

TESOL pre-service teacher's perception towards pedagogical translanguaging in language education

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Abstract

English language teaching has moved towards a post-method paradigm where students' whole linguistic repertoire is valued as a linguistic resource for language practice, and not anymore seen as interference of students' L1. As the concept of translanguaging spread to teacher trainer education, research indicates that the field of TESOL is still bonded to the 'English-only' approach in ELT. This formative paper intends to explore perceptions of foreign English teachers in Thailand and their perceptions towards pedagogical translanguaging. 64 pre-service teachers in the TESOL program participated in the study. Quantitative and qualitative data was obtained by using an adapted survey from Moody, Chowdhury, and Eslami [21] and Mazak and Riveria [23]. Result shows that the use of translanguaging in class is neutral towards negative, most still holding on to the linguistic imperialism of English language teaching. However, qualitative data shows that pre-service teachers appear to view translanguaging not as a process of learning and teaching, but as a functional tool to raise students' attention, especially when teaching young emergent bilingual students.

Index Terms— English language education, perception, teacher training, TESOL, pedagogical translanguaging,

I. Introduction

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (hereafter TESOL) program in teacher education privileges the 'E' (English) in TESOL as it originally intends to bring about the structuralist notion to the table of the English language learners [24]. In other words, students are not encouraged to use their native-language in class and may be reprimanded if one does. A prescriptive system of linguistic rules in syntax, morphology, phonetics, and semantics [12] is given of importance to English language learners. Here, the word 'learner' seems to always be a forever label of to a student in a language classroom (instead of an 'emergent bilingual'), and a native-speaker of English appears to always be labeled as the model teacher and the authorized owner of English. However, as the paradigm of language teaching has shifted towards a more post-structuralist oriented, recent research in language teacher education has call for a more consideration of a 'multilingual turn' [19]. Sembiente and Tian [25] mentioned that, "the field of TESOL has not yet propelled itself away from monolingual orientations". The 'English-only' policy implemented in a language classroom is still prominent, and the limited use of languages other than the target language is strictly denied and viewed as 'interference' from the learners' L1 [11]. It appears that the student's L1 language repertoire is devalued, and is not often seen as a linguistic resource for language

practice. As a result, language educators and researchers have recently been considering the conception of language pedagogy called ‘translanguaging’ into an alternative approach ‘that affirms and leverage students’ diverse and dynamic language practices in teaching and learning’ [28].

The term ‘translanguaging’ is a buzz word in recent language pedagogy research although its concept stems way back from the Welsh bilingual education in the 1980s [29], Vogel and Garcia [28] describes translanguaging as a sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic theory that privileges bi/multilingual performance of individuals. From a pedagogical lens, translanguaging is ‘the use of different planned strategies based on activating students’ resources from their whole linguistic repertoire’ [5]. Garcia and Kleifgen [10], in addition, mentioned that it is not only a strategy and scaffold but more of a philosophy of language and education highlighting it on the bilingual minoritized community. With students’ whole resources of linguistic repertoire, this means that language is viewed as an ongoing process rather than an object or entity [3]. In other words, the view of a language or languages one possesses is seen as a resource for meaning making process, not an entity of separate languages. A language classroom where the concept of translanguaging is the basis view students not as English learners but as individuals who bring in creative and critical perspective of language practices [27].

As TESOL itself reflect the monolingual standpoint where English is seen as a separate language entity in the field of English language teaching, it is vital to explore how English language teachers view translanguaging from a pedagogical lens. There is an increasing number of individuals from the outer and expanding circle [25] who join the English language teaching profession. This implies that currently English language teachers are at least a bi/multilingual individual. However, due to their beliefs and perception in language teaching methodologies, many may still consider using only a target language (English) in class. Both teacher and student’s full linguistic repertoire is not fully utilized as a linguistic resource in the process of teaching and learning. Regarding teacher’s perception, reviews of evidence by Sabarwal, Abu-Jawdeh and Kapoor [24] indicates that teacher’s beliefs directly impact student outcomes and can mediate policy implementation. The form of particular beliefs or notion towards language of a teacher stem from their previous learning experiences and training in teacher education. As suggested by Aghai, Sayer, And Vercellotti [2] that teacher’s ideologies influence students’ translingual practices and that teacher’s translingual competence is crucial. However, previous studies have focused on teachers who at least share the same language with such emergent bilingual. The gap in research was on that teacher whose language is not shared with students. Hence, the main purpose of this study is to explore pre-service TESOL teacher on their perception towards the practice of pedagogical translanguaging and its use on L2 learning in EFL classroom.

