

## STUDENTS' VOICES ON TRANSLINGUAL PRACTICES WITHIN EFL CLASSROOM

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### *Abstract*

*This study investigated students' voices on translanguaging practices within an EFL classroom by involving 47 students in higher education. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach in which the data were collected through recording of teaching language learning activities, surveys, and interviews. Students were asked several questions about their voices and learning experiences regarding translanguaging practices in an EFL classroom. The findings showed that students' voices on translanguaging practices within an EFL classroom varied, depending on personal circumstances, linguistic background, and learning experiences. Most of the students had a favorable opinion of the translanguaging practices and said that it was an accommodating strategy that allowed them to actively and confidently take part in the language learning activities. Students benefited from and valued the chances offered by translanguaging activities within an EFL which were very helpful in acquiring the target language. Moreover, this bridged students and teachers to create dynamic and fluid interactions in English learning.*

**Keywords:** *English as Foreign Language, translanguaging, repertoire.*

### INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging studies in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have been an area of interest for scholars in recent years. Translanguaging describes the flexible and dynamic ways that multilingual people utilize and combine different languages to communicate and convey meaning. It is widely used in reference to modern methods of multilingualism studies and challenges traditional views of languages as separate and discrete entities and instead recognizes the multilingual practices that occur in everyday life. The term "translanguaging" (Garcia, 2009) and "translingual practice" (Canagarajah, 2012) are used interchangeably to address the how speakers employ resources and move between different languages or channels of communication for meaning-making.

Garcia (2009, p. 45) describes translanguaging as "multiple discursive practices that bilinguals engage in to make sense of their bilingual worlds." This concept alludes to unplanned, spontaneous activities that take place within or outside of the classroom but are not part of a lesson plan. However, translanguaging can be seen as a component of an emerging paradigm in the study of bilingualism, multilingualism, and language learning, according to Cenoz (2017). This is because it requires a complete understanding of both of these phenomena. This paradigm involves a new concept of language, speakers, and repertoires since it takes a holistic approach to language. As a result, language barriers are decreasing and multilingual speakers' unique resources are being recognized as crucial ones. It is no longer required of multilingual speakers to be perfect native speakers of each language (Cenoz, 2017). Translanguaging helps to create a favorable perception of bilingualism as a new framework by allowing bilinguals to behave naturally and use language the same way they do at home and in their communities.

The notion of translingual practice is based on the social norms that influence how people communicate. The term "translingual" emphasizes two crucial ideas that constitute a paradigm change in language instruction, according to Canagarajah, who makes this point in his book *Translingual Practice: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations*. Translingual practice is characterized by these ideas. One thing to note is that "communication transcends individual languages." Additionally, "communication transcends words and involves a variety of semiotic resources [such as symbols, icons, and images] and ecological affordances." Resources used in semiotics serve as "means to produce meanings" (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 6).

Regarding the first idea, Canagarajah thinks that languages are continually influencing and enhancing one another. He contends that language users need clearer labels and the capacity to employ their language repertoire, and that meaning is instead formed through the communicative act of renegotiation rather than through a consistent grammatical structure. The translingual practice perspective views language as something we do or practice rather than something we know. Making meaning ought to be founded on social achievement, according to Canagarajah, who is referenced in Maciel & Rocha (2020, p. 23). "It doesn't matter what I want to say; what matters is how the other person responds to and negotiates it." It has to do with anything in between and how it manifests, which gives meaning. According to Canagarajah (2013), the term "translingual" describes how different languages interact and influence one another. The idea of translanguaging pushes for a change in viewpoint about language usage and encourages the inclusive and all-encompassing use of languages in educational settings. Translanguaging seeks to promote meaningful language learning experiences and equip learners to interact with language in real and transformative ways by identifying and utilizing their whole linguistic repertoires.

