

Beyond the Story: A Comparative Study of TPRS Trained and Non-Trained EFL Teachers' Perceptions, Practices and Challenges in Thailand

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Abstract—This study investigates foreign EFL teachers' perceptions, instructional practices, and challenges in implementing Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) in Thailand, where communicative language learning is increasingly prioritized. Utilizing a mixed-methods design, the research compares teachers who have received formal TPRS training with those without such training. Findings indicate that both groups recognize the method's benefits for vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and student engagement but perceive its impact on grammar, pronunciation, and speaking fluency as more limited. Trained teachers reported greater confidence in applying TPRS, attributing this to structured professional development, whereas untrained teachers relied on self-guided adaptation and frequently reported uncertainty. Common challenges, including large class sizes, student reluctance to participate, and time constraints, were expressed by both groups; however, trained teachers employed more systematic strategies to address these issues. While both groups underscored the value of formal TPRS training, untrained teachers cited limited access to such programs. These findings underscore the urgent need for accessible, contextually responsive training to support foreign EFL teachers within communicative learning environments. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on optimizing TPRS for EFL instruction and recommends future research into the long-term effects of training on teacher efficacy and student outcomes in non-English-speaking contexts.

Index Terms—TPRS, communicative language teaching, teacher perceptions, professional development

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has increasingly focused on innovative methodologies that emphasize communicative competence and student engagement. Among these, Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling (TPRS) has emerged as a promising approach that integrates storytelling, comprehensible input, and physical-response techniques to create an immersive, low-stress learning environment (Ray & Seely, 2016; Lichtman, 2018). However, despite its theoretical soundness and documented benefits, effective implementation of TPRS often depends on educators' understanding of and training in the methodology. This raises important questions about the perceptions and classroom applications of TPRS among both trained and untrained EFL teachers, particularly in contexts where traditional teaching methods dominate.

In Thailand, English education is a national priority due to the persistent annual decline in language proficiency (Bucol & Sangkawong, 2025). Nevertheless, the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches, such as TPRS, has progressed slowly, often hindered by cultural, institutional, and pedagogical challenges (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Foley, 2005; Taladngoen, 2019). Although the Thai government has launched significant initiatives aimed at improving English proficiency through curriculum reforms and teacher-training programs, many classrooms still rely on grammar-translation and rote-learning methods, which fall short in preparing students for effective real-world communication (Brown, 2007). Recently, however, pedagogical trends have begun to shift with the Thai Ministry of Education's directive to integrate CLT into teaching curricula (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2025). Within this context, TPRS offers a viable alternative, emphasizing comprehension, interaction, and enjoyment in the language-acquisition process. However, the extent to which TPRS has been effectively integrated into EFL classrooms in Thailand remains underexplored, particularly from the perspective of foreign educators who bring diverse pedagogical experiences and cultural insights to the Thai educational landscape.

Although existing research has highlighted the benefits of TPRS on learner outcomes (Lichtman, 2018; Watson, 2009),

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studies investigating the influence of teacher training on classroom practices, particularly in non-Western contexts such as Thailand, remain notably scarce. The significance of this oversight cannot be overstated, as teacher training is widely recognized as a critical factor in the effective implementation of innovative methodologies (Shrum & Glisan, 2015). Furthermore, the unique challenges faced by foreign educators in Thailand, such as navigating cultural differences and adapting to local curricula, add an additional layer of complexity, underscoring the need for research specifically tailored to this context.

By focusing on foreign teachers in Thailand, this study aims to provide insights into the cultural and pedagogical adaptation of TPRS, as well as the role of training in shaping teachers' instructional decisions. This research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on teacher professional development and the international relevance of communicative language teaching methodologies within culturally diverse environments.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *TPRS Theoretical Foundations and Language Acquisition*

TPRS is an innovative language teaching approach developed and refined in its current form by Ray and Seely (2016), whose effectiveness has been further examined in several classroom studies (Alley & Overfield, 2008; Liu, 2011). It has proven successful in teaching foreign languages across diverse age groups and proficiency levels (Braunstein, 2006; Kara & Eveyik-Aydın, 2019; Spangler, 2009). Grounded in Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (IH) and Natural Language Acquisition (NLA) theory (Krashen, 1982, 1992, 2003), Asher's (1969) Total Physical Response (TPR), and Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, TPRS incorporates a storytelling component to foster social engagement and create a comprehensible, input-rich environment for language learners (Ray & Seely, 2016).

