

**Research Article**

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## Translanguaging practices in tertiary context of EFL classrooms in Indonesia

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### Abstract

The phenomenon of code-switching and translanguaging has evolved within the field of linguistics, particularly in the context of bilingualism. Researchers have explored the use of the first language (L1) in second language (L2) classrooms from various perspectives. This study explores students' attitudes toward using L1 in EFL classrooms and its correlation with translanguaging characteristics, frequency, and other contributing factors including proficiency levels and gender. Based on Poplack's (1980) theory, this study examines bilinguals' high language proficiency in translanguaging. This study involves 49 participants from an Indonesian EFL program using a survey-based research design. Data collection methods encompass Likert Scale surveys and open-ended questionnaires. The result reveals that students had positive attitudes toward translanguaging. However, the study found that the students showing neutral perceptions that the practice of translanguaging did indicate the students' lack of linguistics proficiency. This led to the meaning that the statements were true without being influenced by the participants' subjectivity. Furthermore, the study also substantiates gender-based differences in opinion on the translanguaging practices. This study also proves the hypothesis which stated that bilinguals who are highly proficient in both languages (L1 and L2) are generally better at translanguaging.

**Keywords:** EFL classroom; translanguaging; correlation; L1; L2

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### 1. Introduction

The utilization of the English language in non-native English-speaking countries, particularly in Indonesia, has emerged as a significant concern for both educators and students. In Indonesia, English is commonly imparted as a foreign language and typically maintains official recognition within the nation (Patmasari & Kamaruddin, 2022). Students are required to learn English as part of their curriculum. In EFL classrooms, English is primarily taught, but it is used less in daily social interactions. Hence, both instructors and students occasionally resort to using their first language or L1 (Yletyinen, 2004). Under certain circumstances, since the lectures and students share the same first language or national language, there is a tendency for tasks originally intended to be conducted in English (L2) to shift towards being carried out in L1 (Nation, 2003). This situation is also observed in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in Indonesia, where the communication between lectures and students often transitions between English and Indonesian, or the local language, or even a combination of both.

The act of transitioning from one language to another is an inevitable occurrence in the EFL classroom, affecting both lectures and students. This language-shifting process necessitates that teachers and students possess bilingual capabilities, as it is intended to enhance (Patmasari & Kamaruddin, 2022; Sadiq, 2022). The teaching of language should promote bilingual or multilingual individuals to harness every aspect of their linguistic capabilities in the pursuit of learning another language, a concept referred to as translanguaging (Sahiruddin, 2023).

Translanguaging, as defined by (Garcia & Lin, 2017), intentionally involves changing the input and output languages in bilingual education. It enhances student engagement and understanding in both languages (Lewis et al., 2012). Flexible teaching methods are crucial for successful translanguaging in foreign language instruction (Wiley & García, 2016). In essence, translanguaging taps into complete linguistic abilities to improve comprehension, express thoughts, and expand knowledge (Wei, 2011). Using translanguaging as a language teaching strategy in EFL classrooms deepens students' understanding of complex concepts.

Using translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms benefits teaching, classroom dynamics, and student-teacher connections (Puspawati, 2018). It aids in conveying complex concepts (Patmasari & Kamaruddin, 2022) and is time-efficient (Ye, 2023). Indonesian high school students prefer using their L1 to enhance L2 proficiency (Patmasari & Kamaruddin, 2022), while Hong Kong junior secondary students' preferences depend on their language proficiency (Ye, 2023). At the tertiary level, limiting L1 use in EFL classrooms aligns with instructional objectives (Sahiruddin, 2023). Learners generally favor using L2 to enhance their competence in the second language (L2).

Recent research, led by (Hu, 2022), analyzed 335 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners using a cross-sectional approach. English proficiency, content, and motivation were the main factors affecting translanguaging, with gender having minimal impact. The debate on translanguaging and language proficiency has various viewpoints. Shifting from English to the first language (L1) can indicate competency or limited L2 proficiency in EFL classrooms (Cook, 2002, as cited in Khalid Aldalbahy, 2022). Conversely, some scholars argue that L1 use can enhance bilingual competence (Nilep, 2006, as cited in Khalid Aldalbahy, 2022).

