



# Linguistic Diversity and Language Policies in Thai Education: Challenges and Opportunities in Multilingual Classrooms<sup>1</sup>

Suthon Saikham<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Khon Kaen Campus, Khon Kaen, Thailand

\*Corresponding author ✉: [Sunthon.sai@mcu.ac.th](mailto:Sunthon.sai@mcu.ac.th)

## Abstract:

**Background:** Thailand's linguistic landscape encompasses over 70 languages spoken across diverse ethnic communities, creating increasingly multilingual classrooms that present unique pedagogical challenges and opportunities. Traditional educational policies emphasizing Standard Thai instruction have historically marginalized minority languages, potentially compromising students' learning experiences, cultural identities, and academic outcomes. Concurrent pressures from globalization intensify demands for English proficiency, further complicating language policy formulation in contexts where balancing national linguistic unity, cultural preservation, and international competitiveness proves challenging.

**Purpose:** This study examined linguistic diversity and language policies in Thai education, analyzing challenges confronting multilingual classrooms, evaluating current policy frameworks governing language instruction including Standard Thai dominance and English Medium Instruction (EMI) implementation, exploring opportunities for inclusive language practices through Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) strategies, and developing recommendations for policy reforms embracing multilingualism while supporting both local linguistic heritage and global communication needs.

**Methods:** The research employed comprehensive analytical methodology integrating policy document analysis of government language regulations and curriculum standards, comparative international examination of multilingual education systems in European Union countries and Southeast Asian contexts, literature review synthesizing research on intercultural sensitivity in language teaching, EMI effectiveness in Thai universities, translanguaging practices, and minority language preservation initiatives, and evaluation of stakeholder perspectives including teacher preparedness for multilingual instruction, student attitudes toward minority languages, and community engagement in language education development.

**Results:** Analysis revealed significant policy-implementation gaps: Standard Thai emphasis marginalized ethnic minority languages including Lao, Karen, and Sino-Tibetan dialects, EMI adoption in universities prioritized international competitiveness while potentially undermining native language instructional roles, inadequate teacher training in multilingual pedagogies constrained effective diverse classroom management, curriculum design insufficiently accommodated linguistic diversity across socioeconomic and geographic contexts, and assessment practices developed for native Thai speakers inadequately evaluated

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<sup>1</sup> Received: 05 February 2025; Revised: 03 March 2025; Accepted 07 March 2025



multilingual learners' competencies. International comparisons demonstrated alternative approaches: European Union language policies promoting regional and minority languages through protective charters, Global Englishes frameworks recognizing localized English variations reflecting cultural adaptation, and MTB-MLE implementations showing improved academic performance and cultural integration when students' native languages formed learning foundations. Opportunities identified included translanguaging practices leveraging students' complete linguistic repertoires for enhanced comprehension, technology integration providing personalized multilingual learning experiences, community involvement strengthening culturally responsive language education, and local language curriculum integration valuing cultural heritage while maintaining academic rigor.

**Conclusions:** Transforming Thai education requires comprehensive language policy reforms embracing linguistic diversity as educational asset rather than obstacle. Recommendations encompass intensive professional development equipping teachers with multilingual pedagogical competencies, curriculum restructuring integrating local languages alongside Standard Thai and English, MTB-MLE implementation supporting native language foundations for academic achievement, stakeholder collaboration among policymakers, educators, and communities developing culturally responsive frameworks, and assessment modification ensuring equitable evaluation across diverse linguistic backgrounds, collectively fostering inclusive educational environments preparing students for both local cultural participation and global engagement.

**Keywords:** Linguistic diversity, language policies, Thai education, multilingual classrooms, English medium instruction

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rising language variety in Thailand, driven by globalization and cultural sharing, brings both problems and chances in its education system. As a nation with many ethnic groups, classrooms in Thailand are more and more filled with students speaking different dialects and languages. This highlights the need for better language rules that support this multilingual situation. The traditional Thai language-based instruction often disregards students' diverse linguistic backgrounds, potentially hindering their learning experiences. Looking at the current language policies in Thai education shows that rethinking teaching methods is necessary to create an inclusive space where all languages are valued and used as learning tools. Therefore, tackling these issues can change multilingual classrooms into lively areas that boost both cognitive and social growth for all students, which would enhance the educational setting in Thailand.