According to Krashen (1982), language acquisition occurs naturally when learners receive input that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level ($i+1$). In this regard, TPRS aligns with this theoretical framework by employing repetitive, engaging, and contextually rich narratives to provide learners with sufficient comprehensible input (Krashen & Mason, 2020; Li, 2018; Morgan & Rinvoluceri, 1983). TPRS also integrates the foundational principles of TPR as articulated by Asher (1969), emphasizing the strong connection between verbal expression and physical action in language instruction (Shi, 2018). Asher (1969) argued that pairing gestures and actions in storytelling substantially enhances memory retention and learner engagement. The findings of Mason and Krashen (2004) support this claim, showing that students engaged with TPRS demonstrate greater retention and motivation compared to peers taught through conventional methods. Moreover, the storytelling component fosters interaction and scaffolding that help learners progress within their Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Although TPRS is supported by substantial theoretical underpinnings, researchers have expressed concerns about its de-emphasis on explicit grammar instruction, which has long been considered a crucial component in language acquisition. Critics of the methodology often reference the study of Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), which highlights the importance of integrating grammatical structures with contextual rules to foster strong interactional competence. However, proponents contend that TPRS's focus on meaningful communication and systematic repetition naturally foster grammatical accuracy through organic acquisition processes (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Meanwhile, Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis provides a more nuanced perspective, suggesting that while comprehensible input is essential, productive language use serves equally important functions in second language development, thereby offering a potential reconciliation between the contrasting perspectives on TPRS.

B. *Teacher Training and TPRS Implementation*

The successful implementation of TPRS largely depends on teachers' understanding and training in the methodology (Shrum & Glisan, 2015). Formal training equips educators with the knowledge and skills needed to design engaging, linguistically appropriate stories and to manage interactive classrooms effectively (Ray & Seely, 2016). Research by Lichtman (2018) highlights that structured professional development not only enhances teachers' confidence but also strengthens their ability to employ advanced TPRS techniques, such as dramatization and student-centered storytelling. In contrast, teachers without formal training often lack both the theoretical foundation and the practical strategies required for consistent implementation, resulting in variable learning outcomes (Watson, 2009). Guskey (2002) and Kennedy (2016) emphasize the broader significance of professional development in fostering teacher self-efficacy, which is essential for adopting innovative pedagogies like TPRS. Within the context of EFL teaching, Freeman and Johnson (1998) further argue that teacher training must integrate theoretical knowledge with practical, context-specific strategies to ensure effective classroom application. Nonetheless, access to TPRS-specific training remains limited, particularly in non-Western contexts, creating a significant barrier to its widespread adoption (Alley & Overfield, 2008).

C. *Challenges in TPRS in EFL Context*

Despite its numerous advantages, the implementation of TPRS in EFL classrooms presents several challenges. One major impediment is the considerable time and effort required to design and adapt stories that are both engaging and linguistically appropriate for learners. Teachers often struggle to balance the need for repetitive input with the imperative of sustaining student interest (Shrum & Glisan, 2015). This difficulty is particularly expressed among untrained teachers, who frequently lack the skills and confidence necessary to improvise effectively.

Another prevalent challenge in educational settings is classroom management. Because TPRS places significant emphasis on student engagement and interaction, many teachers encounter difficulties in effectively managing large or heterogeneous classes. Moreover, teachers frequently find it challenging to strike a balance between fostering participation and maintaining order, particularly in contexts where learners display diverse proficiency levels and varying degrees of confidence (Lichtman, 2018). A further obstacle to effective implementation is the lack of standardized materials and curricula for TPRS. While the method's flexibility is one of its strengths, it also requires teachers to develop their own resources, a process that can be both time-consuming and overwhelming, especially for those without formal training (Ray & Seely, 2016).

Despite the growing body of literature examining TPRS, two critical research gaps remain particularly relevant to the Thai EFL context. First, although numerous studies have documented the method's impact on learner outcomes (Watson, 2009; Lichtman, 2018), research remains limited in examining foreign teachers' perspectives and experiences in implementing TPRS in EFL settings. This gap is especially significant in Thailand's educational landscape, where English foreign teachers work within an educational system that traditionally relies on conventional methodologies. Investigating the cultural and pedagogical adaptation of communicative approaches like TPRS could provide valuable insights for the Thai context.

