

# Tertiary English Language Teachers' Perceptions toward Self-reflection and Teacher Collaboration on Learning and Professional Development

การตระหนักรู้ของอาจารย์ผู้สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษในระดับ  
มหาวิทยาลัยที่มีต่อการย้อนคิดไตร่ตรองตนเองและการทำงานร่วมกัน  
ของครูที่มีต่อการเรียนรู้และการพัฒนาวิชาชีพครู

จิตติมา ชoopun<sup>1</sup>

Jittima Choopun

จิรายุ ทัพพุ่ม<sup>2</sup>

Jirayu Tuppoom

## บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้นำเสนอผลการศึกษาเบื้องต้นเกี่ยวกับการตระหนักรู้ถึงแนวคิดและ  
นุ่มนองของอาจารย์ผู้สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษในระดับมหาวิทยาลัยที่มีต่อความสำคัญของ

---

<sup>1</sup>นิสิตระดับปริญญาเอก สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาสาがら คณะศิลปศาสตร์และวิทยาศาสตร์  
มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์ วิทยาเขตกำแพงแสน ประเทศไทย

Ph.D. student, English as an International Language Program, Faculty of Liberal Arts and  
Science, Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

<sup>2</sup>ดร. สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาสาがら คณะศิลปศาสตร์และวิทยาศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยเกษตรศาสตร์  
วิทยาเขตกำแพงแสน ประเทศไทย

Ph.D., English as an International Language Program, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Science,  
Kasetsart University, Kamphaeng Saen Campus, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand

Corresponding Author: E-mail: choopun.j@gmail.com

(Received: 8 February, 2018; Revised: 14 August, 2018; Accepted: 10 January, 2019)

การย้อนคิดไตร่ตรองตนเองและการทำงานร่วมกันของครูต่อการเรียนรู้และพัฒนา วิชาชีพครู ผู้วิจัยเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลโดยการใช้แบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์แบบ กึ่งโครงสร้าง กลุ่มตัวอย่างในการศึกษา คือ อาจารย์ผู้สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษใน มหาวิทยาลัยของรัฐแห่งหนึ่งในภาคใต้ของประเทศไทย จำนวน 32 คน ประจำ ปีการศึกษา 2558 ซึ่งผู้วิจัยใช้วิธีการเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจง การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล จากแบบสอบถามใช้ความถี่และค่าร้อยละ ส่วนการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์ใช้ การวิเคราะห์แก่นสาระ ผลการศึกษาพบว่าอาจารย์ผู้สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษในระดับ มหาวิทยาลัยมีการตระหนักรู้ในเชิงบวกและเห็นคุณค่าของการย้อนคิดไตร่ตรองตนเอง และการทำงานร่วมกันของครู อาจารย์ผู้สอนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษส่วนใหญ่มีการย้อนคิด ไตร่ตรองตนเองทั้งในขณะที่สอนและภายหลังการสอน สำหรับผลการวิเคราะห์การ สัมภาษณ์สามารถจำแนกการตระหนักรู้การย้อนคิดไตร่ตรองตนเองเป็น 4 แก่นสาระ คือ เป็นความต้องการภายในที่จะแก้ปัญหา เป็นการเปลี่ยนพฤติกรรมการสอน เป็นการเพิ่มความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษ และเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการคิดอย่างมี วิจารณญาณและการมีตระรักษ นอกจากนี้การตระหนักรู้เกี่ยวกับการทำงานร่วมกัน ของครู จำแนกเป็น 3 แก่นสาระ คือ เป็นทักษะด้านมนุษยสัมพันธ์ที่มีประสิทธิภาพ เป็นกรอบที่นำไปสู่การพัฒนาตนเอง และเป็นการเพิ่มประสิทธิภาพของการสอน

**คำสำคัญ:** การย้อนคิดไตร่ตรองตนเอง การทำงานร่วมกันของครู อาจารย์ผู้สอนวิชา ภาษาอังกฤษในระดับมหาวิทยาลัย การพัฒนาวิชาชีพครู

## Abstract

This paper reports on preliminary study results of Thai tertiary English language teachers' perceptions toward self-reflection and teacher collaboration on learning and professional development. The data was collected from a questionnaire and semi-structured interview which were responded by 32 Thai tertiary English language teachers who worked in a

government university in the southern region of Thailand in the academic year 2015. The purposive sampling method was used to select the participants. The questionnaire data was analyzed by means of frequencies and percentages. The interview data was analyzed thematically. The findings demonstrated that the participants had positive perceptions and appreciated the value of self-reflection and teacher collaboration on their learning and professional development. They self-reflected on their teachings on a regular basis both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The interview results revealed 4 main themes of perceptions toward self-reflection: internal desire to solve problems, changing teaching practice, enhancing English language competence, and essential part of logical and critical thinking. The study also explored 3 main themes of perceptions toward teacher collaboration: effective interpersonal skills, scaffold to individual development, and strengthen effective teaching.

**Keywords:** self-reflection, teacher collaboration, Thai tertiary English language teachers, teacher professional development

## Introduction

Professional development is considered as a way to maintain and enhance the quality of language teachers. The acquired knowledge does not only bring about improvement in the teaching process but also leads to career growth (Wichadee, 2011). Becoming a successful language teacher requires not only knowledge of the language but also ability to

implement different language teaching methodology, technique, and strategy to improve their students' performance (Puebla, 2011).

To promote on-going professional development, English language teachers can get involved in many professional activities either individually or collaboratively ( Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010) . According to Khan ( 2008) , there is a range of professional learning programs available for teachers like attending pre-service and in-service training, participating in conferences, seminars, workshops, joining teacher associations, reading books and articles, and so on.

