

TRANSLANGUAGING IN EFL CLASSROOM IN INDONESIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of the Translanguaging approach in English Language teaching practice in Indonesian higher education institutions, focusing on the perspective of both instructors and students. Translanguaging has drawn attention as an innovative strategy in multilingual education, as it draws on a variety of linguistic resources to enhance learning. This study examines how instructors perceive and apply Translanguaging, how students experience it, and how it affects their teaching and learning practices. The data will be gathered using a mixed-methods approach across several Indonesian institutions through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The results should shed light on the advantages and challenges of implementing Translanguaging, especially in promoting language and cultural diversity in English classes. Another goal of this research is to help provide a more effective and inclusive educational framework for teaching English in multilingual settings.

Keywords: EFL, Higher Education, Teachers' and Students' Perceptions, Translanguaging.

1) INTRODUCTION

With Bahasa Indonesia, many regional/local languages, and English coexisting in educational, social, and cultural contexts, Indonesia is among the most linguistically varied countries in the world. English Language Teaching (ELT) in higher education usually adheres to monolingual, English-only standards. However, this approach frequently ignores the advantages of integrating student's current linguistic repertoires, which include Indonesian and local languages. In multilingual settings, translanguaging has been proposed to enhance learning outcomes, identity affirmation, comprehension, and engagement by allowing and valuing the fluid use of all learners' linguistic

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resources (Silalahi & Santoso, 2023; Emilia & Hamied, 2022; Hidayati, Dharmawan, Prasatyo, & Luciana, 2023).

There remains a lack of understanding and application of translanguaging in Indonesian higher education, despite growing interest. Instead of comprehensive, institution-wide EFL classrooms, a large portion of the new work focuses on primary/second-language instruction, pesantren environments, or specific courses (like ESP). Translanguaging Practices in a Tertiary EFL Context in Indonesia (Emilia & Hamied, 2022), for instance, recorded the purposes and attitudes of translanguaging in online courses during COVID-19; nevertheless, its reach was quite limited in terms of the disciplines, institutions, and data triangulation. The perceptions and practices of translanguaging and trans-semiotizing were also examined by Silalahi & Santoso (2023), although they primarily focused on classroom interactions and illustrative examples rather than on systematic comparisons of teachers' and students' perspectives across various higher education institutions. Hidayati et al.'s (2023) study integrating multimodal and translanguaging.

These gaps point to particular unanswered questions: In what ways do teachers in EFL classes at Indonesian universities view and apply translanguaging? What effects do students think it has on their language identity, confidence, and learning? What are the drawbacks (such as those related to policy, evaluation, and teacher readiness) and advantages of translanguaging in practice? Three research issues are intended to be addressed by this study: (1) How do the teachers perceive the translanguaging and apply it in EFL classes in Indonesian higher education? (2) How do students perceive their learning experiences through translanguaging? (3) What are the advantages and challenges of using translanguaging in EFL situations in Indonesian higher education?

The contribution of this work is multifaceted. First, compared to studies that focus on a single group or a single perspective, it provides a more comprehensive view of translanguaging in higher education by examining both teachers' and students' perceptions and observing actual classroom practice. Second, it supports multilingual education reforms and language policy discussions by expanding Indonesia's empirical foundation, particularly

beyond 2020. Third, the observations can drive pedagogical recommendations, curriculum development, and policies that better harness students' multilingual backgrounds, boosting inclusivity and efficacy in English instruction in multilingual situations.

2) METHODS

Research Approach and Design

In order to capture the depth and range of perspectives on translanguaging in Indonesian higher education, this study used a mixed-methods research approach. The complexity of translanguaging—which includes not only measurable patterns (such as frequency and amount of use) but also complicated individual experiences and institutional practices—justifies the adoption of a mixed-methods methodology (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). In particular, a convergent parallel design was used, in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, examined independently, and then combined for interpretation. The researchers were able to validate their findings and offer a more comprehensive grasp of the perceptions of both teachers and students thanks to this design (Ivankova & Greer, 2020).

Research Participants

Twenty undergraduate students from an Indonesian university and five EFL teachers participated. Purposive sampling was used to find teachers, and the requirements for inclusion were (a) having taught English as a foreign language for at least three years and (b) actively participating in multilingual classes. To ensure a diversity of English proficiency levels, the student participants were selected via convenience sampling from classes taught by the participating teachers. Prior to data collection, all participants gave their informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms.