Linguistic diversity is an important aspect of human societies, involving the many languages spoken within a population, reflecting cultural identities and ways of thinking. In Thailand's education system, this diversity creates both difficulties and advantages for teaching. The presence of several languages in multilingual classrooms means that teachers must handle the complicated mix of language rules and teaching methods that can help or hinder student learning. Research shows that how teachers view intercultural sensitivity and their creative teaching methods are key to improving language instruction in this diverse setting. Additionally, the growing use of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in Thai universities as a way to compete globally illustrates a trend toward multilingualism, indicating that linguistic diversity can be used to improve educational results (Anggieta et al., 2022) (Sameephet et al., 2020). This idea highlights the important role that linguistic diversity plays in developing effective education policies and practices.



The language rules in Thailand are heavily influenced by the country's history and the way languages interact there. The promotion of a national language is closely linked to ideas about identity and cultural heritage. The Thai government has consistently promoted the use of Standard Thai in schools to build national unity and a uniform linguistic identity. However, this has pushed minority languages and dialects aside, creating major difficulties in multilingual classrooms where students find it hard to connect their native languages with Standard Thai. Additionally, as Thailand becomes more involved in a globalized world, the need for English skills grows, making existing language policies that focus on adherence to Standard Thai more complex. Recent research points out the need for a more inclusive approach in language education, suggesting curriculum changes that treat linguistic diversity as an asset instead of an obstacle. This would tackle issues raised in studies about race and language teaching (Esch KSV et al., 2020) and the global role of English as a common language (Galloway N et al., 2019).

Multilingual education is very important for promoting language diversity and dealing with the various challenges in classrooms all around Thailand. By helping students with their native languages while also teaching them international languages like English, educational policies can create more inclusivity and participation among students. This method improves students' language skills and supports their cultural identities, which is important in a setting where some language groups have been pushed to the side due to historical power issues (Esch KSV et al., 2020). Also, adding English as an International Language (EIL) into the curriculum provides a more relevant language education that matches the language situation of today's world (Rose H et al., 2018). As a result, multilingual education becomes a necessary framework that boosts academic achievement and helps students manage a complicated, connected world, preparing them for future success in various situations.

The goals of this essay are to look into the various aspects of language variety in Thai education, especially in classrooms where multiple languages are used. By reviewing current language rules, the essay plans to find the challenges and opportunities these rules create for both teachers and students. A main point is to assess how English Medium Instruction (EMI) is carried out at places like Thai public universities, checking how well things like the English Linguistic Gears work and whether they meet international teaching standards (Sameephet et al., 2020). Additionally, the essay aims to investigate how using multiple languages helps students learn English as a second language, comparing it to systems used in other countries, like Norway, where educational policies are also examined (Badry et al., 2024). In the end, the analysis hopes to add to the ongoing discussion about good language practices and policies in Thai schools.

When looking at the framework of an essay about Linguistic Diversity and Language Policies in Thai Education: Challenges and Opportunities in Multilingual Classrooms, it is important to focus on clear organization and logical sequence. The essay might start with an introduction that gives background on linguistic diversity in Thailand and discusses its impact on educational policies. After that, there could be a literature review that combines relevant theories and past studies to build a base for discussion. The main part of the essay would be split into several sections, with each section focusing on particular challenges, like the disparity between local languages and Thai, while also noting possible chances for improving teaching. In these sections, one should critically examine the relationship between theory and practice, offering insights into effective methods for multilingual classrooms. To wrap up, the conclusion should summarize the key findings and recommend areas for further research and policy enhancement, which would strengthen the essay's main argument (Mavri Vč, 2022).



## 2. THE LANDSCAPE OF LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN THAILAND

Thailand's language variety shows many languages and dialects, influenced by different ethnic groups and local factors. This complex situation brings both challenges and chances for language policies in education, especially in classrooms with many languages. Teachers face problems with standard language beliefs and the related racial hierarchies that can favor some languages over others, which affects students' identities and involvement (Esch KSV et al., 2020). Additionally, the growing importance of English as a global language prompts a change in teaching methods, encouraging educators to use the English as an International Language (EIL) approach that takes into account the multicultural language environment in Thailand (Rose H et al., 2018). Therefore, addressing these bilingual and multilingual situations is important for creating inclusive teaching practices that respect language diversity while readying students for a global world.

