

**EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSLANGUAGING
APPROACH IN BILINGUAL SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY**

Dita Ariyantika Ramadhani¹
Ditaariyantika28@gmail.com

Sarifah Achmad²
sarifah.achmad@students.untidar.ac.id

Muhamad Laudy Armanda³
laudy787@gmail.com

Abstract

The necessity to promote multilingualism and cultural competence in educational settings has grown substantially in our contemporary globalized society. The phenomenon is referred to the translanguaging approach, and it is commonly applied in bilingual schools. This approach has been implemented in various contexts, particularly in English for Young Learners (EYL) programs. However, study on translanguaging as it applies to elementary-level bilingual education remains scarce. The issue lies in the traditional segmentation of languages in bilingual education systems, which frequently disregards the possible advantages of utilizing the complete linguistic repertoire of students. The main objective of this study is to investigate the efficacy of a translanguaging approach within a particular bilingual elementary school setting. Data will be collected via a qualitative case study method that includes student feedback, teacher interviews, and classroom observations. This research approach intends to provide valuable insights into the practical aspects and obstacles associated with the implementation of translanguaging practices. Insights from teacher interviews revealed the benefits of translanguaging in a bilingual environment. In addition to contributing to the ongoing discussion on effective language pedagogy, this study emphasizes the significance of embracing linguistic diversity in EYL.

Keywords: *Translanguaging, English for Young Learners (EYL), Bilingual Education*

¹ University of Tidar, Magelang

² University of Tidar, Magelang

³ State University of Yogyakarta

A. INTRODUCTION

There are ongoing discussions concerning the factors that are contributing to the growing popularity of English programs for young learners (EYL) in primary school and the fact that they are becoming increasingly entrenched. This issue addressed several factors, such as the recognition that children should acquire another language earlier rather than later, the necessity to prepare for future employment in a global workforce, and parental expectations that their children will benefit from the new world orders (Nguyen, 2011; Garton et al., 2013; Lestariyana & Widodo, 2018). In order to familiarize students with a mandatory supplementary language during their middle and secondary education in countries such as Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand, Korea, China, and Laos, English for Young Languages (EYL) is either a subject that is required or an elective subject in the majority of countries that do not speak English (Butler, 2015; Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2020). In Indonesia, on the other hand, English is taught as a topic that is adapted to the local curriculum without being restricted by legislative or nationally recognized curriculum regulations (Sulistiyo et al., 2019). This is the case in Indonesia. According to Lestariyana and Widodo (2018), English is provided as a subject that is not required to be taken in almost all primary schools in Indonesia. This is done with the intention of providing young learners (YLs) with an introductory grasp of the context in which they are learning. Despite this, young students in primary schools have varying possibilities to develop their English skills due to the restricted amount of time available to them.

This phenomenon demonstrates that the practice of English for Young Learners (EYL) has recently considerably raised the question of their capacity to shift gracefully between languages. This is due to the fact that they have a tendency to speak their first language for a variety of reasons while they are learning. As a result, it is essential to have an appropriate instructional strategy, one of which is translanguaging, in order to facilitate the learning of English language skills by younger students. The phrase "languaging" and "translanguaging" are used to emphasize the idea that "language" is a social activity in which learners actively participate, rather than a fixed collection of rules and functions that they simply

memorize (Cummins, 2017). The term "translanguaging" was first introduced by Welsh educator Cen Williams in the 1980s. According to the Encyclopedia of Language and Education, the phrase "languaging" originated from Williams. Translanguaging, which was initially developed by García in 2009, has recently acquired recognition as a paradigm that is both freeing and critical. Instead of concentrating simply on the languages themselves, she presented the concept of translanguaging as a method of approaching bilingualism. This method places an emphasis on the activities that bilingual people engage in at the same time. Learners of a language are recognized as proactive actors who possess a unified linguistic repertoire consisting of designated languages and abilities.

The idea of translanguaging, which was suggested by García and Wei (2014), places substantial emphasis on a number of crucial aspects. In the first place, it acknowledges that the distinctions between languages and dialects are not immutable but rather changeable and the result of social construction. In the second place, it emphasizes the fact that as emergent bilinguals become fluent in both of their languages, both languages combine into a single system that is referred to as common underlying competency. The third point is that it recognizes the fact that languages and the act of using language are disputed areas in which cultures and identities are constructed and negotiated. Last but not least, it argues that educational programs that are designed to accommodate kids who speak more than one language should acknowledge the linguistic and conceptual knowledge that these students have gained from their upbringing and should work toward fostering transfer and integration between languages (Cummins, 2017). In addition, Welsh (2012) has observed that translanguaging is characterized by the dynamic and integrated utilization of both languages in order to facilitate mental processes in the areas of comprehension, speaking, literacy, and learning. In their 2017 study, García and Lin observed that the concept of translanguaging in the field of education encompasses more than simply switching between languages and translating. It encompasses the manner in which students who are multilingual utilize a variety of languages and techniques of communication when they are in the classroom.