In Canagarajah's second idea, meaning is created not only through words but also through communication, signs, symbols, and other semiotic resources. Speaking many languages is more like speaking multiple repertoires. They are lacking in certain competencies for languages with specific classifications. Separating 'language' from other semiotic resources confounds our understanding of how communication works. Furthermore, he believes that communication is contextual in that "diverse modalities" coexist in the social and physical environment (Canagarajah, 2013, p. 7). Language must therefore be viewed in this context as multimodal, contextual, and situational. According to the theory of translingual practice, meaning is not transferred from a speaker to an audience in virtual classroom interactions but rather is negotiated between interlocutors.

Translingual practices in an EFL classroom involves the strategic and purposeful use of students' linguistic repertoire, including their native language(s) and English, to facilitate language learning and communication. Translanguaging recognizes that language is fluid and interconnected, and it encourages students to draw on their multilingual abilities to enhance their understanding and expression in the target languages, which, in this case, English. In EFL classrooms, students naturally did code-switch to clarify meanings, explain concepts, or express emotions, using their native language and English. Interaction and participation within an EFL classroom context revealed that translanguaging is encouraged when dealing with students' engagement in group discussions, collaborative tasks, and peer interactions.

A number of scholars have investigated translingual practices in different domains and found new insights that students' interactions within the EFL classrooms are dynamic and fluid. For instance, students' perceptions of their lecturer's translanguaging in a Puerto Rican University were neutral to favorable (Rivera & Mazak, 2016). In contrast to this study, Rasman (2018) found that young Indonesian English learners had a negative attitude toward translanguaging. The study in the USA (Moody et al., 2019) showed that students' voices regarding translanguaging were overwhelmingly positive, particularly in social contexts and L2 learning. University students in China were almost evenly split between monolingual and multilingual approaches. Chinese-only and L1-only may be supported by half, while Chinese-English and Chinese-L1s may be preferred by the other half (Wang, 2019). These studies generally showed that translingual practice was nearly universally favorably received in settings where most participants seemed to be open to the concept.

A different study was carried out in South Africa to learn how university students felt about using translanguaging to comprehend academic subjects. In a group discussion, the participants agreed that translanguaging could aid in their understanding of complicated academic concepts in materials written in English. Even when students in a multilingual school speak more than three languages, it can

be a useful method to improve reading comprehension (Vimbai Mbirimi-Hungwe, 2021). Once more, it was evident that the participants' perspectives on translanguaging were positive. Language variety was viewed as a resource to be used to its fullest in learning rather than a problem. Translanguaging as a pedagogical technique in EFL classes, according to Umam (2022), brought a positive view and was treated as a resource that gave students options rather than as a weakness.

By considering previous research studies and students' preferences for language learning, the researcher aims to investigate further findings and contribute to the development of translanguaging studies. Therefore, the current study aims to find out students' voices on translanguaging practices within an EFL classroom in higher education level. Specifically, 1. What are the characteristics of translanguaging practices in the EFL classroom? 2. What are the students' voices on translanguaging practices within an EFL classroom?

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to describe students' voices on translanguaging practices within an EFL classroom conducted virtually in a private university in South Jakarta. 47 students participated in this study by filling up the survey. In order to enhance the data, the researcher additionally interviewed selected students in order to interpret their voices. The questionnaire consists of a series of questions and statements modified from Anderson (2018) in which students were requested to provide an assessment of the structured statements/questions by picking agree, disagree, or neutral. The researcher used audio recordings to document the process of classroom interactions observation over the course of six meetings, as well as the process of interviewing certain students. In Figures 1,2, and 3 displayed the diversity and characteristics of participant demographic data broken down by gender, language ability, and ethnicity.