In line with (Poplack, 1980) theory, bilinguals with strong grammatical skills in both languages are expected to code-switch more smoothly. Additionally, individuals who possess high proficiency levels in both languages tend to be more excellent in the practice of translanguaging.

Exploring Indonesian EFL students' attitudes toward using other languages in English-based courses is underexplored. Gender's influence on second language acquisition has been studied, with limited focus on its correlation with translanguaging practices (Burat & Çavuşoğlu, 2020; Joyce et al., 2021; Hu, 2022).

Furthermore, there's limited research on translanguaging and language proficiency among Indonesian tertiary students. This study aims to explore students' perspectives on translanguaging in tertiary L2 classrooms and its correlation with language proficiency and gender.

To provide greater clarity, this study aims to address the following inquiries: (1) How do students view and perceive the use of translanguaging, particularly the integration of L1 in the L2 classroom? (2) What are the underlying reasons for the occurrence of translanguaging practices in the classrooms? (3) Is there any correlation between the practice of translanguaging, students' English language proficiency levels, and their genders?

The study's findings have both theoretical and practical relevance. Theoretical importance arises from its alignment with similar research, while practically, it may guide educators and students on the adoption of translanguaging in EFL classrooms.

## 2. Methods

This study explores students' perspectives on translanguaging in EFL classrooms and assesses the correlation between their English proficiency levels and gender in translanguaging practice. This study employs a quantitative approach, which is utilized to address a research question by examining trends within a specific field or by seeking to elucidate the reasons behind a phenomenon, as described by (Creswell, 2021). Conversely, (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005) state that “Quantitative research entails gathering data for the purpose of quantifying it and subjecting it to statistical analysis, with the aim of substantiating or challenging alternative knowledge assertions”. Quantitative research systematically examines observable events using statistical or computational methods.

This study employs a descriptive data analysis approach, uses survey questionnaires and open-ended questions to gather data on students' perspectives on translanguaging in the EFL classroom. It also explores the potential links between translanguaging, students' English proficiency, and gender. Survey research designs systematically gather data from a representative sample to analyze trends, attitudes, or opinions within a population (Sahiruddin et al., 2021).

Students completed a survey with twenty Likert scale items and one open-ended question adapted from (Rivera & Mazak, 2017) and (Moody et al., 2019). The survey assessed students' attitudes and motivations for using their first language in an L2 environment. It also explored their opinions on the connection between translanguaging practices, language proficiency levels, and gender.

This study involved 49 first-year and fourth-year students from Brawijaya University's English program. Data was collected using Likert-scale questionnaires with four assessments. These assessments covered students' attitudes and perspectives on translanguaging practices, their application in L2 learning, perceptions in a tertiary context, and categorized responses based on proficiency levels and gender. An open-ended question aimed to uncover the reasons behind students' use of translanguaging practices.

The statistical software SPSS 25 was utilized for data analysis, encompassing descriptive and frequency (percentage) assessments, with the aim of addressing the research inquiries posed in the study. A descriptive analysis of the collected survey data was conducted, involving the calculation of means and standard deviations for each aspect of the research questions. The mean was computed by dividing the total sum of responses by the overall number of responses, while the standard deviation was determined by taking the positive square root of the variance.

Following the approach outlined by (Moody et al., 2019) for assessing students' perceptions and facilitating reporting, the survey items were categorized into three groups. A score falling between 2.5 and 3.5 was considered indicative of neutral perceptions, scores below 2.5 were interpreted as reflecting negative perceptions, and scores exceeding 3.5 were seen as indicating positive perceptions.

## 3. Results

The objective of this analysis was to uncover students' perspectives and attitudes toward the practice of translanguaging in L2 classrooms. To achieve this, descriptive statistics was used to compute means and standard deviations for each item on a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. In this questionnaire, a rating of 1 corresponded to “strongly disagree,” 2 indicated “disagree,” 3 signified “neither disagree nor agree,” 4 represented “agree,” and 5 denoted “strongly disagree”. The distribution of scores for each item is presented in Table 3.1. A total of 49 students participated in this survey, the detailed item scores in were shown in Table 3.1.

