

## EFL Student Teachers' Lesson Planning Processes: A Grounded Theory Study

**Vachira Jantarach**

Language Institution

Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

**Kittitouch Soontornwipast**

Language Institution, Thammasat University

Bangkok, Thailand

### Abstract

Lesson planning employs both pedagogical and content knowledge. The processes are complex and student teachers, undergoing practicum, struggle to plan. However, studies that explain processes drawn from a qualitative inquiry to explain the practice are rare. The purpose of this study is to generate a theory to explain Thai EFL student teachers' lesson planning by adopting the grounded theory. The research questions include 1) How do the Thai EFL student teachers design their lesson plans? 2) How do the student teachers implement the lesson plans? and 3) What action do the student teachers take after implementing the lesson plans? The research instruments are semi-structured interviews as well as observations of 22 student teachers majoring in Teaching English. The data is analyzed by means of coding to identify emerging categories and generate a substantive theory. A constant comparative analysis of the data generates a grounded theory of EFL student teachers' lesson planning, illustrating cyclical processes of four stages. The first stage is pre-planning, where personnel and institutions have an influence by giving information necessary for planning. The second stage is planning, showing both linear and non-linear processes. The third stage is implementing plans, observed by school and university supervisors. Student teachers agree, partly disagree or entirely disagree with feedback and use or do not use the feedback to improve subsequent plans. Finally, the last stage is reflecting/evaluating, showing modes of communication and a reflective process for both problems and success.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language (EFL), grounded theory, lesson planning, lesson plans, student teachers, supervisors

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## Introduction

Teacher preparation programs have been prioritized when qualified learners are in need because qualified teachers lead to development in students (Darling-Hammond, 1997). To illustrate, teachers directly interact with students in classrooms, establish a pleasant climate, design appropriate activities and select effective materials in order that student learning is supported to success. Student teachers in the teacher education program, therefore, have to learn about the teaching components and put them into practice. Boyd et al. (2008) and Ball, Knobloch & Hoop (2007) assert that teachers, who have had an opportunity to practice teaching in an actual school setting, can better apply theories into real practice in classrooms. The application of pedagogical and content knowledge prior to teaching must be learned and practiced, accordingly. Lesson planning is one of the components teachers have to come across as student teachers. It allows them to apply pedagogical theories into teaching students in classrooms. Writing a lesson plan involves integrating content, adopting methods of teaching, stating materials and planning assessment (Kammanee, 2001).

As such, lesson planning reaffirms quality in teaching and learning achievements (Jensen, 2001) because all teaching and subject-matter components are included in a plan and its implementation enables students to learn. To learn how to plan a lesson, then, is important to novice teachers, especially student teachers, who have little experience in teaching. Specifically, lesson planning is necessary for language instruction due to students' rare exposure to the target language in a foreign language setting. Student teachers have to plan for students to have sufficient practice in a set up environment so that students can use the language in a limited physical setting (Ciaffaroni, 2004). Studies report problems in student teachers' lesson planning: spending a long time thinking about a plan; struggling to write clear learning outcomes; writing irrelevant objectives to content, activities and standards and indicators; and lacking skills in planning English learning process and managing classrooms (Faikhamta, Jantarakantee & Roadrangka, 2011; Ministry of Education, 2006; Songserm, 2012). The studies focus on finding out problems student teachers have during lesson planning by means of the quantitative method. A profound qualitative inquiry on the area is still needed to understand lesson planning processes better.

Accordingly, previous studies on the area of lesson planning have not indicated descriptions of what student teachers are doing or thinking while planning, or what they are thinking or how they are reacting to other factors involving in lesson planning so that implications can be drawn as tied from the data. The previous studies are not concerned with lesson planning of language student teachers, either. To illustrate: Faikhamta's et al. (2011) study focuses on student teachers' level of satisfaction towards a teacher education program in Thailand, Ministry of Education (2006) describes problems of general in-service English teachers and Songserm (2012) reports problems in lesson planning of general student teachers.

What's more, an interesting mixed-method study by Naeem (2014) identifies English student teachers' problems concerning insufficient time allotted to activities; supervisors' resistance to new teaching techniques and absence in expected class observation; negative effects of low voice; and students' problem behavior, lack of motivation and poor skills. The results seem to involve student teachers majoring in Teaching English and relevant to explain implementation

of plans. Still, the results are based on statistical data and writing to identify reasons for the problems. Explanations for specific causes of problems are not investigated.

Also rare are studies that explore student teachers' lesson planning in teaching a foreign language, such as English, which is the specific topic of this study. Despite works that inquire about English student teachers, the information is not sufficient to explain the processes of lesson planning. Richards & Bohlke (2011) and Kim (2011) reveal student teachers' adoption of certain methods of teaching in lessons and need to seek meaning of teaching languages by considering their own thoughts. The conclusion encourages further study on student teachers' thinking and doing while planning.

In fact, there are studies directly relevant to processes of lesson planning. Clark & Peterson (1986) argue that teachers' thinking and acting are influenced by constraints and opportunities in a context. The processes of planning a lesson comprise of teacher's thinking before and after teaching, interactive thoughts and decisions while teaching and theories and beliefs. Furthermore, teachers' actions are influenced by students' classroom behavior, student achievement and outcomes, teachers' classroom behavior and outcomes and nature of teachers' lesson plans. Based on Clark & Peterson's (1986) work, Ball et al. (2007) figure out inexperienced teachers' thinking and doing while planning a lesson and propose the following actions: thinking about aims of writing a plan; prioritizing and conceptualizing content; making daily or hourly plans; and coping and adapting from formal to practical plan formats. Other than that, influences on lesson planning include knowledge and experience; time tables of schools; school administrators; availability of facilities, technology and resources; students; personality; and impracticality of planning methods. What's more, Richards (2015) argues teachers' practice is shaped up by information, attitudes, values, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning, that is, a belief system, stemmed from experience, school practice, personality, thoughts about education, and other sources. A teacher may interpret content of a teacher education program differently due to his/her belief and establish his/her own practice.

