

Assessing translanguaging as a strategy for enhancing students' classroom activity participations in a rural vocational high school: A case study

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ABSTRACT

Translanguaging (TL) has been recognized for its potential to enhance students' understanding and participation in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, particularly in speaking, reading, writing, and listening. This is especially relevant for vocational high school students in rural settings, where limited English proficiency and resource constraints present challenges. TL allows students to engage more actively by flexibly using their native language alongside English. However, its effectiveness depends on various contextual factors, including teachers' implementation strategies and students' language proficiency. This case study investigates how teachers and students perceive the effectiveness of TL in supporting comprehension within the context of English for specific purposes (ESP) in a rural school setting. The data were collected through teacher interviews, student focus group discussions, and classroom observations. Findings indicate positive perceptions of TL from both teachers and students, with teachers using it strategically to explain complex ideas and foster language skills. However, its effectiveness varies based on language familiarity, with a noted preference for mixing English with Bahasa Indonesia over Javanese. Despite TL's benefits in building confidence and comprehension, challenges such as balancing native languages with English, managing limited vocabulary, and ensuring consistent practice remain. Overall, while TL strategies could enhance comprehension and confidence in speaking English, the success depends on strategic implementation and alignment with students' proficiency levels. Future studies could explore the efficacy of TL in improving students' comprehension across diverse educational settings.

Keywords: English as a foreign language; English for specific purposes; translanguaging

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INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging (TL) practice has become an increasingly utilized method in EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms to aid students' understanding and participation in using L2 (Kwihangana, 2021; Rabbidge, 2019). It has been suggested that TL can help students achieve English proficiency (Beres, 2015; Putrawan, 2022); scaffold their understanding of instructions (Raja et al., 2022b); alleviate foreign language anxiety (Dryden et al., 2021); preserve student's L1 while promoting multilingualism (García, 2009); and cultivate learner's own identities, as opposed to reinforcing English cultural hegemony or native-speakerism (Dovchin & Wang, 2024; Sahan & Rose, 2021). Teachers are encouraged to use both their L1 and L2, i.e., their native language and target language, to assist students in understanding learning materials and to improve students' participations. This could encourage students who are apprehensive due to low confidence in their English skills to participate more actively in the classroom. In this case, TL pedagogy introduces an inclusive and supportive learning environment in which students can utilize their entire language repertoire. This exemplifies that TL has the potential to cultivate students' engagement in discussions and participations in speaking activities.

Considering the growing affirmation of teachers' use of multiple languages in EFL classrooms, TL is widely utilized in Indonesian EFL classrooms (Liando et al., 2023), including ESP (English for Specific Purposes) (Triastuti et al., 2023). Henceforth, vocational high school (VHS) aims to develop students' language abilities for effective communication in specific fields or disciplines (Alasmari et al., 2024). ESP provides learners with specialized vocabulary, discourse patterns, and communicative strategies for their chosen fields. It has been suggested that teacher perspectives on students' motivation and ESP learning achievement led to effective methods of teaching (Dja'far et al 2016). However, due to the challenges often encountered in the ESP classroom of VHS, such as students' motivational aspects (Muslim et al., 2020)—including the problematized relationship between students' low motivation, which affects teachers' motivation to use English in class (Yulia, 2013); lack of prior knowledge (Mistar et al., 2016); and overt focus on testing (Puspitasari & Pelawi, 2023), teachers find it difficult to encourage students to actively participate in the classroom, especially considering their workload (Indraswari & Kuswandono, 2018). Consequently, while English teachers in Indonesia commonly embrace and implement translingual practices in their classroom with or without the knowledge of TL pedagogy (Triastuti et al., 2023), its effectiveness in aiding the retention of knowledge introduced in classroom activity needs further exploration.

Studies have demonstrated that the implementation of TL strategies enhances students' understanding of English materials (Beres, 2015; Putrawan, 2022; Vyshnevskaya et al., 2021). Beres (2015) highlights TL as an effective strategy in developing proficiency in both English and the students' native language. Similarly, Putrawan (2022) concluded that TL assists the improvement of students' proficiency by reducing anxiety and promoting a sense of inclusiveness in the classroom. However, while these findings suggest benefits, language learning is complex and influenced by numerous factors, including students' prior knowledge, motivation, cognitive abilities, socio-economic background, and exposure to the target language (Gardner, 2001; Ushioda, 2011). These influences mean that the role of TL in language acquisition may vary across contexts, and its benefits on long-term language retention and skill improvement remain less clear as opposed to, for instance, its role in cultivating learners' identities (Creese & Blackledge, 2015). Moreover, research often emphasizes short-term comprehension gains over broader and sustained language development outcomes. As such, the effectiveness of TL practices depends on a case-by-case basis.

