Thai Students' Proficiency and Attitudes towards English-only Approach and Bilingual Approach[1]

ความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษและทัศนคติของนักศึกษาไทย

ต่อการสอนโดยใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเพียงอย่างเดียว

และการสอนโดยใช้สองภาษา

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Abstract

The English-only approach (monolingual/ L2 only) in language teaching has been widely discussed, while the inclusion of learners' L1 (a bilingual approach) remains a topic of debate.

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Previous research has primarily concentrated on attitudes towards using L1 in the classroom, rather than investigating its influence on learners' language proficiency. The study aimed to investigate the proficiency, attitudes, and the correlation between proficiency and attitudes of students taught using a monolingual and bilingual approach. The participants consisted of 76 students from Mae Fah Luang University enrolled in an Intensive English. They were divided into two groups: a control group taught only in English and an experimental group taught using both English and Thai. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests measuring English proficiency and language attitudes. The findings revealed that the monolingual group showed no significant difference in mean scores between the pre- and post-proficiency tests (X_1 = 5.16, 5.79), while the bilingual group showed a higher mean score in the post-proficiency test compared to the pre-test (X_2 = 4.95, 6.45). In terms of language attitudes, the monolingual group demonstrated a significant increase in L1 preference after the experiment (X_1= 10.32, 11.50), while the bilingual group consistently maintained a positive attitude towards L1 throughout the course (X_2 = 10.65, 11.32). The analysis also revealed a positive correlation between participants' proficiency and attitudes ($r = 1.00$, $p = .01$), indicating that a positive attitude towards language use in the classroom tended to impact participants' proficiency. Overall, these results suggest that the judicious use of Thai in English language classrooms can serve as an advantageous tool for learners, leading to improved proficiency outcomes.

บทคัดย่อ

       การศึกษาการสอนโดยใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นสื่อในการสอนเพียงอย่างเดียว เป็นที่ได้รับความสนใจในสาขาการสอนภาษาอังกฤษ ทว่าการใช้ภาษาแรกของผู้เรียนในห้องเรียนยังเป็นประเด็นที่มีการถกเถียงอยู่มาก จากการสืบค้นพบว่าปัจจุบันงานที่ศึกษาเกี่ยวการสลับระหว่างภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาไทยส่วนใหญ่ เน้นไปที่ทัศนคติของครูและผู้เรียนที่มีต่อการใช้ภาษาแรกมากกว่าการเปรียบเทียบ ความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียนทั้งสองวิธีสอน ดังนั้นงานวิจัยนี้ จึงมุ่งศึกษาความสามารถทางภาษา ทัศนคติของผู้เรียน และสหสัมพันธ์ของความสามารถทางภาษาและทัศนคติของผู้เรียน ที่มีต่อการสอนโดยใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเพียงอย่างเดียวและสองภาษา โดยกลุ่มผู้เข้าร่วมงานวิจัย จำนวน 67 คน เป็นนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 1 มหาวิทยาลัยแม่ฟ้าหลวง ที่เรียนหลักสูตรภาษาอังกฤษเร่งรัด ผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยถูกแบ่งออกเป็น 2 กลุ่มคือกลุ่มควบคุม ที่สอนโดยการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นสื่อการสอนเพียงอย่างเดียว และกลุ่มทดลองที่สอนโดยการใช้ภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาไทยเป็นสื่อการสอน และเก็บข้อมูลโดยใช้แบบทดสอบวัดระดับความรู้ภาษาอังกฤษ และแบบทดสอบทัศนคติทางภาษาก่อนและหลังเรียน ผลการทดลองบ่งชี้ว่าค่าเฉลี่ยของคะแนนวัดระดับความรู้ภาษาอังกฤษก่อนและหลังเรียนของกลุ่มควบคุมไม่มีความแตกต่างที่นัยสำคัญทางสถิติ (X_1= 5.16, 5.79) แต่กลุ่มทดลองมีระดับคะแนนเฉลี่ยภาษาอังกฤษหลังเรียนสูงกว่าก่อนเรียน (X_2= 4.95, 6.45). สำหรับการประเมินทัศนคติทางภาษา พบว่ากลุ่มควบคุม มีทัศนคติเชิงบวกที่เพิ่มขึ้นหลังเรียน (X_1= 10.32, 11.50) และกลุ่มทดลองมีทัศนคติเชิงบวกต่อการใช้ภาษาแรกคงที่ตลอดระยะเวลาการเรียน (X_2= 10.65, 11.32) ทั้งนี้ พบว่า

