

English-Indonesian Translanguaging: Effects on EFL Students' Vocabulary Acquisition and Concept Comprehension

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of English Indonesian translanguaging, the use of two languages simultaneously, on vocabulary acquisition and comprehension. The participants in this study were students from St. Maria Monte Carmelo Senior High School, Maumere, comprising 32 students from phases E1 and E2, who were selected through purposive sampling. The method employed was a descriptive qualitative approach, utilising instruments such as classroom observation, questionnaires, interviews, and vocabulary and concept understanding tests. The observation indicated that translanguaging was often used to explain the material and vocabulary, making it easier for students to learn the material. Then, the questionnaire data showed that the majority of students had a favourable view of translanguaging, indicating that students became more confident and comfortable while learning. In addition, the interviews revealed that students were not afraid to make mistakes due to the native language usage in the learning process. The test results showed that, on average, students demonstrated satisfactory vocabulary and concept understanding. This study suggests that translanguaging plays a crucial role in facilitating students' acquisition of new vocabulary and knowledge of concepts in the context of English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Translanguaging; Vocabulary Acquisition; Concept Comprehension

Abstrak: Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji dampak dari penggunaan *translanguaging* -penggunaan dua bahasa secara bergantian, terhadap pemerolehan kosakata dan pemahaman, khususnya dalam bahasa Indonesia dan bahasa Inggris. Partisipan dari penelitian ini yaitu siswa-siswi dari SMA St. Monte Carmelo, Maumere, dengan melibatkan 32 siswa dari fase E1 dan E2 yang dipilih melalui *purposive sampling*. Metode yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan instrumen; observasi kelas, kuesioner, wawancara, serta tes kosakata dan pemahaman konsep. Observasi menunjukkan bahwa *translanguaging* digunakan dalam penjelasan materi dan kosakata yang mempermudah siswa untuk mempelajari materi. kemudian, data kuesioner memperlihatkan bahwa mayoritas siswa memiliki pandangan positif terhadap *translanguaging* yaitu siswa menjadi percaya diri dan menjadi nyaman saat belajar. Selain dari itu, wawancara mendalam menunjukkan bahwa siswa menjadi tidak takut melakukan kesalahan karena adanya bantuan bahasa yang dikuasai dalam proses belajar. Dan hasil tes menunjukkan bahwa rata-rata siswa memperoleh kosakata dan pemahaman konsep yang memuaskan. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *translanguaging* memiliki peran yang signifikan dalam membantu siswa memperoleh kosakata dan mendapatkan pemahaman konsep dalam konteks bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing.

Kata Kunci: Translanguaging; Pemerolehan Kosakata; Pemahaman Konsep

INTRODUCTION

English has become a dominant global language, widely recognized as a lingua franca that bridges communication among speakers from diverse linguistic

backgrounds. In addition, English is an international language that takes the role of the most widely spoken and used language in many fields in the world (Rao, 2019, p. 66). Its influence permeates many sectors, including international business, science, technology, and most notably, education. According to Kurniawati et al. (2021), the role of English in global communication is multifaceted and far-reaching, influencing various aspects of human interaction, culture, diplomacy, and academic development (p. 53). This widespread presence highlights the importance of equipping learners with effective strategies to acquire and use the language competently, particularly in education contexts where English proficiency increasingly determines academic and professional opportunities.

In Indonesia, the growing presence of English has significantly impacted the national education system, especially in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). As English becomes more integrated into school curricula, educators face the challenge of finding inclusive and innovative teaching approaches that resonate with students' linguistic realities. As stated by Peng (2024), immersive instruction, that has many ways of teaching interestingly, shows a good impact to enhance students' English fluency (p. 3). One such approach that has gained attention is translanguaging, which offers a more dynamic and learner-centered pedagogy. Itoi (2024), found that translanguaging fosters an interactive classroom environment that enhances engagement, deepens content understanding, and encourages students to apply appropriate language conventions. The practice has emerged as a powerful strategy to improve EFL learners' comprehension and ability to navigate two or more languages in constructing knowledge.

Rather than viewing language use as compartmentalised, translanguaging embraces the whole linguistic repertoire of multilingual learners. It allows students to strategically use both Bahasa Indonesia and English to process information, build understanding, and communicate meaningfully. As Wei & García (2022) explained, translanguaging is often interpreted as simply enabling students to move between the two languages of instruction (p. 314). However, such a limited interpretation overlooks the cognitive and pedagogical advantages of translanguaging, it enables learners to co-construct meaning through the interplay of languages rather than switching between them. This approach recognises students' linguistic resources as assets, not obstacles, and promotes a more equitable learning environment.