*3.1. Perception of Translanguaging as a Practice*

Table 3.1 Descriptive analysis of the responses towards translanguaging practices

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
1	Translanguaging should be avoided by bilinguals	40.8 % (20)	26.5 % (13)	22.4 % (11)	4.1% (2)	6.1% (3)	2.08	1.1 6
2	Instructors at my class engage in translanguaging	0% (0)	6.1% (3)	14.3 % (7)	44.9 % (22)	34.7 % (17)	4.08	0.8 6
3	Translanguaging is a natural practice for bilinguals	0% (0)	0% (0)	16.3 % (8)	42.9 % (21)	40.8 % (20)	4.2	0.7 2
4	Translanguaging indicates a lack of linguistics proficiency in your second language	14.3 % (7)	40.8 % (20)	16.3 % (8)	20.4 % (10)	8.2% (4)	2.67	1.1 9
5	Translanguaging is a disrespectful practice	38.8 % (19)	36.7 % (18)	22.4 % (11)	2.0% (1)	0% (0)	1.87	0.8 3
6	Translanguaging is confusing for me	20.4 % (10)	44.9 % (22)	24.5 % (12)	6.1% (3)	4.1% (2)	2.28	1

Based on the data provided in Table 3.1, several key observations can be made regarding students' perceptions of translanguaging in L2 classrooms. Firstly, a significant majority of students (79.6%) express support for instructors using translanguaging in L2 classrooms, indicating a positive stance toward its utility in the learning process.

Additionally, the data shows that students generally view translanguaging as a natural practice for bilingual individuals, (M=4.12). This suggests that most students consider it a common and unproblematic part of bilingual communication and language learning.

Moreover, the response to Statement 4, which suggests that translanguaging signifies a lack of proficiency in students' second language, was more neutral (M= 2.67), indicating no clear link between language proficiency and translanguaging.

Furthermore, a significant majority of students (75.5%) disagreed with the statement that translanguaging is disrespectful, suggesting that most students do not view it as a disrespectful practice.

Lastly, a relatively small percentage (10.2%) found translanguaging confusing, indicating that the majority of students did not perceive it as confusing, even as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

In summary, the data in Table 3.1 indicates that students, on the whole, have positive attitudes and perspectives toward the use of translanguaging in L2 classrooms. These findings underscore the acceptance of translanguaging as a valuable tool for effective language learning and communication in the educational context.

*3.2. Perception of Translanguaging for English as Foreign Language (EFL)/L2 Learning*

Table 3.2 Descriptive Analysis of the Responses Regarding the Translanguaging Practice for EFL/L2 Learning

N o	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mea n	SD
1	Translanguaging helped me learn a second language	0% (0)	4.1% (2)	20.4% (19)	38.8% (19)	36.7% (18)	4.08	0.86
2	Translanguaging is only acceptable when you are learning a new language	22.4% (11)	32.7% (16)	20.4% (10)	18.4% (9)	6.1% (3)	2.53	1.20
3	Translanguaging is essential for learning a new language	0% (0)	0% (0)	30.6% (15)	34.7% (17)	34.7% (17)	4.04	0.81
4	Translanguaging has assisted me in learning second language	0% (0)	4.1% (2)	18.4% (9)	42.9% (21)	34.7% (17)	4.08	0.83
5	Language instructors should avoid translanguaging because it will prevent second language learning.	18.4% (9)	40.8% (20)	28.6% (14)	8.2% (4)	4.1% (2)	2.38	1.01

The data presented in the table offers an insightful perspective into students' preferences and attitudes surrounding the use of translanguaging in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or second language (L2) learning. It is noteworthy that a substantial majority of students, constituting 75.5%, express agreement with the idea that translanguaging is conducive to the process of acquiring a new language. This positive stance underscores the perceived benefits of translanguaging in language acquisition.

However, a more nuanced perspective emerges when considering the statement that translanguaging is only acceptable when learning a new language, where the data suggests a degree of neutrality among students ( $M=2.53$ ,  $SD=1.20$ ). This neutrality suggests that students do not rigidly confine translanguaging to the context of learning a new language but may consider its relevance in other language-related activities.

