

THE ROLE OF TRANSLANGUAGING IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN INDONESIAN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXT: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This literature review explores the role of translanguaging in English Language Teaching (ELT) within Indonesia's multilingual context. As a country with over 700 regional languages, Indonesia presents a linguistically complex educational landscape that challenges traditional monolingual paradigms. Drawing upon eleven recent empirical and theoretical studies published between 2023 and 2025, this review identifies the pedagogical benefits, strategies, teacher and student attitudes, and challenges of implementing translanguaging in EFL classrooms. The findings indicate that translanguaging enhances students' conceptual understanding, linguistic confidence, and classroom participation by leveraging their full linguistic repertoire. Common strategies include bilingual discussions, L1 scaffolding, and multimodal teaching. Despite its demonstrated effectiveness, resistance persists among some educators due to entrenched monolingual ideologies. The study underscores the need for curriculum reform and professional development that incorporates translanguaging principles to build a more inclusive and context-sensitive ELT framework. It concludes that translanguaging is not merely a teaching strategy but a transformative practice that promotes linguistic justice and sustainable language education in Indonesia.

Keywords: *translanguaging, English language teaching, multilingual education.*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country with more than 700 regional languages, is a concrete example of a complex multilingual society. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, the presence of various local languages such as Indonesian, Javanese, Sundanese, Minang, and others is an important factor in the second language learning process. According to Otheguy & Garcia (2024), the translanguaging approach, a pedagogical practice that allows the use of all students' linguistic repertoires to build understanding and communication, is becoming increasingly relevant in this context. Translanguaging not only reflects students' socio-linguistic realities but is also a pedagogical strategy that recognises and utilizes the power of multilingualism to strengthen understanding, engagement, and learning outcomes (Tai, 2025; Kuncoroningtyas et al, 2025). Thus, the application of translanguaging in English learning in Indonesia is a strategic step that integrates the richness of multilingualism as a primary resource in increasing the effectiveness and meaning of the teaching and learning process.

Recent studies have shown that translanguaging enables students to bridge conceptual gaps in English learning by strategically using their first language (L1) (Sugiharto, 2023; Agustin & Wahyudi, 2024). This approach also provides a safe space for students who have high anxiety about the exclusive use of English and facilitates their emotional engagement and linguistic identity (Yolandana et al, 2024; Sha'ar & Rofi'ah, 2024). In Indonesia, qualitative and quantitative studies have shown that translanguaging not only improves vocabulary comprehension and speaking skills but also strengthens teacher-student relationships and creates a more inclusive learning environment (Titania & Ashadi, 2024; Sakkir et al, 2024; Puspitasari & Sugirin, 2024). So, translanguaging has been proven to be an effective and inclusive pedagogical strategy in the context of English learning in Indonesia.

However, translanguaging has not been fully accepted by all education stakeholders. Some teachers still question the pedagogical legitimacy of this practice and consider the use of local languages as an obstacle to students' English development (Asra et al, 2024; Sinaga & Putrawan, 2024). This debate shows the gap between practices in the field and the monolingual paradigm that still dominates the curriculum and education policies. Therefore, it is important to review the existing literature to fully understand the role, benefits, challenges, and implications of translanguaging in the context of English teaching in multilingual Indonesia.

This article aims to compile a literature review on translanguaging in English teaching in Indonesia by focusing on pedagogical practices, teacher and student attitudes, and their effects on learning outcomes and classroom dynamics. By evaluating findings from various recent studies, this article provides an in-depth understanding that can be used as a basis for policy making, teacher training, and curriculum development that is more responsive to the linguistic realities of Indonesia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Translanguaging

The concept of translanguaging first emerged in the context of bilingualism in Wales as a pedagogical strategy that allowed students to move between languages to strengthen conceptual understanding and literacy skills (Lewis et al, 2012). In its development, translanguaging evolved into a theoretical approach that reflects the complex dynamics of multilingual language practices, which are not just code-switching or code-mixing, but as a single, holistic discursive system (Canagarajah, 2013; Wei, 2018). García and Li Wei (2015) stated that translanguaging involves interactions between language systems that form an individual's linguistic repertoire, different from the structuralist approach that limits language identities separately. Therefore, in the educational context, translanguaging provides a new, more inclusive framework for the linguistic practices of multilingual students.

