Vietnamese EFL secondary teachers’ translanguaging use and their perceptions

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ABSTRACT

Although the concept of translanguaging is not new, little is known about how it is employed and viewed by Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in both public and private institutions. By investigating how EFL secondary teachers in the public and private sectors employ translanguaging in language schools and their perceptions, this convergent mixed-method study bridged the gap in the current literature. Following the collection of questionnaires from 32 secondary school teachers in a district of Hanoi and four semi-structured interviews with 04 survey participants, descriptive analysis was used to examine the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The merged results showed that most teachers in both sectors had positive opinions on translanguaging and thought it was crucial for scaffolding students’ learning, especially for cognitive purposes (e.g., to explain difficult grammar/vocabulary) due to the importance of grammar and vocabulary for exam preparation while using translanguaging for affective purposes was found unimportant by most participants. Also, teachers in public schools reported using translanguaging more frequently than those in private schools due to the private institutions’ policy. The study continues to confirm the results of previous studies, supporting translanguaging use in EFL classrooms. It also argues that translanguaging should not be prohibited but included strategically in language teaching, calling for reconsideration of language policy from private schools. Some implications were offered, and further research is needed to generate more insights.

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, translanguaging has emerged as a pedagogical strategy that has drawn researchers’ attention. Translanguaging is the combination of two or more languages employed by both teachers and learners to achieve educational outcomes in language classrooms (Rabbidge, 2019). It has appeared in foreign language teaching due to the challenges of monolingual ideology (García, 2017) and students’ low English proficiency (García & Li, 2013). Moreover, recent research has shown that the field of Teaching English to Other Speakers of Other Languages is witnessing a shift to a complex linguistic landscape named “post-multilingualism” where “relationship between languages, where boundaries between languages, between languages
and other communicative means and the relationship between language and the nation-state are being constantly reassessed, broken or adjusted” (Wei, 2017, pp. 9-30). Also, recent studies continue to affirm the development of languages as more dynamic and fluid (Picardo, 2013; Tian, Aghai, Sayer, & Schissel, 2020) and the use of multiple languages is an asset (Galloway, Kriukow, & Numaijiri, 2017). Therefore, it is important to explore more about translanguaging use in language classes in the multilingualism era.

In Vietnam, at the secondary school level, where teachers and students share the same first language (L1) and use English as a foreign language, there has been a rising concern about how teachers use English and Vietnamese in their classrooms as there has been no mandatory instructional document addressing how English and Vietnamese are used in language classrooms (Nguyen, Chik, & Woodcock, 2022). This might lead to inconsistency in teaching English among institutions as some schools might promote a monolingual approach while others might welcome L1 in their English classes due to its benefits. Despite its being “an elephant in the room” (Kharchenko & Chappell, 2020), how stakeholders, namely secondary teachers, perceive translanguaging use remains understudied. Up to date, few studies seek to capture views from teachers and how they adopt translanguaging use at the secondary level. Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, in Vietnam, there are no studies investigating the differences in translanguaging use in both sectors, namely public and private schools. Therefore, the aim of the study is to explore translanguaging practices and views from teachers across sectors.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definitions of key terms

Translanguaging and translanguaging strategies.

In Welsh schools, translanguaging was discovered when teachers found out that while they were speaking Welsh, their students were frequently responding in English (García & Wei, 2013). Canagarajah (2011, pp. 1-28) defined translanguaging as “the negotiation of meaning across languages and language varieties.” García and Kleyn (2016) gave a clearer definition that translanguaging is the intermixing of languages, linguistics, and repertoires, allowing teachers and students to understand and express all their resources and enable students to produce meaningful communication to deepen their knowledge of the subject. It can be concluded that translanguaging is a specific language practice used to empower teachers and learners to realize pedagogical goals.

