

Translanguaging Practices in a Thai Classroom Context: Views from Thai Primary and Secondary School Teachers

Sunaree Khonjan and Eric A. Ambele

Mahasarakham University, Thailand

Corresponding Author, E-mail: 63010152005@msu.ac.th

Abstracts

The present study examines the translanguaging practices of Thai English as a Foreign Language teachers and their perceptions on incorporating such practices in a classroom with strict language separation policy. Convenience (availability and accessibility) and purposive (common characteristics of participants) sampling methods were used to select Thai teachers at primary and secondary school levels ($N = 77$) in Northeast Thailand as participants. Online questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used to collect data that were both quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed using descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis, respectively. The results show that most of the teachers (72.23%) practiced translanguaging in the classroom by creating a space for both Thai and English to be used for scaffolding learning and meaning-making and for fostering opportunities to assist students in learning, while 27.77% of teachers reported their strict adherence to use English only. This result corroborated with the teachers' overall positive perception of incorporating translanguaging in different classroom situations to assist the students' learning and enhance classroom interaction and participation. However, some teachers highlighted challenges with implementing this strategy in Thailand despite its practical benefits.

Keywords: Translanguaging, Linguistic resources, L2 learning, Translanguaging in Thailand, EFL teacher The Impact of Extensive Reading; Thai Primary School Children; Vocabulary Knowledge

Introduction

Over the years, the monolingual practice of using only English in the classroom has dominated the Thai English language teaching classroom. This is the case because Thailand still maintains a monolingual approach in English language teaching/learning as a way to enhance Thai students' English language proficiency (Roger, 2013). The designed English language teaching (ELT) curriculum in Thai aimed to enhance student language proficiency by focusing on English as the main language of instruction in the classroom (Ambele, 2022; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021; Chanaroke & Niemprapan, 2020; Daraswang, 2014).

However, recent teaching practices, as observed in actual classroom interactions between the teachers and the students, show that some Thai teachers, especially at primary and secondary levels as the case with some observed teachers at some schools in Northeast Thailand, have started employing linguistic resources from the socio-politically named English and Thai languages in their English classrooms to foster their content and language learning (Ambele, 2022). In other words, we have observed that Thai teachers deploy both their L1 (Thai language) and English in teaching their students for the purpose of helping them to better understand what they teach. The practice is that these teachers tend to introduce Thai (L1) into

the English language classrooms to teach English. The teachers effortlessly employ both the English (L2) and Thai (L1) languages in their English classrooms in a manner that seems natural to them in order to facilitate their students' learning of English (Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021; Li Wei, 2017). It is this line of observation that motivated the current study. Despite the seemingly prevalent translanguaging practice in Thai English language classrooms, empirical studies on this issue still remain relatively scarce, particularly in the aspect of observed Thai teachers who are actually making use of this strategy in their teaching and learning of English. Put differently, translanguaging research in Thailand is still very scarce, with very few studies on it mainly looking at perceptions of university teachers, secondary school teachers' practice of translanguaging (e.g. Okoye & Ambele, 2022), listenership and translanguaging in terms of 'students' interactional competence (Kampittayakul, 2019) even though the practice of it seems prevalent in Thai ELT classrooms.

Moreover, these studies looked at what these teachers think of translanguaging in Thai ELT classrooms without focusing on their actual classroom language practice. Methodologically, previous research studies on translanguaging in Thailand have taken a qualitative approach to elicit perception data from participants without integrating a quantitative method to examine actual instances and situations of the teachers' translanguaging use in the classroom. Thus, the need for this research direction to focus on Thai EFL teachers at primary and secondary schools in Northeast Thailand and their translanguaging classroom practices and views of its incorporation in teaching English. Therefore, to understand this classroom practice, Thai EFL teachers' language practice and perception towards translanguaging in the Thai classroom is the focus of the current study. To achieve this aim, two research questions were designed:

1. What is the classroom languaging practices of Thai EFL primary and secondary school teachers in Northeast Thailand?

2. What are the teachers' perceptions of their translanguaging practices and their incorporation in the classroom?

Translanguaging

The translanguaging concept originated from the work of Cen Williams in 1994-1996 who coined the term in Welsh as 'trawsieithu'. Later, it was translated into English as translanguaging (Baker, 2012). This concept was used in the Welsh context to refer to pedagogical practice in the classroom. William (1994), however, demonstrates that translanguaging benefits students as it creates a comfortable classroom atmosphere and enhances their learning (Ambele, 2020; Nagy, 2018; Garcia & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging emphasizes the practice of mono/bi/multilingual through the same lens on account of the fact that this practice is selecting linguistic features from speakers' linguistic language repertoire. Translanguaging, therefore, creates a space where such language users use, integrate, and interconnect freely with others using their repertoire resources in a way that seems natural to them in order to assist their contribution of new knowledge and meaning-making in the classroom (Ambele, 2020; Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021). In another light, Li Wei (2017, cited in Ambele, 2020) opined that translanguaging is both a practice and a process; a practice that is portrayed as a variety of languages that work dynamically, fluidly, and functionally in one system; and a process as knowledge is constructed by drawing on 'speakers' full linguistic repertoire.