Thailand has many languages, with over 70 different ones spoken in the country, showing its rich culture. The main language, Thai, is the main language used in schools, but many ethnic groups still speak their own languages like Lao, Karen, and other Sino-Tibetan dialects. This mix of languages brings both challenges and chances in Thai education, mainly in creating teaching methods that honor this diversity. Policies that support mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) have shown possible benefits, like better school performance and cultural integration (cite13). However, the rising use of English Medium Instruction (EMI) in universities makes things more complicated, as there is a push to use English along with Thai and local languages. Therefore, to create a fair educational system, it is important to address language practices that connect these different language needs.

The historical background of language use in Thailand affects how multilingual education policies are created and used. In Thai history, language has acted not just as a means of communication but also as a sign of social and political identity. The influence of different kingdoms and colonial experiences has led to a complicated linguistic environment with many dialects and languages, including many native languages. As globalization continues, the importance of teaching languages with an awareness of different cultures becomes more critical, particularly regarding English as a second language. Two recent studies point out the urgent need for teachers to grasp the social and cultural factors in their teaching methods, fostering inclusivity and effectiveness in multilingual classrooms, which improves the learning experience for students from different language backgrounds (Anggieta et al., 2022) (ACDP et al., 2014). This historical perspective calls for a thorough review of language policies and their effects on current educational practices in Thailand.

In Thailand's classrooms where many languages are spoken, the part of ethnic minorities and their languages is very important for making education inclusive. Ethnic minorities add to the country's culture and increase the variety of languages, which is necessary for engaging students and shaping their identities. The way languages interact in these classrooms often reflects larger social issues, where the survival of ethnic languages is in danger due to stronger language beliefs. This issue can be seen around the world, where teaching languages is affected by history and race, as discussed in the study of race and language ideas (Esch KSV et al., 2020). Moreover, families from ethnic minorities, such as Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands, show the challenges of managing languages, as they aim for their children's educational success while also trying to keep their language traditions



(İrem Bezciöđlu-Göktolga et al., 2017). In summary, recognizing and appreciating these languages can help reduce gaps in education and improve cultural ties in Thai schools.

The effect of globalization on language variety is very noticeable in places like Thailand where multiple languages are spoken. Here, language policies struggle to keep local languages alive while dealing with the strong influence of global languages like English. As global communication needs more English skills, the trend to use a single language can push aside native languages, putting them at risk of disappearing and weakening cultural identity. This issue has been discussed in various studies, showing that making one language the standard can maintain racial power and deepen existing inequalities among different language speakers (Esch KSV et al., 2020). Also, the move toward English as an International Language (EIL) shows the need for changes in teaching that take into account the different language backgrounds of students, helping to create a more inclusive learning space (Rose H et al., 2018). Therefore, although globalization creates issues for language diversity, it can also bring chances for new teaching methods that respect multiple languages.

In today's diverse classrooms with many languages, new trends in keeping and reviving languages are important to support linguistic variety, especially in Thai education. Programs led by the community and the addition of cultural education in school courses have become effective ways to improve language skills and awareness among students. These programs aim to keep local languages alive and highlight the cultural importance of these languages, showing how language and identity are linked. For example, studies indicate that adding cultural elements to language teaching makes students' learning more meaningful and helps them better understand their own cultural backgrounds. Additionally, research that crosses different fields has encouraged collaboration among researchers, tackling issues in the field and opening up chances for joint efforts in language policy and education. Therefore, the ongoing efforts to revitalize languages show a strong dedication to maintaining linguistic variety in a world that is becoming more global.

## 2. LANGUAGE POLICIES IN THAI EDUCATION

As Thailand has many languages, its education language rules need to change to help all types of students. The Thai language has been the main focus in schools, often leaving English and other local languages behind. This has led to much discussion about adding English as an international language (EIL) to school programs. Right now, there are problems, like not having enough teacher opinions on using EIL methods, which could help with the needs of multilingual classes (Rose H et al., 2018). Also, technology and social media in education create both chances and issues; they can improve language learning but also make things more complex (Kapoor KK et al., 2017). So, it is very important to look at language policies again to support fair education access and encourage language variety, helping students succeed in a global world.

