THE USE OF ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA IN TEACHING THAI STUDENTS: THE PERSPECTIVES FROM INDONESIAN TEACHERS

by

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Abstract:

Despite numerous studies into English as a Lingua Franca, little empirical evidence reports the factors contributing to teachers' beliefs and attitudes. Studies of English as a Lingua Franca has so far been focused on teaching strategies. To fill this void, the present study aims to discover Indonesian teachers' beliefs and attitudes on using ELF in the Thai context. Furthermore, this study explores the factors contributing to these beliefs and attitudes. Findings revealed that mixing English and Thai was needed for Thai students with poor English. Furthermore, two factors shape the beliefs: the English learning experience and the English language identity. These findings implied that teachers needed to reflect on the students' language habits, assess their needs, and adjust their teaching strategies properly.

Keywords: *English as a Lingua Franca; maximal position; optimal position; teacher's belief; virtual position*

Abstrak:

Meskipun banyak penelitian tentang bahasa Inggris sebagai Lingua Franca, sedikit bukti empiris melaporkan faktor-faktor tersebut berkontribusi pada keyakinan dan sikap guru. Studi Bahasa Inggris sebagai Lingua Franca sejauh ini difokuskan pada strategi pengajaran. Untuk mengisi kekosongan ini, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui keyakinan dan sikap para guru Indonesia tentang penggunaan ELF dalam konteks Thailand. Selanjutnya, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi faktor-faktor yang berkontribusi terhadap keyakinan dan sikap tersebut. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa bagi siswa Thailand dengan tingkat bahasa Inggris yang buruk, pencampuran bahasa Inggris dan Thailand diperlukan. Selain itu, ada juga dua faktor yang berkontribusi pada pembentukan keyakinan; yaitu: pengalaman belajar bahasa Inggris dan identitas bahasa Inggris. Temuan ini menyiratkan bahwa guru perlu merefleksikan kebiasaan bahasa siswa, menilai kebutuhan siswa dan menyesuaikan strategi mengajar mereka dengan benar.

Kata kunci: *keyakinan guru; Bahasa Inggris sebagai Lingua Franca; posisi virtual; posisi maksimal; posisi optimal*

INTRODUCTION

Throughout this globalization era, English appears to be the leading medium of communication among people in both national and international contexts (Khamkhien, 2010; Wongsothorn et al., 2002). As it has been proven, in 2020, nearly two billion people worldwide are utilizing English as a medium of communication; in fact, most of them are non-native English speakers (NNES) (Clark, 2012; Phan, 2020). It has been predicted that in 2020, there will be a decreasing number of native speakers of English; it has declined to approximately 300 million (Goddard, A., Rana, R., & Clayton, 2016). As a result, English language teachers' demands have increased across the globe (Debora Floris, 2013). It may also lead to the opportunity for non-native English teachers to teach English worldwide. It is worth noting that more than half of English teachers are non-native speakers of English (Canagarajah, 2004; Crook, 2016; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2001). Take, for instance, it is stated that 80% of around 12 to 15 million English teachers across the globe are non-native English-speaking teachers (Freeman et al., 2015).

In Thailand, English has emerged as a foreign language, becoming the most popular subject to study at school (Kam, 2006; Putri, 2020). As English subject is embedded in every school curriculum in Thailand, a good deal of policies have been made by the government to improve the teaching and learning of English in Thailand (Hayes, 2010). The Education Minister of Thailand, Nataphol Teepsuwan(2020), states that there are more or less 7,000 foreign teachers currently teaching in Thai schools; he is calling for another 10,000 teachers to come to Thailand to teach (Bangkok Post, 2020). These job vacancies are open for both NEST and non-NEST. It is worth noting that every single English teacher must possess a high proficiency in English to conduct their teaching and serve as a model of competent users of English (Renandya et al., 2018).