Translanguaging also plays a crucial role in enhancing comprehension by enabling students to relate new concepts to their existing knowledge using familiar linguistic frameworks. When learners are allowed to engage with content through both English and Indonesian language, they can better understand abstract or complex ideas. As Cenoz & Gorter (2021) argue, translanguaging serves as a bridge in the language acquisition process, helping students to integrate new knowledge with prior linguistic and cognitive experiences. This perspective positions translanguaging not just as a practical classroom technique, but as a transformative approach to language learning that acknowledges the reality of multilingual students.

In addition to its role in comprehension, translanguaging significantly supports vocabulary acquisition. By allowing learners to draw on familiar language to contextualize and internalize new English vocabulary, translanguaging deepens word understanding and facilitates long-term retention. Renandya & Chang (2022) highlight that translanguaging creates flexible, plurilingual spaces in the classroom where



students' full linguistic repertoires can be utilized as valuable resources in meaning-making and communication (p. 1). Thus, students can articulate their thoughts more precisely and build connections between new words and known concepts, therefore, it can improve their overall language proficiency.

Given these considerations, this study aims to explore how English-Indonesian language translanguaging can be effectively applied in EFL classrooms for students' benefit to acquire new vocabulary and also concept comprehension. As the demand for English proficiency continues to grow in Indonesia's academic and professional spheres, educators must adopt approaches that are inclusive and responsive to students' linguistic realities. Exploring the impact of translanguaging not only addresses current pedagogical challenges but also contributes to the development of equitable teaching practices that empower bilingual or multilingual learners. The researcher employed classroom observation, student interviews, questionnaires, and comprehension and vocabulary tests to examine how translanguaging is practiced and experienced in Indonesian EFL settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative approach supported by descriptive data to examine the impact of English-Indonesian translanguaging on EFL concept understanding and vocabulary acquisition. Lim (2025) stated that this approach can explore social phenomena, such as experiences and perspectives in a social context (p. 201). This study was conducted at Monte Carmelo Senior High School in Maumere City, Indonesia, on English as a foreign language or EFL classes. The participants were 32 students from E (1&2) phases. The participants were selected through purposive sampling best on their exposure to translanguaging in the classroom and their willingness to share their experiences. According to Nyimbili & Nyimbili (2024), purposive sampling enables researchers to select participants who improve the quality, reliability, and trustworthiness of the research results (p. 90). Moreover, the students have mastered more than one language, including their local traditional language and the national language, Indonesian. Regarding that information, the qualitative design is the most suitable one, as it provides an insightful understanding of how translanguaging affects students' understanding of the class material and their ability to acquire new English vocabulary.

The procedure started with a classroom observation conducted to document how English and Indonesian were used alternatively during the lesson. This observation aims to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching process by the teacher or students (Ularte, 2019, p. 20). Observation data focused on any events where translanguaging appears to support or hinder students' understanding of complex EFL concepts or vocabulary. Audio recordings and field notes were used to record live learning practices and student responses. After the observation stage, students were asked to complete a questionnaire aimed to gather their perceptions of how translanguaging affects their comprehension and vocabulary development (Sharma, 2022). Semi-structured interviews were then conducted to gain a deeper insight into students' experiences especially regarding how translanguaging supports their learning (Karatsareas, 2022). A comprehensive vocabulary and concept test was also conducted to assess actual learning outcomes related to their translanguaging experiences.



To analyse the data, qualitative analysis was applied to the interview transcripts and observation notes. Sloman (2010) stated that descriptive analysis's function is to gather information as a comprehensive function (p. 20). Then, 20 items from the questionnaires were examined using basic descriptive statistics to support the qualitative insights. The participants were required to fill out the questionnaire, which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The vocabulary concept test outcomes were analysed to examine whether students with greater exposure to translanguaging demonstrated a visible improvement in vocabulary comprehension and retention. These three instruments —interviews, questionnaires, and test scores —were used to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Translanguaging Practice in the Classroom



Figure 1. The Implication of Translanguaging in EFL Classroom

Research on translanguaging practices in E1 and E2 phase classes at St. Maria Monte Carmelo Senior High School showed quite positive results. The material provided was new, having not been previously studied, specifically the simple past tense. The material was taught carefully, using translanguaging as the medium of communication. The teacher used English, then directly translated each word or sentence into Indonesian, the national language of Indonesia. Cenoz & Gorter (2020) stated that translanguaging is a pedagogical theory and practice that refers to instructional strategies that integrate two or more languages (p. 2). It means the translanguaging helps students by utilising all the languages they speak, so learning becomes more natural and immersive through the native language to understand the target language.