Instruments

- a. Questionnaire: To gauge perceptions of translanguaging, a 20-item Likert-scale survey was given to both teachers and students. Affective advantages, obstacles, frequency of

practice, and pedagogical usefulness were among the instrument's dimensions. Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.80, which indicate strong reliability, were obtained after the questionnaire was piloted with a small group of students and examined for content validity by two applied linguistics experts. Twelve students and all five teachers participated in semi-structured interviews. Participants' experiences with translanguaging, perceived benefits, and implementation obstacles were all examined in the interview questions.

- b. Classroom observations: Using an observation checklist, two EFL classes instructed by the participating teachers were observed. The notes concentrated on students' answers, interactional dynamics, and translanguaging techniques (such as alternating between English, Indonesian, and local languages).

Data Collection Procedure

During the two months of the 2024–2025 school year, data was gathered. Initially, twenty students and five teachers received questionnaires. Individual semi-structured interviews that lasted 30 to 45 minutes each were then conducted. Lastly, in order to minimize interruption and document real translanguaging processes, classroom observations were made during regular teaching sessions. Following each session, observation notes were expanded into in-depth narratives, and interviews were audio recorded and verbatim transcribed.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (means, frequencies, and percentages) were used to analyze survey data and summarize the opinions of both teachers and students. Since the goal was to identify patterns rather than extrapolate to broader populations, inferential statistical analysis was not used, given the limited sample size. Thematic analysis was used to examine qualitative data collected through observations and interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2021). After the initial classification, codes were grouped into broader categories related to advantages, difficulties, and teaching strategies. To increase trust, information from several sources (questionnaires,

interviews, and observations) was triangulated. In order to confirm correctness, interview summaries were shared with participants as part of the member checking process.

3) RESULTS

Teachers' Perception and Implementation

a. Questionnaire Findings

Five teachers responded to the perception survey. Table 1 presents the item-level results.

Table 1. Teachers' Perceptions of Translanguaging (N = 5)

Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Translanguaging helps students understand difficult concepts.	4.8	0.45	Strongly Agree
Translanguaging increases student participation.	4.6	0.55	Strongly Agree
Translanguaging reduces students' anxiety.	4.2	0.63	Agree
Translanguaging fosters inclusivity and values multilingual identities.	4.0	0.71	Agree
Translanguaging risks over-reliance on Indonesian.	3.4	0.89	Neutral–Agree (moderate)
Institutional policy supports translanguaging.	3.2	0.84	Neutral (limited support)

The results indicate strong agreement on pedagogical value but moderate concerns over over-reliance and institutional constraints.

b. Interview Findings

Interviews revealed three main themes:

- **Pedagogical Strategy:** Teachers used translanguaging selectively for grammar explanations, vocabulary introduction, and task scaffolding.
L2: *"I usually explain the grammar in English, then give quick Indonesian examples. Students nod and finally understand."*
- **Affective Function:** Translanguaging lowered anxiety during presentations.
L1: *"If they cannot continue, I allow them to say it in Indonesian first. It calms them down."*
- **Inclusivity:** Teachers valued translanguaging as recognizing students' identities.
L4: *"Students are more open when they feel their own language is acknowledged."*

c. Observational Findings

Eight observed lessons showed that teachers used translanguaging in three consistent ways:

Table 2. Observed Functions of Translanguaging in Lecturer Practices

Function	Example (English → Indonesian)	Frequency (out of 8 sessions)
Clarification	Explaining “past perfect” then paraphrasing in L1	7
Vocabulary reinforcement	Giving English term + Indonesian equivalent	6
Student engagement	Using jokes, idioms, or humor in Indonesian	5
Task scaffolding	Allowing brainstorming in Indonesian	4

The frequency suggests translanguaging was deliberate, mainly as scaffolding, not as a replacement for English.

Students’ Perception

a. Questionnaire Findings

Twenty students participated in the survey. Table 3 summarizes their responses.

