Students' Perception of Socio-Affective Impacts of Translanguaging in EFL Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores students' perceptions of translanguaging in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom context at Universitas Khairun. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with three undergraduate students, this research examines the roles, benefits, and challenges of using multiple languages (English, Bahasa Indonesia, and Melayu Ternate) in the classroom. Findings reveal that varying emotional responses, such as pride, confusion, and self-consciousness, emerge as translanguaging effects. Triangulation with faculty perspectives confirms translanguaging as an inclusive, efficient, and strategic pedagogical practice. The study concludes that translanguaging is a beneficial approach in multilingual EFL contexts to support deeper engagement and understanding.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing linguistic diversity in contemporary classrooms has spurred renewed interest in multilingual pedagogical approaches. Among these, translanguaging stands out as a dynamic strategy wherein speakers mobilize their full linguistic repertoires to make meaning, communicate, and learn (García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging, which was first introduced by Williams (1994) within Welsh bilingual education, has developed into a conceptual framework that questions the strict separation of languages and embraces the dynamic and flexible nature of bilingual communication (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries, the tension between monolingual teaching norms and the multilingual realities of learners has created pedagogical challenges. Traditional EFL instruction often emphasizes exclusive use of English in the classroom, presuming that full immersion accelerates language acquisition (Littlewood & Yu, 2011). However, this approach can marginalize learners who rely on their native languages for comprehension, especially when faced with abstract or technical content (Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009).

In the Indonesian context, and more specifically in regions like North Maluku, classrooms reflect a trilingual dynamic: Bahasa Indonesia as the national language, regional languages such as Melayu Ternate, and English as the foreign language of instruction. This linguistic landscape provides a rich site for studying translanguaging practices. However, scholarly exploration of translanguaging in Indonesian EFL settings remains limited, with few studies delving into how learners perceive and emotionally engage with these practices (Sulistiyo, 2016; Maryani et al., 2020).

Translanguaging in such multilingual contexts serves not only cognitive and linguistic purposes but also socio-affective ones. It fosters inclusion, mitigates anxiety, and strengthens student-teacher relationships (Garcia & Kleyn, 2016). For learners, being able to draw on familiar linguistic resources can improve conceptual understanding and boost classroom participation (Tian & Macaro, 2012). Alternatively, some students may view translanguaging as a sign of linguistic weakness or feel apprehensive about being judged by peers for mixing languages, highlighting the intricate relationship between language practices and personal identity (Li, 2018).

García and Wei (2014) conceptualize translanguaging as the dynamic deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire (dialects, registers, and languages) to make meaning, learn, and communicate, a framework that Creese and Blackledge (2010) further clarify as an integrated system rather than mere code-switching. Originating in Welsh bilingual education (Williams, 1994), translanguaging aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory by treating language as a mediational tool for thought and social interaction and with Hornberger's (2003) ecological framework that locates classroom practices at the intersection of macro-level policy and micro-level learner agency.

Critiques of the "monolingual fallacy" in EFL contexts (Littlewood & Yu, 2011; Turnbull & Dailey-O'Cain, 2009) underscore how exclusive English-only instruction can marginalize students, whereas empirical studies in Europe and Asia (Tian & Macaro, 2012; Hall & Cook, 2012; Chen & Goh, 2011) demonstrate that occasional recourse to L1 reduces anxiety, scaffolds comprehension, and supports complex task negotiation. Beyond cognitive gains, the socio-affective functions of translanguaging which include affirming identity, fostering inclusion, and strengthening classroom rapport, have been documented by García and Kleyn (2016) and Li (2018), though stigma in some settings may lead learners to perceive mixed-language use as weakness. In Indonesia, ad hoc L1 use by teachers in Java (Sulistiyo, 2016) and Sumatra (Maryani, Wahyuni, & Sari, 2020) signals a need for structured pedagogical models such as García and Leiva's (2014) reception–planning–production cycle or Lewis, Jones, and Baker's (2012) "Translanguaging Spaces," yet affective dimensions remain underexplored, especially in trilingual North Maluku classrooms where Bahasa Indonesia, Melayu Ternate, and English routinely intersect.

This study responds to the growing demand for empirical insights into students' attitudes and experiences with translanguaging. It focuses on undergraduate students from the English Literature program at Universitas Khairun in Ternate, North Maluku.

