

Understanding Translanguaging in Bebandem Vocational High School EFL Classroom: Strategies and Teacher Pedagogical Reasoning

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Abstract: This study explores translanguaging in a vocational high school English classroom at the Bebandem district, in Bali, focusing on the teacher's translanguaging strategy and the reasons behind its use. The study was conducted in a 10th-grade English class of the Hotel Hospitality program, a multilingual classroom setting where students and teachers regularly use English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Basa Bali. With basic qualitative study design, data were collected through classroom observations and a semi-structured teacher interview. The results revealed twelve translanguaging strategies used by the teacher, which were then inductively organized into three functional themes, which cover facilitating comprehension and instruction, promoting peer interaction and collaboration, and supporting students' language output. The interview results further indicated that the teacher's use of translanguaging was guided by pedagogical considerations related to students' language proficiency, learning challenges, and classroom dynamics in EFL multilingual settings. Time triangulation across data suggested that translanguaging in this vocational EFL context functioned as an intentional instructional strategy rather than merely spontaneous language alternation. This study contributes to translanguaging research by highlighting how translanguaging was used as pedagogically focused functions in vocational EFL classrooms, emphasizing the role of teacher awareness in building effective instruction in multilingual settings.

INTRODUCTION

The notion that Indonesian students had difficulty learning study material at school is still true to this day. English classes are no exception, considering Indonesians learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This claim is further supported by studies that find Indonesian EFL students have difficulties during the English learning process (Andika & Mitsalina, 2020; Susanto et al., 2020; Tukan, 2024). Moreover, these difficulties align with the learner autonomy issue that Wiraningsih and Santosa (2020) find, regarding students' dependent tendency on the teachers. The results of the previously mentioned studies include difficulties in vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension. These difficulties especially worsen as Susanto et al. (2020) found that different English proficiency levels among students are one major contributing factor to this issue.

In the vocational high school context, these challenges are crucial to address, as students are guided to learn skills that should be immediately applicable to their future occupations. This concern is further supported by Reswari et al. (2022) who highlight the need for English learning materials that are relevant to students' future workplace and instruction that fits the students' language proficiency level in vocational high schools. Similarly, Ardiansyah (2023) added that better teaching strategies are necessary for EFL vocational high school classrooms, in the hope of making vocational high school graduates perform better in their future occupations.

Based on the discussed issue, teachers have tried a lot of teaching strategies to deal with these rising students' learning challenges. Specifically within this context, translanguaging is one of the phenomena in multilingual discourse that is emerging as a pedagogical strategy in the classroom and is commonly used by teachers and students in multilingual geography contexts such as Indonesia (Sahib, 2019). Translanguaging is a phenomenon where multilingual people use multiple languages and varieties to communicate effectively while shaping experience and building up knowledge (Baker & Wright, 2021). It emphasizes the fluid use of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire, with a primary focus on understanding and communication. Due to this nature, translanguaging has been extended into the educational field and not just as a phenomenon through the concept of pedagogical translanguaging, which recognizes and maximizes students' multilingual resources to improve both language and content learning (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Garcia & Wei, 2014).

In the field of English education and EFL, Silwal (2021) stated that translanguaging can be planned as a teaching strategy to be applied in the classroom. However, translanguaging can also occur naturally without any prior planning, as it is a natural phenomenon in a multilingual context. Later on, it was further indicated that the teachers were often unaware of translanguaging use during the teaching processes (Hu, 2020; Silwal, 2021). This opens up possibilities for more research into the topic of translanguaging in the EFL multilingual context.

Despite the growing body of research on translanguaging, several gaps remain. Studies on the topic of translanguaging have explored its applications, teacher perception, strategies, effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities across different contexts of English Language Teaching (ELT) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) (Ataş, 2023; Hu, 2020; Liando et al., 2023; Rauteda, 2024; Sakkir et al., 2024). Especially on the topic of translanguaging strategies in the classroom, prior studies have mostly focused on the topic without accounting for established translanguaging strategies and their frameworks, resulting in general, non-specific results. Moreover, there is limited research examining the strategies used by teachers in EFL classrooms within the vocational high school context. And, past research often faces challenges in generalizability, making it difficult to determine whether similar results would emerge in different geographical, multilingual, or contextual settings, such as Indonesia's varied multilingual vocational classrooms.

