Research Article

HOW MULTILINGUAL FRESHMEN PERCEIVE TRANS-LANGUAGING: A SURVEY STUDY

Rahmati Putri Yaniafari, Ibnuz Zaki, Nindyasari Nastiti

Universitas Negeri Malang, Malang, Indonesia

Abstract.
Given that Indonesian people speak both their local language(s) and Bahasa Indonesia, the country's official language, the majority of Indonesians are either bilingual or multilingual. Compared to other foreign languages taught in Indonesia, English is the one taught the most. Some academics advocate the use of trans-languaging, particularly in the English as a Second Language (ESL) context, to overcome the difficulties of learning English. This study investigates how trans-languaging is perceived by first-year English and Language Literature (ELL) students at an Indonesian university. The findings indicate that most of the research's subject group of students frequently employs trans-languaging in social and academic contexts. Additionally, they have positive views on trans-languaging.

Keywords: *translanguaging, bilingualism, multilingualism*

Corresponding Author: Rahmati
Putri Yaniafari; email:
yaniafari.fs@um.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Reportedly, there are 633 major group ethnics in Indonesia (Amarasthi, 2022), with each having their own languages that differ from one another. These local languages exist and are used by most Indonesian people along with the national language. Indonesian language was first authorized as the national language in 1928. Since then, it has become a force of national unification for Indonesian people from different ethnicities (McDivitt et al., 2022). Therefore, by default, the majority of Indonesian people are either bilinguals or multilinguals because they speak their ethnic language and Indonesian (Restuningrum, 2018). Either of them is usually the first and the second language for Indonesians. Indonesian has become the mother tongue for most big city dwellers, and for some it is the local language that is their first language.

In addition to those two languages, foreign languages are also studied by many Indonesians as they are usually mandatory subjects in school and university. Compared to other foreign languages, English is the most taught foreign language in Indonesia. Its status as a lingua franca at an international level is the key factor of why it is officially

taught to Indonesians. Different from Indonesian and local languages, acquiring English is more challenging, as the formers are spoken everywhere, while English has to be learned in a structured format in classrooms and forums (Restuningrum, 2018). Although a lot of Indonesians, especially those who live in big cities, speak English, they do not use it in public or on a daily basis, unlike Indonesian and the local language.

In relation to facing challenges of learning English, some scholars suggest the use of translanguaging especially in English as Second Language (ESL) classes. It has in recent years become a popular scientific concept in applied linguistics. In pedagogy, especially in the context of ESL class, translanguaging is implemented by incorporating more than one language in class. It is deemed to be the answer to issues surrounding monolingual practice in pedagogy, in which one language (the target language) is used exclusively in class. Cummins (2005) argues for a need to employ bilingual instructional strategies that can accommodate cross-language transfer better. Anderson (2008) has also stated that a flexible approach for pedagogy in a bilingual context is necessary. In relation to supporting second language acquisition, translanguaging has the potential in enhancing students' engagement, involvement, and comprehension of the learning processes; creating less formal interactions between participants; more easily communicating ideas; and completing lessons (Arthur & Martin, 2006b; Lin & Martin, 2006).

Considering the notion of translanguaging that is reportedly to be suitable for bilingual context, it is necessary to look into the application of this strategy in ESL classes in Indonesia, especially because the vast majority of Indonesians are bilinguals and even multilinguals. Indeed, as a part of Asia, Indonesia is regarded as a homeland for bilingualism research courtesy of its diversity (Zen, 2017). This study explores the perception of English and Language Literature (ELL) freshmen of a university in Indonesia, towards the practice of translanguaging both in classroom settings and social settings.

2. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

2.1. Bi-/Multilingualism and Second Language Acquisition

As a community of bilinguals or even multilinguals, SLA in Indonesia is not a new concept. However, the process is more often implied, involuntary, or at the very least autonomous as the young is exposed to their environment (Restuningrum, 2018)—which can contain at least the Indonesian language and the community's local language. Classroom perception, then, needs a specific, needless to say, more careful approach in teaching the students another language, especially foreign ones such as in the case

of English (as can be seen in Adi Saputra (2020) and Khairunnisa and Lukmana (2020)). The main difference is that foreign languages like English are in themselves foreign, meaning that they do not see high number of uses in everyday life (Liando et al., 2022), at least not as high as local languages in Indonesia—or Indonesian itself in cases where the local language is considered the mother tongue instead (Munandar & Newton, 2021).

