

An Autoethnographic Exploration of the Use of Basic Thai Phrases as a Code-Switching Strategy in Undergraduate English Classrooms: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract

Aim/Purpose: This autoethnographic study explored the firsthand experience of a Filipino English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in Thailand, focusing on using basic Thai phrases as a code-switching strategy during activity instructions. The study investigated how this approach influenced various classroom aspects such as student engagement, comprehension, and overall classroom dynamics.

Introduction/Background: This study explored the use of basic Thai phrases by a Filipino EFL teacher in a Thai university classroom as a code-switching strategy during activity instructions. Basic Thai phrases refer to common classroom expressions such as greetings, simple commands, and clarification phrases. These expressions help to clarify meaning and reduce confusion while maintaining English as the main language of instruction. The use of Thai phrases is aligned with the concept of code-switching, where two languages are alternated within a conversation. In the Thai EFL context, this can occur as inter-sentential switching (Thai phrases between English sentences), intra-sentential switching (Thai within English sentences), or tag switching (short Thai expressions added to the end of English sentences). When used selectively, code-switching supports student comprehension, reduces anxiety, and promotes engagement without detracting from English language exposure.

This study examined both the benefits and challenges of using Thai phrases in the EFL classroom. Benefits include improved understanding and classroom participation, while challenges involve pronunciation, limited fluency in Thai, and sensitivity to cultural nuances. By focusing on the experiences of a Filipino teacher, this study offers insight into how the strategic use of students' native languages can enhance classroom communication and support effective multilingual teaching practices.

Methodology: This study employed autoethnography as its primary research method, offering a reflective and deeply personal examination of teaching experiences through journal entries that captured the researcher's lived encounters in the classroom. Unlike traditional methods that rely on external observations or standardized tools, autoethnography provides an insider's perspective on the complex interplay of language, culture, and pedagogy, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how linguistic barriers and cultural contexts shape teaching practices and student engagement. The journal entries served as the primary data source and were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. This analytic approach enabled the emergence of meaningful patterns rooted in context and experience, with themes guided by the researcher's reflections and shaped by the cultural nuances embedded in the teaching environment.

Findings: As an autoethnographic study, this research drew on my personal experiences as a Filipino EFL teacher in Thailand who used basic Thai phrases as a code-switching strategy during classroom instruction. Integrating these Thai expressions at key moments—such as when giving task instructions or clarifying directions—noticeably enhanced student engagement and comprehension. For example, inserting simple Thai phrases during activity instructions helped students to focus more effectively and complete tasks with greater accuracy.

However, using Thai as a non-native speaker also presented challenges. My limited proficiency occasionally led to pronunciation errors, which sometimes caused confusion. In some instances,

students would turn to their peers for clarification rather than asking me directly. One particular example involved an activity where my incorrect intonation in delivering instructions led to student hesitation and uncertainty, highlighting the potential risks of code-switching without full fluency in the local language.

Cultural sensitivity also emerged as a key factor in shaping classroom interactions. The Thai language is deeply connected to cultural norms, particularly in terms of politeness and social hierarchy. Using appropriate polite markers was essential for maintaining classroom respect and encouraging participation. When these markers were unintentionally omitted, students became more reserved, indicating that cultural nuances play a significant role in how instructional language is received. These reflections revealed that while strategic code-switching using basic Thai phrases can support learning and classroom management, its effectiveness depends heavily on the teacher's language proficiency and cultural awareness. As a Filipino educator in a Thai context, navigating these linguistic and cultural dynamics required continuous adjustment and reflection to foster a more inclusive and responsive learning environment.

Contribution/Impact on Society: This study provides valuable insights into the role of language proficiency and cultural sensitivity in enhancing EFL instruction. It demonstrates how thoughtful and strategic code-switching can positively impact student engagement and comprehension. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need to support non-native Thai-speaking EFL teachers in overcoming language barriers by offering targeted language and cultural training. Providing such support can foster a more inclusive and effective teaching environment, ultimately improving educational outcomes for students.

Recommendations: Based on these findings, I recommend that educational institutions develop professional development programs for foreign teachers in Thailand, focusing on improving Thai language proficiency—especially in pronunciation and conversational fluency. These programs should also incorporate cultural awareness training to help teachers navigate the nuances of Thai language and culture effectively.

