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Students' Translanguaging Practices in EFL Classroom Interaction at SMP Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate students' translanguaging practices in EFL classroom interactions at SMP Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. Specifically, it focused on identifying the types and functions of translanguaging employed by students during classroom interactions. This study adopted a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through recordings of classroom interactions and interviews with students. The findings revealed that students frequently engaged in translanguaging through code-switching and code-mixing between English and Bahasa Indonesia. These practices served several functions, including clarifying meaning, responding to the teacher, asking questions, expressing ideas, maintaining communication, and helping peers understand the lesson. Furthermore, translanguaging enhanced students' confidence and encouraged their active participation in classroom interactions. The findings indicate that translanguaging plays an important role in facilitating communication and supporting the learning process in EFL classrooms. Therefore, translanguaging can be regarded as a valuable pedagogical strategy in English language teaching and learning.

Keywords: Translanguaging, EFL Classroom, Classroom Interaction, Code-SwitchingCode-Mixing

INTRODUCTION

English plays an important role in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms as the target language used in teaching and learning activities. In many educational contexts, students are expected to use English as the primary medium of communication during classroom interaction. This expectation is closely related to monolingual ideologies which position English as the only legitimate language for learning English effectively. However, in multilingual societies such as Indonesia, classroom interaction rarely occurs in a purely monolingual manner. Students often combine English with their first language during communication in order to facilitate understanding, express ideas, respond to others, and maintain interaction. This phenomenon reflects the sociolinguistic reality that multilingual learners naturally utilize all available linguistic resources during communication and learning activities.

Language use in classroom interaction cannot be separated from social and communicative contexts. Sociolinguistics explains that language is closely connected to social interaction and communicative purposes. According to Holmes (2013), speakers choose and use language depending on participants, situations, and interactional goals. In multilingual communities, individuals frequently move between languages to achieve effective communication and mutual understanding. This condition is also visible in EFL classrooms where students use both English and Bahasa Indonesia during interaction. The use of multiple languages demonstrates that students actively employ their linguistic repertoire to support participation and meaning-making in classroom communication.

The multilingual nature of classroom interaction is also related to the concepts of bilingualism and multilingualism. Grosjean (2010) explains that multilingual speakers regularly use more than one language depending on communicative situations and purposes. Similarly, Baker (2011) states that bilingual speakers often alternate languages flexibly during communication. In EFL learning environments, students commonly combine English and their first language while discussing tasks, asking questions, clarifying information, and responding to teachers or peers. This flexible language practice reflects how multilingual learners naturally integrate linguistic resources during communication. Consequently, multilingualism becomes one of the important foundations underlying translanguaging practices in classroom interaction.

The phenomenon of using multiple languages dynamically in communication is conceptualized through translanguaging. García and Li Wei (2014) define translanguaging as the process in which multilingual speakers utilize their full linguistic repertoire as an integrated system to construct meaning and communicate effectively. Unlike traditional perspectives that separate languages into distinct and independent systems, translanguaging emphasizes fluid and flexible language use. From this perspective, multilingual speakers do not simply switch between isolated languages, but rather integrate linguistic resources strategically according to communicative needs. Therefore, translanguaging provides an important framework for understanding how multilingual learners actually use language in EFL classroom interaction.

In educational contexts, translanguaging has become an important concept because it reflects the real language practices of multilingual students. In EFL classrooms, students often rely on their first language to support understanding and communication during learning activities. García (2009) explains that translanguaging functions as a meaning-making process in which learners actively integrate linguistic knowledge during interaction. Through translanguaging, students are able to connect prior knowledge from their first language with new knowledge in English. As a result, translanguaging supports not only communication but also cognitive processes in language learning.

