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# Translanguaging in Practice: Insights from a Thai University EFL Classroom

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## Abstract

Translanguaging has been increasingly recognized as a useful pedagogical approach for supporting multilingual learners in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. In Thailand, however, research has largely focused on perceptions rather than classroom practices. This study explores how a Thai EFL university teacher and his students implement translanguaging during instruction. Using a qualitative case study with supplementary quantitative data, we collected information from 16 classroom observations, online surveys with 77 students, interviews with the teacher and 12 students, the teacher's reflective journal, and relevant documents. Qualitative data were examined using thematic analysis, and the survey data were analyzed using the SPSS software package. The findings reveal that translanguaging predominantly took weak forms, such as translation and spontaneous language shifts across classroom tasks. The teacher strategically used his native language to explain complex content, give directions, and support student learning. Meanwhile, students used translanguaging for classroom tasks, casual communication with peers, clarification, and note-taking. Overall, translanguaging was perceived as improving understanding, reducing anxiety, and encouraging participation. The findings suggest that teacher preparation, curriculum discussions, and broader institutional conversations should consider how flexible language use can support student learning and promote more inclusive language education.

**Keywords***:* translanguaging Thailand, EMI pedagogy, student engagement, EFL classrooms, language policy

In recent years, English-medium instruction (EMI) and English-only policies have been widely adopted in higher education to boost English proficiency (Boonsuk & Ambele, 2024; Sahan et al., 2022), yet these policies often hinder students' ability to express themselves and comprehend content. As one student noted:

> I feel like I cannot express my thoughts adequately when I speak English. I do not know a lot of vocabulary, so I only use basic words and many fillers, such as *er* and *ah*. When desperate, I even use Thai to convey my thoughts.

Such frustration reflects how English-only instruction restricts learners from using their full linguistic repertoires. This tension may be understood as "a product of coloniality" (McKinney, 2020, p. 116), conceptualized as the "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). In Thailand, colonial ideologies surface in hiring practices that privilege native English speakers (Waelate et al., 2019; Watson Todd, 2006; Watson Todd & Pojanapunya, 2009) and in national policies that recruit large numbers of Native English Speaker (NES) teachers (Rohitsatien, 2020).

Beyond affecting teachers, English hegemony can also marginalize students. It may devalue learners' native languages and cultures (Wahyudi, 2023) and reduce their confidence or access to meaningful learning opportunities (García, 2020; Wang, 2023). In contexts like Thailand, where English and Thai differ markedly in linguistic and cultural features, rigid monolingual policies can further impede students' ability to learn complex content (Xiao & Lertlit, 2022).

Translanguaging has emerged as a promising alternative (García, 2009a). Defined here as a pedagogical approach that values the dynamic use of all linguistic resources for meaning-making, translanguaging has been shown internationally to support comprehension, inclusion, and identity affirmation (Dougherty, 2021; Mbirimi-Hungwe, 2020; Rajendram, 2021). In Thailand, however, research has tended to focus on teacher and student attitudes rather than classroom practice (Ambele, 2022; Khonjan & Ambele, 2023). Although Pawapootanon et al. (2025) explored translanguaging in a secondary school, studies in Thai university settings remain limited.

Drawing on Cenoz and Gorter's (2021) strong–weak translanguaging framework, this study investigates how one Thai English as a foreign language (EFL) university teacher and his students enact translanguaging. Data come from classroom observations, interviews, reflective journals, artefacts, and a survey. Two research questions guide the inquiry:

1. In what contexts and for what purposes does a Thai university EFL teacher use translanguaging?

2. How and why do Thai undergraduates use translanguaging in EFL classrooms?

## Literature Review

### *Translanguaging*

Translanguaging originated in Williams' (1994) Welsh–English pedagogical practice, where teachers strategically alternated languages to support learning. Later, Cenoz (2017) conceptualized translanguaging as a planned pedagogy involving the intentional use of students' full linguistic repertoires. However, such teacher-centered definitions may underrepresent the fluid, student-initiated multilingual behaviors observable in real classrooms. The field continues to debate whether planned and spontaneous translanguaging represent distinct constructs or lie along a continuum.

To understand how translanguaging practices unfold, Li (2011) introduced the notion of translanguaging space, a dynamic arena where linguistic boundaries are transcended. Building on this, García et al. (2022) propose three pedagogical strands: stance (the belief that students' multilingual resources are rights and assets), design (intentional incorporation of multiple languages into materials, activities, and assessments), and shift (spontaneous in-class adaptations to support understanding). While this framework promotes linguistic equity, how teachers in EFL contexts with monolingual norms, such as Thailand, operationalize these principles is still underexplored.

Translanguaging practices can also be categorized into strong and weak forms depending on the level of pedagogical planning and integration of languages (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). Strong forms, namely enhancing metalinguistic awareness and using students' entire linguistic repertoires, tend to support deeper learning but typically require training, administrative support, and time for multilingual lesson design. Metalinguistic awareness involves planned activities that compare linguistic features across languages, while the broader use of students' full repertoires allows flexible language use without explicit contrast and is considered weaker by comparison. Weak forms, including integrated language curricula and translanguaging shift, are more prevalent in contexts with English-only norms or limited institutional support. Integrated curricula acknowledge multilingualism but maintain language separation in classes, while translanguaging shift is the weakest form, referring to spontaneous language alternation for immediate communicative needs (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021).

While strong forms offer deeper metalinguistic engagement, weak forms remain more common in EFL settings due to policy constraints, teacher beliefs, and time limitations (Pawapootanon et al., 2025). This disparity raises an important question: in contexts where English has symbolic power and teachers may translanguage only for specific purposes, such as efficiency or repair, how should translanguaging be conceptualized in EFL environments?

### *Translanguaging in an EFL Setting*

Empirical research on translanguaging in EFL contexts generally follows two strands. The first examines perceptions of translanguaging. Studies show that teachers and students often view translanguaging positively for comprehension and participation (Ambele & Neumaihom, 2024; Xiao & Lertlit, 2022; Yuvayapan, 2019), especially for lower-proficiency learners. However, these perception-based studies remain largely speculative because they seldom document real classroom interaction.

The second strand explores actual translanguaging practices. Elashhab (2020) observed Saudi teachers using translanguaging strategically for meaning scaffolding, while Yuan and Yang (2020) identified teachers' integration of multiple linguistic and discursive resources in Chinese EMI settings. Other research shows students' interaction-driven translanguaging in peer talk (Li & Qu, 2024) and teacher–student exchanges (Emilia & Hamied, 2022; Neumaihom et al., 2024), and highlights socio-affective benefits such as reduced anxiety (Ulum, 2024; Zam et al., 2024) and increased participation (Lan, 2025; Okoye & Ambele, 2023; Ulum, 2024). Yet, as Chaisiri (2022) notes, these benefits often remain unrealized in Thailand unless teachers are supported to implement translanguaging beyond surface-level translation.