ความสามารถทางภาษาและทัศนคติของผู้เรียนมีค่าสหสัมพันธ์เชิงบวก (r = 1.00, p = .01) กล่าวคือ ทัศนคติที่ผู้เรียนมีต่อการใช้ภาษาในห้องเรียนส่งผลต่อ ความสามารถทางภาษาของผู้เรียน ข้อค้นพบเหล่านี้บ่งชี้ว่าการใช้ภาษาแรก (ภาษาไทย) ในห้องเรียนภาษาต่างประเทศ (ภาษาอังกฤษ) หากใช้อย่างเหมาะสม จะเป็นเครื่องมือที่เป็นประโยชน์สำหรับผู้เรียน

คำสำคัญ: การเรียนรู้ภาษาที่ 2 การสอนโดยใช้สองภาษา
            การสอนโดยใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเพียงอย่างเดียว

Introduction

Being a world language, English is taught as a compulsory subject for all Thai students. At Mae Fah Luang University, English is recognised as the required course for all students. According to the university's policy, English is used as a medium tool for instruction in an English classroom. This policy correlates with the Direct Method (DM) which is one of the famous language pedagogies. DM was designed after the decline of the Grammar-Translation method (GT) which mainly teaches learners by translating the target language(L2) into learners 'mother tongue (L1). On the contrary, the DM approach directly teaches learners through the target language (L2) because they believe that humans were born with the ability to learn languages, so L2 can be learned in the same manner as a first language is acquired (Krashen, 1985, 1989). Also, several studies suggested that using L1 may be detrimental to the acquisition process because L1 can negatively interfere with second language learning (Odlin, 1989).

However, using only the target language (L2) is still a controversial topic among English language teaching researchers. Many researchers argue whether the target language together with students' first language can be used to assist language learning in a second language classroom (e.g., Brooks & Donato, 1994; Cook, 2001). Macro (2001) studied the use of L1 in L2 secondary school classrooms and concluded that the quantity of teachers' use of L1 does not significantly impact the quantity of L1 or L2 used by the learners and can lighten the cognitive load on working memory.

As indicated previously, in the context of Mae Fah Luang University, where an English-only policy is adopted in English language classrooms, it seems that studying by using English as a medium of instruction may be one of the greatest challenges for several students. There is increasing concern that some students have difficulties in learning through the English-only policy which causes them to fail English courses that are required by the university.

However, much of the research up to now has been repetitively descriptive of the attitude of students and teachers toward using L1 in the L2 classroom. One notable study regarding this issue in the Thai context is the study of Thongwichit (2013). The author examined Thai university students' opinions toward the use of L1 in their EFL classrooms, aiming to propose guidelines for Thai university English teaching. The author mentioned that all students showed positive attitudes toward L1 use in EFL classrooms because they viewed L1 as a tool for facilitating their learning.

Another significant analysis and discussion on the focus of Thai teachers' perceptions toward the use of L1 in English language classrooms were presented by Trakulkasemsuk and Ketwandee (2013). The purpose of the research was to study how Thai teachers use L1 and L2 in EFL classrooms and their attitudes toward using L1 in their EFL classrooms. The participants of this study were 16 Thai university full-time teachers teaching English who claimed to have acquired an advanced proficiency level in English. The teachers varied depending on the courses they taught which were language knowledge-based courses (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, writing) and communication-based courses (e.g., oral communication skills). The teachers were asked to answer a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections which included participants' personal information and 16 items regarding common situations in ESL classrooms. The teachers were asked to rate each of the situations on a seven-point rating scale regarding the amount of L1 and L2 use, ranging from using Thai only to using English only. The authors found that the teachers chose to use L2 more than L1 in their ESL classrooms. There were, however, some situations where the teachers preferred to use L1 equally to L2. The authors claimed that this happened because, in those situations, the teachers were concerned with the student's attention and would like them to concentrate on the lesson.