Unfortunately, as reported by many researchers, there is a plenty of training courses but they are considered as inefficient, ineffective, and unproductive. According to Gould (2008), Sharma (2016), and Agbayahoun (2016), in-service training simply organized in forms of workshops, short-term courses, or 'sit and get' training that offer teachers new information on specific aspects of their work. They are unable to use what they gained from the training to change way of teaching and increase students' achievement in English language classes.

In Thailand, there is a similar situation. In a study by Noom-ura ( 2013) , and Meng and Tajaroensuk ( 2013) , they discovered that the available training programs for EFL Thai teachers in fundamental education are organized in top-down, one-size-fits-all, and non-collaborative manner. Most of them are not found to be as efficient as what had been planned. They could not directly serve teachers' needs and may not be closely tied to classroom practices.

In this regard, in tertiary education, generally, form of professional development for teachers are administered by a responsible committee or unit. Most of them includes attending seminars and conferences, undertaking professional training programs, presenting research papers, attending higher degree programs, and other forms of development. Thai university EFL teachers appear to rely heavily on their university for teacher professional (Phothongsunan, 2018).

Consequently, a more desirable professional development should move beyond a traditional form of simple in-service workshop (Sharma, 2016). Instead, as proposed by Rout and Behera (2014), the current provision of professional development should be shifted from a behaviouristic to constructivist approach. They suggest many aspects of effective professional development activities, among which are the concept of 1) inquiry, reflection, and experimentation that are teacher-driven and 2) teachers' communities of practice rather than individual teachers working.

Furthermore, specifically Thailand education reform in the future, Thai teachers should have a reflective, collaborative, and problem-solving skill. This policy generates the researcher's interest in designing professional development model for tertiary English language teachers by encouraging them to examine their own teaching, work in group, and construct their own learning through self-reflection and teacher collaboration.

### Purpose of the study

In order to develop the model which responds to teachers' real needs, firstly, the researcher needs to explore teachers' perceptions because

they show how teachers feel and understand self-reflection and teacher collaboration on learning and professional development. Consequently, this study aims at answering the following two research questions:

1. How do Thai tertiary English language teachers perceive self-reflection on learning and professional development?
2. How do they perceive teacher collaboration on learning and professional development?

### Theoretical framework

#### 1. Teacher self-reflection

In English language teaching, teachers need to revisit their teaching experiences in order to increase their awareness of what they actually do to understand, challenge, modify, and develop from it. This awareness can be brought about by self-reflection (Boon, 2011).

##### 1.1 Definition and conception of self-reflection

The interest in reflection in the educational context is originally introduced by John Dewey (1993). He defines self-reflection as an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it. He also asserts that it is important in the change processes of teaching through the reconstruction or reorganization of experiences.

In addition, Dewey distinguishes between ‘routine action’ and ‘reflective action’. A routine action is influenced by tradition, habit and authority, and by institutional definitions and expectations. It is relatively static. Conversely, a reflective action demands to think over

one's action and work on his/her development which implies flexibility analysis and social awareness.

According to Schön (1983), another proponent of reflective practice, he describes self-reflection as central to growth and development for all professions. He introduces and extends the concept of reflection in two forms: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Applied to teaching, reflection-in-action is a while-lesson reflection. Teachers need an ability to interpret, analyse, and find the solutions instantaneously to a particular problem or situation while they are teaching.

Reflection-on-action or post-lesson reflection allows teachers to consider, analyse the actions and events that have taken place in the classroom, and try to find solutions or changing for future teaching. This involves developing a repertoire of experience and forces teachers to think about what they would ideally do if the situation happened again. It is unlike reflection-in-action, which is a solitary activity; reflection-on-action could be normally done collectively.

### 1.2 Methods of collecting data for self-reflection

As recommended by many educators (Yang, 2009; Fatemipour, 2013; Zaare, 2013; Harun & Suravi, 2013; Yaacob, Walters, Ali, Abdullah & Walters, 2014; Rashid Shah & Al Harthi, 2014), teachers who would like to be a reflective practitioner can employ a number of data collection methods as follows:

1.2.1 A classroom observation is one of the most common ways of reflecting on pedagogical practices. It can be employed to understand classroom realities and can help teachers evaluate their

strengths and weaknesses. The observation has typically two goals: appraisal and developmental. In terms of appraisal goal, it is an occasion when an observer is sitting at the back of the classroom observing and recording the teachers' and learners' actions. Developmental observations provide teachers with opportunities to raise their awareness of classroom dynamics, improve their abilities to assess their own teaching approaches, and develop their skills to notice, reflect, and enhance their pedagogic skills. It consists of five stages which lead to developmental observations: 1) in pre-observation stage, the observer and observed collaboratively plan a formal observation session; 2) in while-observation stage, the observer gathers verifiable data; 3) in post- observation scenario, the observer analyses the data to discover strengths and weaknesses; 4) in post-observation meeting, observer and observed collaboratively focus on both the strengths and weaknesses to help teachers develop a future plan of action that will help them grow professionally; and 5) afterwards, both the parties set a time-frame to achieve the set targets.

1.2.2 Using various forms of reflective writing aids to write down thoughts, feelings, experiences, and attitudes related to teachers' works. These reflective writings include dossiers, verbatim transcriptions, logs, diaries, portfolios, and more recently, digital narratives. Teachers can articulate their emerging thoughts and encourage a self-awareness of attitudes and beliefs over time. They are not only useful documents for providing factual information but they can also be further analysed and interpreted. Reflective skills may be developed best when teacher

trainees learn how to write down their thoughts, feelings, experiences and attitudes related to their work as educators. Various forms of reflective writing aids include dossiers, verbatim transcriptions, logs, and diaries

1.2.3 Recording lessons through an audio and video recording is considered as one of the most valuable instruments for self-reflection because it provides an objective and permanent source that various aspects of classroom practice can be viewed repeatedly and observed. Through watching their own video recordings, teachers can review vividly pictures of the whole process of teachings. They can reflect on their weaknesses and assist them to get some inspirations for their improvements.

