IS TRANSLANGUAGING LEGITIMATE IN ENGLISH LEARNING?: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES FROM INDONESIA

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Abstract

Translanguaging pedagogy is the balance of using two languages in language learning. As in Indonesian context, the practice of integrating Indonesian language (L1) into English classes (L2) or translanguaging practice is very common to happen. Many students think it is useful for them in learning a foreign language. The students perceived the translingual practice is helpful. However, the teachers still think it is an illegitimate practice. Therefore, this research aims to support the idea of using Indonesian language in English language learning and explore its practice for students scaffolding. The method used was a descriptive qualitative using observations, questionnaires, and interviews. The data source for this research was 40 high school students taught by one English teacher, selected purposefully. The findings of this study show that teachers and students engage in translanguaging activities. The teachers and students use Indonesian language for more than half of the entire teaching and learning process. Although, the teacher still felt that the use of Indonesian language is inevitable due to the students' low abilities. Yet, from the student side, this practice received a positive response. Students found it beneficial for understanding English lessons.

Keywords: *Indonesian language; learning English; pedagogy; translanguaging*.

1. Introduction

Indonesia, a country with numerous local languages, has complex linguistic conditions. Local languages and Indonesian language as the national language are mutually involved in English learning. This condition automatically makes students in the first place learn their regional languages or mother tongue. There are 718 regional languages and one national language, namely Bahasa Indonesia (Language Development and Construction Agency, 2019). As a result, it is safe to assume that students have mastered their native languages, either Indonesian or their regional language, before attempting to learn English. It means that teaching English in Indonesia with a monolingual approach has been disapproved for a long time. Evidence from the field backs this up as well; most English teachers in Indonesia use Indonesian language when teaching English to their students (Emilia & Hamied, 2022; Liando, Dallyono, Tatipang, & Lengkoan, 2023; Rasman & Margana, 2022; Sahib, 2019). Therefore, translanguaging practice is the inevitable practice in teaching English, especially in Indonesia.

English teaching practice with monolingual approaches has long been doubted by many experts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Cenoz and Gorter (2020) even went further to say that "*focusing on monolingualism is problematic*" (p. 1). This means that teaching that uses full English faces many challenges in the field, such as students experiencing high stress. On the one hand, the use of English in teaching English can increase students' input into the language; on the other hand, the use of English in teaching English can make students stressed and increasingly dislike English. This dilemma then makes the pedagogical practice of teaching using the first language one of the best solutions. Furthermore, this practice continues to develop and is practiced in many foreign language learning contexts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Cummins, 2019; Dougherty, 2021; Vaish, 2020).

However, English teachers still believe that monolingual or immersion teaching is the best practice to do. They argued that immersion can give more opportunity for students in using English (Cheng, Li, Kirby, Qiang, & Wade-Woolley, 2010; Supriyono, Saputra, & Dewi, 2020). They wanted and had ability in using English, yet their students are not ready for English immersion learning. As a result, they chose to combine the first and the second language in English classroom.

In the English teaching field in Indonesia, the use of linguistic skills from the language that students have mastered is a strategy that can be used, and teachers can maximize its use. The use of students' first language in foreign language teaching is something that can be used to improve students' linguistic competence. First-language linguistic abilities are used as a basis for developing foreign-language linguistic abilities. So it becomes easier for students to understand the language with the help of the first language they have mastered previously. Therefore, teachers cannot ignore or avoid using the first language or other languages that students have learned previously (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). This is what is then called *translanguaging pedagogy* (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Cummins, 2019; Dougherty, 2021; García & Lin, 2017; Vaish, 2019; Williams, 1994). Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) provide an explanatory definition of translanguaging as the process of using one language to strengthen another language to improve student understanding in both languages.

The practice of translanguaging pedagogy in Indonesia is common in almost all schools, both public and private. This practice also happened in higher institutions by lecturers (Puspitasari, Yannuar, & Zubaidi, 2024). However, not many teachers are aware that the use of Indonesian language can be maximized by regulating its use in English learning classes. This practice can be used as scaffolding in English language learning. Therefore, this practice must be well planned by following predetermined principles.

This awareness aims to prevent teachers from using excessive Indonesian language. On the other hand, excessive use of English (the target language) in English classes where students still experience many challenges is also something that is not recommended.

The solution to this dilemma is the use of translanguaging pedagogy, where in practice teachers will use Indonesian and English language in a balanced, controlled, and planned manner. Therefore, this research aims to strengthen notions that translanguaging is a good practice and explores the process of using translanguaging pedagogy in English language teaching classes.

2. Literature Review

The practice of teaching English by involving other languages continues to develop. This development is followed by the dialectic of experts in naming the terminology used. The

experts from multilingual approach use translanguaging to differentiate the practice from code-switching and code-mixing. They argue that translanguaging is different from code-switching and code-mixing in the quantity and function of its use.

