



STUDENTS' RESPONSES TOWARD TEACHERS' TRANSLANGUAGING PRACTICE AT AN ISLAMIC PUBLIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Abstract:

Translanguaging, a language teaching approach which is now widely used, has been recognized as a language teaching approach that has a myriad of benefits. However, as the research and positive elaborations of this approach continue to grow, there are also many speculations and negative views from some educators about the use of translanguaging. The existence of these two sides invites translanguaging into a circle of pros and cons. The establishment of an Islamic senior high school that applies translanguaging in three languages might lead to the students' responses towards teachers' translanguaging practices used in the classroom. Using a qualitative case study, the data from an open-ended questionnaire responded by 71 students from two classes were analyzed. As a result, most students gave more positive responses to the teacher's translanguaging. They believed translanguaging as a tool to make them become more familiar with English since not all of them are good at L2 acquisition. Although many of them responded positively, a small number of students felt that the use of another language in English learning was not good for the development of their skills in the target language. They thought that English should be used more frequently if they wanted better results in the learning process.

Keywords: *Students' Responses, Translanguaging, Translanguaging Practice*

1. INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging, a language learning approach first introduced by a Welsh teacher in 1980, has now become widespread and frequently used by language teachers around the world at various levels. Various aspects of translanguaging, such as its perspectives, attitudes, potentials and applications, have raised many questions leading it to develop as a growing trend in English language education over the past few years (see Barahona, 2020; Maraden et al., 2023; Raja et al., 2022; Sahib, 2019). However, the different answers to various questions in research using the term translanguaging frequently lead to controversies, as if the issue of translanguaging cannot be settled. One such dispute revolves around translanguaging concepts and the status of its use in English language learning. The concept of translanguaging, which should be understood as the use of linguistic repertoire by moving between languages fluently during the learning process, is often misinterpreted as the same concept as code-switching, when in fact the two have fundamental differences (Balam, 2021). Translanguaging is a movement in language education that challenges traditional models of bilingualism and supports the flexible use of multiple languages to enrich understanding and learning (Vogel & García, 2017) while code-switching is investigated in sociolinguistics to structurally comprehend how two languages are separated or used in bilingual speech (Treffers-Daller et al., 2021). Translanguaging emphasizes language merging, while code-switching concentrates on language decoupling.

In addition to its concept, it turns out that the permissibility of utilizing translanguaging also remains a controversy in English language learning. Undeniably, several studies that address the benefits and disadvantages of translanguaging seem to



add to the fact that translanguaging is actually still on the verge of pros and cons. Across the many studies that have been conducted, translanguaging is deemed to bring various benefits to all parties involved in learning such as teachers and students. Several studies have highlighted various advantages of utilizing this approach in the classroom such as being able to increase student participation, and make students feel comfortable or accepted (Henderson, 2017; Omidire & Ayob, 2022), as well as being able to increase students' confidence to speak (Kartikasari & Rerung, 2015). Furthermore, some studies have also mentioned that translanguaging assists the students' emotional well-being by promoting equity in learning (Quijano, 2007), relaxing and comforting the students, enhancing the students' engagement, and giving them confidence.

However, as the research and supporting elaboration of this approach continues to expand, there has been a lot of speculation and sceptical views from some parties involved about the use of translanguaging which leads to a finding that translanguaging is not entirely good to use in all contexts. The natural concept of translanguaging which utilizes two or more language repertoires of students is held responsible for students' weak knowledge and vocabulary acquisition of the target language (Kuteeva, 2020). Translanguaging which is promoted as a viable tool for teaching students, in reality often generates confusion. The suddenness and unpredictability of the language shift is the reason for this. Along with revealed negative impacts, a case study in Hong Kong also indicated that translanguaging may trigger hesitation among students regarding their skills (Yuan & Yang, 2020). Students felt that translanguaging reinforced their uncertainty in supporting their understanding and learning. These assertions reinforce the claim that translanguaging is still unacceptable to some students in different contexts.