1.2.4 Teaching blogs are written or recorded accounts of teaching experiences, teachers' routine or conscious actions in the classroom. These actions include conversations with students, critical incidents in a lesson, teachers' beliefs about teaching and events outside the classroom that will influence teachers' views about language teaching and learning. There are two purposes for teaching blogs, one of which is for future reflection and triggering teachers' insights about teaching by writing and the other of which can involve all their students, their colleagues, and other educators in the blogs so as to offer more advice on teaching.

1.3 Collaborative action research involves investigation of practice in teachers' own context. Action research has a specific and immediate outcome. Teacher can engage in action research individually or collaborate in team of teachers. As a result of conducting the projects,

teachers are more reflective and more confident about teaching in general and English language learning context.

As can be seen from the above review of methods of self-reflection, each instrument has advantages and limitations. Some are more useful for exploring specific aspects of teaching than others. It is up to teachers to decide which methods are useful and for what purpose. Each method and approach can be used alone or in combination with them depending on the purpose of investigation.

## 2. Teacher collaboration

As described earlier, teachers who always revisit and analyse their teaching, they will receive information directly from their actual practices ( Soisangwarn & Wongwanich, 2014) . However, Meng & Tajaroensuk ( 2013) suggest that teacher teamwork is better than individual practice in terms of sustainable professional development. As teachers can learn from one another and interact around substantive issues of teaching and learning.

### 2.1 Definition and conception of teacher collaboration

Currently, teachers are both subject and object of learning (Avalos, 2010). They need to cooperate with each other to develop themselves professionally instead of waiting for the educator to bombard them with externally imposed methods and techniques through teacher training courses.

As described by Fullan (2005), teacher collaboration is a form of teachers' working culture where they choose to work together voluntarily to share ideas and teaching resources. They also focus on

mutual observation and reflective enquiry. The common goal of this professional learning community is to make changes in teachers' beliefs, understandings, methodologies, and teaching resources in order to increase the success of their students.

Moreover, Piedrahita (2007) defines teacher collaboration is an educational culture in which teachers, instead of an outside expert, negotiate and decide their own agenda, objectives and the activities to be carried out. It can be seen as an alternative structure to traditional professional development because it provides teachers opportunities to jointly investigate teaching and learning on their own initiative.

It has been documented extensively that Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory is the influential and foundational concept for teacher collaboration. Vygotsky argued that learning stems from the exchange of ideas and interactions. This theory stresses on the importance of collaborative, discussion, and social interaction with more capable peers in creating an environment for learning (Hagan & Richmond, 2012). Within the teacher group, the assistance and guidance for knowledge construction that more competent peer provide for less competent one can be defined metaphorically as scaffolding. It is believed that teachers' development happened through scaffolding. Particularly, less competent teachers require it to extend their Zone of Proximal Development or ZDP. The ZPD refers to the distance between what teachers can do alone and what they can do if they work through the encouragement from more capable colleagues or peer facilitation (Engin, 2014).

## Research methodology

### 1. Participants

The participants were 30 Thai tertiary English language teachers who worked in a government university in the southern region of Thailand in the academic year 2015. The purposive sampling method was used to select participants.

The participants consisted of 23 female and 7 male teachers. Most of them (43.3%) were aged between 31 and 40. 17 participants (90 % ) had a master's degree. 2 participants (6.67 % ) had a bachelor's degree and only 1 participant (3.33 % ) had a doctorate degree as last academic degree completed. They were mixed with regard to years of English language teaching experience. The participants who had 6-10 years of teaching experience were the largest group. 4 of them had the experience of studying in Australia, 1 in India, and 1 in Malaysia.

### 2. Research instruments

#### 2.1 A questionnaire

It was designed to investigate the participants' perceptions toward self-reflection and teacher collaboration. It was divided into 4 parts. Part I was the participants' demographical data. Part II consisted of questions to find out which English language skills were believed by the participants to be the most needed. The participants were asked to evaluate their own knowledge and efficiency of English skills. Part III provided a checklist of perceptions and needs of self-reflection. In this part, the participants were requested to check yes or no to questions about self-reflection. The last part was made up of a checklist of

perceptions and needs of teacher collaboration. The participants were asked to check yes or no to questions about teacher collaboration. The validity and reliability of the questionnaires were checked by 3 experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was 0.90.

## 2.2 A semi-structured interview

It was employed to find more in-depth information about the participants' perceptions toward self-reflection, methods they used for self-reflection, an example of contexts they engaged in a reflective practice, and benefit of self-reflection which would contribute to their learning and professional development. The interview questions were offered and checked by three experts for validity and reliability. The reliability of the interview was 0.87.

## 3. Data collection procedures

Due to the small sample size, the researcher tried to involve all participants as much as possible. Thus, the questionnaires were distributed to individual participants. The total number of returned questionnaires was 30 copies or 100 %. After gathering the questionnaire data, the researcher also interviewed the participants personally. In this session, the researcher interviewed 16 teachers. They were selected on the basis of availability and voluntarily. Before conducting the interview, the participants were informed of the detail of the investigation. They also signed a consent form to indicate that they understood the purposes of the study and participated in the study voluntarily.

#### 4. Data analysis

The researcher analyzed questionnaire data by means of frequencies and percentages. The qualitative data from the interview was transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically. The participants' perceptions toward self-reflection that related to learning and teacher professional development were categorized into 4 main themes:

- 4.1 Self-reflection is driven by the desire to solve the problem
- 4.2 Self-reflection is integral to change of teaching practice
- 4.3 Self-reflection enhances English language competence
- 4.4 Self-reflection is an essential part of logical and critical thinking

Based on the interview data, 3 main themes of the participants' perceptions toward teacher collaboration were categorized as follows:

1. Teacher collaboration contributes to more effective interpersonal skills.
2. Teacher collaboration provides scaffolding to individual development.
3. The interplay between teacher collaboration and self-reflection strengthen effective teaching.