II. Literature Review

A. Translanguaging and Language Education

Translanguaging originally stems from the Welsh bilingual education in the 1980s [28] which reflects the idea of ‘common underlying proficiency’ (CUP) which directs advantages towards a transfer in language learning. An iceberg model was used to portray CUP by Francis [9] in which two icebergs represent two languages and a linguistic ability was shared under the icebergs such as decoding meaning, identifying main ideas, and reasoning. Upon its similar lens, Vogel and Garcia [27] mentioned that translanguaging is a theoretical lens that can provide different perspectives towards bi/multilingualism since it posits that all users of

language select and deploy specific features from a unitary linguistic repertoire. Three cores of its theoretical foundations and assumptions were provided by Vogel and Garcia [28]: 1. individuals select/deploy features from a unitary linguistic repertoire to communicate 2. dynamic and semiotic practices are perceived above the named languages of nations and states 3. “it still recognizes the material effects of socially constructed named languages categories and structuralist language ideologies”. Upon this theoretical foundation and assumption, users of a language select features from their linguistic repertoire in both oral and written communication to make meaning in different contexts. The concept of translanguaging appears to challenge the traditional understanding of language boundary [27], and it has been increasingly applied into educational contexts, especially in language education.

In language education, a monolingual approach towards learning a target language is prominent and seen as the ideal one. In other words, most language teachers and even parents do not encourage students to use their L1 during the process of learning a target language. From the lens translanguaging, however, individuals learning L2 is using their own linguistic repertoire (L1 in this case) as a meaning-making process to have a successful communication in context. Teachers and researchers in the field of education is increasingly aware of the translanguaging concept and have tried to apply the principles into their classroom context [32][13]. This results in a theoretical and instructional approach called, ‘pedagogical translanguaging’ [4] which responds to the demand for specific approach that consider multilingualism as its core. Pedagogical translanguaging is about, ‘activating multilingual speakers’ resources so as to expand language and content learning.’ [4]. Although it is closely related to the original approach of translanguaging in Welsh education, Cenoz and Gorter [4] states that pedagogical translanguaging goes beyond both the theory and practice of language alternation. This is because it supports the development of all languages, foster the development of metalinguistic awareness, and is learner centered. The aim of pedagogical translanguaging is to develop multilingualism in school contexts with the lens that different languages can support each other in the learning process.

As pedagogical translanguaging is an approach that is still in its developing period, it is crucial to investigate how translanguaging is perceived among emergent English language teachers and what their perceptions are towards implementing this approach into language teaching and learning. Evidence from recent years have indicated that there is a need for the awareness in translanguaging in teacher education and training especially in TESOL [25]. Teachers’ beliefs and perspectives on translanguaging practices have been increasingly explored in the field [8][20][32][16]. Although majority of English language teachers appear to hold positive view on implementing the translanguaging approach into a language classroom, many were from the context where students and teachers share the same native language. In addition, Hall [11] reported that more experienced teachers seem to be more open to translanguaging in the classroom compared to their less-experienced counterpart. Very few studies focus on perception of English language teachers who do not share a native language with students. Taken an example in Thailand, for instance, foreign language teachers know very little Thai when teaching Thai students. Little is known on the perception of translanguaging in such EFL classroom. It is still underexplored whether non-native Thai teachers hold monolingual view of language teaching or not, especially when these teachers are coming from the monolingual TESOL program. Very little is known whether such translanguaging practices is seen as acceptable in L2 learning environment. Therefore, this study intends to explore perception of translanguaging from a foreign language teacher in Thai EFL context who do not share the same language background with students. Two questions were sought after in this study:

B. Perception of Translanguaging

Researchers in the field of applied linguistics and language pedagogy have investigated perception of translanguaging in various contexts. Overall, studies have revealed positive perception towards translanguaging practice in a classroom. However, majority of these study were from that of students. A longitudinal study by Adamson and Coulson [1], for instance, investigated students' perceptions toward translanguaging practice in CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) classroom of undergraduate students in Japan. By using questionnaires and written report, it was found that students have increased-positive perception towards translanguaging practice in class since they were able to appreciate the task and expectations from teachers. Another study by Riveria and Mazak [23] also investigated students' perception in Puerto Rico towards translanguaging practice in class. As part of a larger study, data were descriptively analyzed from two types of survey: language attitude survey and student background survey (Likert-scale). Result found positive outlook toward the practice of translanguaging practice in class. Instructor's code switching was found to be appropriate, normal and respectful [23]. Adapting upon a survey initially developed by Riveria and Mazak [23], a study by Moody, Chowdhury and Eslami [21] conducted a study to explore perception of translanguaging in graduate students. Similar to previous findings, it was found that translanguaging is perceived as highly positive, particularly in social settings and L2 learnings [21]. Studies towards perception of translanguaging in students have been prominent in pedagogical research area. Few, however, explored how translanguaging is perceived from teacher's point of view.

In the realm of teacher training and education, translanguaging seems to still be finding its place in its clear practices. Perception of translanguaging is somewhat complex and still in its early development. Kim and Choi [18], for instance, stressed the need to expand empirical research on pedagogical translanguaging. In addition, Hall [11] also states that teacher training and education programs do not yet to engage with or provide a forum for discussion in translanguaging within the classroom. Narrowing down to TESOL teacher program, Sembianti and Tian [25] pointed out that 'translanguaging has experienced very little traction in TESOL' [2]. One of the most recent studies was that of Karlberg and Eriksson [15] who investigated teacher's perception towards translanguaging in English teaching in Sweden. Using a mixed method approach, it was found that teachers generally view translanguaging as a facilitating factor when teaching English. However, result also showed that there were also participants who reported the desire to use English as much as possible when teaching [15]. In line with a study by Yuvayanpan and Fatma [32], positive views towards translanguaging practice in Turkish classroom was reported. However, teachers do not implement translanguaging in practice due to expectations of their institutions, parents, and students. Arriving closer to the context of this paper, Khojan and Ambele [17] investigated practices and perceptions of Thai EFL teachers in Northeast Thailand. It was found that EFL teachers positively viewed translanguaging practice in EMI (English Medium Instruction) class, and it should be integrated into EMI.

Previous studies, however, appears to investigate from a context where both teachers and students share the same L1 or native language. In addition, most participants in previous studies was already teaching as a full-time teacher, and their previous teacher training and its philosophical standpoint was rarely mentioned. As foreign language teachers are increasing in countries where English is learned as a foreign language, investigation towards their perception is crucial as it could provide deeper insights into the study of translanguaging in language education. Therefore, this study aims to explore TESOL pre-service teacher's perceptions towards the practice of translanguaging in EFL classroom where both teachers and students do not share the same native language. Two research questions were sought after in this study:

1. How do non-Thai English pre-service teacher in a TESOL program perceive the practice of pedagogical translanguaging?
2. How do non-Thai English preservice teachers in a TESOL program perceive the use of translanguaging for L2 learning?

III. Method

The purpose of the study is to explore perceptions of pre-service teachers in a BA TESOL program towards the practice and the use of translanguaging for teaching and learning English. The guided theoretical framework of this study in the process of a survey adaptation is guided by Garcia's theory of translanguaging. Teachers are encouraged to use their linguistic repertoires in learning and making meaning. This research takes a mixed-method approach towards investigating perceptions of pre-service non-Thai teachers in Thailand. Quantitative data was obtained by using an adapted survey from Moody, Chowdhury, and Eslami [21] and Rivera and Mazak [23]. Open-ended questions were also used to obtain the qualitative data.