The study investigates how students interpret the use of multiple languages in EFL instruction, what functions translanguaging serves in their learning processes, and how it influences their engagement, comprehension, and sense of belonging. By employing a qualitative design, this research aims to contribute to the broader discussion on multilingual pedagogies and highlight the practical benefits of incorporating translanguaging into EFL teaching. It explores translanguaging not only as a linguistic strategy but also as a cultural and emotional practice grounded in students' real-life experiences.

METHODS

The present study adopted a qualitative descriptive strategy within an interpretivist paradigm (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2013), aiming to produce a thick description of how translanguaging is experienced and understood by undergraduates and faculty at Universitas

Khairun. Fieldwork involved four purposively sampled participants, three students enrolled in English-medium courses and one lecturer known for scaffolding multilingual discourse, selected on the basis of active engagement with classroom translanguaging (Palinkas et al., 2015). This selection took place through classroom observation prior to the interview to notice participants who are actively using translanguaging during lesson.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews of 25–40 minutes were conducted in English and Bahasa Indonesia to elicit narratives of specific episodes, perceived functions, and emotional responses (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and translated when necessary to preserve nuance. Concurrent non-participant observations in two EFL sections yielded structured field notes documenting spontaneous language shifts, instructor prompts, student reactions, classroom layout, and bilingual materials (Patton, 2015). Detailed reflexive memos captured the researcher's positionality and emergent insights (Charmaz, 2014; Berger, 2015).

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an iterative, three-stage coding process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) carried out in Microsoft Excel. In the open-coding phase, transcripts and field notes were fractured into provisional codes reflecting participants' own language, such as "peer collaboration" or "affective comfort." Axial coding then clustered conceptually related codes into categories like "instructional scaffolding," "identity negotiation," and "emotional regulation via L1 support," with memos documenting the rationale for each grouping. In the selective-coding stage, these categories were distilled into integrative themes "strategic language mixing," "socio-emotional scaffolds," and "identity affirmation in translanguaging spaces" validated through cross-referencing of interview excerpts and observational data (triangulation). Trustworthiness was ensured through member-checking of preliminary themes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), thick contextual descriptions to support transferability, an audit trail of raw data and analytic memos for dependability, and reflexive journaling to bracket researcher assumptions for confirmability. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was reached, resulting in a context-rich, credible account of how translanguaging functions pedagogically and socio-affectively in a trilingual EFL environment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Contexts of Translanguaging Use

Translanguaging manifested most visibly in three overlapping arenas: peer-mediated scaffolding, lecturer–student interaction, and informal affect-building talk. During peer discussions, students routinely shifted from English to Bahasa Indonesia or Melayu Ternate to unpack dense theoretical notions, most commonly grammar metalanguage and literary terminology. For instance, Student A translated the clause "past participial modifier" into "keterangan yang memakai bentuk V-3" before illustrating it with a local anecdote; such moves align with findings that collaborative L1 talk mediates higher-order comprehension (Tian & Macaro, 2012).

In lecturer-directed exchanges, translanguaging surfaced whenever conceptual ambiguity threatened task progress. Lecturer F typically front-loaded explanations in English, paused to probe comprehension, then re-voiced key points in Bahasa Indonesia, seasoning them with Melayu idioms like so pasti to sustain attention. This rhythmic alternation echoes García and Wei's (2014) description of teacher-guided "translanguaging moments" that interleave languages to maintain epistemic flow.

A third layer involves informal, relational speech events, humour, spontaneous commentary, or whispered clarifications. Though peripheral to the syllabus, such talk performs crucial socio-affective work. Students recalled a lecturer's joke comparing irregular verbs to ikan

cakalang yang bandel, which instantly diffused tension before a quiz, mirroring Hornberger and Link's (2012) claim that translanguaging can act as an "identity text" fostering belonging.

Across these arenas, the triggers for language alternation were lexical gaps, unfamiliar technical terms, or the need for emotional resonance. Importantly, translanguaging was bidirectional: English terms like deadline and plagiarism were equally imported into Indonesian utterances, signalling the hybrid literacy norms of Indonesian higher education (Maryani et al., 2020). Rather than a fallback for deficiency, translanguaging functioned as an agile communicative repertoire enabling cognitive precision and interpersonal warmth within a trilingual classroom ecology.

These examples show that translanguaging is not a sign of "laziness" but a flexible toolkit. Students move between languages to clarify, extend vocabulary, manage thinking, lower stress, and include peers. The lecturer's comments for triangulation confirm that strategic mixing is planned, not accidental: it is timed after checking comprehension and before new input.