As the study of translanguaging grew over the years (Mahayanti et al., 2024), this study aims to address these gaps by focusing on a vocational high school in the Bebandem district, Bali, specifically in the 10th-grade Hotel Hospitality program's English class. In this context, the class provides an opportunity to explore translanguaging strategies used by the teacher. Moreover, the English subject class represents the first space where students begin building their English competency and proficiency, which they later can use for future hospitality interactions.

By observing how translanguaging strategies are used in this specific context, this study seeks to identify both what strategies are used and why they are being used in the classroom. Furthermore, the study examines these strategies through the lens of García and Wei's (2014) translanguaging theory, treating translanguaging as a function-oriented pedagogy rather than just general language

practice in a classroom context. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to a deeper and more specific understanding of translanguaging strategies in vocational EFL classrooms and is hoped to be used as a reference for developing more effective. These context-specific teaching strategies promote the use of translanguaging in multilingual contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of translanguaging was originally proposed by Williams (1994) to develop Welsh students' bilingualism by having them work on tasks that require them to use Welsh and English alternately. Over time, translanguaging has been defined as a phenomenon in which multilingual people use multiple languages and varieties to communicate effectively while shaping experience and building knowledge (Baker & Wright, 2021). It is usually described as a phenomenon where people use the fluid movement of their repertoire of languages to communicate. Furthermore, in translanguaging, it is also important to note that the main focus is meaning-making and understanding (García and Wei, 2014). Thus, translanguaging is usually used with some purpose in mind, and was also viewed as a strategic use of students' full linguistic repertoire to support learning.

García and Wei (2014) explained that the phenomenon of translanguaging can occur naturally to assist communication in multilingual settings, which is often referred to as natural or spontaneous translanguaging. However, translanguaging can also be planned structurally in the educational context, known as official or pedagogical translanguaging. By its definition, pedagogical translanguaging is the translanguaging within the field of pedagogy and education that introduces a methodology that recognizes and maximizes students' multilingual capacities during the learning process. Cenoz and Gorter (2021) stated that pedagogical translanguaging is a theoretical and instructional approach that aims to improve language and content quality in educational settings by utilizing resources from the learner's entire linguistic repertoire.

However, it is also important to note that previous studies have proven that both types of translanguaging practices are viable in the classroom. For example, Zhang and Jocuns (2022) found that while translanguaging emerged naturally among Chinese students in English-medium instruction, the lack of planned and structured approaches improved the flow of communications. On the side of pedagogical translanguaging, Cenoz and Gorter (2021) noted that pedagogical translanguaging practices, which align closely with theoretical frameworks, are effective in assisting the learning process.

In summary, translanguaging may occur both naturally and pedagogically in multilingual contexts. Natural translanguaging refers to spontaneous language practices that emerge from speakers' multilingual repertoires during communication as a language phenomenon. In contrast, pedagogical translanguaging refers to the intentional use of these linguistic resources by teachers to support learning processes as a pedagogy. While natural translanguaging reflects the linguistic realities of multilingual classrooms, this study focuses specifically on translanguaging as a pedagogy implemented by the teacher.

As for this study to address its goal, an existing concept on the pedagogical translanguaging framework was reviewed as a comparison to the translanguaging strategies found in this study. One example of pedagogical translanguaging frameworks is proposed by García and Wei (2014) as principles and strategies of translanguaging as pedagogy in their book titled "Translanguaging, Language, Bilingualism, and Education". This pedagogical translanguaging framework divides the translanguaging practices in the classroom into two different categories. The first one is how the

pedagogical translanguaging practices can be used by teachers for seven different common language and content learning goals. The second one is how the pedagogical translanguaging practices can be broken down into possible strategies to address the previously stated goals.