Apart from these experiences, there are several foreign English-speaking teachers in Thailand: the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (Ulla, 2018). There is still a shortlist of non-native English-speaking teachers hired to lend a helping hand to the Thai teachers to teach English; Indonesian teachers are on that list. Indonesian teachers coming to teach in class may face challenges teaching English to Thai students. (Noom-Ura, 2013) puts in writing, "The problems involving students who wished to speak English fluently included challenging interference from the Thai language, lack of

opportunity to use English in their daily lives, unchallenging English lessons, being passive learners, being too shy to speak English with classmates, being poorly-motivated and lack of responsibility for their learning."

Indonesian teachers teaching in Northeastern Thailand may put extra effort into teaching English. The northeastern part of Thailand belongs to a rural region. For this reason, most international tourists have not acknowledged this region (Putri, 2020). It also impacts the students coming to school; they have a low level of English as they are not exposed to speaking with foreigners. Most of them are barely able to understand and speak English. As Indonesian teachers are coming to teach in the northeastern region, they are in a dilemma as they have to decide whether to utilize English-only instruction or English-and-Thai instruction.

It is worth noting that previous studies have focused on the emerging tension of English-only as the language of instruction and experiments of promoting an English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) teaching pedagogy (Danping, 2013; Nagy, 2016). Research on Indonesian teachers teaching English in Thailand emphasizes the teaching strategies (Noor, 2018; Saefullah, 2018). In previous studies, (Danping, 2013) researched using English as a Lingua Franca in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. His research focused on the three categories of beliefs, which were classified based on the following (E. Macaro, 2009; Ernesto Macaro, 2005). Chanwaiwit and Kantisa (2022) conducted a longitudinal study to examine how attitudes toward English as a Lingua Franca changed over time as English educators progressed through education and teaching experiences from 2019 to 2022. Cahyadi and Fitriyah (2024) also explored pre-service teachers' perceptions and strategies in teaching English as a Lingua Franca in Indonesia. This present study enhances the value of the current research by reporting a qualitative study on Indonesian teachers' belief in teaching English to Thai students.

A teacher's belief is defined as what a teacher believes in, such as learning, teaching, program and curriculum, and the teaching profession in general (Ghaith, 2004). Borg (2006) also adds that teacher beliefs refer to a teacher's pedagogical beliefs relevant to one's teaching situation. Moeller et al. (1997) also state that a teacher's belief is defined as the inner strength and principle of a teacher that drives him or her in daily teaching. In particular, a teacher's belief is constructed by many factors; they are the critical incidents during a person's learning

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process, the journey of one's teacher training, one's teaching experiences, the official policies, and also one's exposure to the perceptions of colleagues and school administrators (Danping, 2013).

As the number of Native and Non-native speakers of English teachers increases, English as a lingua franca in Thailand emerges. Trakulkasemsuk (2015) researched the phenomenon of English as a Foreign Language and English as a Lingua Franca. He suggested that the way teachers teach English to Thai students should consider the emergence of ELF. In school, non-native English teachers are always encouraged to use English. Non-native English teachers might not always use English to teach the subject to the students. In particular, there was research on using code-mixing of Thai and English in the Thai tertiary context of the communication process between Thais and non-Thais (Tassev, 2020).

Woon and Ho (2007) explain that code-mixing happens when one language is utilized with another in the same sentence. It often happens in the social settings where the people are bilingual or multilingual (Tassev, 2020). Code-mixing also deals with embedded linguistic units that help people understand each other: morphemes, words, and phrases (Ayeomoni, 2006). Kongkerd (2015) states that many people in Thailand often communicate in English with other people (either Thai or non-Thai) by applying code-mixing to show respect and politeness, feelings, and negotiate meanings. For instance, those people usually utilize the polite markers of "ka" or "krab" at the end of their English or mixed-language sentences.

Tantiniranat (2020) writes, "Strategy 2.1 (Curriculum development) of the 12th Educational Development Plan asserts that Thai education must implement intensive English language curriculum that is in line with AEC agreement to support works in ASEAN." This education policy in English language learning implies that there should be an escalating standard of English in the Thai education context. Departing from this experience, there is an argument about implementing standard English teaching to Thai students. It deals with teaching a specific variety or various features of the English language, considering "World Standard English" (Tantiniranat, 2020).