Research Limitation: This study, being autoethnographic in nature, is based solely on my personal experiences. While it offers deep insights into my teaching practice, it may not fully capture the diverse experiences of other non-native Thai-speaking educators. Thus, the findings should be considered reflective of my individual perspective rather than representative of the broader teaching community.

Future Research: Future studies could explore the long-term effects of code-switching training on non-native teachers' instructional practices, and the resulting student outcomes. A comparative study involving native and non-native Thai-speaking educators could also provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and language use. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how to enhance communication and student engagement in multilingual classrooms.

Keywords: *Auto-ethnography, Thai language, code-switching, English–Foreign Language*

Introduction

In Thailand, English is taught as a foreign language to students whose native language is Thai. Since English is not widely used in daily life, it is primarily taught to enhance students' global communication skills (Foley, 2005; Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017; Lee, 2019). As a Filipino English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in a Thai public university, I have observed that students' English language skills are quite diverse, a situation that reflects the findings of Ambele and Boonsuk (2020). This diversity poses challenges, as students exhibit varying levels of English proficiency and are influenced by different linguistic factors. When instructions are delivered exclusively in English, they may not be clear to all students, especially those whose English skills are not yet well developed. While some

students have advanced English skills, most do not, and this affects their understanding and participation in class activities.

In this study, *basic Thai phrases* refer to common classroom expressions like greetings, commands, and clarification phrases. These phrases help students understand instructions while retaining English as the main language of instruction. Using Thai phrases selectively supports students by reinforcing meaning, reducing confusion, and improving engagement without shifting the focus away from English. This approach is aligned with code-switching, where two languages are used within the same conversation (Crystal, 1987; Hoffmann, 1991). In Thai English classrooms, this occurs in three main ways: inter-sentential switching, where Thai phrases appear between English sentences; intra-sentential switching, where Thai words are mixed into an English sentence; and tag switching, where short Thai expressions are added for emphasis or confirmation (Gumperz, 1982; Romaine, 1989).

I used all three types of code-switching in my classroom. Inter-sentential switching was used when I inserted Thai phrases between English sentences to reinforce instructions. Intra-sentential switching happened when I mix Thai words within an English sentence to clarify key concepts. Lastly, tag switching occurred when I briefly add Thai expressions to English sentences to check for understanding or emphasize a point. Research studies have suggested that when used carefully, code-switching enhances student comprehension and engagement rather than causing distractions (Gumperz, 1982; Romaine, 1989). It provides cognitive and contextual support, helping students to process new information more effectively while remaining immersed in English. Given these benefits, I became interested in studying how basic Thai phrases in English classrooms could improve learning. Understanding how code-switching affects students can help teachers use it to enhance, rather than disrupt, language learning.

In a previous study, Phamunchakko and Indrambarya (2021) examined a Filipino teacher's use of code-switching with Mathayom-level (high school) Thai students, highlighting functions such as reiteration, message qualification, interjections, and personalization. Similarly, Cejudo et al. (2024) conducted a phenomenological study involving seven respondents, five of whom were Filipino EFL teachers in Thailand. Their findings revealed that code-switching enhanced socialization, vocabulary, grammar, and instruction while reducing student anxiety. However, they also noted that excessive code-switching can negatively impact learning the target language. Therefore, effective code-switching in an EFL classroom requires teachers to possess at least conversational proficiency when using Thai phrases.

These studies demonstrated the potential of code-switching to improve communication clarity and engage students in learning activities. Therefore, I aimed to expand upon their findings by incorporating personal perspectives based on my experience as an EFL teacher for undergraduate Thai students. This investigation may enrich this discussion by focusing specifically on the perceived advantages and challenges faced by a Filipino EFL teacher, distinct from the experiences of teachers from other nationalities. While the use of basic Thai phrases can facilitate immediate comprehension and encourage student participation, fluently communicating these phrases can be challenging for non-native Thai speakers, potentially leading to misunderstandings or inconsistent usage.