Regarding the seemingly confused distinction between translanguaging and code-switching, translanguaging is similar to code-switching in that they both refer to the natural switching or alternating between languages by bilingual or multilingual speakers (Creese &

Blackledge, 2010). However, translanguaging is a "process that occurs between languages," whereas code-switching occurs "across languages," challenging established boundaries between named languages (Wei, 2018, p. 3). Simply put, translanguaging holds the view that languages have no border; every language is used interconnectedly, interchangeably, simultaneously, and strategically to achieve communication and learning goals. In the light of an EFL classroom like the case of the current study, when teachers or learners translanguag, they usually use these fundamentally unique features in manners that correlate with the social construct 'language'; emphasizing the artificiality of linguistic boundaries in order to generate new linguistic behaviors (Ambele & Todd, 2021). This is especially evident when languages and cultures come into contact.

Apparently, in translanguaging, the individual who has the ability to use resources from different languages is able to be innovative, creative, and critically able to mediate cognitively complicated tasks as well as utilize languages to enhance, gather knowledge, make sense of, and achieve communication using language (Swain & Deters, 2007; Li Wei, 2011; Otheguy et al., 2015). Garcia and Li Wei (2014) clarified that a bilingual is not a monolingual who utilizes resources from two separate languages but opined that bilingualism is dynamic as it goes beyond the notion of two autonomous languages since the practice is complex and interrelated. With this in mind, Vogel and García's (2017) study with bilingual speakers establishes that translanguaging practices dynamically and fluidly go together in their 'speakers' repertoire language deployment. Omidire and Ayob (2020) thus argued that translanguaging is "a legitimate pedagogical approach involving the use of one language as a scaffold for language development and learning in another" (p. 4). In support of this view, Canagarajah (2011) referred to translanguaging as "the ability of the multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system" (p. 401). In other words, translanguaging supports language use in the classroom as an integrated system that bilinguals/multilingual use to be able to negotiate for teaching/learning purposes. Hence, bilingual/multilingual teachers/learners can use their language resources in the development of every other language in their repertoires instead of establishing proficiency in each language.

Classroom translanguaging

Classrooms, particularly today's ELT classrooms in Thailand, are spaces for language contact (Ambele, 2020), specifically between local native, national, and foreign or second language learners and teachers. From this idea, language use in Thai EMI classrooms typically follows Lambert's (1974, cited in Vogel & García, 2017) "subtractive" and "additive" model due to the monolingual 'English-only' model of ELT policy in Thailand. To clarify, mathematically, the subtractive will be a minus sign, meaning that learning a second language would replace the learners' minority languages in the classroom (e.g., local dialect) with the society's dominant language (e.g., national language). On the other hand, the additive would be a plus sign. With this plus sign, it is believed that when the person who is already proficient in one language adds a second language (or is learning a second language) to their repertoire, they maintain both languages in their repertoire (i.e., bilinguals are dynamic and fluid). This 'additive' claim nicely fits with the translanguaging pedagogy argument, as recent studies have shown that the 'subtractive' claim (or monolingual approach) now poses a significant challenge to today's English language learners who are, in most cases, multilingual, especially in foreign language contexts (Tai & Li Wei, 2020; Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Vogel & García, 2017).

Translanguaging practices in the classroom reveal that it affords many opportunities beyond the English-only approach, such as the potential to utilize the students' language resources in the classrooms. For example, in a study conducted by Duarte (2016), he found that translanguaging strategies provided students and teachers in multilingual classrooms with flexible ways to communicate in multiple languages. A similar explanation by Wei and Zhu (2013) corroborated the fact that translanguaging pedagogy has the potential to boost the relationship between students, teachers, and curriculum interactions. Recognizing that students may have linguistic knowledge, which the teachers may lack and/or share with the students, therefore, translanguaging necessitates the creation of a co-learning space. Translanguaging as a language learning practice thus contributes to multilingual education; it is a phenomenon that occurs to help multilingual students in meaning-making and sense-making to facilitate their involvement in classroom learning and aid their own understanding of the content taught by using their native language, the target language, or both (Otheguy et al., 2019; Heugh, 2018). In other words, translanguaging allows and encourages learners to utilize their native language as a positive linguistic resource; providing benefits and assisting students in learning as a strategy for negotiating communicative interactions in English (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Levine, 2011; Nambisan, 2014).