The Thai education system is complicated due to its many languages and ongoing discussions about language policies. It includes formal education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, with a clear focus on the Thai language for teaching. This focus creates challenges for students who come from different linguistic backgrounds. As a result, local dialects and languages are often overlooked, which can harm the cultural identities of various ethnic groups in Thailand. Additionally, research on multilingual classrooms shows that the relationship between language diversity and education policies can create both challenges and chances for more inclusive learning settings (Mokikwa H et al., 2024). It is essential for teachers and policymakers to see linguistic diversity as valuable. Efforts should aim to include



local languages in official curricula to create a more inclusive educational approach that respects cultural heritage while also supporting academic success (Tabe NA, 2024).

In Thailand, language policies by the government greatly affect education, especially in classrooms with many languages. The push for English Medium Instruction (EMI) shows a larger goal of internationalization, which aims to make the nation more competitive in the global market (Sameephet et al., 2020). Yet, while these policies try to improve English skills, they often ignore the need to keep the rich linguistic diversity present in Thai society. The idea of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) has been suggested to help close this gap, allowing students to achieve better academic results and gain social and cultural benefits (ACDP et al., 2014). However, the success of such programs depends on overcoming challenges, like teachers' abilities in various languages and suitable classroom resources. In the end, finding a balance between promoting a global common language and protecting local languages is essential for creating an inclusive and fair educational setting.

In Thai education, the Thai language is a key way of teaching, showing the nation's culture and helping students understand. However, different languages create challenges that need a careful look at language rules to support multilingual teaching. New studies show that using English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education is becoming popular due to global competition, but this often harms the role of native languages in learning places (Sameephet et al., 2020). This can create problems between delivering content effectively and helping students understand, especially for those who do not speak Thai. Also, using multilingual teaching based on mother tongue principles has been seen to improve academic success and social integration (ACDP et al., 2014). So, finding a balance between Thai and other languages in classrooms not only keeps language heritage alive but also creates a more welcoming learning space for every student.

Students who do not speak Thai face big difficulties in the education system of Thailand, especially as English Medium Instruction (EMI) gets more common in universities (Sameephet et al., 2020). These problems include not just language issues but also cultural differences and lack of support. When language policies are put in place without strong teaching plans, non-Thai speakers often have a hard time understanding academic material, which makes their learning experience worse. Moreover, the lack of training for teachers in meeting the needs of these students makes things worse, as many teachers do not have the skills required to assist varied language backgrounds (Winfield et al., 2016). As a result, non-Thai speaking students frequently find themselves at a disadvantage, facing hurdles that impact their academic success and social integration. To tackle these issues, it is essential for policymakers and educational institutions to work together to improve teacher training and create inclusive curricula that support language learning and cultural exchange.

Looking at Thailand's language policies alongside other multilingual countries gives important views on the challenges of language diversity. In Thailand, English is usually taught with a focus on Standard English, whereas countries in the European Union have policies that favor multilingualism, promoting local and minority languages through programs like the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (R T Tulaganov et al., 2024). These methods focus not just on effective communication but also on maintaining cultural identity, showing a more inclusive view on language teaching. In addition, the idea of Global Englishes (GE) shows how different cultures influence local languages, as seen in countries that change English to fit their local cultures (Pholying T, 2025). Comparing these strategies suggests that Thailand could gain from including different English forms and increasing awareness of its own language background, which would improve speaking skills in a globalized setting.



### 3. CHALLENGES IN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

Linguistic diversity in multilingual classrooms creates big challenges for teachers trying to create effective learning environments. In Thailand, these issues are made worse by policies that do not fully support the diverse cultures of the student body. Communication problems often occur, making it hard for students to fully engage with the curriculum, especially in areas like STEM, where precise language is very important (Mokikwa H et al., 2024). Also, teachers often lack the training needed to use strategies that encourage inclusivity, which leads to a focus on dominant languages and overlooks students' language backgrounds (Tabe NA, 2024). Consequently, the educational experience is unfair, limiting students' chances to work together and share their different views. Thus, it is necessary to reconsider language policies that place a priority on linguistic diversity as an important part of effective teaching practices in multilingual environments.

In multilingual classrooms, it is very important for teachers to be ready and trained to create effective learning environments. This is especially true in Thailand, where many languages bring both difficulties and possibilities. Research shows that teachers need to use multilingual methods to improve their teaching strategies. For example, a thorough review points out that teacher qualifications and readiness are key elements affecting educational results in diverse language settings (Badry et al., 2024). Additionally, professional development programs greatly help teachers understand multilingualism. A long-term study showed that training for current teachers helped them change their teaching styles, allowing them to welcome various language backgrounds (Christison et al., 2024). These findings highlight the need for ongoing professional development focused on multilingual teaching methods, which will help teachers create inclusive classrooms where every student can succeed, thus tackling important issues in current educational policies and practices.