Crucially, interviewees insisted that switching languages does not replace English practice:

"Presentasi resmi tetap English, campur itu hanya di proses pikir." — Student A "Translanguaging itu jembatan, bukan tujuan akhir." — Lecturer F

Thus, rather than conflicting with immersion principles, the practice aligns with García & Lin's (2017) notion of the classroom as a "translaboration lab," where ideas circulate across codes until they are precise enough for formal English output.Together, the evidence substantiates theoretical claims that well-timed translanguaging supports both understanding (cognitive gain) and motivation (affective gain) in a trilingual EFL setting.

Emotional and Social Effects

Translanguaging not only supports the intellect but also shapes how students feel and relate to one another in class. In simple terms, the emotional effects concern how language choices influence confidence and comfort, while the social effects refer to how those choices affect group relationships and classroom atmosphere. Close analysis of the four interviews reveals three intertwined themes (linguistic pride, social anxiety, and inclusive bonding) each illustrated in table 1 below with transcript evidence and anchored in the sociolinguistic literature.

Table 1. Emotional and Social Effects of Translanguaging

Theme	Definition	Sample data excerpt	Academic context
1. Linguistic pride	Feeling proud when able to mix languages smoothly.	"Kalau saya bisa satu kalimat campur Inggris dan Indonesia tanpa mikir, saya bangga sekali." Student A	Heritage-language affirmation heightens positive emotionality (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014).
2. Social anxiety	Worrying about negative judgments from peers.	"Kalau saya pakai campur, takut dibilang pamer. Jadi lebih aman full English." Student B	Peer evaluation can raise the anxiety filter that blocks participation (Krashen, 1985).

3. Inclusive bonding	Using local codes to make everyone feel involved.	"Kalau dosen selipkan Melayu, mahasiswa yang pas-pasaan langsung ikut ketawa." Student C	Shared in-group talk promotes solidarity and reduces power distance (Gumperz, 1982).

Linguistic pride—celebrating hybrid competence

Student A's narrative foregrounds "pride" as a direct outcome of successful code-weaving. She recounts moments when she answered the lecturer's question with an English sentence capped by a perfectly timed Indonesian idiom. She expresses pride in seamlessly blending English and Indonesian, suggesting a perception that code-mixing is not only a natural linguistic ability but also a source of personal achievement. This indicates that for some individuals, multilingual fluency is a valued skill and a marker of identity and competence. According to her, these instances demonstrate that she is "thinking fast in two channels," which she frames as proof of academic maturity. Such self-celebratory stances echo Pavlenko's (2006) notion of linguistic ownership, where bilinguals claim authority over multiple codes, thereby boosting self-esteem. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) likewise argue that positive emotions, such as enjoyment and pride, broaden learners' willingness to experiment with L2 structures. In this study, pride translated into higher classroom engagement: Student A volunteered answers more frequently after each "successful mix," a pattern also noted by Lecturer F in her field notes.

Linguistic pride emerges as a form of personal validation. Participants who effortlessly mix languages express a strong sense of accomplishment, viewing this skill as emblematic of linguistic competence and cultural dexterity. This supports earlier studies that frame code-mixing as a marker of identity and a demonstration of high communicative ability (e.g., Canagarajah, 2013).

Social anxiety—navigating peer perceptions

By contrast, Student B positions translanguaging as socially risky. She fears that partial code-mixing may signal incompetence or, paradoxically, arrogance: "Kalau bahasa Indonesia muncul sedikit, saya takut dinilai belum fasih; kalau Inggris terus, takut dibilang sok." This statement reflects a concern that code-mixing may be socially risky, potentially interpreted as pretentious. This suggests an internal conflict between language ability and social acceptability, where full use of English is seen as a safer, more neutral option to avoid social penalties. The double-bind reflects what Horwitz (2001) terms foreign-language classroom anxiety, a tension between self-image and perceived audience evaluation. Her strategy is to remain resolutely English except during private "whispered clarifications," mirroring findings by Moeller and Yu (2015) that high-proficiency learners sometimes avoid L1 to protect their L2 identity.

While Student B's stance contrasts with Student A's pride, both cases highlight how translanguaging is filtered through social meaning, not mere utility. As Student B's comment illustrates, the fear of being perceived as pretentious or "showing off" can inhibit spontaneous code-switching. This tension underscores how language choice is shaped not only by internal proficiency but also by external social dynamics. Such concerns reflect Goffman's (1967) concept of face-work, where individuals manage impressions in socially sensitive contexts.

