

Supporting English teaching in Thailand by accepting translanguaging: Views from Thai university teachers

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Translanguaging pedagogy has recently been given a lot of attention within tertiary institutions; however, there has been a paucity of research on Thai teachers' perceptions of this issue. This study therefore adds to existing literature by examining Thai university EFL teachers' views on classroom translanguaging and its adoption at tertiary institutions. Data was collected from 10 Thai EFL teachers across 5 universities in Thailand through classroom observation, field notes and semi-structured interviews, and analysed using qualitative content analysis. The data revealed that the teachers all showed a generally positive attitude towards classroom translanguaging practices (i.e. the use of learners' L1 in the classroom) for L2 and content learning. Moreover, they reported that it is seemingly difficult to completely dismiss the learners' L1 (Thai) in Thai classrooms where English is used as the medium of instruction. Implications for practice, policy and research are highlighted, as well as limitations.

Introduction

Over the years, traditional bilingual education approaches in Thailand have sought to keep languages separate. This has resulted in the separation of languages in Thai EMI (English as a medium of instruction) classrooms, an assumption that is founded on monolingual ideologies (Eslami et al., 2016; García, 2017; Maphalala & Mpofu, 2020; Almusharraf, 2021). No matter the content taught in the classroom, the problem of communication mode seems to be an issue when teachers teach learners of English as an additional language. To mitigate this issue, current research among researchers and scholars has proposed the idea of translanguaging (García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017; Otheguy et al., 2015). This idea has brought about shifts in teaching that call for the recognition and integration of learners' first language (L1) in EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms (Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021; Flores & García, 2013; Otheguy et al., 2019). Translanguaging proposes that both teachers and students can utilise their entire linguistic repertoire to learn/teach a foreign language and course content. Thus, incorporating bilingual practices into the classroom, including translanguaging, may not hinder but rather benefit teachers and students to accomplish teaching and learning goals, respectively.

To support the idea of translanguaging, Cook (2001) and Ambele (2020) emphasised the importance of using the learners' L1 as a resource, pointing out that there are many conditions under which their repertoire resources can potentially support and not deter learning. A key highlight of the translanguaging concept is that language is 'open' (Chukwuemeka & Ambele, 2022; Pastushenkov, Camp, Zhuchenko & Pavlenko, 2021). Teachers (e.g. Thai EFL teachers) can deploy aspects of their L1 (Thai language), say, grammar, phrases or vocabulary, to assist Thai students to learn content taught in English. This serves as a strategy for both teachers and students to 'tap into both their L1 and L2

resources, spanning from their linguistic background to their personal history and knowledge acquired at home, to where they can produce meaningful communication' (Pastushenkov, Green-Eneix & Pavlenko, 2021, p. 53). In terms of pedagogical practices and instructional efforts, translanguaging calls for teachers to soften the borders between named languages, since EFL learners often employ their entire linguistic repertoire in meaning making (Wei, 2018). This will, in turn, engage learners in collaborative interactions with peers, facilitate comprehension of new concepts and content since the L1 will serve as a scaffold in completing classroom tasks and retaining newly learned content (Kleyn & Garcia, 2019; Lewis & Baker, 2012; Poza, 2017; Maphalala & Mpofu, 2020; Almusharraf, 2021).

In Thai universities where Thai teachers and students speak Thai as their L1 and learn/use English as a foreign language, there have always been concerns with using Thai and English, or teaching English content in English only or/and Thai to Thai bilingual learners. Despite the myriad benefits of translanguaging in teaching English to bilingual learners of English, many Thai EFL teachers at the university level in Thailand still adhere to monolingual ideologies, leading them to approach the learners' L1 through a subtractive lens. Prior research (García & Kleyn, 2016; Otheguy et al., 2015; Wei, 2011; Hojeij et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2021) in other settings has shown that while teachers report to believe that translanguaging is a natural tool, however, in Thailand, Thai EFL teachers have been observed to show hesitancy incorporating this practice in the classroom. While this is largely influenced by the traditional monolingual policy of language separation ideology in Thailand (Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021), to date, no empirical study has been conducted to capture the views of some of the Thai EFL teachers who have been observed to incorporate translanguaging in their classroom at the university level or capture their perceptions on implementing translanguaging in Thai university EFL classrooms.