To further examine TL's effectiveness, contextual factors like the setting of the school and its resources should be considered. For instance, Rasman (2018) highlighted how TL facilitates students' comprehension and classroom interaction in Indonesian EFL contexts. However, his work focused on general classroom communication, leaving a gap in understanding how TL specifically influences speaking participation in VHS and ESP-oriented classrooms. Thus, while existing studies point to the short-term benefits of TL, questions of its effectiveness in addressing persistent motivational and participation issues in rural VHS remain underexplored. Private VHS in remote or under-resourced

areas could present unique challenges. Many students in these contexts face limited English exposure outside of school, and socioeconomic barriers may restrict access to supplementary language resources (Indraswari & Kuswandono, 2018). These factors create a learning environment where assumptions do not apply in such situations. The constraints on resources, coupled with students' contextual backgrounds, present a challenge. As such, an investigation into how TL affects specific language competencies, skills, and student participation in settings within such contexts could contribute to the research investigating TL potential use cases. While recent research on TL has indeed highlighted its immediate effects on comprehension and, in some cases, linked this to broader aspects of classroom discourse, less attention has been placed on how TL may facilitate active classroom participation in EFL rural settings, or how it supports vocabulary acquisition and contextual understanding in environments where English is only spoken inside the classroom. There is also limited understanding of how TL is perceived and utilized by students with varying levels of English proficiency, and whether it encourages long-term language retention.

Noting the aforementioned issues, this study aims to explore the TL practices to enhance students' speaking participation in an ESP context, specifically within a private VHS located in a rural area with students categorized as living below the official poverty line determined by Indonesian Central Statistics Agency (BPS) using the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach, which is the minimum amount of rupiah required to meet basic needs. Furthermore, the English subject in the school is conducted in mixed-major classrooms; as such, one classroom comprised of students from both Motorcycle Engineering (*Teknik Sepeda Motor* or TSM) and Visual Communication Design (*Desain Komunikasi Visual* or DKV) programs. This unique classroom condition, which mixes students from two different majors due to the small student population, has rarely been explored in previous TL studies. In such settings, the researchers aim to explore the impact of TL on students' participation, which is assessed through active classroom participation (e.g., speaking in class), general English competencies, and domain-specific vocabulary use. To fill the gaps, the authors investigated whether incorporating students' native language(s) alongside English encourages active participation, comprehension, and verbal engagement in a speaking activity. The aim of the current study is formulated into the following research questions:

1. How do teachers and students perceive the usefulness of TL in a classroom setting?
2. How is translanguaging implemented to support students' comprehension of ESP content in an EFL classroom context?
3. Does the implementation of TL encourage students to speak and participate more actively in English?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Translanguaging is a language use practice that encourages the utilization of multiple languages that is often advocating for the inclusion of the first language (L1). As a concept, translanguaging can be understood through three perspectives (Mazak, 2016). The first perspective views TL as a transformational language ideology, which considers bilingualism and multilingualism, along with the shuttling between 'languages,' as the norm. In this perspective, the focus is on the use of both L1 and L2 in communication (Sánchez & García, 2022). The second perspective is a theory of bilingualism and multilingualism which states that individuals do not separate their 'languages' but instead possess one integrated repertoire of 'language practices' (e.g., Wei, 2018). The third perspective views TL as a pedagogical stance that involves communicative and instructional practices where individuals (e.g., teachers) use their entire linguistic repertoire strategically to help in achieving learning goals (Duarte, 2020).

Following the third notion, TL usage as a pedagogical approach has been growing in language classroom (Beres, 2015). Translanguaging involves bilingual individuals using their entire language repertoire to communicate and learn effectively (García, 2009). Compared to conventional concepts of bilingualism, which frequently consider languages as separate entities, translanguaging emphasizes the seamless integration of several languages to increase cognitive and communication capacities. Wei,

(2018) expands this concept by highlighting translanguaging as a linguistic and cognitive approach, where individuals actively navigate and adjust language boundaries to aid understanding and communication. Translanguaging not only facilitates communication but also functions as a pedagogical tool that facilitates deeper learning and critical thinking. A recent study highlights that TL helps students understand the material and enhances their overall English skills (Sakkir et al., 2024).