Alongside these reported strengths, scholars note some limitations. Over-reliance on learners' first language (L1) may reduce opportunities for target-language practice if not carefully balanced (Tai, 2025). Translanguaging may lead to students' marginalization and isolation if teachers over-emphasize one language (Itoi & Mizukura, 2023; Ticheloven et al., 2019). In addition, some scholars caution that translanguaging can unintentionally reinforce linguistic hierarchies if specific languages dominate classroom instruction (Jaspers, 2018). Acknowledging these concerns allows for a more nuanced understanding and positions the current study to explore both the affordances and limitations of translanguaging in Thai EFL contexts.

Overall, while prior work has documented attitudes and general benefits (e.g., Ambele & Neumaihom, 2024; Elashhab, 2020; Yuvayapan, 2019), fewer studies have examined how translanguaging unfolds in Thai university classrooms. This study addresses that gap by investigating not only the enactment of translanguaging but also the specific purposes for which students use it—whether for comprehension, cognitive processing, social meaning-making, or communication repair—thus informing future curriculum design, teacher development, and language policy.

## Method

### *Research Context and Course*

This study was carried out in a prestigious, large public Thai university located in central Thailand. The university had almost 20 faculties and more than 400 Thai and international programs. Given its status as one of the oldest and most

reputable universities in the country, students came from all regions and had a range of socio-economic backgrounds, with the majority from middle-class families. Overall, students at this university had diverse English proficiency levels, ranging from A1 to C2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), according to their English admission scores. At the time of data collection, all students were required to take at least three English courses (9 credits).

The present research was situated in two sections of EN103 English for Job Application (pseudonym), taught by an experienced Thai EFL teacher. To maintain the authenticity of classroom language practices, we did not intervene in instructional activities, preserving the naturalistic environment essential for qualitative inquiry into translanguaging practices (Merriam, 2009).

### *Research Approach and Design*

We employed a qualitative case study design to investigate how translanguaging was enacted by the teacher and undergraduate students in their regular classroom context. A case study is appropriate for examining complex linguistic behaviors in natural settings using multiple data sources for in-depth insight (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Following naturalistic qualitative principles, the two EN103 sections were treated as intact learning environments without researcher intervention. All students completed a short survey on translanguaging, and 12 were purposively selected for interviews based on their willingness and observed or reported translanguaging use.

Five data sources informed the analysis: (1) a student survey, offering descriptive context; (2) classroom observations, documenting natural translanguaging; (3) in-depth interviews with the teacher and 12 students; (4) the teacher's reflective journal; and (5) documents and artefacts. Although the survey provided quantitative input, the study remained qualitative in orientation, with interviews and observations as the primary analytic sources. Triangulation across datasets enhanced the credibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### *Participants*

The participants comprised one EFL university teacher and his students. The teacher was purposively selected based on the criteria of willingness, Thai nationality, current employment in higher education, at least two years of teaching experience, and demonstrated use of translanguaging. Selecting a single teacher allowed an in-depth examination of instructional interaction, consistent with qualitative case study principles that emphasize depth over breadth (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The teacher held a master's degree and nearly a decade of teaching experience, and his philosophy reflected a translanguaging stance (García, 2009a, 2009b), aiming to draw on students' full linguistic repertoires to avoid excluding lower-proficiency learners. During data collection, he taught two sections of EN103 and permitted full classroom observation.

All 95 students in these sections were invited to participate, and all provided informed consent; 77 completed the online questionnaire (a response rate of 81%), with possible minor non-response bias due to survey timing. For instance, some students may have been in a hurry to attend another class, as the survey was administered at the end of the lesson. Additionally, 12 students (see Table 1) volunteered for follow-up interviews, representing multiple faculties and self-reported CEFR levels from A1 to B2. This diversity offered valuable perspectives on translanguaging across different academic and linguistic backgrounds.

**Table 1**
*Student Participant Profile*

| No. | Pseudonyms | Gender | Year | Faculty | Self-Rated Proficiency Level |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Keerati | Female | 2 | Humanities | B1 |
| 2 | Janejira | Female | 2 | Social sciences | B1 |
| 3 | Jindarat | Female | 2 | Business administration | A1 |
| 4 | Chawalee | Female | 2 | Social sciences | A2 |
| 5 | Nanthida | Female | 2 | Humanities | B2 |
| 6 | Thanathit | Male | 4 | Agro-industry | A2 |
| 7 | Theeraphob | Male | 4 | Forestry | B1 |
| 8 | Thanon | Male | 2 | Agriculture | A1 |
| 9 | Natcha | Female | 3 | Science | A2 |
| 10 | Nirada | Female | 2 | Social sciences | B1 |
| 11 | Pongpon | Male | 3 | Science | A2 |
| 12 | Pimpisa | Female | 2 | Humanities | B1 |

### *Data Collection Tools*

#### *Qualitative Tools*

Four data collection tools were employed: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, the teacher's reflective journal, and relevant documents and artefacts. We observed the two English sections 16 times (eight each) between June and July 2024, using an adapted protocol from Merriam and Tisdell (2016) (see Appendix), focusing on translanguaging implementation, classroom atmosphere, and teacher–student interactions. We acted as complete observers, remaining non-intrusive.

The teacher and 12 students participated in Zoom semi-structured interviews (45–60 minutes each). Interview questions were developed using Castillo-Montoya's (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement Framework and validated by an expert.

The teacher completed a reflective journal responding to four writing prompts: (1) When and why do you incorporate translanguaging (the use of Thai

or other local dialects) in your EFL classes? (2) Do you think translanguaging can foster social justice awareness among students? Why or why not? (3) How do you scaffold translanguaging activities to ensure all students, regardless of proficiency level, feel comfortable and empowered to participate in discussions? (4) What are your perceptions of implementing translanguaging in EFL classrooms? Do you think this approach can develop students' English skills?

Lastly, the researchers collected relevant documents and artefacts from all EFL classes. We gathered a course syllabus, a textbook (Business Essentials B1: The Key Skills for English in the Workplace, published by Oxford University Press, 2019), PowerPoint slides, supplementary materials, and student notes.