A. Procedures and Instruments

Prior to designing and obtaining data from the participants, the authors completed training in research ethics by the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCTP) and Forum for Ethical Review Committee in Thailand (FERCIT). In addition, one of the authors has completed a six-hour training course on Good Clinical Practice by NIDA Clinical Trials Network as our research study involves human subject.

Participants from a Bachelor of Arts in Teaching English to Speaker of Other Languages (TESOL) were asked to voluntarily participate in an online survey via email. In addition to the link that was provided in an email, purpose of the research, definition and examples of translanguaging practice were also given. Participants were also informed that their personal information would not be shared with other individuals or organization without their permission.

The survey was adapted from Riveria and Mazak who explored university lecturer's attitude towards translanguaging practice. A survey in this study consists of 20 questions. The first seven relate to participants background such as home countries, age, language spoken, experience and years of teaching English, and their proficiency in the Thai language. The last 13 questions were about how their perception towards translanguaging practices. Participants were asked to rate the statement on a Liker scale ranging from one to five, with one as "strongly agree" and 5 as "strongly disagree". Participants were also allowed to write down their thoughts in the last questions of a survey towards translanguaging practice.

B. Context

Participants were from a wide range of backgrounds. Most participants taught in a public and private Thai schooling system from elementary school up to high school. The reason for joining the TESOL program was to get a degree in order for them to submit to the Thai Ministry of Education to become a qualified full-time teacher. The Bachelor of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) program is an international program offered under the Department of General Education at a local college which is a partial branch of a larger university in Bangkok, Thailand.

C. Participants

Participants recruited for this study were currently in a teacher training program in an undergraduate level of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). None of

the participants were Thai. Most of the participants have had teaching experiences in Thailand both at primary and secondary level in both public and private organization.

A total of 64 pre-service teachers participated in the study. Their ages range from 10-60 years of age with 6.25% (n = 4) aged 20-10, 34.37% (n = 22) aged 30-21, 34.37% (n = 22) aged 40-31, 14.06% (n = 9) aged 50-41, and 10.93% (n = 7) aged 60-51. Total number of age group of the participants can be viewed in Chart 1.

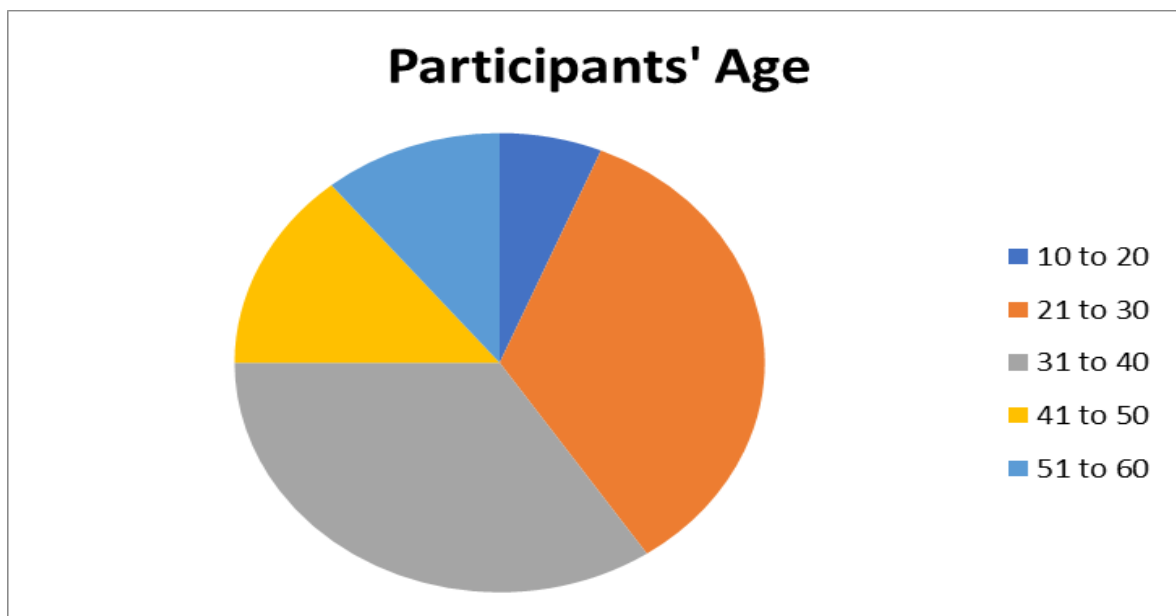


Chart 1 Age of Participants

Participants were also asked about their experience in teaching English in Thailand. Most pre-service teachers have more than three years of teaching experience with 54.68% (n = 35), 21.87% (n = 14) for less than three years and 23.43% (n = 15) for no teaching experience. The chart of teaching experience could be viewed in chart 2.