Translanguaging space provides a collaborative learning environment among students in the classroom. It enables students to create a familiar learning situation by incorporating and encouraging the use of students' L1, thus peers of lower proficiency level can easily understand and relate to (Bisai & Singh, 2019). When working in pairs or small groups, learners can discuss tasks in their preferred languages, which helps them feel more comfortable and confident. This peer interaction not only enhances language skills but also promotes critical thinking, as students negotiate meaning and clarify ideas in both languages. Indonesian EFL classrooms can benefit from incorporating translanguaging practices by utilizing the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students to improve the overall learning experience (Rahmadani, 2023). In addition, translanguaging pedagogy encourages students to use their entire language repertoire to actively engage in classroom activities. This approach allows them to learn subject content in depth and develop conceptual knowledge in their language (Khair et al., 2020). Additionally, teachers can design activities that require students to translate phrases or concepts between English and their first language (L1). Research by Daniel et al. (2019) supports this method, indicating that translating involves careful reading and the recognition of both microstructures and macrostructures, which demonstrates successful reading comprehension through collaborative efforts. This approach reinforces understanding and promotes deeper cognitive processing.

On the other hand, several challenges may confront both teachers and students when implementing translanguaging in the classroom. Yuvayapan (2019) claims that EFL teachers primarily use TL during lessons, but without a systematic approach to enhancing English proficiency. The study suggests that this method does not contribute to long-term English learning goals, as its usage is limited to specific occasions, such as clarification of course material and classroom management. Additionally, a study by Raja et al. (2022a) highlighted that some students criticize student-directed translanguaging due to their monoglossic ideology, a lack of adequate theoretical support or literature, and a general negative perception of the approach. In line with the findings of Sakkir et al. (2024) study, some students voiced that utilizing their first language (L1) in the classroom while learning English is unnecessary. They believe that teachers should consistently use English to achieve the primary objective of language learning. This mindset poses a barrier to teachers' acceptance of the use of translanguaging.

METHOD

Research design

This study uses a qualitative case study approach, as it allows an in-depth exploration of how translanguaging is naturally integrated into classroom practices. Moreover, a case study is suitable because it provides a holistic understanding of phenomena within their real-life context. A case study design was chosen for this research due to its appropriateness in exploring complex educational practices within a specific context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 1995). This study investigates the effect of TL on speaking activities conducted by a teacher in a rural private vocational high school situated on the outskirts of Yogyakarta and how TL influences student participation in speaking. By focusing on a particular school, which represents a rural VHS with mixed majors English classrooms arrangement due to limited sources, insights into the pedagogical strategies employed by the teacher and the resultant impacts on student engagement and language learning could be observed and examined. This research began with classroom observations, which documented real-time teacher-student interaction. The researchers focus on the natural integration of translanguaging into instruction, examining language-switching patterns, student engagement, and students' comprehension levels in the classroom. In addition to the observations, in answering the first, second, and third research questions, the researchers also held a semi-structured interview with an English

teacher to explore teachers' perceptions of translanguaging used in ESP classrooms. Similarly, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with the students to collect data on how they perceive the influence of translanguaging on their understanding of ESP materials.

Participants

This study involved one English teacher and fourteen 11th-grade students who participated in privately owned schools. In the interview section, an English teacher and two students were selected as informants through purposive sampling, based on the teacher's recommendation, to ensure they could provide relevant and meaningful insights for the study and classroom observation. For context, there is only one English teacher for two majors: Visual Communication Design and Automotive Technology. The two majors are run on the rationale that these majors have relevance to the local job market and the specific needs of the students, many of whom, according to the teacher's account and school records, come from families with limited financial resources. The fourteen students were from the two majors above. They learn English in the same class at the same time. Thus, students from Visual Communication Design receive materials about motorcycle engineering, and vice versa.

In Yogyakarta, the zonation policy is partly determined by students' Regional Education Standards Assessment (or ASPD) scores, which places those with lower scores at a disadvantage, as they are unable to enter urban public schools that are perceived to provide better quality. Students from underdeveloped rural areas, where school options are limited, thus face greater competition for tuition-free public schools, leaving many with no alternative but to attend nearby private schools (Riyanti et al., 2020). The above contexts may affect both the learning environment and the students' motivations in learning English at school (Vygotsky, 1978). Prior to the interviews, an initial classroom observation was conducted to gain a contextual understanding of the students' English proficiency. The observation revealed that the majority of students demonstrated beginner-level proficiency, which requires the teacher's adaptation of learning materials and simplification of teaching methods to facilitate language acquisition. There are 14 students from both majors who share a single English class due to limited class size and resources.

