

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study has the primary aim of evaluating how teachers of EFL in Thailand schools implement and execute explicit grammatical instruction---and why. In view of this, the study appeals to the exploratory-interpretative paradigm (Grotjahn, 1987). The framework focuses on particular events which are to be viewed against the backdrop of research and findings on the explicit grammatical epistemology. By implication, the study views knowledge and learning as objective realities even though it recognises the personally constructed nature of all knowledge (Basse, 1991). Though largely exploratory in demand, this study also uses conceptual inquiry principles, since it seeks to unravel the development of a framework for a more objective intellectual scheme of organization (Dewey, 1938). The purpose of this research therefore necessitates methodical triangulation (Denzin, 1970) which recognises drawing data using different instruments.

Data collection was done in phases, from July to September, 2010 . These are referred to in this account as the first, second and third phases. For the purpose of this study, classroom observation, interviews and questionnaires were used in the first phase of this study. Classroom-lesson observation led to individual teacher interviews and answering of questionnaires. The information gathered from the use of these instruments was used to collect more data in the second phase of this study. Miles and Huberman (1994) aver that the collection of new data is significantly predicated upon existing ones where the field worker is engaged with "... thinking strategies for collecting new data", (p. 50). In line with this assertion, insights about explicit grammar instruction as practised in Thailand schools were gained from the first phase of investigation.

Determining a suitable approach for a study like this could be dilemmatic. A longitudinal design might not be useful as it would probably mean measuring at intervals, the extent of development of objects of study until the end of the long term investigation (Ajuzie, Ezeasor & Nnajofofor, 2008), but in this study, the object of study was observable in a short space of time. A case study was neither considered as results might be narrow, idiosyncratic and failing to be representative of the population. Geertz, (1993) recommends robust, vivid and comprehensive description and masses of details for a study particularly involving investigations of methods, practice and process descriptions. This study was therefore designed as a qualitative research which Richards, (2001) describes as "...more holistic and naturalistic than

quantitative approaches and seeks to collect information in classroom settings for language use and on authentic tasks...” (p. 297).

This matches the spirit of this study which seeks to examine the workings of the explicit grammar pedagogy in Thai EFL classrooms. It affords the much necessary elaborate detailing of the step-by-step approach employed by each teacher-participant in teaching Auxiliary Verbs in the classroom which a quantitative design would not have been able to achieve. It made for the observation of the typical grammar lesson where learners’ demeanor, deportment and physical reaction to instruction also counted in analyses that culminated in the findings in this study. The teachers were not only observed and interviewed for information, they were also engaged in discussions which revealed their perspectives and captured their personal (as opposed to, their official) opinions about how and why they implemented explicit grammatical lessons in the way they did. In this chapter, the context of investigation, data-collection method, instruments, and procedures are discussed.

There are three phases of data collection in this study. These are the first phase data collection stage, the second phase data collection and the third phase of data collection. After the first phase of data collection, insight was gained into the teaching of grammar in Thailand. This led to two more separate phases of investigation for more detailed and focused information on how explicit grammatical instruction is implemented in Thailand schools.

3.1 Setting

The study was set in the Chiang Mai Province in Northern Thailand. Three secondary schools were earmarked for the first phase of investigations. Two schools were involved in gathering data for the second phase while three schools were used, to get data for the third phase of data collection.

Two of the three secondary schools used for the first phase study were of the largest and best known private, Christian-mission-affiliated schools in Northern Thailand. They teach English at levels including the Basic 7 to 12 which are potentially qualified for evaluation, in this study.

In two of the schools, there were two types of English programmes: the one taught by native English speakers only, with student enrollments, in the case of school one put a total of 771 (seven hundred and seventy-one) students or approximately 11.5% of the entire student population of 6, 710 (six thousand, seven hundred and ten) students. Learners taught by these native English-speaking teachers span all class levels of the school from Basic 1 to Basic 12. This programme, christened in both schools one and two, “NP” (Native-speaker Program), is attended by learners whose parents or guardians could afford a higher tuition than that paid for the mainstream programme, taught by non-native English teachers.