Furthermore, in this study, the participants' responses are categorized by Macaro's (2005, 2009) "continuum of perspective." This continuum perspective deals with three different personal beliefs of teachers regarding how they hold their potential language choice

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in teaching English (Danping, 2013). First, the virtual position is linked to the monolingual perspective. In this case, the teachers might support exclusively using English as the target language. In addition, the maximal position is the acknowledgment that the exclusive use of English as the target language is not attainable. In some ways, the teachers might feel guilty for partially using other supportive language. Furthermore, the optimal position is also known as the multilingual perspective, which enables teachers to use other languages to support the teaching-learning process without having any pedagogical regrets.

For this reason, the study aims to answer the following two research questions:

1. **What are Indonesian English teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards using ELF in EFL teaching?**
2. **What factors contribute to these beliefs and attitudes?**

METHOD

Design

The writers conducted a qualitative study. A qualitative research methodology was implemented in this study to acquire the thoughts, beliefs, real-life experiences, and perceptions of the participants. Cresswell (2012) stated that a qualitative study focused on investigating a problem and presenting an understanding of a crucial phenomenon in further detail. The writers emphasized the Indonesian teachers' points of view on their experiences in using English as a Lingua Franca to teach English to Thai students. All the data were collected in this research and presented in the form of a narrative account as they might give a better understanding of the research results. Moreover, the data collected were analyzed inductively to ensure the teachers' responses were recorded correctly and with all details.

Participant

This study limited the scope of the study to eight different private primary schools in the Northern and the Northeastern regions of Thailand and ten Indonesian teachers who taught English in the Northern and Eastern regions of Thailand. The provinces from Northern Thailand were Lampang and Chiang Rai; meanwhile, the provinces from North Eastern Thailand were Mahasarakham and Buriram. Chiang Rai and Lampang provinces were the

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northmost provinces in Thailand. These northern provinces of Thailand were close to the Burmese border. Meanwhile, the two provinces in northeastern Thailand, Mahasarakham and Buriram, were parts of Isan. Isan was the region of northeast Thailand, bordering Cambodia and Laos. International tourists might not know about those four provinces well. Therefore, it was difficult for the people in those four provinces to find tourists. For these reasons, people, in general, might not be exposed to English speakers.

In this study, potential participants must meet specific criteria: they must be Indonesian teachers in regional areas in Thailand who are currently teaching English to Thai students. It was worth noting that the writers limited the study to eight schools from Thailand's Northern and North Eastern provinces. The participants of this study were six Indonesian teachers who were teaching English. Four male teachers and two female teachers participated in this study. The ages of the participants ranged from 24 to 29 years old.

Furthermore, their teaching experiences in Thailand ranged from one to three years. However, most of them were novice teachers. All the participants were teaching in the Catholic Schools. All those schools are elementary private schools.

Instrument

To comprehend participants' beliefs and attitudes in teaching English as a Lingua Franca, the writers used a questionnaire for the research instruments. The writers utilized fifteen statements for the closed-ended questionnaire, which used four of the Likert scale. In addition, the researchers also made use of one question for the open-ended questionnaire. As the writers obtained the data from the questionnaire, they conducted an in-depth interview with six Indonesian teachers to understand their experiences better using English as a Lingua Franca to teach Thai students in those four bordering provinces. The interview serves to help the writers acquire an in-depth understanding of the participants' beliefs and attitudes in the context of ELF teaching. Also, it helps the writers to draw links between the perceived beliefs and attitudes and the factors that influence their beliefs and attitudes.

Data collecting technique

To begin with, the researchers used a closed-ended and an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire served as a preliminary step before the interview. As the researchers obtained the data from the questionnaires, the researchers started to conduct an interviews

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with the six Indonesian English teachers. The writers employed semi-structured interviews to gather the data from the six Indonesian English teachers. The research problems served as a solid foundation for formulating the questions for the interview. By implementing semi-structured interviews, the research participants could share detailed insights and explain their teaching experiences, which corresponded to this study's specific objectives. Due to the geographical separation between the researchers and the interviewees, the interviews were conducted using a video call application.

Data analysis technique

As the data from the questionnaire and interview were completed, the researchers proceeded to the data analysis process. To begin with, each statement of the closed-ended questionnaire was recapitulated in the form of percentage by using this formula:

$$\frac{n}{N} \times 100$$

n: the number of participants who choose a certain degree of frequency.