Data collection

The data were collected using classroom observation and semi-structured interviews with both the teacher and students. The observations were conducted before the interview to avoid an influence on teachers' practices (Halldén et al., 2007). The observations were conducted to capture real-time interactions and teachers' use of TL strategies during classroom instruction, as well as how such strategies impact student participation and apparent understanding of materials. In addition, the interview guidelines were adapted from previous research by Salimi et al. (2024) to ensure validity and alignment with previous research on translanguaging practices in the English classroom. These adapted questions, specifically, covered aspects such as students' and teachers' beliefs of TL, the challenges of implementing TL, students' engagement, and the general background of TL, which were then adjusted to this research's questions and needs. The interviews were conducted after each classroom observation to gather insights on the perspectives, challenges, and perceptions of TL practices from the perspectives of both the teacher and the students. The teacher's interview provided context regarding his pedagogical strategies, while the student interviews provided insights into their experiences and attitudes toward learning in a TL-supported environment.

Data analysis

The interview and observation data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process began with familiarizing oneself with the data through repeated reading and note-taking. Following this, initial codes were inductively generated based on the interview transcripts and then organized into larger themes related to the research questions. Thematic analysis was carried out in stages to address the research issues. For the first research question, which investigates students' perspectives of translanguaging, the researchers categorized interview transcripts by selecting

statements that expressed their sentiments, attitudes, and experiences while speaking both English and their original language. For the second research question, which looks into instructors' opinions, the researchers analyzed interview responses and classroom activities, coding data on the goals, benefits, and obstacles of adopting translanguaging in ESP teaching. Lastly, the third research question, which focuses on how translanguaging affects students' comprehension of ESP content, the researchers analyzed both interview data and observation notes to identify recurring patterns that demonstrated how translanguaging improved understanding of technical terms, clarified instructions, and increased participation, also English skills. The combined analysis of interviews and observations ensured that each research question was directly addressed through practical coding and interpretation of the data.

To ensure the reliability and credibility of the study's findings, data triangulation was employed, as suggested by [Carter et al. \(2014\)](#). Specifically, this involved comparing and contrasting data gathered from the teacher's interviews with insights from classroom observations. This approach involved cross-referencing the teacher's interview responses with data from classroom observations to validate the findings.

Triangulation was used in this study to enhance the reliability and validity of the data analysis by ensuring consistency throughout numerous data sets. Triangulation in this study involved comparing data from teacher interviews, student interviews, and classroom observations. This process was intended to cross-check self-reported practices with observed behaviors, reduce potential biases, and increase the trustworthiness of the findings. When inconsistencies emerged, follow-up interviews were carried out to clarify and contextualize the factors influencing translanguaging implementation.

FINDINGS

In a rural vocational high school context, students' perceptions and use of translanguaging are shaped by limited resources, diverse linguistic backgrounds, and varying English proficiency levels. [Edy and Ashadi \(2025\)](#) found that in rural Indonesian schools, TL practices provide inclusive learning environments that overcome linguistic gaps and increase student involvement. Additionally, teachers in low-resources settings often face practical challenges, such as unreliable internet and the inaccessibility of common online language-learning tools, leading them to use accessible platforms like WhatsApp for communication and feedback. As demonstrated by [Fitriana \(2022\)](#) that WhatsApp, due to its simplicity and widespread usage, becomes a viable platform for communication, feedback, and autonomous learning in rural contexts.

On the other hand, given that many students are more comfortable speaking Javanese, translanguaging practices must balance English exposure with native language support. In response, teachers adapt their instruction by simplifying material, using Bahasa Indonesia for clarity, and incorporating code-switching to build students' confidence in English. These strategies demonstrate that, despite external assumptions about student motivation and the constraints of the setting, translanguaging can be effectively implemented when it aligns with learners' needs and honors their linguistic identities.

The results related to the three research questions regarding teachers' and students' perspectives, implementations, and effectiveness of TL implementation in the classroom are presented below. Furthermore, from the analysis, six major themes were frequently mentioned in the interview section, which were also supported by observation results.

Teachers' and students' perceptions of translanguaging in ESP contexts

Translanguaging is perceived positively by both teacher and student as both see it as a helpful method and an essential aspect of learning in an ESP classroom. However, positive beliefs do not necessarily translate into practice ([Kennedy & Kennedy, 1996](#)). Corroborating such a notion, the teacher was hesitant to incorporate local languages in a significant proportion in the classroom and limited it only when students appeared to be confused, not responding, and asked the teacher for the meaning or to repeat. During the interview, it was revealed that there is apprehension because doing so could hinder learning, limit exposure to the target language, or create confusion to the students, as expressed below.