Previous studies attempt to show that the practice of translanguaging and code-switching is not the same. Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) indicated that while code-switching appeared from outside communication and transitioned to classroom contexts, translanguaging was the opposite. It appeared first in classrooms and then moved to the outside social contexts. Garcia (2011) clearly differentiated translanguaging and code-switching. While the former combines purposeful and systematic discursive modes, including code-switching, translation, note-taking, and focuses more on a speaker to make sense of learning, the latter is more hearer-oriented. From Garcia (2011)’s differentiation, code-switching is considered a part of translanguaging, which reveals the intricacy of translanguaging. Goodman and Tastanbek (2020, pp. 29-53) argued that even though code-switching and translanguaging share some overlapping features, it is essential to shift from code-switching to translanguaging in language classes as the former focuses on monoglossic ideology, which sees languages as distinct entities while the latter holds a holistic view of languages, stating translanguaging practice could add more value to meaning making and identity construction in language classrooms. Therefore, there is still so much to explore the potential of translanguaging.
Translanguaging strategies are the L1 use systematically employed by teachers in the classroom to facilitate students’ learning. Forman (2010) identified three principles for using translanguaging: Cognitive (to explain vocabulary/grammar/cultural concepts), Affective (to establish rapport among teachers/students), and Pedagogical (to ensure comprehensibility of content/to ensure all students participate). Rabbidge (2019) lists some commonly used translanguaging strategies labeled as Instructional (to give clear instruction), Concept-check (check students’ understanding of instruction), Associative (to connect lesson content to everyday life), Mediating (to assist students when they have a problem during an activity), Affective (to praise students). Our research is based on Forman’s (2010) and Rabbidge’s (2019) findings to explore what translanguaging strategies EFL teachers use in the classrooms.

2.2. Translanguaging in language teaching

2.2.1. Monolingual approach

The monolingual approach is defined as the use of a second language (L2) as the sole medium of instruction and interaction in the classrooms (Auerbach, 1993). The emergence of the monolingual approach was strongly promoted throughout the twentieth century, which advised language teachers and learners not to use their mother tongue (L1) for an explanation, translation, testing, and assessment in the L2 classrooms for fear that the L1 interference might lead to errors in L2 (Le & Pham, 2019). Supporting the idea that L1 is detrimental to language, previous studies also expressed the advocacy of excluding L1 from language classrooms (Lin, 2015). However, monolingual approach has been criticized in a number of studies. Wei (2017) argues that it is not necessary to exclude L1 from L2 classes. Instead, L1 can play a facilitative role in students’ language learning. Supporting Wei (2017), Le and Pham (2019) conducted a secondary research which indicates several studies advocating the use of L1, which calls for a shift from monolingual approach to multilingual approach which translanguaging should be used in L2 classrooms. Thus, this study was carried out to learn more about the potentials of translanguaging in Vietnam.

2.2.2. Advocacy of translanguaging in language teaching

Translanguaging has proven beneficial to language learning/teaching (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009; Menken & Sanchez, 2019; Wei, 2017). It could help students understand what they are learning by teachers using L1 to make the instruction clearer (Ahmad & Jusoff, 2009). Wei (2017) states that translanguaging could facilitate students’ English language learning by explaining vocabulary, grammar, or culture, as well as showing respect for students’ language and culture. Moreover, Wei (2017) also emphasizes that students are offered more opportunities to produce successful communication by using their linguistic repertoire. Translanguaging also has a positive impact on students’ creative engagement, allowing the flexibility to appreciate and use the home language at school while students can still learn the target language (Menken & Sanchez, 2019). Translanguaging, therefore, helps to explain concepts, make instructions clearer, scaffold students’ language learning process, maximize their opportunities to communicate, and make the classroom atmosphere more comfortable.

2.2.3. Criticisms of translanguaging in language teaching

Some disadvantages of translanguaging in language classes are identified. First, Bui and Nguyen (2014) stated that translanguaging might cause misunderstandings between two languages. Students might use vocabulary incorrectly due to their misuse of the Vietnamese equivalent. Secondly, the domination of L1 in the language class might inhibit students’ linguistic
development as they need sufficient input from the target language (Yuvayapan, 2019). Agreeing with Yuvayapan (2019), Phuong and Dang (2022) added that students could be demotivated if teachers overuse L1. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to balance the use of translanguaging in classes.