Turning to another study from Enama (2016), the author examined whether low-proficiency bilingual EFL learners performed better in grammar and speaking, when

French, their L1, is used in the EFL classroom. The author experimented by dividing students into two groups, one control group and one experimental group. The control group was taught by using English only while the experimental group was taught by using French (L1) and English (L2). The result showed that the experimental group performed a higher mean improvement in the two experiments, in both grammar and speaking tests. This study has been done differently, compared to other studies in this area. The study faced limitations in terms of participant size, as it included a small sample of only 22 individuals, specifically targeting low-proficiency students. Nevertheless, in an actual classroom setting, it is common to have varying levels of proficiency among students. Consequently, it is imperative to consider the outcomes and results of learners with different proficiency levels, as these variations may potentially yield diverse findings.

Although previous studies have been carried out numerously with a focus on the attitudes of students and teachers toward the use of L1, it remains unclear if the attitudes of students will affect their L2 performance and proficiency. Therefore, it is still not known whether there is a relationship between the attitudes of the students and their L2 learning. Furthermore, the current body of research on the use of L1 in EFL classrooms remains limited, with only a few studies providing a comprehensive and thorough investigation that compares the outcomes of both approaches. This study aims to contribute to this growing area of research by exploring the result of English-only and bilingual approaches on EFL learners'

performances who have different levels of proficiency and provide new insights into the relationship between the learners' attitudes toward the language of instruction used in an EFL classroom and their performance and proficiency in second language learning.

Objectives

1. To compare the English language proficiency of EFL learners before and after studying using an English-only approach and a bilingual approach (L1 and L2)

2. To examine the attitudes of EFL learners before and after studying using an English-only approach and a bilingual approach (L1 and L2)

3. To investigate the correlation between attitudes and proficiency of EFL learners before and after studying using an English-only approach and a bilingual approach (L1 and L2)

Literature Review

1. The English-only Approach

The research into English-only policy or the Monolingual approach is not recent. The topic has been excessively described in the 1960s after the grammar-translation method generally refrained. Early examples of using the target language to teach learners were mentioned in Krashen's (1988) monitor theory. The theory mentioned that the target language (L2) is possible to be acquired by the subconscious and

spontaneous development of L2 competence, identical to the acquisition of L1. In other words, learners acquire L1 without the intervention of other languages, thereby L2 acquisition could be acquired similarly to the L1 by using only the target language as a tool. Additionally, the author proposed that the acquisition of L2 occurs in a manner where no intervention or influence between the acquisition of L2 and L1 could be identified. Similarly, Cook (2001) also mentioned that L1 and L2 acquisition are completely independently formed.

Also, several previous studies have suggested that only L2 should be used to teach in the L2 classroom because it provides second language learners with the greatest exposure to the target language which is considered an important factor in acquiring a second language. As supported by Zhao and Macaro (2016), given that EFL learners primarily encounter L2 exposure within the confines of the classroom, imitation and habit formation emerge as pivotal factors for learners to cultivate and enhance their proficiency. This aligns with Krashen's input hypothesis, which emphasizes the significance of these processes in language acquisition and skill development.

2. The Bilingual Approach

Formerly, the idea of using L1 in L2 classrooms was viewed as an interference for second language acquisition since second language learners seemed to rely on L1 when using the second language (Bhela, 1999). Because of the concept of L1 interference, L1 has deliberately refrained from a second

language classroom. As a result of this perception, many learners and teachers carry a negative attitude toward the use of L1 in L2 classrooms (Nazary, 2008).

