

## **Translanguaging Pedagogy in Thailand's English Medium of Instruction Classrooms: Teachers' Perspectives and Practices**

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### **Abstract**

The present study explores the perspectives and instructional approaches adopted by five university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Thailand about using translanguaging pedagogy in monolingual English instruction. Examining the concept of translanguaging pedagogy and framed in an exploratory-descriptive qualitative research design through individual interviews, the findings emphasize the significance of acknowledging students' first language, emphasizing the favorable opinions of the participants toward the use of translanguaging in English language classrooms. The findings also demonstrate that translanguaging pedagogy serves as a scaffolding mechanism, enabling students to leverage their pre-existing linguistic abilities to enhance their proficiency in the English language. This study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of research on translanguaging pedagogy, as it does not only place importance on students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, fostering a classroom environment that is safe and inclusive, but it also emphasizes the significance of language teachers recognizing and accepting the coexistence of translanguaging pedagogy in classrooms where English monolingual policies are mandated. We discuss the implications and offer research recommendations.

**Keywords:** EFL teachers, English medium of instruction, language classrooms, Thai teachers, translanguaging pedagogy

Translanguaging (TL), a language pedagogical concept and practice that has garnered significant attention among language educators worldwide, has emerged as a vital topic in language education research recently (Graham et al., 2021; Karabukut, 2022; Tian et al., 2020; Zhou & Mann, 2021). Many scholars believe that TL could have a positive impact on students' language learning experience since it provides a space for their linguistic repertoire and prior experiences (Graham et al., 2021) assists them in gaining more knowledge about the subject (Zhou & Mann, 2021), and embraces learners' identities and encourages more participation in

their learning (Rosiers et al., 2018). In other words, TL challenges traditional language learning practices and beliefs as a pedagogical approach, transforming how language is perceived and utilized as a multilingual resource for sense- and meaning-making (Wei, 2018).

Furthermore, García and Kleifgen (2019) and Tai and Wong (2022) mentioned that since TL challenges monolingual ideologies by valuing students' entire linguistic repertoire, it gives students more freedom in using their home language and the target language to think and learn. Thus, students are encouraged to draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire, encompassing their home and target languages, to enhance their understanding and learning experiences (García & Kleifgen, 2019).

Despite the positive light regarding TL in language classrooms, research also acknowledged some issues relating to TL as a practice and an approach in a classroom and how language teachers perceived TL (Barahona, 2020; Karabassova & San Isidro, 2023; Romanowski, 2020; Wei, 2023). For instance, Wei (2023) made a distinction between "pedagogical translanguaging" and "translanguaging pedagogy." According to Wei (2023), pedagogical translanguaging refers to using translanguaging practices as a tool for teaching and learning, such as using students' home languages to support their knowledge of the target language. In contrast, translanguaging pedagogy refers to a broader approach to teaching and learning centered on translanguaging principles, such as valuing and respecting students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and creating a safe and inclusive classroom environment where all students can participate and learn. Furthermore, Wei (2023) mentioned that translanguaging pedagogy involves a change of mindset, not just practice, and requires a fundamental shift in how teachers and learners view themselves and their roles in the classroom. He also argued that a translanguaging pedagogy is necessary for promoting inclusion and social justice in linguistically diverse classrooms.

However, the Karabassova and San Isidro (2023) study reported that teachers had difficulty implementing TL due to the monolingual language policy of some educational institutions. In other words, the conflict between the monolingual language policy's requirements and the communication-oriented pedagogy in many education institutions may impact how teachers perceive and practice TL. Although pedagogical TL has permeated the traditional belief regarding language learning by challenging the English-only policy in the classroom and viewing learners as bilinguals rather than foreign language learners (Barahona, 2020), some teachers reflected their opposite stance on TL practice, employing it to facilitate understanding but still using the target language as the primary language in the classroom (Romanowski, 2020).

In Thailand, where there is a firm policy from the government to improve Thai students' English language proficiency, as English is taught and spoken as a foreign language (Ulla, 2021), research on TL has also been carried out, investigating it as a classroom practice. For example, Kampittayakul (2018) revealed that TL fostered Thai students' interactional competence in one-on-one tutorials. Similarly, Ambele (2022), who explored Thai EFL university teachers incorporating TL into their classrooms, found that teachers held positive perceptions and attitudes toward translanguaging for L2 and content learning. However, the country's monolingual policy also hindered some teachers from employing it in their language classrooms (Ambele, 2022).

