

## TRANSLANGUAGING PRACTICES WITHIN INDONESIAN EFL CLASSROOMS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Dwi Budidarma Sutrisno**

English MA Student, Department of English, Arizona State University, USA

Corresponding Author Email: [dsutrisn@asu.edu](mailto:dsutrisn@asu.edu)

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### Abstract

This paper reviews the past decade of studies related to translanguaging practices in the EFL learning context in Indonesia. This topic has crucially been discussed among scholars in many classroom settings due to the influence of multilingualism possessed by Indonesian EFL learners. The studies from 2010s-2020s are selected and critically reviewed using qualitative methods through content analysis by focusing on students' and teachers' perceptions of translanguaging practices used in EFL classrooms. The studies being reviewed cover meaningful insights from various education levels in the Indonesian EFL context since the country is known as one of the most linguistically diverse communities. The result of the content analysis shows that translanguaging contributes to helping the learning activities including improving students' comprehension towards the teaching materials. Moreover, the review also found the use of code-mixing and code-switching that are considered fundamental in order to leverage learning outcomes through maximizing students' class participation. Furthermore, the pedagogical implication of translanguaging in a multilingual context is also discussed such as the effectiveness of translanguaging being used as tools for clarification and intermezzo during the learning process.

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## INTRODUCTION

When English is being taught in classrooms where the students are diverse in terms of languages, classrooms where the students are either bilinguals or multilinguals, most teachers seem to be having the tendency to make the most of the classroom instructions and activities to reach the goals by only exposing the students to the targeted language. In other words, it is arguably noticeable as what (Howatt, 1984, as cited in Cummins, 2007) that the teachers create separation with other languages possessed by students by applying English-only throughout the class with the expectation it will help the students better in the process of acquiring the targeted language being taught, this such practices is known as monolingual principles in which arguably a preferred approach for most of English teachers.

However, Cummin (2007) in the same article also states that there needs to be a rethinking of how teachers and scholars perceive this particular practice because L1 belongs to the students and should not be seen as a variable in preventing language L2 learning. In addition, there is a language practice called translanguaging in which originally widely known and spread because Chen Williems during the 1980s did a class observation in Welsh where the teachers talked to the students in Welsh yet constantly received the response from students in English then later this phenomenon is named trawsieithu from Welsh language that later translated into English as what is known today as translanguaging (Lewis at all, 2012).

Moreover, Garcia (2009) in *Social Justice through Multilingual Education* in her book chapter *Education, Multilingualism, Translanguaging in the 21st Century* highlighting the comparison between how a lot of things have changed throughout the time so that what used to

be known as recursive bilingualism needs to be updated into dynamic bilingualism. With that said, language practices such as translanguaging is encouraged to be acknowledged. Furthermore, Canagarajah (2011) argues that translanguaging is a natural occurrence and can be achieved even with less pedagogical efforts from the teachers. This is because a diverse multilingual student population is naturally performing translanguaging in the classroom.

Additionally, English in Indonesia is considered EFL (English as Foreign Language) rather than ESL (English as a Second Language) because Indonesia is a big archipelago country with diverse cultures spread across three different regions. A recent study from Purba (2022) who looked at how Indonesian as first language and local language (Batak Toba) as the second language might influence students' English as third language confirms how many languages Indonesian students will typically have. With that said, each person in Indonesia are commonly in possession of at least three languages including (1) traditional languages that are spoken within each specific regions (2) Indonesian language as a national language to communicate among Indonesian coming from different regions and then (3) a foreign language that is almost always English that is being taught in schools. Based on these facts, it can be argued that Indonesia is linguistically diverse and can be situated as a strategic setting where translanguaging practices can occur as well as a potential demographic for researchers conducting investigations both towards the students or the teachers of English.

Therefore, many scholars have attempted to conduct research related to translanguaging practices especially in Indonesian EFL classrooms contexts. This current study aims to review these selected most recent and relevant studies in order to contribute to the literature in terms of mapping out the topic to learn what has been done and found. This study will also function as a medium of advocacy introducing the topic to a wider audience of scholars and teachers of English to increase the awareness about translanguaging practices. This research paper is particularly looking at (1) How translanguaging contributes to helping the learning activities, (2) How code-mixing and code-switching are used in class instructions as teachers' strategies and (3) How does the pedagogical implications of translanguaging.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The major focus of this research is to look at the recent studies that have been done related to the topic translanguaging within the EFL Indonesian context. This study used a qualitative method to gather the data in order to answer the research questions. The data that have been gathered are classified into each classification based on the three questions.