Then, in language education theory, translanguaging is positioned as a critical approach that shifts the monolingual paradigm towards a pedagogy that emphasises linguistic justice and student empowerment (Garcia & Kley, 2016; Vogel & Garcia, 2017). According to Garcia et al (2017), the basic principles of translanguaging pedagogy include recognition of students' entire language repertoire, flexibility in language use in learning, and the creation of a safe space for exploration of linguistic identity. Research shows that the application of translanguaging in multilingual classes allows for deeper conceptual mediation and increases students' metalinguistic awareness (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Wei & Garcia, 2022). So, translanguaging not only revolutionises the approach to language education but also

strengthens the position of multilingual students as active subjects in a fair and inclusive learning process.

Translanguaging in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Benefits

In teaching English as a foreign language (EFL), translanguaging has been shown to improve students' conceptual understanding and engagement in the learning process (Tai, 2025). Furthermore, Sugiharto (2023) argues that students can access meaning more quickly through their first language, which strengthens mental representation and retention of information. In addition, translanguaging contributes to increased self-confidence and a sense of belonging in the classroom, as students do not feel they have to "abandon" their linguistic identity (Agustin & Wahyudi, 2024; Kuncoroningtyas et al, 2025). In the Indonesian context, translanguaging also serves as a tool to maintain social relationships between teachers and students, creating a more friendly and inclusive learning environment (Titania & Ashadi, 2024; Sakkir et al, 2024). Translanguaging not only strengthens the cognitive aspect but also supports the affective and social dimensions in learning English as a foreign language.

Practices

Translanguaging practices in English classrooms can include strategies such as bilingual group discussions, contextual glossaries, and the use of scaffolding in L1 to understand texts in L2 (Puspitasari & Sugirin, 2024; Li et al, 2025). Studies in various countries have shown the effectiveness of this approach in improving students' active participation, speaking skills, and reading comprehension (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Garcia et al, 2017). Recent research in Indonesia (Sari et al, 2025) shows that translanguaging helps students understand complex academic genres and linguistic structures in expository texts. So that translanguaging functions not only as a pedagogical strategy but also as a linguistic bridge that strengthens students' access to complex academic discourse in the context of English learning.

The Indonesian Multilingual Context

Linguistic Conditions of Indonesia

Indonesia is known as one of the countries with the highest level of linguistic diversity in the world, with more than 700 regional languages spread across various islands and ethnic communities (Eberhard et al, 2018). According to Lauder (2008), Indonesian functions as the national language and symbol of unity, while English acts as a foreign language that is taught formally at all levels of education. However, Rasmin & Samsudin (2024) argue that in practice, students' linguistic interactions in the classroom are greatly influenced by the regional languages they master, creating a complex and dynamic linguistic landscape. In this context, translanguaging offers a responsive approach to the multilingual reality in Indonesia by providing space for all languages that students have to contribute to the learning process (Garcia & Wei, 2017). The application of translanguaging is a relevant and adaptive pedagogical strategy in accommodating Indonesia's linguistic diversity and strengthening the inclusivity and effectiveness of English learning in multilingual classrooms.

