

# Translanguaging Practice in Higher Education: Lecturers' and Students' Perspectives (An Argumentative Essay)

Alfian

Universitas Esa Unggul, Jl. Arjuna Utara 9 Kebon Jeruk Jakarta Barat 11510, Indonesia

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## Abstract

The notion of Translanguaging is not something new in the context of EFL classroom but, both lecturer and student may not be familiar with the basic concept and how it is implemented in the classroom, that is why this paper is presented as argumentative essay focusing to explore the basic notion of Translanguaging from the perspective of lecture and students. It tried to explain about challenges and opportunities of bringing about Translanguaging to classroom practice. From the theories and several studies discussing about the implementation of Translanguaging, it is found that several findings support the practice of Translanguaging, while others found its drawback so that it is worth investigating to see on the lecturers' and students' perspectives. Since Translanguaging changes the way people think about second language learning, it needs to be viewed by students as both a threat and an opportunity. Lecturers, on the other hand, must see it as a university-wide theme applied to Translanguaging through active and collaborative learning.

*Keywords:* Translanguaging; Higher Education; Lecturers; Students; Perspective

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## 1. Introduction

Multilingualism has always been an interesting topic in today's globalized world because it is linked to diversity. Due to the diversity, there is an urgent need for mutual understanding among people with different linguistic backgrounds. The English language teaching (ELT) sector has grown with the advent of globalization, as English has become a means of economic progress, increased reputation, and international mobility (Rajendram, 2021). It is suggested that translanguaging can be used in education, particularly in bilingual education, as a transformative practice to provide a trans-space of change and interdisciplinarity of knowledge and understandings (García & Wei, 2014). In Asian countries, where English is used as the medium of educational instruction, there is a growing awareness of the consequences of linguistic diversity in education (Smith, 2017), so that diversity should be seen as an advantage. It leads to the notion that the traditional ways of perceiving language need questioning in today's superdiversity, mobility, and fluidity (García & Seltzer, 2016). More importantly, teaching bilingual students is changing toward a multilingual approach in which different language resources need to be considered (García, 2020).

In its practice, however, students typically come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, using one language as a medium of education appears to be a challenge. Another important thing was when and how can other languages be used as a resource for learning? (García & Wei, 2014). Given the context, Translanguaging seems to be worth practicing since Translanguaging bridges understandings of language diversity for different types of students—those who are said to be bilingual and those considered multidialectal (Li, 2020). Although the practice of Translanguaging has been extensively exposed in the classroom setting, its application in the Higher Education EFL classroom appears to get less attention. Therefore, it may elicit positive and negative responses from lecturers and students regarding the issue of multilingualism. The situation is not different in Indonesia; regardless of whether the program is monolingual or

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\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [ianalfi182@gmail.com](mailto:ianalfi182@gmail.com) (Alfian)

bilingual, students typically come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Using one language as a medium of education appears to be a challenge. This condition leads to the critical question of why language education continues to be monolingual in an era where multilingualism has become more visible (García, 2019). In response to these questions, competing notions attempt to explain the actual language activity, such as Translanguaging ? (García & Wei, 2014). While English-only policies and practices are widespread in many educational contexts, Canagarajah (2011a) believes that Translanguaging cannot be eliminated because it is a natural phenomenon for multilingual learners.

Although Translanguaging has been widely discussed in the classroom, lecturers', and students' thoughts on whether it was used intentionally or unintentionally in the Higher Education EFL classroom don't seem to get as much attention. Several studies have focused on the practice of Translanguaging in the EFL context, but few have focused on lecturers' and students' experiences.

## **2. What is Translanguaging?**

Translanguaging must be well defined since there has been some discussion over whether it is distinct from code-switching. Cen Williams introduced the word translanguaging in Welsh to refer to a teaching approach in which the language of input and language of output are purposely changed (García & Wei, 2014). Its primary goal is linked to an educational strategy in which students are encouraged to switch between languages for receptive or productive usage; for example, students may be instructed to read in English and write in Welsh, and vice versa (Baker, 2011). From this definition, the writer would say that translanguaging is one of the instructional methodologies used in the classroom. Furthermore, , Canagarajah (2011b) defines translanguaging as the ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages by seeing the several languages that compose their repertoire in an interconnected way. The writer posit that we might use translanguaging to various activities in the school that focus on developing four language abilities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). It is scaffolding activities that need to be well designed. It is in line with what had been proposed by Li Wei (2018), stating that translanguaging is a scaffold that needs careful and systematic implementation. In the writer's opinion, Williams' and Baker's, Garcia's, and Wei's definition of translanguaging must be considered. We may discover various definitions of Translanguaging from other renowned researchers interested in Translanguaging. Knowing who initially created the term will help us compare one description to another.