2.2.4. Translanguaging and institution culture

Previous empirical studies have shown that despite sharing L1 with students, teachers in private schools might avoid using L1 due to strict language policy from their institutions (Sampson, 2012). Hall (2020) added that the monolingual approach or English-only policy still prevails, particularly in private schools. The differences in translanguaging deployment across sectors were also indicated in Hall and Cook’s (2014) large-scale study, which showed that teachers in public schools used translanguaging more frequently than those in private sectors. Institutional factors, hence, have affected how translanguaging is employed, yet it remains understudied in Vietnam. Hence, this study was conducted to explore how secondary teachers across both sectors perceive translanguaging use.

2.2.5. Previous studies related to teachers’ perceptions towards the use of translanguaging in English language classes

A number of studies were well-documented on teachers’ perceptions of the use of translanguaging in English classes both in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. Yusri, Huzaimi, and Sulaiman (2022) conducted a qualitative study exploring Malaysian teachers’ perceptions of translanguaging, showing that most ESL teachers hold a positive perception of the use of intermixing languages. In EFL context, most of the teachers perceived translanguaging as an effective tool in language teaching (Ambele, 2022; Yuvayapan, 2019). Yuvayapan (2019) explored the perceptions of EFL teachers in Turkey. The most noticeable finding in her study is the mismatch between teachers’ perceptions and their practice. While most of the teachers expressed their positive attitudes toward translanguaging, they did not use this method frequently in their classrooms. The teachers identified the reasons for the conflicts as institutional and contextual restrictions. This is in contrast with Sobkowiak’s (2022) qualitative study, showing that teachers declared that they gave priority to the exclusive use of English in classrooms but in practice, still deployed L1. In line with Yuvayapan (2019), Ambele (2022) used a qualitative study and found that despite the monolingual policy in classrooms, EFL lecturers often use Thai and English, which is considered helpful to students’ learning. Ten university lecturers from his study called for a shift towards translanguaging, as the use of L1 should not be neglected in L2 classrooms. Translanguaging use in classrooms, therefore, still needs further research to explore how teachers employ L1 in classrooms.

Translanguaging is considered facilitative by teachers for various purposes. The most frequently used purposes for translanguaging are to explain difficult grammar, establish rapport, and manage the classroom (Macaro, 1997). In line with Macaro (1997), Littlewood and Yu (2011) also mentioned the main reasons for teachers to use translanguaging are talking with students about personal matters, explaining difficult grammar, and dealing with serious discipline problems. Ölmez and Kirkgoz (2021) recently confirmed the previous studies’ results, indicating that giving instruction, praising, and managing the classrooms are the three primary purposes for translanguaging use by teachers. It can be concluded that translanguaging is not only employed for mainly cognitive purposes (to give instruction, to explain grammar) but also for affective purposes (to praise or establish rapport), which shows that affective purposes are also considered important by teachers.
Previous studies reported the positive attitude perceived by teachers; Zein (2018), however, produced a different finding. The study showed that teachers’ perceptions towards translanguaging seemed quite ambivalent, and some teachers supported L1 while others advocated a monolingual approach in foreign language teaching for fear that L1 interference might be detrimental to the development of the target language. Previous studies reported that teachers feel “guilty” and afraid of being judged when using translanguaging (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Wang, 2019). Hence, the topic still needs further research to confirm previous studies’ results.