I adopted an autoethnographic approach to provide an accessible, firsthand exploration of using basic Thai phrases for instruction in an EFL classroom. As a Filipino EFL teacher in Thailand, this approach was particularly fitting because it allowed me to share an insider's perspective rooted in personal experience. Autoethnography, as described by Qutoshi (2015), offers a reflective narrative that captures nuanced, context-specific ways that language fosters understanding in the classroom. Unlike traditional research methods, it enables a deeper examination of bilingual instructional strategies from a practitioner's standpoint. Through my lived experiences and self-reflections, I aimed to reveal practical teaching dynamics often overlooked by quantitative studies or external observations. The insights derived from this study seek to inform and enhance multilingual teaching practices, contributing to more effective language instruction and improved student outcomes.

Review of Related Studies

This study incorporates theoretical perspectives, empirical evidence, and practical considerations to examine code-switching as a pedagogical strategy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Research focusing on the use of code-switching with Thai EFL students provides valuable insights into multilingual classroom dynamics.

Theoretical Foundations on the Use of Code-Switching

Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) emphasized the need for comprehensible input, positioning code-switching as a useful teaching strategy. By blending students' native languages with English, instructors can facilitate comprehension, particularly for those with lower proficiency levels. Similarly, Curran's Community Language Learning framework (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) highlighted the importance of a supportive learning environment, where meaningful communication and emotional connections aid language acquisition. Code-switching fosters an inclusive atmosphere, promoting student participation.

Recent studies have indicated that both EFL teachers and students perceive code-switching positively, as it enhances comprehension and eases the learning process (Promnath & Tayjasanant, 2016; Patmasari et al., 2022; Cejudo et al., 2024). By incorporating code-switching into their teaching practices, educators align with Krashen's and Curran's principles, thereby enriching the language learning experience.

Empirical Evidence on Code-Switching in EFL Contexts

A substantial body of research has highlighted the benefits of code-switching in education. Hussein et al. (2020) identified its key functions, such as overcoming language barriers, providing instructions, and managing classroom dynamics. This strategy helps students to navigate language difficulties, reinforce understanding through translation, and express their emotions. Similarly, Olivera (2021) found that code-switching boosted students' confidence and engagement in the classroom.

In Thai EFL contexts, code-switching improves comprehension (Promnath & Tayjasanant, 2016) and addresses the limited exposure to English outside of class (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017). It also accommodates varying proficiency levels, promoting equitable interactions (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020). Phamunchakko and Indrambarya (2021) found that Filipino teachers frequently use extra-sentential code-switching to clarify messages and manage interactions. Likewise, Cejudo et al. (2024) reported that code-switching improved comprehension in EFL classrooms, highlighting its role in communication and engagement.

Challenges and Mixed Perspectives on Code-Switching

Research supports the use of code-switching to enhance comprehension, classroom management, and student confidence (Sakaria & Priyana, 2018; Hussein et al., 2020). However, its potential drawbacks should also be considered. Although code-switching has many reported benefits, several concerns need to be addressed. Sert (2005) and Selamat (2014) cautioned that excessive reliance on code-switching may prevent students from fully engaging with target languages. May and Aziz (2020) reported mixed views among ESL teachers; some found it helpful for explaining difficult concepts and managing classroom interactions, but others worried that it may hinder students' ability to think and communicate independently in English. Thus, the decision to incorporate code-switching as a pedagogical tool requires careful consideration to balance its benefits with the risks of overuse.

Autoethnographic Perspective on Code-Switching in Thai EFL Classrooms

Existing research provides valuable insights into code-switching, but it lacks personal, reflective perspectives on its real-world application. Studies by Phamunchakko and Indrambarya (2021) and Cejudo et al. (2024) examined the types and purposes of code-switching, yet they did not address the daily challenges teachers face in using this strategy. This study addresses this gap by adopting an autoethnographic approach, documenting my experiences as a Filipino EFL teacher in Thailand through self-written journals. By reflecting on my use of basic Thai phrases, this autoethnographic

perspective offers a deeper understanding of the emotional and relational aspects of code-switching, contributing new insights to the literature. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) and Curran's Community Language Learning (1976) offered a theoretical foundation for this reflection. For instance, Krashen's theory on comprehensible input is aligned with my personal practice of using Thai phrases to facilitate student understanding, especially those with lower English proficiency. Similarly, Curran's framework underscored the importance of emotional connections in the classroom, which is evident in my use of culturally sensitive code-switching to foster a positive, inclusive classroom environment.

Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Foundations

This study was grounded in the intersection of language acquisition theories and pedagogical practices within EFL classrooms. Specifically, it drew on Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) and Curran's Community Language Learning (1976) to examine how strategic code-switching—the selective use of basic Thai phrases—enhances student comprehension, engagement, and classroom interaction.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) asserted that comprehensible input is crucial for language acquisition. In this study, basic Thai phrases function as scaffolding tools, helping students—especially those with limited English proficiency—grasp lesson content (Promnath & Tayjasanant, 2016). When strategically integrated, these phrases enhance linguistic comprehension and reduce cognitive overload (Hussein et al., 2020). This is aligned with research studies that highlight the role of scaffolding in improving instructional clarity, where using Thai phrases to explain complex English instructions enhances student comprehension (Ambele & Boonsuk, 2020; Phamunchakko & Indrambarya, 2021). By reflecting on my classroom experiences, this study examined the extent to which code-switching serves as an instructional aid without impeding English language development.

Curran's Community Language Learning (1976) emphasized the emotional and social dimensions of language learning. In this study, culturally sensitive code-switching—such as the use of polite markers like 'krub' (ครับ) and 'kha' (ค่ะ)—creates a supportive and respectful classroom environment (Cejudo et al., 2024). This, in turn, fosters student confidence, encourages participation, and strengthens teacher-student rapport (Olivera, 2021). Research has further supported that code-switching fosters inclusivity and increases student engagement (Hussein et al., 2020; Olivera, 2021), reinforcing its role in promoting active classroom participation. However, challenges such as pronunciation accuracy must be considered, as mispronunciations during code-switching may create confusion and reduce student confidence (Selamat, 2014). Additionally, ensuring that code-switching aligns with Thai cultural norms is crucial to maintaining classroom engagement (Cejudo et al., 2024).

By incorporating both cognitive and affective perspectives, this framework offers a holistic view of code-switching's role in EFL instruction. Strategic code-switching is expected to improve student comprehension by increasing their understanding and retention of lesson content. Moreover, the use of culturally sensitive code-switching can promote active learning and foster a positive classroom atmosphere, contributing to increased engagement. Finally, a balanced approach to code-switching may enhance students' comfort in both English and Thai, facilitating smoother communication and improving overall language proficiency.

The conceptual framework for this study as illustrated in Figure 1 outlines the pedagogical purposes, challenges, and expected outcomes of code-switching as a teaching strategy.