Although several studies on TL from various contexts (see Tian et al., 2020; Zhou & Mann, 2021; Jang, 2022) demonstrate a profound implication for teaching a language, acknowledging, and recognizing multilingualism as a fundamental aspect of language learning, only a few of these studies examined TL as a pedagogical practice in an ELT classroom, particularly at a higher education level in Thailand, where the country is still glued on the English language monolingual policy.

Thus, using the concept of translanguaging pedagogy (Gort & Sembiante, 2015), the present study explores EFL teachers' perceptions of and motivations for translanguaging in language teaching and learning classrooms in universities in Thailand. It also explores how these language teachers practice translanguaging pedagogy in their language classrooms, considering the English-monolingual policy in the country. We argue that exploring TL as a classroom practice not only contributes to the existing theoretical and empirical studies in the field but also sheds light on how TL is employed and perceived as a pedagogical practice among language teachers in universities in Thailand.

### **Pedagogical translanguaging or Translanguaging Pedagogy?**

Although TL has recurred through many research studies in various scholarly journals, it still appears unclear not only to many teachers (Alqahtani, 2022) but also to some scholars trying to distinguish between pedagogical TL and TL pedagogy (Wei, 2023). Cenoz and Gorter (2022) defined pedagogical translanguaging "as a theoretical and instructional approach that aims at improving language and content competencies in school contexts by using resources from the learner's whole linguistic repertoire" (p. 1). In other words, pedagogical translanguaging pertains to the deliberate utilization of the linguistic resources possessed by multilingual students to enhance both language learning and understanding. Cenoz and Gorter (2022) added that multilingual students' linguistic abilities surpass monolingual ones, as they possess a more extensive range of languages in their repertoire.

However, Wei (2023) introduced a conceptual differentiation between "pedagogical translanguaging" and "translanguaging pedagogy," arguing that while pedagogical TL encompasses utilizing TL practices to facilitate teaching and learning processes by harnessing students' native languages to improve their learning of the target language, translanguaging pedagogy pertains to a more expansive methodology of teaching and learning that revolves around the fundamental tenets of TL (Wei, 2023). These tenets encompass the appreciation and regard for students' linguistic and cultural heritages and establishing a secure and all-encompassing classroom environment wherein all students can engage and acquire knowledge (Wei, 2023).

TL has been adapted in classroom settings as a pedagogy that supports employing two or more languages while standing against the language separation ideologies widely rooted in many schools (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). These foundations of language separation reinforce only the target language use and avoid involving another language in the classroom. For instance, the review of the research conducted by Rowe (2018) demonstrated six principles that promote bilingual students' language and literacy learning and support TL in classroom instruction: realizing the importance of the students' languages and cultures by discussing different languages and cultures, demonstrating TL through actions and materials used in class, creating opportunities for communication with other languages, doing activities in the classroom by using two-way translation, reassuring students to write in all languages they know, and having

students sharing their work with a bilingual or multilingual audience. Rowe (2018) found that TL allowed students to move across languages, as evidenced by their written texts and audio recordings. Students were allowed to use their linguistic repertoires in writing and record their stories, supporting their bilingualism and biliteracy development, unlike in English-dominant school settings where communication was only in English.

## **Translanguaging practices in the classroom**

It is essential to highlight that the concept of translanguaging places a fundamental emphasis on communication rather than focusing solely on language. This differentiates it from codeswitching, which treats two languages separately (Aoyama, 2020). Translanguaging views bilinguals as individuals with a bilingual language system endowed with rich linguistic resources for learning and communication (Li, 2022). In essence, translanguaging seeks to encompass broader dimensions of language, incorporating a variety of languages and diverse cultures that contribute to the construction of personal and collective identities (Sato, 2023). In contrast, codeswitching is limited to addressing language superficially.

Moreover, the primary concern of translanguaging revolves around the strategic integration of languages in the classroom. However, Brevik and Rindal (2020) emphasized that "the major concern is not whether to allow other languages into the English classroom but how to balance target language exposure with students' needs for other languages" (p. 945). For instance, in a study conducted by Anderson (2022) involving eight secondary English teachers in India, the researcher found that these teachers attempted to balance the use of two languages in their classrooms, arguing that while, in written form, English is often used monolingually in India, in spoken interaction it is rarely used in isolation from other languages.