Code-switching and code-mixing only occur at several code levels—words, phrases, or sentences—while translanguaging occurs at the context level—learning activities (Fanani & Ma'u, 2018, p. 2-3; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012, p. 647-648). In terms of function, code-switching and code-mixing function as tools to assist the communication process and are often considered illegitimate practices (Brown, 2006; Sridhar, 1996; Zhu, 2008), while translanguaging functions as a means to strengthen, support, and facilitate one's learning language by using another language (a language that has been previously mastered) in a balanced and appropriate context (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, p.8; Garcia & Lin, 2017; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012, p. 649-650; Lin, 2020). Several scholars refer to the practice of code-switching and language learning as part of translanguaging pedagogy, where multilingual practices are used in language classes (Heugh, Harding-Esch, & Coleman, 2021, p. 41-42).

The term *translanguaging* was first used by Cen Williams in 1994 in Wales. In Welsh, *"translanguaging"*, or *"trawsieithu"* (Williams, 1994, p. 263), refers to pedagogical practices in bilingual education that deliberately change the input language (the language of instructions or tasks) and output language (the language of the results or answers). This practice aims to help English language learners use more Welsh (Baker, 2019). On progress, translanguaging refers not only to its practice in the context of bilingual learners but also to multilingualism (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Garcia & Lin, 2017; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012; Lin, 2020). Lewis, Jones, and Baker (2012) define translanguaging as the process of using one language to strengthen another language to improve student understanding in both languages.

The concept of translanguaging was born in the context of language teaching (Williams, 1994), but in its development it has expanded beyond the world of language teaching and even education. Therefore, translanguaging experts then proposed a new concept that is more specific to the world of education, namely *translanguaging pedagogy* (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, p. 1-2). The term is used to distinguish between translanguaging as a planned pedagogical activity (translanguaging as pedagogy) from translanguaging as language spontaneity (translanguaging as spontaneity or spontaneous translanguaging) carried out by multilingual speakers (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, p. 1-2).

Translanguaging as language spontaneity can occur in or outside learning as a result of lack of mastery of the target language and the influence of multilingual abilities. Spontaneous translanguaging is when the use of bilingualism occurs naturally in a context where the boundaries between languages are fluid and constantly changing (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, p. 4; Dougherty, 2021, p. 20-21). Lin (2020, p. 6) said *that* spontaneous translanguaging occurs without planning or design where the teacher spontaneously changes language (or allows students to spontaneously use another language) to reinforce ongoing student learning.

While pedagogical translanguaging only occurs in learning with planning preceded by the teacher. Pedagogical translanguaging is a teaching strategy that aims to integrate two or more languages with the aim of developing multilingual repertoires, metalinguistics and language awareness (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021, p. 14-15). Pedagogical translanguaging accommodates the use of first, second, or third languages that have been previously

acquired in foreign language learning. It occurs when teachers and curriculum designers plan to develop learning to make students familiar with the linguistic features of all the languages being studied to strengthen student learning.

3. Research Method

This study used the descriptive-qualitative method. Qualitative descriptive research involves inductively exploring data to identify recurring themes, patterns, or concepts and then describing and interpreting those categories (Creswell, 2012). Based on this method, exploration is carried out through observation using questionnaires and interviews to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population.

This research was conducted at Private High School Cut Nyak Dhien, Langsa City. This school was selected using a purposive sampling technique with the consideration that students have above-average abilities, have a good learning process, and have good-quality teachers. The number of samples selected was 40 students who were at the final level (class XII) with one teacher teaching in their class.

This research instrument consists of classroom observations, student questionnaires, and interviews with teachers. Observations were carried out to see the conditions of English learning in the classroom, especially in terms of language use. Observations are based on learning stages, which include preliminary, core, and closing stages (Brown, 2001). In the preliminary stage, observations are directed at looking at learning activities, which consist of (1) conditioning the class, (2) providing apperception, (3) providing motivation, and (4) conveying learning objectives. At the core stage, the learning activities observed include (1) presenting teaching materials, (2) providing opportunities to ask students questions, (3) guiding students, and (4) conveying conclusions. In the closing stage, the activities observed consist of (1) summarizing the material studied, (2) giving additional assignments, and (3) reflecting. Observations were carried out in eight meetings over a month.

Next, students were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their views on the function of Indonesian language in supporting English language skills. This questionnaire consists of two parts, namely questions related to the quantity of Indonesian language use in the classroom and students' views on the use of Indonesian language in the English class. The Likert scale is used in the student questionnaire, which consists of 4 scales: 1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: agree, and 4: strongly agree. The student questionnaire was prepared based on the analysis of want and need in learning English (Long, 2005), including want of L1/L2, need of L1/L2, and translanguaging (L1-L2).