Second, there is limited comparative research on the differences between trained and untrained TPRS practitioners, particularly among foreign language teachers. Although scholars such as Shrum and Glisan (2015) have advocated for enhanced training initiatives in language teaching, few studies have systematically examined how varying levels of TPRS training influence foreign teachers' pedagogical decision-making and classroom practices. Given the scarcity of research on TPRS implementation by EFL teachers in Thailand, particularly concerning the role of teacher training and its impact on classroom practices, there is a clear need to investigate how these educators perceive and apply this method. In this context, the present study seeks to address these gaps through the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What are the perceived effects of TPRS on student engagement and language development from the perspective of TPRS trained and non-trained EFL teachers in Thailand?

RQ2. How do TPRS-trained and non-trained EFL teachers differ in their confidence and classroom implementation of TPRS techniques?

RQ3. What challenges do EFL teachers in Thailand encounter when using TPRS, and how do these challenges vary between teachers with and without formal TPRS training?

RQ4. How do trained and non-trained EFL teachers in Thailand perceive the role of formal TPRS training for effective implementation of the method?

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative components to provide a comprehensive understanding of TPRS implementation among EFL teachers in Thailand. The quantitative component involved an online survey designed to collect numerical data on teachers' use of TPRS, their perceived effectiveness of the method, the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ in its implementation. In the absence of a pre-existing survey instrument that fully aligned with the objectives of this study, a customized survey was developed to compare the use of TPRS by trained and untrained teachers. The design of the survey items was guided by established principles of survey development (Dillman, 2011; Fowler, 2014) and grounded in the core principles of TPRS as outlined by Ray and Seely (2016). To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the survey underwent a systematic development process, including a review of relevant literature, pilot testing with ten (10) EFL teachers, and refinement of certain questions based on feedback from pilot respondents (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2022; Taherdoost, 2016). This process ensured that the survey was both comprehensive and contextually tailored to TPRS implementation, thereby enabling the collection of meaningful and relevant data.

Complementing the quantitative data, the qualitative component incorporated open-ended questions within the same Google Forms survey instrument. These questions were designed to elicit deeper insights into teachers' experiences, motivations, and attitudes toward TPRS. The participants were able to share personal narratives, challenges, and successes in using TPRS, providing a richer understanding of the contextual factors influencing its implementation. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and emergent themes across teachers' responses, thereby enriching and contextualizing the numerical findings from the survey.

This study adhered to established ethical standards, with all procedures reviewed and approved by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure compliance and safeguard participants' rights and well-being.

A. Participants of the Study

This study involved EFL teachers currently employed in Thailand. Participants were recruited through a Facebook group specifically dedicated to EFL teachers, resulting in a total of 61 responses. However, only fifty-six (N = 56) respondents completed the survey. The sample included individuals from diverse nationalities and academic backgrounds, ranging from bachelor's to doctoral degrees. Participants were teaching across various educational levels, including primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions. Of the 56 respondents, 24 (42.9%) reported having received some level of

formal training in TPRS, while 32 (57.1%) indicated no prior training in the method. A detailed breakdown of participant demographics is provided in Table 1.

TABLE 1
PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

| Category | Trained Teachers | Non-Trained Teachers | Totals |
|-----------------------|------------------|----------------------|--------|
| <i>Country</i> | | | |
| Cameroon | | 1 | 1 |
| China | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Ghana | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| India | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Indonesia | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Iran | | 1 | 1 |
| Kenya | | 1 | 1 |
| Myanmar | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| Pakistan | 1 | | 1 |
| Philippines | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| South Africa | 4 | 1 | 5 |
| Sri Lanka | | 1 | 1 |
| Turkey | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| United Kingdom | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| USA | 6 | 1 | 7 |
| Vietnam | | 1 | 1 |
| <i>Degree</i> | | | |
| Bachelor | 6 | 16 | 22 |
| Master | 11 | 14 | 25 |
| Doctor | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| <i>Teaching Level</i> | | | |
| Primary | 4 | 13 | 17 |
| Secondary | 7 | 7 | 14 |
| Tertiary | 13 | 12 | 25 |

B. Data Collection

Data for this study were collected using a convenience sampling strategy, targeting foreign language teachers in Thailand who were available during the summer break at the end of the 2024 academic year. This timeframe was strategically chosen to maximize participation, as teachers were more likely to have time to engage with the survey. The instrument was an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms and distributed through social media platforms, particularly groups dedicated to foreign teachers working in Thailand.