This concern highlights a nuanced approach to language instruction, recognizing that students possess valuable linguistic resources in their L1 that can be harnessed to improve comprehension and learning. The goal is to find a harmonious balance that upholds the benefits of target language exposure in line with the English monolingual policy, all while acknowledging and accommodating the linguistic diversity of students.

Many studies have widely confirmed the potential benefits of TL in learning and teaching a language, illuminating its inherent advantages and associated challenges. For example, Zhou and Mann (2021) conducted an extensive investigation that sought to explore the utilization of TL practices within the context of a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) environment at a university in China. The study has identified and elucidated three discrete pedagogical approaches teachers implemented in the classroom: explanatory, attention-raising, and rapport-building. The study's results revealed that students preferred TL as it allowed them to effectively utilize their diverse linguistic abilities and prior knowledge, enhancing their understanding of the subject matter.

The investigation into the intricacies of TL has also encompassed migrant communities. The scholarly inquiry conducted by Jang (2022) delved into the phenomenon of Uzbek-Russian speakers residing in South Korea. The study shed light on the pivotal role TL plays as a facilitator of linguistic exchange, enabling individuals to surmount academic obstacles and engage in meaningful communication. The research study emphasized the criticality of self-initiated and sustained TL practices, highlighting their pivotal function in establishing connections between language and literacy proficiencies, specifically within the context of migrant learners.

Research continuously demonstrates the positive stance regarding TL among many students. In Indonesia, Emilia and Hamied (2022) concluded that although some of the students from the study (15.2%) preferred using only English in class, most of them (82.6%) had positive attitudes towards TL in the classroom. This is also true with the university students in Qatar as they reflected positive attitudes towards using TL within English-medium instruction (EMI) courses (Graham et al., 2021).

Despite a few positive perceptions toward TL in learning and teaching a language by and among teachers and students, some challenges also surfaced. For instance, Rosiers et al. (2018), who conducted a qualitative study with five teacher participants in Canada, revealed that participants from a major Canadian university demonstrated that translanguaging was not perceived as a resource for better comprehension and knowledge extension. Instead, it tended to slow students' English learning. Moreover, Rosiers et al. (2018) noted that limited use of TL practices in the classroom might influence teacher-student relationships and learning enhancement because it undermines students' home language, which could be another resource in their language learning. Burton and Rajendram (2019) also mentioned that TL was believed to be only helpful for some specific purposes, particularly in lower proficiency classes, due to the belief that the English-only policy best maximizes the students' English learning outcomes.

Thus, although teachers may hold positive beliefs toward TL, it is undeniable that they must endeavor through resistance from mainstream education, which may influence their practices (Gorter & Arocena, 2020). This is because pedagogical TL has permeated the traditional belief regarding language learning by challenging the English-only policy in the classroom and viewing learners as bilinguals rather than foreign language learners (Barahona, 2020).

### **The Thai EFL context**

In Asia, English is mainly taught and learned as a foreign language in schools (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2019), and Thailand is no exception. English in the country has been recognized in Thai education since the reign of King Rama III (1824 – 1851) (Darasawang, 2007). However, it was during the time of King Rama VI (1910 – 1925) that English was included as a compulsory subject in schools for students after grade 4 (Darasawang, 2007).

Even though Thai education has privileged English and despite numerous reforms in ELT education, the English language proficiency of Thais still needs to be improved as required for international communication (Kaur et al., 2016). As a result, language education policies were revisited and changed, and among these changes is the making of learner-centered English language classrooms, maximizing the target language use (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017). However, Satienchayakorn and Grant (2023) emphasized that ELT educators in Thailand should not ignore students' contextual cultures, identities, and backgrounds. The uniqueness of individuals should be respected and mutually connected with pedagogies in classrooms (Satienchayakorn & Grant, 2023). Among various teaching pedagogies, a translanguaging stance helps support the multilingual reality in monolingual education discourses. It encourages learners to value their own social identities and communicative repertoires by incorporating translanguaging into the pedagogy (Simpson, 2020). However, this endeavor becomes challenging for teachers because few are trained to implement translanguaging in their classrooms. At the same time, they are continuously informed that the English-only approach in class is the best through teacher training programs (Simpson, 2020).