#### *Quantitative Tool*

This study administered an online survey to students only, as the number of participants was sufficient to yield statistically meaningful findings. The questionnaire was divided into four parts with 42 items, all translated into Thai and accompanied by examples for items that might cause confusion. Before students completed the survey, one of the researchers explained key terms that could be challenging, such as translanguaging and social justice. In developing the questionnaire, the researcher adopted selected questions from Öztürk and Çubukçu (2022) and Xiao and Lertlit (2022) and formulated additional items to align with the research questions. To ensure validity, the questionnaire was sent to three experts to evaluate the Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC); the overall IOC value was 0.95. After revising the survey based on expert suggestions, we piloted it with 40 students who shared characteristics with the study participants, then refined the items again to ensure practicality. For this project, we drew only on two sections of the survey: demographic data and the application of translanguaging in EFL classrooms.

### *Research Procedures*

Data collection took place between June and August 2024. The researchers first visited the two classes taught by the participating teacher. In the first session, we introduced ourselves and informed students about the research project to help them become familiar with our presence. During classroom observations, we took field notes and collected relevant documents and artefacts. At the same time, the teacher was asked to keep a reflective journal addressing the four writing prompts. At the end of July 2024, we administered the online survey and invited students to participate in follow-up interviews. The interviews were then conducted in August 2024.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis followed the nature of the research questions. For Research Question 1, which drew on classroom observations, artefacts, the teacher's reflective journal, and interviews, we used inductive thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2006). Audio data were transcribed verbatim, and Thai transcripts were

standardized. Each researcher independently reviewed the transcripts, generated initial descriptive codes, and then compared and refined them to reduce overlap and improve coherence. Related codes were merged into broader categories and reviewed for alignment with the research questions and theoretical frameworks.

Although initial coding differed between the two authors, consensus was reached through iterative discussion, resulting in three overarching themes: classroom management, cognitive support, and learning engagement. Detailed codes were retained as subcomponents within these themes. Minor formatting inconsistencies were resolved collaboratively. Final themes were applied consistently across the dataset and supported with illustrative excerpts. Examples of coding and theme development are illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2**
*Demonstrative Example of Coding and Theme Development*

| **Data Source** | **Quote (Translated if Thai)** | **Preliminary Code** | **Refined Code** | **Final Theme** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom observation | ถ้าเราดูตาม *course syllabus* เราจะเห็นว่า *project "You are hired"* จะเกิดขึ้นสัปดาห์หลัง *midterm* [If you look at the course syllabus, you will see that the project "You are hired" will be submitted a week after the midterms]. | *Providing clarification for classroom activities and assignments* | Classroom management | Classroom management |
| Teacher's reflective journal | There are times when I need to explain difficult concepts like grammar rules, vocabulary, and expressions, and using translanguaging allows me to do it more effectively and for students to understand better. | *Delivering difficult content* | Cognitive support | Cognitive support |
| Classroom observation | 10 นาทีแล้ว เรามาเริ่มกันเลยนะครับ [It is already 10 minutes. Shall we start?]. คำถามแรกเลย มีใครยังไม่ลงทะเบียนวิชานี้ไหม [The first question: Have all of you registered for the course?] | *Small talk and rapport building* | Learning engagement | Learning engagement |

For Research Question 2, the data sources included survey responses from 77 students, in-depth interviews with 12 students, and their relevant artefacts. A mixed-methods analysis was used. The quantitative survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify overall patterns and trends. The qualitative data—interview transcripts and artefacts—were analyzed using the same thematic analysis procedures (Clarke & Braun, 2006) applied for Research Question 1. For this research question, we applied similar coding approaches and maintained consistency throughout the coding process, as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**
*Demonstrative Example of Coding and Theme Development*

| Data Source | Quote (Translated if Thai) | Preliminary Code | Refined Code | Final Theme |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom observation | "My strength is that I am attentive to details. My weakness is that I work quite slowly". Then she shifted to Thai asking herself, "แล้วทำไมบริษัทต้องจ้างฉันวะ" [Why does the company have to hire me?] and giggled with her friend as her friend replied, "ฉันจะรู้ไหมเนี่ย" [How am I supposed to know?] | Classroom activities | Classroom participation | Classroom participation |
| Student interview | Honestly, I mostly talk to my friends in Thai, but sometimes I add English words, especially exclamations. I use both languages to make the conversations interesting and fun, for example, "Oh sh*t!," "WTF," "Let's do something". Then, I proceed to speak Thai. | Casual communication with peers | Casual communication with peers | Casual communication with peers |

**Table 3**
*Demonstrative Example of Coding and Theme Development (Cont.)*

| Data Source | Quote (Translated if Thai) | Preliminary Code | Refined Code | Final Theme |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student interview | I am quite nervous to ask a teacher questions in English. I am afraid that my classmates would make fun of my accent. I am not close to them. I do not know how they think of my Thai accent and English skills. So, I mostly ask the teacher in Thai and add some English words if needed such as asking for the synonym of some vocabulary. | Seeking teacher's clarification | Seeking teacher's clarification and anxiety management strategy | Seeking teacher's clarification and anxiety management strategy |
| Class artifacts | One student wrote "ตั้งใจเรียนรู้" as the translation of "willing to learn". | Note-taking | Note-taking and cognitive scaffolding | Note-taking and cognitive scaffolding |

### *Data Consistency and Trustworthiness*

To enhance consistency and trustworthiness of our qualitative analysis, we adopted three strategies. First, we applied triangulation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), drawing on multiple data sources, including teacher interviews, student interviews, and systematic classroom observations. Second, we maintained an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) by documenting all procedures related to data collection, coding decisions, analytic steps, and researchers' reflective notes. This documentation enhanced transparency and allowed for possible external review. Third, we integrated member checking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by inviting both the teacher and selected students to review the accuracy of the researchers' interpretations. Through these discussions, the participants confirmed the interpretations and highlighted the importance of L1 use in English classrooms. Collectively, these strategies strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative findings.

## Findings

### *Contexts and Purposes of Teacher Translanguaging*

Across all 16 observed classes, the teacher consistently employed translanguaging. He expressed a belief that students have the right to use their full linguistic repertoires for learning, though his practices aligned mostly with translanguaging shift—a weak form characterized by spontaneous code-switching rather than planned design (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). For example, when he translated suitability into Thai, "แปลว่าเหมาะสมเนอะ [It means appropriate]," this shift was triggered by visible student confusion or hesitation.

The teacher also acknowledged feeling slightly inferior to NES teachers ("I do think translanguaging is beneficial, but I slightly feel less potent when compared to NES teachers. I don't know if students can learn better if they just study with native speakers."), reflecting internalized linguistic hierarchies (Phillipson, 2008). However, his reliance on Thai was not due to linguistic deficiency but to pedagogical reasoning: enhancing comprehension, maintaining classroom pace, and reducing cognitive strain.