This study therefore aims to contribute in this light as it explores the views of Thai EFL university teachers' on translanguaging practices in the classroom, as well as their perceptions of incorporating such a practice at the tertiary level in Thailand. In other words, the study seeks to better understand the reasons for the translanguaging practices of some Thai EFL teachers who have been observed to use this approach in their classroom through their own practice reflection. Specifically, the study utilises observation and field notes to capture ten Thai teachers' classroom translanguaging practice and in-depth interview data to examine how they perceive this practice in teaching/learning English in Thailand.

Classroom translanguaging

Translanguaging has become a popularly recommended strategy that supports the use of learners' L1 as beneficial in scaffolding learning (Carroll & van den Hoven, 2016) and linguistically and academically supporting learners to learn a foreign language (e.g. English) and content knowledge (Hojeij et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2021) nowadays. Although scholars have provided many competing definitions of translanguaging, Garcia's (2009)

operationalisation of the term seems to stand out in the literature. Garcia (2009, p. 44) operationalised classroom translanguaging as:

An approach to bilingualism that is centered not on languages as has often been the case, but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable. These worldwide translanguaging practices are seen here not as marked or unusual, but rather taken for what they are, namely the normal mode of communication that, with some exceptions in some monolingual enclaves, characterizes communities throughout the world.

According to García, Johnson and Seltzer (2016), language is ‘an ongoing process that only exists as translanguaging’ (p. 12). Thus, translanguaging shapes both teachers and students as they interact in the classroom to negotiate meanings and implications. Since L1 (in this study, Thai) and L2 (in this study, English) use in the classroom is less likely to be seen as completely separate and distinct, traditional bilingual terms like code-switching or code-mixing have lost their earlier popularity. As a result, the primary focus of translanguaging is no longer on ‘codes’ or established patterns of language separation in the classroom. Translanguaging is just a natural and necessary component of bilingual and multilingual learners’ meaning-making processes in classroom interactions, in which learners’ L1 is intertwined with other semiotic aspects other than the L2 (Wei & Lin, 2019). In this sense, translanguaging refers to fluid verbal and linguistic performances in a variety of interconnected classroom exchanges between teachers and learners.

Translanguaging is common in several EMI classrooms at varied levels where the learners’ L1 is not the language of instruction. As a classroom practice, translanguaging has therefore blurred and challenged the limitations of traditional teaching and learning in EFL classroom. Otheguy et al. (2015) and Garcia (2009) emphasised the dynamic nature of translanguaging. They opined that while bi/multilingual learners are learning, they do not adhere to the socio-political rules and boundaries that separate languages in the classroom. This has been reported to ‘increase the inclusion, participation, and understandings of learners in the learning process; developing less formal relationships among learners; conveying ideas more easily; and accomplishing lessons’ (Wei & Lin, 2019). In the words of Wei (2018, p. 17), classroom translanguaging emphasises ‘linguistics of participation’ since both teachers and learners engage in the co-construction of knowledge.

While this practice in the classroom is crucial for understanding the present study, research on it in Thailand is still scarce and from the researcher’s observation, only very few Thai EFL teachers are actually incorporating the translanguaging strategy in their classrooms against the dominant and prescribed monolingual policy of language separation in Thai EFL classrooms. In fact, these teachers have been observed to practise translanguaging in one of the following ways: using a text that is in one language and discussing it in another language; moving from a text in one language to another text in another language; integrating learners’ entire linguistic resources; and using both (or all) languages available in the classroom flexibly.