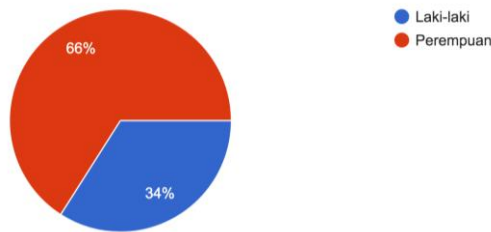


Figure 1. Gender

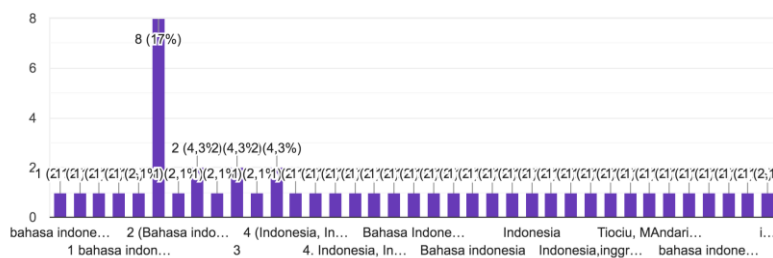


Figure 2. Language ability

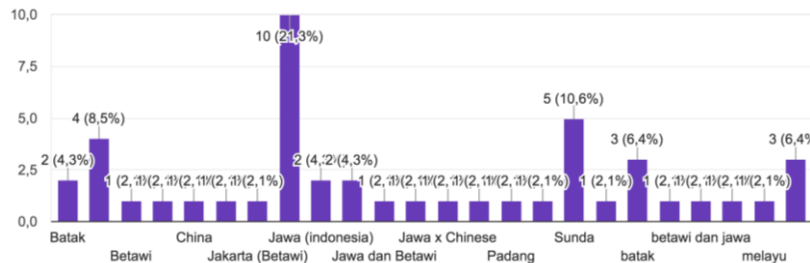


Figure 3. Ethnicity

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The opinions of students on translingual practices in an EFL classroom differed depending on their unique linguistic backgrounds, cultural experiences, and personal preferences. In general, students have a positive perception of translingual practices that help them in language learning. They appreciated translingual practices made by

teachers that helped them better understand complex concepts and teaching instructions. With the flexibility of language use, students were able to express themselves effectively and purposely. Moreover, using language alternation strategically to support English learning could facilitate better communication and understanding. Additionally, translingual practices created a more inclusive classroom environment where students from diverse backgrounds feel valued for their linguistic repertoire and cultural identities.

According to what was observed and learned from the EFL students who were interviewed, translingual activities were advantageous for students because they could transfer knowledge and skills between languages without feeling constrained. They understood the relationship between Indonesian and English and understood how knowledge of the vocabulary and skills of one language may aid their acquisition of the other. Also encouraging timid or less confident students to actively participate in teaching-learning activities in the classroom were the translingual teaching strategies used in the EFL classroom. Students were more at ease expressing themselves in their home tongue when given the opportunity, which led to higher levels of engagement and participation.

### **Characteristics of translingual practices**

Translingual practices within the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom exhibit several distinctive characteristics. These characteristics emphasize the integration and utilization of multiple languages to enhance language learning and communication. Based on the observation, at least there are three key features of translingual practices in the EFL classroom. First, multilingual environment. The EFL classroom encourages students to use their native languages and other languages they are familiar with in addition to English. The presence of various languages creates a linguistically diverse setting that acknowledged and values students' language background. Second, code-switching. Translingual practices involve the natural occurrence of code-switching, which is the seamless switching between languages during communication. Additionally, students also blend word or phrases from

different languages while speaking or writing (known as code-mixing). Third, flexible language use. Translingual practices encourage flexibility in language use. Students learn to navigate between languages and adapt their language choices according to various communication situations.

Language alternation within an EFL classroom was a common phenomenon where the teacher or students switch between the target language (English) and the student's native language during instruction or communication. This alternation occurred for various reasons and may have both positive and negative impacts on language learning. Common ways in which language alternation can occur in an EFL classroom are clarification and explanation. Both teachers and students often used native languages to clarify difficult concepts, instruction, or vocabulary. This is often made to ensure that students understand the content more effectively. In certain situations, the native language of students treated as practical way to manage the classroom, especially if there are specific rules or instructions that need to be conveyed quickly and efficiently.