His translanguaging behaviors manifested across three areas: classroom management, cognitive support, and learning engagement.

### *Classroom Management*

The teacher's initial use of translanguaging primarily focused on classroom management, particularly on clarifying classroom activities and giving clear instructions for assignments. He reported preferring translanguaging because he aimed to optimize understanding and save time. In his words, "I only aim to maximize students' comprehension. I think using Thai is quick, and students do not have to come back and forth to keep asking about the instructions" (Interview). Numerous examples reflected this stance. For instance, the teacher translated questions to support understanding:

> "A CV or job application form should always be accompanied by a short covering letter. What is the purpose of a covering letter?" (Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 46). นิสิตคิดว่า covering letter หรือ cover letter คืออะไร และเอาไว้ใช้ทำอะไร [What is a covering letter or a cover letter? What is its purpose?] (Classroom observation).

When the teacher explained the first assignment on a résumé, which counted for 15 percent of students' grade, he relied on Thai to ensure clarity and comprehensive understanding:

> ถ้าเราดูตาม *course syllabus* เราจะเห็นว่า *project "You are hired"* จะเกิดขึ้นสัปดาห์หลัง *midterm* [If you look at the course syllabus, you will see that the project "You are hired" will be submitted a week after the midterms]. ครูอยากให้พวกเราทำตามที่บอกไว้คือ *print resume* ออกมาไว้ ไม่ต้องส่งครูน้า [I want you all to print the resumes out, but you do not have to submit them to me.] ส่งไปที่อาจารย์ A (pseudonym) ที่จะมารับช่วงต่อครู [Submit them to Professor A who will be substituting for me]. (Classroom observation)

In these instances, the teacher used translanguaging to ensure that students clearly understood the task procedures. According to Cenoz and Gorter (2021), this represents a weak form of translanguaging, as the teacher aimed to provide clarity rather than promote metalinguistic awareness or explicit linguistic comparison.

### *Cognitive Support*

Analysis of the observed patterns shows that once the teacher ensured students' clear understanding of all class activities and assignments, he transitioned to the core instructional phase, which was coded as *cognitive support*, as it focused on guiding students' meaning-making and higher-order thinking. For instance:

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher: | Let us pay attention to the circle. What do you see? |
| Students: | ประสบการณ์การทำงาน [Work experience] |
| Teacher: | Good. ทีนี้เห็น *tense* ที่เค้าใช้ไหมครับ [Do you see the tense this person uses?] *tense* อะไรน้า [What tense is this?] |
| Students: | Past simple tense |
| Teacher: | Good job! เราใช้ *past simple tense* เพราะว่าเหตุการณ์มันเกิดขึ้นแล้ว *right*? [We use past simple tense because the events had already happened, right?] ถ้าเป็นสิ่งที่เราเคยทำมาแล้ว ให้เราใช้ *past simple* นะ [If it is a thing we have done in the past, you need to use past simple tense.] |
| Teacher: | "แต่ถ้าเป็นงานที่เรากำลังทำอยู่ในปัจจุบัน เราสามารถใช้ present simple ได้นะ [If it is the work that you are currently doing now, you can use present simple tense.]". (Classroom observation) |

These data show that the teacher employed both strong and weak forms of translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). Instances coded as strong translanguaging occurred when he attempted to promote metalinguistic contrast by linking students' cognitive engagement with cross-linguistic comparisons. At the same time, there were weak translanguaging moves that involved brief shifts to students' L1 to enhance clarity during task

explanations. Overall, these moves were short and largely incidental, reflecting fluid alternation between the two languages. The data indicate that the teacher's translanguaging practices predominantly fell within the category of translanguaging shifts rather than sustained metalinguistic scaffolding.

> เรามาแตกคำศัพท์กันหน่อยเนอะ [Let us learn some more vocabulary.] We have the word *suitability*. หมายความว่ายังไงลูก คำนี้ [What does it mean?] ความเหมาะสม [compatibility] เรามีคำว่า *suitable* ด้วยนะ รากศัพท์เดียวกัน [We also have the word suitable, which shares the same root.] หมายความว่าเหมาะสม [compatible] It is an adjective. เป็น adjective นะลูก มีคำว่า *suit* ที่เป็น *verb* อีกคำ [There is also the word 'suit' which is a verb.] (Classroom observation)

When asked why he chose to switch languages, the teacher explained that he often noticed students becoming confused when he explained grammatical concepts in English. He therefore decided to use translanguaging to support clearer understanding.

> Interviewer: Why do you choose to use translanguaging to explain complex concepts?
>
> Teacher: I always observe students' faces when I explain things in English. Some students nod along, but some just zone out. I can see if they can follow me just from their expressions. *If I insist on speaking English without any translation, students will just lower their faces, will not give me eye contact, or will just play on their mobile phones. This is when I have to switch to Thai to draw their attention back.* (Interview, emphasis added)

He further confirmed his stance in the reflective journal.

> *There are times when I need to explain difficult concepts like grammar rules, vocabulary, and expressions, and using translanguaging allows me to do it more effectively and for students to understand better*. For example, when I encounter words that I feel might be unfamiliar to students, I usually prefer to translate them to Thai rather than try to explain them in English, which is likely to confuse them even more. (Reflective journal, emphasis added)

EFL learners are commonly required to navigate numerous language rules across different aspects of the language. In this context, the participating teacher's use of translanguaging to deliver challenging content aligns with findings from several other studies (e.g., Elashhab, 2024; Ulum, 2024; Yuan & Yang, 2020). The teachers in these studies favored translanguaging when teaching difficult lessons, noting that it could facilitate deeper understanding.

### *Learning Engagement*

Equally important, we found that the teacher made a consistent effort to engage students in classroom activities. During our observations, he typically began each class with small talk and a brief attendance check to create a welcoming and interactive atmosphere. He relied almost entirely on Thai for these purposes. His practices were part of humanizing pedagogy and social bonding, rather than instructional moves. For instance, he greeted students with "Good morning. How are you? เป็นยังไงบ้างวันนี้" [How is today?]. In the first class, he also explained course registration procedures in Thai.

> Teacher: 10 นาทีแล้ว เรามาเริ่มกันเลยนะครับ [It is already 10 minutes. Shall we start?]. คำถามแรกเลย มีใครยังไม่ลงทะเบียนวิชานี้ไหม [The first question: Have all of you registered for the course?] มีใครมาแทนเพื่อนไหม [Is anyone here to replace your friend?] ครูมีรายชื่อ 45 คน [I have 45 students on the list.] (Classroom observation)

From the second class onward, he began the classes using both English and Thai.