Extract 1

T (Teacher): *"... the students tend to use daily language/their mother tongue and daily language more often ... in class or at school, they usually speak in a mixed way. ... Of course, I'm worried (domain-specific, unfamiliar vocabularies) because the students find it difficult to grasp them, since those things are new to them."*

The teacher expressed his concern about the numerous new vocabulary words that need to be taught. He was concerned that students might struggle to grasp new concepts in class, such as learning new English material and vocabulary. The teacher believes that this issue was caused by students' different levels of language understanding, which hindered their ability to connect previous knowledge with newly learned vocabulary. This concern stems from the teacher's observation that his students have the tendency to code-switch their first language, Javanese or Indonesian, in everyday interactions. In a typical classroom activity, he observed that students frequently conversed in their L1 (Javanese) rather than attempting to speak English. Such reliance on the L1 in classroom interactions has also been reported in rural EFL contexts, where learners' limited English proficiency makes it difficult to integrate new vocabulary without TL strategies (García & Wei, 2015)

Extract 2

T: *"... indeed, in the practice {speaking} is also quite challenging here. ... the students' willingness to speak is very weak. ... In English, it is very rare for students to take the initiative to speak first. ... But once they have read, then they remember, 'oh, this is its function.' ... their initiative is still lacking ..."*

As exemplified in Extract 2, the teacher felt that there is a need to expose his students in an immersive English environment, however, such aspiration remains a challenge. This is mainly because, as perceived by the teacher, the students lack the motivation and initiative to engage with English, both in and outside the class. While in class, students often require assistance and guidance to speak English. To avoid such an issue, the teacher employed a learning strategy that involves providing examples of texts for students to read and translate, as well as demonstrating correct pronunciation. He believes that this approach is more effective in helping students acquire and retain new vocabulary. However, he notes that students still show a lack of initiative when it comes to participating in class discussions. In such situation, the teacher would incorporate L1 into the instructions. Students, however, expressed diverse receptions to, both the use of full English instruction and translanguaging pedagogy.

Extract 3

T: *"...In practice ... the mother tongue has already become the medium of instruction, so they feel more comfortable ... it is likely that they are more confident using it than English. When it comes to English, they want to speak but do not know what to say. So, they tend to be more active when asked to use Javanese."*

In the extract 3 above, the teacher reveals that students display higher confidence and participation when using their mother tongue, whereas reliance on English often leads to hesitation and disengagement. This pattern reveals a gap in linguistic skills that stops students from fully expressing their ideas in English. Translanguaging, therefore, acts as a scaffold, allowing learners to participate actively without being limited by their vocabulary. However, the teacher's observation that students tend to stay silent when English is enforced suggests that over-reliance on the first language might reduce chances for meaningful English practice. This shows the need for a balanced approach, where translanguaging is used thoughtfully to reduce anxiety and aid understanding, while still encouraging gradual exposure to English for communication.

On the other hand, another student's statement indicated that she felt more comfortable when the teacher used languages other than English in their learning process.

Extract 4

S1 (Student 1): *"Well, I just feel confused. Sometimes I understand, sometimes I also get confused, so in class I use a mixture of Javanese and English."*

S1 stated that TL could result in both support and misunderstanding. Switching between Javanese and English was occasionally challenging to understand. Here, the students feel comfortable using Javanese (mother tongue), making it easier for her to connect new English vocabulary with Javanese equivalents. The extract illustrates how the choice of L1 in TL practices may influence the clarity and effectiveness of classroom communication.

Extract 5

S1: *"I feel more confident, I know more, and I also understand better, so I don't feel overwhelmed, and I become more active when there are class discussions."*

The student's statement shows how the use of a first language serves as an affective support in the classroom. Allowing L1 fosters a helpful learning environment by lowering stresses and cognitive load, allowing students to participate more actively in conversations. This is consistent with the premise that translanguage not only improves understanding but also boosts students' confidence because they may use their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate ideas and engage with the material.

Extract 6

S2: *"When Javanese is mixed with English, it actually makes me more confused. But if there is a mixture with Indonesian and English, then maybe I can understand it better."*

In contrast to the previous extract, S2's response indicates that she faced difficulties understanding the English content when the class was conducted in her native language, Javanese, suggesting that not all TL choices equally facilitate understanding. She expressed that she would better understand the material if the teacher provided English translations in Bahasa Indonesia. Since Bahasa Indonesia is the primary language of Indonesia's formal education system. Some students are more accustomed to using Bahasa Indonesia as the medium of instruction, which makes them feel more comfortable when English materials or vocabulary are translated into Indonesian rather than Javanese. This in line with [Yolandana et al. \(2024\)](#), where TL using Bahasa Indonesia improves understanding and academic engagement.