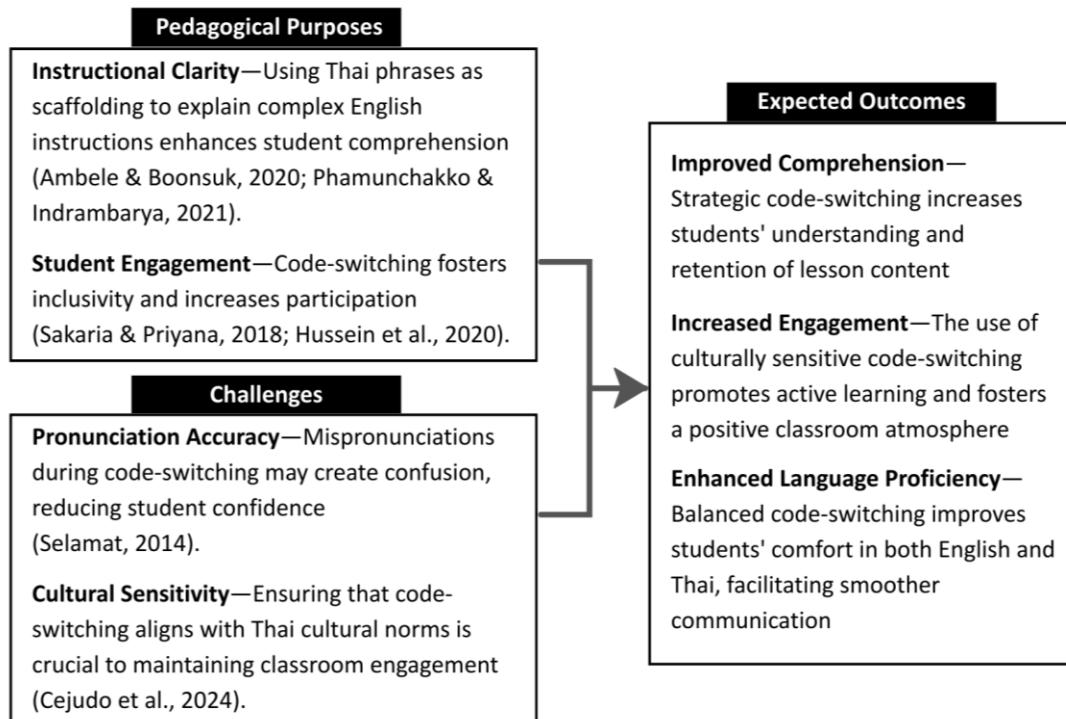
Research Objectives

This autoethnographic study examined the use of basic Thai phrases by a Filipino EFL teacher, a non-native Thai speaker, in delivering activity instructions in the classroom. It sought to determine how limited Thai proficiency influences instructional clarity and student comprehension. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. Examine the role of basic Thai phrases in enhancing student comprehension during EFL classroom activities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

2. Explore the impact of pronunciation accuracy on the effectiveness of code-switching in facilitating communication between the instructor and students.
3. Investigate the role of culturally sensitive code-switching (e.g., polite markers) in fostering positive classroom dynamics, engagement, and student comfort.
4. Assess the challenges faced by a non-native Thai-speaking EFL instructor when integrating Thai phrases into instruction, with a focus on pronunciation issues and cultural sensitivity.
5. Evaluate the overall pedagogical benefits of code-switching as a tool for improving EFL teaching practices in a Thai cultural context.

Figure 1 Conceptual Framework of Code-Switching in Thai EFL Instruction



This study drew on instructor journal reflections to analyze the role of basic Thai phrases in classroom interactions. By addressing these objectives, it provides insights into the practical application of basic Thai phrases in EFL instruction and their impact on student engagement and understanding.

Researcher Positionality

I have over a decade of experience teaching EFL to students from grade school to undergraduate levels in Thailand, navigating challenges related to language barriers and cultural differences. As a non-native Thai speaker, these experiences have shaped my teaching practices and informed the research questions used in this study. I have observed how using basic Thai phrases can improve instructional clarity and student engagement, which was the focus of this autoethnographic study.

The study was conducted with undergraduate students enrolled in "English for Social Communication 1," with A1 to A2 CEFR-level proficiencies. Over two months during the first semester of 2024, I worked with an average of 35 students across seven groups, totaling around 245 different students. This context informed my approach to enhancing classroom communication using Thai phrases. By examining the impact of basic Thai on student engagement and comprehension, this study highlights the value of personal experience in addressing the complexities of teaching in multilingual classrooms.

Methodology

Research Design

An autoethnographic approach was adopted in this study to investigate the use of basic Thai phrases in explaining activity instructions within an undergraduate EFL classroom. This approach was described by Reed-Danahay (1997) as a specialized version of ethnography that combines elements of autobiography and ethnography. Ellis et al. (2011) defined it as a qualitative research method that allows researchers to reflect on their firsthand experiences and motivation to seek knowledge that can bring positive changes. In addition, Mirhosseini (2018) highlighted its potential in language education, since this inquiry shaped possibilities for diving into deeper layers of language teachers' experiences. By integrating personal narratives with cultural and contextual analysis, this study aimed to explore how basic Thai phrases impact instructional effectiveness and student engagement from the perspective of a Filipino EFL teacher in Thailand.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were addressed to ensure that all reflections and journaling preserved participant confidentiality and adhered to principles of academic integrity. When documenting events, the researcher avoided including students' personal details in the journal entries. Also, the journaling was strictly conducted after classes to avoid interference with the learning process. Additionally, the students, who were young adults with an average age of 20 years old, were informed that the teacher was observing the class for research purposes, and sought their written consent in digital form using vocabulary at the A1 CEFR level to assure comprehension. Lastly, no images, audio, or video recordings were collected during the research process.