From Khairunnisa and Lukmana (2020), Liando et al. (2022), Munandar and Newton (2021), and Rasman (2018) we can see that external factors play such important role in second or foreign language acquisition processes. Munandar and Newton (2021) and Rasman (2018) specifically mention cultural situations (carried over by the local language) affect the choices, decisions and the overall classroom activities involving foreign language learning in multicultural—and by extension multilingual—settings both as opportunistic and challenging ways. In Rasman (2018), the use of Javanese (which is spoken daily by the learners outside of the active classroom settings) sees some form of discouragement when they are involved in English learning discussion (specifically compared to transitioning between English and Indonesian) even though the teacher gives them freedom to use any languages. In the case of Munandar and Newton (2021), meanwhile, it was the teacher who thinks about the need to carry along with them values and norms of the local culture in conjunction with linguistically appropriate materials. Translanguaging, along with the recent interest on it in the past few years (see Saputra, 2020; Emilia & Hamied, 2022; Liando et al., 2022; Nur et al., 2020; Nursanti, 2021; Rasman, 2018), comes with aims at mitigating the challenges in TEFL discussed earlier.

2.2. Challenges and Opportunities of Translanguaging

Different from code-switching which mostly involves transitioning from one language to another at different parts of the utterance (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021), translanguaging is a more complex mix in that it requires a fuller, more systematic shift in the speaker's linguistic repertoire (see Emilia & Hamied, 2022). This very nature of translanguaging naturally gives it positive and negative points in its application. On one hand, it can present a deeper, more thorough sense into what is being discussed (Emilia & Hamied, 2022; Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021; Nur et al., 2020; Rasman, 2018) since every language, together with its underlying thinking process, comes with its own unique set of features. For example, one can expect a deeper sense of politeness between interlocutors when speaking in Indonesian as opposed to using English due to the latter's more egalitarian principles—though studies on this particular matter are quite rare. On the other hand, and this is very true with classroom settings, the requirement of

fuller shift in the speaker's linguistic repertoire can become quite an intimidating factor to the learners, especially when theirs is still in development (Abdurahman & Rizqi, 2020).

However, this particular point, given correct approach, might also introduce a positive encouragement to the learners as they see a, say, role model in what they are trying to learn (Liando et al., 2022) or feeling of constructive competition (Havwini, 2019). This is one point where we as educators need to pay close attention about taking translanguaging into practice, with back-and-forth introspections between our action and how the class perceives it. This is perhaps even truer in the case of Indonesia where our learners often need to shuffle between at least three sets of language systems (Munandar & Newton, 2021; Rasman, 2018).

Considerations in proper application of translanguaging seem to revolve around giving learners the space to explore and thus deepen their understanding of the language (Saputra, 2020; Khairunnisa & Lukmana, 2020), encouragement to using their native languages (that is, on both learners' and educators' sides) (Emilia & Hamied, 2022; Rasman, 2018), as well as maintaining the natural, flexible nature of such language shift along its theoretical planning (Goodman & Tastanbek, 2021; Munandar & Newton, 2021).

3. METHOD

An online survey was distributed to freshmen students majoring in English Language and Literature. A total of 65 students from 97 students filled in the 13 items of the likert-scale questionnaire. The items asking about their perception of translanguaging in both academic and social setting, were adapted from (Moody et al., 2019). The questions asked about their translanguaging practice and their views on translanguaging. The results were then analyzed on the basis of frequency. After the survey were analyzed, an informal interview was conducted to clarify the results.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Translanguaging Practice Among Students