Implementation of Translanguaging in ELT in Indonesia

Several studies in Indonesia have examined the implementation of translanguaging in English classes and found that this practice has a positive impact on students' conceptual understanding, vocabulary development, and speaking skills. For example, in a study by Yolandana et al. (2024), translanguaging not only strengthens students' linguistic identity but also helps teachers explain complex grammatical concepts by utilizing students' L1. On the other hand, a study by Puspitasari & Sugirin (2024) found that the use of strategies such as

bilingual discussions and visual glossaries was also found to be effective in increasing student interaction and reducing anxiety in learning a foreign language. Then, a study by Tafrijiyah and Andriani (2025) showed that although national teaching materials have not fully accommodated translanguaging, teachers are able to adapt this approach to convey local cultural values through multimodality in teaching. These findings indicate that translanguaging is not only a linguistic strategy but also an adaptive pedagogical approach that is able to bridge the gap between students' academic needs and socio-cultural realities in the context of English learning in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a systematic literature review approach to analyse and synthesise key findings related to translanguaging practices in English language teaching in the Indonesian multilingual context. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to review many academic sources in a structured and verified manner, and identify relevant patterns, trends, and research gaps (Booth et al, 2016).

Article Selection Criteria

The studies included in this review were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- 1) Articles published in nationally or internationally accredited journals between 2023 and 2025.
- 2) The primary focus of the study was translanguaging in the context of English language learning in Indonesia.
- 3) The studies included both qualitative and quantitative approaches, including case studies, surveys, and experiments.
- 4) The articles were written in English.

The search was conducted through academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, and Doaj using the keywords: translanguaging, Indonesia, EFL, English language teaching, multilingual education, and classroom practice. After the initial screening process, 74 articles were found. Through further screening based on abstracts and methodological feasibility, 11 articles were selected for further analysis.

Data Analysis

Each article was systematically reviewed using thematic analysis techniques (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2023) covering the following dimensions: (1) teacher perceptions, (2) student perceptions, (3) forms and strategies of translanguaging, (4) impact on learning outcomes, and (5) challenges and barriers to implementation. This process enabled researchers to identify consistencies and variations in translanguaging practices across educational contexts, from primary to higher education.

RESULTS

Overview

Before moving on to the research findings on translanguaging practices in EFL classrooms in Indonesia, I provide an overview of the articles analysed in the studies under review, which is deemed to be necessary to enter discussion as follows:

Table 1: Overview of the Articles Analysed

No.	Title	Author(s)/Year	Method
1.	Translanguaging in Indonesian EFL classrooms: A comparative case study of	Ika Yasyinta Nindy Yolandana, Endang Setyaningsih, and Nur Arifah Drahati 2024	Case Study

	pedagogical strategies and linguistic identity		
2.	Translanguaging used in speaking class of non-formal education program: students' and teachers' perceptions	Pratiwi Tristin Puspitasari and Sugirin, 2024	Qualitative Study
3.	Translanguaging as pedagogical practice: Insight from Indonesian EFL classroom	Yulandha Sekar Titania and Ashadi, 2024	Qualitative Study
4.	Indonesian university students' practices and perspectives on translanguaging	Santi Agustin and Ribut Wahyudi, 2024	Case Study
5.	An analysis of translanguaging practices in an Indonesian EFL classroom: teacher perception	Geminastiti Sakkir, Fitrah Al Amir, Haryanto Atmowardoyo, Sukardi Weda, and Vivit Rosmayanti, 2024	Qualitative Study
6.	EFL students' attitudes towards translanguaging practice: its implications for willingness to communicate in Indonesian vocational classrooms	Feby Sekar Ayu Kuncoroningtyas, Sumardi, and Kristian Adi Putra, 2025	Case Study
7.	Translanguaging as a counter-narrative in EFL practice	Setiono Sugiharto, 2023	Literature Review
8.	Is translanguaging legitimate in English learning? Students' perspectives from Indonesia	Surya Asra, Rahmiati Rahmiati, Prima Nucifera, Fadlia Fadlia, and Aina Mawaddah, 2024	Qualitative Descriptive
9.	Examining Indonesian English as a foreign language lecturers' attitude towards translanguaging and its perceived pedagogical benefits: A mixed-methods study	Mohammed Yassin Mohd Aba Sha'ar1 and Nur Lailatur Rofiah, 2024	Mixed-methods design
10.	How do teachers perceive translanguaging? Teachers' perceptions about translanguaging practices in the EFL classroom	Tuntun Sinaga and Gege Eka Putrawan, 2024	Mixed-methods design
11.	Integrating local languages in Indonesian EFL classrooms: A literature review on pedagogical implications	La Ode Rasmin and Samsudin, 2024	Literature Review