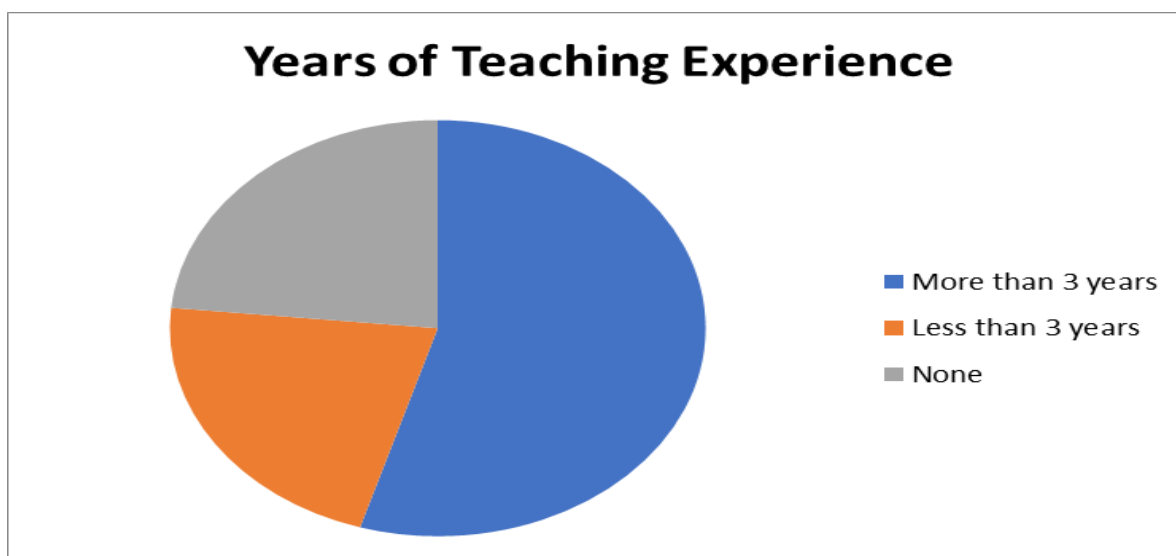


Chart 2 Years of Teaching Experience

In terms of their Thai language proficiency skills, they were mostly in the beginner level (knowing a few basic Thai words and phrases).

D. Data Analysis

The analysis is done after the empirical data through the survey was collected. The score obtained from the Likert-scale in each statement was calculated to find the mean score and standard deviation. Pre-service teacher’s perception towards Translanguaging in the TESOL program was determined by using criteria and category in that of Moody, Chowdhury, and Eslami (2019). Means score were put into three categories: negative (below 2.5), neutral (between 2.5-3.5), and positive (above 3.5). The open qualitative questions in the questionnaire where participants can write down their own thoughts contributed to a more general understanding of the phenomenon study. The qualitative data in a written statement on perception of translanguaging towards classroom practice was coded and grouped into positive, neutral, and negative points of view to support the quantitative findings.

IV. Result

Participants L1 was mostly Afrikaans (n= 26), followed by English (n=8) and Spanish (n = 5). Overall, nine languages were found to be spoken by the participants. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 L1 of Participants