> Teacher: Hello, everyone. เราจะหยิบตัว *supplementary* ขึ้นมาใช้ก่อน [We are going to use supplementary handout first.] มันคือตัวที่ครู *upload* ขึ้นไปใน *Google Drive* [It is the one that I uploaded to Google Drive.] (Classroom observation no. 2, Class B)
>
> Teacher: ระหว่างรอเพื่อน หาอะไรทำกัน [Let us find something to do while waiting for our friends.] พอดีว่า ครูเห็นคำถามใน *interview* [I have just seen the interview questions.] ไหน ขอทำเป็นจอใหญ่หน่อย [Let me expand the window to full screen.] (Classroom observation)

Although these instances represent weak translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021), the teacher's use of Thai helped create a relaxed, supportive environment that encouraged participation. This aligns with Turnbull (2018), who found that L1 use in informal contexts can foster rapport and classroom harmony, an especially valuable effect in settings where students' limited English proficiency may undermine confidence and engagement.

Furthermore, in informal interactions, such as scheduling questions or minor discipline, the teacher used Thai almost exclusively. He described these exchanges as "non-instructional" and therefore better suited to his and the students' native language. On example is shown below.

> Student: เมื่ออาทิตย์ที่แล้ว ลาไปเพราะว่าป่วย ส่งใบลาย้อนหลังได้ไหมคะ [I was absent last week because I was sick. Can I submit the sick leave retrospectively?]

Teacher: ได้ แต่ว่าหนูมีเอกสารหรืออะไรไหมอะลูก [Sure. But do you have any documents?] ป่วยเป็นอะไรอะ [What seems to be the problem?]

Student: อ๋อ แค่ไม่สบายเฉยๆค่ะ ก็เลยไม่ได้ไปโรงพยาบาล [Oh! I was just sick. I did not visit the hospital.]

Teacher: จ๊ะ [OK.] ถ้าเราไม่ได้ไปหาหมอ จริง ๆ ไม่ต้องส่งอะไรก็ได้ [In fact, if you did not see a doctor, you do not have to submit anything.]

Interestingly, the observed data also suggested that translanguaging played a significant role in managing and guiding student behavior.

ไหน มันเป็นยังไง คุยกันจังเลย เดี๋ยวก็โยนชอล์กใส่หรอก [Well? What is going on there? You are talking too much. I might just throw a piece of chalk at you.]
อะ เบา ๆ เพื่อนกำลังทำงาน [Be quiet, please. Your friends are doing exercises.]
(Classroom observation)

In these situations, the teacher believed that Thai was more appropriate because it was irrelevant to learning; his interview showed, "I think that it is not the moment of learning. It is just Thai people talking to one another. I think using Thai is the best way to go. It is more effective." (Interview)

The teacher's translanguaging practices are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4**
*Teacher Translanguaging*

| Observed teacher actions | Data coding | Translanguaging moves | Translanguaging form |
|---|---|---|---|
| Classroom management | Classroom management | Translanguaging shift | Weak |
| Delivering difficult content | Cognitive support | Translanguaging shift and mild metalinguistic awareness | Weak and strong |
| Small talk and building rapport | Learning engagement | Translanguaging shift | Weak |

Overall, the data indicate that the teacher consistently prioritized classroom interaction, beginning with ensuring that students clearly understood all activities and assignments. By strategically integrating students' L1 alongside English, he was able to gauge engagement and support learning more effectively. Throughout the sessions, the teacher primarily used translanguaging shifts, occasionally adding brief metalinguistic prompts to reinforce students' understanding when necessary. These practices served both cognitive and affective purposes, helping students grasp content while feeling supported and more confident. This approach aligns with Antony et al. (2024), who reported similar translanguaging strategies among university teachers in India

### *Undergraduates' Purposes and Motivations for Using Translanguaging in Classrooms*

An analysis of quantitative data illustrated that students frequently adopted translanguaging for various functions, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5**
*Students' Usages of Translanguaging*

| No. | Items | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) with my friends on non-subject-related matters in my English class. | 4.38 | .76 |
| 2 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to ask for my teacher's clarification on the lessons. | 4.34 | .82 |
| 3 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to discuss with friends for the class activities. | 4.36 | .82 |
| 4 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to brainstorm with my friends in my English class. | 4.32 | .82 |
| 5 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to ask my teacher a subject-related question within the English language classroom. | 4.19 | .89 |
| 6 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to explain a new concept or complex concept to my friends in my English class. | 4.17 | .91 |
| 7 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to check for the new vocabulary's meaning with both teachers and friends. | 3.99 | .90 |
| 8 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to respond to my teacher's questions. | 3.57 | .97 |
| 9 | I translate vocabulary, sentences, reading texts, and teachers' teaching into my native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to learn English. | 3.92 | .97 |
| 10 | I use native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) to take notes in my English class. | 3.58 | .91 |
| 11 | I think in my native language(s) (Thai and/or other regional dialects) and translate my thoughts into English before responding to my teacher. | 4.23 | .87 |
| 12 | I write texts in Thai and/or other regional dialects before translating them into English when I have to produce written content in English. | 3.88 | 1.12 |
| | **Overall values** | 4.07 | .90 |

*n* = 77; response rate = 81%; 1.00–1.79 = minimal support; 1.80–2.59 = slight support; 2.60–3.40 = moderate support; 3.41–4.19 = frequent support; 4.20–5.00 = core support

As shown in Table 5, translanguaging was a frequent support strategy overall (*M* = 4.07, *SD* = 0.90), indicating widespread reliance across classroom contexts. Two patterns emerged. First, translanguaging functioned as a core support (*M* = 4.20–5.00) during interaction-driven and cognitively demanding activities—for example, casual peer talk (Item 1; *M* = 4.38, *SD* = 0.76), classroom activities (Item 3; *M* = 4.36, *SD* = 0.82), asking teachers for clarification (Item 2; *M* = 4.34, *SD* = 0.82), brainstorming (Item 4; *M* = 4.32, *SD* = 0.82), and internal cognitive processing (Item 11; *M* = 4.23, *SD* = 0.87). These consistently high means suggest that translanguaging facilitates comprehension and peer collaboration.