The abovementioned studies focus on in-service teachers' lesson planning processes concerning factors in their processes and steps they take during the lesson planning processes. Still, a study about lesson planning of pre-service teachers or student teachers is needed because they have less experience and are still learning. An in-depth study in natural setting will yield better understanding of lesson planning processes and a theory for explaining what is going on before, while and after student teachers plan a lesson.

### **Purpose of the study**

To generate a theory to explain Thai EFL student teachers' lesson planning.

### **Research questions**

1. How do the Thai EFL student teachers design their lesson plans?
  - 1.1 What factors influence the student teachers' lesson planning?
  - 1.2 What is the procedure in the student teachers' lesson planning?
2. How do the student teachers implement the lesson plans?
3. What action do the student teachers take after implementing the lesson plans?

## Research methodology

Because of scarce theories from studies to explain Thai EFL lesson planning processes, the researcher needs to generate a theory based on actual data. Therefore, the method used to conduct this study is the grounded theory. According to Corbin & Strauss (2015), the grounded theory approach is appropriate for exploring participants' inner experiences, formation and transformation of meanings and areas, which have not been clearly investigated. This study aims to find an explanation of the processes of lesson planning, such as student teachers' thinking during the process of completing a plan, other factors influencing lesson planning and other emerging elements not yet found or clearly explored. The following are the practical components of this study to find the answers for the research questions.

**1. Participants.** Participants of this study are 22 undergraduate students majoring in Teaching English in a five-year Bachelor of Education program provided by the Faculty of Education of a state university located in the West of Thailand. For the first four years on campus, the students enroll in various teacher education courses, including foundations courses, free electives, general teacher education courses, English skills courses and English pedagogical courses. Before the 5<sup>th</sup> year starts, the students enroll in the Practicum course and choose schools for practicing teaching for two terms or the whole academic year. During mid-February until mid-March each year, the practicum officially commences when the students, now called student teachers, escorted by university supervisors, visit the schools and meet with school supervisors for the first time.

The participants are purposively sampled, with the intention that they would "provide maximum insight and understanding of what is being studied" (Ary et al., 2006, p. 472). To be specific, the criterion sampling technique is adopted to select the participants, who meet predetermined criterion of importance and can provide rich information for this study (Patton, 2001). Actually, there are thirty student teachers majoring in Teaching English at the time of data collection but eight of them are under the researcher's supervision. They, therefore, are left out for fear that their responses may not be based on their own thoughts but highlighted for the researcher's satisfaction. This is called biasing effects, positive or negative results caused by both interviewer and interviewee's preconceived notions about the interviewer's role (Berg, 2007). The researcher of this study interviews the student teachers by himself.

**2. Context.** The twenty-two participants or student teachers go to nine schools, including elementary, lower secondary and high school levels. Three of them practice teaching at a vocational school. All student teachers are under a school supervisor and a university supervisor, to both of whom lesson plans are submitted and who observes implementation of plans regularly. Usually, students in schools have 2 – 4 hours of English classes a week. The number becomes the frequency of lesson plans student teachers have to write and submit.

**3. Research instruments.** A semi-structured interview is used as it allows the researcher to consistently collect data covering the topics of lesson planning, which have been set up as questions according to literature review and practice. When the questions listed are covered, additional issues can be asked until each concept is thoroughly clarified (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

The concepts, then, provide meaningful understanding of lesson planning processes and eventually help generate a theory. The objective of the semi-structured interview for this study is to find: 1) factual information about the participants, including levels of students, average number of students per class, teaching hours and days of teaching, and 2) the processes of writing a lesson plan.

Other than that, observations are also used to investigate what student teachers actually do with the plans in classroom. In other words, observations allow the researcher to gather data of how a lesson plan is implemented to see if it is like what the student teachers have described in the interview or not (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). During observation, the student teacher provide the lesson plan that the researcher uses as a prompt for generating more questions for the second interview. The researcher also records video of the observation for writing field notes later.

**4. Data collection.** The collection of data consists of three phases: the first interview, the observation and the second interview.

4.1 The first interview is administered to gather data in order to answer the first research question: "How do the Thai EFL student teachers design their lesson plans?" The objective of the initial interview is also to find answers for the two sub-questions: "What factors influence the student teachers' lesson planning?" and "What is the procedure in the student teachers' lesson planning?" All interviews are recorded on audio files, each of which lasts about one and a half to two hours.

4.2 The observation is conducted to see how a lesson plan is implemented and to collect data for the second research question: "How do the student teachers implement the lesson plans?" The researcher contacts a student teacher and agrees on a date and time for observation. Usually, the contact will be made a day before the observation. The researcher has all student teachers' timetables, so it is easy to set a date, on which they definitely have a class. The observation is recorded on a visual file, which lasts about fifty minutes. During the observation, the researcher is sitting in the back. The student teacher leaves the lesson plan for the day on the table for consultation.

4.3 The second interview is administered to investigate more about any concepts introduced by the student teachers during the first interview and the observation. The data collected at this phase is also used to answer the third research question: "What action do the student teachers take after implementing the lesson plans?"

**5. Data analysis.** To begin with, the interviews are transcribed. Pseudonyms are used and selected by the participants themselves. Based on a cyclical process of data analysis, similarities and differences are looked for among responses from the transcription. After that, themes and relationships among these categories are examined. The researcher, then, gains insights, conditional propositions and questions for more data collection. The construction of tentative theoretical statements is reached at this point. More data is collected to find meanings and understandings of the theoretical propositions. The researcher tries to explain the theoretical

constructs by comparing with more empirical data until no more new contributions from the data emerges, that is, theoretical saturation (Ary et al., 2006).