Several works that promote the position of translanguaging in EFL classrooms highlight how important it is to use L1 to assist L2 and enhance English language learning. Daniel et al.'s (2017) investigation of translanguaging in an English-only classroom with elementary teachers highlighted the usefulness of scaffold translanguaging activities in helping students learn in schools. This implicates that although students possess different language resources in their repertoire or are from different linguistic backgrounds and with a range of linguistic skills, perceived scaffold translanguaging unites them in one class to better learn. In corroboration, Sahib (2019) discovered that teachers use translanguaging in several situations during the teaching process: 1) introducing a lesson, 2) drawing students' attention, 3) explaining the contents, 4) asking questions, 5) giving task/command, 6) giving feedback, and 7) closing the class. Similarly, Nambisan (2014) observed that teachers employ translanguaging in the classroom to interact for varied purposes, such as "1) to praise students, 2) to build bonds with students, 3) to give feedback to students, 4) to help low proficiency students, 5) to explain concepts, 6) to describe vocabulary, 7) to quickly clarify during activities, 8) to give directions, and 9) classroom management" (p. 88).

It should be recalled that teachers' translanguaging practices and perceptions have been investigated in several European contexts; however, literature on this in an EFL context like Thailand still needs to be more extensive. The argument has been that, in a context like Thailand, only the L1 (Thai) and the target language (English) are used to facilitate/assist bi/multilingual students in their learning (e.g., to support students' comprehension of concepts). While the basis of such an argument in Thailand has been largely predicated on code-switching; however, Garcia and Lin (2017) and Otheguy et al. (2015) have argued that the flexible use of both the L1 and L2 and vice versa by the teacher and/or student to clarify meanings of words, expressions, structures, and rules are all still translanguaging strategies. In the context of this study, the teachers' linguistic resources from their repertoire are what can be ascribed to as named languages in the classroom, i.e., English, Thai, and Isan (Isan is a local dialect in the Northeastern region of Thailand). Thai EFL teachers have been observed to deploy resources from these socio-politically named languages in EMI classrooms in ways that seem natural to them. Put differently, the teachers tend to use every language they know strategically to

accomplish their teaching goal. Therefore, whether Thai English teachers are aware of their language practice in the EMI classroom or not, what they actually 'do' is translanguaging. As already elaborated, this kind of usage should not be confused with or taken for code-switching since speakers can use such constructions without necessarily being conscious of the languages involved. As a result, it would seem to be of a great pedagogic impact on teachers and learners alike were allowed to deploy their full linguistic repertoire in the classroom during teaching and learning without any strict adherence to a name language (Tai & Li Wei, 2021; Garcia, 2019; Vogel & García 2017; Li Wei, 2017; Garcia & Kleyn, 2016). This, therefore, makes the line of research in the present study germane.

Research Methodology

This study uses a mixed method design to understand Thai EFL teachers' classroom language practice and their perceptions towards translanguaging in the Thai classroom. Davies (2020) opines that a mixed method research design typically involves a survey followed by interviews to explain the survey results. Combining both quantitative and qualitative data in one study enhances the comprehension of the research problem in ways that cannot be achieved using a single approach (Guest & Fleming, 2015). Thus, a questionnaire for quantitative data and a semi-structured interview for qualitative data were used to collect the data for this study.

1. Participants and setting

The participants in this study were limited to EFL teachers at primary and secondary schools in Thailand's Northeast region. Convenience (based on availability and accessibility of the participants) and purposive (based on common characteristics of participants) sampling methods were considered crucial in recruiting participants for the research (Dörnyei, 2007). 100 Thai EFL teachers participated in the questionnaire survey; however, only the data of 77 teachers were analyzed because some teachers either did not complete the whole questionnaire or provided answers that were unrelated to the questions. Of these 77 teachers, six (three from primary and secondary, respectively) voluntarily took part in an interview session to further probe their views on the issue of classroom translanguaging at primary and secondary levels. Based on the purposive sampling strategy for recruiting participants, certain criteria were considered in selecting the participants for this study. The criteria included: 1) teachers who allow the use of English and other languages in the classroom, 2) English teachers in the northeast of Thailand, 3) teachers with more than 6 years of teaching experience in Thailand, and 4) English-teachers who graduated with a bachelor degree in English, English literature, or Graduate Diploma Program (Teaching Profession) or Bachelor of Education in English

2. Research instruments

Three research instruments were used to assess the extent to which the ER approach. The data in this study were collected using a questionnaire survey and a semi-structured interview, given online surveys, the results may be considered more objective and empirical (Elizabeth, 2013), and data may be gathered anonymously (Rea & Parker, 2005). Using an anonymous survey allows the researcher to preserve the participants' identity since the results cannot be reported back to the schools, nor can they be linked back to the individual participant. The questionnaire questions were closed and open-ended, and because data were collected during COVID-19 restrictions on movement in Thailand, the questionnaire was administered online. The questionnaire was adopted and adapted from Nambisan's (2014) study to suit the Thai context. It consists of two parts: the first included closed-ended questions on general background and language use information in the classroom, and the second included open-ended questions on the teacher's deployment of learners' repertoire resources in the classroom.