Further affirming the positive attitudes on translanguaging, students displayed favourable attitudes regarding its significance in the acquisition of language proficiency ( $M=4.04$ ), with an overwhelming 75.8% of students endorsing its role in proficiency enhancement. This is a significant finding that underscores the perceived effectiveness of translanguaging in fostering language skills.

On the other hand, negative sentiments were evident ( $M=2.38$ ) concerning the notion that instructors or lecturers should abstain from using translanguaging due to potential implications for second language (L2) learning. This suggests a degree of apprehension or reservations regarding the role of translanguaging in the instructional context.

In sum, the data reflects a spectrum of perspectives among students, with varying degrees of favourability and neutrality toward translanguaging, indicating the complex and multifaceted nature of attitudes surrounding this practice in the EFL/L2 learning environment.

### 3.3. Perception of Translanguaging in Tertiary Level Context

Table 3.3 Descriptive Analysis of the Responses Towards the Translanguaging Practice in Tertiary Context

N o	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mea n	SD
1	It is okay to engage in translanguaging in secondary education settings	6.1% (3)	2.0% (1)	36.7% (18)	36.7% (18)	18.4% (9)	3.59	1.01

				(18)	(18)	(9)		
2	Bilinguals should be able to engage in translanguaging to complete school assignments	6.1% (3)	14.3% (7)	51.0% (25)	18.4% (9)	10.2% (5)	3.12	0.99
3	Translanguaging is acceptable to use within school-level assessments	4.1% (2)	10.2% (5)	51.0% (25)	22.4% (11)	12.2% (6)	3.28	0.95
4	It is appropriate for university/school to engage in translanguaging	2.0% (1)	2.0% (1)	38.8% (19)	42.9% (21)	14.3% (7)	3.65	0.83
5	Translanguaging by classroom instructor is unprofessional	20.4% (10)	49.0% (24)	16.3% (8)	12.2% (6)	2.0% (1)	2.26	0.99
6	I would feel upset if a lecturers/instructor engaged in translanguaging during L2 class	24.5% (12)	46.9% (23)	20.4% (10)	6.1% (3)	2.0% (1)	2.14	0.93
7	If an instructor used translanguaging in class, it would be helpful for the bilingual students	0% (0)	2.0% (1)	26.5% (13)	49.0% (24)	22.4% (11)	3.91	0.75
8	Translanguaging helps me engage in conversation with my colleagues	0% (0)	6.1% (3)	28.6% (14)	18.4% (9)	18.4% (9)	3.77	0.82
9	Translanguaging helps me understand conversation with my colleagues	4.1% (2)	4.1% (2)	26.5% (13)	42.9% (21)	22.4% (11)	3.75	0.99

Referring to Table 3.3, students showed a mix of neutral and positive attitudes towards translanguaging practices in a tertiary context. Most participants (65.3%) agreed that translanguaging practices are beneficial for bilingual individuals ( $M=3.91$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ). They also expressed agreement with the use of translanguaging in a tertiary context ( $M=3.65$ ) and its role in enhancing active participation in conversations with peers ( $M=3.77$ ). A majority of respondents (51.0%) accepted the idea of using translanguaging practices within school-level assessments. Neutral attitudes were observed, indicating that students believe that bilingual individuals are competent in translanguaging practices when it comes to completing school assignments (score: 51.0%). However, most respondents disagreed with the notion that translanguaging reflects the unprofessionalism of lecturers/instructors ( $M=2.26$ ,  $SD=0.99$ ) and expressed disappointment with the use of translanguaging by lecturers/instructors ( $M=2.14$ ,  $SD=0.93$ ).

In sum, students in a tertiary context exhibited a mix of attitudes towards translanguaging practices. Most were positive, seeing benefits for bilingual individuals and acknowledging its role in active peer engagement. They also favoured using translanguaging in school-level assessments. However, they disagreed with the idea that translanguaging reflects unprofessionalism among instructors and expressed disappointment with its use by educators.