Given this understanding, the writer agrees with Molina and Samuelson (2017), asserting that Translanguaging is distinct from code-switching. They urged that the process of changing two languages is referred to as code-switching, whereas translanguaging is concerned with the speakers' construction, which builds the entire language repertoire. In my opinion, one important thing to distinguish between translanguaging and code-switching is laid on the practice in the classroom. Translanguaging usually occurs in the classroom while code-switching is outside the classroom, and more importantly, when we are talking about Translanguaging, we are utterly talking about the scaffolding activities. I concluded that Translanguaging practice could be done not only for bilingual and multilingual classes but also for the class using English as a medium of instruction. It is in line with Smith (2017), asserting that Translanguaging is a helpful term in contexts where the focus is on how students from a language background different from the mainstream learn in an EMI set.

## **3. Translanguaging as a Theory and Practice**

Park (2018) points out that although most translanguaging studies have been conducted in the classroom setting, little is known about translanguaging in higher education. Because of this challenge, it is necessary to investigate translanguaging in a higher education setting to identify a gap between theory and practice in the Higher Education EFL classroom. It is paramount to see the actual practice of translanguaging in the classroom setting. Mazzafero (2018) asserts that the original conceptualization of Translanguaging laid the groundwork for a paradigm shift in how multilingual individuals dynamically create their everyday language practices both within and outside the classroom. With the potential practice of Translanguaging, it is not impossible to bring about this practice either in the school or

out of the school if scaffolding activities are used. It is crucial since the scaffolding activities are mainly used to create various affordances and opportunities for learning during students' collaborative social interactions, as Rajendram (2021) proposed. In other words, the linguistic minorities in Indonesia are not seen or treated as equal or contributing members of the national community. Additionally, it is critical to highlight that this article does not evaluate whether the scaffolding activities are adequate or improved.

Translanguaging in schools creates the possibility that bilingual students could use their entire linguistic and semiotic repertoire to make meaning. The teacher would take it up as a legitimate pedagogical practice (García & Wei, 2014). Regarding its course in the EFL classroom, Rabbidge (2019) asserts that English learners in EFL circumstances have substantially less exposure to and interaction in English. Hence language programs that increase vulnerability to English are said to be essential. It is presented as something entirely new, and it necessitates a social semiotic theory that allows for a new interpretation of language. Traditional language ideas are addressed to fight disruptive beliefs such as the monolingual bias in most language education settings. What becomes crucial is that lecturers must establish a translanguaging perspective before designing or conducting it in the EFL classroom. In doing so, the writer believes that translanguaging will encourage both positive and negative affirmations in acquiring a foreign language.

#### **4. Translanguaging and the language used in the bilingual classroom**

Translanguaging theory refutes the notion of separate languages as a psycholinguistic reality favoring a unified linguistic system (Otheguy et al., 2018). It develops a comprehensive account of multilingual functioning and development by positing a unitary linguistic system where distinctions between named languages are viewed arbitrarily (Otheguy et al., 2018; Wei, 2018). In the context of classrooms, encouraging bilingual students to use their whole linguistic system makes students easier make sense of what they're saying because they don't have to hold back any part of their linguistic system. The unitary view of bilinguals' linguistic system blurs between learning a second or foreign language and being bilingual (Ossa Parra & Proctor, 2021). The Dean and Head of Department had explicitly directed the usage of the target language (English) in the context of this study. It led to utilizing the target language (English) in the classroom. What made it worse was that the English-only policy was made without seeing the potential use of L1 and in its practice, both faculty members and students were still using L1. It leads the writer to explore the perspective from both sides (lecturers and students)

#### **5. Lecturer's and student's perspectives on Translanguaging practice**

Yuvayavan (2019) discovered that EFL instructors' views did not correspond to their behaviors. Although they had good attitudes toward translanguaging in specific contexts, they did not regularly use this technique due to their institutions, colleagues, and students' parents. Another study from Yuan and Yang (2020) shows that teacher educators may not always know how translanguaging works to help enhance their classroom practice. It indicates that teacher educators firstly need to become conscious of their translanguaging intuition and view translanguaging as a valuable tool for education. I posit that lecturers' translanguaging practice is closely related to their individual beliefs and values and external policy and requirement in different teaching contexts. Therefore, teacher educators need to engage in ongoing reflections to examine their assumptions and work environment (associated with social, cultural, and linguistic features) when engaging in translanguaging practice. Lecturers' perspectives on translanguaging practice seem to be varied due to belief, ideology, and policy and a deep understanding of how to use translanguaging in the classroom were paramount.