The survey captured demographic information, including participants' educational qualifications, teaching levels, nationalities, and TPRS training status. In addition, it collected data on the frequency of TPRS use, teachers' confidence in its implementation, and the specific techniques most commonly employed by participants. This foundational information provided essential context for understanding the respondents' diverse backgrounds and their familiarity with TPRS. To evaluate the perceived effects of TPRS, the survey included Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These items were designed to assess teachers' perceptions of TPRS's impact on key aspects of student language learning, including engagement, vocabulary retention, listening comprehension, pronunciation, grammar acquisition, and fluency development. Additionally, respondents rated their confidence in implementing the TPRS approach on a scale from 1 (Not Confident) to 5 (Extremely Confident). Data on teachers' instructional techniques were collected using a check-all-that-apply (CATA) question format, with an "Other" option allowing respondents to indicate any additional methods they currently employ in their classrooms. The quantitative data from these survey responses were cleaned, coded, and systematically organized, then analyzed using SPSS version 29 to ensure a reliable examination of the results.

Following this, the survey also explored participants' perceptions, challenges, and practices related to the TPRS approach. This was achieved through open-ended questions designed to capture qualitative insights into teachers' personal experiences with TPRS, their motivations for adopting the method, and their perspectives on the importance of formal training for its effective implementation.

Participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's purpose, including details about informed consent, confidentiality, and their right to withdraw at any point. They were also assured that their input would remain anonymized and used exclusively for research purposes.

C. Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis procedures were structured to address the study's research questions through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, consistent with its exploratory mixed-methods design. Descriptive statistics and

inferential analyses addressed RQ1 and RQ2, examining perceived effectiveness and confidence differences, while thematic analysis explored challenges and training perceptions for RQ3 and RQ4.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 29. Prior to statistical testing, responses were cleaned, coded, and examined for missing values to ensure accuracy and integrity. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize perceptions of TPRS effectiveness across language skill areas. To assess differences between trained and untrained teachers, inferential statistical tests were applied, including independent samples t-tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for normally distributed data. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were assessed using Shapiro-Wilk tests and Levene's test, respectively, while non-parametric alternatives, such as the Mann-Whitney U test, were employed to ensure a robust analysis of differences between trained and untrained teachers. Additionally, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between teachers' confidence and their motivation to use TPRS.

For the qualitative component, thematic analysis was conducted following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involved familiarization with the data, initial coding, searching for and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a narrative synthesis. The open-ended responses were analyzed using the Taguette tool to facilitate systematic coding and theme organization. This procedure enabled efficient identification and comparison of recurrent patterns across participants' responses while supporting transparency and rigor in coding decisions. A single coder conducted the initial coding and theme development using Taguette, with iterative reviews to ensure consistency. To enhance rigor, a subset of responses was cross-checked by a second coder, achieving an inter-coder reliability of 85% agreement, which supported the reliability of the identified themes. To enable comparative analysis between cohorts, participant responses were categorized using a structured coding system, in which teachers with formal TPRS training were coded as "1" and those without as "0." This coding schema allowed cross-cohort analysis without compromising participant anonymity. The final themes were interpreted in relation to the study's research objectives and triangulated with quantitative findings to enhance validity and provide a comprehensive understanding of the results.

IV. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The comparative analysis of the data highlighted both the similarities and differences between EFL teachers who had received formal TPRS training and those who had not. Combined perceptions of effectiveness from both groups acknowledged the positive impact of TPRS on students' language skills, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
MEAN PERCEPTIONS OF TPRS EFFECTIVENESS ACROSS LANGUAGE SKILLS (N = 56)

| | N Statistic | Range Statistic | Minimum Statistic | Maximum Statistic | Sum Statistic | Mean Statistic | Std. Deviation Statistic |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Vocabulary | 56 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 215 | 3.84 | .930 |
| Listening | 56 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 213 | 3.80 | .999 |
| Fluency | 56 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 207 | 3.70 | 1.143 |
| Pronunciation | 56 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 206 | 3.68 | .917 |
| Grammar | 56 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 186 | 3.32 | .993 |
| Engagement | 56 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 213 | 3.80 | .883 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 56 | | | | | | |

The descriptive findings suggest that, among the various language skills assessed, vocabulary acquisition emerged as the skill with the highest perceived improvement, with a mean score of 3.84 ($SD = 0.930$). This finding aligns with earlier research that underscores the role of contextualized, repetitive exposure in vocabulary retention. The relatively low standard deviation indicates a consistent perception among respondents, reflecting broad agreement on the effectiveness of TPRS in vocabulary development.