To illustrate, the researcher starts with open coding to find major categories from the transcriptions. Then, axial coding emerges as one open coding, called the core phenomenon, is focused. The data is searched again to find categories around the core phenomenon. Types of the categories include casual conditions, strategies, intervening conditions and consequences. The final step is selective coding, in which the researcher takes the model and develops propositions or hypotheses that interrelate the categories in the model or assemble a story that describes the interrelationship of categories in the model. This theory, developed by the researcher, is articulated toward the end of this study and “could assume several forms, one of which was a narrative statement” (Creswell, 2013, p. 86). For example, students, school supervisors, university supervisors and student teachers form the category *personnel*. Then, all the categories are put together. The result of this step is the diagram of lesson planning processes with factors influencing student teachers' lesson planning. Further data is collected to add codes and categories. The steps of analysis are not strictly in order. The researcher reexamines data, codes, categories and the whole diagram.

## Results

The theory about processes of lesson planning is generated from the interview and observational data. There are four stages of lesson planning (see Figure 1). First, in the pre-planning stage, student teachers gain information from two main sources: personnel (school supervisors, university supervisors, student teachers) and institutions (Schools and the Faculty of Education). Second, in the planning stage, student teachers think about the information obtained in the pre-planning stage or it has an influence on lesson planning components. Third, in the implementing stage, lesson plans are implemented in real classrooms and the implementation is observed by school and university supervisors. Finally, in the reflecting/evaluating stage, student teachers think about the result of the implementation, where they reflect, evaluate or record after-teaching notes for writing next lesson plans. Details of each stage are as follows.

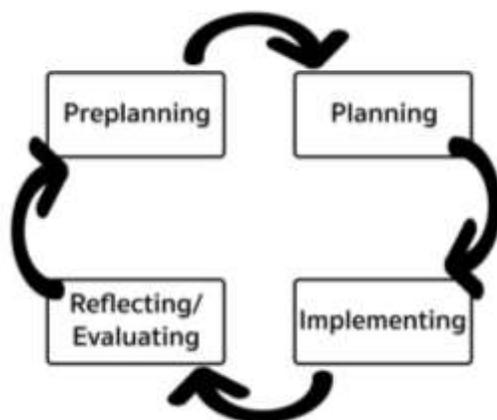


Figure 1: Lesson planning processes

**1. Pre-planning.** In the first stage, student teachers are provided with information from personnel and institutions. The information is received by student teachers. The information is related to various components in lesson planning (see Figure 2).

Information from	Information related to
School supervisors	Textbooks; curriculum; students; equipment and physical settings
University supervisors	Knowledge prior to planning; rules (e.g. submission of plans, change in plan format)
Student teachers	Ideas for planning; consultancy; school and university supervisors' favorite techniques
Schools	Rules (e.g. submission of plans, no homework); practice (e.g. no time frame for special activities)
Faculty of Education	Rules (e.g. submission of plans, detailed plan format); practice (e.g. selection of schools)

Figure 2: Information from sources in pre-planning stage

### 1.1 Personnel

1.1.1 *School supervisors.* The information about textbooks, curriculum, students and equipment and physical settings is provided to student teachers by school supervisors. It influences student teachers' thinking about different components that should be included in lesson plans: use of textbooks as a resource of content, use of curriculum as a resource of indicators, tactics to deal with students of different levels and possibility of use of teaching aids. First, school supervisors suggest use of textbooks for designating amount of content for weekly plans and language points to focus. The student teachers, then, write lesson plans at the suggested number and language points.

*Nicky: "She [school supervisor] also tells me to write about 10 – 12 plans for a unit. In fact, the number may be lesser."*

*Polita: "My school supervisor tells me to focus on grammar."*

Second, when asked for school curriculum by student teachers, school supervisors suggest using the 2551 B.E. core curriculum to identify indicators as guidelines for writing objectives for long plans and weekly plans. Despite existence of school curriculum, the core curriculum is encouraged for use as a main source. The student teachers use the core curriculum to write indicators accordingly.

*Andy: "The school supervisor gives school curriculum to me but she tells me it is based on the core curriculum. I'm encouraged to use the core curriculum, then."*

Third, the information about students guides student teachers to design a variety of activities, linguistic explanation, examples and pace of instruction for students with different levels of proficiency and motivation.

*Pooky: "So, I plan various activities as told [by school supervisor]. It's like I plan to teach a grammar point and I should plan to have them [students] speak in a situation, not to write correct sentences."*

*Nicky: "My school supervisor tells me to prepare explanations for students. ... Yes, they are intermediate students."*

*Helen: "My school supervisor tells me to use easy words for beginner students and I have to teach slowly, too."*

Finally, the information about availability, unavailability and limitation of equipment and physical settings influence student teachers to plan activities, electronic and non-electronic teaching aids and to be careful of using office supplies.

*Gasoline: "My school supervisor tells me there are computers and visualizers in all rooms. Great! It's convenient to prepare PowerPoint files."*

*Jane: "I plan to use paper as teaching aids first when my school supervisor says not all computers and visualizers work well."*

*Grace: "My school supervisor tells me A4 paper is provided, but only 50 sheets. I like that but I have to use it carefully."*

1.1.2 *University supervisors.* Student teachers say that university supervisors give knowledge of teaching methods, knowledge of language learning prior to practicum and inform them of rules for submission and change in the plan format. The information has a direct influence on student teachers establishing a lesson plan with methods of teaching English, expected practice in submitting plans and coping and adapting with change in the plan format. First, student teachers gain knowledge from courses conducted by university supervisors. Accordingly, the student teachers apply the knowledge in planning lessons. Otherwise, they have no idea how to teach with correct teaching techniques that may affect student learning. They describe the main concepts of methods of teaching English and teaching techniques.

*Tharee: "The motivation phase is for making students interested. The input phase is for showing structures. The focus phase is for practicing and the transfer phase is for ... umm ... using English. ... It helps me write plan correctly."*

*Chanom: "I try to make my activities communicative as I learned from the university. ... Students should communicate to each other. The activity should let students talk to each other."*

*Boy: "I've got the SQR3 technique from the [Methods of Teaching English] course. ... It's good because I know how to teach students read."*

Next, university supervisors tell student teachers about rules of submission, such as time and frequency. This makes them more disciplined; however, some student teachers learn that some

university supervisors do not check plans regularly, hence rare submission of plans and search for feedback from school supervisors instead.