In the Vietnamese context, translanguaging has attracted researchers’ attention recently. Dang (2022), in her action research study, investigated how teachers and students at a university change their perceptions towards the implementation of translanguaging. A positive attitude was adopted by most of the teachers and students after the intervention. She also suggested several strategies to make translanguaging more effective. Vu (2022) also reported similar results when investigating five high school teachers’ perceptions. Most of the participants supported L1 use but cautioned that it should be used with flexibility based on students’ level and lesson content. The previous studies mainly focused on teachers’ perceptions in university and high school settings. However, little is known about teachers’ perceptions at secondary schools in Vietnam, even though teachers’ perception is important and could influence the goals of language learning. Moreover, teachers’ perceptions of translanguaging in private and state schools in Vietnam remain unexplored, although the institutional factor also plays a role in affecting teachers’ perceptions of translanguaging. Therefore, this timely study was conducted to bridge the gap as well as contribute insights to the current literature by exploring teachers’ perceptions of translanguaging across sectors in Vietnam.

The study sought to answer the two research questions (RQ):

**RQ 1:** To what extent do EFL secondary teachers in private and public schools use translanguaging strategies?

**RQ 2:** What are teachers in private and public schools’ perceptions of the use of translanguaging?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Methodological approach

The study is mixed-method research (MMR). The rationale for this approach is MMR helps to draw on both quantitative and qualitative approaches and minimize the limitations of the two approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This could help to develop a detailed understanding of the research topic.

#### 3.2. Research design

A convergent mixed method was adopted. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and then were analyzed separately. The findings from both databases were compared to see if they converge or diverge. The rationale for this design is that the researcher wished to explore a complete understanding of the topic from different angles, and which convergent mixed-method design would be best suited (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Moreover, the aim of the study is to achieve triangulation, which can be accomplished through mixed-method research (Riazi & Cadlin, 2014).
3.3. Contexts & participants

Teachers from both public and private schools in a district in Hanoi were approached and invited to participate in the study by the head teachers of their schools. Before the study was conducted, all participants were fully informed of the study’s aims and procedures. A consent form was also provided and sent to them to sign.

The study invited 45 teachers to complete the survey. Only 32 teachers returned their questionnaires. They are all language teachers with more than 03 years of experience in teaching secondary schools. While most of them were women, only one teacher was male. Their English proficiency ranges from B2-C1, according to CEFR. 53.1% of participants work in the public sector, while 46.9% work in private schools (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Convergent mixed-method design

Figure 2. Teachers’ types of institutions

Most participants taught students from beginner to intermediate (93.8%), while only 6.3% of participants taught intermediate to advanced learners (Figure 2):
04 teachers from the survey were invited for the one-on-one interview with the information below:

**Table 1**

Interview participants’ information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Type of school</th>
<th>Their qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xuan</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nhu</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Private school</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giang</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Public school</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:

**3.4. Instruments**

Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (with an interview guide) were used in the study. The questionnaire was used because of its cost-effectiveness and ability to collect a huge amount of information in a relatively short time (Dörnyei & Dewaele, 2022), while an interview is the most frequently used data collection method in qualitative research (Rose, McKinley & Baffoe-Djan, 2020). Therefore, the two instruments were chosen for the study. Both instruments were used to answer the two research questions. Parallel questions were used in both databases in order to readily be compared. The concepts in the questionnaire were also asked in the interviews so that the database could be merged.

**3.5. Procedure**

The research used a 25-item questionnaire, which was adapted from Forman’s (2010), Hall and Cook (2014), Rabbidge’s (2019) studies as they are validated and reliable. The questionnaire contains two parts. In part 1, the survey asked about teachers’ translanguaging practices, how they perceived translanguaging use, and their institution culture related to translanguaging use, while part 2 was about participants’ personal information. Regarding the sampling strategy, convenience sampling was used. The research would choose participants (minimum 30 people) who are available and can be studied for the survey. The rationale for choosing this sampling type is it provides useful information and results, yet it cannot generalize the results to a larger population (Phakiti, 2014). The questionnaire administered online via Google Forms aimed to explore the teachers’ use of translanguaging strategies and their perceptions. It was written in English and assessed by an expert researcher to ensure reliability. A pilot study was conducted with a group of
non-participants (similar to those in the actual research) who completed the survey and returned a feedback form to revise the questionnaire and test the internal consistency of the items. A consent form was given before participants completed the survey.