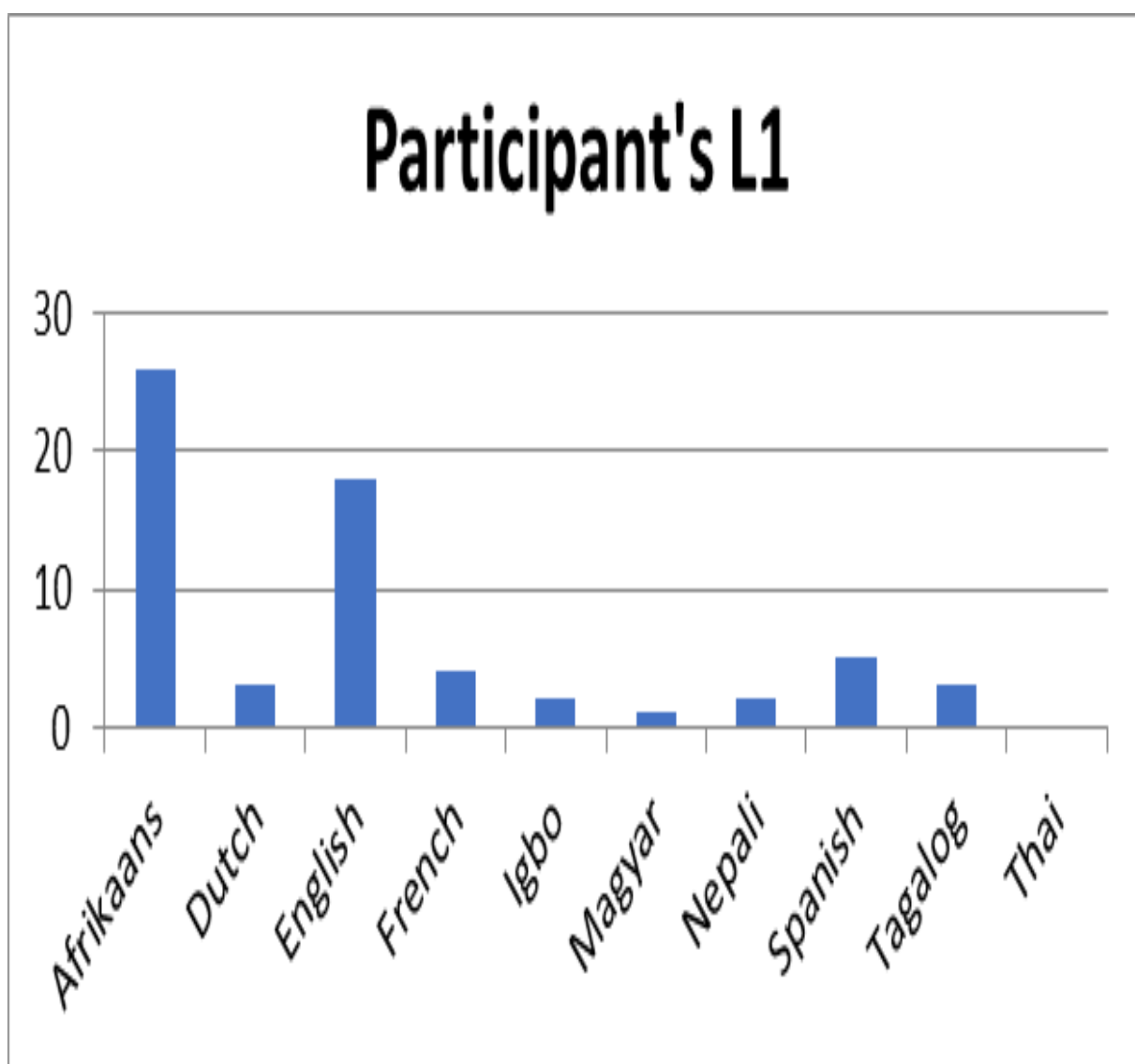


Table 2 Mean result on perception of translanguaging practice

	Negative (below 2.5)	Neutral (2.5-3.5)	Positive (above 3.5)	Overall Mean (3.38)	Standard Deviation
<i>Perception of Translanguaging as a practice in teaching</i>				2.54	
Usage of Thai language should be avoided when teaching English	2.00				0
I try to engage in Translanguaging by using some Thai words when teaching		2.67			1.39
Translanguaging or slipping the Thai words into producing a language indicates a lack of linguistic proficiency in student's target language (English)		3.15			1.34
Switching back and forth between some Thai and English words to teach English is a natural practice when teaching English	2.28				1.26
Translanguaging practice is confusing for me		2.58			1.21
<i>Perceptions of Translanguaging for L2 learning</i>				3.02	
Translanguaging helps students learn English		3.21			1.1
Translanguaging is only acceptable when you are learning a new language		2.86			1.24
Translanguaging is essential when learning English		2.76			1.23
Using Thai assists my students in learning English		3.17			1.36
I tend to avoid using Thai (Translanguaging) because it will prevent my student from learning English		3.09			1.43