N: the total number of the participants.

Meanwhile, the results from the open-ended questionnaire were labeled under different names. As the writers finished the open coding process, they started to put similar labels into a more prominent theme. Before coming to the process of analyzing the interview data, the researchers first listened to the recording and started transcribing the interview. (Braun, V and Clarke, 2012) suggested that there were six thematic analysis procedures: becoming acquainted with the data, creating initial codes, identifying themes, assessing possible themes, defining and labeling themes, and preparing the final report. The researchers highlighted the interview transcripts, noted the code, and grouped the codes into different themes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this paper, the writers obtained data from the interviews with six English teachers. They were asked about their beliefs on using English as a Lingua Franca in teaching English to Thai students. The two teachers represented one category (E. Macaro, 2009; Ernesto Macaro, 2005). In particular, the two participants represented the virtual, maximal, and optimal positions. It was worth noting that each participant had revealed consistent thoughts

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and ideas on the issue of ELF in teaching English to Thai students. Furthermore, their beliefs on using ELF were also proven to be rooted in their previous learning experience and

Indonesian Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes on the Use of ELF in the Thai Context
Case one: Vanya representing the virtual position

In this part, the writers elaborated on the beliefs of the participants. Vanya represented the virtual position.

Vanya

Vanya supported English-only pedagogy and believed that English could be mastered only through the exclusive use of English in the classroom. Vanya began with the story of her experience.

> *Teaching Thai students was challenging but, of course, fun. The language barrier was the biggest obstacle, yet the most exciting part. It was frustrating not to be able to make them understand quickly. I could not just use Thai. Not only did I not speak Thai, but I could not use it in my class. It was interesting too, because it forced me and the students to speak English only to communicate.*

As she taught the students, she also set the goal of teaching. She expected her students to be confident in talking in English. She suggested that the students did not need to worry much about grammatical issues. She encouraged her students to speak entirely in English; they should not mix English with Thai.

Vanya believed that using English only was the best way to teach English to Thai students. No matter where her students came from, students needed to be exposed to English as much as possible. As she perceived that grammar was not that essential in speaking, she motivated her students to practice more on speaking. Focusing too much on grammar would likely hinder the students from speaking. They might end up being speechless. She argued,

> *For example, we do not need to study Bahasa Indonesia to be able to speak since we have been exposed to that language since we were young. All we had to do was practice. Furthermore, since we (as teachers) speak English, it will most likely trigger our students to do the same. Thus, I think students are better taught in English if we encourage them, do not correct them too often when they speak, make speaking class not terrifying for them, and make them practice every time.*

Furthermore, Vanya implemented various teaching strategies to support her students in learning English. In addition to speaking English only, she used presentations, pictures,

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videos, and movies as the learning media. She also made the students work collaboratively in groups and do the role-play. She created the learning ambiance to support learning English.

> *While taking the test, the rest of the students watched an English movie with English subtitles. This would make them get used to reading and listening to English. The idea of the movie was to "condition" and "reward" the test takers.*

Vanya saw translation as an unnecessary teaching strategy. She pointed out that every teaching-learning strategy worked for her students except translation. She argued that as her students were exposed to English only, her students would get used to hearing English. In this case, the teachers could take advantage of the students being asked to practice English.

Case two: Johan representing the maximal position

In general, Johan supported the idea of the maximal position. He believed that learning English could not be achieved through English only as the students were beginners. Departing from this experience, he utilized Thai in their teaching-learning process. However, he sometimes doubted if what he had done was acceptable.

Johan

To begin with, Johan elaborated on his belief,

> *My father, who used to serve as a teacher at the peak of Jaya in Papua, inspired me. He taught the local ethnic group called Dani. My father needed to speak the Dani language to teach Indonesian and other subjects. I believe that English is better taught by mixing Thai and English for my students.*

Furthermore, Johan believed that using the Thai language to teach English to small kids would likely ease the students' anxiety. Johan added that it would be easier to understand what his students were trying to ask or say as he understood the Thai language.