In Thailand, the use of translanguaging was investigated by Kampittayakul (2018) in a school offering one-on-one tutorials with 25 EFL learners aged between 16 and 18 years old. Thai teachers at Thai schools tutored eighteen participants, three had learned English with native English-speaking teachers, and the other four were from international schools. The tutorial class was conducted in English exclusively. The study concluded that TL could foster students' interactional competence in one-on-one tutorials. Specifically, those with lower English proficiency were found to use TL to interact with the teacher. In comparison, those with higher English proficiency used TL to enhance their knowledge through the lesson and appeared to be faster at developing their interactional competence.

Similarly, a study by Ambele (2022) explored the practices and perceptions of Thai EFL university teachers who incorporated TL in their classrooms. It was found that there were only a few Thai teachers who employed TL in their classrooms due to the monolingual policy for EFL classrooms that had been deeply rooted in Thailand. Ten teacher participants came from five universities in Thailand's North, Northeast, and Center regions. They all shared the same mother tongue with their students who majored in English. The research findings presented positive attitudes among this group of teachers towards TL pedagogy for L2 and content learning.

While numerous scholarly investigations have been conducted on TL, it is worth noting that only a limited number of these inquiries have specifically examined the implementation of TL as a pedagogical approach within ELT, particularly within the higher education context in Thailand. This is noteworthy given that Thailand continues to adhere to an English language monolingual policy. To address this gap, the current study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers perceive translanguaging pedagogy in a monolingual English language policy in Thai language teaching classrooms?
2. What translanguaging pedagogical practices do teachers have in their language classrooms?

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

This study follows the exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) research design (Hunter et al., 2019) to explore and understand teachers' teaching practices and beliefs toward translanguaging in the classroom. According to Hunter et al. (2019), employing the EDQ allows the researchers to explore a relatively understudied phenomenon, particularly when the research objectives involve producing a succinct and comprehensive description. Thus, EDQ enhances comprehension of the individuals or entities implicated, their involvement, and the spatial context in which the events unfolded, all about the phenomena being examined (Hunter et al., 2019). In the current study, translanguaging pedagogy as a phenomenon is explored through Thai university EFL teachers' perspectives, using a semi-structured individual interview.

This study was approved by the researchers' institutional research board for human research with approval number WUEC-23-144-01.

## **Context and participants**

The study was conducted at universities in the south of Thailand, where five Thai EFL teachers were teaching at the time of the survey. The southern region of Thailand presents a unique context for the study as people living in this region speak standard Thai, southern Thai dialect, and Chinese language. In contrast, some of them from deep-south Thailand speak Malay as their mother tongue. Thus, the region clearly reflects multilingualism and multiculturalism, providing a good site where translanguaging is practiced in the English language classroom.

To seek volunteers for the study, the researchers posted a “call for participants” announcement on the English language teacher's Facebook group in Thailand and a Google form link, where a brief introduction of the study and participants’ biographical information were presented. After a month, 25 teachers responded to the online survey. Employing a purposive sampling, only eight (8) teachers were eligible to participate in the study based on the following criteria: must have been using two or more languages in their English classroom, must have teaching experience at the tertiary level of at least one year or more, and must be willing to participate in the interview. Of these eight (8) teachers, two (2) withdrew from the study due to personal reasons, and one (1) had a conflict of schedule and thus could not find time for the interview. Therefore, five (5) teachers (three females and two male teachers) from two government universities in the southern region of Thailand were interviewed. The participants had a teaching experience between five and 15 years. Five of them held Master’s degrees, and one had a Ph.D.

Participants were contacted by the email address they provided in the Google survey link, confirming their convenient date and time to be interviewed. The interview was done face-to-face in coffee shops or at their respective offices.

As the interview was semi-structured, the researchers prepared five sample questions asking participants mainly about their perceptions of translanguaging pedagogy in the Thai language teaching context and the translanguaging pedagogical practices they employed in their language classrooms. However, during the interview, participants were asked about their preferred language (Thai and English languages) to use. With their permission, the interview was recorded via mobile phone and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality of the data and that only the researchers had access to the recorded interview stored on their personal computers.