Perception of translanguaging as a practice in teaching and for L2 learning was neutral ($M = 2.54$, $M = 3.02$). Usage of Thai language when teaching English and switching back and forth between some Thai and English words to teach English is seen as negative practice in teaching ($M = 2.00$, $M = 2.28$). Pre-service teachers in the TESOL program do not perceive translanguaging for teaching English and learning to be positive.

Analysis of the qualitative data appears to confirm the result of the quantitative data on perception of translanguaging as teaching practice in classroom. Qualitative data indicates that translanguaging as practice and L2 learning is somewhat negative. Some negative to neutral data were:

Participant A - "Using Thai language is not acceptable in English classroom"

Participant A does not see Thai language as an appropriate language to be used in the English classroom. Implied from the statement, the participant does not see students' L1 as a

useful linguistic resource to be used in learning the target language. Thai and English are strongly separated as a different entity. In addition, translanguaging for L2 learning also received negative perception by participants.

Participant B - “I think it should completely be avoided because it could interfere with *the* learning process of English”

Participant B appears to believe that using L1 could interfere with the learning process of English; hence, it should be avoided. This perspective reflects the realm of second language acquisition where L1 is perceived as interference when the learner is trying to produce a target language. Similarly, participants also reported that negative results arise when using Thai to teach English.

Participant C - “I’ve only seen negative results from using Thai to teach English”

Here, Participant C focuses on the end-product in using English, stating that using Thai to teach English is not recommended. Although the practice of translanguaging may be misinterpreted by the participant, this statement shows that the use of languages other than the target language (English) leads to poor outcome in the production of the target language. By stating a direct statement of ‘*I’ve only seen negative result*’, this suggests that the participant does not feel open to using other languages as a linguistic resource to teach the target language (English).

Participant D - “Had better not use Thai”

A little more open compared to Participant C, Participant D somewhat appears to be more open to the use of translanguaging practice with the use of ‘*had better*’. However, the suggested language which to be used in class is still English, not Thai. As it makes sense to get students exposed to English as much as possible, teachers should perhaps select features of student’s native language to integrate in the learning as a scaffold. Similar to Participant D where there could be some opportunities to use Thai as a linguistic resource in class, Participant E reported that,

Participant E - “I am not against the idea or practice. I just don’t see how it can be more efficient and productive”

Participant E appears to wonder how translanguaging practice could be more efficient and productive compared to the use of English only in class. Being efficient and productive in using translanguaging are still vague from Participant E as the context is not mentioned from the statement. Although Participant E is still unsure of how the practice of translanguaging could be utilized, Participant F shows how the practice could be beneficial.

Participant F - “When teaching English, some Thai words are good to use to help a learner understand”

Some Thai words are being used as a resource to support learning of students by teachers. Although Participant F does not speak fluent Thai, it appears that he/she is more open to integrating student’s native language into teaching and learning. The perception of translanguaging as practice and learning here seems to be opened towards using Thai as a scaffold. Other similar statement suggests that not only translanguaging could be used to increase student’s understanding but also could be used as a resource to get student’s attention as well.

Participant G “Using Thai words here and there to get students’ attention”

Participant G seems to use Thai language as a resource to get student’s attention in different teaching and learning situations. This practice is often seen as beneficial when young children are involved as in Participant H and I.

Participant H - “It is very helpful specially when working with kids”

Participant I - “It is a good idea and I found it interesting when using it with young learners”

Participant H and I perceive translanguaging as positive especially when teaching young children. Although it is not very clear as to what situations and how it is helpful, the positive view of translanguaging appears to be from those who teach young children. Participant I mention that it is interesting when using it with young learners. The practice of translanguaging here does have some opportunity to help support both teachers and students in teaching and learning English.