Similarly, listening comprehension and student engagement were rated highly, each receiving a mean score of 3.80 ($SD = 0.999$ and $SD = 0.883$, respectively). These results highlight TPRS's strength in fostering active participation and sustained attention in the classroom. The relatively lower standard deviation for engagement, compared to listening comprehension, further indicates that teachers consistently recognized the method's capacity to maintain student interest, a key factor in second language acquisition.

The perceived effectiveness of TPRS in developing speaking fluency and pronunciation was slightly lower, with mean scores of 3.70 ($SD = 1.143$) and 3.68 ($SD = 0.917$), respectively. While these results indicate that TPRS contributes to spoken language development, the relatively high standard deviation for fluency suggests greater variation in teacher perceptions compared to other skills. In contrast, grammar development was perceived as the least improved area, receiving the lowest mean score of 3.32 ($SD = 0.993$). This finding aligns with critiques of TPRS that emphasize its implicit approach to grammar instruction. Unlike traditional methods that explicitly teach grammatical rules, TPRS relies on repeated exposure to correct language structures embedded within narrative contexts.

Moreover, a more nuanced examination of the differentiated results revealed a slight variance in the perceived effectiveness between the two groups. The total mean score for trained teachers was 3.75, compared to 3.65 for untrained teachers. This modest difference suggests that both groups generally recognized the effectiveness of the approach, with

trained teachers expressing a slightly more favorable perception. However, the difference was not substantial enough to reach statistical significance in the comparison of means.

A particularly noteworthy finding was the significant difference in teachers' confidence levels regarding the implementation of TPRS. Trained teachers reported higher confidence ($M = 3.79$) compared to their untrained counterparts ($M = 2.94$), as illustrated in Figure 1. This result underscores the impact of formal training on teachers' perceived readiness to apply the approach in classroom settings.



Figure 1. Teachers' Confidence in TPRS Implementation by Training Status

This finding was statistically supported by the results of the Mann–Whitney U test and one-way ANOVA, both of which yielded p-values below 0.001 ($p < 0.001$). These results indicate a statistically significant difference between the two groups and suggest that training may play a critical role in enhancing teachers' self-efficacy in implementing TPRS. In addition, the study examined the relationship between teachers' confidence and motivation to use TPRS in the classroom. A correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and significance of this relationship. The results revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between confidence and motivation, with a p-value below 0.001 ($p < 0.001$), as shown in Table 3. This high level of significance suggests that teachers who report greater confidence in their ability to effectively utilize TPRS are also more likely to express greater motivation to incorporate the method into their instructional practices. These findings affirm the importance of fostering teacher confidence as a means of enhancing motivation and, by extension, promoting the successful implementation of TPRS in language classrooms.

The analysis of the multiple-response survey items revealed several significant patterns, highlighting the impact of specialized training on instructional methodology, as detailed in Figure 2. The data show that trained TPRS teachers consistently implement a broader range of techniques at higher rates than their untrained counterparts across nearly all measured categories. Core TPRS techniques, such as student interaction/role-playing, picture storytelling, and story listening were widely adopted by both groups, with these techniques achieving the highest implementation percentages. The most pronounced disparities emerged in techniques requiring advanced TPRS knowledge, where trained teachers demonstrated notably higher utilization of cognitively demanding approaches, such as circulating meaning before storytelling, involving students in story creation, and using theme words—suggesting a deeper understanding of TPRS pedagogical principles. Particularly noteworthy is the exclusive use of more specialized techniques, such as dramatization, summarizing, story prediction, and thinking aloud by trained teachers, which non-trained teachers did not independently employ. These findings indicate that comprehensive TPRS training expands teachers' instructional repertoires beyond basic reading and storytelling elements to include more sophisticated learning strategies.