> *In my case, if the majority of the students already understand basic English, I am sure I will use full English. However, the first time coming here, I was responsible for teaching kindergarten and primary school students. I cannot teach English only. The presence of the Thai language in my teaching is significant since it may help my students to be comfortable with the lesson.*

Johan also attested that as his students gradually improved their English, he started to use Thai less and maximized the use of English.

> *At the end of the semester, I felt that many of my students started to understand English. Many of them have understood the logic of the language. That is the right time for me to enhance the use of English and gradually minimize the use of the Thai language in my teaching.*

Johan also revealed some benefits to utilizing English and Thai in this case. However, he did feel worried and doubtful about using the strategies.

In general, Johan, who supported the maximal position, revealed that using the Thai language in teaching English to Thai students would unlock the door for the teachers to get into the students' world. Using the Thai language in teaching English to Thai students enabled the teachers to have social mobility in the classroom. Moreover, he believed that Thai was needed to interpret classroom instructions. Although he obtained the benefits of mixing English and Thai in their teaching, he felt regretful of using Thai to some extent.

Case three: Ganang representing the optimal position

In the first place, Ganang might have a multilingual perspective, as proven by their statements that support the view of the optimal position. In particular, he acknowledged the value of utilizing the Thai language in teaching English to Thai students without being regretful.

Ganang

Ganang recognized that the presence of the Thai language in teaching English gave them a significant hint of a "harmonious and balanced teaching environment" (Senior, 2006, p. 270).

> *At first, it was challenging for me to motivate my students to learn English. English is not their first language. I almost gave up in the first two months. I could not find any improvements in my students. For students whose English is very poor, using Thai is very helpful. It is my way to get them engaged in my learning. However, as time went by, it turned out that the students might learn better by using various teaching media and classroom activities. They started being motivated to learn English as they constantly fell in love with it through various learning activities.*

Ganang also added that he always encouraged the students to speak English. He attested to his students that they did not need to feel worried and afraid of making mistakes. Ganang believed that the presence of the mother language in the learning process triggered the students to be motivated to learn. During the learning process, as the students did not understand English, they would likely feel discouraged or demotivated to learn.

> *I used to be a small kid who hated English. I understand how it works. When a kid dislikes something, he will just leave it. For this reason, I always make sure that my students understand what I am trying to say.*

Volume 13 No 3, October 2024 ,
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Ganang added that for schools in big cities such as Bangkok and Chiang Mai, it might be possible for teachers to use only English. His school was in a rural area; he needed to get the students engaged by using the Thai language. In addition to that, he provided many engaging activities such as games, songs, videos, role-playing, etc. He did not have any single regret about mixing Thai and English.

> *It is true. I do not feel any regret at all. As a teacher, I always find every technique or teaching method to help my students understand the subject. I learn Thai; my students teach me too. I learned what strategies work best for them through dynamics and communication.*

Ganang pointed out that his students seemed to avoid talking to foreigners because they could not speak English. He attested that his students feel engaged when they learn English through games, videos, and presentations with topics within their scope (the culture, the food, or the tourism destination in Thailand).

Furthermore, Ganang emphasized that teacher-centered learning was not suitable for Thai students. He found that students learned better through collaboration in discussion as they could share their different thoughts, argue, and respect other students.

> *When the teacher only teaches in front of the classroom, the students will likely forget what they learn. Learning happens as a two-way communication. When we invite our students to participate in discussions, they will understand better.*

From the point of view of Ganang, exposure to English, which was delivered in Thai and English, might help the students gradually construct the habit of speaking in English. It might start with the basic skills. Then, they would gradually improve their language skills.

In the end, his learning goals were achieved.

Another critical point is that Ganang supported the optimal zone; he agreed that mixing English and Thai languages was helpful in his teachings. He did not feel regretful about it. He argued that mixing English and Thai language enabled them to manage the classroom effectively. Based on their experience, he also believed that mixing English and Thai enabled him to build harmonious relationships with students. On top of that, students felt engaged in the learning process.