## **Data analysis**

Manual transcription of the interview data followed after all the interviews were conducted. These transcripts were sent to each participant so that they could check them for accuracy, transparency, and accountability. After the member checking (Birt et al., 2016), the transcribed interview data were copied and pasted on a Microsoft Excel file for the researchers to sort, review, code, and analyze the qualitative data. The researchers analyzed the data using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) by repeatedly reading the data to see if the research questions asked for the study were answered, getting familiar with the data, coding the entire dataset, and constructing themes. The data were approached inductively by the researcher’s engagement with inductive coding and theme development. In other words, thematic analysis involves the process of a bottom-up approach to develop codes and themes for identifying meanings and interpreting the data (Terry et al., 2017).

After the coding, the researchers discussed the codes generated to develop suitable themes. Lastly, the themes developed from the findings were then used to conclude how Thai university teachers perceived translanguaging pedagogy in the Thai language teaching context and what translanguaging pedagogical practices they employed in their language classrooms.

In presenting the findings, participants were assigned codes (P1, P2, etc.) to hide their identities and maintain anonymity.

## Findings

Based on the research questions posed in this study, the researchers categorized the significant findings into (a) *teachers' perceptions of TL* and (b) *teachers' TL pedagogical practices*. Under each theme, the researchers were also able to identify two subthemes.

- 1) Allowing students to use their local language in the classroom and,
- 2) acknowledging students' native language for theme one, and proficiency-adjusted translanguaging pedagogy and group discussion as a site for translanguaging pedagogical practice.

## Teachers' perceptions of TL

### Allowing students to use their local language in the classroom

From the individual interviews, although participants were not sure about their theoretical understanding of the term translanguaging, as they only heard it from their colleagues, they held positive perceptions of the practice of using two or more native or local languages of the students in their English language classroom to support the learning of the target language. For example, Participant 3 opined:

I've never studied it [translanguaging] in detail. If I have to define this term, I'd say it is when we change from speaking in one language to another. Is that correct? I have heard of this because it's also a topic in applied linguistics, and I think it is great to let our students use their local language to communicate their thoughts in the classroom. (P3)

Furthermore, participants' understanding of translanguaging concentrated mainly on allowing students to use their local language to express themselves in the language classroom. Participant 2 narrated:

Last year, there were many students whose first language was Malay, and at that time, I told them to work in groups. They read texts, worked together, and exchanged ideas with their group members, so they exchanged ideas about the lesson's content in Malay, and I didn't have problems with that. I used to ask the students who use another language rather than English in class, and they said it's because they could communicate better. And yesterday, my students spoke their southern Thai dialect, so I listened to them for a while. The speaker used the dialect in a conversation, and the others replied with standard Thai. So I asked why the reply was in standard Thai, not the southern Thai dialect, and the students said that it was because they couldn't speak the southern Thai dialect but understood what was said. (P2)

Participants' positive perceptions toward using students' L1 in their language classrooms can be attributed to how they felt about the monolingual English language policy in Thai language teaching classrooms. Participants maintained that the 'English-only policy in the classroom' is



no longer relevant as “*English is not a dominant language at all due to global Englishes and we have our own language, we have our first language*” (P1).

### **Acknowledging students’ native language**

Despite the participants’ lack of theoretical knowledge regarding translanguaging, they recognized the importance of students’ native language when learning English. They believed that without acknowledging and recognizing students’ first language in the English language classroom, students would not understand and master the target language. This can be reflected in the following excerpt.

Translanguaging is being aware of both the student’s native language and the one they’re supposed to learn to build their language skills. So yep, it is using two or more languages to learn one specific language. (P1)

Participants also emphasized that it is essential to know how students’ mother tongue connects to their English language learning, as students may know a lot of information and skills in their original language, which can help them learn the target language faster and better.

I think Thai is important because it’s the main language for the students to work with. And in my opinion, if you can’t communicate in Thai clearly and correctly, you can’t transfer your ideas into English or into other languages. We need to build up their skills first. Even though they translate reading texts into Thai, they learn some English from reading in English, no matter how much they get from it. So when the students have to speak, they will communicate their comprehension in Thai. (P2)

Participant 2 also noted that translanguaging tries to help students learn and improve their language skills in the target language by using their native language in a planned and strategic way. In other words, although “*learning a language is a complicated process, the skills students learn in one language can be used in the target language.*”

While Participants 1 and 2 highlighted the significant role played by the first language on students’ learning of the target language, Participant 4 provided a nuanced perspective on using a native language in the context of English teaching. He acknowledged the benefits of maintaining an English-only environment and the practical necessity of occasionally incorporating L1 to support student understanding.