Regarding qualitative data, purposive sampling was used. The researcher invited four people who were from the quantitative sample (02 from the private sector and 02 from the public sector) for one-on-one semi-structured interviews with the interview guide. The participants were given a consent form before the interview started. Then, the interviews were audio-recorded for transcription and analysis. All participants’ names were used as pseudonyms for both databases to protect their privacy. A pilot interview was conducted with a similar person to evaluate interview questions and revise them for the actual interviews.

3.6. Data analysis

In quantitative data, descriptive statistics, including frequency, and percentages are used for data analysis to describe general trends with the help of SPSS. Crosstabulation was employed in SPSS to compare both sectors regarding their translanguaging use and perceptions. Cronbach’s Alpha is used to ensure item reliability. Dörnyei (2007) states that the acceptable Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.70 or above.

Regarding qualitative data, the study followed a 7-stage thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2013), namely Transcription, reading and familiarization, coding the entire dataset, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and labeling themes, and writing. The researchers transcribed the recordings, read them again and again to engage with the data, coded the information that helped to answer the research questions, searched for themes relevant to the research questions, labeled the themes by choosing a name that captured the essence of the themes, and wrote.

3.7. Reliability & validity

Reliability can be achieved using statistical analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). The item reliability of the questionnaire was calculated by using Cronbach’s Alpha with an acceptable score (0.86), showing that it could be used for the actual study.

Table 2
Reliability statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reliability Statistics</th>
<th>N of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach’s Alpha</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:

Regarding validity, it refers to trustworthiness in qualitative data (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2019) and the ability to measure what is supposed to be measured in quantitative data (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2019). The study invited another researcher to double-check to ensure transcript accuracy while in quantitative data; even though the questionnaire was adapted from validated sources, an expert was invited for final revision before administration to increase validity.

4. Findings
4.1. Research question 1: To what extent do teachers use translanguaging strategies in their classrooms?

4.1.1. Results from quantitative data

Figure 4. Teachers’ reported use of translanguaging

The teachers utilized translanguaging most commonly for cognitive purposes. For example, while 68% of the participants said they always used translanguaging to explain grammar, 75% of participants said they often/always use translanguaging to explain vocabulary. To explain cultural concepts, 53.1% (often), and 28.1% (always) of participants reported that they used translanguaging.

Using translanguaging for pedagogical purposes was rarely employed by the teachers. The majority of participants rarely used Vietnamese to give clear instructions (62% rarely), check students’ understanding of instructions (68% rarely), connect lessons with everyday life (59% rarely), and correct errors (68% rarely). Regarding affective purposes, while almost 60% of participants rarely used translanguaging to create good relationships with students, half of the participants never used Vietnamese to compliment their students.

Therefore, the teachers employed translanguaging mainly for cognitive purposes and rarely or never used translanguaging for pedagogical and affective purposes.

Figure 5. How important is it for teachers to use Vietnamese in the following situations?

The teachers highlighted the significance of translanguaging use for cognitive purposes in
relation to the importance of translanguaging in specific situations (Figure 5). For example, all participants agreed that it is important/very important to use Vietnamese to explain grammar.

Most participants did not consider using Vietnamese for pedagogical purposes vital. For instance, about 70% of teachers think that it is not important to use Vietnamese to give instructions. Also teachers also expressed their disfavor of using Vietnamese for effective purposes. For example, 72% of teachers reported that Vietnamese praise for students is unimportant.

Regarding translanguaging use associated with types of schools, teachers in public schools reported more frequent use of translanguaging for cognitive purposes than those in private sectors. For example, in Figure 6, teachers in public schools reported always/often using translanguaging than those in private schools when teaching vocabulary (50% against 25%), while in Figure 7. 53% of teachers in public schools often/always used translanguaging to explain grammar compared with 34% of those in private sectors.