L1 use in Thai EFL classrooms

In Thai university EMI classes, there are strict policies imposed by administrators and teachers on language use, particularly L1 use in the classroom. Such policies strictly dismiss the use of learners' L1 in learning English. According to research, the controversy about the use of the L1 in most bi/multilingual classroom contexts has since changed, however at a seemingly slower pace for Thailand. This is because of the strict bilingual policy that separate languages in Thai EFL classroom and the ideology of some Thai teachers that allowing the use of both L1 and L2 in the classroom will prevent learners from acquiring the L2. However, as a way to assist learners and facilitate learning (where learners L1 and L2 can be simultaneously utilised to enhance teaching/learning), some university teachers allow their learners to alternate between L1 (Thai) and L2 (English) and fully use their repertoire of resources in the classroom (Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021).

Scholars have acknowledged that using the learners' L1 may, in fact, help rather than hinder learning (Cook, 2001; Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Hall & Cook, 2012). In fact, it is a matter of common sense in bilingual classrooms today that 'the L1 will play an important part in teaching and learning a foreign language' (Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021, p. 18). Regardless of most Thai teachers' concerns about L1 use in the classroom (e.g. low proficiency in L2 and going off topic in discussing L2 content), research has shown that learners' L1 use in the classroom can assist them in learning the target language and content in the target language (Patushenkov et al., 2022). According to Garcia and Otheguy (2020), learners simultaneously improve the L2 language learning and content learning if they are allowed to strategically use their L1 in the classroom. Thus, L1 can be a useful tool to assist different proficiency learners, despite Thai teachers' concern for learners' use of L1 in the classroom. For example, Littlewood and Yu (2011) opined that depriving learners of their repertoire support and forcing them not to use their L1 can lead to demotivation, particularly for learners with limited English proficiency. It is, however, worth noting that learners' L1 use in the classroom, say the case of Thailand, depends on the teacher's teaching beliefs and best practices for the learners and learning.

Lewis and Baker (2012, p. 4) captured learners' L1 use in the classroom as *translanguaging* in education. They defined this notion as 'using one language in order to reinforce the other, in order to increase understanding and in order to augment the learners' development in both languages'. According to TESOL research, translanguaging helps learners to improve their weaker language by preventing them from doing the majority of their work in their stronger language while tackling less difficult tasks in their weaker language. As a result, translanguaging improves students' academic language skills in both their L1 and L2, 'leading to fuller bilingualism and biliteracy' (Baker, 2001, p. 290). For example, Källkvist et al (2019) investigated translanguaging in an 'English only' multilingual classroom and found out that both L1 and L2 do not exist in isolation, but rather in relation to one another, which is why learners' L1 should be used as support. In fact, Källkvist et al. (2019) maintained that learners can make use of their L1 and recognises the fact that knowledge of different languages can support language development. Edstrom (2006, p.

55) emphasised that ‘L2 learning is maximized when learners have access to L1 skills, and not making use of both the L1 and L2 in the classroom is a waste of a valuable resource’. For Littlewood and Yu (2011), using only English to explain grammatical structures takes a long time, and that learners build a larger vocabulary and learn faster, creating links between the L1 and L2 when the teacher allows them to use both L1 and L2 in the classroom. Baker (2001) emphasised that translanguaging promotes a deeper understanding of content as a potential benefit from using learners’ L1 in the classroom. He argued that:

In a monolingual teaching situation... whole sentences or paragraphs can be adapted out of a textbook, from the Internet... without real understanding. It is less likely to do this with ‘translanguaging’. To read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write about it in another language, means that the subject matter must be processed and digested (Baker, 2001, p. 28).

It could therefore be argued that learners’ L1 use in the classroom provides a lot of benefits to learners and teachers in EFL classroom as discussed here. It is against this background that the current study taps into the perceptions of ten Thai EFL teachers’ translanguaging practices, in five different universities in Thailand, who have been observed to utilise learners’ L1 in teaching L2 in this EFL context.

Theoretical framework

The current research is guided by Garcia's (2009) translanguaging theory which proposed that bilinguals do not have two or more distinct linguistic systems. Languages only manifest as distinct systems on the basis of the rules imposed by policy or administrators. Bilingualism is thus dynamic, focusing on what people do with language to produce and interpret their classroom interactions for meaning-making (Garcia & Otheguy, 2020; Li Wei, 2018). When translanguaging is used for pedagogic reasons and students are encouraged to use their language repertoires creatively, the opportunity to develop information becomes limitless, and teachers and students can collaborate to promote critical thinking. Thus, translanguaging theory is used in this study to guide the understanding of how Thai EFL university teachers incorporate this practice in their classroom and their perceptions of its use at the tertiary level of education in Thailand.