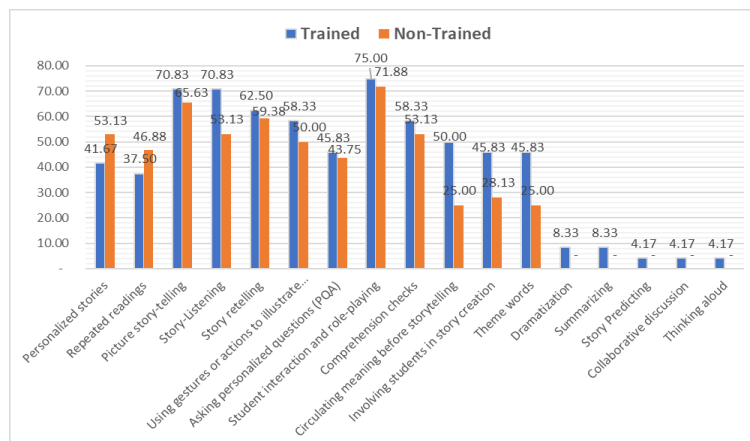


Figure 2. Implementation of TPRS Techniques by Training Status

The analysis of open-ended responses revealed seven key themes regarding the challenges faced by trained and untrained teachers in implementing TPRS, as detailed in Table 3. However, the nature and intensity of these challenges differed significantly. Trained teachers reported that students gradually adjusted to TPRS despite initial resistance, although maintaining long-term engagement remained difficult. In contrast, untrained teachers encountered more pronounced resistance, with students struggling to participate. Both groups identified large class sizes as challenging, but untrained teachers reported greater difficulty to keep all students engaged. Time constraints were a shared concern, although untrained teachers emphasized this more strongly, citing insufficient class time as a significant challenge. Furthermore, both groups noted difficulties with low-proficiency students, but trained teachers employed more scaffolding strategies. Institutional barriers were also identified, such as misalignment with assessments; however, untrained teachers appeared less equipped to advocate the use of TPRS. Finally, while trained teachers expressed concerns about students' over-reliance on mobile devices during lessons, untrained teachers had encountered more fundamental challenges, including a lack of basic teaching resources, appropriate reading materials, and access to technology.

TABLE 3
CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS WHILE IMPLEMENTING TPRS

| Category of Challenges | Trained EFL Teachers | Non-Trained EFL Teachers |
|--|--|--|
| Student Engagement | Some students still resist at first but gradually adjust. Keeping stories engaging long-term is a challenge. | Students resist TPRS at first, struggle with participation, and some find it childish. |
| Classroom Management | Large class sizes make it difficult to balance comprehension and interaction. | Hard to keep all students engaged, especially in large classes. |
| Time Constraints | Managing time effectively to balance storytelling with other curriculum requirements. | Not enough class time to implement TPRS effectively. |
| Adapting Stories & Materials | Keeping stories fresh and relevant, with cultural appropriateness ensuring students connect with them. | Struggle to find appropriate stories that are meaningful for different levels. |
| Language Proficiency | Students with lower proficiency levels still face comprehension difficulties. | Low-level students struggle to understand stories. |
| Institutional Barriers | Formal assessment is difficult since TPRS focuses on input and interaction. Not integrated in curriculum | Traditional assessment and standardized testing limit TPRS use. No alignment in the curriculum |
| Technological & Resource Issues | Dependency on mobile phones and iPads for translation hinders learning. | Lack of reading materials and technology for implementation. |

Furthermore, the survey results revealed both similarities and differences between the classroom experiences of TPRS-trained and untrained teachers, as summarized in Table 4. Both groups expressed positive perceptions of TPRS, acknowledging its effectiveness in enhancing student engagement, confidence, and language acquisition. Teachers from both groups were similarly motivated by student-centered goals, such as fostering language proficiency, alongside personal interests in storytelling and creativity. Both groups also encountered common challenges, including student resistance, time constraints, and the management of diverse classrooms. These challenges are particularly pronounced in Thai educational settings, where mixed proficiency levels and large class sizes are prevalent.

However, significant differences emerged in teachers' pathways of learning, implementation practices, and confidence in applying TPRS. Untrained teachers primarily relied on informal channels, such as self-directed learning, childhood experiences, or mentorship, whereas trained teachers benefited from structured exposure through formal education or professional development. This structured training enabled teachers to implement TPRS more systematically and reflectively, demonstrating greater methodological consistency in their practice. In contrast, untrained teachers, while resourceful and creative, often implemented TPRS through adaptation and experimentation. Another key difference was confidence in implementation. Untrained teachers exhibited mixed confidence levels, with some feeling assured due to experience or self-directed learning, whereas teachers with formal training and hands-on practice reported consistently high levels of confidence.