4.1.2. Results from qualitative data

Theme 1: A frequent use of translanguaging when appropriate

When being asked about how frequently they used translanguaging and for what situations, most participants agreed that they often used Vietnamese when they explained grammar concepts or vocabulary, especially when the concepts were hard to explain in English; translanguaging was employed to make learning easier for students:

I often use L1 in language classrooms, mainly to explain grammar. I also use L1 to explain vocabulary. When I taught the word “bay hoi” (evaporate) in English, it was very difficult to make students understand the word if you taught in English only (Nhu).

Also, I often use Vietnamese when trying to explain difficult grammar concepts, for example, past continuous tense or new words that are hard to explain in English, like the word “nomadic” (Ha).

Another participant expressed that when she recognized students’ lack of comprehension, she turned to Vietnamese to explain the concepts:

I mainly use L1 when I see students’ worried faces because they do not understand my instruction, so I talk in English and repeat in Vietnamese to make it clear (Xuan).

From the data in the interviews, most participants often reported frequent use of translanguaging for cognitive purposes (mainly to explain grammar and vocabulary) and to ensure students understood the lessons. Also, when being asked about whether teachers use translanguaging
for affective purposes, one teacher stated that she rarely used L1 to praise students and explained:

*It is not necessary to praise students in Vietnamese because you can praise them by using short phrases like: Very good and give your thumbs up to show that you are praising them. Students can understand that (Giang).*

**Theme 2: Importance of using translanguaging for cognitive purposes**

Two participants stated that the reasons why they needed to use translanguaging for cognitive purposes were that grammar and vocabulary played an important role in the exams, and they needed to make sure that students fully understood to pass the exams:

*My students must participate in a lot of exam competitions, and high results are normally something that is very important. We need to make sure students understand grammar clearly to achieve high results (Giang).*

*Well, because students need to pass the entrance to high school exam, it is important for them to understand grammar/vocabulary because they play important roles in the exam. All students understand the grammar and vocabulary is our priority (Ha).*

### 4.2. Research question 2: What are teachers in private and public schools’ perceptions towards the use of translanguaging?

#### 4.2.1. Results from quantitative data

**Figure 8.** Vietnamese should be used in English classes

**Figure 9.** Vietnamese helps students learn English more effectively

When being asked about whether Vietnamese should be used in English classes, most
teachers from both types of schools agreed/strongly agreed with the statement. All teachers from public schools believed that Vietnamese is effective in helping students learn English, while 66% of those from private schools agreed/strongly agreed with the statement.

Most teachers from both sectors also reported that they feel no guilt when using translanguaging (Figure 10):

![Figure 10. I feel guilty when using Vietnamese in English classes](image)

Regarding teachers’ translanguaging use and institution culture, private schools promoted monolingual bias more than public schools. For instance, 73% of teachers in the private sector agreed with the statement that their schools expected them to teach only English in their classes, while 52% of teachers from public schools disagreed with the statement. Teachers from both sectors seemed quite unclear when being asked about how their colleagues think about the monolingual approach.

![Figure 11. My school/institution expects classes to be taught only in English](image)  
![Figure 12. Teachers in my institution feel that classes should be taught only in English](image)

4.2.2. Results from qualitative data

**Theme 1: Importance of Vietnamese in English classes**

All participants from both sectors recognized Vietnamese’s roles in English classes. They all thought that when appropriate, Vietnamese could facilitate students’ learning process:

*I need to make sure that all my students in the same class should need to understand the lesson. Well, so Vietnamese, in my situation, is quite important (Giang).*

*I think in Vietnam, English is not an official language. If we use 100% English, it can be a...*
burden for students to completely understand. If we teach some complex terms, we tend to use L1, which we think helps students to understand the lessons better. Using Vietnamese is inevitable in my classrooms (Nhu).

**Theme 2: Differences in school policy**

There were differences in school policy between the two types of schools. Teachers from public schools stated that it is not compulsory for them to use English only and that teachers should be flexible based on their students’ level:

> Well, from our principal and head teacher’s opinion, they just encourage teachers to use as much English as possible. There is no obligation that teachers must use English 100%. It depends on students’ English ability, and we are advised to be flexible. If their level is low, it is necessary to have a mix of Vietnamese and English. If the classes’ level is high level like gifted students, it should be totally English (Giang).