### *3.4. Perception of Translanguaging as a Practice Based on L2 Proficiency Level*

The primary objective of this study was to delve into the correlation between students' proficiency in their second language (L2) and their attitudes as well as perceptions regarding the use of their first language (L1) in L2 educational contexts. This research endeavor carried substantial significance due to the gap in existing literature where prior studies typically did not differentiate or explore students' varying perceptions based on their language competencies. To accomplish this, participants in the study were asked to self-assess their language skills on a numerical scale ranging from 1 to 10.

Subsequently, based on these self-assessments, the participants were categorized into two distinct groups: those with low language proficiency (n=10) and those with high language proficiency (n=39).

Table 3.4 Descriptive Analysis of the Responses on the Perceptions of Translanguaging as a Practice Based on L2 Proficiency Level

No	Statement	Low (n=10)		High (n=39)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Translanguaging should be avoided by bilinguals	2.2	1.29	2.05	1.16
2	Instructors at my class engage in translanguaging	3.6	0.96	4.20	0.80
3	Translanguaging is a natural practice for bilinguals	3.8	0.62	4.35	0.66
4	Translanguaging indicates a lack of linguistics proficiency in your second language	3.1	1.1	2.56	1.20
5	Translanguaging is a disrespectful practice	2.1	0.73	1.82	0.85
6	Translanguaging is confusing for me	2.4	0.96	2.25	1.01

When it comes to whether bilinguals should use translanguaging, students with different proficiency levels showed nuanced distinctions. Higher proficiency students (M=2.05) expressed more agreement than lower proficiency students (M=2.2) on avoiding translanguaging practices. High proficiency students strongly support the significance of translanguaging (M=4.35), while low proficiency students showed somewhat less support (M=3.8). The disagreement regarding aspects of translanguaging being disrespectful and confusing was more pronounced among low proficiency students (M=2.1 and M=2.4, respectively), whereas high proficiency students exhibited slightly different values (M=1.82 and M=2.25).

The survey implies that higher proficiency students do not find translanguaging confusing. The two groups with varying levels of proficiency share a similar outlook on translanguaging practices, despite minor distinctions between them.

### 3.5. Perception of Translanguaging as a Practice Differentiate by Gender

This study aimed to examine how students' gender influences their perceptions of L1 usage in L2 education. This research is important because previous studies have not specifically addressed the role of gender in shaping these perceptions. Participants in the study were separated into two groups: female participants (n=25) and male participants (n=24).

Table 3.5 Descriptive Analysis of the Responses Towards Translanguaging Practice Differentiate by Gender

No	Statement	Female (n=25)		Male (n=24)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Translanguaging should be avoided by bilinguals	2.08	1.03	2.08	1.31
2	Instructors at my class engage in translanguaging	4.12	0.78	4.04	0.95
3	Translanguaging is a natural practice for bilinguals	4.28	0.67	4.20	0.77
4	Translanguaging indicates a lack of linguistics proficiency in your second language	2.24	1.16	3.12	1.07
5	Translanguaging is a disrespectful practice	1.88	0.78	1.87	0.89
6	Translanguaging is confusing for me	2.00	0.76	2.58	1.13

As indicated in Table 3.5, both genders have perspectives that are nearly similar and show slight differences between female and male participants. Male participants displayed a neutral viewpoint regarding the statement suggesting that translanguaging implies a deficiency in linguistic proficiency in the second language, with an average score (M=3.12). In contrast, female participants expressed disagreement with the same statement, with (M=2.24). Moreover, male participants also showed neutral perceptions regarding the translanguaging practices is confusing with (M=2.58) while the female showing disagreement with (M=2.00). In addition, regarding the other statement, both genders provided slightly different results, but share the same opinion.

### 3.6. Interview based on the Open-Ended Question

In addition to the data collection, participants were asked to respond open-ended questions that delved into the motivations behind their use of translanguaging practices. Subsequently, the researchers present the findings from this interview, which are based on the responses to the open-ended question. These results shed light on the reasons why students engage in translanguaging practices in L2 classrooms.