*Andy: "My university supervisor tells me to submit plans two weeks before and to meet her every week to listen to feedback."*

*View: "My university supervisor doesn't usually check lesson plans. ... My seniors tell me. ... I still send the plan anyway via emails. ... But, I can see feedback from my school supervisor instead."*

The change in the plan format is also informed. The slight change to the Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) format do not affect planning much, but the complete change from the detailed to shortened plan formats helps student teachers save time and encourages them to write plans. The normal format consists of four phases: information/motivation, input/control, focus/working and transfer/application.

*Pooky: "My university supervisor tells me to change to PPP. ... It's OK. Both formats are similar for me."*

*Helen: "The shortened format is better. I write instructions with dashes. I can save paper and time. The detailed plan is too much."*

1.1.3 *Student teachers.* Student teachers talk about three groups of student teachers, each of whom has an influence on lesson planning in terms of being a source or not being a source of information, having moral support and seeking advantages of information about supervisors. First, student teachers talk about themselves, being a source of information for planning. They recall teaching techniques that can be used in lesson plans immediately.

*Anna: "I remember what I learned from the Methods of Teaching English course. I plan activities that help students learn English."*

However, some student teachers say that they do not have any ideas to design activities because they are not sure about knowledge learned from the teacher education program and that their personality affects decisions in designing particular activities.

*Mali: "I'm not sure if students will communicate in English. ... I don't know if games can make them communicate."*

*Tharee: "I try to make the motivation activity fun but it's hard. Probably, it is because I'm not a funny person."*

Second, the student teachers talk about their classmates, who practice teaching at the same school. Chatting at school or on social networking and observing classes of one another becomes a source of information for writing plans. Therefore, they can have ideas to write plans easily. Other than that, when they have problems, they have the classmates to talk to. Though the problems are not solved, they have someone to understand them. It is for moral support.

*Andy: "I get the idea from Boy, my classmate, when he teaches his class."*

*Jane: "My classmates and I talk about problems ... about lesson plans. It's good. We have someone to talk to."*

Finally, student teachers' senior graduates also give useful information about school or university supervisors' favorite techniques so that they can use the techniques in lesson plans to improve their grades.

*Jane: "I plan to use VDO clips because I know he [university supervisor] likes clips. ... The senior graduates tell me about that."*

## **1.2 Institutions**

**1.2.1 Schools.** Student teachers receive information about rules and learn about practices in schools during practicum. The information influences student teachers' practice in submission of plans, designing of activities and time management. First, a school imposes that lesson plans be submitted to school supervisors three weeks before implementation. The plans are kept at the administrative office as evidence for annual education quality assurance. The strict rule activates the student teachers to write plans and submit them in time.

*Nicky and Pooky: "I must plan my timetable ahead so that I can write plans to meet deadlines."*

However, the rule does not seem to affect a student teacher. He fails to meet deadlines.

*Gasoline: "... My school supervisor warns me that I need to submit plans. Well, I try. But, ... umm ... I'm busy."*

What's more, student teachers learn about school policies, some of which influence lesson planning, such as a no-homework policy.

*Chanom: "I must plan to finish everything within class time because students are not supposed to have homework."*

Student teachers also talk about a practice of cancelling classes on short notice at schools for special activities or official major events, where students must participate, such as decoration of flowers for Teacher Appreciation Day, preparation for sports day, use of rooms for national ethics tests, etc. This affects time management in planning and implementing the plans. Student teachers have solutions for the problem: planning to shorten each phase of teaching; rushing or speeding up implementation of some phases; omitting the last phase of teaching (the transfer or production phase); combining the last two phases of teaching (the focus or practice phase and the transfer or production phase); and combining two plans on the same day.

*Paul: "... I have to go fast for each phase, like 1 – 3 minutes for the motivation activity and ten minutes each for the input and practice phases."*

*Tiny and Polita: "At time constraints, I don't implement the production phase."*

*Jane: "I combine the focus and transfer phases at time constraints."*

*Kara: "... Time isn't enough. So, I combine lesson plans. I have to think about combining two lesson plans for a class."*

*1.2.2 Faculty of Education.* Information about rules and practice is delivered to student teachers by the Faculty of Education in the orientation. The information influences student teachers in the pre-planning stage. First, a rule of writing detailed plans has both positive and negative effects. Some student teachers say that detailed plans help them with delivering instruction to students because what they plan to teach is written in conversations on plans. Nevertheless, some student teachers feel discouraged writing the detailed plans because they spend a long time writing plans. This affects personal time for relaxing or rest.

*Pooky: "It [writing detailed lesson plans] helps me remember what to teach. I can say Steps 1, 2, 3, correctly. I don't have to look at the plan."*

*Andy: "I don't want to write detailed plans. There are a lot of details to write about, like things to say, things to do, steps to teach. It's discouraging to write."*

**2. Planning.** Student teachers think about all information from the first stage and produce lesson plans, which comprise of various actions concerning components in a lesson plan. Figure 3 explains the planning stage in the lesson planning processes.