Although the researcher could demonstrate the extent to which translingual practices were used in EFL classroom exchanges through observation, a triangulation was formed by asking students about the extent to which translingual practices were used in the EFL classroom. The degree of translingual practices varied based on the environment, circumstances, educational needs of the students, teaching style, and language policy of the teachers who oversaw the class. Translingual practices within an EFL classroom ranges from some time, often, and very often. Table 1 describes the intensity of translingual practices.

Table 1 Translingual Practices within an EFL classroom

NO	QUESTIONS	FREQUENCY			
		VO	O	S	N
1	How often do translingual practices occur within an EFL classroom?	8.5%	23.4%	63.8%	0



2	Is English mixed with other languages?	19.1%	36.2%	44.7%	0%
3	Do you speak other languages in an EFL classroom in addition to English?	0	44.7%	42.6%	12.8%
4	How frequently does language blending occur in English classes?	0	31.9%	55.3%	8.5%

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VO: Very Often    O: Often    S: Some time    N: Never

As can be observed in Table 1, the majority of students in question 1 acknowledged that the level of translingual practices within an EFL classroom falls into the category of moderate intensity. With 63.8% of respondents, translingual activities are prevalent in EFL engagement with an intensity that is neither too regular nor too infrequent. This figure clearly exceeds the percentages of respondents who selected "often" (23.4%) and "very often" (8.5%). Additionally, none of the respondents said that they had never made a mistake while studying English. In other words, individuals within EFL classroom encounters who engage in translingual behaviors are regarded as commonplace occurrences.

Regarding the degree to which English is incorporated into EFL classroom encounters, Question 2 is more detailed. The participants' answers weren't too far off, which means that they were nearly identical to the preceding response. 44.7% of the students stated that English is a fusion of other languages and comes naturally to people. While other respondents gave the percentages of 36.2% and 19.1% for "Often" and "Very Often," respectively. Naturally, the phenomena of language mixing in EFL is not a major issue for either English teachers or students, especially when English is being taught as a foreign language. It's interesting to note that when the respondent was asked a question that was specifically about them, as in question number 3, 12.8% of the respondents said they had never mixed different languages while learning English. The rest of the respondents claimed that 42.6% had responded frequently, and 44.7% had responded very frequently.

There is a correlation between the response in number 3 and the statement made in number 4 on the frequency of language mixing in English lessons. Only 8.5% of respondents, or very few, indicated they never mixed languages in English classes. In contrast, 55.3% and

31.9% of those who said often or occasionally held the majority position. This supports the idea that, despite their efforts to provide the targeted language a chance to predominate in their interactions, translingual activities are inevitable even for English language learners. The following are the views of students on the degree of translingual activity within an EFL classroom.

*“Saat saya merasa kebingungan mengungkapkan dalam bahasa Inggris, biasanya baur bahasa tidak bisa dihindari.” Fatma.*

“Language mixing often occurs when I need clarification about expressing myself in English.” Fatma.

*“Bagi saya tidak ada masalah baur bahasa cuma diharapkan bahasa Inggrisnya lebih dominan apalagi kita sedang belajar bahasa Inggris sehingga perlu dipraktikkan langsung” Ligita*

"For me, there is no problem doing a language mix. I hope that English is more dominant, especially when we are learning English, so it needs to be practiced directly" Ligita

*“Saya akui bahasa Inggrisnya masih lemah, namun saya setuju saja baur bahasa agar pemahaman lebih mudah dari pada di ruang kelas pakai bahasa Inggris namun banyak yang tidak mengerti. Akhirnya hanya itu-itulah saja yang bicara” Anugrah.*

“I admit that my English is still weak, but I agree that the language is mixed so that it is easier to understand than in a classroom using English, but many needs help understanding it. Finally, only a particular person who speaks and participates in the class actively.” Anugrah.