#### *Q1: Why are you participating in translanguaging practices?*

Students' motivations for engaging in translanguaging practices in L2 classrooms were explored. Their responses revealed that they use translanguaging to express opinions, enhance understanding of discussions, facilitate language learning, and because it's a common practice among their peers. Responses like "Because people surrounding me do it as well," "Easier for me to learn a new language," "Sometimes it helps understand the discussion and convey my thoughts," and "It helps in my daily activities" supported these findings.

Additionally, the responses underscored the importance of translanguaging for bilinguals, particularly in a tertiary context. Students emphasized that translanguaging is inherent for bilingual individuals and plays a crucial role in their participation and comprehension of conversations. Responses included statements such as "Because it is essential for bilinguals as a tool to convey our thoughts," "Not all colleagues are proficient in foreign languages," "It usually comes out naturally," "I think it's spontaneous when I interact with people who understand my first language," and "Because it helps me engage with my colleagues and understand their conversations."

## 4. Discussion

This study explored students' perspectives on translanguaging in tertiary L2 classrooms. Overall, students hold positive attitudes, viewing it as natural for bilinguals and beneficial for language

learning and classroom engagement. These findings align with a previous study by (Patmasari & Kamaruddin, 2022) regarding L1 use in L2 contexts. This study found that 75.5% of respondents agree that translanguaging in L2 classrooms aids in acquiring a new language, consistent with (Patmasari & Kamaruddin, 2022) study showing 87.5% agreement on enhancing language proficiency. Students strongly support allowing translanguaging in tertiary L2 classrooms, aligning with prior research (Sahiruddin, 2023). Insights gathered from interviews conducted within the scope of this research illuminate that students employ translanguaging to facilitate efficient communication, improve comprehension, and foster language acquisition. This practice aligns with a commonly observed pattern among bilinguals' individuals.

In summary, this study revealed neutral perceptions among students regarding translanguaging, suggesting it is an observed fact in real life, uninfluenced by individual subjectivity. This aligns with (Khalid Aldalbahy, 2022) study on translanguaging and student proficiency in Saudi tertiary education. In Saudi Arabia, 60.87% of students saw translanguaging as a sign of incomplete linguistic competence. However, the acceptance of translanguaging practices differs between Indonesian and Saudi contexts, with Indonesian bachelor's students showing greater acceptance in L2 classrooms. This study also showed that both genders share similar perspectives with slight variations between female and male participants. These results were in line with the prior research by (Hu, 2022) which stated that genders have no significant factors on the correlation between with translanguaging practices.

Regarding the hypothesis (Poplack, 1980), the results confirmed that highly proficient bilinguals excel in translanguaging practices. These results are consistent with Poplack's theory, which suggests that a strong command of the grammatical rules in both languages enables individuals to seamlessly switch between language and engage in effective translanguaging. In line with Poplack's theory, this proficiency not only facilitates smooth language transitions but also enhances the efficiency of translanguaging in bilingual contexts. In simpler terms, people who have a good grasp of the grammar rules in both languages can smoothly switch between them and use translanguaging to communicate and understand effectively. This connection with established linguistic theory highlights the importance of the research results and how they could be valuable for bilingual education and learning languages.

## **5. Conclusions**

The study assessed students' perspectives on translanguaging in L2 classrooms at the tertiary level. Overall, the students showed positive attitudes and believed translanguaging, a natural practice for bilinguals, should be allowed in L2 classrooms to enhance language learning, pedagogy, and facilitate conversations with peers. Translanguaging is a flexible and effective way for people to use and leverage their linguistic resources in diverse contexts, promoting better communication and understanding in multilingual environments.

The study found a correlation between translanguaging practices and students' language proficiency levels. Neutral perceptions suggested that translanguaging might indicate a lack of linguistic proficiency, unaffected by subjectivity. Gender didn't significantly impact this correlation. Highly proficient bilinguals excelled in translanguaging, confirming the initial hypothesis.

To enhance the reliability of future research, it would be advisable to consider larger and more diverse study populations. Additionally, advanced studies might explore translanguaging practices in relation to others factors like age, grade level, and various variables, shedding more light on the intricate dynamics of this multifaceted language phenomenon.

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