Translanguaging Practices in English Language Teaching
(A Sociolinguistic Study of Language Choice and Classroom Interaction)

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ABSTRACT

English language teaching in multilingual contexts is deeply intertwined with language choice and learners' linguistic identities. This study examines translanguaging practices from a sociolinguistic perspective at SDI 100 Kepulauan Selayar, Indonesia, to address the gap in primary school EFL research. The study aims to investigate the patterns of English-Indonesian use, identify emerging forms of translanguaging, and analyze its sociolinguistic functions in classroom interaction. This research employed a qualitative descriptive design with data collected through non-participant observations, audio recordings, and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicate that English and Indonesian were used systematically; English served formal instruction, while Indonesian was used for clarification and affective support. Various forms of translanguaging, including teacher-initiated and peer interaction, functioned as instructional scaffolding that validated students' multilingual identities and reduced anxiety. This study concludes that translanguaging is an effective pedagogical practice that supports comprehension and engagement, suggesting that context-sensitive approaches are essential for multilingual primary education.

Keywords: *Translanguaging, Sociolinguistics, Language Choice, Classroom Interaction, Education, EFL.*

ABSTRAK

Pengajaran bahasa Inggris dalam konteks multibahasa sangat berkaitan erat dengan pilihan bahasa dan identitas linguistik siswa. Penelitian ini mengkaji praktik translanguaging dari perspektif sosiolinguistik di SDI 100 Kepulauan Selayar, Indonesia, untuk mengisi celah penelitian EFL di tingkat sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pola penggunaan bahasa Inggris-Indonesia, mengidentifikasi bentuk translanguaging yang muncul, dan menganalisis fungsi sosiolinguistiknya dalam interaksi kelas. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif dengan data yang dikumpulkan melalui observasi non-partisipan, rekaman audio, dan wawancara semi-terstruktur. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Indonesia digunakan secara sistematis; bahasa Inggris berfungsi untuk instruksi formal, sedangkan bahasa Indonesia digunakan untuk klarifikasi dan dukungan afektif. Berbagai bentuk translanguaging, termasuk inisiasi guru dan interaksi teman sebaya, berfungsi sebagai perancah instruksional yang memvalidasi identitas multibahasa siswa dan mengurangi kecemasan. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa translanguaging adalah praktik pedagogis efektif yang mendukung pemahaman dan

keterlibatan siswa, serta menyarankan pentingnya pendekatan peka konteks dalam pendidikan dasar multibahasa.
Kata Kunci: *Translanguaging, sosiolinguistik, pilihan bahasa, interaksi kelas, EFL dasar.*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English in places where people speak several languages is never just about grammar or vocabulary. As Holmes (2013) states, the way we use language always depends on who's talking, where they are, and what they're trying to do. Classrooms are not merely spots for passing on language skills but social crossroads where language, identity, power, and pedagogy intersect. In Indonesia, children learn English as a foreign language within a multilingual environment where Indonesian and local languages are the primary means of communication. Consequently, teachers and students often switch between languages, using their full linguistic repertoire to get their point across. While traditional English teaching has long promoted monolingual instruction assuming that the first language (L1) hinders target language development this view is increasingly challenged. Cummins (2000) argues that L1 provides a cognitive foundation that facilitates additional language learning, and Cook (2010) emphasizes that strategic use of L1 can enhance comprehension and support deeper understanding of new concepts.

One of the most influential concepts emerging from this sociolinguistic perspective is translanguaging. García (2009) defines translanguaging as the flexible and purposeful use of bilingual learners' full linguistic repertoires to make meaning. García and Wei (2014) further argue that bilingual speakers draw on an integrated linguistic repertoire shaped by social interaction rather than operating with separate systems. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, language choice in classrooms is influenced by setting, topic, and participants (Fishman, 1967). Teachers may draw on students' L1 to clarify instructions or provide affective support, while students employ translanguaging to negotiate meaning and reduce anxiety. These practices are particularly salient in primary school settings, where learners are still developing foundational literacy and cognitive abilities. Drawing on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, learning is mediated through social interaction and cultural tools, suggesting that familiar linguistic resources can support learners' movement within their zone of proximal development.

Several previous studies have explored this phenomenon in the Indonesian context. Cahyani et al. (2018) investigated how teachers' code-switching serves pedagogical and sociolinguistic functions in bilingual classrooms. Similarly, Yuliana et al. (2019) demonstrated that translanguaging promotes student participation and reduces anxiety among lower-proficiency learners. Furthermore, Siregar (2019) reported that teachers perceive translanguaging as an effective strategy for managing classroom interaction. Despite this increasing scholarly attention, empirical research examining translanguaging practices at the primary school level remains limited, as most existing studies focus on secondary or tertiary education (Emilia & Hamied, 2015; Yuvayapan, 2019). This creates a knowledge gap regarding how translanguaging operates in primary EFL classrooms, particularly in remote and multilingual regions like Kepulauan Selayar.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore translanguaging practices in English language teaching at SDI 100 Kepulauan Selayar, Indonesia. This research aims to investigate how English and Indonesian are used in classroom interaction, identify the forms of translanguaging that emerge, and analyze the sociolinguistic functions these practices serve. By examining these aspects, the study contributes to more inclusive, context-sensitive, and sociolinguistically informed approaches to English language teaching in primary education.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with a sociolinguistic approach. This design was selected to capture naturally occurring language use and interaction patterns in the classroom without manipulating instructional conditions. The research was conducted at SDI 100 Kepulauan Selayar, Indonesia, a primary school located in a multilingual community. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer to maintain the authenticity of the classroom environment. The research subjects and informants included one English teacher and students from the upper primary grades who were actively involved in English lessons. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on those who regularly engaged in classroom interaction during English instruction.