Several criteria should be met by the the studies that will be selected such as (1) the studies investigating the translanguaging practices (2) the studies focusing on the students and teachers in Indonesian EFL settings and (3) the studies that are considered recent in which published in the past few years. The thirteen recent studies are selected then being reviewed. This research paper is guided with three research questions; (1) How translanguaging contributes to helping the learning activities, (2) How code-mixing and code-switching are used in class instructions as teachers' strategies as well as also looking at (3) How does the pedagogical implications of translanguaging in the context of a multilingual classroom.

### **Data Analysis**

This research employs a qualitative methodology to investigate the subject matter at hand. The data for this study is obtained from a careful selection of published peer-reviewed studies, which are subsequently subjected to content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The purpose of this content analysis is to address the three research questions posed in this current paper. The selected studies are meticulously examined, with a comprehensive reading conducted for each one. Furthermore, the chosen studies are categorized based on their respective participant

characteristics, research settings, and findings. This systematic grouping facilitates a thorough analysis of the data, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the research questions.

Moreover, it is imperative to explicate the ethical considerations inherent in this research, given its nature as a literature review focused on recent published studies within the realm of translanguaging. Consequently, this specific study does not necessitate adherence to Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, as it does not involve direct engagement with human subjects. Since the primary data collection method relies on the analysis of existing scholarly works, no direct interaction or intervention with individuals occurs. Thus, the need for IRB approval is obviated, as this study does not raise concerns related to the safeguarding of human participants.

## **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Research Findings**

#### **Translanguaging Practices Helps Maximizing the Learning Activities**

##### ***Students' Perspectives***

A study from Puspitasari & Yumarnamto (2020) engaged with 50 university level students as the participants by using questionnaires and interviews to gather the data related to what the students think about the incorporation of the first language (L1) during the class. The study found that the translanguaging practices of allowing L1 Bahasa Indonesia in the middle of English language class is helpful in terms of the overall learning process. Moreover, not only is it argued to be useful, the participants also think of it as an empowering tool.

While a study conducted by Emilia & Hamid (2022) that looked at 75 students coming from different classrooms at university level as the participants by gathering the data through class observation, questionnaires, and interviews conducted after the class. The study revealed that translanguaging practices allows the participants to access and use the full linguistics repertoire that students have in possession. In other words, when students are not restricted to only use English during the learning process in the classroom, students can incorporate their first language or even their vernacular language into responding to the given materials.

##### ***Teachers' Perspectives***

Khairunnisa & Lukmana (2020) incorporated multiple choices and scales into the questionnaire they used when they did the study to find out what the attitudes coming from 50 teachers. The study found that teachers as the participants possess attitudes that can be considered positive in the use of translanguaging in the classrooms. Moreover, it is also important to mention that more teachers prefer to only incorporate two languages (Indonesian and English) compared to less teachers who choose to combine all three languages (Indonesian, traditional language, and English) in the English classrooms. It can be said that, even though translanguaging practices have already mostly been accepted, however, the inclusion of all three languages can be considered as not the first choice. These findings can show the pattern of translanguaging for the teachers even though they know that most of the students in Indonesia taking EFL classes have three languages in their possession.

As for Sahib et al (2020), the study only focuses on investigating 3 teachers using observation of the classrooms and semi-structured interviews. The result of the study highlighted that translanguaging practices are usually situated by the teachers in order to achieve several goals such as checking students' understanding of the given materials and helping to set the mood of the classroom. Another uniqueness of the study can be found in the settings of the study which is located in the eastern part of Indonesia. This is especially important because it can somehow confirm the commonality of translanguaging practices because in most cases what seems to be common practices in big cities might not necessarily be the case in other small cities in different parts of the country as big as Indonesia.

Putrawan et al (2022) on the other hand conducted a study with quite a large number of participants, 270 participants who are identified as pre-service teachers took part of this study. Due to the big number of participants, this study is done quantitatively by drawing the data from surveys that ask questions about participants' perception towards translanguaging practices. It is also important to note that the participants are ethnically diverse because they come from different parts of Indonesia, the diverse backgrounds of the participants makes this study unique and essential. The main findings of this study found that the large number of participants supporting the incorporation of L1 while teaching L2. In other words, most participants who are pre-service teachers think translanguaging practices are important.

### **Code-mixing and code-switching are used in class instructions as teachers' strategies *Teachers' Perspectives***

Three different teachers from three different classes were part of the study conducted by Cahyani & Barnett (2016) in order to find out how translanguaging practices are incorporated in the classes. Ethnographic method being employed for the purposes of this study by looking at these three classes for one semester long. In addition, the data also collected from observation of the classrooms, recording as well as reflection of the teachers being observed. The study found that translanguaging is beneficial for inviting the students to be more engaged in learning and maximizing communication. It is also found and suggested that the outcomes coming from practicing translanguaging can be improved if done pedagogically and sociologically more intentional during the whole translanguaging process.