Second, translanguaging served as a frequent cognitive support (*M* = 3.41–4.19) for purposes such as lesson-related questioning (Item 5; *M* = 4.19, *SD* = 0.89), explaining concepts (Item 6; *M* = 4.17, *SD* = 0.91), checking understanding (Item 7; *M* = 3.99, *SD* = 0.90), and note-taking (Item 10; *M* = 3.58, *SD* = 0.91). These uses reflect students' strategic deployment of their full linguistic resources to clarify meaning and support academic performance, including during self-learning (Item 9; *M* = 3.92, *SD* = 0.97) and writing tasks (Item 12; *M* = 3.88, *SD* = 1.12).

The relatively high mean scores suggest that translanguaging was a common strategy for Thai undergraduates learning English. However, to better understand how proficiency is related to translanguaging, we further compared CEFR proficiency levels and the reported frequency of translanguaging (Table 6).

**Table 6**

*The Comparison between CEFR Proficiency and Frequency of Translanguaging Usage*

| CEFR band | *n* | *M* | *SD* |
|---|---|---|---|
| A1 | 9 | 4.19 | 0.96 |
| A2 | 45 | 4.15 | 0.88 |
| B1 | 22 | 3.89 | 0.89 |
| B2 | 1 | 4.0 | 0 |

*n* = 77; response rate = 81%; 1.00–1.79 = minimal support; 1.80–2.59 = slight support; 2.60–3.40 = moderate support; 3.41–4.19 = frequent support; 4.20–5.00 = core support

*Note.* No students were classified at the C1 or C2 levels. Only one student was identified as B2; therefore, the standard deviation could not be calculated.

Across all proficiency levels, translanguaging was employed as a frequent support. The A1 and A2 students reported the highest mean scores (A1 = 4.19; A2 = 4.15), suggesting that lower-proficiency students relied on Thai or local dialects for better understanding, meaning negotiation, and maintaining

engagement. The B1 students also reported frequent use of translanguaging ($M$ = 3.89), though at a slightly lower level than A1–A2, indicating a gradual shift from L1 dependence toward more English-based processing. Interestingly, the B2 student showed an average score of 4.00. Despite higher proficiency, this learner still used translanguaging regularly, likely because it supported communication clarity, linguistic processing, and peer understanding.

The quantitative data documented the overall levels of translanguaging use but could not, on their own, provide a comprehensive account of how translanguaging operated in practice. To gain deeper insight into how these practices were carried out in the classroom, we invited 12 students (see Table 1) to participate in online semi-structured interviews, collected relevant learning materials (including student notes and textbooks), and conducted classroom observations. The qualitative data confirmed the quantitative findings for four main learning purposes: classroom participation, casual communication with peers, seeking teacher clarification and managing anxiety, and note-taking and cognitive scaffolding.

### *Classroom Participation*

The qualitative data echoed the survey, showing that students comfortably used translanguaging to generate and negotiate ideas before shifting to English for output. This reflected a translanguaging shift (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021), as students alternated between Thai and English based on communicative needs, with L1 serving as a shared meaning-making space. Ten students voiced this preference in interviews. Thanathit noted, “If there is a group discussion, I will opt for Thai first. I think I can express my ideas better. But most of the time, my friends and I speak two languages because we also want to practice our speaking” (Interview). Similarly, Natcha recalled using Thai to script and rehearse before translating into English: “I am not comfortable with speaking English only as I believe my English is not that good. Like in English 2, we were told to write a conversational script and record the clip. We spoke Thai and wrote a script in Thai as well. Next, we translated the script and practiced the conversation. … In this class [English 3], I still do the same, but I use more English” (Interview).

Consistent with these accounts, translanguaging was pervasive in observed activities, with students relying heavily on Thai. For example, during a task requiring students to discuss strengths, weaknesses, and suitability for a job, students often began in Thai: “อาจารย์ให้ทำอะไรนะ [What does the teacher want us to do?]” and clarified directions for peers: “อาจารย์ให้คุยกันเรื่อง strength กับ weakness แล้วก็ทำไม company ต้องเลือกเรา [The teacher wants us to discuss our strengths and weaknesses and why the company should hire us].” Students used English primarily to perform the task—for example, “My strength is that

I am attentive to details. My weakness is that I work quite slowly"—then shifted back to Thai for internal reasoning and humour: "แล้วทำไมบริษัทต้องจ้างฉันวะ [Why does the company have to hire me?]," followed by "ฉันจะรู้ไหมเนี่ย [How am I supposed to know?]."

These instances show that translanguaging in group work was student-driven rather than teacher-directed, illustrating translanguaging as a bottom-up communicative resource. This fluid language use supports Li's (2011) conception of translanguaging space, where students drew on their full linguistic repertoires to collaboratively build understanding.

### *Casual Communication with Peers*

Complementing the survey findings, the qualitative data showed frequent student-to-student translanguaging in casual interactions, facilitating rapport, shared identity, and emotional expression. For example, one student commented while watching TikTok, "ทำไมร้านนี้มันน่า eat จังเลย [Why does this restaurant look so delicious?]," and her friend responded, "กูก็ think so ไป eat กันไหม [I think so. Shall we go eat there?]" (Classroom observation). Eight interviewees expressed similar preferences for bilingual casual talk. For instance:

> Honestly, I mostly talk to my friends in Thai, but sometimes I add English words, especially exclamations. I use both languages to make the conversations interesting and fun, for example, "Oh sh*t!," "WTF," "Let's do something". Then, I proceed to speak Thai. It is all in a colloquial tone, though. I never use these words with classroom activities. (Keerati, interview)

Some students reported that translanguaging could add "spiciness" to conversations: "I add the word 'attitude' into a Thai sentence. I do not speak long chunks of English sentences though, only words. I think English and Thai together make the conversations enjoyable and add spiciness" (Keerati, interview). Translanguaging was also a choice when students gossiped about other people:

> It is quite hard to pinpoint when I use two languages at the same time. But I think my friends and I use both English and Thai to mention other people. The languages just popped up in our minds, and we use them without thinking. I think it makes the conversation fun. It is like we can portray a certain "จริต" [manners] that English carries with it along with Thai. (Nirada, interview)

Moreover, students felt that translanguaging was a natural means of communication.

> I will say something like "วันนี้มัน so good น้า" [Today is so good.] Recently, I asked my friends about a personal issue. I told her, "คนนั้นแบบไม่ทักฉันเลย เหมือนทักมาแบบ need some help" [That person did not really initiate a conversation with me. It is like they only contacted me when they needed something.] I think using two languages is the most natural thing to do. Nowadays, nobody speaks only one language anymore. (Chawalee, interview)

The use of translanguaging in informal peer interaction was also documented in Kanduboda's (2020) study, in which students opted to use both their native and target languages in casual situations when they were free to choose their language. In our data, humorous English expressions such as "so good," "attitude," and "WTF" functioned not as translations but as stylistic insertions that indexed students' linguistic identities and strengthened emotional bonds among peers. These moves reinforce the role of translanguaging in building rapport, confidence, and authentic conversations.