Data Collection

Personal Reflections. The primary data source was the researcher's personal reflections; this approach was aligned with the core principles of autoethnography, where the researcher is both a subject and an observer. The researcher maintained a detailed journal throughout the study to document experiences and observations related to the use of basic Thai phrases during various classroom activities. The journal entries included descriptions of how basic Thai phrases were used to explain instructions for activities such as listening activities, formative writing activities, speaking exercises involving group role-play, and reading comprehension exercises. This reflective practice is essential in autoethnography, as it allows researchers to critically analyze and interpret the impact of their teaching strategies (Jones et al., 2013).

Consultation of Published Research Articles. To further contextualize and validate the observed events and reflections recorded in the researcher's diary, relevant published research articles were consulted. These articles provided theoretical and empirical frameworks that helped to shed light on the observed phenomena, such as the use of code-switching in EFL classrooms and its impact on student engagement and comprehension. By integrating insights from existing literature, more robust conclusions could be drawn about the effectiveness of using basic Thai for classroom instructions. This approach is aligned with Chang's (2008) recommendation for incorporating external sources in autoethnographic studies to enhance analytical depth and theoretical rigor. The use of multiple data sources enhances the validity of the findings, and provides a richer, more nuanced account of the instructional process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis

The data collected from personal reflections and classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method well-suited to qualitative research that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2008). The thematic analysis enabled the researcher to explore the impact of using basic Thai phrases in the EFL classroom on both instructional clarity and student engagement, drawing on autoethnographic insights and providing depth and context to the findings. The analysis process involved coding the data inductively, followed

by categorization into emerging themes (Guest et al., 2012). This approach was consistent with the interpretive nature of autoethnography, where the focus is on meaning-making and the researcher's role in the process (Ellis et al., 2011).

Findings

This autoethnographic study, grounded in reflections on four fundamental classroom activities—listening, writing, speaking, and reading—examined how integrating basic Thai phrases influenced EFL instruction. These activities are crucial for developing students' macro language skills (Brown, 2007), providing rich data for understanding both the benefits and challenges of code-switching in a non-native Thai-speaking context.

To provide context for the qualitative analysis, two tables were prepared containing quantitative and qualitative summaries of the data. They are shown in Appendix 1: Table 1: Overview of Word and Sentence Counts in Personal Reflections Journal and Table 2: Emerging Themes in Personal Reflections Journal. The analysis identified three core themes:

1. Strategic Code-Switching for Instructional Clarity and Student Comprehension.
2. Pronunciation Accuracy as a Challenge in Effective Communication.
3. Culturally Sensitive Code-Switching for Classroom Engagement.

These themes directly addressed the research questions by examining (a) how basic Thai phrases support student comprehension across different classroom activities, (b) the challenges associated with pronunciation accuracy in a non-native Thai-speaking context, and (b) the cultural implications of using Thai phrases in EFL instruction. The following sections further explore these findings.

Strategic Code-Switching for Instructional Clarity and Student Comprehension

The strategic use of basic Thai phrases significantly enhanced student comprehension and prompted positive responses. This was most evident in listening and writing activities, where students demonstrated understanding through positive non-verbal cues such as nodding and improved task performance. For example, the phrase "write a full sentence" (เขียนประโยคเต็ม) during writing activities effectively clarified instructions and increased student engagement. Similarly, in listening activities, the phrase "listen carefully. Laew haa main point na" (แล้วห้าม point นั้น) helped students focus on key details, as seen in their improved responses.

These reflections indicated that code-switching played a crucial role in reducing clarification requests and supporting students in processing instructions more efficiently. This finding is aligned with Macaro's (2009) concept of code-switching as a cognitive scaffold, which aids comprehension without diminishing cognitive engagement.

Pronunciation Accuracy as a Challenge in Effective Communication

While code-switching facilitated comprehension, pronunciation challenges sometimes diminished its effectiveness. This issue was particularly prominent in speaking and reading activities, where mispronunciations led to student hesitation and misunderstanding. For instance, in a speaking task, an attempt to instruct students to "speak more naturally" resulted in confusion due to a mispronounced word. Instead of proceeding confidently, students paused and sought peer clarification.