Translanguaging practices frequently emerge during both teacher–student and student–student interaction in EFL classrooms. Students may use Bahasa Indonesia to

ask questions, explain difficult concepts, clarify instructions, or express ideas when they encounter difficulty using English. Creese and Blackledge (2010) argue that translanguaging allows learners to participate more actively in classroom interaction because it reduces linguistic barriers during communication. Similarly, Canagarajah (2011) states that multilingual speakers naturally integrate available linguistic resources to negotiate meaning and sustain interaction. Therefore, translanguaging can be viewed as a communicative strategy that enables students to remain engaged in classroom activities despite limited proficiency in the target language.

Previous studies have demonstrated that translanguaging provides important pedagogical benefits in EFL classrooms. Duarte (2016) found that translanguaging encourages active classroom participation and allows students to express their ideas more confidently. Lin (2013) also explains that the use of students' first language can reduce cognitive load and support comprehension during language learning. Furthermore, García and Li Wei (2014) emphasize that translanguaging helps learners connect new information with existing linguistic knowledge, thereby facilitating understanding and learning processes. These findings indicate that translanguaging is not simply random language mixing, but rather a purposeful strategy that supports communication, participation, and comprehension in multilingual classrooms.

In Indonesian EFL contexts, several studies have also examined translanguaging practices in classroom interaction. Afriadi and Hamzah (2021) found that translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms involve the use of Indonesian, local languages, and English to support instructional activities and classroom communication. Putri and Rifai (2021) revealed that teachers frequently employ translanguaging to explain difficult materials and manage classroom interaction more effectively. Heryanti and Samsi (2023) further reported that translanguaging practices help students improve comprehension and participation during learning activities. These studies consistently show that translanguaging functions as an important communicative and pedagogical resource in EFL learning environments.

Besides examining the pedagogical value of translanguaging, researchers also analyze the forms and functions of translanguaging practices in interaction. In terms of forms, several researchers adopt the structural classification proposed by Poplack (1980), which includes intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag translanguaging. Intra-sentential translanguaging occurs when multilingual speakers combine elements from different languages within a single sentence. Inter-sentential translanguaging refers to language alternation between sentences or clauses, while tag translanguaging involves the insertion of short expressions or tags from another language into an utterance. These classifications help researchers identify observable patterns of multilingual language use during classroom interaction.

In addition to forms, understanding the functions of translanguaging is also essential in explaining why students use multiple languages during communication. Sampson (2012) explains that translanguaging may serve various communicative purposes, such as compensating for limited vocabulary, clarifying meaning, maintaining interaction, and developing group solidarity. Students may also rely on

translanguaging to express feelings, negotiate meaning, and sustain communication when they experience difficulty using English. Therefore, translanguaging practices should not be viewed as indicators of language deficiency, but rather as strategic linguistic practices that support communication and learning processes in EFL classrooms.

Despite the growing attention to translanguaging research, several gaps remain in the existing literature. Most previous studies focus mainly on teachers' translanguaging practices or general classroom language use, while limited attention has been given to students' translanguaging practices in natural classroom interaction. In addition, studies that simultaneously analyze both the types and functions of students' translanguaging practices at the junior high school level in Indonesian EFL contexts are still limited. Consequently, further investigation is needed to understand how students utilize translanguaging during classroom interaction and the communicative purposes underlying their language choices.

Preliminary observation conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan also indicated the presence of translanguaging practices during classroom interaction. During classroom activities, students frequently combined English and Bahasa Indonesia while asking questions, responding to the teacher, and discussing assignments with classmates. The use of Bahasa Indonesia appeared to help students clarify meaning, maintain interaction, and express ideas more confidently during communication. In addition, preliminary interview findings revealed that students intentionally relied on translanguaging to support comprehension and reduce difficulties when communicating in English. These preliminary findings suggest that translanguaging plays a significant role in facilitating communication and classroom participation in EFL learning environments.