#### 5. Research results and discussion

##### 5. 1 Results of English language skills the participants most needed to improve

As mentioned earlier, in the questionnaire and interview survey, the participants were asked to answer which English language skills they most needed to improve. The findings from the questionnaire were consistent with the interview results. They revealed that most of

the participants prioritized writing skills and then speaking, reading, and listening respectively. They gave reasons that they desired to strengthen their English ability and to be a good role model for their students. Moreover, they believed that English language proficiency was one of the important fundamental components in becoming qualified language teachers. The responses were given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Thai tertiary English language teachers' English skills needed most to improve

English language skills	Data sources			
	Questionnaire results (N=30)		Interview results (N=16)	
	Tally	Percentage	Tally	Percentage
Writing skill	11	36.7	8	50
Speaking skill	10	33.3	6	37.5
Reading skill	5	16.7	0	0
Listening skill	4	13.3	2	12.5

2. Results of perceptions toward self-reflection on learning and professional development

### 2.1 Results from the questionnaire

The questionnaire responses revealed that the majority of participants had positive perceptions on being a reflective teacher. 83.33 % had an experience of self-reflection both on their learning and English language skills evaluation. 96.7 % believed that self-reflection

could support them to become more autonomous teachers and contribute to their sustainable professional development. 100% of participants thought that self-reflection will help them to improve English language skills. The questionnaire responses were given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Thai tertiary English language teachers' perceptions toward self-reflection

Questions	Answers			
	Yes		No	
	Tally	Percentage	Tally	Percentage
1. Do you consider yourself to be a reflective learner?	28	93.33	2	6.67
2. Have you ever reflected on your learning and evaluated your English language skills?	25	83.33	5	16.67
3. Do you think self-reflection will help you improve your English language skills?	30	100	0	0
4. Do you believe that self-reflection will promote you to become more autonomous learners or teachers?	29	96.67	1	3.33

Questions	Answers			
	Yes		No	
	Tally	Percentage	Tally	Percentage
5. Do you think that experience gained from self-reflection can contribute to your sustainable professional development?	29	96.67	1	3.33
6. Do you need self-reflection to develop your learning and improve your English language skills?	29	96.67	1	3.33
7. Do you need more training and guidance for self-reflection?	29	96.67	1	3.33

## 2.2 Results from the semi-structured interview

The interview results showed that the participants were aware of the importance of being a reflective teacher. In the practical way, they self-reflected on their teachings on a regular basis and engaged in both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action as proposed by Schön (1983).

To give an example of reflection-in-action, the participants mentioned that during giving of lectures in class, they found unexpected problems and had to improvise an activity in order to keep their

students' attention and continue the teaching smoothly. The following quotes expressed the participants' experience of reflection-in-action:

“ ... Once, my student asked a question about English-Thai slang which I couldn't answer and then I brought up that question to a class discussion. But they still couldn't find the answer. I promised that I would check it for them and I would tell them the answer on the next lesson. From this situation, I felt that being a knowledgeable teacher is necessary. I had to study more, prepare better, and always update new information...” (Teacher 7, Interview)

As evidenced in the example quote of the participant, while facing unexpected teaching problems, they were stimulated to use reflection-in-action by assessing what actually was the problem and choosing immediate solution to address it. They mostly practiced a rapid and repair reflection. To clarify this, they observed and used students' reaction or behaviors to change their teaching immediately.

Furthermore, reflection-in-action was very powerful and artistry practice. It needed teachers' high level of effort, knowledge, and skilled action to come up with a quick solution and make teaching adjustment. This reflection was like an internal supervision whereby practitioners were acting as their own supervisor and questioning themselves how to deal with this situation effectively (Rolfe, 2011). To achieve the goal, they activated their personal experience, knowledge, theory, and beliefs to

critically analyze and address the situation. This teacher knowledge included classroom management, fostering students individual difference , establishing rapport between teacher and students, taking a role as a facilitator, and so on (Saylag, 2012).

With regard to reflection-on-action, the participants reported that they reviewed their teaching or the students' learning through unstructured reflections without documenting their thoughts after completing each lesson.

In addition, none of them used a video or audio recorder to record their teaching for further self-development. From this finding, the researcher thought that EFL teachers should be raised their awareness of the valuable and usefulness of video and audio recording as a reflective tool. Although, there were possible constraints to use, previous studies (e.g., Masats & Dooly, 2011; Susoy, 2015) proposed in the same direction that using video can serve as a means for constructing knowledge and developing reflective skills. Importantly, watching their own video of teaching along with some feedback for the improvement, teachers became more aware of the classroom atmosphere and critical of themselves as a teacher as well as to understand the students' learning.

Through employing a post-lesson reflection, the participants recalled and analyzed what went well or what did not go well in their teaching. They also reflected on the appropriateness of the activity that the students worked on. Mostly, they used students' feedback as a main input to consider what situation needed to adjust or remedy as well as

what their future teaching plan should be. The following quote exhibited the participant's experience of reflection-on-action:

“ ... .When practicing speaking, my students had a difficulty of transferring their grammatical knowledge into communicative language use. Thinking about this, because of having a teaching style of spoon-feeding caused my students became passive learners. I needed to change the class from being teacher-centered to more active teaching... ” (Teacher12, Interview)

Generally, the participants employed reflection-on-action. Due to the multiple demands of teachers in classrooms and time restriction, they were unable to stop in the midst of teaching to reflect all occurring problem or to pay conscious attention to every student's response. Instead, they needed to look back and assess the previous event in the classroom after the lesson completion.

