



Students' Perception of Translanguaging Practices in The Department of English Education, Mulawarman University

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Abstract

This study explores translanguaging practices in the Department of English Education at Mulawarman University, focusing on how lecturers implement these strategies and how students perceive their impact on learning. The background of this research arises from the challenges faced by students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where limited exposure to English often hampers comprehension and reduces classroom participation. The objective of the study is twofold: to identify the forms of translanguaging employed by lecturers and to examine students' perceptions, engagement, and responses toward these practices. This research applied a qualitative case study design, collecting data through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with selected students, followed by thematic analysis supported by triangulation of data sources and methods. The findings demonstrate that lecturers commonly applied code-switching, bilingual clarification, and double questioning techniques to simplify abstract concepts and encourage classroom interaction. Students reported that translanguaging significantly reduced language anxiety, boosted confidence, and facilitated more active participation. Moreover, it improved comprehension by allowing learners to connect complex academic content in English with their first language. These findings highlight translanguaging not merely as spontaneous language switching but as a deliberate pedagogical strategy that scaffolds learning, fosters inclusivity, and validates students' multilingual identities. Nevertheless, challenges were also noted, such as the risk of overreliance on the first language, which may reduce immersion for advanced learners, and the necessity for structured implementation to maintain discourse coherence. In conclusion, translanguaging has proven to be an effective instructional approach in multilingual EFL classrooms. It supports deeper understanding, enhances student engagement, and nurtures identity affirmation. However, proportional and systematic application is essential to maximize its benefits while minimizing potential drawbacks.

Keywords: Translanguaging; Multilingual Education; Student Perception; English Language Learning; Pedagogical Strategy

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi praktik translanguaging di Departemen Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Mulawarman, dengan fokus pada bagaimana dosen menerapkan strategi ini dan bagaimana siswa memandang dampaknya terhadap pembelajaran. Latar belakang penelitian ini muncul dari tantangan yang dihadapi mahasiswa dalam konteks English as a Foreign Language (EFL), di mana terbatasnya paparan bahasa Inggris seringkali menghambat pemahaman dan mengurangi partisipasi di kelas. Tujuan penelitian ini ada dua: untuk mengidentifikasi bentuk-bentuk translanguaging yang digunakan oleh dosen dan untuk memeriksa persepsi, keterlibatan, dan respons siswa terhadap praktik ini. Penelitian ini menerapkan desain studi kasus

kualitatif, mengumpulkan data melalui observasi kelas dan wawancara semi terstruktur dengan siswa terpilih, dilanjutkan dengan analisis tematik yang didukung dengan triangulasi sumber data dan metode. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa dosen biasanya menerapkan teknik code-switching, klarifikasi dwibahasa, dan pertanyaan ganda untuk menyederhanakan konsep abstrak dan mendorong interaksi di kelas. Siswa melaporkan bahwa translanguaging secara signifikan mengurangi kecemasan bahasa, meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, dan memfasilitasi partisipasi yang lebih aktif. Selain itu, ini meningkatkan pemahaman dengan memungkinkan pelajar untuk menghubungkan konten akademik yang kompleks dalam bahasa Inggris dengan bahasa pertama mereka. Temuan ini menyoroti translanguaging tidak hanya sebagai peralihan bahasa spontan tetapi sebagai strategi pedagogis yang disengaja yang merancah pembelajaran, mendorong inklusivitas, dan memvalidasi identitas multibahasa siswa. Namun demikian, tantangan juga dicatat, seperti risiko ketergantungan yang berlebihan pada bahasa pertama, yang dapat mengurangi pencelupan bagi pelajar tingkat lanjut, dan perlunya implementasi terstruktur untuk menjaga koherensi wacana. Kesimpulannya, translanguaging telah terbukti menjadi pendekatan instruksional yang efektif di ruang kelas EFL multibahasa. Ini mendukung pemahaman yang lebih dalam, meningkatkan keterlibatan siswa, dan memelihara afirmasi identitas. Namun, aplikasi proporsional dan sistematis sangat penting untuk memaksimalkan manfaatnya sekaligus meminimalkan potensi kekurangan.

Kata Kunci: *Translanguaging; Pendidikan Multibahasa; Persepsi Siswa; Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris; Strategi Pedagogis*

Introduction

This research is very crucial to be researched because the application of translanguaging is believed to increase student participation and understanding in learning English in the context of classroom learning. In addition, students will learn how to respect each other by using language codes that may differ and, at the same time, reinforce the language and cultural identity of the students themselves. In the context of learning English through the application of translanguaging, it is intended to illustrate that English learning can be carried out by lecturers to students by applying elements of translanguaging such as language code transfer or translation patterns. In contrast, the use of translanguaging in the context of learning English in the classroom is seen as a panacea for students who have different ethnic and multi-lingual backgrounds.