Table 1 above gives information about studies on translanguaging in EFL classrooms in the Indonesian context. It is apparent that only a small number of studies (11) investigating translanguaging in EFL classrooms have been conducted in Indonesia around 2023-2025. Only one study (18%) was conducted in 2023 and 2025, respectively. Most of the studies were conducted in 2024, with 9 articles (82%).

Translanguaging Strategies and Pedagogical Practices

Studies in Indonesia show that translanguaging is implemented through various strategies, such as bilingual discussions, use of visual glossary, multimodal teaching, and L1-based scaffolding. For example, in non-formal contexts, strategies such as bilingual dialogue and reflective questions have been shown to increase student engagement (Puspitasari & Sugirin, 2024). Tafrijiyah & Andriani (2025) added that teachers utilise translanguaging to convey local values unavailable in national teaching materials. These findings indicate that translanguaging is not only pedagogical, but also cultural and social, which is then reflected in the teaching practices of EFL teachers at various levels of education.

EFL teachers in Indonesia also show flexibility in adapting translanguaging as a bridge to understanding English academic content, especially when students have limited vocabulary

(Yolandana et al., 2024; Titania & Ashadi, 2024). Translanguaging strategies are used not only as linguistic aids but also to strengthen inclusivity and social relationships between teachers and students. Thus, translanguaging in the context of EFL teaching in Indonesia appears to be not just an instructional strategy, but a holistic approach that supports the learning process while strengthening the affective dimension and students' identities.

Teacher and Student Attitudes Towards Translanguaging

Teachers' and students' attitudes towards translanguaging are generally positive, although there are variations. Several studies, such as Kuncoroningtyas et al. (2025) and Agustin & Wahyudi (2024), showed that students felt increased confidence and willingness to speak English after adopting translanguaging. Teachers viewed translanguaging as an effective strategy to overcome conceptual barriers and explain foreign language structures more comprehensively (Sugiharto, 2023). These findings indicate that translanguaging supports cognitive learning and has a significant affective impact on the teaching and learning process.

However, the acceptance of translanguaging is not entirely without challenges. Some teachers remain sceptical about the pedagogical legitimacy of this approach. Asra et al. (2024) and Sinaga & Putrawan (2024) report that some teachers perceive the use of L1 in English classes as a potential barrier to code-switching and target language acquisition. These debates point to the tension between the monolingual paradigm in educational policy and the reality of multilingual classroom practice, which calls for critical reflection on the basic assumptions of language teaching and adaptation to the needs of diverse students.

Impact on Learning Outcomes and Linguistic Identity

Research in Indonesia consistently shows that translanguaging positively impacts student learning outcomes. Students show improvements in vocabulary comprehension, speaking engagement, and information retention (Agustin & Wahyudi, 2024; Sakkir et al., 2024). Moreover, translanguaging also creates a safe space that allows students to express their linguistic identity without the pressure of losing their native language (Yolandana et al., 2024; Mohd Aba Sha'ar & Rofiah, 2024). These findings provide a strong initial foundation for seeing the long-term potential of implementing translanguaging in learning in Indonesia.