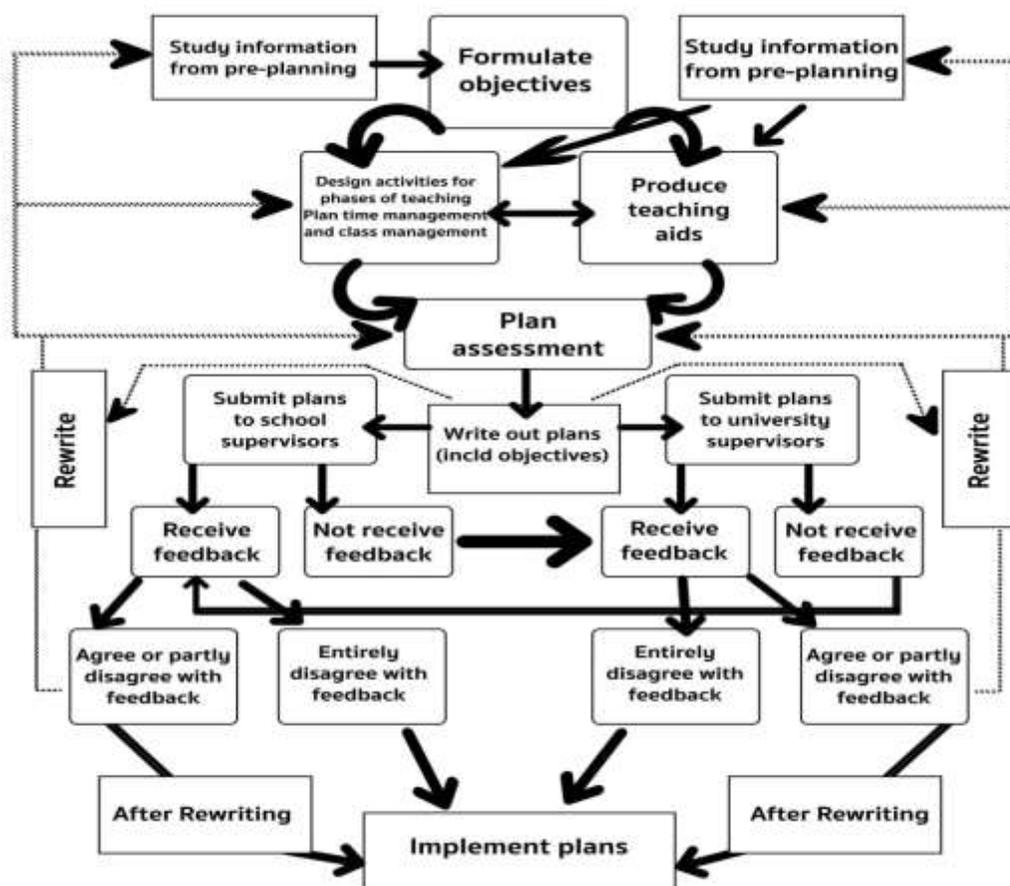


Figure 3: Planning stage

To begin with, student teachers study information obtained from the pre-planning stage. Next, they plan either according to the following two practices: (1) formulating objectives, designing activities and producing teaching aids; or (2) producing teaching aids and then designing activities.

In one practice, student teachers formulate objectives and design activities for each phase. They also think about time allotted to each phase. At the same time, class management is thought about each activity. Then, they produce teaching aids. Some student teachers say that after formulating objectives, they design activities along with producing teaching aids

In the other practice, after formulating objectives, student teachers produce teaching aids, mostly concerning electronic ones, and then design activities. They look at textbooks, thinking about the information obtained earlier, and produce PowerPoint slides. Some student teachers say after looking at textbooks, they think about activities and then produce PowerPoint slides all along. They reason that the practice is time-saving and convenient because they use the PowerPoint slides as main teaching aids. The slides can show teaching procedures.

Then, for both practices, student teachers plan assessment. They say they use the objectives to write the rubric for the assessments. Next, they write out formal lesson plans, which contain all components. Finally, the plans are submitted to school and university supervisors for checking. There are two different practices at this stage: (1) receiving feedback and (2) not receiving feedback.

Student teachers receive feedback and think about it. If they agree with the feedback, they rewrite the components receiving comments, resulting in reiterating a cyclical process. Though they partly disagree with feedback, they still rewrite the plan. As for the reason, student teachers say that supervisors have been teaching for a long time and student teachers respect them. At times, student teachers say that they entirely disagree with feedback. Their decisions depend on their beliefs. The feedback may not be congruent with what they have known or practiced before. In this case, they do not rewrite the plan and implement it in the next stage.

*Polita: "It's hard to change according to my university supervisor's feedback because I write grammar plans like my school supervisor. He also uses grammar exercises for students in his class."*

*Tharee: "...Eventually, I don't write 2 or 3 plans [differentiation suggested by university supervisor]. ... It's hard to find time."*

*Fasai: "... I'm thinking the topics are not connected. Talking about nutrients and then asking about prices. ... I change the topics as told, anyway. She's my school supervisor. She's been a teacher for so long."*

When student teachers do not receive feedback, they seek it from other supervisors. For example, if school supervisors rarely checks their lesson plans, student teachers can look at university supervisors' feedback instead, and vice versa. The next practice is similar to receiving feedback: agreeing, partly disagreeing or entirely disagreeing with feedback and rewriting the plan or implementing the plan in the next stage.

**3. Implementing plans.** In this stage, student teachers implement lesson plans in classrooms. The implementation is observed by supervisors. Next, the process is similar to planning in terms of feedback (see Figure 4). After receiving feedback from supervisors, student teachers either agree or disagree with the feedback, think about it and use it or do not use it in writing next plans. In case of no feedback, student teachers have to seek one from other supervisors.