### *Seeking Teacher's Clarification and Anxiety Management Strategy*

Since the classes included students with mixed English proficiency levels, some students could not fully understand the lessons and assignment requirements. As a result, they employed their L1 to seek explanations or clarification from the teacher, similar to students' actions in Kampittayakul's (2018) study. Analysis of the qualitative data showed alignment with the survey results: most students adopted translanguaging when asking the teacher for clarification. Six students explicitly confirmed this use. In one instance, a student asked about the assignment due date and code-switched between English and Thai: "Due date งาน resume คือวันที่เท่าไหร่เหรอครับ [When is the résumé due?]" (Classroom observation). In another case, a student asked whether he could submit his assignment before the deadline because he was worried about having to submit it to the substitute teacher: "ผมเคยติด F วิชานี้ เทอมที่แล้ว เพราะอาจารย์ไม่ค่อย okay ผมส่ง resume ก่อน deadline ได้ไหมครับ? [I failed this course last semester because the professor was not very pleased with me. Can I submit my résumé before the deadline?]" (Classroom observation).

At the same time, we noticed that students opted for translanguaging to reduce fear of public error, uncertainty, and embarrassment. Their utterances illustrated an affective translanguaging shift, in which language switching was driven by emotional self-protection, as illustrated in the following quote:

> I am quite nervous to ask a teacher questions in English. I am afraid that my classmates would make fun of my accent. I am not close to them. I do not know how they think of my Thai accent and English skills. So, I mostly ask the teacher in Thai and add some English words if needed such as asking for the synonym of some vocabulary. (Keerati, interview)

In the situation above, translanguaging acted as a face-saving strategy, mitigating vulnerability and preserving dignity in public contexts. Consequently, translanguaging was not only a linguistic learning strategy but also a psychological safety mechanism that helped reduce emotional uncertainty and allowed students to gain a deeper understanding of the lessons.

### *Note-taking and Cognitive Scaffolding*

In contrast to Siegel (2022), who reported that students of English in Indonesia, Spain, and the United States tended to avoid translation when taking notes and instead matched the language of their notes to that of the speaker, we found that Thai EFL students regularly used translanguaging for vocabulary, translation, and transliteration. For example, in her notes, one student wrote "ตั้งใจเรียนรู้" as the translation of "willing to learn." This supported the quantitative finding that students often took notes using both Thai and English. The interviews further illustrated this pattern:

> In my English class, I wrote in both English and Thai. I used English to answer the questions and Thai for the translation of words I do not know. But in other classes, I use English when Thai words are too long. For example, I will write "for" instead of "สำหรับ" and "to" instead of "เพื่อ". It makes me write faster, and I can follow what my professor says. (Theeraphob, interview)

The constant use of translanguaging in written notes suggests that translanguaging acted as cognitive scaffolding. Students drew on Thai for conceptual grounding while using English for labelling, terminology, and academic framing. Much of this linguistic alternation occurred internally, indicating that translanguaging often operated silently but effectively as a learning mechanism.

To sum up, the quantitative and qualitative findings converged to highlight the prevalent and functional use of translanguaging among Thai EFL university students. Although frequently used, translanguaging mostly took a weak form, as students relied on translanguaging shifts. The qualitative data also showed that students experienced translanguaging as a natural means of communication with peers in both formal and informal settings. It enabled them to ask questions and seek explanations and clarifications, which in turn supported comprehension and a more positive learning experience. This was reflected in the survey results, which indicated that translanguaging served as

a useful resource for classroom conversations, casual interactions, clarification and anxiety management, and note-taking and cognitive scaffolding.

## Discussion

The findings highlight the complex dynamics of translanguaging practices within Thai tertiary EFL classrooms. Both quantitative and qualitative data indicate that translanguaging is not merely an occasional workaround but a pervasive, multifunctional practice. The teacher and students used it to scaffold learning, clarify meaning, reduce anxiety, and foster a sense of inclusion. While many of these outcomes are consistent with international research (e.g., Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; García, 2009), this study contributes local insight by examining how translanguaging unfolds in a Thai university class, showing it as both a spontaneous and intentional strategy that helps navigate the realities of mixed-proficiency classrooms.

### *Teacher's Implementation of Translanguaging*

Based on the qualitative data, the teacher primarily used translanguaging shift—the weakest form in Cenoz and Gorter's (2021) framework. His instructional moves (e.g., brief translations, quick clarifications, spontaneous Thai insertions) were reactive to students' real-time needs rather than deliberately pre-planned. Although a weak form, these shifts reflected natural linguistic fluidity, restored comprehension, refocused attention, and maintained participation. For instance, during grammar explanations, he alternated English terms with Thai clarification. This supports Cenoz and Gorter's view that translanguaging is not only planned but also emergent and flexible. Comparable shift-based practices were found in Singapore (Vijayakumar et al., 2020), where teachers used bilingual adjustments to facilitate comprehension. What distinguishes this context is the teacher's stance. Even while expressing a sense of inferiority to NES teachers, he prioritized student comprehension over policy constraints. This reflects García et al.'s (2022) translanguaging stance, in which learners' linguistic repertoires are regarded as assets and rights, not deficits. The teacher emphasized translanguaging as a tool to avoid leaving lower-proficiency students behind, a view confirmed by ten students who stated that his Thai explanations improved their understanding.

Using Thai alongside English allowed the teacher to present difficult concepts clearly and support students across proficiency levels. This aligns with studies reporting translanguaging as a key tool for explanation and engagement (Elashhab, 2024; Ulum, 2024; Yuan & Yang, 2020) and supports García et al.'s (2022) assertion that translanguaging can meet learners' needs without diluting content. In Thailand, where EMI policies prevail (Chaisiri, 2022), this stance is relatively bold. Incorporating Thai for instructions and routine interactions functions as a subtle resistance to English-only ideology and reframes translanguaging as student-centred rather than remedial.

His reflections further reinforce Li's (2011) and Dougherty's (2021) argument that translanguaging fosters safe linguistic spaces. This study shows that even weak forms can create inclusion and affirm students' repertoires, challenging assumptions that only strong, fully bilingual models achieve equity. This is consistent with García (2009a, 2009b), who argues that education should value teachers' and students' full linguistic repertoires.