Method

Context of the study

To address the research aims, the study was limited to only ten teachers’ classrooms where the teachers, during their teaching, incorporated the translanguaging approach (in this case, utilising the learners’ L1 (Thai) and English in the classroom). The researcher who is a friend to these ten Thai university teachers in the North, Northeast and Centre regions of Thailand observed, on several casual visits to the universities, that the teachers would allow the learners to use their L1 and L2 during lessons. It should be noted that these ten teachers share the same L1 (Thai language) with their learners who were all undergraduate

English major students. Therefore, as part of this study, all ten teachers (observed to adopt translanguaging in their classes) were recruited and interviewed in order to get their insights into the reasons for allowing the learners to use both their L1 and L2 in the classroom, against prescribed English-only policy, and their perceptions of incorporating such a languaging practice in university classes. It should also be recalled that Thailand still adheres to traditional bilingual policy of language separation in EMI classes (which most Thai teachers still strictly follow). So, as a researcher, I found the translanguaging practice of these ten Thai teachers interesting for further exploration. Thus, the reason for this focus in the current study.

Participants

Data for this study was collected from 10 Thai English teachers across five universities in Thailand (see Table 1 in Appendix A). All teachers had at least 6 months experience living or teaching abroad from Thailand; and more than 10 years teaching experience in Thailand. The universities were selected because (1) they allowed teachers the freedom to use whatever teaching method that facilitates their teaching/learning; and (2) they are host universities of the participants for the study. Furthermore, the participants (who are members of the researcher's network) were selected by purposive-convenience sampling (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Selvi, 2020), given that (i) they are Thai university teachers of English residing in Thailand; and (ii) they have been observed to incorporate the translanguaging strategy (i.e. allowing the use of both Thai and English) in their classrooms. The study implemented these criteria in its sampling process to include the participants who were familiar with traditional and newer methods of teaching English to Thai students. According to Chukwuemeka and Ambele (2022), the justification for this type of inclusion is that teachers who incorporate modern teaching methods (like translanguaging) in the classroom are far more likely to encourage their students to emulate such an approach than teachers who do not use such methods. Hence, the participants in this study were selected under the impression that their experiences teaching English through the traditional English-only approach to now incorporating the translanguaging method would offer more in-depth insights into practical benefits of using learners' L1 in Thai ELT classroom.

Instruments

This study employed observation and semi-structured interviews as the main research tools. Class observation was carried out during the researcher's visits to the site within a semester. During initial visits, when the teachers were observed to be incorporating the translanguaging strategy in their classrooms (i.e. allowing the use of Thai when English was not sufficient to facilitate teaching/learning), they were formally contacted following ethical procedures for more observations of their classes within the semester. About 10 lessons (out of 15 lessons in one semester) with each of the ten teachers were observed. This was done before intense measures on onsite class cancellation was imposed on universities in Thailand due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the critical incident technique was used as the observation method in this study, thereby, limiting the observations to only incidences of translanguaging during the lesson. Such incidences

included using a text that is in one language and discussing it in another language; moving from a text in one language to another text in another language; integrating learners' entire linguistic resources; and flexibly using both Thai and English languages available in the classroom. Thus, data from the observed lessons served as representations of the teachers' translanguaging practice in their classes.

At the end of the semester, after the over-10 class lessons observations of each teachers' class, an interview appointment at a time and place convenient for all ten teachers (individually) was scheduled in order to probe into the teachers' reason(s) for employing the learners L1 into a supposedly English-only classroom. The individual semi-structured interview (see Appendix B) was meant for the teachers to provide insights into their translanguaging practice in corroboration with the classroom observation. The questions were basically about the teachers' perception regarding the use of L1 during class. Since the questions were prepared as the observation was ongoing, the final interviews with the teachers were semi-structured, allowing for openness and versatility. This, in turn, aided the framing of the interview questions based on observed practice, allowing both the researcher and the interviewees the opportunity to draw on examples from the observation. The data gathered from the classroom observations were therefore mainly used as a common reference during the interview, as well as in relation to the discussion of the results.