This study also employed a semi-structured interview for data collection, using a semi-structured interview is a good way to obtain an in-depth understanding of the participants' insights into a phenomenon (Boonsuk et al., 2021; Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020). Also, by utilizing this instrument, the participants can express their understanding of the topic, which influences the general direction of the interview. Indeed, this instrument provides the researchers with the opportunity to discover areas of interest, allowing them to delve into their thoughts, feelings, and beliefs on such research topics (Alvehus, 2013; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). In doing so, therefore, the purpose and nature of the current study were first explained to the participants before the interview was conducted. The interview questions were developed from the questionnaire items to generate further insights into the investigated phenomenon. As with the questionnaire survey, the semi-structured interview was conducted online through Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions.

3. Data collection procedure

For the questionnaire, the process started with contacting and selecting the potential participants from the chosen contexts and schools. The questionnaire survey was administered online using Google forms and sent to all participants through social media platforms like Facebook, Line, and Instagram. The participants were informed that their responses were completely voluntary, and that all data collected would remain confidential. Informed consent forms were also distributed online through the same social media platforms. As mentioned earlier, in the circumstances of COVID-19, the semi-structured interview was conducted online through ZOOM at the convenience of all six participants. The interview session took place in December, 2021 and each interview lasted for approximately fifteen minutes. It was recorded in an audio file and later transcribed into text. As part of the content analysis process, the transcript was sent back to each participant to validate the accuracy of the content through member-checking (Birt et al., 2016) before the data analysis process commenced.

4. Data analysis

descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentages, and mean. In contrast, the qualitative data from the semi-structured interview were analyzed using qualitative content analysis (Sevilmiss & Yildizm, 2021). In the qualitative content analysis, prosodic features were disregarded since the analysis only focused on the content of what the participants said. Emerging themes were then extracted from the content analysis after a 'top-down coding or deductive approach' (coding applied on pre-conceived codes) and a 'bottom-up coding or inductive approach' (coding emerging from the data) was used (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2007). Three steps, based on Lewis and Silver (2007, p. 262–267), were observed in the coding process: (i) "making the text manageable," (ii) "hearing what was said," and (iii) "developing a theory." Therefore, after coding the data, relationships were identified, and relevant themes of similar content were merged into broader categories. However, themes considered irrelevant to the study's overall goal were discarded. Thereafter, the analysis was then interpreted based on the translanguaging framework employed by García (2009) and Lopez et al. (2017). These scholars classified translanguaging into two applicable principles relevant to the present study's overall objectives. The first principle stated that translanguaging provides opportunities for bilinguals to utilize their entire linguistic repertoires, while the second principle argued that translanguaging provides opportunities for student-to-student or student-to-teacher interactions to create a translanguaging space for interactive classroom lessons (Lopez et al., 2017).

Research Results and Discussion

This section presents the results and discussion of the questionnaire and interview data analysis. The results are sectioned into two main parts according to the study's two main research questions. The first section illustrates the results of the teachers' languaging practice in the classroom, while the second part discusses the teachers' perception of their translanguaging practices and their incorporation in Thai EFL classrooms

Teachers' languaging practice in the classroom

From the data analysis involving 77 Thai EFL teachers who participated in the survey, the result shows the teachers' languaging use and practice in the classroom. The results show that the teachers employ resources in the classroom belonging to the different languages they know and share with their learners. For the teachers, these languages include English, Thai and local dialects. Even though English is supposed to be used as the medium of instruction in the classroom, 57% of the teachers reported using mostly English and Thai (that is, shuttling between English and Thai resources in the classroom), while 35.74% teachers reported deploying resources belonging to English, Thai and local dialects. Only 7.11% teachers actually showed their strict adherence to teaching exclusively in English, as the curriculum stipulates (Ambele, 2022; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021; Kampittayakul, 2019).

English remains the only dominant foreign language and a compulsory school subject in Thai education because of its global usage and use (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021). As a result, Thai classrooms have constantly maintained the English-only approach as the norm and expected to be followed by teachers (Han, 2018; Penthisarn & Phusawisot, 2021). Such language policy and curriculum have placed a primary emphasis on 'English-only' for classroom instruction based on the assumption that when students are exposed to and/or allowed to use the target language, they will develop their competence in the target language (Dearden, 2014; Xu & Chuaychoowong, 2017). This situation, however, stands in contradiction with the results of this study. The results show the teachers' use of more than 'only English' in the classroom, as reflected in the popularization of current scholarship on the importance and benefit of integrating the L1 and other languages in the learners' linguistic repertoire to facilitate teaching and learning (Ambele, 2022; Otheguy et al., 2019).