In the light of code-switching research, the study of Atkinson (1987) plays an important role in addressing this issue. Atkinson identified 9 situations and formed the approach that explained how the L1 could fit the EFL classroom. Atkinson's approach was influenced by Cummins' (1978) linguistic interdependence hypothesis which explains that L2 will be successfully acquired along with L1 development and competence. Atkinson (1987), then, recommended 9 situations in that L1 could be used in L2 classrooms which are eliciting target language, checking comprehension, giving complex instructions to basic levels, cooperating in group work situations, explaining classroom methodology at basic levels, highlighting a recently taught item, checking sense, explaining testing instructions and developing circumlocution strategies. The 9 situations that Atkinson pointed out were, thereafter, adapted into several studies, for example, Auerbach (1993), Macaro (1997), and Cook (2002).

Moreover, more recent literature has emerged that offers contradictory perceptions about using L1 in L2 classrooms. Many studies found that L1 plays a significant role in second language learning and teaching in varied aspects (Brooks, 2009; Simsek, 2010). As noted by Cook (2001), L1 can be used to facilitate learning grammar and vocabulary more advantageously and faster. Also, it is found that L1 is frequently used by many experienced teachers when giving instructions or feedback (De La Campa and

Nassaji, 2009). In the same vein, Ford (2009) reported that most Japanese university lecturers who teach in a university that employs an English-only policy sometimes use their L1 (Japanese) in their L2 classroom for giving instructions and reducing anxiety from using L2. As aforementioned, these results are reported by Abe (2011) and Thongwichit (2013) in the Thai context. The authors studied Thai students and teachers and found that many Thai students had an optimistic opinion toward the use of L1 in their English classroom and expected their teacher to know their L1.

Despite the shift of L1 use in an L2 classroom, many researchers agree that L1 is unavoidably necessitated in second language acquisition in many aspects (Atkinson, 1987; Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2001). By way of illustration, both the study from Meyer (2008) and Ocak et al., (2010) show that L1 is related to psychology because learners can communicate with their teacher through L1 when they are afraid of using incorrect L2 which could lead them to lose face. Moreover, L1 is claimed to assist students with low L2 proficiency in many studies (Sarıçoban, 2010; Mirza et al., 2012). An example of this is the study carried out by Machaal (2012) which found that in the case of Arabian learners of English, L1 was used to enhance learners 'comprehension and learning at the beginning level. Mirza et al. (2012) also mentioned in their study that L1 can help simplify difficult grammar points and explain new words' meanings.

3. The Relationship Between Attitudes and Second Language Learning

In the literature, the term 'attitude' in the second language acquisition field usually refers to various sets of viewpoints toward the target language (Ellis, 1985). Zeinivand et al. (2015) mentioned that attitudes are mental states that affect the learning preferences of learners. Attitudes are mental concepts that refer to positive or negative perceptions or mental pictures toward second language learning in different situations, for instance, the use of language in classrooms, teachers, or even the environment of the classroom.

To better understand attitudes, Gardner and Lambert (1972) classified attitudes into three distinct types: 1) attitudes towards language speakers and the community where the language is spoken, 2) attitudes towards learning the target language, and 3) attitudes towards language learning and language in general. In this paper, only the second type of attitude will be focused on since it is related to the purpose of this paper.

Many studies on second language acquisition (e.g., Dörnyei, 2007; Ellis, 2008) have revealed that attitude plays a major role in second language learning success. Ellis (1997) showed that the attitude toward L2 learning can affect both the process and proficiency of language learning. This concept shares similarities with the findings from Richards and Rodgers (2014), wherein it was established that positive and negative attitudes towards the target language have implications for the ease or difficulty of learning, social status, and other related factors. Moreover, Prodromou (1992) also stated that positive

attitudes toward the target language will affect learners to successfully acquire the target language. That is to say, the more effort the learners put toward learning depends to some extent on their attitude (Gardner et al., 1985). Then, it could be argued that attitudes might be related to the proficiency and performance of L2 learners. For that reason, it is one of the purposes of the current study to determine to what extent attitudes affect learners 'L2 learning success.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design

Previously, many studies regarding the use of L1 in L2 classrooms have been assessed by using questionnaires as descriptive research. However, since this study aims to discover in-depth results, the study is designed to be experimental research. The type of experimental research design that the researcher will use is a randomised pretest–post–test control group design as shown in Table 1. X_1 is the control group which is the English-only teaching and X_2 is the experimental group which is the bilingual teaching. This design is particularly useful when studying two groups of participants and has a pre and post-test after the experiment ends.