Data collection and analysis

The participants (whose classes had been informally observed) were contacted by email with all ethical procedures for participant recruitment and participation observed before the actual data collection process started. During each class observations (10 classes in total, each about 45-50 minutes), the researcher sat in the back of the class and did not (in any way) take part in the lesson. The researcher made notes from the observations and prepared potential interview questions based on the observed critical episodes. The ten teachers were contacted immediately after the observations for interview. Each interview lasted for approximately 30-35 minutes. Since words and phrases could be lost if the researcher just took notes, the interview was recorded using a mobile phone recorder. This allowed the researcher to focus and pay attention to the teachers' responses for follow-up, in addition to making corrections and double-checking the data. Furthermore, since the participants were all teachers of English, the interviews were conducted in English. It was also crucial that the participants felt at ease and could openly express themselves. For the latter reason, the teachers selected the location and time for the interview.

The data obtained from the observations and interview were analysed using qualitative content analysis (Selvi, 2020). According to Selvi (2020), qualitative content analysis is the systematic assigning of content to categories by subjective perception, taking into account the occurrence of categorical content. All the interviews were first transcribed and then sent back by email to the teacher participants for validation. After that, the transcripts were read several times and contents which seemed interesting in relation to the research questions were marked. Summaries of each interview were later written to get a clearer

view of its content. The contents were then organised in a table which made similarities and differences between the participants' contents visible. The notes from the observations of each class were then reviewed. The notes focused on where the teachers' allowed the learners to use their L1 during the lessons. The contents from the interviews and that of the notes taken during observation were compared to identify salient patterns of the teachers' perception of translanguaging during class. Lastly, the data were consolidated into similar contents and themes were then deduced from the data and presented as two main overarching themes that were appropriate to the research objectives.

Findings and discussion

This section presents and discusses the emerging themes from the data analysis of the ten teachers. To provide for participant anonymity, codes were used for each teacher participant (e.g. T-A for teacher A). The discussion is presented in relation to two salient overarching themes based on the overall research purpose, firstly perceptions of teachers' classroom translanguaging practice, and secondly teachers' beliefs on L1 use in the classroom. Excerpts of similar contents from the observation and interview data are used to support the data interpretation from the translanguaging perspective.

Perceptions of teachers' classroom translanguaging practice

From the observations, all the participating teachers employed the translanguaging strategy in teaching and displayed positive attitudes when doing so in class. In response to the first research aim concerning teachers' perceptions of their classroom translanguaging practice, the results show the teachers' overall positive attitude towards translanguaging. This attitude, for example, is echoed in T-C's report in Excerpt 1:

Excerpt 1 I believe that the use of both Thai and English in my English classes better develops my learners' learning of the L2 and contents taught in the language. The kind of learning environment we have in Thailand today is completely different from the past where traditional methods for teaching worked. With bi/multilingualism taking a different turn, allowing learners to utilise their full linguistic repertoire to their advantage is just remarkable. I enjoy giving my learners the opportunity to do so in class even when I know the policy does not permit me to. (T-C)

With the growing linguistic diversity of today's language learners (even within traditional monolingual communities) due to globalisation, classroom language use and practices have been altered to suit this linguistic diversity (Garcia & Otheguy, 2020; Poza, 2017; Chukwuemeka & Ambele, 2022). Similar to T-C in Excerpt 1, T-A stated clearly that "it is now possible to use both L1 and L2 in teaching/learning in Thai classrooms". In Excerpt 2, T-E succinctly puts it like this:

Excerpt 2 Even in a monolingual country like Thailand, it would be wrong to dismiss the use of L1 in trying to learn the L2. Integrating students' entire linguistic resources in the classroom (Thai and English), flexibly, would lead to better teaching and learning; at least, from my experience using this method. Thai can be used to translate a few words here and there to help the learners to understand. (T-E)