EFL classrooms in Thailand have recently been observed as spaces for language contact, especially between English and Thai and among English, Thai, and other local dialects (Baker, 2012; Darasawang, 2014). Studies on students' English proficiency in Thailand have reported that Thai EFL students have low proficiency in the English language (Khamkhien, 2010; Waluyo & Arsyad, 2022). The results further highlight the fact that today's Thai classrooms have become multilingual spaces where teachers deploy resources belonging to different languages to assist their learners' practical and pedagogical needs. This languaging classroom practice depicts the teachers' value of this multilingual pedagogical approach in facilitating language and content learning. Thus, it is interesting that most of the teachers reported using both English and Thai (in practice) as opposed to the seemingly impractical and unattainable English-only (according to language policy in Thailand) (Baker, 2012; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021).

In another light, when the participants were asked to rate their use of both English and Thai in the classroom, they overwhelmingly (40.5%) reported that they generally used both English and Thai resources in the classroom while teaching their learners. Despite English being the language of instruction in classrooms; however, the disparity in terms of the use of Thai and English practice in the classroom varies. Thus, based on the learners' needs and

language proficiency, Thai teachers tend to shuttle between resources from these two languages to facilitate teaching and learning (Ambele, 2020, 2022). This implies that in their English classroom, learners are allowed to use their full linguistic repertoire in meaning-making interactions and negotiations (Lujić, R., 2017).

The results by extension follow Lambert's (1974, cited in Vogel & García, 2017) 'additive model.' The 'additive' models, being a plus sign, is believed that when learners who are already 'proficient' in one language add a second language (or are learning a second language), the learners tend to maintain resources from both languages in their repertoire and deploy them in interactional situations as dynamic and fluid. This claim nicely fits with the translanguaging pedagogy argument, as recent studies have shown that the 'monolingual' approach now poses a significant challenge in today's English classroom, especially in foreign language contexts like Thailand, where it has been observed that Thai learners use their L1 (Thai) to aid them in learning (in) the target language (English) (Ambele, 2022; Ambele & Todd, 2021; Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Vogel & García, 2017). The initial aims of translanguaging are to employ instructional languages to help students improve their other languages in order to contribute to the balanced development of the learners' repertoire of languages (Tai & Li Wei, 2021, 2020). In this fashion, such findings further call for administrators, including educators, and stakeholders, to adopt pedagogical choices that acknowledge, accept, and support students' full communicative repertoire practice. The flexible use of all languages available in the classroom will likely create more optimistic learning environments, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes (Rajendram, 2019; Neokleous, 2017).

Another interesting result in the data is when the participants were asked to elicit contextual situations in the classroom where they employed translanguaging. Table 1 shows the different classroom situations where the teachers use the translanguaging strategy and the frequency of use for each situation. The table shows that the participants usually use translanguaging to assist participants with low proficiency (44.9%) and in their response to the teacher's question (40.82%). Despite the discrepancies in the percentage of use for the different translanguaging situations, what is germane is that the teachers find translanguaging as an effective pedagogical strategy in assisting their learners in these situations. This practice, therefore, allows greater flexibility and interchangeability in moving across learners' repertoire of languages in the classroom. Pacheco (2016) suggests that using translanguaging in situations in Table 1 necessitates the assistance of students with proficiency deficiency translanguaging pedagogy provides students with opportunities to express competence that could otherwise go unnoticed in a classroom where monolingualism exists. Besides, translanguaging offers opportunities for students to learn content through languages. For example, the teacher in her study encouraged students to paraphrase, rather than translate, using Spanish, Arabic and English to offer students the opportunities to clarify content and procedural information, question texts, and demonstrate understanding. Similarly, Norton (2014), likewise Tai and Li Wei (2021) emphasized the need to consider and implement translanguaging pedagogical techniques since they support language learners' development and imagination of their linguistic identities. Ambele (2022) further agree on the importance of translanguaging as a pedagogical method for attempting to expand students' communicative repertoire for knowledge construction, eliminating language barriers to academic concepts, addressing students' linguistic insecurity in the classroom, and dealing with curriculum and institutional pressure that emphasize monolingual standards of English instruction.

Table 1 Frequency of classroom translanguaging situations

Classroom situations	The percentage of occurrence					
	Never	Rarely	Sometime	Frequently	Usually	Total
To enable participation by lower proficiency students	0	2.04	20.41	32.65	44.9	100
To respond to teacher's question	0	10.2	26.53	22.45	40.82	100
To explain problems not related to content	0	8.33	27.08	27.08	37.5	100
To provide assistance to peers during activities	0	6.12	24.49	32.65	36.73	100
To discuss content or activities in small groups	0	4.08	24.49	36.73	34.69	100
To brainstorm during class activities	0	6.12	30.61	28.57	34.69	100
To ask permission	14.29	14.29	14.29	24.49	32.65	100

Teachers' perception and incorporation of translanguaging in Thai classroom

This section addresses the second research question that sought to determine the perception of translanguaging and its incorporation in Thai EFL classrooms from 6 Thai teachers out of 77 who took part in the questionnaire survey.

Overall, most of the teachers were overwhelmingly positive in their perception of translanguaging in Thai classrooms (see Excerpts 1–3); however, 15% of the teachers still maintained that Thai classrooms should still stick to the English-only monolingual approach of teaching and learning (see Excerpt 4).