In the long term, translanguaging strengthens students' metalinguistic awareness, facilitates more dynamic social interactions, and builds a more inclusive learning environment (Titania & Ashadi, 2024). This approach has proven to be relevant in Indonesia, which is rich in linguistic diversity. It has the potential to support the preservation of local languages while improving English language competence. Thus, translanguaging is not only a pedagogical strategy but also a strategic means to support a more equitable and sustainable educational ecosystem amidst Indonesia's linguistic plurality.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of translanguaging in EFL learning in Indonesia reflects a paradigm shift towards a more inclusive and contextual pedagogical approach. Strategies such as bilingual discussions, visual glossaries, multimodal instruction, and L1-based scaffolding demonstrate that translanguaging is not simply a language aid but a reflection of students' social, cultural, and cognitive dynamics. These practices align with the culturally responsive pedagogy approach, where teachers leverage students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds to enhance their academic understanding and participation (Gay, 2013). In the context of Indonesia, which is rich in linguistic and cultural diversity, translanguaging serves as an epistemological bridge connecting the local language with the target language (Hornberger & Link, 2012),

allowing students to access meaning without having to abandon their linguistic identities. Furthermore, the flexibility of EFL teachers in implementing translanguaging also shows the presence of active pedagogical agents in adjusting learning strategies to students' needs. This strengthens previous findings stating that translanguaging can increase cognitive engagement and reduce the affective load that is often experienced by students in foreign language learning (Cenoz & Gorter, 2014). In addition, according to Garcia & Sylvan (2011), the use of translanguaging in classroom interactions helps create a discursive space where students can construct meaning collectively, not just through individual processing. Studies in various multilingual contexts also show that translanguaging increases students' metalinguistic awareness and helps them understand academic structures and genres more deeply (Velasco & Garcia, 2014; Turnbull, 2019).

Then, the practice of translanguaging also reflects the ethnopedagogical dimension, namely, an approach that values local wisdom as an integral part of the learning process. According to Paris & Alim (2017), when teachers insert local values through the mother tongue, they not only teach English but also instil cultural values that strengthen students' identities. Furthermore, Heugh (2015) emphasised that this is very important in linguistic justice education, where no language or culture is considered inferior. Thus, translanguaging can be seen as an emancipatory practice that rejects the hegemony of monolingualism and paves the way for social recognition of multilingualism as an asset, not a barrier (Makalela, 2016; Garcia et al, 2017a). The positive attitudes of teachers and students towards translanguaging in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) indicate a shift in the pedagogical paradigm towards a more inclusive and humanistic approach. This phenomenon is in line with the opinion of García and Kleyn (2016), who emphasised that translanguaging creates a linguistic space that empowers students to participate in the learning process actively. In the Indonesian context, where students often experience pressure to conform to the linguistic norms of the target language, translanguaging presents an alternative mechanism that allows students to stay connected to their linguistic identity while building academic competence in English (Hornberger & Link, 2012). According to Garcia & Sylvan (2011), this concept not only supports the development of cognitive skills but also strengthens affective aspects such as self-confidence, security, and emotional involvement in learning.

However, resistance from some educators to translanguaging reflects the continued dominance of the monolingual paradigm in the formal education system. According to Garcia & Wei (2014), translanguaging practices are often perceived as a form of "mixed code" that is not academically valid, even though theoretically and empirically it has been proven to be able to increase students' metalinguistic awareness and communicative flexibility. Teachers who are trapped in this normative framework tend to view the first language (L1) as a disruption to the process of acquiring a second language (L2), rather than as a resource that can be utilised strategically for deeper understanding (Cummins, 2007). In addition, Menken & Garcia (2010) argue that this perspective is exacerbated by curriculum policies that implicitly emphasise linguistic purism in foreign language teaching, thus limiting teachers' pedagogical freedom in implementing translanguaging-based approaches.

Furthermore, resistance to translanguaging is often not based on empirical evidence but rather on ideological assumptions about the "purity" of language and the desire to maintain formal standards in learning (Flores & Rosa, 2015). In a global context, various studies have shown that translanguaging not only improves students' academic performance

but also strengthens interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, especially in multilingual and multicultural educational environments (Canagarajah, 2012). Therefore, according to Lin (2016), who argues that it is important for policymakers and educational institutions in Indonesia to reconstruct the language teaching approach that has so far emphasised the dominance of one language, and to start opening up space for more dynamic and reflective linguistic practices towards students' social realities.