Several preliminary studies on translanguaging in English education in the context of English as a foreign language have been conducted by Letarina et al. (2022), Li & Peng (2024), Garcia, Garcia & Lin (2017), Yuwayapan (2019), and Sari et al. (2024). In relation to translanguaging through English education with online modes, Li & Peng et al. (2024) have examined it. Meanwhile, the topic of translanguaging research at the university level has been carried out by Letarina et al. (2022). Translanguaging research from the perspective of educators has been conducted by Sari et al. (2024). Finally, the research topic of translanguaging to student perception has been carried out by Yuwayapan (2019).

Translanguaging has gained significant attention in the field of language education as a pedagogical approach that allows students to draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to facilitate learning. Unlike traditional monolingual methods, translanguaging embraces the fluent and dynamic use of multilingualism in the classroom, recognizing that multilingual students naturally switch between languages to build meaning. In higher education, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, translanguaging has been shown to improve comprehension, engagement, and critical thinking skills (García & Lin, 2017). At Mularwan University, where students and lecturers navigate between English, Indonesian, and local languages, examining translanguaging practices can provide valuable insights into effective language teaching.

In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language, which means students have limited exposure outside the classroom. This context often results in challenges related to understanding and participation in English language teaching. Translanguaging can serve as a bridge, allowing students to process complex ideas in their first language before articulating them in English. Previous studies have shown that students who are allowed to use their mother tongue strategically in learning tend to perform better academically and show greater confidence in using English (Mazak & Carroll, 2017). However, the extent to which translanguaging is practiced in the university environment is still not explored, especially in the Department of English Education at Mulawarman University.

Beyond the academic benefits, translanguaging also contributes to the development of student identity and language confidence. Many students in multilingual contexts feel linguistic insecurity when forced to use only one language, especially if it is not their dominant language. Allowing translanguaging allows them to harness their linguistic strengths and foster a more inclusive learning environment. Studies show that students who can use their native language as a cognitive tool are more likely to engage in discussions, ask questions, and contribute meaningfully to classroom activities (Canagarajah, 2011). At Mulawarman University, where students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, understanding how translanguaging affects engagement and participation can offer valuable insights for curriculum development.

Based on this study, the researcher tries to fill in the research group that can still be explored optimally, or called the Pragmatic Gap. This research further highlights how learning English as a target language is creatively designed by lecturers to increase students' motivation in learning English in the classroom. The aim of this study was to identify different forms of translanguaging practices by lecturers in English classrooms in the classroom and to explore students' perceptions of the use of translanguaging in English classrooms. In line with this goal, the researcher formulated the following research questions: "What are the types of translanguaging practices by English lecturers in English classes? What is the student's perception of the use of translanguaging in the English classroom?" The limitation in this study is the form of lecturer speech, which contains translanguaging patterns, and students' perception of lecturers' strategies in translanguaging practices in English learning in general.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore translanguaging practices in the Department of English Education at Mulawarman University. The participants consisted of lecturers and students who were directly involved in classroom learning, selected purposively based on their engagement in translanguaging practices. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with selected students, complemented by a review of relevant teaching materials. These methods were chosen to capture both the strategies applied by lecturers and the perceptions expressed by students. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved organizing, coding, and categorizing data to identify emerging patterns and themes. To ensure the validity of findings, triangulation of data sources and methods was applied.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of translanguaging practices within the Department of English Education, Mulawarman University. The data obtained came from classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with five students. The findings of this study reveal three central themes emerging from the coding process: (1)

translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy, (2) its role in enhancing student engagement and comprehension, and (3) its implications for linguistic identity. Observations are divided into Lecturer Interaction and Student Response. Each category is broken down into a sub-code of behavior that shows the pattern of translating the movements of lecturers and students between L1 (Indonesian) and English to achieve clarity of meaning.

1. Open Coding Findings

Open coding is the initial method of coding. According to (Strauss & Corbin, 2007), in (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019), open coding is the process of dividing, analyzing, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data. Here's an example of an original transcript that brings up open code:

Table 1. Open Coding Results

Open code	Transcript	Fungsi translanguaging
“Apanya yang sulit?”	The lecturer asked, “ <i>Apanya yang sulit?</i> ” After explaining the abstract concept	Provoking metareflection; move to L1 to lower complexity.
“What is the purpose?”	Lecturer: “ <i>What is the purpose? Tujuannya apa kamu buat ini?</i> ”	Strengthening academic vocabulary as well as verifying comprehension with direct translation.
“Lima” (Five)	The lecturer calls the number “ <i>Five</i> ” to confirm the number of points before switching again to the UK	Short L1 insertion to display numerical information.
“Reciprocal artinya apa?”	Lecturer: “ <i>Reciprocal artinya apa?</i> ” followed by a discussion of the meaning of the term	Activate students' initial knowledge schemes before exploration of academic terms.