As for Setyaningrum et al (2022) the study to investigate the translanguaging practices is situated in a first grade classroom looking at how the teacher navigates the teaching instructions. This study uses narrative inquiry so that the teacher as the participant is asked to share the experience through three stages of interviews. The study found that not only practicing translanguaging to help better comprehension of the teaching materials, the demographic of the students who are categorized as young learners as first grade classroom students require the teacher to also incorporate multimodality. Therefore, other than the strategies of constantly including first language in the middle of the second language instructions, the teacher also includes visual and audiovisual during class. In other words, it can be said that the combination of translanguaging practices along with the incorporation of multimodal literacy may help increase comprehension especially among young learners.

Aribah & Pradita (2022) did a study in quite unusual settings in which they contributed to the literature. The study was conducted in a *pesantren* or an islamic boarding school by focusing on one teacher and the total number of 29 students in the classroom as the sample. The data for this research comes from self report or self observation, lesson plans, and teaching materials from the teacher as the participant. One among many findings derived from this particular study is related to how English is not seen as L2 for the students, this is because for students in this certain classroom setting Arabic becomes their L2 in which that makes English as their L3. Moreover, the study found that the teacher would switch to Arabic instead of Indonesian if the students were having problems understanding the teaching materials. It is also important to note that since the teacher tends to give more emphasis on English, Arabic, then Indonesia, it seems like no traditional language is observed in the study.

### ***Students' Perspectives***

While a study from Saputra (2020) also has the setting in a university level classroom, however, the study put more emphasis on the students as the participants. The data were gathered from students from two different universities using in-depth interviews then analyzed qualitatively and descriptively. In addition, the data collection is also supported by the class observations. The findings of this study revealed that students prefer the learning process in the classroom environment to be conducted with translanguaging practices considering diverse

language proficiency among students. Moreover, even though the students who are the participants in this research have stated their preference towards translanguaging, they are also particularly interested that the translanguaging practices done in the classroom can use less first language and more portions given to English as the second language. It is also important to mention that this study also argues the use of translanguaging practices will most likely have something to do with promoting participation among students in the class. This particular conclusion is appropriate considering how students can respond more to the materials not only in English as the targeted language in the translanguaging environment.

## **The Pedagogical implications of Translanguaging in a Multilingual Context**

### ***Students' Perspectives***

A quite different approach conducting research can be found in a study from Rasman (2018) who unlike other studies who put the focus on the interaction between teachers and the students, this study particularly looked at the interaction among students. The data being gathered interactions that occurred naturally captured by recorded video then later analyzed using the technique of discourse analysis. Other differences that can be found within this study are the settings and demographics of the participants located in junior high school level. The findings of this study show students interacting with each other using three languages; Indonesian, javanese, and English. The study suggests that the use of all these three languages are done strategically and intentionally by the students. In addition, this study also highlights how Indonesian (national language), which has been seen as the formal language in settings of education, has impacted students' interaction by having some students feel less motivated and less motivated to use their javanese (local language). Furthermore, the study confirms that the use of translanguaging practices proved to be helpful and useful for language learners.

### ***Students' and Teachers' Perspectives***

Similar findings can be found in another study from Afiadi & Hamzah (2021) who collected the data through multiple recorded classroom observations of both students and teachers talks throughout the learning process. This study is done qualitatively and descriptively. The similarities from this this compared to the study mentioned before located on how the local language in which in this study is minangkabau language, is seen as something unusual for the context of educational settings, therefore, the use of local language is minimum as well as most often being laughed at and less respected by other peers. The study also emphasizes the functions of the translanguaging practices as *intermezzo* and clarification tool throughout the whole classroom interaction and teaching materials delivery. Furthermore, the study found that the least amount of local language in class is concerning because the local language seems to be used outside the classroom but not during the class.

### ***Teachers' Perspectives***

Furthermore, responding to many studies on the topic of translanguaging practices, a study done by Raja & Ngadiso (2022) looked at English teachers from different junior high schools in order to find out how these teachers as participants think about this new widespread pedagogical approach. This study is also important because the participants are from the central part and west part of Indonesia, completing other studies that have been conducted in west or east Indonesia. The collected data process uses a triangulation method of combining the data coming from questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews as well as observations. The findings from this study show diverse opinions from each participant, some think translanguaging as something useful depending on the classroom where higher level use less translanguaging, while others think translanguaging as something less motivating because they believe English teachers should only use English in the classrooms. Similar perceptions also illustrate when it comes to students who started the translanguaging practices, some teachers

argue such activity is allowed because it helps increase classroom participation yet other teachers feel discouraged because they hope the students will use more English as the targeted language. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that the teachers who show positive attitudes towards translanguaging come from the west part of Indonesia while teachers from the central part of Indonesia show otherwise. The comparison of teachers coming from different regions of this study helps understanding how differing pedagogical approaches and perceptions towards particular approaches in this case is translanguaging.