Excerpts 1 and 2 show that the teachers had a clear understanding of the bi/multilingual nature of today's EFL classroom learners and are willing to adopt new methods that support their learners' learning and teaching effectiveness. This idea is supported by the other teachers in the study (T-A, T-B, T-D and T-F). The result here corroborated with the observed class lessons as all the participants deployed the learners' L1 in the classroom throughout their lessons. This was supported by many instances of translation (in this case, the teachers were moving from explaining concepts in English to providing the same explanation in Thai) to support the learners' understanding. Creating a translanguaging space (Li Wei, 2018; Otheguy et al., 2019) enables learners to utilise both their L1 and L2 resources to facilitate their learning (Boonsuk, Ambele & McKinley, 2021). What the teachers (T-C, T-A and T-C) described is their implementation of both Thai and English in one lesson (operationalised as translanguaging) as they intentionally allowed the shuttling between the language of the input and the language of the output within a class setting (Baker, 2001). Put together, these teachers showed a positive perception towards translanguaging. According to T-H, "using learners' L1 seems a normal linguistic resource in a Thai EFL classroom". In support of this point of view, Otheguy et al. (2019) observed that the use of both learners' L1 and target language in the classroom will help learners to learn faster.

Teachers' beliefs on L1 use in the classroom

As part of exploring teachers' perceptions towards their classroom translanguaging strategy, the teachers were further asked why and how they employed the learners' L1 (Thai) in the classroom. From the teachers' interview data, they all had varied but complementary reasons for doing so, and in different ways, too (Excerpts 3, 4 and 5).

Excerpt 3 This new translanguaging approach is needful and very effective in my classes. I basically use and also allow the learners to use their L1 in the classroom when explaining new things like grammar; to maintaining control in the classroom; and when instructing individual students who seem to struggle (T-F).

Excerpt 4 I strategically use the learners L1 in my English classes to support my students to understand what I am teaching and faster, too. For instance, I let the students to use Thai during discussions and present in English later or I teach them in English and later asked them to answer in Thai to check their understanding. In these ways, I use both Thai and English flexibly in my lessons (T-A).

Excerpt 5 I just allow my students to use any resource from the languages that they know if only that helps them to answer my questions and understand what am teaching better. Sometimes, I let them explain what they understand to their mates in Thai, then, ask their friends to explain to the class in English and vice-versa. This approach is very practical for my classes as my students do not struggle to grasp contents and learn the language as well, from my observation (T-J).

The teachers' responses in Excerpts 3-5 show that they do not view the presence of the learners' L1 in the classroom as confusing or disrespectful, as it would be arduous for them not to use (or translate into) the learners' L1 when needful. From the observation and interview reports, the teachers generally perceived the translanguaging strategy as a natural practice and needed adjustment in teaching methodology to the complex dynamics that exists in today's Thai EFL classroom (Boonsuk, Ambele & McKinley, 2021). As observed by Littlewood and Yu (2011, p. 70),

... depriving students completely of this support by immersing them in a strange environment, where they feel disoriented and powerless, has been identified as one possible source of demotivation, especially for students with more limited proficiency.

Thus, how the teachers allow the learners' L1 to be flexibly used in class alongside English shows their support for learners with limited proficiency to learn and stay motivated to do so (Grcia, 2017; Conteh, 2018; Kleyn & Gracia, 2019; Galante, 2020).