TABLE 4
COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCES OF TPRS-TRAINED AND UNTRAINED TEACHERS IN THAI CLASSROOMS

| Responses | Trained EFL Teachers | Non-Trained EFL Teachers |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Pathways of learning | Learned through formal training (university courses, professional development, workshops, TEFL certification). Have a structured, research-based understanding of TPRS principles. | Discovered informally (self-study, online resources, personal teaching experiences, trial and error, learned from colleagues). Use TPRS elements intuitively without recognizing it as a formal method. |
| Perceived effectiveness | View TPRS as highly effective for engagement, comprehension, and fluency. Students engage well with structured storytelling, leading to better retention and comprehension. | View TPRS positively for improving student confidence and engagement. Students respond positively, but effectiveness varies based on how TPRS is applied. |
| Motivation to use | Foster language acquisition, confidence, and fluency. Some use TPRS because it aligns with curriculum goals or school policies. | Improve student engagement, confidence, and fluency. Many use TPRS because it aligns with curriculum goals or school policies. |
| Self-Reported Confidence | High confidence levels due to formal training and structured implementation. Confidence is reinforced by formal training, hands-on practice, and mentorship. | Mixed confidence levels; some feel confident due to experience, while others feel uncertain without training. Confidence is influenced by experience, student feedback, and self-directed learning. |
| Coping with Challenges | Face challenges such as student resistance, time constraints, and managing large and diverse classrooms but are better equipped to navigate them due to formal training. | Face similar challenges with trained teachers but unstructured in the approach to maintain classroom dynamics |
| Importance of Training | Emphasize the value of formal training for confidence and effectiveness. | Express strong interest in formal training to enhance understanding and implementation. |

V. DISCUSSION

This research examined foreign EFL teachers' perceptions, practices, and challenges in implementing TPRS in Thailand, with particular attention to the role of formal training. The findings indicated that both trained and untrained teachers perceived TPRS positively, particularly in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and student engagement. These results align with prior research emphasizing the value of contextualized, comprehensible input in language development (Krashen & Mason, 2020; Lichtman, 2018; Nation, 2022).

Both trained and untrained teachers highlighted improved student engagement and vocabulary retention—findings consistent with research identifying storytelling as a motivational and memory-enhancing instructional tool (Braunstein, 2006; Ray & Seely, 2016). The structured repetition and contextual use of language inherent in TPRS support Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis and Asher's (1969) Total Physical Response model, both of which advocate a meaning-driven, low-anxiety environment for language acquisition. However, the limited perceived improvement in grammar acquisition ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.993$) aligned with critiques of TPRS's implicit approach, as noted by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), who argued that students required explicit instruction to develop strong interactional competence. Similarly, Swain's (1985) Output Hypothesis underscores the role of productive language use in refining grammatical accuracy, suggesting that TPRS's emphasis on comprehensible input may not sufficiently address form-focused needs. To address this gap, integrating TPRS with explicit grammar instruction, as proposed by Lightbown and Spada (2013), could enhance its effectiveness. Additionally, combining TPRS with Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as suggested by Long (2015), may improve form-focused outcomes in Thai EFL classrooms. For instance, pairing TPRS's engaging narratives with targeted grammar exercises, such as structured output tasks following storytelling, can provide learners with opportunities to consciously apply grammatical rules within meaningful contexts. This hybrid approach may reconcile TPRS's strengths in fostering engagement and vocabulary retention with the need for explicit form-focused instruction, particularly in Thailand's EFL classrooms, where students often require structured guidance to meet curriculum expectations.

The results reinforce the need for a complementary approach that balances implicit input with opportunities for structured output, as advocated by Swain (2005) and VanPatten and Williams (2015). Exploring hybrid models that integrate TPRS with targeted grammar and pronunciation activities may help address its limitations in form-focused instruction, potentially improving student outcomes in curriculum-driven settings. These findings also highlight gaps in the literature, particularly the need to investigate how TPRS can incorporate explicit instruction to support form-focused learning, as proposed by DeKeyser (1994) and Ellis (2017). This underscores the importance of critically evaluating the

adaptability of TPRS across diverse EFL contexts, especially where curricular demands necessitate a balance between communicative fluency and linguistic accuracy.