Regarding private schools, the English-only policy seemed to be more promoted, as expressed by one participant, because her international curriculum and her head teacher is British. However, she expressed her dissatisfaction with the policy as this could affect their lesson delivery. This could be seen as a mismatch between teachers and schools:

> We are required to teach totally in English because our curriculum is Cambridge. The principal of our school is British, and he strongly advocates using only English in the classrooms. He states that if teachers use L1, this could reduce the English environment for students. However, we are not satisfied with the policy. In practice, when we only use English 100%, we see our students’ worried faces as they might not understand. When we talk to students outside the class, they express that they are worried that they do not fully understand the lessons (Xuan).

Agreeing with Xuan, Nhu added the monolingual approach was adopted in her school because her head teacher believed that an English-only environment could make their school more professional:

> My boss tells me that I must use English only. It could make our school more professional because our school is a private school. If we create a full English environment, this could promote the image of our school (Nhu).

**Theme 3: No sense of guilt when using Vietnamese in English classes**

Two participants from both sectors stated that they never felt guilty because using Vietnamese in their classes could limit students’ exposure to L2. They explained that their students’ English level is low and they needed to make sure students understand the content clearly:

> No. Because we need to be sure that students understand. We need to do everything we can to make them understand the lessons. I do not feel bad that I did not provide students with enough English environment (Giang).

> I am not because the goal of the lessons is to help students understand the lessons. My students are not excellent in English; they need to understand at least basic grammar or vocabulary to pass the high school exam. Therefore, I have never thought that I limit the L2 exposure. Using Vietnamese helps them learn English more effectively (Nhu).

5. Discussion
5.1. Research question 1: To what extent do teachers in private and public schools use translanguaging strategies?

Concerning the first research question, two types of results were merged, indicating that most teachers used translanguaging in their classrooms at some point. The most frequent situation in which the teachers used translanguaging is to explain grammar (88% of participants always/often used translanguaging to explain grammar). Results from qualitative data also conform to the quantitative one, adding that teachers focus mainly on difficult grammar because they are important components in exams. This continues to confirm results in previous studies (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Ölmez & Kırkgöz, 2021), inferring that teachers often employ translanguaging as a scaffolding strategy to enhance students’ understanding. Also, teachers in public schools used translanguaging more frequently than those in private schools (53% of public school teachers reported frequent use of L1 to explain grammar compared to 34% of those in private schools). This aligns with Hall and Cook’s (2014) findings, indicating a gap between teachers’ translanguaging use in different institution types.

Contrary to previous studies which emphasized the significance of translanguaging for affective purposes (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Ölmez & Kırkgöz, 2021; Rabbidge, 2019), our study highlighted that translanguaging for affective purposes was considered unimportant by most participants (72% of teachers agreed that using Vietnamese to praise students is unimportant). Explaining this difference, one participant from the interview stated that it was not necessary and they could use short phrases to make students aware of being praised. A possible explanation is that participants in our study might fail to completely understand affective purposes, while Rabbidge (2019) explains affective purposes are more than praise students but to single out quieter students and encourage their participation in the lessons. Further studies are needed to confirm our results.

5.2. Research question 2: What are teachers in private and public schools’ perceptions towards the use of translanguaging?

Regarding research question 2, the merged results showed that most teachers from both sectors held positive attitudes towards translanguaging and valued its importance in teaching. This confirms findings from previous studies (Ambele, 2022; Dang, 2022; Vu, 2022; Yuvayapan, 2019), which support translanguaging use in EFL contexts.