2. Axial Coding

Axial coding is the second stage in the coding process. According to Charmaz (2006, cited in Yukhymenko et al., 2014), axial coding is the process of connecting categories with subcategories, then rearranging the data that has been categorized so that it can be associated with the analysis that emerges. In other words, at this stage, the researcher not only identifies the categories, but also looks for connections between elements to clarify the pattern of analysis. Axial coding focuses on linking open code with two major axes, namely pedagogical strategies and student participation.

In the first axis, namely the pedagogical strategy, there are two important things that emerge from the data. First, the use of the first language (L1) to explain complex concepts. For example, when the lecturer explains the concept of *reciprocal teaching*, he inserts the phrase “meaning of mutual discussion” to clarify the meaning for students. Second, lecturers encourage student participation by giving questions arranged in English and L1 alternately. This strategy has been proven to reduce the ambiguity of questions while triggering responses from students.

Meanwhile, in the second axis, namely student participation, two main trends were found. First, students show active involvement in using both languages. Translanguaging is not seen as an obstacle, but rather as a “bridge of meaning” that helps

them understand complex academic concepts. For example, student statements such as "If you want to be a good person, you know, Miss." indicate that they first formed meanings in L1 before reformulating them in English. Second, the use of bilingual education can reduce linguistic anxiety. The results of the interviews indicated that students felt more comfortable when the lecturer gave double explanations, both in English and Indonesian. With this bilingual explanation, anxiety levels are reduced, so that students are more confident in responding to questions.

3. Selective Coding

The third stage in the coding process is selective coding. According to (Strauss & Corbin, 2007) in (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019), selective coding is a way to connect other categories that need to be refined and then compile them into sentences systematically. From the above code relationships, three core categories emerge:

Table 2. Selective Coding Results

Core Categories	Field evidence
Pedagogical Strategies	Translanguaging is used in a planned manner to simplify abstract ideas and maintain the flow of learning.
Student Engagement	The high frequency of bilingual question-and-answer indicates active participation and a sense of linguistic security.
Institutional Policies	Although not explicitly written, the consistent translanguaging pattern shows curricular tolerance for multilingual practices in the classroom.

From selective coding, three main themes are formed:

- Language Learning Support where Translanguaging acts as a "bridge of meaning" that makes it easier for students to access high-cognition content.
- Improvement of Concept Understanding, namely the Combination of L1-English as a scaffolding; For example, clarification of the term destination is immediately followed by an equivalent of "*destination*", minimizing the burden of language processing.
- The formation of Multilingual Identity is the habit of switching languages, reinforcing academic identities that respect the cultural background of students, confirming that the use of L1 is not considered "less academic".

The findings of this study illustrate that translanguaging in English classrooms at Mulawarman University operates not merely as a spontaneous communicative phenomenon but rather as a purposeful pedagogical repertoire. Lecturers consciously employed strategies such as code-switching, bilingual clarification, and dual questioning at crucial points in instruction. These practices effectively simplified abstract concepts, sustained classroom interaction, and reduced barriers to participation. Students consistently perceived translanguaging as beneficial, highlighting reduced language anxiety, increased confidence, and improved comprehension. These findings resonate with García and Wei (2014), who conceptualize translanguaging as a pedagogical practice that mobilizes the entirety of learners' linguistic resources, fostering inclusivity and deeper meaning-making.

A closer look, however, reveals that translanguaging yields differential impacts depending on student proficiency. For novice learners, the use of the first language (L1) serves as a bridge of meaning, allowing them to grasp complex academic content with greater ease. This aligns with Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis, which emphasizes that comprehensible input, when scaffolded appropriately, enhances second language acquisition. By integrating L1, lecturers reduce the cognitive load associated with

processing difficult content exclusively in English. This echoes Canagarajah's (2011) argument that translanguaging functions as a cognitive tool, supporting students' ability to construct knowledge by first formulating ideas in a familiar linguistic system before transferring them into English.

By contrast, advanced learners sometimes perceived excessive reliance on L1 as limiting immersion in English. This finding supports Ticheloven et al. (2021), who caution that unstructured or frequent language switching can disrupt discourse coherence and impede fluency development. Thus, while translanguaging creates inclusivity and fosters participation, it also requires careful calibration to ensure that its benefits are not offset by reduced exposure to the target language. This paradox underscores the importance of systematic planning, echoing Gibbons (2015), who argues that scaffolding must gradually release responsibility to learners as their competence increases.

