

Negotiating Pedagogical Translanguaging: A Dialogic Perspective from Students and Lecturers in an Indonesian EFL Classroom

Rini Listyowati¹, Slamet Setiyawan², Widyastuti³

^{1,2,3} Language and Literature Education Department, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

*) correspondence: listyowatirini7@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

While Translanguaging is increasingly recognized as a pedagogical asset in multilingual EFL contexts, few studies examine how student and lecturer perspectives align in shaping its classroom enactment. This qualitative study investigates the convergent and complementary views of 18 undergraduate students and 5 English lecturers at Universitas Islam Madura, Indonesia, regarding the strategic use of Bahasa Indonesia and Madurese in English Medium Instruction. Drawing on Garcia and Wei's (2014) Translanguaging Theory and Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Thematic analysis reveals a strong consensus that both groups regard translanguaging as a temporary cognitive scaffold that enhances comprehension, reduces anxiety, and fosters inclusive participation, yet reject its overuse. Lecturers report using L1 in response to visible confusion, while students confirm these moments as pivotal "aha"! Breakthroughs. Both knowledge institutional "English-only" pressures frame translanguaging as a mutual act of pedagogical care and resistance. The study advocates for collaborative, policy-responsive translanguaging that honours learner and agency and teacher professionalism.

Keywords: pedagogical translanguaging; multilingual EFL; students-lecturer dialogue; cognitive scaffolding; affective filter; Indonesian higher education

INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Indonesia has long been dominated by monolingual ideologies that privilege English-only classroom practices (Bolton et al., 2024; Rosmaladewi, 2019). However, translanguaging theory reconceptualizes multilingualism as an integrated repertoire, positioning learners' full linguistic resources, including Bahasa Indonesia and regional languages like Madurese as legitimate pedagogical tools (García & Wei, 2015). Recent studies in Indonesian Universities have begun to document lecturers' strategic use of translanguaging (Witari & Sukamto, 2023; Zein et al., 2020), while others highlight its cognitive and affective benefits from the student perspective (Pratiwi et al., 2022).

Yet a critical gap remains how do students and lecturers interact to co-construct translanguaging as a shared classroom? Most research treats these voices in isolation, missing the dialogic nature of pedagogy (Canagarajah, 2011). In contexts like East Java, where students navigate Madurese, Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia, and English, understanding this synergy is essential for developing responsive, equitable teaching approaches. This study addresses the gap by asking how undergraduate EFL students and their lecturers jointly perceive, enact, and negotiate pedagogical translanguaging in an Indonesian university classroom.

By centuring both student and lecturer perspectives, this paper conceptualizes pedagogical translanguaging not as a unilateral teaching technique imposed from above, but as a co-regulated, dialogue practice dynamically shaped through real-time interaction, mutual awareness, and shared negotiation within the constraints of the Indonesian EFL classroom.

METHODS

Research Design

A qualitative case study was conducted at Universitas Islam Madura (UIM), East Java, a multilingual institution where most students are native speakers of Madurese or Javanese. This design enabled deep exploration learning experiences within the bounded context (Yin, 2018).

Participants

The study involved a total of 23 participants from Universitas Islam Madura: 18 undergraduate students from the English Education Department and 5 English lecturers. Students were purposively selected based on their diverse English proficiency levels, ranging from beginner to advanced and their direct classroom experience with lecturers who strategically employ translanguaging. The lecturers were chosen for their demonstrated use of students' first languages (Bahasa Indonesia or Madurese) in English Medium Instruction, with teaching experiences ranging from 2 to 17 years. To ensure ethical rigour and protect participant identity, all names used in the reporting of data are pseudonyms. This dual perspective sampling strategy allowed for a nuanced exploration of how translanguaging is jointly perceived, enacted, and negotiated within the same instructional context.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews and two focus group discussions (FGDs) with 18 undergraduate students, as well as in-depth semi-structured narrative interviews with 5 English lecturers. Student interviews and FGDs explored their learning experiences with pedagogical translanguaging in EFL courses, while lecturer interviews delved into their beliefs, practices, and decision-making processes regarding the strategic use of students' first languages. All interviews are conducted in either Bahasa Indonesia or English, depending on the participant's preference, to ensure comfort and authenticity of expression. Each session is audio-recorded with informed consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. This dual-method, dual-perspective approach enabled a rich, triangulated understanding of how translanguaging is perceived, enacted, and negotiated in the Indonesian university EFL classroom.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was performed using Nvivo. Initial codes were generated inductively, then iteratively grouped into themes. Both datasets were analyzed separately first, then integrated to identify points of convergence, divergence, and mutual reinforcement. Theoretical frameworks guided interpretation without predetermining outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of interview and forum group discussion data from 18 undergraduate EFL students and five English lecturers at Universitas Islam Madura reveals four interrelated themes that collectively illustrate how pedagogical translanguaging is not unilaterally imposed but co-negotiated through mutual awareness, responsive interaction, and shared pedagogical values. These findings challenge monolingual ideologies and reframe translanguaging as a dynamic, context-sensitive strategy shaped by both teacher agency and learner feedback.