Table 1

Randomised Pre-test – Post-test Control Group Design

A control group	R	O	X_1	O
An experimental group	R	O	X_2	O

2. Participants

The populations of this study were first-year students at Mae Fah Luang University who enrolled in an Intensive English course. This course is the first English course in the university that students enrol in, and the course aims to develop basic English skills for students (A2). There were 90 sections of the course which had 30 students for each, with approximately 2500 students enrolling in one semester. Regarding the aims of this study, 2 sections were recruited randomly. The total number of participants was 76 students. After that, the recruited participants were classified by simple random sampling into 2 groups which were an experimental group and a control group. Both sections followed the same course syllabus and students were evaluated with similar assessments. Moreover, all qualified participants in this study should not have any language disorders that could affect their performance during testing (such as ADHD or dyslexia).

3. Proficiency Test

The participants in this study were administered the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) to classify their English language proficiency. With 20 multiple-choice test items, the test was adopted because it could quickly evaluate test-takers' proficiency. The purpose of using this test is to track the proficiency of participants as a pre-post test to examine the language achievement of participants. The aim of utilizing this test is to monitor the English proficiency of participants as a

pre-post test, with the intention of evaluating their language achievement, as previously stated in the first objective.

4. Language Attitude

Language attitude is another factor that should be considered in second language acquisition research. That is to say, the language attitude that participants have might affect the result of the study. To explore this factor, participants were administered a Classroom Language Attitude Questionnaire which was adapted from the study of Gaebler (2014). The objective of this questionnaire is to understand whether participants prefer the use of L1 in the classroom as well as to understand in which context participants preferred L1 to be used. The questionnaire was conducted in a multiple choice. For the classroom language preference, the question was designed to be 'yes' or 'no'. The questionnaire consists of a total of 14 items, with participants' responses generating individual scores. Participants scoring below 7 were categorized as having a negative attitude towards the use of L1 in classrooms, whereas those scoring above 7 were classified as having a positive attitude.

5. Experiments

There were 3 phases of the experiments in this study. To begin the experiment, participants were separated into 2 groups by a simple random sampling method. There were 2 groups of participants, the control group, and the experimental group, as mentioned in 2. Participants. The control group was

taught in English only (English-only approach). On the other hand, the experimental group was taught in Thai together with English (Bilingual approach).

To prevent conflicts of interest between the researcher and participants, the selected classes were conducted by other lecturers who were dissociated from the study. The teachers who participated in this study were trained on how to use L1 in their class according to Atkinson's (1987) nine-point model. The model is suggested to be suitable for classrooms that are based on translation. Since an Intensive English course is mainly based on preparing students to understand basic concepts of English, Atkinson's (1987) nine-point model could be suitably adopted. As mentioned in the Literature review, Atkinson (1987) suggested that L1 should be used in 9 situations which are 1) eliciting L2, 2) checking comprehension, 3) giving instructions, 4) cooperating in group work, 5) explaining classroom rules, 6) checking to understand of recently taught lessons, 7) checking for sense, 8) explaining testing directions, and 9) developing circumlocution strategies.

At the beginning of the class, both groups of participants were administered the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) which is considered an English achievement test. Following the proficiency test, the English language attitude test was administered. The results of the OQPT and English language attitude test were analysed to investigate the relationship between proficiency and attitudes before participating in the monolingual and bilingual approach.

In the last class, which is the third phase, the participants were administered the adapted English language attitude test from Gaebler's study (2014) and the OQPT once again to investigate English language proficiency improvement and the change of attitudes before and after participating in the monolingual and bilingual approach. The reason to conduct the experiment as mentioned above is to investigate the relationship between the attitude and the language learning achievement of the participants towards the methods used in the class.