To gain maximum benefit of reflective practices, the purpose of reflection-on-action should involve not merely thinking upon events, experiences, or behaviors but converting reflected information into in-depth understanding. Thus, to move beyond a reflection on technical performance, teachers should carry out their reflection-on-action immediately after the lesson. Also, it should involve keeping a diary or journal reflection that focused on a specific lesson or class with a view to identify key points against a personal set of reflective criteria.

Considering both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, the ultimate goal of them were improving teacher teaching practice and enhancing student outcomes. Teachers who always used reflective practice deliberately, they would be able to move forward a routine teaching but make their instruction in a more dynamic way.

Furthermore, based on the interview data analysis, the researcher categorized the participants' perceptions toward self-reflection that related to learning and teacher professional development into 4 main themes as presented below:

1. Self-reflection is driven by the desire to solve the problem.

Particularly, when confronting difficulties in teaching or when the plan did not work accordingly; they became conscious of their problem and started thinking about a solution. In this situation, self-reflection was stimulated to use. The following quote gave the evidence of the participant's perception:

“ ... Throughout long years of working, I found that teacher's role is no longer limited with only teaching but to keep on learning from day-to-day experience to improve myself and my career. Teaching and self-reflection are closely related with each other. Without looking back and improvement, I couldn't move forward... ” (Teacher 16, Interview)

## 2. Self-reflection is integral to change of teaching practice.

The participants' responses indicated that to become successful teachers, it is a must to continue their learning and develop their teaching. Teaching is not a rigid process; it is the on-going process based on individual's desire. Due to insufficient teaching experience and the advancement of teaching innovation, teachers needed to have some changes in order to achieve better results. The following excerpt illustrated the participant's perception:

“ ... Nowadays, there is a lot of teaching innovation happening. I think English teaching is no longer standing in front of a classroom and lecturing. Instead, teacher must educate students by using a variety of method in teaching without sticking to a particular method. This condition forces me to adapt and change my existing teaching methods...” (Teacher 9, Interview)

## 3. Self-reflection enhances English language competence.

The participants not only realized that self-reflection was considered to be an important part of their teaching practice; but they also viewed this inquiry can be utilized for developing proficiency in English. That is, they could self-evaluate their competence, identify their weaknesses, and choose the effective way of English language improvement. The following excerpt illustrated the participant's perception:

“... I have a problem with my speaking skill. I tried to assess myself to find a way to develop it. One of the main reasons is that I don't like talking too much. I also don't have much chance to use English in my daily life. One of the best ways for me to solve this problem is to practice communication in English with a native speaker teacher in the department. I started and tried to use English whenever I talk to him. I tried to communicate with him in English more often than I could. Now, I think I'm more confident with my English and when I use the language...” (Teacher 3, Interview)

#### 4. Self-reflection is an essential part of logical and critical thinking.

The participants also believed that there is a relationship between self-reflection and their critical thinking. In general, self-reflection is embedded in teachers' everyday thinking and practice. It is a foundation to strengthen working and problem-solving ability particularly when encountering an unplanned problem or event. The following statement expressed the participant's perception:

“... In my working time I will apply self-reflection as a way of my thinking. Self-reflection allows me to see problems that come up during work and how to deal with them. A person who is able to analyze and evaluate his or her problem will become wiser,

thoughtful, and won't give up easily when facing a problem..." (Teacher 14, Interview)

## 5. Results of perceptions toward teacher collaboration on learning and professional development

### 5.1 Results from the questionnaire

The findings demonstrated that the majority of participants acknowledged the significance and benefit of teacher collaboration. Half of the total participants (17 or 56.67%) collaborated with peers to develop their English language skills. All of them (100%) believed that teacher collaboration will help them improve their English language skills and can contribute to their sustainable professional development. 23 (76.67%) participants felt that their department or university culture is conducive to teacher collaboration. The questionnaire responses were given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Thai tertiary English language teachers' perceptions toward teacher collaboration

Questions	Answers			
	Yes		No	
	Tally	Percentage	Tally	Percentage
1. Have you ever collaborated with peers to develop your English language skills?	17	56.67	13	43.33

Questions	Answers			
	Yes		No	
	Tally	Percentage	Tally	Percentage
2. Do you believe that teacher collaboration has more potential for enhancing teacher's English knowledge and skills than individual learning?	30	100	0	0
3. Do you think teacher collaboration will help you improve your English language skills?	30	100	0	0
4. Would you like to collaborate with other language experts for English language skills improvement?	30	100	0	0
5. Would you like to collaborate with colleagues to develop your English language skills?	29	96.67	1	3.33

Questions	Answers			
	Yes		No	
	Tally	Percentage	Tally	Percentage
6. Do you need more training and guidance for participating in teacher collaboration?	28	93.33	2	6.67
7. Do think that experience gained from teacher collaboration can contribute to your sustainable professional development?	30	100	0	0
8. Do you feel your department or university culture is conducive to teacher collaboration?	23	76.67	7	23.33

## 5.2 Results from the semi-structured interview

The interview results were consistent with the questionnaire results. They revealed that the participants' perceptions toward teacher collaboration seemed to be positive. In this research context, a group of language teachers or formal teacher collaboration had not been established yet. Nonetheless, some of them had an experience with

teacher collaboration informally. The common and practical way of teacher collaboration was weekly meeting where teachers worked on instructional development. They discussed the selection of instructional media, assessment procedures, and students' learning problems and shared other experience with their colleagues.