Both supporting and sceptical views of translanguaging often make teachers hesitate, feeling guilty, and have to consider the decision to apply it. So even though translanguaging is still applied in some English language teaching, its application is still a matter of debate. The uncertainty regarding the legal status of translanguaging in English language teaching makes it a hot topic to discuss, especially in terms of perspectives, attitudes, and views of various parties concerned, as well as the importance of understanding and determining the rules regarding its use. In line with this topic, students' responses to translanguaging are also an important focus as students are the main parties affected by it. Numerous studies have indeed been recorded delving deeper into students' perceptions and attitudes as a reaction to the use of translanguaging. However, research that focuses only on students' responses to translanguaging is scarcely found. Therefore, this study aims to analyze students' responses towards teachers' translanguaging practices at a state Islamic school in Sidoarjo. The school was chosen as the research site because of its unique identity as the only Islamic public senior high school in Sidoarjo with students from various backgrounds, as well as the fact that the school also teaches Arabic language which adds to the collection of students' linguistic repertoire. Collecting data from students at this school will provide new and more diverse insights to support further research into translanguaging practices in English language teaching.



2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative design to explore the students' responses toward teachers' translanguaging practice in one Islamic senior high school in Sidoarjo. The selection of this research location allows the emergence of more diverse data to support further research in the field of translanguaging due to a rich language source of some teachers and students including Indonesian language, a particular local language, English language, and Arabic language. This study involved 71 students from two classes with different English teachers in order to obtain more diverse data about the translanguaging practices that take place in the classroom. Both classes that would be involved in responding were determined by the researcher based on the suitability of several criteria, including the class taught by the teacher who most frequently practiced translanguaging.

For the sake of establishing clear findings and discussions in the study, researchers utilized two types of data in the study arrangement, which are primary and secondary data. As previously explained, the primary data source that became the basis for the findings and discussion of this study was data extracted from the responses of MAN Sidoarjo students through an open-ended questionnaire. While for the secondary data, researchers collected data obtained from related books, articles, and journals that had been selected and then associated with primary data to form clearer findings and understanding. Before elaborating on the data to create insight, the researcher compiled open-ended questions as an instrument. The use of open-ended questionnaires in this study was intended to obtain broader answers based on respondents' views on a large scale.

For the sake of establishing clear findings and discussions in the study, researchers utilized the primary data source extracted from the responses of the students through an open-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire, consisting of 7 questions categorized into cognitive, affective, and conative responses, was distributed manually to 71 students. The data are analyzed using thematic analysis, following five stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme identification, theme confirmation, and theoretical expansion (Christou, 2023).

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Before giving their responses to translanguaging, students provided some information about the teacher's translanguaging which included the language used as well as the frequency of translanguaging in the classroom. There were diverse answers even though the students were from the same class. The first finding briefly addressed the variety of languages used by teachers in English language teaching, with the majority of students answering that teachers use both English and Indonesian during teaching. However, students' answers were not only limited to the use of the first language (L1), some students also answered that there were other languages used by teachers during the learning process besides English and Indonesian, which were Javanese and Arabic. This was related to the context of the research location, where the school is an Islamic school that provides Arabic language subjects, so the possibility of the emergence of Arabic language in the classroom is very likely to occur.



Table 1 The Frequencies of Translanguaging

Teacher's Name	Language Spoken	Categories of Frequency	Number of Responses
Mr. A	English	Often	28
		Seldom	8
	Indonesian	Often	30
		Seldom	6
	Arabic	Seldom	6
	Javanese	Seldom	33
Mrs. B	English	Often	21
		Seldom	14
	Indonesian	Often	26
		Seldom	9
	Javanese	Seldom	11
Total Respondents			71

Regarding the frequency of language use in the classroom, in classroom learning, English and Indonesian remain the most dominant languages used by teachers, while the use of Javanese and Arabic is less frequent. While the teachers apply translanguaging by engaging other languages such as Javanese and Arabic apart from the mother tongue, the utilization of these languages remains limited and does not dominate the learning process, thus English and Indonesian remain the main ones. Based on the data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire, the data captured two types of responses which are the accepting responses and the sceptical responses to the use of translanguaging in the learning process.