With the previously reviewed pedagogical translanguaging framework as a reference, García and Wei (2014) have established some pedagogical translanguaging strategies ranging from translation and inner speech to the use of multilingual learning resources in the classroom. These strategies are especially common in EFL classes, where creative approaches are needed to promote comprehension and engagement due to students' limited target language skills. However, in real-world practice and context-specific studies, these strategies might not always align with what García and Wei (2014) have proposed.

In comparison with previous studies, Rauteda (2024) revealed that teachers used translanguaging as a language teaching strategy, which included translation and code-mixing to simplify the teaching content. Similarly, Riswanto (2022) identified that teachers employed three pedagogical translanguaging strategies when teaching English, which include code-mixing, English-to-Indonesian translation, and Indonesian-to-English translation techniques. Furthermore, Nursanti (2021) added that synonyms, translation, grouping, and dialogue as translanguaging strategies are seen to be used in higher education English classes where students come from different departments and majors.

While previous studies have shown that translanguaging is actively used in Indonesian EFL classrooms, their results tend to describe translanguaging strategies using relatively broad categories, commonly covering translation and code-mixing. This pattern is reflected in the studies where Rauteda (2024) and Riswanto (2022) discussed translanguaging in terms of general language alternation to simplify instruction with translation and code-mixing as their results. Among these studies, Nursanti (2021) provided more detailed results, revealing strategies such as synonyms, translation, and strategies similar to grouping and dialogue. Their research demonstrated several practical ways in which translanguaging strategies might be implemented in English classes at higher education levels. However, although these strategies are clearly articulated, they were not themed around broader pedagogical functions. This allowed the present study to contribute by providing a more comprehensive and function-oriented theming of translanguaging strategies, demonstrating how translanguaging functions as a set of intentional teaching strategies that extend beyond language alternation.

In conclusion, prior studies have mostly focused on only translanguaging strategies without accounting for them within existing translanguaging frameworks, resulting in general and non-specific results of translanguaging strategies. Furthermore, previous translanguaging studies' limitations were often connected to their generalizability, making it difficult to assess whether the same type of study would result in the same results in a different research setting. Moreover, factors such as teachers' limited understanding of translanguaging practices and sociopolitical contexts contribute to inconsistencies in the implementation and use of translanguaging strategies in the classroom (Rasman, 2018; Silwal, 2021).

Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the growing body of research in the field of translanguaging and especially its use as a classroom strategy by closing the geographical and contextual gap of the previously conducted study. Thus, this study was deliberately conducted in Bebandem, where translanguaging studies are scarce and uncommon, while also having the multilingual dynamic that is suitable for translanguaging studies. Moreover, this study also further discussed the results by closely examining them through the lens of existing translanguaging

frameworks, allowing both theory and data-driven results to be examined. With that, it is hoped that the results of this study contribute new things to the studies of translanguaging.

METHODS

This study utilized a basic qualitative study as its research design to investigate the translanguaging strategies of the 10th-grade Hotel Hospitality program in Bebandem vocational high school. This particular research design was chosen because it allows for a rich descriptive exploration of a specific single phenomenon, a process, or a particular point of view in order to understand it. According to Ary et al. (2009), a basic qualitative study focuses on interpreting how individuals make meaning of their experiences and phenomena, making it suitable for exploring the translanguaging strategies in natural classroom contexts. This design is chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of both the strategies used and the reasons behind their use.