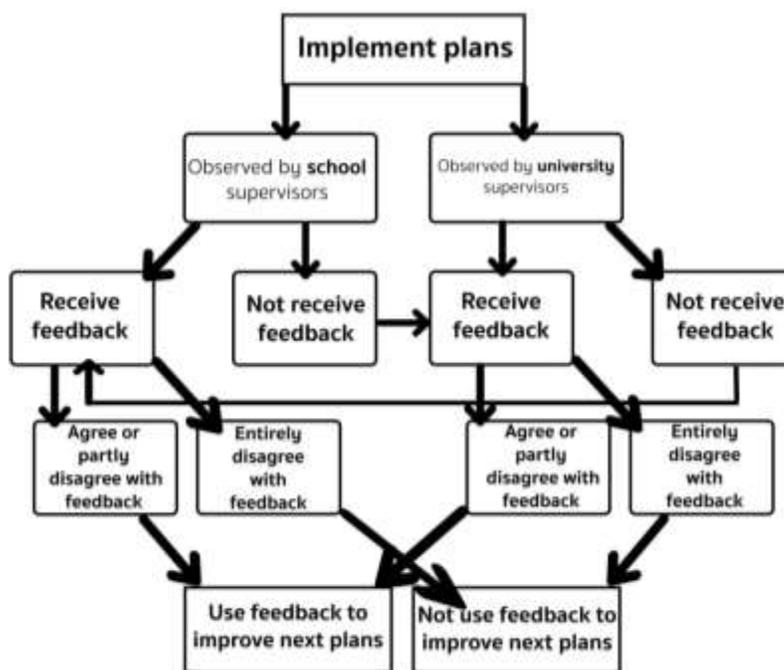


Figure 4: Implementing stage

**4. Reflecting/Evaluating.** For the reflecting/evaluating stage, there are four steps for reflection on problems: identifying problems, specifying causes, seeking possible solutions and evaluating solutions. There are three steps for reflection on success: identifying success factors, specifying causes and evaluating causes.

Figure 5 illustrates two modes of reflection: mental reflection and written out reflection. Student teachers think about their implementation and write after-teaching notes on the last page of lesson plans. When student teachers share reflections, they identify problems, specify causes, seek solutions, evaluate solutions by implementing the solutions in class to see whether they work out or not and share reflection with classmates (in private time) or in a seminar, officially attended by classmates and supervisors. The dashed lines suggest that some student teachers share reflection after they identify problems and receive solutions from classmates or the seminar. On the other hand, student teachers identify success factors; specify causes; and evaluate causes by implementing them in class. When student teachers do not share reflection, they go through all steps of the process without interruption of sharing to anyone. The end of the two alternatives is to use information for writing future plans.

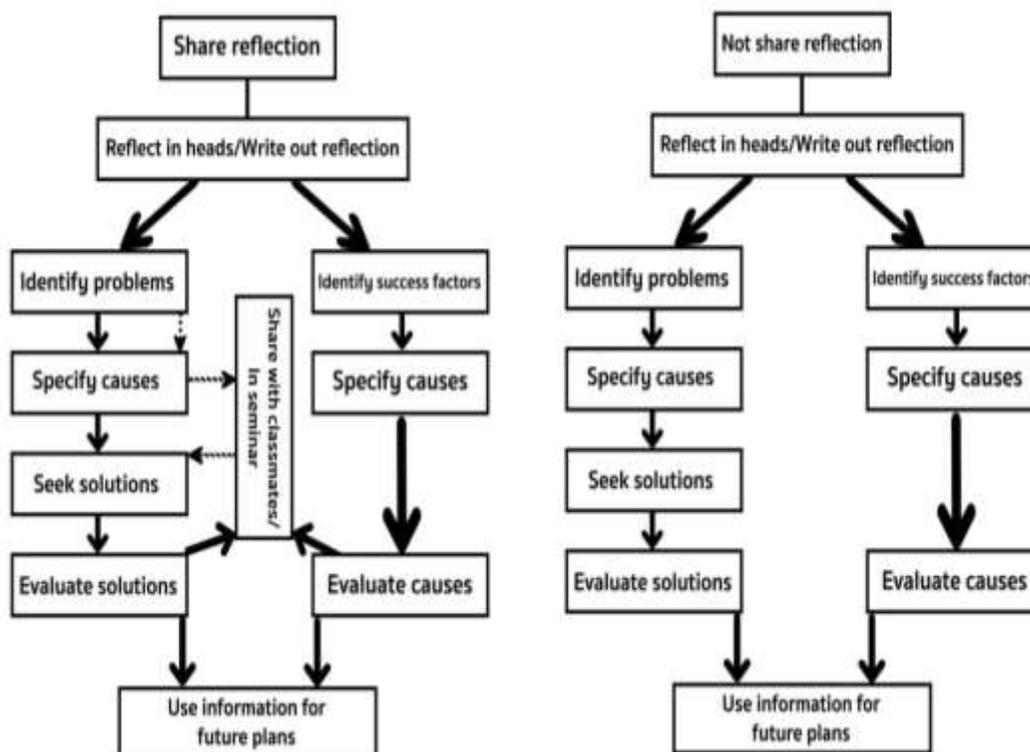


Figure 5: Reflecting/Evaluating stage

## Discussion

According to the purpose of this study, a theory to explain Thai EFL student teachers' lesson planning processes is generated (see Figure 6). The results indicate a theory of lesson planning as a cyclical process, where there are four stages. First, in the pre-planning stage, student teachers gain information to design a lesson plan. Second, in the planning stage, they design a lesson plan comprising of such components as objectives, activities, time management, class management, teaching aids and assessment. They also revisit and rewrite the components to improve the plan. Third, in the implementing stage, they implement the lesson plan in classrooms with students. Finally, in the reflecting/evaluating stage, they reflect upon the implementation. The reflection, then, is used in the pre-planning stage of the next cycle of the processes.