Findings

The study aims to achieve three main objectives. First, it seeks to compare the English language proficiency of Thai learners of English before and after studying, using an English-only approach and a bilingual approach (L1 and L2). Second, the study aims to examine the attitudes of Thai learners of English before and after studying, considering the two approaches. Lastly, it aims to investigate the correlation between the attitudes and proficiency of Thai learners of English after studying via an English-only approach and a bilingual approach (L1 and L2).

1. The English language proficiency of students before and after studying using an English-only approach and a bilingual approach

Table 2

Pre-test and post-test of the English language proficiency of an English-only approach and a bilingual approach

List	Pre-test		Post-test		T-test (Comparison between pre-test and post-test)
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	
A control group An English-only approach *(N = 38)*	5.16	2.15	5.79	2.46	-1.1331***
An experimental group A bilingual approach *(N = 38)*	4.95	1.92	6.45	2.80	-3.0172****
T-test	0.4506*		1.0884**		

*Sig. (2-tailed) 0.6536   *** Sig. (2-tailed) 0.2645
** Sig. (2-tailed) 0.2799   ****Sig. (2-tailed) 0.0046

According to the findings presented in Table 2, an independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the English language proficiency pre-test scores between two groups: an English-only approach group and a bilingual group. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in the English language proficiency pre-test scores between the English-only approach group (X_1= 5.16, SD.= 2.15) and the bilingual

approach group (X_2= 4.95, SD.= 1.92); t= 0.4506, p=0.6536. This suggests that the English language proficiency of both the English-only group and the bilingual group prior to taking the course is similar.

In terms of the post-test scores, no statistically significant difference was observed between the English-only approach group (X_1= 5.79, SD.= 2.46) and the bilingual approach group (X_2= 6.45, SD.= 2.80); t= 1.0884, p=0.2799. These results indicate that the English language proficiency of both the English-only group and the bilingual group after completing the course is similar.

Additional analysis of the pre-test and post-test comparison within the English-only approach group demonstrated no significant differences (X_1= 5.16, 5.79); t= -1.1331, p=0.2645. This suggests that the English language proficiency of the English-only approach group did not show any different variation between the pre-test and post-test.

What stands out in Table 2 is the pre-test and post-test comparison within the bilingual approach group. It was found that there was a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores (X_2= 4.95, 6.45); t= -3.0172, p=0.0046. This indicates that the English language proficiency of the bilingual approach group demonstrated improvement after completing the course.

2. The attitudes toward using L1 in English class of an English-only approach group and a bilingual approach group

The study employed Gaebler's (2014) Classroom Language Attitude Questionnaire to evaluate participants' attitudes.

The questionnaire consisted of 14 items, with each item contributing to an individual score. Participants scoring below 7 were identified as holding a negative attitude towards the use of L1 in classrooms, while those scoring above 7 were considered to have a positive attitude.

Table 3

Pre-experiment and Post-experiment of the Attitudes toward Using L1 of an English-only Approach and a Bilingual Approach

List	Pre-experiment		Post-experiment		T-test (Comparison between pre-experiment and post- experiment)
	Mean	SD.	Mean	SD.	
A control group An English-only approach *(N = 38)*	10.32	2.55	11.50	2.10	-2.3813***
An experimental group A bilingual approach *(N = 38)*	10.66	2.65	11.32	3.00	-1.4943****
T-test	-0.5732*		0.3102**		■

*Sig. (2-tailed) 0.5682   *** Sig. (2-tailed) 0.0225
** Sig. (2-tailed) 0.7573   ****Sig. (2-tailed) 0.1436

Based on the findings presented in Table 3, an independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the attitudes towards using L1 in the classroom between two groups: an English-only approach group and a bilingual group. The results of the pre-experimental phase indicated that there was no significant difference in the attitudes scores between the English-only approach group (X_1= 10.32, SD.= 2.55) and the bilingual approach group (X_2= 10.66, SD.= 2.65); t= -0.5732, p=0.5682. These findings suggest that both the English-only group and the bilingual group had similar positive attitudes towards using L1 in the classroom before the course.