In both programmes: the mainstream and the NP, students from different countries could be found while, however, Thai students account for the largest number. In the

conventional, mainstream programme where non-native English speakers teach, the majority of teachers co-opted are Thais, with a few others from China, The Philippines, Singapore and other neighbouring countries. The average number of students in the observed class in school one is 40 while that of school two is 55. School three is a full-fledged bilingual secondary school where the learning of English is a key driving force in the students' education. The average number of students per class is twenty eight in this school.

3.2 Participants.

The participants are twenty-three teachers of EFL in all of the three stages of investigations, among whom twenty-two were practicing classroom teachers: thirteen in the first phase investigation; five in the second phase and five in the third. This study which focuses primarily on evaluating the implementation of a particular grammar teaching approach, naturally made teachers the major potential participants since teachers, who could make or mar educational programmes are the key element in the implementation process, (Carless, 2001).

To facilitate the first phase observation and interaction process, arrangements were concluded with the Directors of the three schools. In all schools, the following criteria were used to select the teachers for the first phase investigation:

- 1) Both sexes would be represented.
- 2) Both native and non-native teachers would be represented.

Participants in this study were selected by considering their lesson schedules and the grammar structures to be taught.

For classroom-lesson observation: Only teachers, whose lessons were primarily *Auxiliary Verbs* or bordered on it, were arranged with for dates and time for classroom observations. They were all also scheduled for individual teacher interviews and answering of a questionnaire. Below is a table showing all nine teachers whose lessons were observed in this study. Fourteen others who were participants in the study were interviewed and they responded to a questionnaire bringing the total number of participants to twenty-three. The names of the observed teachers listed below, are pseudonyms.

Table 1. Profile of teachers whose lessons were observed in the study.
(Key: F=Female, M=Male, B=Basic)

No	Teacher	Gender	Age	Education and Length of Teaching Experience	Class level Taught
1	Pookie	F	30	M.A.(Candidate) 3 years	B10,11
2	Liu	M	39	M.A., 11 Years	B12
3	Promptalit	F	35	M.A., 12 Years	B11
4	Philip	M	47	B.A., 20 Years	B10,11,12
5	Fang Ming	F	35	B.A., 7 Years	B11
6	Lilly	F	36	B.Ed., 2 Years	B10
7	Tina	F	-	B.Ed., 11 Years	B11
8	Tessy	F	43	B.A., 1 Year	B11
9	Sutton	F	31	M.A., 3 Years	B10

In two of the schools in the first phase study, ESOL classes taught by native and non-native English speakers were separated. Non-native English speakers were assigned the teaching of grammar while native English teachers were assigned the teaching of speaking, listening, reading and writing. In other words, native English teachers were assigned teaching language skills (both the receptive and productive). This is a strategy that enabled the learners benefit maximally from both kinds of teachers' teaching specialisations. A further enquiry into this 'division of labour' arrangement revealed that non-native English teachers were generally adjudged more familiar with the teaching of grammar than are native English teachers, whereas the latter were expected to impact on learners' speaking and listening abilities. It is believed that while non-native teachers were able to nurture students to accuracy through grammar lessons, learners in the NP programmes would be able to speak with the native English accent in 'mimicry' of their native English teachers.

For the interview and questionnaire: After selecting enough suitable classes that matched the spirit of the first phase of investigations for classroom-lesson observation, other teachers were appointed for individual interviews and answering of the questionnaire. In the end, nine grammar lessons were observed in practical, normal classroom teaching sessions.

All twenty-three teacher-participants were interviewed individually and they responded to a questionnaire. In The whole of the study, there are five male and

eighteen female teachers. Four are native English speakers while nineteen were non-native English speakers.

The schools were chosen primarily because of the large student and teacher population, teacher nationality diversity. The schools in the third phase of data collection were chosen because they were government schools. The other school in the third phase of investigations (a language school) was chosen to provide an opportunity for triangulation of findings.

Throughout Thailand, a secondary school ESOL teacher is either a native or non-native English speaker. On this basis, the teachers selected for participation in these first, second and third phases of investigations could be said to have sufficiently represented the Thailand secondary-school-level staffing, teacher profile and teaching style.