Inclusive bonding—building a supportive micro-community

For Student C and Lecturer F, the key emotional payoff of translanguaging lies in togetherness. Student C recounts how a lecturer defused pre-test nerves by joking, "Irregular verb itu kayak ikan cakalang yang bandel, susah diatur," prompting collective laughter. Student C highlights the role of local language (Malay) in creating a shared space of humor and connection, especially for less confident students. This shows how code-switching can be inclusive, signaling

solidarity and reducing social distance between authority figures (e.g., lecturers) and students. The shift into Melayu Ternate signalled that academic hierarchy had momentarily flattened, letting all students, regardless of English level, share a cultural wink. Gumperz (1982) labels such moves contextualization cues that mark shifts from formal to affiliative footing. They reduce social distance (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and cultivate what Tajfel (1981) calls ingroup cohesion. Lecturer F also confirms this function, "Kalau saya campur sedikit, kelas langsung hidup. Mereka merasa bahasa rumah juga punya tempat di universitas."

The theme of inclusive bonding introduces a more communal aspect. When authority figures such as lecturers use localized codes, they reduce perceived hierarchies and foster shared understanding. This strategic use of language to build rapport supports findings from sociolinguistic research on accommodation and solidarity (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Notably, code-mixing here functions not to exclude but to include, especially for students who may feel linguistically or socially marginalized.

The pedagogical implication of balancing emotions

The coexistence of pride, anxiety, and bonding underscores the need for educators to manage translanguaging spaces thoughtfully. Drawing on Dörnyei's (2001) motivational framework, teachers can sequence tasks to start with low-stakes bilingual brainstorming, followed by progressively English-dominant output. Such pacing allows students like Student B to acclimate without threat, while still giving Student A room to display hybrid mastery. Additionally, explicit discussion of translanguaging norms can neutralize stigma: when Lecturer F clarified that "switching is a strategy, not a weakness," Student C reported feeling "lega" (relieved), illustrating Bandura's (1997) principle that verbal persuasion can lift self-efficacy.

Overall, emotional responses are not side-effects, they directly mediate learning outcomes. Positive affect widens the "attentional aperture" (Fredrickson, 2001), enabling deeper processing of input, whereas unchecked anxiety narrows it. The present data reveal that wisely timed translanguaging can tilt the emotional balance toward pride and solidarity. However, absent explicit support, social anxieties may suppress participation, confirming Ellis's (2008) call to integrate affective factors into language-teaching design. The theme also captures the affect-laden swing inherent in code alternation. Student A feels a surge of pride when she "mixes seamlessly," treating hybridity as a badge of competence. Student B, however, oscillates between confidence and apprehension, worrying that peers will interpret mixing as either deficiency or arrogance. These ambivalent reactions are consistent with Dewaele & MacIntyre's (2014) findings that multilingual performance can evoke both Foreign Language Enjoyment and Foreign Language Anxiety. The emotional toggle matters because emotion directs attention: positive affect widens the cognitive aperture (Fredrickson, 2001), whereas anxiety narrows it (Krashen, 1985). Effective pedagogy therefore requires "emotional choreography" (Dörnyei, 2001)—calibrating language choices to sustain pride while damping fear.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that translanguaging practices in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at Universitas Khairun significantly benefit students both cognitively and socio-affectively. Cognitively, translanguaging facilitates the comprehension of abstract concepts, supports academic discussion, and bridges linguistic gaps. Socio-affectively, it fosters students' confidence, sense of belonging, and enhances classroom interaction between peers and instructors.

Students' responses to translanguaging vary across a spectrum of emotions, from linguistic pride and a sense of competence to social anxiety about peer perception. However, the strategic use of local languages, such as Melayu Ternate, especially in informal settings, strengthens social bonds and reduces hierarchical barriers in the

classroom. Within a trilingual context (Bahasa Indonesia, Melayu Ternate, and English), translanguaging emerges as a communication tool and a deliberate pedagogical strategy that affirms students' linguistic identities and inclusivity. Thus, when guided intentionally, translanguaging can create emotionally supportive and academically productive classroom environments. Teachers are encouraged to manage translanguaging spaces thoughtfully to amplify its benefits and reduce potential stigma or social barriers.

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