Implementation of translanguage to facilitate ESP comprehension

For the teacher, TL is seen as a learning strategy for students' comprehension. Translanguage helps to simplify complex vocabularies and ideas for students as well as teachers by utilizing several languages to clarify and enhance comprehension, thus making learning more effective.

Extract 7

T: *"I also deliver the material in English. Then ... in Indonesian. ... sometimes (I use) Javanese ... to make it easier for them to understand. (To ensure correct pronunciation) I usually ask them to check in the Cambridge Dictionary to minimize mispronunciation ..."*

The teacher's approach of alternating between English and Bahasa Indonesia, with occasional use of Javanese, illustrates a type of translanguage designed to help students understand. English is the target language, with Bahasa Indonesia acting as the major mediating code, reflecting its position as the national language of instruction in the education field. Here, the Javanese is only selectively used, suggesting that the teacher prioritizes maintaining an academic register while still accommodating students' immediate understanding needs. Furthermore, the teacher's suggestion to utilize the online Cambridge Dictionary shows an attempt to combine technological and language learning strategies. The teacher supports learner autonomy in pronunciation practice by instructing students to explore an authorised dictionary.

This strategy is not without challenges, as the teacher expressed in Extract 6 below. Although the material has been delivered at an appropriate level based on the teacher's estimation, students still struggle to grasp the content during the next meeting.

Extract 8

T: *"... now the students understand ... but tomorrow it has to be repeated ... for example, when I teach, 'where did you go last month?' ... the students can understand it at the moment. However, if I ask the same question the following week, they have already forgotten. ... the texts are selected to be easy, easy according to them. Yet sometimes even those are still difficult."*

The teacher's description emphasises a frequent concern among students: short-term retention. While students may initially acquire the information during classroom teaching, their understanding gradually decreases over time. This demonstrates that quick comprehension does not always convert into long-term acquisition. The teacher also observed that even when simpler texts were offered, children continued to struggle, implying that the content was still beyond their existing independent competence.

Extract 9

T: *"Actually, I do not apply any specific technique. I tend to explain things through written text. So, I ask the students to read alternately and translate. If there is a mispronunciation during practice, they repeat it again. I use what I call 'observe, imitate, and modify.' Sometimes, I take them to the workshop or to the computer lab, so they can learn together."*

Although the teacher claimed not to utilise a specific technique, his actions suggest the usage of implicit scaffolding strategies. Asking students to read alternately and translate improves comprehension by linking English vocabulary to familiar linguistic resources. The cycle of observing, imitating, and modifying provides opportunities for gradual language internalization through repetition and correction. Furthermore, integrating occupational contexts such as workshops and computer labs situates language learning in meaningful, real-life settings, which enhances both relevance and motivation. These practices, though not explicitly labeled as techniques, function as scaffolds that enable learners to connect classroom English with their prior knowledge and experiences.

Extract 10

S1: *"Sometimes we are asked questions about the lesson in class. And sometimes we are asked about the English terms for vocational tools and their functions... The teacher explains in English, then occasionally mixes in Javanese and Indonesian, so it's not entirely in English and it doesn't make us confused... For example, when the teacher explains in English, I get confused. But when it is explained in Javanese or Indonesian, then I can understand."*

The S1's statement highlights how limited vocabulary knowledge hinders comprehension when classroom discussion takes place entirely in English. Without sufficient vocabulary sources, learners struggle to process meaning, which can lead to misunderstandings during instruction and when responding to questions. The student emphasized that understanding improves when explanations are given in Javanese or Indonesian, emphasizing the importance of translanguaging as a scaffold for bridging English competence gaps. This suggests that using various languages allows students to access meaning more successfully, especially in situations when exposure to English is limited.

Extract 11

S2: *"Oh yes, I understand better when the explanation is mixed, but if it is mixed with Javanese, I get even more confused. So, when it is mixed with English and Indonesian, I can understand better. Sometimes we are asked to check the pronunciation, usually through Chrome using the Cambridge Dictionary, which can provide examples of how to say the words."*

The student's preference for English-Indonesian translation over English-Javanese demonstrates that comprehension is heavily influenced by the language of instruction. Javanese is predominantly utilised in informal and oral circumstances, which may lack the academic register required for English acquisition. In line with the teachers' statement, the student also mentioned using digital resources like the Cambridge Dictionary to help with pronunciation, suggesting that technological scaffolds work in tandem with linguistic scaffolds to help people understand.