As far as translanguaging is concerned, it is an observed phenomenon in multilingual or trilingual societies, such as Indonesia, particularly in regions where the indigenous language (regional language) is spoken. Hence, daily, children residing in such environments employ the regional language as their primary means of communication. Afriadi and Hamzah (2021) conducted research on the impact of such factors on the usage of local languages in educational institutions. Specifically, they examined the implementation of translanguaging in schools where local languages are employed in discourse during EFL instruction with limited usage. They claim the use of local languages conveys the purpose of humor while the target language was employed to convey classroom instructions and management.

Children's use of translanguaging optimizes their linguistic and cognitive abilities, suggesting that the emphasis on language compartmentalization in Dual Language bilingual education may need to be reduced (Wright & Baker, 2017). Translanguaging acknowledges that bilingual children's language practices are not confined to a single L1 or L2, or to home language and school language, but rather go beyond both (Cummins, 2017). This viewpoint allows for the exploration of effective teaching techniques in Dual Language or translanguaging that maximize the progress and achievements of individual students, as well as positive results for schools in an era of accountability (Celic & Seltzer 2013; Lewis et al., 2012).

In the language classroom, translanguaging refers to an effective learning practice or approach wherein the learner utilizes their native language, which is distinct from the target language (Wei, 2018). As mentioned previously, in English as a foreign language courses at the primary level in Indonesia, for instance, the student's native tongue is not English, which is where teachers must incorporate this actuality into the learning process. Moreover, the practice of translanguaging within a super diverse linguistic ecology environment is a challenge. It can be seen when students within this context are encouraged to speak the national language yet thrive on their indigenous language identity. This complexity inevitably positioned English as the target language and Bahasa Indonesia as their identity. Therefore, translanguaging is essential to enhance students' comprehension. Above all, the

effectiveness of translanguaging is attributed to the fact that students neglect to fully comprehend the process of acquiring a foreign language when instruction is restricted to the target language. That is why translanguaging is demonstrated to be a practical approach to clarifying information on language acquisition.

While the investigation of translanguaging practices in Indonesia within English classrooms has now been well-documented in universities (Puspitasari & Yumarnamto, 2020; Letarina et al., 2022; Emilia & Hamid, 2022; Silalahi & Santoso, 2023; Yolandana et al., 2024), senior high school (Sahib, 2019a, 2019b), and junior high school settings (Liando et al., 2022a;2023b). Further, Witari and Sukamto (2023) conducted a case study to address Indonesian EFL teachers' perspective of translanguaging practice across levels who come from a freelance private teacher, a teacher in a vocational institution, and a lecturer at a private university. Although there are many studies, limited research explores Indonesian young students in bilingual schools, for instance, a paper reported by Guo (2022) on Chinese primary school students' need for translanguaging in English classrooms. It is well-known that few researchers have been able to look into elementary schools, particularly in bilingual education, thus it is necessary to investigate how translanguaging practice is to teach EFL students, especially young Indonesian students in its learning environment. To enrich more evidence toward this gap and the novelty of this area, the dissemination of empirical literature by Putrawan (2022) illustrates that bilingual school and elementary level language have been discussed far less extensively in translanguaging practice.

Since the practice of translanguaging in primary schools is not questioned to be implemented to teach English. A question arises when it comes to the realization some schools create an environment with bilingual and multilingual support. The multi-lingual schools established a curriculum where English teachers and the environments are aligned to its encouragement of speaking more than one particular language. This privilege, it is said, influences the students' ability to move flawlessly between languages. Based on this evidence, this study delves into the exploration of translanguaging practice to teach English for young learners in bilingual elementary school.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The current study took a case study research design, which explores the virtues of a translanguaging approach in bilingual education, especially at the primary level. The researchers invited an English teacher and some students from a trilingual elementary school in Magelang, Indonesia. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and classroom observation to discover the implementation of translanguaging in English classrooms. To begin with, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with an English teacher who teaches at a bilingual school, followed by some students' feedback from fourth graders in order to obtain their experiences, stories, or views. The questions protocol covered the following areas: background, experience, and reflection on challenges toward the implementation of translanguaging. Furthermore, classroom observation was utilized to strengthen trustworthiness and generate a more comprehensive picture of the primary findings. Ultimately, the findings were organized and analyzed through descriptive qualitative analysis to portray a detailed description of the phenomenon.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The researchers answered the research questions through an in-depth interview with the English teacher and students at the specific school, as well as through classroom observations to determine firsthand how translanguaging in English language learning activities were implemented. The results indicated that the implementation of linguistic scaffolding through translanguaging in classes for young learners necessitated the use of a multimodal scaffolding source.