In response to these challenges, teacher training and professional development need to integrate insights into translanguaging as part of modern pedagogical competencies. Teachers need to not only understand the theory behind translanguaging but also master practical strategies in implementing it ethically and effectively in the classroom. A critical reflection-based approach, such as that offered by Lin and He (2021), which emphasises the importance of understanding the ideology and social context in the use of translanguaging, can be used as a reference in language education reform in Indonesia. In this way, translanguaging can develop from an isolated classroom practice into a systematic and integrated pedagogical framework in language education in the global era. Then, the application of translanguaging in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia not only has an impact on students' cognitive aspects but also shows a transformation in the dimensions of their linguistic identity and metalinguistic awareness. International studies show that translanguaging can improve students' cognitive access to the target language by facilitating complex mental processes through the strategic use of the first language (L1) in the construction of meaning (Garcia et al, 2017b). In this case, according to Lewis et al (2012), translanguaging acts as a conceptual mediation that allows students to map new understandings in a foreign language based on the linguistic framework, they have previously mastered. This accelerates vocabulary acquisition and information retention, especially for students who learn in the context of a foreign language that is not widely used outside the classroom (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

Furthermore, Norton (2013) argues that students' linguistic identities are also formed and strengthened through translanguaging practices. In the context of sociolinguistics, identity is not only seen as a fixed attribute but because of language interaction and negotiation in a particular social space. Translanguaging opens space for students to negotiate their identities more autonomously and participatively in classroom interactions (Wei, 2018). In this case, students are no longer forced to "leave" their mother tongue but instead embrace it as an integral part of the foreign language learning process. According to Garcia et al (2017c), this makes a significant contribution to increasing students' affective involvement in learning, which has often been ignored in conventional monolingual approaches.

From the perspective of multilingual education, translanguaging also shows potential in increasing metalinguistic awareness, namely the ability of students to reflect on and compare different linguistic systems (Garcia & Kley, 2016). This awareness is important because it strengthens autonomous learning strategies, linguistic problem-solving, and sensitivity to complex language structures. In fact, according to Flores & Rosa (2015), translanguaging has been recognised as a decolonial practice in language education, which critically challenges the dominance of global languages by rehabilitating the role of local languages as legitimate tools for thinking and learning. Thus, translanguaging is not just a pedagogical strategy, but also a political act that fights for linguistic and cultural justice in formal educational spaces.

Strengthening inclusive learning environments through translanguaging also has long-term impacts on social integration and educational sustainability. When local languages are legitimised in the classroom, it creates a more democratic learning climate, where all students feel valued and empowered (Vogel & Garcia, 2017). In addition, translanguaging supports the preservation of local languages that are increasingly marginalised by globalisation and linguistic homogenisation. In other words, Tai (2025) states that the translanguaging approach is in line with the principles of sustainable development in education, namely creating an education system that is responsive to local contexts and oriented towards the future.

CONCLUSION

The results of this literature review indicate that translanguaging is a practical and inclusive pedagogical approach in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in the multilingual context of Indonesia. Strategies such as bilingual discussions, L1-based scaffolding, and multimodal approaches have been shown to improve students' conceptual understanding, language skills, and affective engagement. In addition to supporting cognitive aspects, translanguaging also strengthens students' linguistic identities and creates a more democratic learning space. Although some teachers still show resistance due to the influence of the monolingual paradigm, empirical evidence shows that translanguaging is in line with the social and cultural needs of Indonesian students. Therefore, the integration of translanguaging into teacher training and curriculum policies needs to be considered to build a more equitable and sustainable education ecosystem. Further, broader and more contextual research is needed to strengthen the empirical basis for the systemic application of translanguaging in language education in Indonesia.

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