In the learning process, the students responded enthusiastically from the very beginning of the lesson; they seemed happy and excited when we arrived and started teaching using the translanguaging approach, i.e., teaching in English and directly translating into Indonesian. Previous studies, such as those from Sanjaya & Sumardi (2023), also discovered that teachers implemented translanguaging in their EFL classes, which explores students' perspectives on pedagogical translanguaging and the point of view on whether the use of translanguaging is beneficial in the English foreign language (EFL) classroom and how translanguaging helps EFL learners through their FLA (p. 406). During the learning process, students not only seemed to enjoy the learning process, but also showed a good understanding of the material presented. When asked, they were able to respond appropriately, indicating that this approach successfully reinforced concept understanding. In addition, students' interest in this

technique is reflected in their active participation during the learning process. This shows that translanguaging is not only well received, but also an effective and enjoyable method in supporting the English learning process in particular, at St. Maria Monte Carmelo Senior High School.

Students' Perceptions of Translanguaging

Table 1. Students' Perception Presentation on Translanguaging Usage in EFL Learning

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Translanguaging helps me feel more at ease in English classes	3,1%	0%	18,8%	28,1%	50%
2	Successful communication between teachers and students can be achieved through the use of translanguaging in the classroom.	3,1%	3,1%	15,6%	46,9%	31,3%
3	When a teacher uses translanguaging in the classroom, students are more eager to participate in the learning process.	0%	3,1%	25%	40,6%	31,3%
4	Translanguaging has helped me learn English.	3,1%	0%	21,9%	34,4%	40,6%
5	Translanguaging is essential for learning a new language.	3,1%	0%	12,5%	34,3%	50%
6	It's okay to engage in translanguaging in educational settings.	3,1%	6,3%	34,4%	31,3%	25%
7	It's appropriate for teachers to engage in translanguaging.	0%	9,4%	31,3%	25%	34,4%
8	Language teachers should avoid translanguaging because it will hinder second language learning.	9,4%	28,1%	21,9%	9,4%	31,3%
9	I use translanguaging in social settings.	3,1%	3,1%	43,8%	21,9%	28,1%
10	Translanguaging is socially acceptable.	3,1%	0%	34,4%	37,5%	25%
11	Translanguaging is confusing for me.	9,4%	28,1%	15,6%	18,8%	28,1%
12	Translanguaging helps me acquire new English vocabulary.	0%	0%	18,8%	25%	56,3%
13	Translanguaging helps me understand a new concept in English.	3,1%	0%	9,4%	28,1%	59,4%

The presentation of students' perceptions revealed that the use of translanguaging in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning classes is generally viewed positively. The majority of students agreed or strongly agreed that translanguaging helped them feel more comfortable in English classes, improved communication with teachers, encouraged participation in the learning process, and made it easier for them to acquire vocabulary and comprehend concepts in English. Furthermore, 59,4% of students strongly agreed that translanguaging helped them



understand new ideas, and 56,3% stated that translanguaging helped them learn new vocabulary.

In addition, students also considered translanguaging as important in the process of learning a new language (84,3% agreed or strongly agreed), and 65,7% felt that translanguaging should be used by the teachers. Although there are various views regarding its acceptance in social and educational settings, but, overall, translanguaging give good effects on students. According to Amblers & Aper (2010), the use of appropriate approaches is very important to help teachers in solving this problem of self-efficacy in students' English skills. By this conjecture, there is a potential of using translanguaging to increase students' self-efficacy in English skills (p. 86). Overall translanguaging is not perceived as confusing in the language learning process. Rather, translanguaging is viewed as an effective tool that supports students' English learning process.

Interview Insights

The interviews also involved 10 students from diverse backgrounds. The participants revealed that their primary language is predominantly Indonesian, with some also indicating that their first language is local. According to them, the incorporation of translanguaging in the classroom environment is beneficial, particularly in the context of English language acquisition. Furthermore, the findings of the interviews and the post-test conducted at St. Maria Monte Carmelo Senior High School indicated that the implementation of translanguaging in EFL learning for Phase E1 and Phase E2 students had a favourable impact.