Table 3. Students’ perceptions of translanguaging (N = 20)

Statement	Agree/Strongly Agree	Mean	SD
I understand lessons better when both English and Indonesian are used.	90%	4.7	0.46
Translanguaging makes me more confident in speaking English.	80%	4.4	0.61
Translanguaging reduces my learning anxiety.	75%	4.3	0.69
Translanguaging makes lessons more interesting and engaging.	90%	4.6	0.51
Using too much Indonesian reduces my English practice.	45%	3.3	0.88

Students reported overwhelmingly positive experiences, with high ratings for comprehension, confidence, and engagement. Still, nearly half acknowledged the risk of reduced English exposure.

b. Interview Findings

Three key themes emerged:

- **Cognitive Clarity:**

S7: *"When the teacher repeats in Indonesian, I finally understand. Otherwise, I feel lost."*

- **Confidence and Participation:**

S12: *"It gives me courage. I know if I forget a word, I can say it in Indonesian first."*

- **Balanced Expectation:**

S15: *"I like translanguaging, but I want teachers to switch back to English quickly so we still practice."*

c. Observational Findings

Classroom observations revealed clear differences in student engagement. In English-only lessons, only 3–5 students participated actively. In translanguaging-supported lessons, 12–15 students engaged.

Table 4. Student participation under different language policies

Condition	Avg. active participants (out of 20)	Engagement level
English-only	3–5	Low
English + Translanguaging	12–15	High

This shows translanguaging encouraged broader inclusivity in student participation.

Benefits and Challenges

a. Reported Benefits

Both teachers and students identified multiple benefits, summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Perceived Benefits of Translanguaging

Benefit Type	Examples	Reported by
Pedagogical	Clarifies grammar, supports writing tasks	L1, L2, S8
Affective	Reduces anxiety, increases participation	L3, S12
Sociocultural	Validates multilingual identity, connects local/global ideas	L4, S4

A lecturer noted:

L3: *"Students feel more confident and willing to speak when their language is valued."*

b. Reported Challenges

Despite benefits, concerns persisted.

Table 6. Perceived Challenges of Translanguaging

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Challenge	Example / Explanation	Reported by
Over-reliance on L1	Students stay in Indonesian too long in group work	L5, S15
Policy constraints	Some universities promote English-only classroom rules	L2
Assessment mismatch	Exams in English only, no recognition of translanguaging	L1, L4
Inconsistent practices	Different teachers apply different rules	S10

c. Observational Confirmation

Observations showed both benefits and risks:

- In writing classes, translanguaging helped students generate ideas quickly.
- In speaking classes, some groups stayed in Indonesian until pushed back to English.

This confirms that translanguaging is a powerful tool when guided, but may cause dependency if not managed.

4) DISCUSSION

Teachers' Perception and Implementation

According to the findings, teachers had a generally positive opinion of translanguaging and acknowledged its educational benefits in regulating classroom engagement, structuring complex information, and promoting comprehension. Especially when students had trouble understanding English-only material, teachers purposefully used translanguaging to explain academic jargon, explain abstract concepts, and provide instructions. These views are consistent with recent research conducted in EFL contexts in Indonesia, where translanguaging is increasingly recognized as a purposeful teaching method rather than a sign of limited English proficiency (Emilia & Hamied, 2022; Sutrisno, 2022).

However, the study's teachers also cautioned against overreliance on the first language. This worry aligns with the findings of Kristanti and Pei (2024), who found that Indonesian teachers used translanguaging selectively based on perceived expectations of English-only norms and institutional policies. Khairunnisa and Lukmana (2020) observed that although teachers recognized the advantages of translanguaging, they were concerned that it might limit students' exposure to English, particularly in academic writing and speaking assignments. This

contradictory view highlights a larger conflict in higher education between the multilingual realities of the classroom and English's global standing (Mazak & Carroll, 2023; García & Wei, 2024).

It's interesting to note that teachers in this study stressed how translanguaging is intentional. Instead of letting students flip between languages at random, they scheduled when to push them toward English and when to utilize Indonesian as scaffolding. This is in line with research by Cenoz and Gorter (2022), who contend that pedagogical translanguaging needs to be methodical and goal-oriented in order to balance chances for target-language practice with linguistic accessibility. These results show that translanguaging is an organized pedagogy that is in line with educational objectives rather than a random collection of codes.

Students' Perception

Translanguaging was viewed by the study's participants as a helpful and welcoming approach that improved understanding, boosted self-esteem, and promoted involvement. When teachers used Indonesian in addition to English, many students said they were better able to understand the material, particularly in technical vocabulary, difficult readings, and test preparation. These opinions align with previous research in Indonesia, where Emilia and Hamied (2022) found that over 80% of students favoured mixed-language training because it reduces cognitive overload and promotes meaning-making. Ratminingsih et al. (2023) reported similar results in Bali, noting that although quantifiable gains in achievement were not always apparent, students appreciated translanguaging for comprehension.