Role of translanguaging in skill development for ESP

By linking their native language with English, students can gain a deeper understanding of complex topics, clearly express their ideas, and comprehend challenging materials. When students practice these skills using multilingual techniques, they enhance their competence and improve their ability to retain information.

Extract 12

T: *"Because there are many new vocabularies, I have to provide a vocabulary list. Then I read it aloud. After that, we check the tools in the school lab. For example, this is a screwdriver, this is attached to the bolt. So, they understand ... not only the tools themselves, but also how to describe them."*

The teacher's practice illustrates a form of contextualized support. By providing a vocabulary list related to students' vocational field and immediately connecting it with fundamental tools in the laboratory, the teacher supports comprehension through multimodal input such as written, oral, and visual. This method enables students to not only recognise new phrases but also place them in authentic contexts, making vocabulary more remembered and functional. The practice also encourages incremental language development by guiding pupils from knowing technical elements in their surroundings to describing them in English. This integration of technical practice and language learning allows students to connect classroom English to their discipline knowledge, lowering anxiety when encountering unfamiliar phrases.

Extract 13

S1: *"Yes, it can help to improve my English skills."*

S2: *"It helps me better, but only a little bit."*

The students' responses indicate that translanguaging is viewed as a helpful tool, while its impact differs by learner. While S1 believes it is directly beneficial to overall English competence, S2 sees a more restricted influence. This contrast emphasises the variations in how learners internalise translanguaging practices. The variation may stem from factors such as proficiency level, personal learning strategies, or the extent of exposure to English outside the classroom. These insights suggest that translanguaging functions as a scaffold that can lower language barriers, yet its effectiveness is not uniform across all students, reflecting the need for differentiated application in EFL classrooms.

In addition, in the classroom observation, the teacher employed translanguaging flexibly as a pedagogical strategy to support students' comprehension. This practice was consistently applied throughout the lesson from the opening to the closing stages as a means of facilitating access to learning materials. When modeling sentences or explaining expressions in English, the teacher frequently provided translations in Indonesian and occasionally engaged students using Javanese. This multilingual approach helped create a linguistically safe environment, enabling students to participate more actively, particularly in imitation and questioning tasks. The observation also revealed variation in student participation, with those possessing prior knowledge of English demonstrating greater engagement than their peers with limited English proficiency. This practice shows that translanguaging functions not only as a linguistic support mechanism but also as an adaptive instructional strategy tailored to the classroom context and the diverse proficiency levels of students.

DISCUSSION

This discussion focused on findings that reveal TL's potential to enhance students' engagement in ESP classrooms and, to some extent, comprehension of the materials. The teacher frequently uses TL to introduce new terms, explain complex concepts, define challenging vocabulary, and ensure accurate pronunciation. Tools like Cambridge Dictionary often support this process. However, the effectiveness of translanguaging depends heavily on the languages used and the students' familiarity with them. For some students, pairing English with Indonesian generally facilitates their understanding, while incorporating Javanese sometimes still leads to confusion or difficulty.

Translanguaging strategies hold potentials in fostering language development, particularly in speaking and writing. Techniques such as utilizing vocabulary lists, guiding students to respond in English, and translating complex terms could enrich students' vocabulary and boosted their confidence in English language use. However, the improvement in these skills remains somewhat limited due to students' inadequate foundational vocabulary. Moreover, students' responses to translanguaging vary. Students' mixed feelings about translanguaging appeared to come from a perception of the English language as more relevant professionally and internationally than other local languages that constituted their multilingualism, as has been confirmed in prior research (Dovchin & Wang, 2024). Some students feel more comfortable and engaged when Javanese is integrated, as it provides a sense of familiarity and ease. Others prefer conversing with English mixed with Bahasa Indonesia, which aligns more closely with the national language used in formal education. These different preferences suggest that teachers need to tailor their translanguaging strategies to meet the linguistic needs of their students.

TL can facilitate the comprehension of complex concepts and enhance academic and professional communication skills. For instance, in this ESP classroom, especially in DKV program, many technical terms originate from English, such as *layout*, *typography*, *vector*, *interface*, *rendering*, *leading*, and *grid system*. Through TL, teachers can explain the concept of leading (which refers to the spacing between lines of text) by comparing it with the equivalent term in Bahasa Indonesia "*spasi antarbaris*". However, in some cases, TL can also become a hindrance if not implemented strategically or if students become overly reliant on their first language, reducing their exposure to English. For example, if students predominantly use their first language during technical discussions without attempting to connect it with relevant English vocabulary, this may slow down the acquisition of domain-specific vocabulary in English. Therefore, the implementation of TL should be carefully designed to support the mastery of specialized vocabulary while ensuring that students have ample opportunities to practice using the target language.