Translanguaging is used as a purposeful educational strategy by teachers in EFL classes where translingual practice is practiced often. Translanguaging is a method of teaching that permits easy switching between different tongues. It involves teachers and students actively combining different languages, using different codes, and interacting across different linguistic groups. This method encourages language integration for communication that conveys meaning by viewing all languages as resources. By leveraging the students' varied linguistic backgrounds, the emphasis is on fostering multilingual competency and a greater grasp of the topic.

It is crucial to emphasize that English and Indonesian were the two primary languages used in the teaching and learning processes. Despite the fact that Indonesian was the most widely spoken language, the instructors instructed in English. Vernacular languages and dialects do exist, but they are less prevalent. In a variety of communicative situations, including greeting students, outlining the subject/materials/complicated concept

or term, grabbing students' attention, asking and answering questions, giving orders or feedback, debating the topic, and concluding the meeting, teachers and students frequently used English and Indonesian as their two primary languages.

From the beginning to the finish of teaching-learning activities, language meshing took place organically in various contexts. According to Table 2, English and Indonesian share the largest percentage of linguistic meshing (32 out of 47 occurrences), followed by language variation (dialect or vernacular languages) (13 occurrences).

Table 2  
Language alternation within EFL classroom

Code-meshing	N	%
English	32	68
Indonesian	13	28
Language variation	2	4
Total	47	100

### **Students' voices on translingual practices**

Depending on their experiences, cultural backgrounds, and personal perspectives, students' opinions on translingual practices in EFL classes vary. Common student concerns in EFL remote learning include around technology, practice, and language as a resource. Many students asserted that their first language can be a useful tool for learning English. They see their L1, or first language, as a tool that aids in their comprehension of English concepts, grammar, and vocabulary. They view speaking various languages as a way to make the most of their native tongues and improve their English language acquisition. Additionally, when students can use their L1 in addition to English, they frequently feel more secure and interested. For explanation or debate, they feel that being able to briefly switch to Indonesian facilitates their ability to actively engage in class activities.

Students think that exposure to and practice with English are essential for language acquisition. They are aware that actively utilizing the language in a variety of situations—including speaking English, hearing English in the media, and reading English—can help them become more fluent. They also think that technology can aid their efforts to learn a new language in regard to the digital learning platform. For

gaining access to online learning resources and digital learning platforms, they view technology as a helpful resource. Technology may be used to make language learning more interactive and interesting.

The way that EFL students communicated and chose to utilize language in the digital learning environment was heavily influenced by their language preferences. The choosing and use of languages come naturally to students and are a component of their subliminal behavior that transitions between languages. One student reported she hadn't even noticed the use of English and Indonesian in EFL remote learning encounters. Other participants, on the other hand, described their linguistic decisions as conscious ones. To speak to their intended audience and appear less menacing, they made the deliberate choice to use only one language. Here, the concept of language belief refers to the idea that language, or the use of language, is mobilized as a resource for interactional meaning-making, and that this usage also serves to perpetuate and modify language.

Many scholars have stated that being bi/multilingual is a natural process, supporting the student views that translingual actions are instinctive and unconscious. Garcia and Wei contend that "human beings have a natural translanguaging instinct" (Garcia & Wei, 2014, p. 32). According to Wei, as stated in Jaspers (2018), this is 'an intrinsic capacity to draw on as many varied cognitive and semiotic resources as available to them to determine meaning intents and build actions accordingly. Below are the comments given by students regarding their translingual preferences and methods for learning English.

*“Jujur walaupun bahasa Inggrisnya masih terbatas, saya lebih suka jika kelas bahasa Inggris menggunakan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa pengantarnya” Laila.*

“Honestly, although my English is still limited, I prefer English classes to use English as the language of instruction,” Laila.