Given these points, every single teacher was seen to put his or her best effort into assisting students in learning English. Whether a teacher supported the virtual, maximal, or optimal positions, each tried his or her best to teach English to the students. It could be seen that each of the virtual, maximal, and optimal positions might present different advantages and drawbacks. An important key finding revealed that mixing English and Thai language

would enhance their learning for the students who barely knew English or were indigent in English. However, as their English levels had upgraded and their English skills improved, the teachers no longer used the Thai language in their teaching.

What influenced their beliefs in teaching?

In general, the teachers' beliefs in teaching might be influenced by various factors. They were language learning experience and English language identity.

Language Learning Experience

Most teachers attested that their experience as language learners influenced their teaching. All the participants were Indonesians who studied English as a foreign language. The participants walked through various learning processes. They got used to learning the traditional ways of routing. Julian stated,

> *I have got the actual experience. Teachers tend to do traditional teaching of teacher-centered by reading books to students and asking the students to copy them on their books. That is old-fashioned. Writing in books and routing without practicing the language will hinder the students from mastering English. As a teacher, I no longer used those teaching methods.*

Julian appeared to support the optimal position. Ganang, who supported the optimal position, also added that learning requires the students' engagement with the subject to learn. As a child, he tended to ignore the lesson, which he did not feel engaged in. It made him believe that using the Thai language supports classroom activities.

Furthermore, Johan and Ica stated almost similar things based on the open-ended questionnaire. Both of them supported the maximal position. They stated that those whose houses were isolated in the village or mountain might know and understand very little English. They know very little English or even nothing, so mixing English and Thai would be a great idea. Ica wrote,

> *As an English teacher, I only need to use English to improve the students' skills. However, for some conditions, I cannot deny that using Thai is sometimes helpful for students to learn, especially for those from a village or mountain tribe. They do not know any English words at all. So, it depends on the condition of the students, but I always try to speak English to them. However, I prefer to mix English and Thai because my students mostly do not know English words, even the simplest ones.*

In addition, based on the open-ended question, Vanya claimed that learning happened as the students were exposed to English maximally. Vanya supported the virtual position. Vanya wrote,

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> *Using English only is the right way to teach English (no translation). It will help students get used to hearing English words and giving responses since their English grammar teachers are Thai and use the Thai language most of the time. Students need to be exposed to the English language as much as possible.*

As Vanya has described, what she believed in learning might move and direct her to what she did in her teaching.

English as language identity

Each participant's foreign language identity appeared to be a significant hint of what they believed about using English in their teaching. Ganang and Julian, who supported the optimal position, feel confident about being labeled as bilingual by utilizing English and Thai. Both Ganang and Johan stated that they did not find it problematic to mix English and Thai language. They were both foreigners who taught English to Thai students and also learners of the Thai language.

In contrast, Ica, as the representative of the maximal position, found it guilty to acknowledge the presence of the Thai language in her classroom. Ica stated,

I am a foreign English teacher. I need to and am expected to speak and teach my students in English.

Bernard, one of the participants, might be satisfied with being monolingual. Based on the open-ended question Bernard put in writing,

> *I prefer using English as much as possible. Exposure becomes the critical element in being fluent in English.*

Both Bernard and Vanya were satisfied with teaching English without the Thai language.

Discussion

This research has obtained data from interviews to understand the six Indonesian English teachers' beliefs about using EFL to teach English to Thai students in Thailand. Three different categories of beliefs were found by adopting Macaro's theory: virtual, maximal, and optional (E. Macaro, 2009; Ernesto Macaro, 2005). Each teacher represented one category of Macaro's theory (E. Macaro, 2009; Ernesto Macaro, 2005). In particular, the two participants represented the virtual, maximal, and optimal positions. It was worth noting that each participant had revealed consistent thoughts and ideas on the issue of ELF in teaching English

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to Thai students. Furthermore, their beliefs about using ELF were also rooted in their previous learning experience and their English language identity.

Those who supported the virtual position might benefit from using English only in their classroom. It was undeniable that using English only in the classroom could encourage the students to develop their English by exposing them to a virtual reality class of English. Besides, it might also stimulate the students to speak and practice their English as there were no other choices. However, as both participants who supported the virtual position agreed that both of them avoided using the Thai language and translation, students with a lower level of English might not understand the lesson. Those students needed to be helped with other strategies to understand the lesson well.