Based on the interview data, 3 main themes of the participants' perceptions toward teacher collaboration were emerged as follows:

1. Teacher collaboration contributes to more effective interpersonal skills.

The responses of participants demonstrated that in a collaborative environment, they need to offer information, ask questions, or argue for a different viewpoint with other colleagues. Normally, having a disagreement within the group can occur. In this condition, interpersonal skills are required. Engaging in teacher collaboration, they can learn how to work, interact, and get along with others effectively. Possessing social capacity provides a foundation for effective learning environment. The following statement exemplified the participant's thought:

“ ... I can share my experience and learn from the experiences of others when joining teacher collaboration. Due to the nature of working collectively, some different opinion may arise; however, I find that it is a good opportunity to open my mind to learn new things and admit that I don't know everything... ”

(Teacher 6, Interview)

Apart from the advantages of teaching improvement, some of participants perceived that teacher collaboration provided interpersonal skills or social capacity. Particularly, being an open-minded person might be one of the important interpersonal skills. Openness led to an increase of successful communication when working in a group. Due to the nature of group working, members needed opportunities to discuss, listen carefully to others, receive feedback on how they were doing, and express their feelings in an open way.

2. Teacher collaboration provides scaffolding to individual development.

The participants perceived that their involvement in a collaborative learning group made them gain a constructive feedback and support from other colleagues. This assistance was like scaffolding available for teachers' learning. Teachers can use them as a framework to examine what they should do to achieve a successful teaching. Furthermore, within collaborative context, teachers can mutually support one another to identify their strengths and weaknesses as well as some kind of changes in their teaching practices. More significantly, they can use obtained feedback to continue building up and developing their own personal knowledge independently. Participants explained their perceptions as follows:

“ ... I believe that when working together with other teachers I can find my areas that need improvement. Sometimes, others see what I fail to see. I can find my

weakness and learn how to deal with it effectively. It enables me to be more careful and aware of my work..." (Teacher 2, Interview)

As illustrated in the participants' quotations, they accepted and used other teachers' feedback for scaffolding themselves, particularly diagnostic scaffolding (Smit, Van Eerde, & Bakker, 2013). Having discussions with other colleagues assisted them to examine whether they were on the right track or whether they have some kind of strengths and weaknesses in their teaching practice. This scaffolding was essential for the foundation of further individual development.

3. The interplay between teacher collaboration and self-reflection strengthens effective teaching.

According to the interview results, the participants accepted the benefit of having an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practices and share them with other colleagues. It should not isolate one stage from the other. They believed that working alone do not nurture critical reflection. Effective teaching requires both individual and collective working. Thus, by incorporating teacher collaboration into active self-reflection, teachers' practice will be improved. The following remark illustrates this theme:

"... Certainly, after engaging in a group, we get new and different ideas from others. But the most important thing is teachers themselves. Any change or further development is up to their personal decision. Teacher

collaboration will be the most successful when teachers benefit what emerged from the group on their self-reflection and self-development..." (Teacher 14, Interview)

In this last theme, it can be assumed that although the participants perceived that teacher group involvement provided great benefit for teaching; however, the most critical factor was teachers themselves. They needed to put what they gained from the group into their own practices and continue to learn by themselves. To contribute to effective pedagogies, teachers should be supported to evaluate their own instructional practices reflectively and collaboratively.

## Discussion

### Self-reflection

Many studies have investigated EFL teachers' perceptions toward self-reflection (e.g., Jadidi & Keshavarz, 2013; Noormohammadi, 2014; Ferdowsi & Afghari, 2015). Consistently, these studies have reported that EFL teachers had high awareness of self-reflection. They applied and practiced this learning method to evaluate their teaching experiences. In addition, they perceived self-reflection as a useful approach for developing their profession. Possessing the ability to reflect on their teaching practices critically can be an indicator of the characteristic of effective language teachers.

In the literature written by Leitch and Day (2000), it provided another lens to confirm the importance of self-reflection for teacher professional development. They also gave the reasons why self-

reflection can foster teachers to improve their teaching. The first reason concerned the nature of teaching since teaching and learning was considered as complex processes. There was not one right or best approach to teaching. If teachers continued their teaching without evaluating assumptions and experience, they will be more inclined to remain prisoners of their profession. Their professional effectiveness in circumstances which inevitably changed over time will be decreased. For the second reason, a reflective practice was a mean tended to involve individual teacher to build greater self-knowledge and self-challenge through an analysis of the personal value and theory underlying teaching practice.

In addition, Farrell (2008) argued that self-reflection can be identified as one of the crucial tools in teacher professional development since. It allowed teachers to gain deeper understanding of their teaching, assess their professional growth, develop decision-making skills, and become confident in their teaching.

As described previously, it seemed clear that many educators recognized that self-reflection was an essential component of teacher professional development. Akin to the participants' perceptions, these can be reasons behind their decision to agree and accept the benefit of self-reflection for their ongoing self-development.

Furthermore, based on the interview data analysis, the participants perceived that self-reflection related to their learning and teacher professional development. Firstly, the participants viewed self-reflection as an internal desire to improve their teaching practice as well as working ability. It was in the way that related to Schön's perspective

(1983). He viewed reflection as a method of thinking about experiences that led to inquiry and problem solving. He further explained that reflection began with the recognition that an educational dilemma or emotional discomfort existed in response to a particular professional experience. In this case, teachers recalled and thought about an action that did not go well in the classroom as well as considered what could be done to remedy the situation.

As evidenced from the perspective of theorists and scholars, the researcher strongly believed that throughout teachers' careers, definitely, teachers faced diverse problems and difficulties. To become a professional language teacher, we needed to examine problems and addressed them effectively through self-reflection. We cannot ignore it and teach without any considerations.

Moreover, the participants perceived that self-reflection is integral to change of teaching practice. This theme revealed the perceptions that reflection was analytical thinking about an action to change teaching practice. It was in accordance with Ball (2009) who declared that being a reflective practitioners, teachers must be willing to change their own teaching strategies. The unpleasant result of teaching for a long time was becoming routine teaching. More importantly, teacher development was not possible without teachers' intention to change.

Making some changes to teaching practice for the purpose of improvement directly related to reflective practice. Dewey (1993) and Schön (1983) considered changing as a central component of reflective thought. The practitioners should allow themselves to experience,

reflect on the phenomenon, and then carry out an experiment which served to generate both a new understanding of the phenomenon and a change in the situation.