Systematic Planning

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“Yes, we do plan the translanguaging. We also use the Cambridge curriculum and Cambridge books as students' main reference for learning English.” (Teachers' interview on May 16, 2024)

The instructor acknowledged the crucial necessity of books to facilitate teaching and learning activities. The students made use of the Cambridge students' book, whilst the teacher employed a guidebook specifically tailored for teachers. The English book was selected for the nationally recognized trilingual school, which was specifically created to meet the kids' needs. Furthermore, the school selected a diverse range of science publications that were published in English due to their alignment with both the Cambridge basic curriculum and the latest national curriculum of Indonesia.

The teacher ensured that the educational resources in the books acted as content scaffolding, facilitating linkages between the intended learning, students' daily lives, the community, and other subjects taught in school. They should offer support to students in understanding the process of learning and how it can be applied both within and outside the classroom.

Researchers conducted classroom observations on May 16, 2024, and promptly observed the optimal use of Cambridge students' books in the classroom. The instructor furnishes the students with worksheets with activities that are derived from the subject presented in the book.

The school selected the students' book, which contains target words integrated into the texts along with accompanying photographs and illustrations. The assignments in the workbook serve the purpose of evaluating students' critical thinking skills, and also, the workbook contains highlighted keywords. By engaging in translanguaging, children can practice interpreting texts from books not just at school but also at home with their parents.

Habituation: using English in the context of classroom activities

Given the nature of teaching young learners English as an extra language (EAL), Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović (2019) placed greater emphasis on

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activities that stress fluency rather than accuracy in order to provide young learners with more experience in core communication skills than cognitive academic ones. This satisfies the findings of observations made during activities in the classroom during which the instructor scolded.

S1 : Mister, I want to go to the restroom.

Teacher : May I go to the restroom, mister? We use may I to ask for a permission. (Classroom observation on May 16, 2024)

S1 then repeats the sentence as a correction for the incorrect use of the previous sentence. Then correction occurred in the next conversation when S1 returned from the restroom.

S1: (just entered the class without saying anything)

Teacher: "Say, thank you.

S1: Thank you, mister

Teacher: *Coba sekarang* ask my permission to go back to your seat?

S1: Mister, may I go back to my seat?

(Classroom observation on May 16, 2024)

The ability to talk in the target language through habituation has an influence that extends beyond the confines of the classroom. It is through the practice of speaking both languages that students gain the courage to attempt speaking the language that they are trying to learn. During the in-depth interview, the participants disclosed the following rationale for their participation:

P1: I do not know whether or not I speak good English, but because my friends do so it makes me want to try speaking in English.

In a humorous tone, another participant in this study stated the similar idea:

P2: I speak English because my friends speak the language. Also, I feel English is important to master so I know the secret of the world.

(Students' interview on May 16, 2024)

Translanguaging has positive impact

The data from students revealed a significant practice of translanguaging in the English classroom conducted by the teacher. The practice of translanguaging is implemented in the English classroom to introduce English. Nevertheless, the use of Bahasa Indonesia was applied as a help when one did not understand the teacher's delivery or the material. In this case, the students reveal there are some classmates demanding the teacher to speak in Bahasa Indonesia in order to make the explanation reachable.

“Well, actually for translanguaging, especially for grammar, because when we teach about the grammar, the teacher should make the students understand the concept. Sometimes, it is really hard to deliver the understanding of the concept to the students if we use full English. That's why sometimes teachers translanguaging to deliver the concept of grammar.” (Teacher interview on May 16, 2024)

On the other hand, the use of transanguaging in the classroom also has a positive and beneficial impact on some students who use English as their first language and learn Indonesian as their second language at school.

“We have several students who use English as their first language and Indonesian as their second language. They study at our school which is quite helpful for them since we use translanguaging.” (Teacher interview on May 16, 2024)

Feedback from student 1, student 2, student 3, student 4:

Researchers moreover requested pupils to engage in interviews in order to ascertain their perspectives on the utilization of translanguaging. The following points are as follows:

- The practice of translanguaging in English classroom encourages the students to learn english.

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- The practice of translanguaging in English classroom habituate the students to speak English outside the classroom
- One influential factor the students stated to support their translanguaging is the family situation

Challenge in implementing translanguaging

Based on interviews that researchers conducted directly with teacher, the use of translanguaging in learning English at the trilingual national school has several challenges, especially when students have been given an opportunity to ask questions/participate in class using non-targeted language, in this case is English, then it will become their comfort zone which can interfere with getting used to using full English.