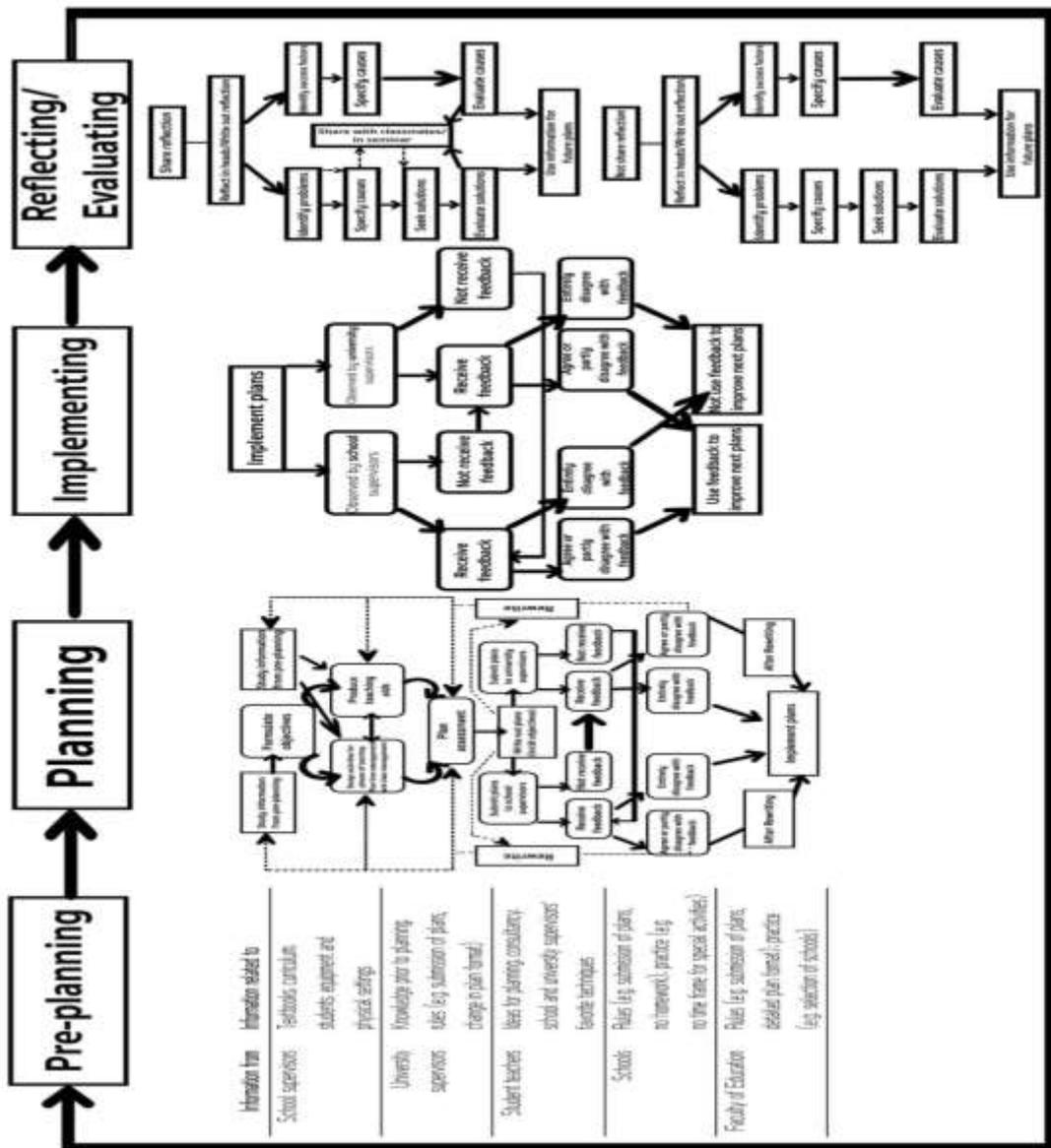


Figure 6: Thai EFL student teachers' lesson planning processes

This is similar to John's (2006) lesson planning process of student teachers, where components in a lesson plan are designed in a non-linear, cyclical process, consisting of early and extended phases. Student teachers gather information and design the components of a lesson plan. Their professional values (e.g. beliefs, opportunities) and students learning have an influence on the process. They also reflect upon each component when they revisit, for example, objectives, student learning or activities, until the lesson plan is completed. However, John's (2006) lesson planning process does not illustrate implementation of plans. There are similar features between this study's processes and Clark & Yinger's (1980) model on teacher lesson planning. First, the initial stage is pre-planning, where student teachers gather information about student teachers,

students, curriculum and environmental factors. Next, student teachers think about the information to write a plan to be implemented in a classroom. Finally, student teachers reflect upon the implementation. The difference includes that Clark & Yinger's (1980) model is a linear process, whereas this study's processes are cyclical, showing student teachers' going back and forth in planning and rewriting a plan.

The following are details of each stage generated from the results of this study.

In the *pre-planning* stage, student teachers gain information from relevant personnel and institutions to design a plan. The information is concerning resources for content, student characteristics, components for producing teaching aids, pedagogical and content knowledge, rules and practices and supervisory styles. The information influences components in a plan. This is consistent with John (2006), who describes school supervisors' as a source of information concerning subject content, curriculum, students' learning and resources available for producing instructional materials. Apart from school supervisors, John's (2006) process does not mention other groups in personnel, nor does it mention institutions. However, Clark & Yinger (1980) imply that student teachers, school supervisors and schools as institutions influence lesson planning because they provide information for student teachers to design a plan. The information is concerned with experience, personality, knowledge of subject, repertoire of teaching skills, student characteristics, curriculum and environmental factors. The results are consistent with Santoyo & Zhang (2016), who argue that teacher education programs provides necessary information for lesson planning, such as knowledge in teaching, knowledge and skills in subject matter and all elements concerning teaching and student learning.

In the *planning* stage, student teachers study the information gained from the pre-planning stage. Then, there are two practices. One practice is that they formulate objectives, design activities along with planning time and class management, produce teaching aids and plan assessment. This is the linear process introduced by Tyler (1949), whose four steps include "specifying objectives, selecting learning activities, organizing learning activities and specifying evaluation procedures" (as cited in Uhrmacher, Conrad & Moroye, 2013, p.11). John (2006) asserts student teachers need to learn to design a lesson plan in the linear process before they can develop their own alternative process.

The other practice is that after studying the information, some student teachers produce teaching aids first and then go through the rest of components. Similarly, many experienced teachers and student teachers do not adopt the linear process because there are more factors interrupting lesson planning: time constraints, institutional concerns, attitudes, moods or expected events (Clark & Yinger, 1980; Hall & Smith, 2006; John, 2006).