For the third theme, the participants perceived the benefit of reflection on English language competence enhancement. Self-reflection enhances English language competence. In other words, self-reflection can be considered as a flexible process since practitioners can apply it to all types of practices and learning. The finding was consistent with Fandiño-Parra's (2011) opinion, he viewed that reflection can be applied to many important aspects of learning which may extend beyond the teaching practice.

The participants also believed that there is a relationship between self-reflection and their critical thinking. In general, self-reflection is embedded in teachers' everyday thinking and practice. This perception was correlated to the definition of reflection defined by Dewey (1993). He defined it as an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends. Thus, according to Dewey, reflection was closely related to those concerned with critical thinking.

According to Schön, he pointed that possessing the ability to reflect on one's teaching practice can help to distinguish an effective practitioner from a less effective one. Since, in real life, teachers dealt with varied people and events. When facing the unpredictable situation, self-reflection can help teachers to resolve it effectively.

### Teacher collaboration

With regard to another research results, focusing on the participants' perceptions toward teacher collaboration on learning and professional development. The results of this study were in line with those found in related works (e.g., Huang, 2007; Mede, 2010; Vo & Nguyen, 2010; Yuvayapan, 2013). Similarly, they demonstrated that EFL teachers perceived the importance and benefit of teacher collaboration on their learning and professional development. By creating collaborative learning group, the most important outcome is that teachers can share teaching experience, learn from other colleagues on how to improve their teaching practices, and develop plans to reach educational goals.

In the study of Balyer, Karatas and Alci (2015), it provided another lenses to confirm the importance of teacher collaboration. They explained that teachers benefited from the insights of their colleagues that offered a good source for their own professional development. This activity gave learning environment that encouraged mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth which cannot be accomplished by teachers working alone.

Apart from the advantages of teaching improvement, some of the participants perceived that teacher collaboration provided interpersonal skills or social capacity. Particularly, being an open-minded person might be one of important interpersonal skills. This idea can be supported by Janquart (2011) who mentioned that teacher collaboration was an ongoing process that needed open-mindedness and willingness to approach tasks in a positive constructivist way.

The participants perceived that teacher collaboration provides scaffolding to individual development. Teachers can use them as a framework to examine what they should do to achieve successful teaching.

Obviously, this perception was consistent with one major aspect of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. A level of development can be attained when teachers work collaboratively with other teachers. Guidance and assistance mutually provided within the group can serve as scaffolding for enlarging individual teacher's' Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD.

Fani and Farid (2011) proposed different forms of extending scaffolding for individual ZPD including self-scaffolding, collaborating with colleagues, conducting an action research, analysis of teaching practice, as well as having discussions with learners.

As illustrated in the participants' quotations, they accepted and used other teachers' feedback for scaffolding themselves, particularly diagnostic scaffolding ( Smit, Van Eerde, & Bakker, 2013) . Having discussions with other colleagues assisted them to examine whether they were on the right track or whether they have some kind of strengths and weaknesses in their teaching practice. This scaffolding was essential for the foundation of further individual development.

Besides providing assistance for teachers' knowledge construction and development, the researcher believed that scaffolding can facilitate teachers to avoid their own trial and error learning. Teacher collegiality brought teachers with diverse teaching experience closer together to reinforce the competence and confidence of teaching. Thus,

teachers were better prepared to support one another's strengths and accommodate weaknesses. Importantly, they can reduce the time spent on individual learning through trial and errors while greatly increase the available pool of ideas and resources.

Last but not least, the participants also perceived that the interplay between teacher collaboration and self-reflection strengthen effective teaching. As explained by Williams and Burden (1997), a reflective practitioner was a teacher who subjected daily professional practice to ongoing critical reflection and made clear their own particular worldview by means of such consideration. They further supported the notion of encouraging teachers to be part of teacher collaboration. In order to become a reflective practitioner, the concept of the teacher-ultimate authority was rejected. Instead, they needed to learn from other teachers and students.

In the similar line with Yuvayapan (2013), she agreed with the connection between teacher self-reflection and teacher collaboration. She argued that teacher collaboration created an opportunity for teachers to learn from each other, while, self-reflection involved only analyzing individual teachers' learning and teaching practices. To contribute to effective pedagogies, teachers should be supported to evaluate their own instructional practices reflectively and collaboratively.

## Conclusion

This paper presents the results of Thai tertiary English language teachers' perceptions toward self-reflection and teacher collaboration.

Overall, they had positive perceptions and appreciated the value of self-reflection and teacher collaboration which would contribute to their learning and professional development. The emerged themes of their perceptions toward self-reflection demonstrated that they viewed this inquiry as an internal desire to solve problems and change their teaching practice. Through self-reflection they could evaluate and develop proficiency in English. More importantly, they viewed that self-reflection embedded in their everyday thinking and practice. It is a foundation to strengthen working ability.

Furthermore, the participants perceived that in a collaborative environment, they were encouraged to possess effective interpersonal skills to work with others effectively. Another benefit is gaining constructive feedback from other colleagues to develop and build up their learning. They also accepted that effective teaching is required both individually and collectively. Thus, by adding teacher collaboration into active self-reflection, teachers' practice and learning will be improved and more effective.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, the results were unique for this particular group of tertiary English language teachers. The study of teachers in other institutions with largely different context may provide significantly different results. Thus, future research should include several of institutions or universities both private and government.

Moreover, the researcher obtained the data from only 30 Thai tertiary English language teachers within a strict time limit. It is

recommended that a larger sample size should be further studied to increase the degree of generalization of the study.

## References

Agbayahoun, P., J. ( 2016). Teacher professional development: EFL teachers' experiences in the Republic of Benin. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 6(4), 144-152.

Avalos, B. (2010). Teacher professional development in teaching and teacher education over ten years. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(1), 10-20.