A key contribution of this study is its illumination of how formal TPRS training influences teacher confidence and instructional strategies. Trained teachers consistently demonstrated higher confidence and a broader repertoire of TPRS techniques, including advanced strategies such as dramatization, theme words, and predictive questioning. These findings align with prior research emphasizing the value of structured professional development in shaping effective instructional practices (Guskey, 2002; Kennedy, 2016). The statistically significant differences in confidence levels between trained and untrained teachers suggest that training supports not only knowledge acquisition but also fosters self-efficacy—a vital factor in sustaining instructional innovation (Hassanien et al., 2022; Oddone, 2016; Richards & Farrell, 2005). This observation further supports Freeman and Johnson's (1998) assertion that teacher education must integrate theory, practice, and contextual understanding.

While challenges such as large class sizes, time constraints, and mixed proficiency levels were commonly reported, trained teachers demonstrated greater adaptability by implementing scaffolding strategies and maintaining student focus. In contrast, untrained teachers more frequently expressed frustration with student resistance and limited access to instructional materials. These findings support earlier research on the contextual challenges of applying communicative methods in EFL settings, particularly within Asian contexts (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Nunan, 2003). The persistence of structural barriers—such as curriculum misalignment and assessment-driven constraints also echoes Borg's (2018) concerns regarding the limited institutional support for innovative pedagogies.

The stark contrast in implementation strategies and self-reported confidence indicates the value of context-sensitive professional development. While untrained teachers expressed a willingness to adopt TPRS, they often lacked theoretical grounding and access to formal training. This finding supports Shrum and Glisan's (2015) argument that exposure alone is insufficient; structured guidance and mentorship are essential. Consistent with Burns and Richards (2009), this study suggests that teacher training must not only develop technical skills but also prepare educators to navigate the complexities of local educational contexts. Providing access to scalable, practice-oriented TPRS workshops may help address these training gaps and support Thailand's recent shift toward communicative approaches (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2025). By comparing trained and untrained teachers within Thailand's EFL context, this study fills a critical gap in TPRS research, offering evidence-based insights for designing context-sensitive training programs and advancing global understanding of communicative pedagogies in non-Western settings.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions and implementation of TPRS among trained and untrained foreign EFL teachers in Thailand, emphasizing the role of formal training in enhancing teacher confidence and pedagogical effectiveness. While both groups recognized TPRS as an effective method for fostering student engagement and language acquisition, trained teachers reported higher confidence and employed more structured, research-informed strategies. These findings align with previous studies highlighting the benefits of professional training in facilitating effective language instruction (Lichtman, 2018; Krashen & Mason, 2020).

Importantly, these results should be interpreted within the evolving context of Thailand's English language education, which is increasingly oriented toward communicative language teaching. This approach prioritizes meaningful interaction and fluency development, positioning TPRS as a potentially valuable pedagogical tool. However, as the study indicates, successful implementation depends on teachers' training and familiarity with its principles. Expanding professional development opportunities could help bridge the gap between TPRS and communicative language teaching, enabling educators to integrate storytelling-based methods more effectively within Thailand's broader curricular objectives.

Despite its contributions, this study has certain limitations. The sample size was modest, and while the findings offer valuable insights, they cannot be generalized to all foreign EFL teachers in Thailand. Additionally, reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, as teachers' perceptions do not always align with actual classroom practices. The absence of direct assessments of student learning outcomes further limits the ability to measure the impact of TPRS beyond teacher-reported effectiveness. Future research should explore hybrid models that combine TPRS with structured grammar and pronunciation activities, conduct longitudinal studies on the effects of training, and perform comparative analyses across EFL contexts to support the broader integration of TPRS into global language education.

Although this study focuses on EFL teachers in Thailand, its implications extend to broader educational contexts in which language instructors face similar challenges in adopting student-centered, input-driven approaches. By aligning professional development initiatives with national and institutional language education policies, stakeholders can promote more effective teaching practices that enhance student engagement and language proficiency. These findings contribute to the global discourse on language pedagogy, offering insights to inform the alignment of teacher training programs, curriculum design, and policy reforms in diverse multilingual and EFL contexts.

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