For me, I don’t mind if there is another language used in the English class. It is good to speak English all the time because the students will get exposed to the target language, but sometimes, in some teaching contexts, an explanation in the mother tongue or the local language is easy for students to understand. Sometimes switching to Thai is necessary; I do that a lot in my class. (P4)

## **Teachers’ TL pedagogical practices**

### **Proficiency-adjusted translanguaging pedagogy**

The interview findings also revealed how and when teachers must employ translanguaging pedagogy in their English language classrooms. As highlighted by Participant 4, students’ English language proficiency also played an important factor in translanguaging pedagogy. He said:

The lower the students' proficiency is, the more teachers need to allow their students to use their first language. I think there is no question about the importance of allowing students to use their L1 in the classroom. I think the only question is to what extent we have to allow our students to speak the Thai language. (P4)

Noting students' English proficiency levels, Participant 5 also supported Participant 4, and they maintained that students' language skills are very important in translanguaging pedagogy. They believed that students who did not know English could use their L1 to understand the lesson and participate in the group discussion. On the other hand, as students improve their English, they may rely less on L1 in favor of a more engaging setting for learning English.

If we speak 100% English, certainly we can do that, but there will be only 10% or 5% of the students who understand. The rest will be lost. The proficiency or capability of the students is important. If they are advanced learners, we speak in English 100%. But if it is those struggling students, suppose that we teach English grammar and speak in English, only that's already difficult for them. (P5)

Participants 4 and 5 emphasize tailoring language use to match students' proficiency levels. They recognize that using 100% English might be effective for advanced learners with a firm grasp of the language. However, they also acknowledge that an exclusive English-language environment could lead to confusion and disengagement for students with lower proficiency, as understanding might be limited.

### **Group discussion as a site for translanguaging pedagogical practice**

Given that language proficiency level is important in translanguaging pedagogy, participants were asked what classroom situations and activities employ translanguaging pedagogy. Participants' typical response was on classroom group discussion, pair work, and small group activities. For example,

Mostly, I use peer learning techniques, which involve having them work in groups. They will get into their own group and share ideas using their own language. I observed them and noticed that some students were not good at English, but when they worked in groups with others, they were encouraged to learn more by their friends in the same group. (P3)

Moreover, Participant 3 contended that putting her students in groups for language activities not only helped the students accomplish the task but also provided them with the opportunity to express themselves and contribute to the success of their activity using their language.

The pressure to communicate and express among students was also observed by Participant 2. Thus, like how Participant 2 organized her class for language activities, Participant 3 also put her students in groups to allow them to learn from each other using their L1.

...like discussing and talking to each other in the classroom. This is for sure, the students can't speak fluently in English, and it'll become a burden in their communication. The students sometimes have some ideas to share, but if they are required to speak in English, that will prevent them from speaking. So, I feel like if you can't make it in English and want to speak in Thai, let's do it, I'm okay with that. Speak your ideas in Thai, and I'll help paraphrase their ideas into English. (P2)

Participants also acknowledged that putting students in groups and allowing them to use their L1 would provide an optimal setting for translanguaging as group work fosters the exchange

of ideas, the articulation of viewpoints, and involvement in substantial dialogues. As Participant 4 opined:

Group work helps students with different linguistic backgrounds to come together, where they can use different language that would also create a welcoming and authentic learning environment. I also believe that when students use their first language, they are more likely to be able to express complex ideas easily, and they would have a common understanding and fruitful discussions.

Participant 1 also shared that, based on his experience, students became more interactive and less reserved when they could speak their native language. He mentioned:

So yeah, at certain amount of time, the students become more active and then they've begun to participate rather than just staying quiet the whole class because they couldn't speak their language or they're scared to try to speak in English. So, yeah, I see more confidence in the students when they are able to speak their language at certain amount of time but...yeah they become too confident when they speak a lot of Thai (lol), so I try to avoid that – I give a specific limitation. And yeah, they understand more vocabulary because they see the difference between the two languages – two words in different languages.

However, participant 1 also acknowledged that he always balanced the time when he allowed students to use their L1 in the classroom, thinking that his students might be too familiar and comfortable speaking Thai and forgetting that they also needed to learn English.