Ball, A. (2009). Toward a theory of generative change in culturally and linguistically complex classrooms. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45-72.

Balyer, A., Karatas, H., & Alci, B. (2015). School principals' roles in establishing collaborative professional learning communities at schools. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1340-1347.

Boon, A. (2011). The reflective teacher: Towards self-actualization. *The Language Teacher*, 35(4), 27-30.

Dewey, J. (1993). How we think: A re-statement of the relation of reflective thinking to the education process. Boston: D.C. Heath & Company.

Engin, M. (2014). Macro-scaffolding: Contextual support for teacher learning. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 26-40.

Fandiño-Parra, Y. (2011). English teacher training programs focused on reflection. *Educación y educadores*, 269-285.

Fani, T., & Farid, G. (2011). Implications of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in teacher education: ZPTD and self-scaffolding. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 1549-1554.

Farrell, T. (2008). Here's the book, go teach the class: ELT practicum support." *RELC Journal*, 226-241.

Fatemipour, H. (2013). The efficiency of the tools used for reflective teaching in ESL contexts. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 93, 1398-1403.

Ferdowsi, M., & Afghari, A. (2015). The Effects of reflective teaching on teachers' performance. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 20-31.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and Sustainability: System Thinkers in action*. California: Corwin Press.

Gould, M. (2008). Teacher as researcher: A paradigm for Professional development. *Kappa Delta PI Record*, 45(1), 5-7.

Hagan, K. , L. , & Richmond, A. S. ( 2012) . Teaching constructivism constructively: What a novel idea! *The Researcher*, 24(2), 86-95.

Harun, M., & Suravi, A. (2013). Continuous teacher development through reflective teaching and action research. *Bangladesh Research Publication Journal*, 8(1), 69-78.

Hismanoglu, M., & Hismanoglu, S. (2010). English language teachers' perceptions of educational supervision in relation to their professional development: A case study of Northern Cyprus. *Novitas-ROYAL (Research on Youth and Language)*, 4(1), 16-34.

Huang, Y. (2007). How teachers develop their professional knowledge in English study group in Taiwan. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 36-45.

Jadidi, E., & Keshavarz, Z. (2013). The impact of Iranian EFL teachers' reflection on their incorporation of strategy-based instruction. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, 140-148.

Janquart, A. (2011). Characteristics of effective grade-level teacher collaboration. Unpublished master's thesis, Michigan: Northern Michigan University.

Khan, R. (2008). Developing professionally. *The Dhaka University Journal of Linguistics*, 1(2), 169-180. .

Leitch, R., & Day, C. (2000). Action research and reflective practice: Towards a holistic view. *Educational Action Research*, 179-193.

Masats, D., & Dooly, M. (2011). Rethinking the use of video in teacher education: A holistic approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(7), 1151-1162.

Mede, E. (2010). The effects of collaborative reflection on EFL teaching. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Science*, 2, 3888-3891.

Meng, J., & Tajaroensuk, S. (2013). An investigation of tertiary EFL teachers' problems in their in service professional development. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(6), 1356-1364.

Noom-ura, S. (2013). English-teaching problems in Thailand and Thai teachers' professional development needs. *English Language Teaching*, 6(11), 139-147.

Noormohammadi, S. (2014). Teacher reflection and its relation to teacher efficacy and autonomy. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1380-1389.

Phothongsunan, S. (2018). EFL university teachers' professional development in the Thai context. *Arab World English Journal*, 9(2), 283 -297.

Piedrahita, A. (2007). The Professional development of a facilitator through a study group. *PROFILE*, 8, 91-101.

Puebla, A. (2011). Experiences that impact EFL Mexican teachers' professional development. *MEXTESOL Journal*, 1-14.

Rashid Shah, S. & Al Harthi, K. (2014). TESOL classroom observations: A boon or a bane? An exploratory study at a Saudi Arabian university. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(8), 1593-1602.

Rolfe, G. (2011). Knowledge and practice. In Gary, Rolfe, Melanie Jasper and Dawn Freshwater (pp 11-29). Critical reflection in practice: Generating knowledge for care London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rout, S., & Behera ,S.,K. (2014). Constructivist approach in teacher professional development: An overview. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 2, 8-12.

Saylag, R. (2012). Self-reflection on the teaching practice of English as a second language: Becoming the critically reflective teacher. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 3847-3851.

Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books Inc.

Sharma, P. (2016). Professional development of teachers: A paradigm shift. *Paripex-Indian Journal of Research*, 348-350.

Smit, J., Van Eerde, A., A., & Bakker, A. (2013). A conceptualisation of whole-class scaffolding. *British Educational Research Journal*, 817-834.

Soisangwarn, A., & Wongwanich, S. (2014). Promoting the reflective teacher through peer coaching to improve teaching skills. *Procedia -Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 2504-2511.

Susoy, Z. (2015). Watch your teaching: A reflection strategy for EFL pre-service teachers through video recordings. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 163-171.

Vo, L.,T. & Nguyen, H. (2010). Critical friends group for EFL teacher professional development. *ELT Journal*, 64(2), 205-213.

Vygotsky, L., S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Wichadee, S. (2011). Professional development: A path to success for EFL teachers. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (The Clute Institute)*, 4(5), 13-22.

Williams, M. & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivism approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yaacob, A., Walters, L., Ali, R., Abdullah, S. & Walters, T. (2014). Reflecting on Malaysian Teacher Trainees' Journals. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction*, 11, 1-21.

Yang, S. (2009). Using blogs to enhance critical reflection and community of practice. *Educational Technology & Society*, 12(2), 11-21.

Yuvayapan, F. (2013). The contribution of constructivism into the professional development of English language teachers. *International Journal of Language Education and Teaching*, 1, 1-9.

Zaare, M. (2013). An investigation into the effect of classroom observation on teaching methodology. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 70, 605-614.