In general, Juan and Monic, who supported the maximal position, revealed that using the Thai language in teaching English to Thai students would unlock the door for the teachers to get into the students' world. Using the Thai language in teaching English to Thai students enabled the teachers to have social mobility in the classroom. Moreover, these two participants also believed that Thai was needed to interpret the classroom instructions. Although these teachers obtained the benefits of mixing English and Thai in their teaching, they felt regretful of using Thai to some extent.

Another critical point is that Galih and Jalu supported the optimal zone; both agreed that mixing English and Thai languages was helpful in their teachings. They did not feel regretful about it. Both of them argued that mixing English and Thai language enabled them to manage the classroom effectively. Based on their experience, they also believed that mixing English and Thai enabled them to build harmonious relationships with students. On top of that, students felt engaged in the learning process.

It was worth noting that the results of this research were in line with Danping's research. He found that some Chinese teachers belonged to different groups of virtual, maximal, and optimal positions (Danping, 2013; E. Macaro, 2009; Ernesto Macaro, 2005). A study (Enama, 2016) revealed that low performers of bilingual EFL students in Cameroon achieved better in grammar and speaking when they studied two different languages of instruction. This statement supported the maximal as well as optimal positions. However, in

this research, the writers could not conclude if the students whose teachers belonged to virtual, maximal, or optional had performed better than each other.

Given these points, it implied that every single teacher was seen to put their best effort to assist his or her students in learning English. Whether a teacher supported the virtual, maximal, or optimal positions, each tried his or her best to teach English to the students. It could be seen that each of the virtual, maximal, and optimal positions might present different advantages and drawbacks. An important key finding revealed that mixing English and Thai language would enhance their learning for the students who barely knew English or were indigent in English. However, as their English levels had upgraded and their English skills improved, the teachers no longer used the Thai language in their teaching.

After understanding the three categories of beliefs identified by the adaptation of Macaro's (2005, 2009) theory on virtual, maximal, and optimal positions, the writers tried to elaborate on the factors that influenced their beliefs. In the first place, these Indonesian teachers' beliefs were rooted in their English language learning experiences, their national identity as Indonesians, and their English language identity. It was worth remembering that Danping stated that ELF was utilized to interpret Chinese words and culture for pedagogical purposes, manage the classroom, and build practical rapport with students. This statement supported the finding in this research that some of the research participants also used ELF to build a good rapport and understand their students better.

This study also suggested that Indonesian English teachers were encouraged to constantly renew their beliefs and identity as teachers, for they had walked through their own learning experiences and taught English to their students. They were encouraged to understand more about theories of learning and the education policies implemented in the Thai context. This study also suggested that as four of the interviewees utilized the Thai language to be mixed with English, they appeared to be bilingual and could distinguish the linguistic features of both English and Thai.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

This paper utilized interview data to examine Indonesian teachers' beliefs about using English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Thai English classrooms. Three belief categories were

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identified by applying (E. Macaro, 2009; Ernesto Macaro, 2005) concepts of virtual, maximal, and optimal positions. All teachers expressed clear and consistent views on using ELF in the classroom, with their beliefs strongly influenced by their own experiences in learning English and their English language identity.

Limitation

The limitations of this study are the research participants, the research method, and the learning theories. The research participants of this study were only six Indonesian teachers teaching English to Thai students. For further research, having more teachers as participants would be better. Notably, all participants were private Thai elementary and junior high school teachers, potentially impacting the applicability of findings to public schools. Future studies could include qualitative and quantitative approaches, utilizing a more extensive and diverse participant group from different regions of Thailand to achieve a more thorough understanding.

Implication

This study has facilitated the exploration of teaching English to Thai students from the perspective of English as a Lingua Franca. Notably, participants had the opportunity to reflect on their teaching experiences. Additionally, this research contributes to the existing literature on teaching English as a Lingua Franca, particularly in regional areas focusing on elementary and secondary education. Furthermore, the findings could provide valuable insights for school leaders on how to support teachers in improving education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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