3.3 Data Collection

It is important to reiterate here that data was collected as three broad, separate exercises, for this study. The first set of data was produced from what is here called, the first phase investigation data which in itself was a cyclical, rather than a linear data collection exercise. This means that after some data in this exercise were collected, it led to the collection of more. The collection of all data was cyclical in operation and effect, that is, more data were collected after the initial ones were analysed and this gave the opportunity of a sequential form of analysis (Tesch, 1990; Delamont, 1992). The implication of this is that data was continuously analysed while the study lasted.

3.3.1 Preparing for Preliminary Data Collection

The three schools previously mentioned were contacted to gather enough information about how best to evaluate explicit grammar teaching in Thailand schools. From observing those aforementioned lessons, insight into language teaching in Thailand was gained. The data guided the main research for what appropriate steps to take during the second and third phases of observation, interaction and interview with teachers. In other words, the details of the second investigation guided the third phase of investigations.

Prior to the first phase of classroom-lesson observations, the literature was frisked and perused for a holistic meaning and blueprint on practical implementation stages, components and procedures of explicit grammatical instruction. From information gathered, an observation checklist was designed and piloted (see Appendix A). A 15-minute pre-observation interview was conducted separately with each teacher in each of the schools, including the Heads of Department of English (please see Appendix D). This was an opportunity to draw a profile of the teachers to be observed or interviewed. Through this, their educational background and qualifications; their teaching experiences and other views about being EFL teachers were established. This interview was, semi structured (Kvale, 1996).

3.3.2 First Phase Data Collection: Classroom Lesson Observation

Observation was designed to be a major source of the first phase data since Selinker (1974) posits that by observing meaningful performance situations, dependable judgement is engendered. These observations were carried out with the teachers, in a non-participant observer capacity (Woods, 1986).

A checklist for the first phase observation was designed as an admixture of both structured and unstructured one since observation was expected to capture the essence of the lesson in definitive terms. The checklist for the second and third phases of observation was fundamentally unstructured. (See Appendix B for the observation checklist for the second and third phases of investigations).

The observations were planned to be graphically recorded for each lesson of the first phase of investigation but audio-taped for the second and third phases of the investigations. Permission was obtained from each teacher for the audio recording of their lessons. They were also transcribed. While each observation session lasted, observation notes were to be taken. It must be admitted from the outset that the teachers were not told what the focus and thrust of the observation would be, neither did any of them ask about it----- either in advance or during the actual observation. This was deliberate in order to see the natural evolution of classroom dynamics in regard to auxiliary verbs and explicit grammatical teaching----which would not be obtained if they were previously informed about what the focus of the study was.

The primary purpose of this instrument was therefore to see in different classrooms, how explicit instruction was executed as a means of learning English grammar; how it was operationalised in a typical lesson of auxiliary verbs: did the teachers understand what they were doing with explicit grammar? Were they implementing the Approach in full or partial measure? How did they control the ship of lesson for maximum learner benefit and understanding? Did auxiliary verbs lend or yield themselves to pedagogic use in the hands of the teachers and did the learners respond to their teachers' methodological overtures? How enthusiastic were the naturally taciturn and generally bashful Thai learners to this method? Did they understand auxiliary verbs more----their functions and default position in the sentence; did they discover the vacuum created in sentences constructed without auxiliary verbs? Did learners construct sentences after they were taught----for, this would mean to some extent that they understood the lesson by some measure? How did the learners perform in the 'practice' sessions? Were they able to demonstrate their understanding of the newly learnt grammar in practical terms during the oral production sessions by using dialogues, role plays, simulated interviews ----or other 'production' methods? Or, did they look even more confused with each step of explicit grammar instruction? Were they unable to respond to the teachers' questions, ask questions or seek further clarifications (which could have convinced the teachers of the comprehensibility of their lessons)? Particularly, did the teachers really use the explicit method masterfully? Since as many sincere answers to the questions above could possibly not have been found using other instruments, much premium was laid on observation

which would be recorded for each observed teacher, also using a checklist and writing a short analytic memo on each lesson.