Excerpt 1

It is necessary to use both English and Thai to assist students in learning because some vocabularies are difficult and beyond their level of acquisition. When I teach grammar and vocabulary, I use a lot of Thai language to explain because it matters to my students that this topic must be thoroughly explained in order to grasp the language's structure (Participant 1).

Excerpt 2

Using only English in class might cause confusion with complex contents. For example, reading passages' level is difficult for learners. So it is beneficial to employ English and Thai to reinforce the English conceptual orientation. That is, using English only in an EFL classroom may lead to some problems because nothing can guarantee that the instructions and explanations have been understood correctly. I use Thai specifically to instruct activities to make sure that students understand what I want them to do correctly (Participant 5).

Excerpt 3

If I only used the English language in my classroom, the students might not be able to understand in some situations. For example, in Math or Science classes, teachers sometimes teach specific vocabulary words. It would be very challenging for some students to understand these words when they learn about them for the first time. So, I use both English and Thai resources (Participant 6).

Excerpt 4

I think moving away from the English-only as the policy instructs approach will prevent learners from learning the target language effectively. Even though I agree that L1 has its own benefits in L2 language learning and teaching, our Thai EFL classroom should still stick to teaching English only in English classes and not mixing it with the Thai language. In practical terms, I have created a situation where students can participate by creating conversions in daily life so that they can use only English (Participant 4).

From the data, it was observed that regardless of the stipulated language policy of an English-only approach (as advanced by Participant 4 in Excerpt 4), perceptions toward translanguaging use and practice in the classroom remain largely positive (as reported by Participants 1, 5, and 6 in Excerpts 1–3). Thus, it can be said that most participants see translanguaging as a natural practice in the classroom, which affords many opportunities beyond the English--only approach, such as the potential to utilize students' language resources in the classroom. Put differently; this insight clearly sheds light on the reason behind implementing the translanguaging practice in the classroom.

The teachers' perceptions in Excerpts 1–3, supported by Excerpts 5–7, corroborate with previous research on the benefits of translanguaging in the classroom (Ambele, 2022; Lanza, 1997; Pearson, 2008; Kokturk et al., 2016). For example, Carroll and Mazak (2017) observed that teaching English is supposed to contribute as a dynamic process that engages students' multiple meaning-making resources from their repertoire. Equally, Kleyn (2016) and Garcia (2019) advocated that translanguaging can be used in EFL classrooms to help students improve their English while grasping the subject. They reported that one effective way to implement translanguaging in the classroom is to give language practice with directions in their native language to guarantee a proper start. This implies that allowing translanguaging practice in class improves students not only their semantics but also morphologically (word combination) and syntactically (grammar) through the full

Excerpt 5

Because Thai students have low language proficiency, employing both English and Thai would encourage them to feel more comfortable in learning. That is, most Thai students learning in are usually not good enough in English at the initial stage of learning the language; therefore, as language facilitators, the teachers have to select the languages, which students are familiar with in order to explain the complex concept. *I always ask my students to use English when they present their works to their classmates, and somehow they prefer using Thai to communicate with friends (Participant 3).*

Excerpt 6

I simply allow the learners to communicate and allow them to interact with friends in Thai and English. After all, it is language classrooms. I use Thai sometimes to explain the terms. My students are getting better at remembering things. When they understand what the word means, they will be more determined to learn English. From this, it is impractical to use only English all the time; using both English and Thai helps make students more comfortable in the classroom. Also, using both English and Thai helps to familiarize students with using and learning automatically (Participant 2).

Excerpt 7

When one of the goals is to be friendly and make students feel relaxed to open up and participate in the teaching/learning process, then employing both English and Thai to assist the students becomes a crucial technique in class. I use Thai to get closer to my students because I think they are more comfortable and less anxious talking about other topics in Thai, like when they are chatting in an informal situation. Also, I use Thai to create bonds with students, such as by telling a joke. That is very important to my class because my students are not familiar with English (Participant 5).

The translanguaging practice is grounded on allowing languages other than just a language to assist students in expanding nurture and enriching their language learning (Garcia & Sylvan, 2011; Lewis et al., 2012). As the participants in this study (e.g., Participants 2, 3, and 5 in Excerpts 5–7, respectively), deploying learners' linguistic resources can be used to scaffold language and content learning (Greggio & Gill, 2007; Qian et al., 2009). McMillan and Rivers (2011) reported that using L1 resources to ensure that learners understood what was being talked about is crucial to learning. It interweaves and contributes to a proper grasp of the subject before moving on to the next part of the topic. It is also beneficial for teachers to employ the L1 when teaching new vocabularies to make it easier for students to understand due to their proficiency (see Excerpts 11 and 6) (Ahmad, 2009). This allows students to understand what they are learning by assisting them in acquiring the contents, both forms, and meaning.