## **DISCUSSION**

It can be argued that the pedagogical approach that has long been practiced by many Indonesian EFL teachers of only using English in English classrooms might have been a great misconception. Referring to the first research question, translanguaging practices demonstrated in selected studies being featured in this paper shows that applying such approach helps acknowledge the linguistics belong to the students as well as beneficial because it supports the students in expressing themselves (Puspitasari & Yumarnamto, 2020; Emilia & Hamid, 2022). In other words, it can be said that by only applying a monolingual policy in the classrooms might limit students' potential in language learning and participating during the learning process in the classrooms. As for both inservice and preservice teachers, translanguaging practices can be seen as tools that if incorporated well can encourage students to be more engaging during the class even though in most cases the combination of English and Indonesian is found to be more popular among teachers compared to the mix of three languages English, Indonesian and local languages. (Khairunnisa & Lukmana, 2020; Sahib et al, 2020; Putrawan et al (2022). Therefore, in order to achieve potentially greater learning outcomes it is important and recommended to teachers to increase the amount of students' local language during the translanguaging practices within the EFL classroom instructions.

For the second research question, in terms of code-mixing and code-switching as part of translanguaging, even though translanguaging is often found to be a natural occurrence, teacher can still generate their own more positive pedagogical outcomes and that can be achieved if done with more intentional as well as modifications such as combining translanguaging with multimodality (Cahyani & Barnett, 2016; Setyaningrum et al (2022). Hence, any activity of code-mixing and code-switching that can be found within the classroom should be encouraged, supported, and normalized because that is part of learning a language. In fact, translanguaging approaches have shown switching from one language to another during the class is considered a natural phenomenon for each and every language learner. Even though mostly what happens are teachers and students feel guilty if they mix languages especially in Indonesian context because it is considered rude for Indonesian.

For the third research question regarding the pedagogical matters and related implications concerning the application of translanguaging as teaching approach, there seems to be a commonality among teachers where even if three languages are acknowledged to be in students' linguistic repertoire yet not all teachers include all three languages during the translanguaging practices in the classroom just like even though teachers have shown supportive reactions towards translanguaging but some teachers still perceive translanguaging to be something inappropriate in English classes (Rasman, 2018, Raja & Ngadiso, 2022). It can be seen that even though some teachers are already open to the idea of translanguaging by not only using English in their English classrooms, however, the majority of the practices still only limited to including Indonesian and only small number of teachers who also recognizing and including the local language as part of the translanguaging practices. A potential reason towards this particular tendency might have something to do with language policy in which even though teachers have gradually shifted from English only in English classrooms to translanguaging by combining other languages that in this case is Indonesian. However, the

other challenge is that there also needs to be a shift from considering Indonesian only as the formal mode of language in the classroom to also including local language as well.

## CONCLUSION

Based on this critical review on the topic translanguaging in the context of Indonesian EFL classrooms it can be said that the practices of translanguaging have been quite common among EFL teachers in Indonesia even though a lot of teachers still believe in monolingual ideology where teachers should only include English as targeted language in the EFL class. More teachers and pre-service teachers need to be exposed to translanguaging concept because (1) some EFL teachers in Indonesia still have the misconception over the long application of monolingual ideology or monolingual policy that has been passed down from generation to generation, this is aligning with language dichotomy practices done by language teachers recognized by previous scholar (Howatt, 1984, as cited in Cummins, 2007). Moreover, (2) the importance of translanguaging practices to be implemented within multilingual classroom is essential and necessary especially in Indonesia because the meaning making in understanding teaching materials might require every linguistics features that students have, this matches with what one of the translanguaging scholar advocate Garcia (2009) have continuously promoted bilingualism is a dynamic phenomenon, with that said, such nonlinear language process will be likely to also applicable for Indonesian multilingual students as well. Furthermore, (3) another potential additional challenge would most likely be considering the activity of mixing languages as something appropriate even though many studies have found and suggested that mixing languages is a common natural occurrence among multilingual learners and communities. Therefore, referring to Canagarajah (2011) that translanguaging is a normal language phenomenon, with that said such practice should be normalized pedagogically in EFL classrooms as well as socially outside of the classrooms.

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