To collect the data, this study used observation and interviews as its data collection methods. This is similar to what Liando et al. (2022) suggested for forming reliable data on qualitative translanguaging studies. Complemented with thematic analysis and content analysis as the methods of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Krippendorff, 2018). This study was able to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes within the data. Observation data were analyzed using thematic analysis, while the interview data were analyzed using content analysis. Using both data analysis methods allows for an in-depth understanding of both the translanguaging strategies and the reasons behind their use, as explained by the teacher.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the results, a triangulation was done. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that triangulation can be done by sources, methods, or investigators. In addition to that, time triangulation was also a common triangulation method, which Creswell and Creswell (2017) explained as collecting data at different times or time points to observe changes or consistency. By allowing the cross-verification of data from several time periods, time triangulation improves the credibility, reliability, and confirmability of the written report. It's about seeing if patterns hold across various moments or periods, adding depth to understanding.

For this particular study, classroom observations were conducted across multiple English class sessions, allowing the study to capture translanguaging strategies as they naturally occurred over time rather than relying on a single instructional moment. By examining translanguaging practices across different time points and sessions, time triangulation strengthens the credibility of the thematic and content analysis results and ensures a more trustworthy interpretation of translanguaging strategies presented in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results are obtained from two sources of data, observations and interviews with the teachers. Data from classroom observations were analyzed using thematic analysis to interpret patterns within the teachers' use of translanguaging strategies, which allows this study to identify the translanguaging strategies used in the English classroom. Later on, the identified translanguaging strategies were used as a base to conduct the interview alongside the interview guide. The data from teacher interviews were analyzed with qualitative content analysis to explore the reasons behind the use of the identified translanguaging strategies.

The observations were conducted over three sessions, and the data collection instrument was developed based on García and Wei's (2014) translanguaging framework called the principles and strategies of translanguaging as pedagogy, which includes 20 possible classroom translanguaging

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strategies.

The thematic analysis revealed three main themes that organize the identified translanguaging strategies observed in the classroom. Out of the listed 20 strategies, a total of 12 strategies were identified during the observed sessions. These strategies include translation, inner speech, reading multilingual texts, alternating language and media, sentence starters, etc. However, the strategies of collaborative grouping and collaborative dialogue were merged as a single strategy of multilingual peer dialogue after careful coding, resulting in a total of 11 translanguaging strategies from the initial 12 strategies. Some strategies appeared consistently across sessions, while others were only observed in one or two sessions, depending on the topic and class activities.

These translanguaging strategies also served as the initial codes for the thematic analysis as a whole, which included both predefined and context-driven translanguaging strategies, such as translation, multilingual peer dialogue, multilingual writing, etc. These themes, along with the associated strategies, are overviewed in Table 1. Thematic Overview of Identified Translanguaging Strategies, which shows how the initial codes develop into themes and the classroom functions they support during observation. This serves as an introduction to translanguaging strategies and their themes, which will be further discussed throughout this study.

Table 1. Thematic Overview of Identified Translanguaging Strategies

Code/Translanguaging Strategy	Initial Theme	Final Theme
Translation, Multilingual Listening/Visual Resources, Alternating Languages and Media, Multilingual Vocabulary Inquiry, Cognates, Translanguaging in Speaking	Supporting Comprehension and Instruction	Facilitating Comprehension and Instruction
Multilingual Peer Dialogue	Promoting Students' Engagement	Promoting Students' Peer Interaction and Collaboration
Reading Multilingual Texts, Inner Speech, Translanguaging in Writing, Sentence Starters.	Supporting Students' Language Output	Supporting Students' Language Output

The identified strategies indicate that translanguaging in this classroom was not used randomly or merely as incidental multilingual communication. Rather, the strategies appeared to function pedagogically in response to specific classroom needs. Strategies grouped under Facilitating Comprehension and Instruction were particularly dominant during teacher explanation, task clarification, and vocabulary-focused activities, suggesting that translanguaging was primarily positioned as a scaffold for students' understanding of English content. This pattern reflects the teacher's awareness of students' varying English proficiency levels and the need to maintain accessibility of instruction in a multilingual vocational classroom context.