Regarding the post-experimental attitudes, there was no statistically significant difference observed between the English-only approach group (X_1= 11.50, SD.= 2.10) and the bilingual approach group (X_2= 11.32, SD.= 3.00); t= 0.3102, p=0.7573. These results indicate that both the English-only group and the bilingual group showed similar positive attitudes towards using L1 in the classroom after completing the course.

Interestingly, a significant difference was observed between the pre-and post-experimental attitudes within the English-only approach group (X_1= 10.32, 11.50); t= -2.3813, p=0.0225 < 0.05. This suggests that the English-only approach group exhibited an increase in their positive attitude towards using L1 in classrooms after the experiment.

However, no significant differences were found in the pre-and post-experimental attitudes within the bilingual approach group (X_2= 10.65, 11.32); t= -1.4943, p=0.1436. This indicates that

the bilingual approach group maintained a consistently positive attitude towards using L1 in classrooms throughout the course.

3. The correlation between attitudes and proficiency after studying using an English-only approach and a bilingual approach

Table 4

The Correlation between Attitudes and Proficiency

List		A control group An English-only approach (N = 38)	An experimental group A bilingual approach (N = 38)
Pre-experiment	Proficiency	5.16	4.95
	Attitudes	10.32	10.66
Post-experiment	Proficiency	5.79	6.45
	Attitudes	11.5	11.32
r		1.00	1.00
Sig.		.01	.01

A Pearson correlation coefficient was employed to examine the relationship between attitudes and proficiency before and after the course. As shown in Table 4, a positive correlation was found between the pre-and post-experiment language proficiency and attitudes in both the English-only approach group (r= 1.00, p = .01) and the bilingual approach group (r= 1.00, p = .01). These results indicate a correlation

between students' attitudes and proficiency, suggesting that as attitudes towards language use in the classroom improve, so does language proficiency.

Discussion

As emphasized in the introduction of this paper, two key aspects will be examined in detail: 1) the English language proficiency of both the English-only group and the bilingual group, 2) attitudes towards the utilization of L1 in the classroom, and 3) the correlation between attitudes and proficiency.

1. English-only vs Bilingual Approach on English Language Proficiency

The first research question of this paper is whether the use of an English-only approach and a bilingual approach affects learners' English language proficiency.

Upon concluding the experiment, the present study revealed that even though the English-only and bilingual groups displayed similar English language proficiency scores after completing the course, it could be observed that, notably, the bilingual group exhibited a higher mean score on the post-proficiency test compared to their pre-test.

One possible explanation for these findings is the nature of the intensive English course, which primarily focuses on translating essential English concepts to help students comprehend and apply them in their writing. For instance, the course may teach

the use of present simple tenses for everyday topics by translating the concepts into the student's first language. In addition to the use of translation in the classroom, students were also engaged in group work activities. These factors could contribute to the observed results, as the utilization of the native language (L1) in eliciting and explaining the target language (L2) and in collaborative group work may enhance learners' understanding of the L2.

This phenomenon can be attributed to the advantages of employing L1 to facilitate the learning process. For instance, the use of L1 allows for more effective and rapid acquisition of grammar and vocabulary. Teachers can directly translate L2 vocabulary into students' L1, which helps students grasp the meaning of L2 words more clearly and comprehensively.

Furthermore, in this study, teachers used the learners' L1 during instruction to ensure that students comprehended the assignment instructions effectively. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Ford (2009), who interviewed Japanese university lecturers teaching in English-only policy environments. The study revealed that these lecturers occasionally resorted to using their L1 (Japanese) in the L2 classroom to provide instructions and alleviate students' anxiety, thereby aiding their understanding of assignment instructions. Similar results were also reported in the Thai context by Abe (2001) and Thongwichit (2013).

In addition to the Thai and Japanese contexts, the findings of this study also support the research conducted by Tian and Hennebry (2016) regarding Chinese learners'

perceptions towards the use of Chinese in their English classrooms. The authors reported that students, particularly those with lower proficiency levels, exhibited positive attitudes towards the use of Chinese for instruction delivery and vocabulary explanations. These findings align with Atkinson's (1987) nine-point model, which suggests using L1 for giving instructions and checking students' comprehension. Moreover, these findings are consistent with the present study, as students enrolled in the Intensive English course are considered to have lower proficiency levels, given that the course is designed as a pre-sessional course to prepare students for university-level studies.