Based on the phenomena above, this study aims to explore students' translanguaging practices in EFL classroom interaction at SMP Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. Specifically, this study focuses on identifying the types of translanguaging used by students and analyzing the functions of translanguaging practices in classroom interaction. By examining students' actual language use during interaction, this study is expected to contribute to the understanding of multilingual communication practices and provide insights into how translanguaging supports interaction and learning in EFL classrooms.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate students' translanguaging practices in EFL classroom interaction. Qualitative research was considered appropriate because the study focused on understanding language use as a social phenomenon occurring naturally in classroom communication. Creswell (2014) states that qualitative research aims to explore and understand social phenomena based on participants' experiences and interactions. In this study, the researcher explored how students utilized multiple languages during classroom

interaction and interpreted the communicative purposes underlying their language use.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Percut Sei Tuan. The population of the study consisted of all seventh-grade students at the school. However, the sample of the study was one seventh-grade class, namely class VII-3, consisting of 25 students. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because the students actively participated in classroom interaction and demonstrated the use of multiple languages during English learning activities. In addition, several students were selected for interviews based on their participation and willingness to share their experiences related to translanguaging practices.

This study also incorporated elements of discourse analysis and thematic analysis. Discourse analysis was used to examine how translanguaging occurred during classroom interaction, while thematic analysis was employed to analyze students' perspectives regarding their reasons for using translanguaging. By combining these approaches, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of both the forms and functions of students' translanguaging practices in the EFL classroom.

Instruments

In qualitative research, the researcher acted as the primary instrument in collecting and analyzing the data. To support the data collection process, this study utilized classroom observation recordings and semi-structured interviews as the main research instruments.

Classroom observation recordings were used to capture students' natural language use during classroom interaction. The researcher recorded English learning activities, particularly during task-based classroom interaction, to identify instances of translanguaging practices. The recordings were subsequently transcribed into written form to facilitate data analysis.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain deeper information regarding students' perspectives on their language use. The interviews focused on exploring students' reasons for using multiple languages and how translanguaging supported their comprehension, communication, and participation during classroom interaction. The semi-structured interview format enabled the researcher to explore participants' responses flexibly while still maintaining focus on the research objectives.

Data analysis procedures

The data in this study were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Before conducting the analysis, all classroom interaction recordings and interview data were transcribed into written form to ensure accuracy and facilitate interpretation.

In the data condensation stage, the researcher selected and focused on utterances containing translanguaging practices. The data were coded and categorized based on the types and functions of translanguaging identified in classroom interaction. The types of translanguaging were analyzed using Poplack's (1980) classification, namely intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag translanguaging. Meanwhile, the functions of translanguaging were analyzed using Sampson's (2012) framework, including clarification, compensation for limited vocabulary, maintaining interaction, and social interaction purposes.

After the data were categorized, the findings were displayed in descriptive form and supported by excerpts from classroom interaction and interview transcripts. Finally, the researcher drew conclusions by identifying patterns, meanings, and relationships related to students' translanguaging practices. The conclusions were continuously verified by re-examining the data to ensure consistency and accuracy. Through these procedures, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of how students utilized translanguaging in EFL classroom interaction.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of classroom observation and interview data. The findings are organized according to the two research objectives of the study: (1) the types of translanguaging practices used by students in EFL classroom interaction and (2) the functions of translanguaging practices in supporting classroom communication and learning activities. The findings are presented objectively based on the data collected from classroom interaction and students' interview responses.

Types of Translanguaging Practices

The findings revealed that students employed three types of translanguaging during EFL classroom interaction, namely intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag translanguaging, as proposed by Poplack (1980). These types occurred when students combined English and Bahasa Indonesia during interaction with teachers and peers in classroom activities.

Table: 1 Types of Translanguaging Practices

Types of Translanguaging	Summary	Frequencies
Intra-sentential	The insertion of English words or phrases into Indonesian sentences	6 times
Inter-sentential	Language alternation between sentences on clauses	1 times
Tag Translanguaging	The insertion of short English expressions into Indonesian utterances	1 times

The findings showed that intra-sentential translanguaging was the most dominant type used by students during classroom interaction. Students frequently inserted English words or phrases into Indonesian utterances while asking questions, responding to the teacher, and discussing assignments.