“When we give a chance to the students to use Indonesian or the other language, they will think that, “oh it is okay, it’s acceptable”, then he/she will not have the willingness to learn English more.” (Teachers’ interview on May 16, 2024)

However, on the other hand, the case of students who still have difficulty but they have willingness to learn English, translanguaging became really helpful.

“Well, basically as I said before that the teacher empowered the students to speak full English but at the fact there are some students that have a limitations in vocabulary or maybe the new students from the state school which still hard to speak English, they still need translation and help. So, I can not say that we have already 100% full English and yeah translation still needed.” (Teachers’ interview on May 16, 2024)

Students Assessment

Since the school implemented the Cambridge curriculum, the assessment system used is slightly different from state schools in general, where state schools are quite flexible in integrating English in the primary school. Based on the interview with the teacher, there is a type of test specifically used to assess students' English language skills.

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“We do have some kinds of assessment: mid-term assessment and final assessment. Especially for language we have a practical assessment, especially for speaking. We take more scores for the speaking itself, because the thing that we can see directly whether the students are able or not to master the language is through speaking.”

Discussion

Translanguaging as a pedagogical approach in bilingual primary schools has become a significant practice in English classrooms for young learners in Indonesia. The findings of this study highlight the benefits of translanguaging in such a context for two major reasons: habituation and awareness of the mastery of English. The habituation means the bilingual primary school commitment to support the translanguaging practice. This includes upskilling the teachers in charge and providing the necessary resources regarding the practice of translanguaging. The bilingual primary school shows its commitment to English language acquisition for young learners by adopting the relevant English curriculum of Cambridge. The idea of Cambridge curriculum pointed to the English language acquisition as a set of a language repertoire. In that sense, learning English is not a separated part of vocabulary, grammar, and meaning. English as a language is understood as a set of repertoire by the students instead of a set of alienated words forced to be stored in their brain.

Translanguaging allows the students to leverage their full linguistic repertoire, translanguaging fosters a deeper understanding of both languages and facilitates vocabulary development. Similarly, Rifai & Putri (2021) discovered that translanguaging improves students' comprehension of instruction. It is believed that translanguaging enhances proficiency in the four fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Through the application of translanguaging techniques to their English studies, students can enhance their exam performance. Students are also becoming more confident to speak in the target language. Over time, it is anticipated that translanguaging will also facilitate mastery of the target language.

Translanguaging breaks down the artificial divide between languages, fostering a more interconnected and holistic approach to language learning. Translanguaging validates students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, allowing them to express themselves confidently and engage in meaningful learning. The process of switching between languages encourages students to compare and contrast linguistic structures, fostering higher-order thinking skills. It encourages the students to set their pace with the language instructions. Translanguaging practice in this English classroom allows the students to be more critical yet lighter to understand what is being delivered in those classrooms. This is similar to prior study which stated the practice of translanguaging in an EYL classroom assists the students to understand concepts that they misunderstand. In an effort to dispel these misunderstandings regarding learning materials, the instructor explains them in Indonesian. In the classroom, intermezzo or icebreaking are frequent occasions when regional languages (local languages) are employed (Afriadi & Hamzah, 2021).

Therefore, translanguaging can be viewed as an impactful approach toward bilingual education in Indonesia. Bilingual institutions are encouraged to support and facilitate the translanguaging within a context of an English classroom. By fostering the translanguaging opportunity in the school environment, students become more critical and more confident to speak in the target language.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research explored the practice of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach in bilingual primary schools. The findings of this study highlight the benefits of translanguaging in such a context for two major reasons: habituation and awareness of the mastery of English. The habituation means the bilingual primary school commitment to support the translanguaging practice. This includes providing the necessary resources regarding the practice of translanguaging and upskilling the teachers in charge. The school's commitment to foster bilingual education through a supportive environment is a significant factor to students' linguistic development.

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This study adds to the growing body of research that supports the practice of translanguaging in bilingual primary education. As teachers move away from monolingual models, translanguaging emerges as a powerful tool to unlock the full potential of bilingual learners. However, further research is necessary to explore the long-term effects of translanguaging on academic achievement and language proficiency. Additionally, ongoing professional development for teachers is crucial to ensure effective implementation of translanguaging practices within diverse classroom settings. In conclusion, translanguaging presents a transformative approach to bilingual education. By embracing students' linguistic resources and fostering a dynamic learning environment, translanguaging empowers them to become confident and critical thinkers who can thrive in a multilingual world.

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