Theme 1: Translanguaging as a Strategic Cognitive Scaffold, Not a Linguistic Crutch

Both students and lecturers consistently described the use of Bahasa Indonesia and occasionally Madurese as a temporary, purpose-driven scaffold that facilitates access to complex academic content. Students reported that switching to L1 during explanations of abstract concepts (e.g., reported speech, critical discourse analysis, morphological rules) functioned as a lifeline that rescued them from cognitive overload. As one third-year student explained:

"When lecturer DVY explained 'critical discourse analysis' in Indonesian, it's like a light when on..., she had only used English, I would have been lost."

This perception was mirrored in lecturer narratives. Lecturer AS, a senior lecturer with 17 years of experience, noted:

"I use Indonesia while teaching English to strengthen students' understanding....especially if it's related theory".

Both groups rejected habitual or excessive L1 use. Students like MIA articulated a clear boundary: *"Use it like medicine only when we really need it"*. Lecturers echoed this, with lecturer IDH stating she employs L1 strategically whenever necessary to support communication, but ensures the majority of the lesson is conducted in English. This convergence underscores a shared metacognitive understanding that translanguaging is valued not as a substitute for English but as a transitional tool aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of the Proximal Development, where L1 temporarily reduces cognitive load to enable eventual L2 internalization.

Theme 2: Affective Safety Through Mutual Linguistic Flexibility

A second power finding is that translanguaging functions as an affective regulator that lowers anxiety and fosters classroom inclusion. Students across proficiency levels described feeling "brave to ask" or "safer to speak" when they knew their lecturer might respond in a shared language. First-year student DA captured sentiment:

"I am scared of mistakes, but if the lecturer FY might answer me in Indonesian, I feel brave enough to ask".

The lecturer confirmed this dynamic, emphasizing that L1 use builds psychological safety. Lecturer FY observed that shy or introverted students become more active in the classroom when permitted to use their first language initially. Lecturer IDH added that occasional L1 use, even for light comments or jokes, helps create a more relaxed atmosphere, which in turn encourages risk-taking in English.

This reciprocity suggests that translanguaging operates not merely as a top-down accommodation but as a co-regulated emotional contract students feel seen and supported, while lecturers respond to visible cues of hesitation or confusion. It aligns with (Krashen, 1982) affective filter hypothesis, yet extends it by showing that affective safety is co-constructed through ongoing interaction, not passively received.

Theme 3: Real-Time Co-Negotiation of Language Boundaries

Perhaps the most significant insight is that translanguaging is enacted through real-time negotiation between lecturers and students. Lecturers reported monitoring student cues such as furrowed brows, side whispers in Madurese, or silence as triggers to switch languages. As the lecturer, MA described:

"If several students start whispering or their facial expressions show confusion, it's a signal for me....I switch to Indonesian to bridge the gap".

Students validated these triggers, noting that lecturers look around or pause before switching a behaviour they interpreted as care, not weakness. Moreover, students themselves actively used their full linguistic repertoire during group work (e.g., brainstorming in Indonesian, clarifying in Madurese, presenting in English), and lecturers generally permitted it, gently redirecting. *Okay, now try to say that in English"*. The reciprocal responses reveal translanguaging as a dialogic practice (Canagarajah, 2011) it emerges from a shared, implicit agreement about when and how L1 supports learning. It is neither chaotic nor unstructured, but governed by mutual pedagogical intuition, a finding absent in studies that examine only teacher cognition or only student perceptions.

Theme 4: Solidarity in the Shadow of Institutional Pressure

Both students and lecturers were acutely aware of the ideological tension between pedagogical reality and institutional English-only expectations. Students expressed gratitude and empathy, with student RA noting: *"We know lecturer MK is taking a risk by using Indonesian..... We feel grateful"*.