Finally, interviews were conducted with English subject teachers to get an overview of teachers' views on the use of Indonesian language in English classes. The type of interview used was semi-structured to obtain broad and in-depth information about teachers' knowledge and views about translanguaging pedagogy. Interview questions were developed based on translanguaging theory from translanguaging experts (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Dougherty, 2021; Lin, 2020).

The data analysis technique was carried out using a qualitative approach. The analysis was carried out in three stages, namely data reduction (*data reduction*), data presentation (*data display*), and c*onclusion drawing* verification (Miles & Huberman, 1984). All the information gathered from interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires was coded as part of the data reduction process. The most important data was then chosen to look for themes and patterns related to translanguaging practices. Data that is not

relevant and not related to research. Furthermore, after collecting and reducing the data, the researcher displays the data in the form of structured descriptive tables for observation and questionnaire data, while for interview data, it is in the form of narrative data. In the final stage, based on the interpretation of the descriptive table, conclusions are drawn. To facilitate this stage, qualitative analysis begins to decide what is meant from the beginning of data collection by paying attention to regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions.

4. Results and Discussion

This research found that Indonesian language is the dominant language used in English learning classes. In the classes where observations were made, it was found that teachers used Indonesian language at a higher rate than English itself. The use of Indonesian is spread throughout almost all stages of the learning process. However, the teacher still believed that practice (translanguaging practice) as an illegitimate choice of action in teaching English.

From the observation, the teacher used Indonesian language for many learning stages and functions. At the preliminary stage, the teacher uses Indonesian language to condition the class, provide apperception, provide motivation, and convey learning objectives. Then, at the core stage, the teacher uses English to present teaching materials (teaching materials use English), but uses a mixture of Indonesian language and English as the language of instruction and presentation. The teacher uses English to give students the opportunity to ask questions, but the students use a mixture of English and Indonesian language to answer the teacher's questions. Teachers still use Indonesian language in their activities to guide students and then switch to using English to convey conclusions from the learning material.

At the closing stage, the teacher uses Indonesian language to give additional assignments and reflect. On the other hand, teachers consistently use English in summarizing lesson materials. The following table 1 shows details of language use at each learning stage, emphasizing that the language mentioned is the language that is most dominantly used over the entire duration of the learning stages.

Learning Stages	Learning Activities	Languages Used
Preliminary	Conditioning the class	Indonesian language
	Give apperception	Indonesian language
	Gives motivation	Indonesian language
	Convey learning objectives	Indonesian language
Core	Presenting teaching materials	English
	Give students the opportunity to ask questions	English
	Guiding students	Indonesian language
	Present the conclusion	English
Closing	Summarize the studied material	English
	Providing additional assignments (PR)	Indonesian language
	Reflect	Indonesian language

Source: Adapted from Brown (2001)

Table 1. Results of English Language Learning Observations

From table 1, it can be seen that Indonesian language is used more in the seven stages of learning. These stages are setting the tone for the class, helping students understand, inspiring them, telling them what they need to learn and how to do it, giving them extra work, and thinking about what they have learned. However, what is interesting at the core activity stage is that English remains the dominant language used. This includes activities such as presenting teaching materials, providing opportunities to ask students questions, and drawing learning conclusions.

These results are also supported by confirmation of students' statements through questionnaires, which show that teachers predominantly use Indonesian language in learning English. The students stated that teachers used Indonesian language more often than English. It can be said that indirectly, teachers tend to use translanguaging when teaching. However, from the interview results, it was found that the teacher did not know that what he was practicing is translanguaging. As a result, the teacher stated that he never planned to use Indonesian language. In other words, teachers only spontaneously use Indonesian language in class. That phenomenon is called a spontaneous translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

Furthermore, the teacher felt that the use of Indonesian language was forced due to the students' low abilities. The teacher felt that the use of Indonesian language was an illegitimate practice. The teacher felt that he should use all English when teaching English, as stated by the teacher in the interview:

> *I use Indonesian language because the students I teach are not able to understand what I am talking about when using full English. I actually prefer to use full English.*

This is in line with what many experts have argued against the use of L1 in English classes, namely that code-switching and code-mixing are regarded as illegitimate practices in teaching English (Brown, 2006; Sridhar, 1996; Zhu, 2008).