Despite their overall positive perceptions towards translanguaging, teachers’ translanguaging use across both sectors was different due to institutional factors. While there was a consistency between perceptions and actual practice in those from public schools as public sectors allow “flexibility,” private school teachers’ perceptions expressed that their perceptions were not akin to their practice due to language policy (73% of teachers in private schools stated that their institutions expected them to teach English-only lessons in their classes). This is because private institutions strongly support monolingual bias, which has been echoed in previous studies (Sampson, 2012; Hall, 2020). One plausible explanation is the institutions might hold an immersion approach ideology (Deroo & Ponzio, 2019), which is a belief that a monolingual environment is essential for language learning. As one participant expressed that her principal supports an English-only policy because it could increase English exposure, the principal might hold a belief that an English-only environment could help students learn more effectively. However, our findings argue that despite a ban for L1, teachers from private schools still use L1 at certain points, which was reported in RQ 1. This implies the inevitable roles of Vietnamese in language classes. Moreover, one participant from the interview showed her dissatisfaction with the monolingual approach, stating that her students might not fully understand her English-only lessons. Therefore, the monolingual bias needs reconsidering as no evidence until now indicates
the benefits of banning L1 in the language classroom (Kharchenko & Chappell, 2020). Littlewood and Shufang (2022) also show that any attempt to prohibit L1 in classrooms has been considered infeasible and misguided.

Most teachers felt no guilt when using L1 in their classrooms. One participant from the interview revealed no sense of guilt and explained that using translanguaging is to fulfill the goal, which is to help students understand the lessons better. This is different from previous studies (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Wang, 2019) when the participant teachers expressed guilty about using L1. Perhaps the participants in our study used translanguaging purposefully, as they stated that they use translanguaging when appropriate and to enhance students’ comprehension. This is called the principled approach (Hall, 2020), taken by teachers when they are considering when is most suitable to use translanguaging. Therefore, it is understandable that teachers reported no sense of guilt when using translanguaging.

6. Conclusions

Translanguaging is not a novel concept, but how it is employed and viewed by EFL secondary teachers might not be given sufficient attention. This study is an attempt to understand teachers’ translanguaging use and their perceptions across sectors in Vietnam. The data from both databases were merged and shown to conform to each other. It indicated overall positive perceptions adopted by most teachers in both public and private institutions. The teachers also valued translanguaging due to its scaffolding roles, especially for cognitive purposes due to the importance of grammar and vocabulary in exam preparation. Another finding was that using L1 for affective purposes was considered unimportant by most participants. The majority of participants also reported no sense of guilt when adopting translanguaging, which needs further research to confirm the results.

Some differences in translanguaging practice were identified in both sectors. Firstly, teachers in public schools used translanguaging more frequently than those in private schools. Secondly, in the private sectors, there was a mismatch between the teachers’ perceptions and their actual practices due to institutional constraints.

The study has contributed knowledge to current literature related to translanguaging in Vietnam. It has shed light on how EFL secondary teachers used translanguaging and their views of it across both sectors. The study extends the current discussion on the topic by using mixed-method research to confirm previous studies’ results. Also, it compared translanguaging use across sectors, which seems understudied in Vietnam.

The study is not free from limitations. Due to the small sample size and convenience sampling method, the study is not generalizable (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2019) as general perceptions of Vietnamese secondary teachers towards translanguaging. Future research could be conducted with more participants and from various school types and areas (rural vs urban) to generate insights into the topic. However, the study could serve as a guide for further research to examine teachers’ perceptions in Vietnam.

Some implications are worth mentioning. Firstly, it is necessary for private institutions and teachers to have discussions about how translanguaging should be incorporated into language classrooms as the post-multilingualism era has emerged (Wei, 2017) and the monolingual approach is not a practical option (Liu & Fang, 2022). Zhou (2023) also suggests that teachers should take full advantage of linguistic resources to make learning happen. Therefore, these institutions should be informed to accept the use of translanguaging in English classes. Secondly, even though the teachers reported frequent use of translanguaging and valued its importance, there
seems to be inconsistency in translanguaging use among schools due to a lack of formal documents addressing how translanguaging is adopted by teachers in English classes, which suggests policymakers take it into consideration.

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