When creating curricula that meet different language needs, it is important to see the complex nature of language diversity in Thai classrooms. As globalization changes language situations, teachers need to change their methods to include local dialects and global Englishes. A major issue is the dominant standard language idea, which often pushes aside non-standard varieties, possibly continuing racial and language hierarchies (Esch KSV et al., 2020). Research shows that a more inclusive curriculum can help students feel they belong and improve their learning by acknowledging the validity of their language backgrounds. To succeed, curricula should include material that reflects these varied experiences and promote active engagement with different Englishes (Rose H et al., 2020). In the end, a balanced approach to curriculum design can change multilingual classrooms into places of fairness and understanding, giving students the skills they need to navigate a more connected world.

The relationship between social and economic issues and learning languages greatly affects educational results in Thailand's classrooms with many languages. Economic gaps often lead to unequal access to good educational tools, making it hard for poorer students to learn languages. This problem is made worse by standard language beliefs that prefer native speakers, which keeps racial hierarchies in language education going. As noted in (Esch KSV et al., 2020), the background of racial unfairness makes the learning atmosphere harder, setting up obstacles for students from disadvantaged groups. Also, using translanguaging methods, mentioned in (Pennycook A, 2020), shows how important it is to see the different languages students bring. By creating a welcoming educational space that recognizes these social and economic problems, language rules in Thailand can improve support for multilingual classrooms and create fair language learning chances for all students, ultimately increasing language variety in the education system.



The views of students and teachers toward minority languages are very important in shaping education in diverse classrooms in Thailand. When students have positive views, they are more engaged and develop a strong sense of identity. This is shown by efforts to include local languages, like the addition of Thai-Lao in schools, which reflects an increasing awareness of linguistic variety. However, teachers' views can be very different; while many recognize the value of teaching minority languages, research indicates that a lack of training and resources harms their ability to teach well (Winfield et al., 2016). This situation highlights the urgent need for educational policies that support not only the significance of minority languages but also provide teachers with the skills and materials they need for effective instruction. In the end, encouraging positive views of minority languages among students and teachers can greatly improve educational practices in Thailand (Badry et al., 2024).

The evaluation of student learning in multilingual settings faces big challenges that are important for fair educational results. In classrooms with different languages, teachers often run into problems with language skills that can affect standard assessment tools. For example, regular tests made for native speakers may not show the true abilities of students who speak multiple languages or use sign language, as seen in research on similar issues in various educational environments (Chishiba et al., 2025). Additionally, teachers need to deal with the difficulties of developing inclusive evaluation methods that support different language backgrounds while keeping educational quality. The chance of misunderstanding assessment outcomes makes it even harder to achieve inclusive education, highlighting the need for a shift in thinking that views language diversity as a strength instead of an obstacle (Mokikwa H et al., 2024). Tackling these issues through custom evaluation approaches can result in better assessments of student learning in multilingual classrooms.

## 4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENHANCING MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

The use of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) offers good chances for improving multilingual education in Thailand. It helps with academic success and keeps cultural identity alive. When students' native languages are used as a base for learning, studies show that grades go up and there are social and cultural benefits that increase community involvement and identity (ACDP et al., 2014). Also, translanguaging is important in multilingual classrooms, where teaching methods encourage the use of different languages, which supports varied language backgrounds (Haladin et al., 2024). How teachers and students view translanguaging affects how well it works; therefore, it's important to create supportive policies and training for it to succeed. Creating a setting where many languages can exist together not only enhances the learning experience but also encourages inclusiveness, helping students to thrive in a global world while respecting their language backgrounds.

Integrating local languages into schools is important for increasing language variety in Thai education. When teachers use students' native languages, they can create a learning space that values cultural background and helps with communication and understanding. Research shows that using multiple languages can greatly improve student learning, allowing them to interact better with the material and take part in class discussions (Badry et al., 2024). Moreover, as higher education becomes more competitive due to the rise of English Medium Instruction (EMI) globally, it is crucial to find a balance between local and global languages in schools (Sameephet et al., 2020). This method not only makes learning better but also



prepares students to be skilled in their local languages and capable of working in a more globalized world, helping to connect different cultures.