Cartens (2016) evaluated the impact of translanguaging on the development of African bilinguals' academic literacy in English. In this study, the participants reported the benefits of this pedagogy, especially its cognitive gains. It enabled them to scaffold their understanding by creating an overall picture, simplifying the concepts, and making distributions among them. Another study shows that translanguaging can enhance multilingual students' understanding of concepts through collaborative learning. It is proposed that translanguaging can be used in joint learning activities to enhance a more profound experience of the (Mbirimi-Hungwe & McCabe, 2020). However, students who felt less optimistic about

translanguaging encouraged by their teacher expressed fears of becoming confused or not fully acquiring the language of schooling. Other students reported becoming confused only when different languages are used a lot (Ticheloven et al., 2019). Another finding indicates that learners used translanguaging agentively to support one another's language learning, build rapport, resolve conflict, assert their cultural identity, and draw on knowledge across languages. Teacher and peer language policies a

nd practices, parental discourses on linguistic capital, and societal discourses on ethnicity, nationality, and marginalization limited learners' use of translanguaging. (Rajendram, 2021). These insights will inform future research questions on the role of teacher language policy and practices in addressing students' translanguaging, the meaning and value of linguistic capital for immigrant students, how educator language ideologies mediate social change efforts around equity. In this way, research on translanguaging can inform progress toward more social justice in the classrooms of schools.

## **6. Translanguaging practice in EFL classroom**

Translanguaging in schools creates the possibility that bilingual students could use their entire linguistic and semiotic repertoire to make meaning. The teacher would take it up as a legitimate pedagogical practice (García & Wei, 2014). Regarding its practice in the EFL classroom, I agree with Rabbidge's (2019) assertion that English learners in EFL circumstances have substantially less exposure to and interaction in English. Hence language programs that increase exposure to English are said to be essential. It is presented as something entirely new, and it necessitates a social semiotic theory that allows for a new interpretation of language. Traditional language ideas are addressed to fight disruptive beliefs such as the monolingual bias in most language education settings. What becomes crucial, in my opinion, is that lecturers must establish a translanguaging perspective before designing or conducting it in the EFL classroom. A translanguaging perspective is based on unearthing the colonial difference and how language, bilingualism, and multilingualism have been and continue to be utilized to minoritize and racialize conquered and colonized nations (Panagiotopoulou et al., 2020).

### *Lecturer's perspectives on Translanguaging practice*

Yuvayavan (2019) discovered that EFL instructors' views did not correspond to their behaviors. Although they had good attitudes toward translanguaging in specific contexts, they did not regularly use this technique due to their institutions, colleagues, and student's parents. Another study from Yuan and Yang (2020) shows that teacher educators may not always know how translanguaging works to help enhance their classroom practice. In my opinion, it indicates that teacher educators firstly need to become conscious of their translanguaging intuition and view translanguaging as a valuable tool for education. I also believe that lecturers' translanguaging practice is closely related to their individual beliefs and values and external policy and requirement in different teaching contexts. Therefore, teacher educators need to engage in ongoing reflections to examine their assumptions and work environment (associated with social, cultural, and linguistic features) when engaging in translanguaging practice practice (Yuan & Yang, 2020). To sum up, lecturers' perspectives on translanguaging practice seem to be varied due to several factors. Lecturers' beliefs and a deep understanding of how to use translanguaging in the classroom were also paramount.

## **7. Students' perspectives on Translanguaging practice**

The perceptions of students in higher education have received attention in some studies. Cartens (2016) evaluated the impact of translanguaging on the development of African bilinguals' academic literacy in English. In this study, the participants reported the benefits of this pedagogy, especially its cognitive gains. It enabled them to scaffold their understanding by creating an overall picture, simplifying the concepts, and making distributions among them. Another study shows that translanguaging can enhance multilingual students' understanding of concepts through collaborative learning. It is proposed that translanguaging can be used in collaborative learning activities to enhance a deeper understanding of the material (Mbirimi-Hungwe & McCabe, 2020). However, students who felt less optimistic about translanguaging encouraged by their teacher expressed fears of becoming confused or not fully acquiring the language

of schooling. Other students reported becoming confused only when different languages are used a lot (Ticheloven et al., 2019). Another finding indicates that learners used translanguaging agentively to support one another's language learning, build rapport, resolve conflict, assert their cultural identity, and draw on knowledge across languages. However, learners' use of translanguaging was constrained by their teacher's and peers' language policies and practices, parental discourses about linguistic capital, and societal discourses on ethnicity, nationality, and marginalization (Rajendram, 2021).

## 8. Conclusion

Translanguaging practice in Higher Education EFL classroom needs to be well prepared and maintained as several considerations need to be considered for its approach. Several findings support the practice of Translanguaging, while others found its drawback so that it is worth investigating to see on the lecturers' and students' perspectives. Suppose we want future professionals to be bilingual and multilingual. In that case, bilingual activities and instruction should be employed at all levels, and universities need to recanalize all department courses, including foreign language, for improvements (Velásquez, 2019). One notion that the writer thinks to be essential is a guideline to understand Translanguaging is the concept of Multi Competency theory. It is a notion that emphasizes the speaker's entire intellect rather than their native or second language. It holds that someone who understands two or more languages is distinct from someone who is monolingual and, as such, should be seen as an individual rather than as a substandard monolingual. It shifts the perspective on second language learning (Wang, 2019). Students may regard translanguaging as both a threat and an opportunity. However, lecturers must see it as a university-wide theme applied to translanguaging through active and collaborative learning.

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