Such moments highlighted the tension between the benefits of code-switching and the limitations posed by non-native Thai proficiency. These findings echoed Cejudo et al. (2024), who emphasized the importance of teacher language proficiency in non-native code-switching contexts. Moreover, the reflections suggested that pronunciation errors not only affect instructional clarity, but also influenced student confidence and participation.

Culturally Sensitive Code-Switching for Classroom Engagement

The study underscored the importance of cultural sensitivity in code-switching, particularly in speaking and classroom management interactions. The inclusion of polite markers, such as “krub” (ครับ) and “kha” (ຂ້າ), significantly influenced student engagement. When these markers were used, students responded positively, displaying increased attentiveness and participation. Conversely, their absence led to visible discomfort and reduced engagement, indicating the importance of aligning classroom communication with Thai cultural norms.

This finding reinforced Holmes' (2013) argument that culturally appropriate language fosters inclusivity and engagement in educational settings. In this context, Thai politeness markers functioned as more than mere linguistic additions—they shaped classroom dynamics by building rapport and trust with students.

Discussion

This study critically reflected on the pedagogical implications of integrating basic Thai phrases into EFL instruction, emphasizing the benefits and challenges associated with non-native Thai proficiency.

The first theme, Strategic Code-Switching for Instructional Clarity and Student Comprehension, highlighted how code-switching enhances comprehension in listening and writing tasks. This supported existing research on code-switching as a scaffolding strategy (Macaro, 2009), and demonstrated its effectiveness in reducing clarification requests and improving student engagement. However, these findings also emphasized the importance of teacher competence in balancing Thai and English to optimize instructional clarity.

The second theme, Pronunciation Accuracy as a Challenge in Effective Communication, presented a critical limitation of non-native code-switching. While integrating Thai phrases supported comprehension, mispronunciations led to confusion, hesitation, and reliance on peer clarification. This finding extends the discussion in Cejudo et al. (2024) by showing how pronunciation errors influence both teacher effectiveness and student participation. It suggests a need for professional development programs tailored to non-native teachers working in multilingual contexts.

The third theme, Culturally Sensitive Code-Switching for Classroom Engagement, reinforced the role of cultural awareness in effective communication. The findings affirmed that politeness markers play a crucial role in fostering student engagement (Holmes, 2013), particularly in a Thai educational setting where cultural norms shape classroom interactions. This study highlights that cultural sensitivity is not an optional component of code-switching, but a fundamental factor influencing its effectiveness.

Conclusions

This study examined the role of basic Thai phrases in facilitating EFL instruction for a Filipino teacher in Thailand. The findings illustrated that code-switching can enhance comprehension and engagement, but it requires careful adaptation, linguistic accuracy, and cultural sensitivity.

The key takeaways from this study are:

1. Strategic code-switching supports instructional clarity, reducing student confusion and improving participation.
2. Pronunciation accuracy is a critical challenge, as mispronunciations can hinder comprehension and affect student confidence.
3. Culturally sensitive code-switching, particularly through politeness markers, enhances teacher-student rapport and classroom engagement.

This study emphasized that code-switching should be employed as a deliberate pedagogical strategy rather than a convenience-based approach. Teachers in similar contexts should integrate linguistic and cultural considerations into their instructional practices to maximize student comprehension and engagement.

Ultimately, this autoethnography contributes to a broader understanding of code-switching in multilingual education. It highlights that for code-switching to be effective, teachers must engage in

continuous professional development, critically reflect on their teaching strategies, and adapt to students' linguistic and cultural needs. These insights are valuable for educators navigating cross-cultural teaching environments, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning and adaptation in inclusive language instruction.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for practice, teacher education, and future research:

1. **Language and Cultural Training**—Professional development initiatives should focus on supporting non-native Thai-speaking EFL teachers in overcoming language barriers, particularly in pronunciation and conversational fluency. Such training would enable teachers to communicate more effectively, thereby improving their ability to provide clear instructions, engage students, and create a positive classroom atmosphere. Furthermore, integrating cultural awareness into these programs is crucial, as it helps teachers to understand social norms, polite markers, and context-specific language usage, all of which are vital for fostering respect and encouraging student participation in Thai classrooms. This combined focus on language proficiency and cultural understanding not only enhances teaching effectiveness, but also promotes a more inclusive and responsive learning environment for students.