Data collection techniques involved several methods to ensure data triangulation. First, non-participant classroom observations were conducted to identify patterns of language choice and interaction without interfering in the teaching process. Second, audio recordings were used to capture authentic instances of teacher talk and student talk involving translanguaging. Third, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teacher and selected students to explore their perceptions of language use and the reasons for employing translanguaging in the classroom. The data analysis techniques followed several systematic stages. Initially, recorded classroom interactions were transcribed verbatim. These transcripts were then analyzed to identify and categorize instances of translanguaging based on their functions, such as clarification, explanation, classroom management, and affective support. Furthermore, interview data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to language attitudes and the sociocultural influences that shape language choice in the classroom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research results indicate that classroom interaction during English language teaching at SDI 100 Kepulauan Selayar was characterized by the systematic and complementary use of English and Indonesian. Rather than operating under a strict English-only policy, the teacher and students employed both languages strategically to support instructional goals. English was primarily used for formal instructional phases, such as opening lessons and introducing vocabulary, establishing it as the official language of learning. However, classroom observations revealed that the teacher frequently shifted to Indonesian when students demonstrated confusion. This adaptive use of language reflects a learner-centered approach where instructional decisions are shaped by students' needs rather than rigid policies.

The analysis of classroom discourse revealed several distinct forms of translanguaging. These include teacher-initiated translanguaging to explain abstract vocabulary, student-initiated translanguaging to supplement limited English utterances, and peer translanguaging during collaborative activities. These forms demonstrate how participants flexibly mobilize their linguistic resources to construct meaning. The following table summarizes the primary functions of these translanguaging practices observed during the research:

Table : 1 Functions of Translanguaging in Classroom Interaction

No	Function	Description
1	Instructional Scaffolding	Connecting new English input with students' existing knowledge to bridge understanding.
2	Classroom Management	Using Indonesian to organize activities, manage behavior, and deliver procedural instructions.
3	Affective Support	Reducing students' anxiety and increasing confidence to participate in lessons.
4	Interactional Negotiation	Collaboratively constructing meaning and clarifying intentions between teacher and students.

Translanguaging served as a crucial sociolinguistic tool in this primary school context. By using Indonesian alongside English, the teacher facilitated learning within the students' zones of proximal development. From a sociolinguistic perspective, this reflects Fishman's (1967) domain theory, where English serves formal academic authority while Indonesian facilitates comprehension and rapport. Furthermore, allowing students to use their first language validated their identities as multilingual learners, which significantly increased participation among lower-proficiency students.

The discussion of these findings confirms that translanguaging is an integral component of EFL teaching in multilingual settings. These results challenge monolingual ideologies that position English-only instruction as the sole effective approach. In line with García's (2009) conceptualization, the observed practices demonstrate that teachers and learners draw on their entire linguistic repertoires to support meaning-making. Rather than obstructing English acquisition, the strategic use of Indonesian facilitated deeper engagement. This supports Cummins' (2000) assertion that a learner's first language serves as a valuable cognitive and linguistic resource. Ultimately, the findings highlight the importance of acknowledging sociolinguistic realities in remote regions like Kepulauan Selayar, where translanguaging functions as a legitimate and effective pedagogical strategy.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion: This research demonstrates that translanguaging is a meaningful, natural, and effective pedagogical practice in multilingual primary school EFL classrooms, specifically at SDI 100 Kepulauan Selayar. The findings reveal that English and Indonesian function in a systematic and complementary manner;

English is used for formal instruction, while Indonesian facilitates comprehension, classroom management, and affective support. Various forms of translanguaging, including teacher-initiated, student-initiated, and peer interaction, reflect the flexible deployment of an integrated linguistic repertoire. Sociolinguistically, these practices serve as instructional scaffolding that links new input to existing knowledge, reduces student anxiety, and validates multilingual identities. Overall, the study challenges monolingual ideologies by proving that strategic language alternation supports rather than hinders English development, ensuring smoother communication and higher engagement in remote, linguistically diverse regions.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers view translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogical resource and integrate it strategically into English instruction, while schools and policymakers should reconsider rigid English-only policies to better reflect classroom realities. Future research is suggested to involve larger samples across different educational levels or employ longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of translanguaging on English language development and student proficiency. By adopting these sociolinguistically informed and context-sensitive approaches, English language teaching in primary education can become more inclusive and effective.

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