Moreover, the findings show that translanguaging strategies rarely functioned in isolation. Several strategies were often interconnected during classroom interaction. For example, translation frequently appeared together with multilingual listening or visual resources and alternating languages and media, while inner speech and translanguaging in writing were often used together to support students' preparation before producing English output. This indicates that translanguaging practices in the classroom operated as interconnected pedagogical processes rather than as separate instructional techniques.

On the other hand, the interview data revealed that the teacher's reasoning indicated three general categories, which cover Facilitating Comprehension and Instruction, Promoting Peer Interaction and Collaboration, and Supporting Students' Language Output. The similar results of themes and categories between observation and interview data are expected. The observation data identified translanguaging strategies and thematized them based on observed pedagogical functions, while the interview explored the teacher's reasoning behind those functions. Therefore, overlapping categories reflect alignment between classroom implementation and pedagogical intention rather than redundancy between the analyses.

Table 2. Overview of Reasons Behind the Use of Translanguaging Strategies summarizes the overall results of the interviews, including the new categories and codes, and shows how each translanguaging strategy relates to the teacher's underlying reason.

Table 2. Overview of Reasons Behind the Use of Translanguaging Strategies

Codes of Reasons	Emerging Category
Scaffolding students' comprehension (Translation, Reading Multilingual Texts, Multilingual Listening/Visual Resources, Alternating Languages and Media) Building students' vocabulary (Cognates, Multilingual Vocabulary Inquiry)	Facilitating Comprehension and Instruction
Promoting students' peer discussion (Multilingual Peer Dialogue)	Promoting Peer Interaction and Collaboration
Supporting language production through processing (Inner Speech, Translanguaging in Writing), Supporting students' confidence in language production (Sentence Starters) Supporting language production through formative assessment (Translanguaging in Speaking)	Supporting Students' Language Output

The interview findings further revealed that the teacher's pedagogical reasoning was closely connected to students' multilingual realities and learning challenges in the classroom. The teacher consistently emphasized students' limited English proficiency, vocabulary difficulties, confidence

issues, and tendency to rely on familiar languages during peer interaction. As a result, translanguaging was used strategically to reduce communication barriers while still maintaining exposure to English instruction. These findings suggest that translanguaging was not viewed as a replacement for English, but rather as a bridge that supported students in gradually engaging with the target language.

In addition, the findings demonstrate that the teacher's translanguaging practices were strongly function-oriented. Rather than focusing on language separation, the teacher prioritized whether students could understand the material, participate in peer discussion, and produce meaningful language output. This reflects how translanguaging in vocational EFL classrooms may operate less as a purely linguistic phenomenon and more as a practical pedagogical response to classroom demands, students' language repertoires, and instructional goals.

When viewed together, the results from the observations and interview data indicate that translanguaging in this study is both practically observable and pedagogically grounded. Moreover, it was implied that emphasis on students' comprehension is prioritized, as the identified translanguaging strategies clustered more around the theme of Facilitating Comprehension and Instruction, which was also reflected in the interview in how the teacher showed awareness of students' language proficiency.

The alignment between classroom practices and teacher reasoning suggests that translanguaging strategies were used intentionally to address instructional challenges within the multilingual EFL classroom. Although some practices appeared spontaneous during interaction, the teacher's explanations revealed underlying pedagogical considerations related to comprehension support, classroom participation, and language production. This demonstrates that translanguaging in the observed classroom functioned as a flexible instructional approach shaped by contextual classroom needs rather than as incidental language mixing alone.

Discussion

While inductively generated, the themes from the observation data also align with theoretical perspectives on translanguaging, as García and Wei (2014) stated multiple times that translanguaging develops deeper comprehension, more sophisticated discourse, and production of a more complex language output. In the same book, García and Wei (2014) further explained that common goals of using translanguaging in a classroom are to deepen understanding, extend new knowledge, and develop students' critical thinking, which supports the theme of Facilitating Comprehension and Instruction. Furthermore, García and Wei (2014) added that allowing students to work collaboratively with peers with a similar language background helped students to build background knowledge of the classroom material on their own, with the addition of enough target language input to produce adequate output, which overall justified the emerged themes of this thematic analysis.