Most students stated that they could remember new vocabulary more easily because the teacher used translanguaging by explaining the meaning of the word in Indonesia. The students felt the use of translanguaging by first translating the material into Indonesian really helped them in discovering new vocabulary (Puspitasari & Sugirin, 2024, p. 13). This approach helped them understand new English vocabulary more effectively. In addition, translanguaging also plays a crucial role in enhancing the understanding of the concepts being taught, which aligns with Mbirimi-Hungwe & McCabe's (2020) assertion that translanguaging facilitates students' comprehension of concepts (p. 247). When the teacher explains the material by combining English and Indonesian, students feel more confident because they are not afraid of making mistakes when learning the new vocabulary. They also stated that the material became easier to understand and the learning felt more relevant to their experiences because they could relate to the concept through their own language. In fact, some students applied translanguaging in independent learning activities outside the classroom. They felt that using translanguaging by first translating the material into Indonesian really helped them understand the content of the lessons and discover new vocabulary. Therefore, the use of translanguaging in learning English is considered very important as it makes teaching more relevant, accelerates understanding, and increases students' confidence in learning a foreign language.

Translanguaging Outcomes: Vocabulary and Comprehension

The students were asked to fill in the answers to the 20 questions given. The questions are divided into two parts; the first 10 questions are specifically for the vocabulary test, and then the following 10 questions are in the form of a test of students' concept comprehension. During the learning process, students were given



material about the simple past tense; therefore, the questions presented were based on the material and vocabulary provided. The percentage of students' scores on the tests can be seen as follows:

Table 2. Students' Vocabulary and Concept Comprehension Test Average

No	Class Phase	Vocabulary Acquisition's Average	Concept Comprehension Average
1	E1	84.1%	56.5%
2	E2	70%	51.33%
Average Total		77.05%	53.92%

In the E1 phase, questions were given to 17 students, and it was found that, on average, students managed to answer correctly 8.41 out of 10 vocabulary test questions and 5.65 out of 10 questions that were successfully answered. Then, of the total 15 students in the E2 phase, who filled in the answers to the test questions for vocabulary, had an average of 7 out of 10 questions, and 5.3 out of 10 questions for concept comprehension. Therefore, it was found that 77.04% of students gained an understanding of vocabulary and new vocabulary, while 53.92% of students gained concept comprehension. Thus, these results were obtained from the impact of translanguaging usage on students.

Overall Implication

This study discovered that the use of translanguaging is one of the strategies that significantly supports students' vocabulary acquisition and concept comprehension. Through this approach, using their first language (Indonesian) and target language (English), students were able to relate familiar words to the new words they acquired during the process of learning a new concept or material. Thus, it can be seen that the benefit is gained through translanguaging. According to the questionnaire, translanguaging also helps decrease anxiety, especially when facing advanced-level or unfamiliar words in the target language, English, aligning with previous studies, such as those by Tai (2025). The results showed that students demonstrated increased confidence and engagement during the test, which made them more active when they encountered new terms. These outcomes suggest that translanguaging can be a powerful tool when used intentionally by educators or students.

In addition, the findings highlight the use of translanguaging and its impact on students' conceptual comprehension. Although the effect was not evident in all students, only half of them, many students developed a positive attitude towards translanguaging, particularly in terms of gaining a deeper understanding of the concept. This aligns with previous studies, such as those by Raja et al. (2022), which found that students have positive attitudes toward translanguaging. This indicates that translanguaging has a positive impact on students' learning process, especially for English as a foreign language. Of the 29 students, 11 supported their statements of feeling with arguments, while the other 10 did not provide any reasons. The 11 students insisted that the EFL class should use English only. The use of language other than English indicated their mistake and lack of English proficiency, which could differentiate them from others. This clearly showed that translanguaging can be a deliberate approach to deepen understanding and vocabulary acquisition.



CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the use of translanguaging, which involves blending Indonesian and English in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning process, has a positive impact on students' vocabulary acquisition and conceptual understanding. Through this approach, it becomes clear that students can connect new vocabulary with the language they have previously mastered, making the comprehension process more understandable and participatory. The result of qualitative data analysis delineated that, on average, students made significant improvements in vocabulary (77.05%) and concept understanding (53.92%). In addition, translanguaging proved to be able to create a more inclusive learning atmosphere, reduce learning anxiety, and increase students' participation and confidence in using English. The implications of these findings suggest that translanguaging can be a practical and relevant pedagogical approach in the EFL classroom, especially in multilingual learner contexts such as Indonesia. By recognising and utilising the full range of students' linguistic repertoires, teachers can design more responsive, communicative, and meaningful lessons. Although the results have not been evenly distributed to all students, the positive attitude shown by most participants toward translanguaging is an indicator that this approach is worth continuing to develop and implement. Therefore, translanguaging has a good impact on EFL students and can be a long-term strategy in creating a foreign language learning environment that is fair, supportive, and empowers all students' language abilities.

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