In another light, without utilizing learners' repertoire resources in the classroom, lower proficiency-level students might feel intense about learning only English (see Excerpts 2, 6, and 7). By reducing such linguistic barrier, translanguaging allows students to make a connection from the language resource in their repertoire and helps weaker language students by purposefully shuttling between languages and preventing them from feeling too demotivated in learning (Baker, 2012; Canagarajah, 2011). This result is also in line with the study of French (2019), who reported that translanguaging practice could serve as a practice for student collaboration by assisting students in comprehending concepts. Additionally, as reported in Excerpt 7, translanguaging enhances students' English fluency (high –low proficiency), reduces anxiety, and enables them to organize their thoughts more efficiently with regard to the provided content in the classroom (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

According to Tai and Li Wei (2021), translanguaging is a beneficial educational strategy for EFL classrooms as it helps students overcome their linguistic insecurities while also broadening their communicative repertoire for the purpose of knowledge development in coping with curriculum and institutional pressures that favor monolingual English instruction requirements. They further explained that translanguaging is a technique to integrate students' knowledge gaps, stimulate student reactions, and motivate students' interest in the content matter, and bridge students' social distance between the teacher-students. This observation corroborated Participant 5 perception in excerpt 7 that using both English and Thai in the classroom with the students helps create a learning atmosphere, as well as a space for student interaction, making them feel more comfortable and relaxed to learn. As reported in French's (2019), Ambele and Watson Todd's (2021), and Ambele's (2022) study, students could better express their creativity in learning when they are connected to their home language and other lingua franca. Indeed, Wei (2011) and Rajendram (2019) argued that this translanguaging practice could build a good relationship between students and teachers as well as the curriculum such that students may have linguistic competence that teachers lack and feel comfortable sharing with them. Thus, from the results here, the teachers show positive attitudes towards incorporating the strength of translanguaging in the classroom; advocating for its agentive, collaborative, and sociocultural role to establish a collaborative learning environment in language classroom

Conclusion and implication

This study set out to investigate the translanguaging practices and perceptions of Thai EFL English teachers at primary and secondary schools in Northeastern Thailand. The findings of the present study showed that the majority of teachers (85%) use both English and Thai to scaffold learning and meaning-making and encourage opportunities to support students as part of their discursive strategic practice to enhance their learning, while the rest of the teachers (15%) stated that they use only English in the classroom following prescribed curriculum and institutional policy. Therefore, the results show that most respondents positively accepted the usage and adoption of translanguaging in the classroom and recommended that Thai teachers and learners benefit from implementing this strategy. The result further suggested that Thai EFL teachers are beginning to shift from the dominant monolingual orientation in the classroom, adopting approaches that make use of students' linguistic repertoire. This implies that Thai practitioners (both students and teachers alike) are starting to seek out ways to incorporate and interweave their mother tongue into the process of the second or foreign language acquisition, whether unintentionally or purposefully, even if it means allowing the use of the L1 or other language resources in the classroom (Baker, 2012; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2021). Additionally, results, in corroboration with previous research, confirmed that teachers employ translanguaging practice to assist, expand and nurture their students' language learning experience (Ambele, 2022; Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021; Garcia & Sylvan, 2011; French, 2019; Tai & Li Wei, 2021). In this sense, translanguaging significantly opens doors for bi/multilingual students to process their cognitive ability to interact while learning the language.

This study has strengthened the idea that translanguaging practice, a natural phenomenon for monolingual and multilingual classrooms in teaching and learning, should be encouraged because of its affordances, such as facilitating strategies for learners with difficulties in acquiring the target language. This is likely because in learning environments with diverse linguacultural learners, the translanguaging strategy may play an essential part in providing learners in such learning environments with the opportunity to enhance bi/multilingual students' linguistic systems to accomplish tasks, draw on prior knowledge, linguistic learning experience, and cultural background into their learning.

It should also be noted that, like every other study, this research is not void of certain limitations. This study mainly looked at teachers (who have been observed to practice classroom translanguaging) in northeast Thailand without considering other teachers of the same or different contexts who still adhere to the strict language policy in the classroom. Also, while this study only looked at primary and secondary school teachers of English, non-English subjects' teachers can also be investigated across academic levels.

Recommendation

The current literature on translanguaging corroborates the results of this study and has shown that incorporating translanguaging pedagogy into language classrooms enhances students' competence in L2. Furthermore, this study reflects on the integration of both L1 and L2 by Thai teachers at both primary and secondary levels as a technique in teaching English so that they can accomplish their goals as teacher English teachers more effectively. Even so, translanguaging is key for teachers to foster students' critical thinking and comprehension strategies through collaborative language learning. By this, educators, specifically stakeholders and policymakers, can effectively utilize this flexible strategy to fit the diversity in today's Thai

EFL classes to develop Thai students' linguistic repertoire and identity (Ambele, 2022; Khonjan, 2022). In other words, utilizing translanguaging pedagogies illustrates a key learning strategy for building a reciprocal relationship among the languages in students' cognitions. Therefore, the curriculum and policy should be normalized using students' first and target languages as language resources in the mainstream classroom. In ELT, translanguaging should be taken into account for making pedagogical choices since the flexibility and creativity of translanguaging build a sense of socially and contextually sensitive academic advancement. Indeed, many institutions' educational institutional norms and language policies should establish a positive attitude and action for concern. After all, being an effective EFL teacher is a primary responsibility, including determining the best approach to support students' learning and increase their proficiency.