3.3.3 Interviews

Interviews were designed to help understand more in this exploratory-interpretative study in agreement with Patton (1990), who claims that an interview could allow an interviewer, as a fly on the wall, enter into the world of his or her interviewee. This is the second instrument earmarked for collecting data in the study and it featured unstructured interview items for the first phase of investigation. The questions were designed for clarifying certain foggy events which took place during the observation of the lesson delivery (see Appendices G, H, I, J, K, L and M, for teacher interview questions used for the first, second and third phases of the data collection exercises).

3.3.4 Questionnaires

Observing a classroom teacher alone could not possibly give all needed information. A four-part questionnaire on a five-point scale was designed to determine, among other things, each teacher's declared knowledge about the explicit grammar concept and intended as well to know what each such teacher thought of the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction in relation to teaching auxiliary verbs (see Appendix C).

The first part of the questionnaire has a total of nine questions concerned with teachers' knowledge about the explicit grammar concept while the second part has seven questions about teachers' beliefs in regard to the effectiveness of explicit grammar teaching. The third part has three questions about teachers' classroom practices in teaching grammar while the fourth part has a single question about how teachers would evaluate the success of their individual current method of implementing explicit grammatical instruction. All questions have answers ranging from "1" to "5", with an opportunity for abstention from any question by the respondent by simply choosing NS (Not Sure). Respondents also had the opportunity of making extra comments, aside from choosing answers for the questions. Three of the twenty-three respondents, representing approximately 13% of total respondents made extra comments useful in data analysis.

All instruments used in this study were piloted with three EFL teachers who worked for a growing private bilingual school. All lapses arising from these instruments were redressed to ensure internal reliability in the first phase of investigations. For example, the observation checklist for phase 1 (see Appendix C) initially assumed that all teachers in Thailand teach grammar explicitly. One of the teachers in the pilot scheme who did not teach grammar explicitly raised an objection leading to the modification of items number 2 to 6.

3.3.5 Second Phase Data Collection: Observation and Interview

For the second phase of data collection, two schools which included two of the three used in the first phase were used although the classrooms observed and teachers interviewed in the second phase of data-collection were different. The classes in the second phase of investigation had an average of 42 students. Having been selected from the first phase of investigation, the two schools' grammar teaching operations and teachers were already known and so, no initial investigative interviews were needed. Altogether in the second phase investigation, two teachers were observed while five were interviewed. All five also responded to a questionnaire.

The two teachers were selected because they were directly in charge of teaching grammar in each of the two schools and they had lessons whose topics were related to auxiliary verbs since auxiliary verb structures are used in this study as yardstick for how grammar is taught in Thailand. The focus of this stage of investigation was no more general (as was the case in the first phase) but rather, it focused on the 'presentation' of the grammar structure, the 'practice' stage and the 'production' stage which according to the literature, are of great importance in the explicit instruction pedagogy. After each observed grammar lesson, a post-observation interview was conducted with each of the teachers as an opportunity to clarify issues arising from the lesson.

3.3.6 Third Phase Data Collection: Observation and Interview

For the third phase of data collection, three new schools were used where three grammar lessons were observed and five teachers were interviewed individually. All five also responded to a questionnaire. This third phase was considered a way of comparing findings about the three phases of data collection. It was realized that initial findings from the first and second phases of investigation were pointing to a definite identical pattern of pedagogical behaviour of almost all teachers whose grammar lessons were observed and others who were interviewed about explicit grammar instruction.

It became pertinent to look for other sources for data since two of the schools in phases one and two of the data collection exercise were church-affiliated. It was reasoned that the initial findings were similar probably because of the influence of shared religious beliefs or practices. At this third phase of data collection, government and language schools were seen as credible alternatives. The language school was considered appropriate because there are many such schools located in different places in Thailand rendering, among other roles, English-language training services to different people. Leaving out data from this sector in the process of evaluating teachers' method of implementing explicit grammatical instruction may therefore leave an obvious gap in the investigations and findings.