*“Baur bahasa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris cukup efektif dan membuat saya dan juga barangkali yang lain lebih mudah memahami pesan dari instruktur”.*  
Fitri

"Language mixing in English learning is quite effective and makes it easier for me and maybe others to understand the message from the instructor". Fitri

*"Bagi saya tidak ada masalah dan cenderung lebih suka jika instruktur melakukan baur bahasa dan membolehkan siswanya melakukan hal yang sama ketika berinteraksi"* Dika

"There is no problem, and I prefer it if the instructor mixes the language and allows the students to do the same thing when interacting". Dika

This research demonstrates that language learners are hopeful that English teachers will take their students' skills into consideration so that their language and policies can be accepted in a proper manner. The students can sense the expression that goes along with the prevalent attitude.

*"Saya merasa bingung dan tidak nyaman ketika dosen bicara tanpa memperhatikan pemahaman dan kemampuan mahasiswanya. Harusnya dosen Bahasa Inggris itu memperhatikan kemampuan mahasiswanya apakah paham atau tidak?".* Ghozali.

"I feel confused and uncomfortable when the lecturer speaks without paying attention to the understanding and ability of the students. The English lecturer should pay attention to the ability of the students, whether they understand it or not?". Ghozali.

*"Saat pelajaran grammar, harusnya English instructor jangan 100% bahasa Inggris terus agar mahasiswa mudah memahaminya. Tidak apa-apa belajar bahasa Inggris namun penjelasannya menggunakan campuran bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Indonesia".* Hafids

"When studying grammar, the English instructor should use less than 100% English so that students can easily understand it. Learning English is okay, but the explanations are in a mix of English and Indonesian." Hafids.

Students employed languages consistently and flexibly during the observation, primarily depending on the people they interacted with or the context of their surroundings. When they were speaking with their professors, they frequently switched between codes. If Indonesian was their primary language, individuals were more likely to switch to Indonesian vocabulary when speaking English. If English

was their primary language, they were more likely to code-switch, beginning their sentences in English and transitioning to Indonesian, or vice versa.

The majority of EFL interactions participants are Indonesians who consider English to be a foreign language. Therefore, it is not unexpected to see them in the English class. In Indonesia, they speak to one another frequently. I noticed them conversing with one another at various occasions. In social contacts, they greet one another and discuss formal subjects in Indonesian. However, if the English supply English-language materials to be used throughout the exercise, they will engage in random code-switching in English. It's vital to remember that students' prior language-learning experiences, cultural background, and individual motivation all have an impact on their perceptions of language learning. When developing instructional tactics and establishing a welcoming learning environment that caters to students' needs and supports their language learning objectives, English instructors should take these views into account.

## **CONCLUSION**

It's important to note that translanguaging practices do not aim to supplant English as the language of instruction in the EFL classroom. Instead, they supplement language learning, create a richer learning experience, and empower students to become more competent and confident language users. Translanguaging practices within an EFL class refer to an approach of language learning that integrates languages other target language, which is English, into the learning process. Its goal is to leverage the students' existing knowledge and skills in other languages to enrich their understanding and use of the English language.

Students' voices on translanguaging practices within an EFL classroom varied depending on individual factors, language background and learning experiences. Some students found translanguaging practices beneficial and appreciated the opportunities they provided. Others had different reactions based on their learning styles and probably prior language experience. Students with diverse linguistic backgrounds, especially those who speak languages closely related to English or are

multilingual, may find translanguaging practices helpful. They can leverage their existing language skills to support their English learning process. Overall, students appreciated the use of translanguaging practices within an EFL classroom. It is crucial that teachers respond to student preferences and design a learning environment that takes into account various learning requirements and styles. A balanced approach that combine translanguaging practices with other language teaching strategies can help meet the diverse preferences of students in the EFL classroom. Therefore, teachers should consider their students' preferences, needs, and learning styles when implementing translanguaging practices or any other instructional methods in the EFL classroom

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