References

Ahmad, B.H. (2009). Teachers' code-switching in classroom instructions for low English proficient learners. *English Language Teaching*. 2 (2), 49-55. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v2n2p49>

Ambele, E. A. (2022). Supporting English teaching in Thailand by accepting translanguaging: Views from Thai university teachers. *Issues in Educational Research*. 32 (3), 871-886.

Ambele, E. A. (2020). Variations in language patterns in Cameroon Pidgin English. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. King Mongut's University of Technology Thonburi, Bangkok, Thailand.

Ambele, E. A., & Boonsuk, Y. (2020). Voices of learners in Thai ELT classrooms: a wake up call towards teaching English as a lingua franca. *Asian Englishes*. 23 (2), 201-217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2020.1759248>

Ambele, E. A., & Watson Todd, W. (2021). Translanguaging patterns in everyday urban conversations in Cameroon. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*. 2022 (273), 181-197. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2020-0118>

Baker, W. (2012). English as a lingua franca in Thailand: Characterisations and implications. *Englishes in Practice*. 1, 1-10.

Boonsuk, Y. & Ambele, E. A. (2021). *The Development and Changing Roles in Thai ELT Classroom: From English to Englishes*. Thammasat Printing House, Bangkok, Thailand.

Carroll, K. S., & Mazak, C. M. (2017). Language policy in Puerto Rico's higher education: Opening the door for translanguaging practices. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*. 48 (1), 4-22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12180>

Canagarajah, S. (2011). Codemeshing in academic writing: Identifying teachable strategies of translanguaging. *The Modern Language Journal*. 95 (3), 401-417. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01207.x>

Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2017). Translanguaging as a pedagogical tool in multilingual education. *Language Awareness and Multilingualism*. 309-321. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02240-6_20

Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching?. *The modern language journal*. 94 (1), 103-115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00986.x>

Davies, C. (2020). *A quick guide to quantitative research in the social science*. UWTSD Repository.

Duarte, J. (2016). Translanguaging in mainstream education: A sociocultural approach. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. 22 (2), 150–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2016.1231774>

Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Creating a motivating classroom environment*. In International handbook of English language teaching (pp. 719-731). Springer, Boston, MA. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-46301-8_47

Elizabeth. (2013). *Ten advantages of implementing a survey questionnaire*. Novisurvey. <https://novisurvey.net/blog/ten-advantages-of-implementing-a-survey-questionnaire.aspx>

French, M. (2019). Multilingual pedagogies in practice. *TESOL in Context*. 28 (1), 21–44. <https://doi.org/10.21153/tesol2019vol28no1art869>

García, O. (2009). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Malden/Oxford: Wiley/Blackwell.

García, O., & Kleyn, T. (Eds.). (2016). *Translanguaging with multilingual students: Learning from classroom moments*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315695242>

García, O., & Lin, A. M. (2017). Translanguaging in bilingual education. *Bilingual and multilingual education*, 117-130. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02258-1_9

García, O. (2019). Translanguaging: a coda to the code?. *Classroom Discourse*. 10 (3-4), 369–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2019.1638277>

Greggio, S., & Gil, G. (2007). Teacher's and learners' use of code switching in the English as a foreign language classroom: a qualitative study. *Linguagem & Ensino*. 10 (2), 371–393.

Guest, G., & Fleming, P. (2015). Mixed methods research. *Public Health Research Methods*. 581–614. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483398839.n19>

Kampittayakul, T. (2019). The role of translanguaging in improving thai learners' interactional competence in dyadic "english as a foreign language" tutorial Sessions. PASAA: *Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*. 58, 80–111.

Khamkhien, A. (2010). Teaching English Speaking and English-Speaking Tests in the Thai Context: A Reflection from Thai Perspective. *English Language Teaching Journal*, Retrieved from <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/viewFile/5253/4351>

Khojan, S. (2022). *Teachers' Perceptions and Practices of Translanguaging in Thai EFL Classroom* (Master dissertation, Mahasarakham University, Thailand).

Kleyn, T. (2016). *Translanguaging with multilingual students learning from classroom moments (1st ed.) [E-book]*. Routledge.

Lanza, E. (1997). *Language mixing in infant bilingualism: A sociolinguistic perspective*. Oxford University Press.

Levine, G. S. (2011). *Code choice in the language classroom*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847693341>