The term "translanguaging" was first unfamiliar to the pupils as freshmen university students studying in English Language and Literature. After hearing the researcher thoroughly explain what translanguaging is, they began filling out the surveys. The survey's findings, which are depicted in Figure 1, indicate that the majority of students use

translanguaging in both social and academic contexts (90,7% and 83,07%, respectively). Only 11 out of 65 students claimed not use translanguage in academic contexts, while 6 claimed not to do so in social ones. The survey's findings were later corroborated in informal interviews conducted throughout the teaching and learning process. Some students who said they never translanguage in academic contexts thought that they always speak English, although they suspect that they may occasionally switch to their native language without recognizing it. As Cenoz et al. (2022) explained, bilingual or multilingual speakers frequently switch between languages flexibly and spontaneously. This occurs in social and academic settings; for concerns about language creation, clear communication, the purpose of language, and the mental processes involved in language usage are all part of translanguaging. (G. Lewis et al., 2012). In social setting, Indonesians even often need to shift between at least three sets of language systems (Munandar & Newton, 2021; Rasman, 2018).
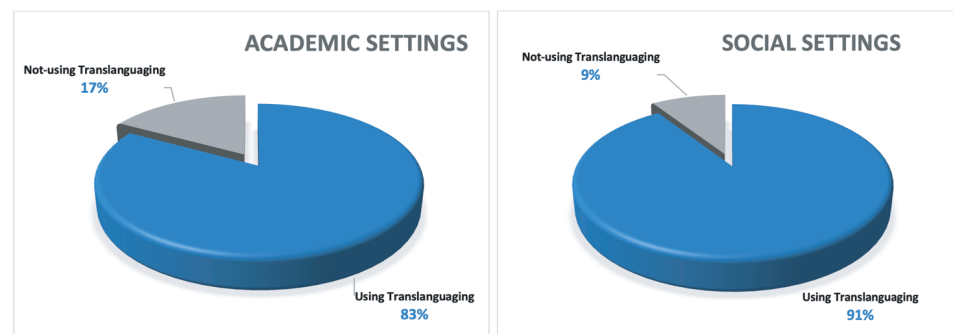
Figure 1: Translanguaging Practice Among Students.

In both situations, the majority of the students said that translanguaging had greatly benefited them; as 97% of the students feel that it helped them to learn L2, and 95% of them feels that it facilitates a more engaging conversation. According to previous studies in the CMC medium with speakers who shared the same L1, Learners frequently use their L1 to solve communication issues (Cheon, 2003). The translanguaging methods in such case should not be undervalued as it might be a potential resource for L2 learning, and a plurilingual strategy may be more effective than a monolingual one (Llanes & Cots, 2020). Of 65 students, only 6 (9%) students got confused when their interlocutors use translanguaging.

4.2. Students' View on Translanguaging

The pupils generally have favorable opinions on translanguaging. The majority of them (82%) disagree that bilinguals should avoid translanguaging. Indeed, in order to

communicate more effectively as multilingual speakers, we must use all of our linguistic resources, including those from other languages. This happens a fair amount in both in-person and online conversations (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

Additionally, the majority of them (55%) believe translanguaging is acceptable not only when they are learning a new language. Furthermore, translanguaging is acceptable in both social settings (92%) and academic settings (65%). Even, it is unacceptable for multilingual speakers to strive to act in a monolingual way, according to Cenoz and Gorter (2022). Multilingual speakers differ from monolingual speakers in that they can employ communication techniques from various languages. As a matter of fact, eventhough teaching techniques for second and additional languages have traditionally separated the target language to minimize the impact of native or previously learned languages, It is anticipated that it will be substantially impermeabilized against any attempts to use the learners' familiarity with other languages as a means of speeding up the acquisition of the target language. (Llanes & Cots, 2020).

Regarding linguistic proficiency, 68% of students disagree that Translanguaging shows a lack of second language linguistic skill. Indeed, instructional translanguaging may both highlight the differences between languages and aid in language acquisition. Galante (2020) reported that a few Chinese students who completed two activities based on pedagogical translanguaging realized there are some distinctions between Chinese and English. These students assert that although the languages may have certain similarities, some idioms and discourse markers are not utilized in the same manner in both languages.