Nonetheless, the teacher's occasional feelings of inferiority echo Dovchin and Wang (2024), who found that linguistic insecurity can develop under native-speaker norms ("native speaker saviorism"), particularly in English-only environments (Hopkins & Dovchin, 2024). The tension between institutional monolingual expectations and the teacher's pedagogical rationale was evident. Yet, despite this conflict, his sustained translanguaging practice demonstrated a principled commitment to student-centred instruction and linguistic inclusivity.

### *Students' Implementation of Translanguaging*

The survey results showed frequent translanguaging use across classroom contexts, especially for peer discussion and brainstorming (Items 1–4 and 11). Interviews and observations confirmed this: 10 of 12 students reported switching into Thai during group activities to formulate ideas before producing final outputs in English. Meanwhile, teacher-directed communication, note-taking, and translation showed slightly lower—yet still high—frequencies, resonating with Boonsuk and Ambele (2024), who found that translanguaging supported peer interaction and comprehension. This suggests that students view translanguaging as a safe space for meaning-making but still feel pressure to "perform English" when speaking to the teacher.

Qualitative data further revealed that students perceived translanguaging as natural and enjoyable. They reported using Thai and English to emphasize or add colour to their ideas and to express themselves more vividly (Ambele & Neumaihom, 2024). In addition, six students reported using Thai with the teacher due to fear of grammatical errors or accent judgement. This provides evidence that translanguaging can serve as an anxiety management strategy and aligns with Krashen's (2006) Affective Filter Hypothesis. This hypothesis posits that emotional variables, namely anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation, can influence second language acquisition. When students experience high anxiety, the affective filter becomes heightened, creating a psychological barrier that can hinder learning. In this context, the findings suggest that for some students, translanguaging lowers emotional obstacles and allows them to ask questions they might otherwise withhold, making the classroom feel less intimidating, as also reported by Ulum (2024) and Zam et al. (2024).

Similar to the teacher's practices, students' translanguaging was spontaneous and situational, reflecting bilingual meaning-making, negotiating

comprehension, and co-constructing knowledge (Li, 2018). Unlike the teacher, students also reported alternating languages during note-taking, suggesting an internal cognitive scaffolding function (Bao, 2025). While survey data showed less Thai use in formal, teacher-addressed contexts, the qualitative data portray translanguaging as the preferred learning practice. Students used Thai to annotate materials, clarify terminology, and mentally process concepts, thereby enhancing confidence, comprehension, and engagement.

However, students translanguaged freely with peers but restrained themselves with teachers, revealing a tension between personal learning strategies and policy-imposed performance. English-only norms still exert pressure, illustrating that translanguaging is simultaneously practiced and constrained in Thai EFL settings. These findings challenge assumptions that English-only policies optimize learning and support scholars such as Canagarajah (2011), Cenoz and Gorter (2021), and García (2009a, 2009b), who argue for leveraging learners' full repertoires for improved engagement and outcomes. Translanguaging thus functions not only as cognitive support but also as social glue and affective protection.

Despite its benefits, translanguaging also presents challenges. Over-reliance on L1 may limit opportunities for authentic English immersion (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Li, 2014). The caution students exhibit in teacher-directed contexts reflects wider ideologies that stigmatize L1 use in academic domains (García, 2009a). Without systematic guidance and institutional support, translanguaging risks becoming ad hoc code-switching rather than intentional pedagogy (García & Li, 2014; Li, 2018), potentially leading stakeholders to perceive it as weak instruction rather than a strategic learning resource (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Li, 2014).

## Conclusion and Implications

Empirically, this study provides one of the first fine-grained descriptions of how translanguaging actually unfolds in a Thai university EFL classroom, going beyond perception-based studies to document teacher and student practices across real lessons. The findings also extend affective accounts of translanguaging by illustrating how students use Thai strategically to lower fear of error and accent judgement, thereby reducing anxiety and enabling questions that might otherwise remain unasked.

Conceptually, the findings nuance the strong–weak translanguaging distinction by showing that weak, shift-based practices can still be principled, recurrent, and central to classroom work, rather than ad hoc "fallbacks."

The study also illuminates how a Thai EFL teacher enacts a translanguaging stance within an English-only policy environment, using

Thai as a quiet form of resistance to monolingual norms while still aligning with institutional expectations.

## Limitations and Recommendations for Further Studies

There are several limitations to this study. First, it focuses on a single teacher in one institutional context, which limits generalizability. While the case study offers rich, situated insights into translanguaging practices, it does not capture the full variability across Thai universities. Multi-site research and translanguaging-based intervention studies could help identify broader patterns and measure effects on language development and participation.

Second, semi-structured interviews may be influenced by social desirability bias. Although triangulation through observations, artefacts, and the teacher's journal helped validate reported behaviours, future studies could strengthen reliability through ethnographic shadowing and stimulated recall to reduce reliance on self-reports.

Third, the researchers' presence may have created an observer effect. While extended observations (16 sessions), piloting, and member checking helped minimise this influence, future research could employ teacher-operated video recording and longer researcher immersion to normalise observation conditions.

Finally, although the findings align with existing research (Ambele & Nuemaihom, 2024; Boonsuk & Ambele, 2024; Elashhab, 2024; Ulum, 2024; Yuan & Yang, 2020), they should be interpreted cautiously and viewed as groundwork for future longitudinal and multi-site studies of translanguaging in Thai higher education.

## Biodata

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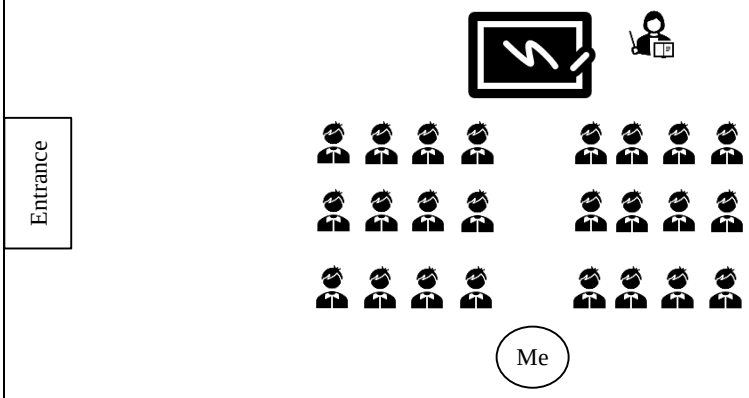
## Appendix

### Observation Protocol (adapted from Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

Researcher:
Venue:
Course:
Date and Time:

Classroom setting:




Fieldnotes:

*This section serves as the space for my classroom observations. It will include detailed descriptions of the setting, participants, and ongoing activities. Additionally, I will include direct quotations from participants alongside the observer's comments (OC) which will be enclosed within parentheses.*