V. Discussion

Although the authors acknowledge that languages should not be viewed as a separate entity from the view of translanguaging, English and Thai is used to indicate separate language in this paper for the ease of understanding. Overall, pre-service teachers in the TESOL program have neutral to negative perception towards the practice of translanguaging in the English classroom. Only some views translanguaging practice as beneficial, especially those working with young learners. The overall result indicates that teachers do not see the practice of translanguaging as advantageous for students which appears to reflect the claim by Hall [11] that less-experienced teachers seem to not accept the concept of translanguaging in class. This may due to the unclear translanguaging practice that is beyond their current state of limited Thai language usage. Some words that these pre-service teachers use to perceive the practice of translanguaging were *‘had better not’*, *‘negative result’*, and even *‘not acceptable’*. It appears that most pre-service teachers in the TESOL program are unaware or perhaps not interested in encouraging usage of students’ multilingual skills as a tool and resource to help support the learning of a target language (English). Qualitative data shows that some do not accept the usage of Thai language in class. This reflect how English is viewed as linguistic imperialism which still exists in teacher’s perception. This could be translated into English language classroom as teacher’s beliefs influence how language is taught in class. More training on the concept and practice of translanguaging is certainly needed in teacher training and education.

However, a few were more opened to the view of pedagogical translanguaging, suggesting that it could be helpful when teaching young children. The use of student’s L1 by teachers could be used as a strategy of scaffolding, similar to research by Dahlberg [7] who found that translanguaging is used to support learning structures. Some qualitative data suggests that translanguaging could be used as a tool to get student’s attention. Students expect their English teachers to use English in class most of the time. If teacher slip the use of Thai words, it appears that students could be surprised and even puzzled as to why the teacher uses Thai. However, overdoing this could result in students not wanting to produce the target language as they could now see that the teacher could understand some Thai. Teachers should be cautious as to when to use and when not to use translanguaging. To young learners, this could be beneficial and advantageous. Their language proficiency should be taken into account as to when and how much translanguaging practice should be involved. Teacher education and training should provide more discussion towards the issues.

This study, however, is limited to several limitations. Since the study is looking specifically at teacher whose native language is non-Thai in a TESOL program, the number of participants is quite limited, hence, could not be generalized to the whole population. Future study could confirm this by recruiting more participants from the same context. In addition, pre-service teachers in the TESOL program may not fully understand the concept of translanguaging as a practice and learning a target language. As translanguaging is currently in the realm of exploration in actual practice, it is somewhat unclear when and how to use translanguaging in class. Future study could include training and examples prior to asking participants to complete the survey.

VI. Conclusion

With the monolingual teaching myths towards English-only teaching in TESOL during the past centuries, relatively few research has explored how pedagogical translanguaging is perceived by teachers from the TESOL training program, especially in an EFL countries where teachers and students do not share the same L1. Perceptions from these non-Thai teachers could provide a more myriad dimensions into the study of perception in pedagogical translanguaging. This leads the authors to investigate the questions: 1. How do non-Thai English pre-service teacher in a TESOL program perceive the practice of pedagogical translanguaging? 2. How do non-Thai English preservice teachers in a TESOL program perceive the use of translanguaging for L2 learning?

Translanguaging as the practice and for L2 learning was perceived similarly in that most teachers do not feel the need to integrate student's native language into the class. Although some teachers believes that student's L1 could be used to help as a resource to learn L2, many are still critical over the benefit and effectiveness when teaching is involved. The overall result indicates that translanguaging is neither positive nor negative. However, negative result appears to suggests that such translanguaging practice should be avoided in English classroom. Teacher's perception appears to reflect the philosophy behinds TESOL. The study does confirm Hall's [11] claim that teacher's experience appeared to be a more significant determiner of views about monolingual or bi-/multilingual teaching. Most pre-service teachers in the study appears to view translanguaging as neutral and negative. More research into perception from of teachers from the TESOL program is called for as it seems that most are still unaware of the 'when' and the 'how' when translanguaging is a topic of discussion.

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