## **Discussion**

The present study explored Thai language teachers' perceptions of translanguaging pedagogy within their English monolingual policy language teaching context and what translanguaging pedagogical practices they have in their language classrooms. Based on the findings, the study highlights the participants' positive attitudes toward translanguaging in English classrooms, underscoring the importance of recognizing students' L1 in the English learning process and their English language proficiency in a translanguaging pedagogy. The study also revealed that TL pedagogy served as language support for students to express themselves, especially in group work and group discussions, which are ideal settings for TL pedagogy.

From the findings, the participants' positive perceptions toward translanguaging can be attributed to their acknowledgment of the significance of accommodating their students' L1 repertoire. The participants believed that students could improve their understanding of the target language by using their L1 as a medium of expression in English as a medium of instruction in the classroom. This finding indicates that the use of translanguaging pedagogy creates a supporting framework like scaffolding within an educational context where English is the primary language of instruction, as it entails leveraging students' pre-existing linguistic abilities to learn and develop English language competence (García & Kleifgen, 2019; Tai & Wong, 2022). In other words, by allowing students to utilize their L1, language teachers recognize the inherent worth of the linguistic abilities that students already possess (Graham et al., 2021). Additionally, using students' L1 in the language classroom has the potential to cultivate a learning atmosphere that is more inclusive and supportive, enabling students to feel empowered to actively participate in the activities according to their linguistic proficiency and personal preferences (Rosiers et al., 2018; Zhou & Mann, 2021).

However, while the findings suggest that TL may increase the likelihood that students would have a sense of comfort in articulating their thoughts and engaging actively in class activities using their L1, participants also acknowledged that because of the English monolingual policy within their context, participants had to limit the use of L1 in their English language classes. In other words, while participants may allow students to use their L1 in the classroom, they also consider that students still have to learn English, striking a balance between using the L1 and understanding the target language. Littlewood and Yu (2011) have also acknowledged such a practice about striking a balance between the use of L1 in the classroom and the target language.

Furthermore, although teachers emphasize the significance of acknowledging and recognizing students' L1, this acknowledgment does not necessarily imply a shift to using it as the primary medium of instruction. In the EMI classroom, the study's context, teachers' acknowledgment of students' L1 may refer to recognizing its importance in learning, understanding the potential challenges students face, and incorporating strategies to address those challenges. This recognition does not necessarily mean that teachers use the student's L1 as the primary language of instruction. Instead, it may involve a more nuanced approach, such as incorporating translanguaging pedagogy selectively when needed, as mentioned in the statement, "*Sometimes switching to Thai is necessary; I do that a lot in my class.*" In other words, language teachers may use students' L1 strategically as a scaffolding mechanism, providing support when students struggle to understand English concepts. This targeted use of the L1 aligns with the findings that translanguaging pedagogy serves as a scaffolding mechanism, enabling students to leverage their pre-existing linguistic abilities to enhance their proficiency in the English language (Burton & Rajendram, 2019).

Translanguaging pedagogy as a form of scaffolding highlights its function as a means of connecting students' current language abilities with acquiring the desired target language. Although Burton and Rajendram (2019) argued that translanguaging as a temporary scaffold to enhance English language abilities does not cultivate multilingual competence among students, in the Thai context, where English is used as a medium of instruction, TL becomes a support system for students to learn the language. We argue that language learning is a multifaceted undertaking wherein several linguistic components interact and together contribute to one's total proficiency. In other words, rather than approaching languages as separate entities, translanguaging pedagogy may become an avenue that advocates for recognizing linguistic fluidity and encourages a comprehensive approach to language teaching.

The findings from the study also underscore the need to tailor translanguaging pedagogy to align with students' levels of English proficiency. The insights provided by participants, particularly those from Participants 4 and 5, offer valuable considerations for implementing translanguaging pedagogy in English language classrooms. That is, language teachers must allow students to utilize their L1 in the classroom when they have extremely low English ability, as it improves students' understanding and encourages their active involvement in the class. Although Burton and Rajendram (2019) recognized that despite teachers adopting a language-as-resource approach to translanguaging, it was frequently perceived as a transitory tool utilized to fulfill specific objectives in courses with students of lower levels of proficiency, participants felt that enabling students with inadequate English proficiency to communicate in their L1 not only improves lesson comprehension but also fosters an atmosphere where students may actively engage in language-related activities. Such a finding may suggest that

translanguaging pedagogy could also serve as a bridge for students with limited English ability, assisting them in better understanding the lessons and promoting a more welcoming and conducive learning environment.