However, the finding from a similar study by Carstens (2016) contradicts this stance. In Carstens' (2016) research, speakers of various Afrikaans dialects considered classroom translanguaging to be confusing and ineffective for learning. Thus, this contrast is worthy of further investigation in different contexts with teachers and students. Despite a few contradictory studies (e.g. Carstens, 2016), the results in this study supports most previous research in this area on teachers' perception of translanguaging (e.g. Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Flores & Garcia, 2013; Garcia et al., 2017). Previous studies showed positive reports from teachers that multilingual students take pride and learn best when their repertoire languages are visible in the classroom, especially when the target language is a foreign language to them (Otheguy et al., 2019). Teacher T-F in Excerpt 6 articulated this point nicely:

Excerpt 6 Today's language learners are diverse and complex. While the monolingual approach used to be suitable for learning a target language yester years, present-day learners are somewhat complex. Most of them now are bi/multilinguals and come to our classes with their own L1. It is our responsibility as teachers to encourage and use the L1 that the learners bring into the classroom to assist their learning and not discourage them; even if it means using the L1 in a supposedly English-only classroom (T-F).

From the classroom observations, the teachers were never complacent with strict adherence to only English in the classroom, as the policy states. Given that "there are no clear modalities on how to teach English in English only in Thai classrooms" (T-I), it therefore calls for "teaching flexibility" (T-E, Excerpt 2) and "teaching adaptability" (T-C,

Excerpt 1) to cope with the diversely multilingual learners in the classroom (Chukwuemeka & Ambele, 2022).

Incorporating translanguaging at tertiary education in Thailand

In response to research question 2 on how the teachers perceive incorporating translanguaging at the tertiary level, all ten teachers show a positive perception towards the incorporation of translanguaging as a tool to assist Thai students to learn the language and contents better and faster (see Excerpt 7). They also held positive perceptions regarding the use of translanguaging within the university to promote bilingualism and multilingualism for educational and social purposes (see Excerpt 8).

Excerpt 7 Even though most Thai students need to pass an entrance before admittance into the university, some of them still have very low English proficiency and take so much to understand a lesson delivered in only English. A better approach to assist such university students is to allow them to use both their L1 and L2 if it all leads to a better outcome (T-G).

Excerpt 8 It is undeniable that most Thai universities have now become multilingual spaces where students bring their own languages into the university context to assist them achieve their social and educational goals. With bilingualism and multilingualism now becoming the norms today, such a tertiary context might take advantage of an approach like translanguaging to encourage both students and teachers to fully utilise their complete linguistic repertoire for a better, teaching, learning and socialising environment (T-D).

Although the results from this study cannot be generalised, given the small number of participants, their positive perceptions in incorporating translanguaging at tertiary level in Thailand might be a good start. T-G's belief in Excerpt 7 on using translanguaging strategy to help low proficiency students shows a positive reaction to integrating translanguaging at universities, or in diversely linguistic classroom contexts (Cook, 2001; Galante, 2020; Chukwuemeka & Ambele, 2022).

Moreover, translanguaging was perceived by the teachers as an effective and acceptable tool for social practice in conversation (see Excerpt 8). This belief may have resulted from the teachers' past experiences with implementing the translanguaging pedagogy in the classrooms. According to the teachers' reports, using both learners L1 and L2 in the class "creates a safe atmosphere for students with low L2 proficiency" (T-J), "diminishes the anxiety with speaking L2 in an EFL context" (T-H), and "scaffolds new information" (T-I). This is a noteworthy insight from the teachers' interview data on their largely positive reactions to translanguaging within academic and social communication which reflect the reality of bi/multilinguals, and aligns with findings from previous research (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Hall & Cook, 2012). For example, the findings are similar to Adamson and Coulson (2015) study in Japan where the participants perceived translanguaging as useful for classroom management and clarification of tasks; likewise, Carstens (2016) whose study participants in South Africa believed that incorporating translanguaging by instructors would help facilitate an understanding of classroom teaching/learning.

This result is also interesting because bi/multilinguals in the educational field at universities in Thailand typically enact strict language separation policies that heavily influence the beliefs of teachers and students towards new paradigms like translanguaging (see Excerpt 9).

Excerpt 9 I would think of translanguaging at tertiary levels in Thailand as being professional, practical and in line with recent trends of teaching English. Translanguaging has gradually gained ground within higher education as a workable and professional method worthy of adoption in ELT classes and within EFL contexts too (T-F).