The majority of students (88%) likewise concur that it is acceptable for university lecturers to engage in translanguaging. Creese and Blackledge's (2010) argument in favor of translanguaging practices mentions an improvement in students' feelings of inclusion, participation, and understandin. Translanguaging brings less formal relation-ships between students and between students and teachers.

In an informal conversation, the 21 students (32%) who believe that translanguaging is a sign of poor language skills explained that their belief was based on their own experience, since they occasionally use their mother tongue when they are unable to locate the English words. This kind of practice is deemed acceptable as the goal of speaking the target language fluently may prove unattainable for students, and they may feel like failures as language learners. Students' self-esteem as language learners rises when they are permitted to draw on their past knowledge. (Cenoz & Santos, 2020; Prada, 2019; Santos et al., 2017). (Cenoz & Santos, 2020)(Prada, 2019)(Santos et al., 2017)

Cenoz and Gorter (2022) argue that soft, permeable borders, rather than rigid ones that segregate languages, can improve learning by allowing students to apply their past knowledge to the teaching and learning of a second or additional language. By starting with the knowledge that students currently possess and connecting it to new information, learning may be improved (Bransford et al., 2000). The ability to use many languages also allows learners to access more material, which is a significant advantage of educational translanguaging. (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). Some even suggest to use resources in separate languages for the input and output as it requires a high level of cognitive involvement (Baker, 2006)

However, the majority of students believe that translanguaging should not be employed when completing assignments and university assessments—64% for the first and 74% for the latter. They assert that they will find it bewildering. While, previous study shows that implementation of translanguaging in writing assignment doesn't hinder language improvement. Wang and Wen (2002) looked studied the L1 use in L2 narrative and argumentative writing of 16 Chinese university EFL students. The study found that although students utilized both their L1 and L2 when writing L2 essays, they tended to rely more on their L1 when coming up with and structuring their ideas. The study also revealed that as learners' L2 competency increased, their L1 use decreased. (Wang & Wen, 2002)

5. CONCLUSION

The majority of the students in the research's subject population regularly utilize translanguaging in both social and academic settings. In both instances, the vast majority of students claimed that translanguaging had been quite beneficial for them since it had aided in their L2 learning and made conversations more interesting. Additionally, the students' evaluations of translanguaging are typically positive. The majority of them believe that bilinguals shouldn't refrain from translanguaging, that it is acceptable in academic and social contexts in addition to when one is learning a new language, that it doesn't indicate a lack of linguistic proficiency, and that it is acceptable for university tutors to use translanguaging; however, they do not believe that it should be used in assignments or assessments. Looking at the results we need to set flexible boundaries as opposed to strict ones that divide languages. It might enhance learning by enabling students to use their prior knowledge when teaching and studying a second or additional language (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

References

[1] Abdurahman NH, Rizqi MA. Indonesian Students' Strategies to Cope with Foreign Language Anxiety. TEFLIN Journal. 2020;31(1):1–18.

[2] Amarasthi N. Definition of ethnicity and various kinds in Indonesia. VOI English. 2022. Available from https://voi.id/en/lifestyle/127476/definition-of-ethnicity-and-various-kinds-in-indonesia

[3] Anderson J. Towards an integrated second-language pedagogy for foreign and community/heritage 1 languages in multilingual Britain. Lang Learn J. 2008;36(1):79–89.

[4] Arthur J, Martin P. Accomplishing lessons in postcolonial classrooms: comparative perspectives from Botswana and Brunei Darussalam. Comp Educ. 2006;42(2):177–202.

[5] Baker C. Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism. Cleveland: Multilingual Matters; 2006.

[6] Bransford JD, Brown AL, Cocking RR. How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school. Washington (DC): National Academic Press; 2000.

[7] Cenoz J, Gorter D. Pedagogical translanguaging and its application to language classes. RELC J. 2022;53(2):342–54.

[8] Cenoz J, Santos A. Implementing pedagogical translanguaging in trilingual schools. System. 2020;92:1–9.

[9] Cenoz J, Leonet O, Gorter D. Developing cognate awareness through pedagogical translanguaging. Int J Biling Educ Biling. 2022;25(8):2759–73.