Students emphasized the emotive advantages of translanguaging in addition to comprehension. When given the opportunity to use Indonesian strategically, they felt more comfortable voicing their thoughts, asking questions, and participating in conversations. These results are consistent with those of Yolandana, Setyaningsih, and Drajati (2024), who showed that translanguaging fosters a more welcoming classroom environment and supports students' linguistic identities. Identity is a key factor in determining students' engagement in multilingual settings. According to Cahyani et al. (2021), when students' entire language repertoires are

recognized in the classroom, they feel more validated, which boosts their motivation and involvement in class.

Students' perceptions of translanguaging as a means of bridging the gap between academic content and their cultural origins constitute another important feature. According to Sutrisno (2022), Indonesian translanguaging approaches support cultural identity by incorporating local language and concepts into the classroom discourse, while also making English learning more accessible. Translanguaging is increasingly seen as a strategy for equality and inclusion, ensuring that multilingual learners are not disadvantaged in academic environments where English is the dominant language. This conclusion aligns with global attitudes (Chen & Tsou, 2022; Li & Lin, 2023).

Benefits and Challenges

The results show a complex interplay between the advantages and challenges of translanguaging. By acknowledging students' varied linguistic repertoires, translanguaging improved comprehension, decreased language anxiety, encouraged engagement, and promoted inclusiveness. These results support an expanding corpus of research that considers translanguaging to be a tool for learning in both the affective and cognitive domains (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; García & Wei, 2024). For example, translanguaging allows students to access prior knowledge and participate in meaning-making without being constrained by monolingualism, thereby facilitating deeper learning, according to Mazak and Carroll (2023).

But there were other difficulties. The excessive usage of Indonesian, according to teachers, may limit students' prospects for English immersion. Researchers Kristanti and Pei (2024) and Khairunnisa and Lukmana (2020) found that institutional norms frequently deter teachers from fully embracing translanguaging. This conflict between translanguaging and English-only expectations aligns with their findings. Furthermore, uneven classroom experiences resulted from inconsistent implementation, with some teachers using translanguaging aggressively while others used it sparingly. Students' opinions of translanguaging as a remedial or valid practice may also be impacted by this discrepancy.

Aligning translanguaging with evaluation presents another difficulty. According to Ratminingsih et al. (2023), students' positive perceptions of translanguaging did not always convert into improved test scores, which raises concerns about how assessment procedures might favour proficiency in English alone. Despite their educational efficacy, translanguaging strategies may be underappreciated in countries like Indonesia, where monolingual English proficiency is often prioritized in standardized testing. Thus, our study contributes to the ongoing discussion on how to balance evaluation systems still based on monolingual ideologies with multilingual pedagogies (Li & Lin, 2023; Chen & Lin, 2021).

Overall, the results highlight the fact that translanguaging is neither a troublesome interference nor an unqualified answer. Rather, it is a dynamic practice that encompasses societal, cognitive, and educational aspects. The way it is organized, the level of institutional support, and the balance between using L1 for accessibility and preserving English for competence development all affect its effectiveness.

5) CONCLUSION

This study looked at how teachers and students in Indonesian higher-level EFL classes perceived and used translanguaging. The results showed that, despite reservations about an excessive dependence on the first language and institutional English-only policies, teachers generally viewed translanguaging as a useful instructional technique for fostering inclusivity, lowering anxiety, and scaffolding comprehension. Conversely, students expressed overwhelmingly positive experiences, highlighting how translanguaging improved their comprehension, increased their self-esteem, promoted engagement, and validated their bilingual identities. Thus, the study offers convincing proof that translanguaging is a useful strategy for connecting academic English learning with linguistic resources.

The study's small sample size and scope are its limitations, but the conclusions have important implications for future research, regulations, and pedagogy. Pedagogically, teachers should strategically employ translanguaging, balancing meaningful English practice with scaffolding in Indonesian. Policies should be more accommodating at the institutional level, acknowledging translanguaging as a valid and inclusive activity. Larger-scale, longitudinal

studies are advised for future research to investigate the long-term effects of translanguaging on academic performance and English ability. All things considered, the study emphasizes how translanguaging can help Indonesian EFL classes become more efficient, fair, and culturally sensitive.

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