Functions of Translanguaging Practices

The findings revealed that students employed three types of translanguaging during EFL classroom interaction, namely intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag translanguaging, as proposed by Poplack (1980). These types occurred when students combined English and Bahasa Indonesia during interaction with teachers and peers in classroom activities.

Table: 2 Function of Translanguaging Practices

Functions of Translanguaging	Summary	Frequencies
L1 Equivalents for Lack of L2 Lexical Items	Students use Indonesian when they do not know certain English vocabulary, such as "*kalau nggak tahu arti kata*" ("when they do not know the meaning of a word") to maintain understanding.	1
Metalanguage for Classroom Activities	Students use translanguaging to clarify instructions and complete tasks, for example "*ditulis dalam Bahasa Indonesia saja atau English*?" ("written only in Indonesian or in English?")	2
Reiteration	Students repeat or reformulate ideas across languages, such as "*pakai Bahasa Indonesia dulu, baru diubah ke Bahasa Inggris*" ("use Indonesian first, then change it into English").	4
Socialising to Develop Group Solidarity	Indonesian is used to create more comfortable interaction because it is "*gampang jelasin*" ("easy to explain") and "*cepat ngerti*" ("quick to understand").	2
L2 Avoidance	Students rely on Indonesian when English feels difficult, as reflected in "*kami nggak ngerti*" ("we do not understand") and "*bingung mau nulis apa*" ("confused about what to write").	2

Floor Holding	Translanguaging helps students continue interaction even when struggling to express ideas in English.	1
Others	Students perceive translanguaging positively because it "*membantu*" ("helps") and allows them to "*tetap belajar Bahasa Inggris juga*" ("still learn English as well").	3

Based on the the Table 2, reiteration emerged as the most dominant function of translanguaging with four occurrences. Several students explained that they usually "pakai Bahasa Indonesia dulu, baru diubah ke Bahasa Inggris" ("use Indonesian first, then change it into English") or "baru diterjemahkan ke Bahasa Inggris biar lebih mudah paham" ("then translated into English so it is easier to understand"). These responses indicate that students rely on Indonesian as a bridge to construct meaning before producing English. This finding suggests that translanguaging supports both comprehension and language production during classroom interaction.

The category of others also appeared frequently, showing that students generally perceived translanguaging as beneficial in the learning process. Some students stated that translanguaging helps them "lebih paham" ("understand better") while still allowing them to "tetap belajar Bahasa Inggris juga" ("still learn English as well"). Another student simply mentioned that translanguaging "membantu" ("helps"), reflecting a positive overall perception toward the use of both languages in the classroom.

In addition, metalanguage for classroom activities, socialising to develop group solidarity, and L2 avoidance each occurred twice. Students used translanguaging to clarify classroom instructions, such as asking whether tasks should be written "dalam Bahasa Indonesia saja atau English" ("only in Indonesian or in English"). Meanwhile, in social interaction, Indonesian was preferred because it made communication "cepat ngerti dan gampang jelasin" ("quick to understand and easy to explain"). For L2 avoidance, students admitted that "kalau full Bahasa Inggris, kami nggak ngerti" ("if it is fully in English, we do not understand"), indicating that Indonesian was necessary to reduce confusion and maintain participation.

Finally, L1 equivalents for lack of L2 lexical items and floor holding appeared less frequently, with one occurrence each. Even so, these functions still played an important role in helping students sustain communication. For example, students used Indonesian when they "nggak tahu arti kata" ("do not know the meaning of a word"), while floor holding allowed them to remain involved in interaction despite difficulties in expressing ideas in English.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that translanguaging plays a significant role in supporting communication and learning in EFL classroom interaction.