2. **Future Research**—Future studies could explore the long-term effects of code-switching training on non-native teachers' instructional practices and student outcomes. A comparative study involving native and non-native Thai-speaking educators could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and language use. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how to enhance communication and student engagement in multilingual classrooms.

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Appendix 1

Table 1 Overview of Word and Sentence Counts in Personal Reflections Journal

| Activity Journal | Group Counts | Total Word Counts | Total Sentence Counts | Words per Sentence |
|------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Listening Activities Journal | 7 | 771 | 68 | 11.34 |
| Writing Activities Journal | 7 | 1060 | 88 | 12.05 |
| Speaking Activities Journal | 7 | 689 | 64 | 10.77 |
| Reading Activities Journal | 7 | 819 | 73 | 11.22 |

Table 2 Emerging Themes in Personal Reflections Journal

| Activities | Observation/Quotes | Code-Switching Type | Initial Codes | Themes |
|----------------------|---|---|--|---|
| Listening Activities | <p>"Listen carefully, laew haa main point na" (แล้วหา main point นะ) – listen carefully.</p> <p>Then find the main point. They started nodding and looked much more focused."</p> <p>"Listen carefully, laew leuak detail thee thook tong (แล้วเลือก detail ที่ถูกต้อง) –listen carefully. Then choose the correct detail.</p> <p>"This instruction was followed by some blank expressions caused by my mispronunciation of a word, which was later clarified as one student hinted that I was trying to utter the word "leuak (เลือก)"</p> | Inter-sentential; Intra-sentential | Code-Switching for Key Instruction; Non-native Thai Pronunciation Difficulty; Student Non-Verbal Cues | Code-Switching as a Teaching Strategy; The Impact of Mispronunciation on Students' Understanding |
| Writing Activities | <p>"Write full sentences and avoid just writing words or phrases, khian pen prayok tem tem mai chai khae kham rue wa li (เขียนเป็นประโยคเต็มๆ ไม่ใช่แค่คำหรือวลี)." Although positive responses were noted in these students, some students wrote single words and phrases, appearing unsure. I then added "These are the example, Nii kuu tuayang (นี่คือตัวอย่าง)" This proved helpful.</p> | Inter-sentential; Intra-sentential | Instructional Clarity; Code-Switching for Explanation; Student Uncertainty; Clarification Strategy | Enhancing Instructional Clarity Through Code-Switching; Addressing Student Uncertainty Through Examples |
| Speaking Activities | <p>"Group into five and then have a one-minute conversation, Jap glum kan ha khon lae poot koi kan nueng nati (จับกลุ่ม กันห้าคน และพูดคุยกันหนึ่งนาที)." They looked unsure as if waiting for something. I repeated the instructions in Thai, adding "ครับ (krab) at the end." This experience taught me that sounding unsure in Thai, and omitting polite markers, can lead to hesitation in understanding, as reflected in the students' facial expressions, which indicated uncertainty about whether the instruction was complete.</p> | Inter-sentential; Tag switching; Intra-sentential | Instructional Code-Switching; Nonverbal Cues and Student Comprehension; Role of Politeness Markers in Communication | The Influence of Politeness and Cultural Cues on Classroom Comprehension |
| Reading Activities | <p>"Read this article, then answer the questions, An bot khwam ni laew top kham tham na krab (อ่านบทความนี้ แล้วตอบคำถามนั้น แล้วตอบ คำถามนั้นครับ)." Students' were receptive, started reading, but hesitations arose when I stated, "make sure to note the important details." This was clarified by adding, "Jot yang samkan wai duay na krab (จดอย่างสำคัญไว้ด้วยนะครับ)."</p> | Inter-sentential; Tag switching; Intra-sentential | Instructional Code-Switching; Clarification Strategies; Student Comprehension and Response; Code-Switching for Emphasis; Politeness Markers in Classroom Discourse | Code-Switching as an Instructional Tool for Enhancing Classroom Comprehension and Engagement |

Note. The author, with developing ability in Thai, recorded phrases used in instruction primarily via transliteration. The exact Thai phrases in Thai script were added later in the journal and are presented here in parentheses.