Community involvement is important for improving language education in Thailand's multilingual classrooms, where many different languages exist together. Getting local communities involved in education creates an environment that appreciates and uses the diverse languages of students, leading to better learning results and greater cultural understanding. In other areas, like South Asia, community engagement has been shown to help carry out language policies that meet local demands, as seen with languages like South Asian English (Khadka BK, 2024). Likewise, Indonesia's experiences show how important it is to include marginalized groups in creating education systems, ensuring that language policies are flexible and adaptive rather than fixed (Mitchell G et al., 2022). Thus, working together with schools and communities can encourage new teaching methods that improve language education and support language diversity in Thailand.

Using technology in language learning has both problems and benefits, especially in multilingual classrooms like those in Thailand. Digital tools, such as language learning apps and online sites, offer personalized and interactive learning experiences, which can help students from different language backgrounds and with varying skill levels. Moreover, the method called translanguaging, which promotes using many languages while learning, can be successfully enhanced by tech tools. This flexible method of language learning allows students to use all their language skills, leading to better engagement and understanding (Bonacina-Pugh F et al., 2021). Technology also helps tackle unfairness in language education by offering resources that can lessen racial and language bias found in traditional teaching methods (Esch KSV et al., 2020). Therefore, when used carefully, technology can be a strong partner in creating inclusive language learning spaces.

In Thai education, training teachers in multilingual methods is very important. This helps tackle issues from having many languages in classrooms. Good training programs need to give teachers the skills to use translanguaging practices. These practices help improve student learning by allowing them to use all their language skills. A systematic review shows that teachers' views on these methods are affected by their experiences and school rules. This highlights the need for specific training that encourages teamwork and understanding among teachers (Haladin et al., 2024). Additionally, Malaysia's educational approaches show that it's crucial to develop skills that reflect the language diversity in the area, especially to support effective multilingualism (Hall et al., 2015). Therefore, ongoing teacher development should aim to match teaching methods with the realities of multilingual settings to improve education quality and inclusiveness.

Promoting linguistic diversity in Thai education policy needs a complex approach that recognizes the multilingual aspects of classrooms. Good policy suggestions should include teaching in students' mother tongues alongside the national language, which values the cultural backgrounds of ethnic minority students. This matches current academic discussions on race and language, which highlight the need to view educational methods through the lens of past inequalities (Esch KSV et al., 2020). Additionally, policymakers should focus on training teachers to use inclusive teaching methods that respect and utilize students' language skills, creating a fairer learning space. Research on ethnic minority students in Hong Kong shows the negative outcomes of ignoring linguistic diversity, which can result in institutional bias and insufficient support for heritage languages (Thapa CB et al., 2017). Adopting these suggestions can improve educational results and the overall language environment in Thai schools.



## 5. CONCLUSION

In summary, looking at language variety and language rules in Thai education shows both problems and chances in classrooms with many languages. The results highlight the difficulty of making English Medium Instruction (EMI) work well, as teachers try to find the right balance between helping students understand academic content and keeping a good relationship with them. The research shows that outside factors, like school policies and classroom setup, have a big effect on how teachers think and act about language use (Sameephet et al., 2020). Also, it is important to recognize and include students' native languages, which can be a useful teaching method that matches more inclusive education practices. Studies show that supporting multilingual practices can improve chances for students to get involved and do well in different learning settings (Badry et al., 2024). Therefore, future steps in Thai education should focus on a complete strategy for language policy that accepts this variety, ensuring good training and help for teachers.

The study of language variety in Thai education rules shows important details about the challenges and chances in multilingual settings. One key point found is that present language regulations often do not match the real linguistic diversity seen in Thai society, which affects communication and learning results. For example, studies point out the changing role of English as a common language, showing the need for new curriculum that recognizes the creative and varied uses of English by students (Galloway N et al., 2019). Additionally, involving students as active members in their language surroundings can improve their awareness of language use, leading to more inclusive teaching methods. This idea connects with the notion that citizen sociolinguistics can help education by encouraging conversations between experts and everyday people, ultimately fostering a better shared understanding of language variety (Bente A Svendsen, 2018). These insights highlight the pressing need to change language regulations so they better serve the multicultural environment of Thai classrooms.