Furthermore, classroom observations revealed that TL does not fully assist students in understanding the material. While translanguaging may aid students in understanding the meaning of a word in their first language, it does not provide insight into the appropriate context for knowledge—specifically, how and when to use a word in English. Additionally, most students require guidance on how to speak English effectively. Findings show that students engaged in translanguaging and acknowledged its benefits in their group activities. They nevertheless expressed reservations about embracing TL as a formal pedagogy in the classroom. Students' mixed feelings about TL appeared to come from a perception of the English language as more relevant professionally and internationally than other local languages that constituted their multilingualism.

Despite its benefits, the implementation of translanguaging poses challenges. Frequent switching between English, Indonesian, and Javanese can sometimes confuse students and reduce their focus on practical English usage (Abdulloh, 2021). Additionally, the reliance on translanguaging to bridge comprehension gaps may inadvertently delay students' progress in mastering English independently. The results suggest that TL practices may improve students' ability to participate in class by improving students understanding of teacher instructions. However, when teachers use TL within IRF (initiation response feedback) sequences, student participation appears to be limited to responses within the IRF sequences, suggesting students may struggle to gain any sense of control over the learning environment in such situations. Relating such findings to Zone of Proximal

Development, such phenomena could be explained by the misalignment between the lesson and students' prior knowledge (Chaiklin, 2003; Vygotsky, 2012). From a sociocultural perspective, this issue can be explained through ZPD. The difference between what learners can demonstrate during guided practice and what they can recall independently in later sessions shows that the support provided was not enough to maintain learning without help. Besides, students generally learn at the same pace (Koedinger et al., 2023); the difference is in prior knowledge. Issues arise when students do not have prior knowledge, e.g., vocabulary etc., that can help them understand the material learned in class.

Students who have more prior knowledge tend to learn faster because they have a stronger foundation. This allows those who are already ahead to continue to be ahead. However, if each student is given training that is appropriate to their abilities, all students can progress at the same rate. Therefore, the practice of translation itself will not have a significant learning effect if it is not aligned with appropriate scaffolding efforts, in the sense that it is adjusted to the student's level. In the classroom observations, it was found that the material being studied had been simplified, but some students still seemed to have difficulty understanding the material given. This means that they do not yet have prior knowledge, such as vocabulary, and the knowledge to link what they already know before to make inferences in understanding new vocabulary.

The findings emphasize that the effectiveness of translanguaging depends on its integration with scaffolding strategies that align with students' varying levels of proficiency. Without such alignment, translanguaging alone may not significantly enhance learning outcomes. Structured support and differentiated training based on students' abilities can ensure equitable progress, enabling all students to achieve comparable learning advancements. As such, teachers should not only focus on providing translanguaging spaces, but they should also monitor how students utilize them (Rasman, 2018). In this case, teachers should guide its use in a way that focuses on learning objectives. This can be accomplished by designating specific moments when translanguaging is used for concept clarification while encouraging the use of English in discussions and written assignments. Teachers should use translanguaging wisely to prevent its overuse and refine their teaching strategies to gradually reduce reliance on it (Sapitri et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the teacher and students perceive the translanguaging strategy as beneficial, especially in reducing barriers to understanding complex ESP terms. From the perspective of teachers and students, translanguaging is seen as a tool to reduce the obstacles in understanding complex ESP terms and to create a more supportive learning environment. By integrating native languages with English, teachers can simplify complex concepts, clarify specialized vocabulary, and foster a supportive environment that encourages active student engagement. This indicates that this strategy also fosters students' confidence in expressing their opinions or ideas by switching between languages and making them more willing to participate in class discussions. However, this study also identifies several challenges in implementing translanguaging, such as students' limited English vocabulary, varying proficiency levels, and over-reliance on native languages. While translanguaging helps bridge the gap in students' understanding of the material, excessive use of native languages may hinder students' exposure to and retention of English. Therefore, its effectiveness lies in careful implementation, balancing native language use with sufficient English practice, and using scaffolding approaches that are appropriate for students' proficiency levels. In this study, the author conducted observations and interviews in a specific context. However, the results do not imply that it can be generalized to all translanguaging practices. Further research is needed in similar or different contexts to evaluate the effectiveness of translanguaging in enhancing students' understanding more broadly. Moreover, it is also necessary to evaluate more comprehensively its role in supporting students' language development across broader settings and levels of education.

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The authors of the manuscript affirm that they have no conflicting interests.

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