These theoretical connections support the inductive theming of the final 11 translanguaging strategies, which include Translation, Multilingual Listening/Visual Resources, Alternating Languages and Media, Multilingual Vocabulary Inquiry, Cognates, Translanguaging in Speaking, Multilingual Peer Dialogue, Reading Multilingual Texts, Inner Speech, Translanguaging in Writing, and Sentence Starters into the three functional themes, as each theme reflects the underlying purpose for which translanguaging was used in the classroom, whether it was to facilitate students' comprehension, collaboration, and language output.

In relation to existing studies, the emerged themes in the observation data reflect broader patterns and more specified strategies observed in translanguaging research. In comparison with

previous studies, Rauteda (2024) revealed that teachers used translanguaging as a language teaching strategy, which included translation and code-mixing to simplify the teaching content. Similarly, Riswanto (2022) identified that teachers employed three pedagogical translanguaging strategies when teaching English, which include code-mixing, English-to-Indonesian translation, and Indonesian-to-English translation techniques. Furthermore, Nursanti (2021) added that synonyms, translation, grouping, and dialogue as translanguaging strategies are seen to be used in higher education English classes where students come from different departments and majors.

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Similar to the results of observation data, the results of the interview also revealed three major categories that cover the teacher's reasoning across the observed translanguaging practice during instructions. These categories include Facilitating Comprehension and Instruction, Promoting Peer Interaction and Collaboration, and Supporting Students' Language Output. The purpose of the interview data was not to create a new functional category of translanguaging strategies, but to provide insight into the pedagogical reasons underlying the observed practices. As a result, the categories that emerged from the interviews were viewed as intersecting pedagogical orientations rather than separate functional themes or categories, allowing the results of the interview to significantly enhance and expand upon the themes identified through observation data.

The results of the interview showed that the teacher's use of translanguaging strategies was grounded in a clear pedagogical intention and reasoning. The teacher consistently emphasized the need to give English exposure to the students while keeping the learning accessible to their language proficiency. This reasoning aligned with previous empirical studies in the field, which suggest that translanguaging is used intentionally to make the instruction effective. For example, Rauteda (2024) identified that translanguaging strategies were applied intentionally and purposefully by the teacher to motivate, praise, and encourage the students in the classroom. Similarly, the teacher in this study expressed that translanguaging was necessary to ensure that students could meaningfully engage with classroom content, rather than merely listening to English input without fully understanding it.

Furthermore, the teacher's reasoning that translanguaging facilitates communication and comprehension was also consistently found in previous studies. Which, Nursanti (2021) also revealed that using translanguaging strategies in a classroom with varying English proficiencies will facilitate understanding of the taught English content. While Riswanto (2022) added that translanguaging helps bridge communication between the teacher and students, which ultimately leads to better English content comprehension.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that translanguaging has an important pedagogical role in multilingual EFL classrooms, especially in vocational high school settings where this study was conducted. In the observed classroom, translanguaging worked as a strategy that facilitated students' comprehension, promoted students' collaboration, and supported students' language output, rather than just being used to compensate for students' limited English proficiency.

The results also suggest that the teacher's use of translanguaging was guided by clear pedagogical reasoning and a clear awareness of the struggles of teaching English in the EFL context, which largely involves students' limited English proficiency. Translanguaging was used to balance English exposure with instructional accessibility through the three main themes and categories revealed in the results of this study. More than that, the teacher also briefly expressed that translanguaging can be used to maintain students' engagement and act as an informal assessment tool while being part of the three main themes of the results. This indicates that translanguaging can serve multiple instructional purposes simultaneously, depending on how it is implemented in classroom practice.

In conclusion, this research supports the idea that translanguaging is a flexible and context-oriented pedagogical tool. It emphasizes how crucial it is to understand translanguaging as a reflective teaching strategy influenced by students' language resources and learning objectives, rather than just seen as a collection of classroom strategies.

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