Based on the study's findings, it is also essential to highlight the significance of group work and other collaborative language activities where students can engage themselves in the language classrooms. The interview findings suggest that collaborative classroom activities like group work are a potent site for translanguaging, where students may feel comfortable sharing their ideas with their classmates using their L1. Putting students in group activities in a translanguaging pedagogy may not only recognize the varying levels of language proficiency among students, but it may also create a nurturing atmosphere in which they may confidently articulate their thoughts and participate in substantive discussions. In other words, such a technique not only enhances the process of acquiring language skills but also fosters the development of confidence and active engagement among students in a language classroom. Burton and Rajendram (2019) emphasized that teachers can structure and oversee project-based instructional methods and foster collaborative groups among students, enabling them to actively participate in learning activities that align with the course's educational objectives. Thus, within these clusters, students not only engage in translanguaging practices, enabling them to acquire and employ the necessary linguistic structures and discourse strategies to accomplish a given job, but it also facilitates the enhancement of their peers' linguistic and discursive competence (Burton & Rajendram, 2019).

Lastly, our study contributes to the literature on translanguaging pedagogy as our findings recognize that TL pedagogy not only values students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and creates a safe and inclusive classroom environment necessary for promoting social justice (Wei, 2023) but also highlights the importance of language teachers' critical acceptance that TL pedagogy can co-exist in the classroom, where English monolingual policy is prescribed, serving as a language scaffolding to support students in the learning of English. This suggests that despite the monolingual policy, teachers can act as social justice agents in the classroom, accommodating students' L1 within the monolingual English policy in Thailand. This means that regardless of the EMI context, they still do translanguaging to support their student's learning needs, following Sahan and Rose (2021), who argued that EMI is not English-only instruction but multilingual.

## **Conclusion and Implications**

Our findings highlight the discourse surrounding translanguaging pedagogy by emphasizing its significance in recognizing and appreciating students' diverse linguistic backgrounds, fostering an inclusive educational environment, and facilitating learning English in environments where English is the dominant language. However, while our findings recognize the capacity for the coexistence of translanguaging and monolingual policies, demonstrating how translanguaging supports students' linguistic development, participants also noted some of TL's limitations. The findings revealed that striking a balance between L1 and the target language in the classroom, students' language proficiency in the target language, and the need for interactive and collaborative language activities where students can use their L1 must be considered in TL pedagogy.

Thus, in Thailand's language teaching and learning classrooms, the Thai EFL teachers' perceptions of and motivations for translanguaging were still shaped by the existing English-

monolingual policy. Deviating from this language policy may benefit and cost language teachers and students. Teachers may face professional consequences, isolation, and legal issues. In addition, divergent language policies can confuse and create an uneven learning environment, making it difficult for students to prepare for real-world situations. However, varying language use can encourage critical thinking, creativity, cultural sensitivity, and individualized learning. Therefore, language teachers must balance cultural awareness, customization, and conformity to linguistic conventions for a constructive educational setting.

Although our study was only conducted in Thailand, involving five Thai English university teachers, the findings have implications for a broader context. First, language teachers need to acknowledge the potential benefits of promoting the utilization of students' L1, as it can effectively enhance the quality of interactions and improve learning results. In other words, teachers should purposefully integrate students' (L1 to facilitate a more seamless progression in learning English language skills, especially for students with limited competence levels. Second, teachers should allow students to participate in collaborative language activities to effectively articulate their thoughts in their mother tongue and foster substantial interactions that enhance language proficiency. Third, the findings critique the conventional belief in rigid monolingual policies, arguing that the use of translanguaging pedagogy is feasible and may positively impact English monolingual classrooms. Thus, teachers and policymakers should reevaluate existing rules to incorporate translanguaging that aligns with language learning objectives.

Moreover, since this study is limited to the Thai context, there is an opportunity to explore research on TL pedagogy using ethnographic methods in diverse contexts to examine and explore teachers' practices in classrooms. This exploration can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of TL pedagogy, fostering principles of equality, respect, and justice in language teaching and learning. Additionally, it is essential to note that this study relies solely on participant interviews as a data-gathering tool. Future research studies could incorporate data triangulation to gain additional perspectives on translanguaging. Lastly, future investigations may delve deeper into the study by incorporating critical language pedagogy, a social justice framework, or adopting an ecological perspective to enhance the insights gained from the research.

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