Lecturer, in turn, acknowledged professional vulnerability. Lecturer AS admitted feeling "guilty at first" but justified L1 use as necessary for comprehension. Lecturer IDH revealed she sometimes "feel limited" by colleagues' assumptions that L1 use "reduces English exposure".

Yet the shared awareness fostered pedagogical solidarity. Rather than reviewing translanguaging as defiance, both parties framed it as an act of care and resistance, a commitment to learn over compliance. As lecturer AS poignantly stated, his ideal classroom is "multilingual not as a concession, but as a conscious choice for deeper, more equitable..... education" the mutual recognition transforms translanguaging from a mere technique into a relational ethic, where linguistic flexibility becomes a marker of trust and mutual respect.

These findings advance translanguaging theory by demonstrating its co-constructed nature in an understudied Global South context. While García & Wei (2015) emphasize the learner's integrated repertoire, this study shows that repertoire use is socially mediated through teacher-student dialogue. Similarly, Borg's (2015) teacher cognition framework is enriched by evidence that lecturers' decisions are not made in isolation but are continuously calibrated through student feedback. This study challenges rigid English-only policies in Indonesian higher education. Both students and lecturers advocate for a principled, flexible approach to English as the primary medium, with L1 permitted for scaffolding complex concepts, checking understanding or reducing anxiety. As lecturer IDH recommended to university leadership that institutional policy should explicitly recognize and support the strategic use of Bahasa Indonesia or regional languages to legitimize what is already happening in effective classrooms.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how pedagogical translanguaging is jointly perceived and enacted by students and lecturers in an Indonesian EFL university context. The findings confirm that translanguaging is not top-down technique or a bottom-up coping strategy, but a co-regulated practice emerging from mutual responsiveness and shared pedagogical values. Both students and lecturers view strategic L1 use as essential for scaffolding comprehension and reducing affective barriers, yet they consistently reject its overuse, advocating instead for a principled, purpose-driven approach.

In response to the institutional tension between English-only expectations and pedagogical reality, this study offers three concrete recommendations. First, university policymakers should formally recognize Bahasa Indonesia and regional languages as legitimate scaffolding tools in EFL instruction, moving from rigid monolingual mandates toward a flexible English-primary, multilingual supportive framework. Second, teacher education programs must integrate student perspectives into pedagogical training, empowering lecturers to use translanguaging with confidence and intentionality. Third, future studies should examine how explicit student-teacher dialogues about language use can co-construct even more responsive classroom practices, potentially through action research or longitudinal classroom observation. By aligning policy with pedagogical evidence and centering the voices of both learners and educators, Indonesian higher education can foster EFL classrooms that are not only linguistically effective but also cognitively and affectively inclusive.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank the students and lecturers of Universitas Islam Madura for their openness and participation. This study was self-funded and conducted independently.

REFERENCES

- Bolton, K., Botha, W., & Lin, B. (2024). English-medium instruction in higher education worldwide. In *The Routledge handbook of English-medium instruction in higher education* (pp. 1-18). Routledge.
- Borg, S. (2015). *Teacher cognition and language education*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Canagarajah, S. (2011). *Translanguaging in the classroom: Emerging issues for research and pedagogy* (Vol. 2). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110239331.1>
- García, O., & Wei, L. (2015). Translanguaging, bilingualism, and bilingual education. *The handbook of bilingual and multilingual education*, 223-240.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Pergamon Press.
- Pratiwi, E., Nanna, A., Kusnadi, D., Aras, I., & Kurniati, D. (2022). *Self-confidence attitude of novice primary teachers reflection on teaching mathematics*. repository.unej.ac.id. <https://repository.unej.ac.id/handle/123456789/105727>
- https://repository.unej.ac.id/bitstream/handle/123456789/105727/FKIP_JURNAL_EnditiyasPratiwi_Self-confidence_attitude_of_novice_primary_teachers_reflection_on_teaching_mathematics.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
- Rosmaladewi, A. A. R. (2019). Language policy, identity, and bilingual education in Indonesia: A historical overview. *XLinguae*, 12(1), 219-227.
- Witari, P. S., & Sukanto, K. E. (2023). Pedagogical issues of translanguaging practice in Indonesia: The voice of four EFL teachers. *IJIET: International Journal of Indonesian Education and Teaching*, 7(2), 204-220. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24071/ijiet.v7i2.5814>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Zein, S., Sukyadi, D., Hamied, F. A., & Lengkanawati, N. S. (2020). English language education in Indonesia: A review of research (2011-2019). *Language Teaching*, 53(4), 491-523. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444820000208>