Students actively combined Indonesian and English through intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag translanguaging, indicating that they naturally utilized their full linguistic repertoire during classroom communication. Among these types, intra-sentential translanguaging emerged as the most dominant, suggesting that students were more comfortable integrating both languages within a single utterance rather than separating them across sentences. This finding supports García and Wei's perspective that translanguaging is a dynamic and flexible process in which multilingual speakers draw on all available linguistic resources to construct meaning.

The dominance of intra-sentential translanguaging also reflects students' communicative adaptability in the EFL classroom. By inserting English words or phrases into Indonesian sentences, students were able to maintain interaction despite limitations in vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. This indicates that translanguaging functions not merely as language alternation, but as a strategic practice that enables students to participate actively in classroom interaction. The findings are also consistent with previous studies by Afriadi and Hamzah (2021), which revealed that Indonesian remains the dominant supporting language in EFL communication.

In terms of function, translanguaging was found to serve multiple communicative and pedagogical purposes. One of the most prominent functions was reiteration, where students first constructed meaning in Indonesian and then restated it in English. This finding highlights the importance of the first language in supporting comprehension and language production. Students tended to understand concepts more effectively in Indonesian before expressing them in English, indicating that translanguaging acts as a cognitive bridge between L1 and L2. This supports previous findings by Heryanti and Samsi (2023) and Rerung and Kartikasari (2015), which emphasize that translanguaging facilitates comprehension and language development in EFL learning.

Another important finding is the use of L1 equivalents for lack of L2 lexical items. Students frequently relied on Indonesian when they did not know specific English vocabulary, allowing communication to continue without interruption. This suggests that translanguaging reduces communicative barriers and supports students in expressing ideas despite limited proficiency. Similarly, the function of metalanguage for classroom activities indicates that students used translanguaging to clarify instructions, negotiate tasks, and manage classroom interaction more effectively. These findings imply that translanguaging supports not only language learning, but also classroom participation and engagement.

The study also reveals the social dimension of translanguaging. Students preferred using Indonesian during peer interaction because it created a more comfortable and supportive atmosphere. This function of socialising to develop group solidarity demonstrates that translanguaging contributes to collaboration and interpersonal relationships in the classroom. By using a familiar language, students were able to communicate more confidently and interact more naturally with their peers.

However, the findings also indicate that translanguaging may reflect students' difficulties in using English. The presence of L2 avoidance suggests that some students relied heavily on Indonesian because they lacked confidence or experienced difficulty in understanding and producing English. While translanguaging helps students remain engaged in communication, excessive dependence on L1 may potentially limit opportunities for exposure to English. Therefore, the findings imply that translanguaging should be used strategically and balanced appropriately in EFL classrooms.

The findings of this study confirm that translanguaging functions as a meaningful and multifunctional resource in EFL classroom interaction. Theoretically, the findings strengthen the view that multilingual learners do not separate languages rigidly, but instead use them dynamically to support communication and learning. Practically, the findings suggest that teachers should view translanguaging not as a barrier to English learning, but as a supportive pedagogical resource that can enhance comprehension, participation, and interaction in multilingual classrooms.

CONLUSIONS

This study reveals that translanguaging is actively used by students in EFL classroom interaction through intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag translanguaging. Among these types, intra-sentential translanguaging appears as the most dominant, indicating that students tend to combine Indonesian and English flexibly within a single utterance to support communication and meaning-making processes.

The study also shows that translanguaging serves various communicative and pedagogical functions in the classroom. Students use translanguaging to clarify meaning, compensate for limited English vocabulary, manage classroom tasks, reinforce understanding, maintain interaction, and support peer communication. These findings indicate that translanguaging functions as a strategic resource that helps students participate more actively and confidently in the learning process.

The findings suggest that translanguaging should not be viewed merely as language mixing, but as a meaningful practice that supports comprehension, interaction, and language learning in multilingual EFL classrooms.

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