[10] Cheon H. (2003). The viability of computer mediated communication in the Korean secondary EFL classroom. Asian EFL Journal. 2003;5(1). Available from https://www.asian-efl-journal.com/main-editions-new/the-viability-of-computer-mediated-communication-in-the-korean-secondary-efl-classroom/index.htm

[11] Creese A, Blackledge A. Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? Mod Lang J. 2010;94(1):103–15.

[12] Cummins J. A proposal for action: strategies for recognizing heritage language competence as a learning resource within the mainstream classroom. Mod Lang J. 2005;89(4):585–92.

[13] Emilia E, Hamied FA. Translanguaging practices in a tertiary EFL context in Indonesia. TEFLIN Journal. 2022;33(1):47–69.

[14] Galante A. Pedagogical translanguaging in a multilingual English program in Canada: student and teacher perspectives of challenges. System. 2020;92:102274.

[15] Goodman B, Tastanbek S. Making the shift from a codeswitching to a translanguaging lens in English language teacher education. TESOL Q. 2021;55(1):29–53.

[16] Havwini T. Indonesian EFL students' willingness to communicate in the 2013 curriculum implementation: A case study. TEFLIN Journal. 2019;30(1):105–20.

[17] Khairunnisa K, Lukmana I. Teachers' attitudes towards translanguaging in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan. 2020;20(2):254–66.

[18] Lewis G, Jones B, Baker C. Translanguaging: origins and development from school to street and beyond. Educ Res Eval. 2012;18(7):641–54.

[19] Liando NV, Tatipang DP, Lengkoan F. A study of translanguaging practices in an EFL classroom in Indonesian context: A multilingual concept. Research and Innovation in Language Learning. 2022;5(2):167–85.

[20] Lin AM, Martin P. Decolonisation, globalisation: Language-in-education policy and practice. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters; 2005. https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853598265.

[21] Llanes À, Cots JM. Measuring the impact of translanguaging in TESOL: A plurilingual approach to ESP. Int J Multiling. 2020;19(4):523–38.

[22] McDivitt JF, Leinbach TR, Legge JD, Mohamad GS, Adam AW, Wolters OW. Indonesia: Ethnic Groups. 2022. Available from https://www.britannica.com/place/Indonesia/Ethnic-groups

[23] Moody S, Chowdhury M, Eslami Z. Graduate students' perceptions of translanguaging. English Teaching & Learning. 2019;43(1):85–103.

[24] Munandar MI, Newton J. Indonesian EFL teachers' pedagogic beliefs and classroom practices regarding culture and interculturality. Lang Intercult Commun. 2021;21(2):158–73.

[25] Nur R, Namrullah Z, Syawal S, A N. Enhancing reading comprehension through translanguaging strategy. Journal of Language Teaching and Research. 2020;11(6):970–7.

[26] Nursanti RR. Classroom strategies through translanguaging for multilingualism students. English Learning Innovation (Englie). 2021;2(1):17–27.

[27] Prada J. Exploring the role of translanguaging in linguistic ideological and attitudinal reconfigurations in the Spanish classroom for heritage speakers. Classroom Discourse. 2019;10(3–4):306–22.

[28] Rasman R. To translanguage or not to translanguage? The multilingual practice in an Indonesian EFL classroom. Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics. 2018;7(3):687–94.

[29] Restuningrum NR. Raising bilingual children in Indonesia: The strategies. 2018. Available from http://theconversation.com/raising-bilingual-children-in-indonesia-the-strategies-93580

[30] Santos A, Cenoz J, Gorter D. Communicative anxiety in English as a third language. Int J Biling Educ Biling. 2017;20(7):823–36.

[31] Saputra WA. Exploring the implementation of translanguaging in EFL classrooms: Perspectives from higher education institutions (HeIs) students in Indonesia. Proceedings of the 2020 English Language Teaching International Conference (ELTIC). 2020;299–302.

[32] Wang W, Wen Q. L1 use in the L2 composing process: an exploratory study of 16 Chinese EFL writers. J Second Lang Writ. 2002;11(3):225–46.

[33] Zen EL. A close look at bilingualism research in Asia. Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics. 2017;7(2):328–38.