2. English-only vs Bilingual Approach on Attitudes

Shifting the focus to the second objective of this study, an intriguing discovery emerged in relation to the attitudes towards the use of classroom language within the English-only group. Surprisingly, there was a noticeable change in the mean scores of attitudes after the experiment. Specifically, the English-only group exhibited an inclination towards a more positive attitude regarding the use of L1 in the classroom compared to their pre-experimental attitudes questionnaire.

This outcome may be attributed to the fact that, following their participation in an English-only classroom environment, learners may naturally gravitate towards using L1 to enhance their comprehension of the content presented. As previously mentioned, given that the participants in the Intensive English course exhibited lower proficiency levels, it is

plausible that the increased positive attitudes observed in the English-only group stemmed from their perception of L1 as a valuable tool for facilitating their learning process. These findings align with a study conducted by Gajšt (2017) exploring students' attitudes in a Business English course. The author proposed that learners with lower proficiency levels tend to rely on their native language (Slovene) to alleviate learning anxiety, while those with higher proficiency levels display a preference for increased English language use within the classroom setting.

3. The Correlation between Attitudes and Proficiency

In relation to the third research question, a correlation was observed between participants' attitudes and proficiency after completing the Intensive English course. This correlation was evident in the bilingual group, where participants exhibited a positive attitude towards using their L1 (Thai) in the English language classroom, as indicated by the pre-attitude test. Consequently, they achieved higher scores in the post-test. However, the English-only group did not exhibit the same pattern. This could be explained by the fact that this group received instruction only in English, which contradicts their positive attitude towards using Thai in the classroom, as evidenced by the pre-attitude test.

These findings are in line with the study conducted by Lee and Lo (2017), which explored the relationship between proficiency and attitudes towards language use in the EFL classroom among Korean students. Their research revealed that participants with lower proficiency levels tended to hold a

positive attitude towards utilizing their L1 in the English classroom, as it boosted their confidence during the initial stages of learning English. Furthermore, Jaliyya and Idrus (2017) noted that when students possess confidence in their learning environment, their level of anxiety decreases, resulting in increased enthusiasm and participation in class, ultimately influencing their proficiency levels.

These findings highlight the importance of considering the correlation of learners' attitudes and proficiency. The observed relationship may be attributed to the fact that students' positive attitudes towards their learning environment can contribute to increased motivation (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). When students are motivated, they are more likely to actively participate in the classroom, which can have a positive impact on their proficiency and overall achievement in the course.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the participants in this study had a low English proficiency level, as the course aimed to prepare them before their first semester at the university. Therefore, caution should be taken when implementing these findings, considering the varying levels of proficiency among learners.

Conclusion

The objectives of this study focus on three main aspects: 1) comparing the English language proficiency of EFL learners before and after studying using an English-only

approach and a bilingual approach (L1 and L2), 2) examining the attitudes of EFL learners before and after studying using an English-only approach and a bilingual approach (L1 and L2), and 3) investigating the correlation between attitudes and proficiency of EFL learners before and after studying using an English-only approach and a bilingual approach (L1 and L2).

Addressing the first objective, the findings of this experiment indicate that incorporating Thai as a facilitative tool in English language classrooms can enhance the proficiency of students, particularly those with low proficiency levels. Regarding the second objective, it was observed that students who were exposed to an English-only approach demonstrated an increased positive attitude towards the use of L1 (Thai) in the classroom by the end of the experiment. Analysing the final objective, the statistical analysis revealed a significant correlation between attitudes and proficiency levels.

Overall, these findings emphasise the significance of using L1 in EFL classrooms to enhance learners' proficiency and comprehension of the English language. However, it is important to note that, as mentioned by Gajšt (2017), the applicability of these findings may vary across different instructional contexts due to factors such as learners' proficiency levels, course content, and differences between L1 and L2. Thus, further consideration should be given when applying these findings to other instructional settings.

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