Easy access to a medium-sized language school's grammar lesson was secured for lesson observation purposes, through an acquaintance. Prior to securing access to this language school managed by Westerners and situated near a popular and large private school in Chiang Mai, audience had been sought with directors of two other language schools, seeking to know how English pedagogy was organized in the schools. It was discovered that grammar was not taught explicitly nor was it recognized in the schools' syllabi. According to a teacher in one of the language schools who could not honour the request for a lesson observation, most students in various language schools are students from regular public and private schools who need augmentation of 'conversation' opportunities with native speakers as a way of practising their spoken English. In his view, parents who send their children to such language schools are more after conversational English than anything else.

It was gathered from another source that since native English speakers seldom learned or taught grammar (confirmed by my experience while observing native English-teachers' classes in other secondary schools), it was difficult for language schools, run mostly by Westerners to make grammar count in the schools' scheme of things. In the grammar class of the language school, there were 11 students who had been categorized by the school as being between intermediate and advanced levels of English. Most of them studying at this level were mature men and women whose ages ranged between 20 and 36. Three of the seven students in the advanced class were TOEFL (Test-of-English-as-a-Foreign-Language) examination candidates.

Government schools were also considered for the third phase of data collection since it is assumed that a good percentage of students in Thailand attend these schools. Official letters were taken from my university department and delivered to the directors of the government schools. One teacher's grammar lesson was observed in each of both schools while five teachers were interviewed, altogether in the two government schools. All five teachers responded to a questionnaire. In these schools, the average number of students per class was 45. The class-room lessons observed were of similar grade levels to the ones in the previous two phases: Basics 10 and 11. Both native and non-native English teachers teach English in both schools.

Table 2. Codes in data-collection investigation

Stages of Investigation	Interpretation of codes	codes	Teacher	School
Phase 1	Phase One Class Lesson Observation (for four teachers)	POCLO 1-4	1, 2, 3, 4	1 & 2
	Teacher Interview One	T I 1	1	1
	Teacher Interview Two	T I 2	2	2
Phase 2	Class Lesson Observation One	CLO 1	5	1
	Post Observation Interview One	POI 1	5	1
	Class Lesson Observation Two	CLO 2	6	2
	Post Observation Interview Two	POI 2	6	2
Phase 3	Class Lesson Observation Three	CLO 3	7	3
	Post Observation Interview Three	POI 3	7	3
	Class Lesson Observation Four	CLO 4	8	4
	Post Observation Interview Four	POI 4	8	4
	Class Lesson Observation Five	CLO 5	9	5
	Post Observation Interview Five	POI 5	9	5

3.3.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter contains the method adopted in the execution of this study. It is concerned with the research design and methods employed in bringing off the study which had twenty-three teacher-participants in all. Nine class-room grammar lessons were observed in six different schools---three private schools, two government schools and one language school. A rationale has been provided for the design and the three-phase investigation process. This chapter contains the planning of the study which started off in phase one with 13 teachers. Participants were narrowed down to five in each of phases two and three. In all, data from these twenty three teachers have been adjudged useful for the purpose of analysis. The progression of investigations is summarised with figure 3 below:

First Phase of investigations: 13 Teachers

- Classroom Lesson Observation of Four teachers (*from 2 private schools*)
- Post Observation Interviews for Two teachers (*from same 2 private schools*)
- Teacher Interviews for all 13 Teachers (observed or not---*from 3 schools*)
- Questionnaire answered by all Thirteen Teachers (observed or not; *3 schools*)

Second Phase of Investigations: 5 Teachers

- Classroom Lesson Observation of Two teachers (*from 2 private schools*)
- Post Observation Interviews for Two teachers (*from same 2 private schools*)
- Interviews for Three additional Teachers(*from same 2 private schools*)
- Questionnaire answered by all Five Teachers (observed and not observed)

Third Phase of Investigations: 5 Teachers

- Classroom Lesson Observation of Three teachers (*2 from 2 govt. schools, 1 from a language school*)
- Post Observation Interviews for the Three teachers (*as above*)
- Interviews for Two additional Teachers (*not observed in 2 govt. schools*)
- Questionnaire answered by all Five Teachers (*observed and not observed*)

Figure 3. The Progression of Investigations.