After that, student teachers submit plans to school and university supervisors and receive feedback. However, when feedback is not provided, student teachers seek it from other supervisors. Similarly, Dias-Lacy & Guirguis (2017) maintain that new teachers, who lack support from experienced teachers, will seek support from other sources. This is one of the coping mechanisms novice teachers use to handle problems. What's more, when feedback is neither sufficient nor effective, feedback or relevant information from other sources is searched for, such as from supervisors, student teachers themselves or classmates. "These feedback approaches are

important strategies for providing student teachers with the information they need about their classroom behavior” (Freiberg, Waxman & Houston, 1987, p.79).

In the *implementing* stage, student teachers implement the lesson plan, which is observed by school and university supervisors, who provide feedback. Student teachers receive feedback, with which they agree or partly disagree. Then, they use the feedback to improve next lesson plans. However, student teachers, who entirely disagree with feedback, do not use the feedback to improve next plans. This is consistent with Bailey's (2006) outcomes of supervision. The student teacher agrees with the supervisor and makes changes completely, gradually or partially or disagrees with the supervisor but still makes changes or disagrees and refuses to change anything. The student teacher sees the value of changing as suggested or he/she does not see the value of making changes. Student teachers also make decisions based on their beliefs (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Perry & Rog, 1992; Richards, 2015). They practice according to the information, values, theories and assumptions about teaching and learning. Knudson (1998) also maintains that student teachers receive feedback differently. Some have trouble accepting constructive criticism. Those who receive feedback and communicate to supervisors have a better chance to improve their teaching.

In the *reflecting/evaluating* stage, student teachers reflect upon lesson plans, analyzing both problems and success in implementing the plans. This stage is similar to Hall & Smith's (2006) instruction process: planning, instruction and reflection. Student teachers think about knowledge and application, difficulties and solutions for improving the teaching profession (Roberts, 2016; Ryken & Hamel, 2016).

From the results, the process of reflection is to identify problems, specify causes, seek solutions, evaluate solutions and use the information for future plans. It is similar to Lee's (2005) process of reflective thinking: problem context, problem reframing, seeking solutions, experimentation, evaluation and acceptance / rejection; and similar to Schön's (1987) reflective thinking approach: problematic situation, frame / reframe the problem, experimentation and review consequences / implementation (as cited in Lee, 2005). Though the terms are different, the steps in this study's reflective process cover all actions of reflection. Lee (2005) and Schön (1987) focus only on reflecting problems; however, reflection on success is also found from the results of this study. This is consistent with Wegner, Remmert & Strehlke's (2014) study, which portrays a self-reflection process of student teachers, with assistance from supervisors: implementing plans, reflecting on implementation and evaluating plans in terms of both problems and success, specifying reasons, comparing own reflections to methodologies and considering ways for improvement. The difference is that student teachers in this study do not reveal how they consider pedagogical methodologies as opposed to or in accordance with their reflection.

From the results, student teachers reflect by thinking in their heads or writing out reflection. Kanthorn (2015) explains that a person can think about things toward him/herself, called self or individual reflection. Reflection can be communicated onto a written form, called a reflection journal or a written format, or by speaking, called an oral format (Lee, 2005). Moreover, student teachers also share reflection with classmates in private time and in a seminar, where all student teachers and university supervisors meet and share problems and success in lesson planning. Some

student teachers gain solutions from the sharing. Freiberg, Waxman & Houston (1987) support the results, saying that student teachers search for feedback or relevant information from a classroom analysis system with supervisors, self-analysis and peer discussion such as in official seminars. In the same way, Spangler (2013) argues that seminars, organized by a university, or any other teacher community systems, like online networking, set up a sharing platform, from which student teachers can gain knowledge about teaching and learning and problem-solving. Meyer & Sawyer (2006) also assert that reflection about teaching, with help from fellow student teachers and supervisors, can improve future instruction.

### **Implications**

The lesson planning theory generated from this study can be used to explain student teachers' lesson planning processes. Better understanding can also be made among personnel and institutions involved in the processes. Different practices in planning in different student teachers should be accepted since there is more than one alternative to explain lesson planning practices. In terms of student teachers, they can be educated to think about the influence of many factors before planning, be confident in their own designing of a lesson plan that suits context and student learning while planning, implement plans and consider supervisors' feedback deliberately while implementing plans and reflect upon or evaluate all lesson plans based on pedagogical knowledge to improve future lesson plans. Accordingly, a teacher education program can be improved based on the theory.

### **Recommendations**

Faculty of Education should emphasize on the importance of lesson planning to student teachers and set up a collaborative community consisting of student teachers, university and school supervisors. All personnel from relevant institutions will be involved in communicating to one another.

For further studies, an investigation can focus on the thought process of supervisors' giving information to and supervising student teachers. Moreover, studies based on a mixed method design can be conducted to test the theory in larger populations of student teachers and any other personnel involved in the lesson planning process.

### **Conclusion**

Lesson planning is a complex process, especially for student teachers who are inexperienced and still learning. This study, therefore, generates a theory to explain the process. The theory derives from interviews with student teachers, who have practicum in an actual school setting. It explains student teachers' cyclical lesson planning processes, consisting of four stages: pre-planning, planning, implementing and reflecting/evaluating. Factors include personnel and institutions, from whom/which student teachers receive information concerning components in a lesson plan; knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter; rules concerning submission and formats of plans; and practices about school schedule and selection of schools. Student teachers also receive feedback from school supervisors and university supervisors as well. However, their beliefs affect their decision-making: either they will agree, partly disagree or entirely disagree with the feedback or whether they will improve the lesson plan or not.

**About the authors**

**Vachira Jantarach** is a PhD candidate in the English Language Teaching program of Language Institution, Thammasat University, Thailand. ORCID ID is 0000-0002-2263-6857

**Dr. Kittitouch Soontornwipast**, Ed.D. is an assistant professor, at Language Institution, Thammasat University. ORCID ID is 0000-0002-0461-7775

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