The report in Excerpt 9 on integrating translanguaging at tertiary levels also corroborates Moody and Eslami (2019), where the participants' responses were generally positive about the professionalism of translanguaging within higher education. While this study does not cover views from students about what they think of this practice, further studies can be conducted in this light to progress understanding of this phenomenon at the tertiary level. According to translanguaging scholars, languages are not separate entities but co-exist together in relation to one another (Conteh, 2018; Galante, 2020; Maphalala & Mpofo, 2020; Almusharraf, 2021). This justifies why Littlewood and Yu (2011) maintained that learners' first languages should be used in the classroom to support learning a target language and clarify meanings of words, to enhance the learners' development. Thus, in relation to the teachers' positive attitudes towards translanguaging, Ambele (2020), Källkvist et al. (2019) and Chukwuemeka and Ambele (2022) have observed that multilingualism is a resource, as languages can be used as a support for one another. For García (2017), all students would benefit from a translanguaging pedagogical approach if teachers make the learners' L1 visible in class.

Conclusion, implications and limitations

Over the last decades, translanguaging pedagogy has been given a lot of attention, especially within tertiary institutions; however, there has been a paucity of research on Thai teachers' perception of this issue. This study therefore adds to existing literature by examining Thai university EFL teachers' view of classroom translanguaging in tertiary education in Thailand. The data showed that the teachers, overall, showed positive attitudes towards classroom translanguaging pedagogy (i.e. the use of learners' L1 in the classroom) for L2 development and content learning. The teachers reported that it is seemingly difficult to ignore the use of L1 and L2 together in a Thai classroom context where English is used as the medium of instruction. Moreover, all ten participants expressed acceptance of the prospect of translanguaging within Thai tertiary education and called for a shift towards translanguaging. This shows that these teachers allow learners to strategically deploy their L1 in the classroom to achieve various teaching/learning tasks and outcomes. This calls for further research on this issue to be conducted with more Thai teachers across Thailand (especially those who do not support translanguaging), and students as well.

Some implications for practice, policy and research are worth further mentioning. First of all, most participants indicated that translanguaging was helpful and essential for acquiring

a second language, so L2 instructors may want to consider allowing and encouraging the use of translanguaging in their classrooms. Moreover, although the main goal of EFL classes is to improve students' English proficiency, attempts to promote an English-only approach should be discouraged (Canagarajah, 2018; Grcia & Otheguy, 2020; Ambele, 2020; Ambele & Watson Todd, 2021; Moody & Eslami, 2019). Teachers' positive stances are also essential in how successful an implementation of 'translanguaging' in any EFL context may be. According to Kleyn and Garcia (2019, p. 73):

... for translanguaging to live up to its full potential, educator must view all linguistic features and practices of any given student as a resource in general and specifically for their learning.

In addition, policymakers, administrators, and curriculum designers in Thai universities might want to find strategic ways to incorporate translanguaging into instruction (Hojeij et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2021; Chukwuemeka & Ambele, 2022).

As with any study, a major limitation in the present research is with the participants and context. Given the small number of participants and universities, the findings from this qualitative research cannot be generalised as reflection of general perceptions of Thai university lecturers in Thailand towards translanguaging. However, the present study could be used as a guide to further investigate this issue with more Thai university teachers and students alike.

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Appendix A: Table 1: Participants' demographics

Participants	Gender	University	Location
T-A	female	University 1	North
T-B	male	University 2	Centre
T-C	female	University 3	Northeast
T-D	female	University 4	Northeast
T-E	male	University 5	Centre
T-F	male	University 5	Centre
T-G	female	University 1	North
T-H	male	University 4	Northeast
T-I	female	University 3	Northeast
T-J	male	University 2	Centre

Appendix B: Semi-structured interview questions

1. What is your understanding and opinion on the monolingual approach of teaching English?
2. What is your understanding and opinion on the translanguaging approach of teaching in English?
3. What motivates you to utilise the full linguistic repertoire of your learners in the classroom regardless of the named languages policy in Thailand? Please explain.
4. Why and how do you employed the learners' L1 (Thai) in the classroom? Please explain.
5. What are your beliefs on incorporating translanguaging practices in Thai EFL university classrooms?

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