Another noteworthy dimension of translanguaging is its affective impact. Students reported reduced anxiety and greater willingness to contribute when lecturers alternated between English and Indonesian. This observation is consistent with Horwitz (2010), who demonstrated that linguistic anxiety is a major barrier in foreign language classrooms and that affective support strategies play a critical role in lowering this barrier. Translanguaging, therefore, not only facilitates comprehension but also creates a psychologically safe learning space in which students feel empowered to take risks and engage more actively. From a sociocultural perspective, translanguaging contributes to the affirmation of students' linguistic identities. Allowing learners to mobilize their first language in academic settings sends a powerful message that their cultural and linguistic backgrounds are valued, not marginalized. This finding is supported by Hornberger and Link (2012), who emphasize that translanguaging amplifies students' voices by legitimizing their full linguistic repertoires. Similarly, Wei (2018) positions translanguaging as a social act that negotiates power and identity, reinforcing the idea that language learning is not merely cognitive but also deeply relational.

The results also align with Creese and Blackledge (2010), who describe "translanguaging moments" as pedagogical opportunities where minority languages reinforce comprehension before students shift to academic English. Such moments were observed in this study, for example, when lecturers deliberately triggered schematic activation in L1 before transitioning into English explanations. This sequential use of languages confirms that translanguaging is not random but strategically deployed to maximize comprehension and participation.

Furthermore, translanguaging as observed in this study reflects broader trends in bilingual and multilingual education. Mazak and Carroll (2017) argue that translanguaging challenges monolingual ideologies in higher education by legitimizing bilingual practices as valuable rather than deficient. The current findings support this perspective, as lecturers and students co-constructed knowledge through both English and Indonesian, thereby normalizing multilingual interaction in the academic space. This also resonates with the work of Gutiérrez and Ortega (2022), who highlight the role of translanguaging in decolonial approaches to education, allowing marginalized linguistic identities to thrive in formal institutions.

The implications of these findings are twofold. Pedagogically, lecturers can employ translanguaging as a diagnostic tool to identify students' lexical gaps and conceptual understanding. By allowing students to respond in L1 before reformulating in English, teachers gain deeper insight into learners' cognitive processes (Canagarajah, 2011). However, professional development is needed to train lecturers in recognizing optimal moments for language switching, ensuring that translanguaging enhances rather than disrupts learning. At the curriculum level, universities should consider formally

integrating translanguaging into language policies and teaching guidelines. Such recognition would align with García and Lin (2017), who argue that translanguaging must be institutionalized as part of bilingual and multilingual education frameworks to move beyond its perception as a remedial strategy.

In sum, this study reinforces the growing evidence that translanguaging is both a cognitive and sociocultural resource. It provides scaffolding for comprehension, reduces linguistic anxiety, affirms student identities, and fosters active participation. Nonetheless, challenges remain, particularly in balancing support for beginners with the immersion needs of advanced learners. Addressing these challenges requires proportional and systematic implementation, teacher training, and policy-level recognition that multilingualism is an asset to be embraced rather than a barrier to overcome.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that translanguaging is an effective pedagogical strategy in multilingual EFL classrooms at the university level. Lecturers at Mulawarman University employed code-switching, bilingual clarification, and dual questioning not only to simplify abstract concepts but also to sustain student engagement and foster inclusivity. Students reported that translanguaging reduced language anxiety, improved confidence, and facilitated comprehension, confirming its role as both a cognitive scaffold and an affective support mechanism. Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on translanguaging by situating its practice within the Indonesian EFL higher education context, where exposure to English remains limited outside the classroom. It highlights that translanguaging is not merely a spontaneous communicative act but a deliberate pedagogical repertoire that strengthens comprehension, participation, and identity negotiation. This extends previous works (e.g., García & Wei, 2014; Canagarajah, 2011) by showing how translanguaging can be strategically adapted in contexts where English is taught as a foreign language. Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for lecturers and higher education institutions. For lecturers, translanguaging can serve as a diagnostic and scaffolding tool to bridge comprehension gaps and encourage participation. For institutions, recognizing translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogical practice could inform curriculum design and teacher training, ensuring that multilingual realities in Indonesian classrooms are acknowledged and utilized as assets rather than barriers. Nonetheless, this study has limitations. The research was conducted in a single department at one university with a relatively small number of student participants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the focus on students' perceptions means that broader institutional factors influencing translanguaging practices remain underexplored. Future research is recommended to expand the scope across multiple universities and larger student populations, as well as to examine the perspectives of policy makers and administrators. Comparative studies between beginner and advanced learners would also provide deeper insights into how translanguaging can be proportionally tailored to different proficiency levels. Such investigations will further clarify the balance between scaffolding in L1 and immersion in English, thereby refining translanguaging as both a pedagogical and policy-oriented practice in Indonesian higher education.

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