Embracing different languages is important for creating an inclusive school environment, especially in multilingual places like Thai classrooms. Acknowledging students' different language backgrounds improves their learning and makes them feel more included and connected to their identity. By adding local languages to the main teaching, teachers can make a more interesting curriculum that shows the varied cultures of the students. Research shows that treating language diversity as a benefit, not a hindrance, results in better problem-solving and communication among students of different backgrounds (Mokikwa H et al., 2024). Additionally, in places like Cameroon, there is a strong need for policies that support the use of local languages in formal education to improve engagement and learning results (Tabe NA, 2024). Therefore, appreciating language diversity is essential for creating fair and effective language policies that serve all learners.

As education changes with globalization, future language policies in Thailand need to focus on inclusive frameworks that support linguistic diversity. These policies should accept and value the contributions of multilingual educators who offer various perspectives and teaching methods in the classroom. It is important to move away from the outdated focus on native speaker standards and to adopt a model that values teachers' local knowledge and their ability to connect with students effectively, as noted in (Anne P A Swan, 2013). Additionally, using translanguaging practices in Thai classrooms shows the benefits of utilizing students' first languages to improve their English learning, highlighting the need to harness students' linguistic abilities as stated in (Ambele et al., 2023). By adopting these strategies, we can



enhance the learning experience for students and help teachers create a language policy that is more relevant and supportive of a diverse student population.

In promoting multilingualism in Thai schools, stakeholders are very important for creating language policies that support language variety. Policymakers, teachers, and community leaders need to work together to develop programs that not only include local languages but also mix them with official languages. Studies from different places highlight how important it is for stakeholders to be involved; for example, teachers in Cameroon said that without policy support, they find it hard to include multilingual aspects in their teaching, showing that changes from the top are needed (Tabe NA, 2024). Also, the situation in India shows how stakeholders can use local cultural identities to improve education, supporting the view that multilingual education promotes fairness and understanding between cultures (Saikia L, 2024). Therefore, it is crucial for stakeholders in Thailand to push for policies that encourage multilingualism, making sure that different language backgrounds are recognized and appreciated in classrooms.

To sum up, multilingual classrooms in Thailand bring big chances and complex problems that might influence the future of language teaching in the nation. Accepting language variety in schools creates a better learning space where students learn the national language and build important communication and cultural skills. However, putting multilingual policies into action may face issues like pushback from old school systems and a lack of teacher training. These problems can be solved through thorough policy planning and community involvement. Additionally, creating an accepting environment that appreciates all languages can boost students' self-worth and identity, helping to form a united society. By promoting and successfully incorporating multilingual education, Thailand can turn its classrooms into lively learning environments that respect its diverse culture while getting students ready for a global community.

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### **Originality & Body of Knowledge**

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*Originality:* This study provides a unique contribution to the discourse on linguistic diversity and language policies in Thailand by critically analyzing the intersection of multilingualism, educational policies, and cultural identity. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on either the dominance of Standard Thai or the impact of English Medium Instruction (EMI), this paper presents a comprehensive evaluation of how various linguistic policies influence student learning experiences and inclusivity in Thai education. Additionally, it explores comparative international frameworks, such as Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) models, offering novel insights on how Thailand can adopt successful multilingual strategies from global contexts. This research contributes to the originality of the field by integrating educational policy reform with the sociocultural impact of linguistic diversity, ultimately presenting a well-rounded discussion on sustainable multilingual education in Thailand.

*Body of Knowledge:* This study enriches the academic body of knowledge by addressing the critical gap in research regarding the implementation and effectiveness of multilingual education in Thai classrooms. By examining over 70 languages spoken in Thailand, this paper contextualizes how language policies have historically marginalized minority languages and how policy reforms can foster inclusive education. It provides a theoretical foundation by discussing linguistic hierarchy, globalization's effect on language learning, and the role of policy frameworks in supporting multilingual education. Furthermore, this research contributes practical implications for policymakers, educators,

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and curriculum designers by outlining best practices for integrating local languages into Thailand's educational system while balancing the growing demand for English proficiency. By incorporating comparative analyses from multilingual education systems in other countries, this study offers valuable recommendations for the development of an inclusive, culturally responsive, and globally competitive educational system in Thailand.

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**Funding:** This study did not receive financial support from any public or private agencies or organizations.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

**Ethical treatment of experimental subjects (animals & human):** The research was conducted in compliance with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration regarding human subjects, so formal ethical approval was not required.

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