In this research, it was also found that teachers had not planned the use of translanguaging well. One of the causes is teachers' ignorance about the practice of integrating other languages into English learning. As a result, the use of translanguaging is not specifically planned, resulting in unstructured use of it. It can be seen from the excerpt below:

> *I was used to using Indonesian from the beginning when I studied in the micro-teaching course. In many teaching practices, I end up doing it spontaneously according to the abilities of the children and the school where I teach.*

This phenomenon is in line with what many experts who oppose the use of the first language in English classes have said: that teachers who use the first language include code switching and code mixing, which are considered illegal practices in English language learning (Brown, 2006; Sridhar, 1996; Zhu, 2008). This understanding then influenced the teacher's view of the position of Indonesian language in the English class. So the teacher never prepared practical use of Indonesian language in English classes. The teacher only spontaneously and naturally used Indonesian language when he saw that the abilities of the students in the class were not sufficient for monolingual teaching.

On the other hand, this practice received a positive response from students because they felt that it was very helpful in understanding English taught by it combining with Indonesian language. This can be seen from the results of the questionnaire regarding students' perceptions of the phenomenon of teachers using Indonesian language in English learning classes, as shown in Table 2 below.

Students' Perception of L1/L2	N	Description
Student's Want of L1	40	Disagree
Student's Want of L2	40	Disagree
Student's Need of L1	40	Disagree
Student's Need of L2	40	Disagree
L1-L2 (Translanguaging)	40	Strongly Agree

Note: L1 is English; L2 is Indonesia language

Table 2. Students' Perception on using L1, L2, and Translanguaging

From table 2 above, it can be seen that the majority of students did not want their teacher to use full English or full Indonesian language. On the other hand, almost all students stated that the teacher should use a combination of Indonesian language and English in teaching English. This desire as teaching theory is called translanguaging pedagogy (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Garcia & Lin, 2017; Lewis, Jones, & Baker, 2012; Lin, 2020). Therefore, an English teacher should not blame students when they have to use Indonesian language. However, teachers must utilize Indonesian language as a tool to strengthen the English learning process. In other words, teachers can support English language learning by using translanguaging pedagogy.

Students are very enthusiastic about the use of translanguaging. They feel freer to take part in the learning process, even though their English skills are not yet good. They can use Indonesian language as a tool to ask the teacher if there is a teaching material that they do not know. They also found that learning English completely will make them lazy to study. Vice versa if you use Indonesian language fully. This is in line with many previous studies, which found that students always need Indonesian language to communicate many things that they are unable to communicate using the target language (second or foreign language, in this context, English) for various reasons (Asra, Saputra, Isda, Fadlia, & Diani, 2023; Cook, 2001; Mart, 2013; Morahan, 2010; Tang, 2002). Therefore, teachers need to consider and plan well the use of Indonesian language in English classes to achieve students' mastery of the target language.

Teachers must open their views to the notion that there is nothing wrong with using Indonesian language when teaching English. With this awareness, it is hoped that teachers can plan their learning carefully. Teachers can plan at which learning stages Indonesian language will be used and at which learning stages English should be used.

5. Conclusion

Studies on translanguaging pedagogy, especially in Indonesia, are still very rare. However, in relaity, many teachers have practiced using two or more languages in teaching English without realizing it. They use Indonesian language, even the local language, spontaneously in their teaching (spontaneous translanguaging). As a result, translanguaging

practice is not utilized properly to improve students' foreign language linguistic abilities. Therefore, this research aimed at increasing teachers' awareness about the translanguaging practice that they often carry out in the classroom. So teachers can use the practice by planning it before teaching. In addition, they can also strengthen students' linguistic awareness in Indonesian language and at the same time build students' linguistic abilities in English.

This research then found that teachers had not planned the use of translanguaging well. The use of translanguaging is not specifically planned. It is reflected in the teaching materials, which only used English in teaching documents, such as power points, teaching modules, and lesson plans. Meanwhile, Indonesian language is dominantly used as the language of instruction for learning. On the other hand, students are very enthusiastic about the practice of translanguaging done by their teacher. They feel freer to take part in the learning process, even though their English skills are not yet good. They can use Indonesian language as a tool to ask the teacher if there is a teaching material that they do not know. They also found that learning full English would make them too lazy to study. Vice versa if the teacher used full Indonesian language.

This research may help open teachers' eyes to the fact that there is nothing wrong with using Indonesian language when teaching English. With this awareness, the teacher can plan their learning carefully. The teacher can plan at which learning stages Indonesian language will be used and at which learning stages English should be used. The teacher can consider and realize that the Indonesian language she uses in English classes is not a compulsion but something natural, so that the teacher could be more active in composing and planning structured teaching integrating Indonesian language.

This study is limited on its methodology and sample. Further research can increase the number of samples more than two classes, more than one teacher, and more than 40 students. It can also use the combination of instruments for a better methodology, such as using multimodal classroom analysis, adding pedagogical intervention, and conducting an FGD with the school stakeholders. Therefore, it needs more research on translanguaging especially in Indonesian context. Some related topics can be explored. For example the role of pedagogical intervention on translanguaging and the use of three languages (trilingual) in the classroom.

Acknowledgements

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