The results of the open-ended questionnaire show that the majority of students are in favour of the use of translanguaging in English language learning. Out of the total 71 students who responded, 62 of them gave the most positive responses, indicating that they approved and encouraged teachers to keep implementing translanguaging in the learning process. The reasons given by the students were diverse, but all of them emphasised the positive benefits of this approach.

In the cognitive category, students' responses showed various reasons why teachers need to maintain translanguaging. Despite the different reasons given, they all referred to the benefits resulting from translanguaging. The table below summarises the students' responses, which include the response category, the number of responses, and specific examples given by the students regarding the implementation of translanguaging by teachers.

Table 2 Students' Cognitive Responses to the Teacher's Translanguaging

Categories of responses	Number of responses	Example of students' responses
Understanding	97	“I find it easier to understand the material when it is explained in Indonesian” “The use of other languages in learning English



		makes it easier for us to understand the meaning of the English”
Vocabulary	22	“The teacher's translation makes it easier for me to increase my vocabulary and know the meaning of English that I don't know yet.”
Simplify the learning process	24	“I don't understand what the teacher is saying, but when the teacher translate it, I understand where the learning is going. So I don't have to work twice to translate by myself” “It becomes easier to learn a foreign language”
Rapport	1	“its use (translanguaging) can strengthen the relationship between teachers and students because we share the same language”
Total Responses		78

The number of answers surpassing the number of respondents shows that some students gave more than one response regarding the benefits they felt from the translanguaging practice conducted by the teacher. After being classified by code, the majority of students gave positive responses to the translanguaging practice. Most students mentioned that translanguaging has helped them to improve their understanding of the materials or instructions given. Coming in second, students also mentioned that translanguaging helped in facilitating their learning process and enriching their vocabulary. In addition, a small number of students also added other benefits of translanguaging, such as ease in the learning process, increased confidence, and higher motivation to learn English.

The questions categorised as affective and conative received entirely answers related to students' emotions when the teacher used translanguaging. The table below summarises the students' emotional responses to the teachers' translanguaging.

Table 3 Students' Affective Responses to the Teacher's Translanguaging

Categories of responses	Number of responses	Example of students' responses
Fair	69	“I feel fair when the teacher does it, because I don't fully understand English.” “Some students may not understand English, so it's fairer if the teacher speaks in a language they understand.”
Comfortable	67	“I feel comfortable because my teacher usually speaks Indonesian when explaining the material.” “I certainly feel comfortable because the learning is less complicated too.”
Relaxed	14	“The use of other languages in learning makes the class feel less tense and more relaxed. I feel more relieved when the teacher uses more languages when teaching”



Interest	4	“When the teacher uses translanguaging, the lesson became more engaging because there is not just one language used.”
Learning motivation	2	“I became motivated to learn English”
Self-Confidence	2	“When Indonesian was allowed to be used, I became more courageous to speak.” “We will be more brave and actively involved in learning”
Total Responses		78

Most of the students revealed a fair and comfortable feeling when the teacher applied translanguaging, with the number of reasons mentioned reaching 69 and 67 times each. In addition, 14 students expressed that they felt relaxed when the teacher used translanguaging. The other responses included 4 responses that indicated a sense of interest, 2 responses that indicated motivation, and 2 responses that indicated increased confidence.

Out of a total of 71 students who responded, only nine students indicated feelings of scepticism or doubt regarding the use of translanguaging in the classroom. The reasons underlying students' skeptical responses can be further explained in the following table:

Table 4 Skeptical Reasons Mentioned by Students

Categories of responses	Number of responses	Example of students' responses
Confusion	5	“Integrating other languages beside Indonesian into English learning makes me dizzy and I don't know where to focus. So it's better to just use English.” “Just use the language we want to learn in class so we don't get confused.”
Uncertainty	3	“I doubt I will get used to English if the teacher continues to use more Indonesian in class.”
Inappropriate level	1	“I think for senior high school level, there is no need to use it.”
Total Responses		9

Among the nine students who showed a skeptical response to the translanguaging practices applied by teachers during English language learning, the category “confusion” was the most dominant reason, with five students mentioning this point. Three students also expressed doubts about the efficacy of translanguaging, while one student argued that translanguaging is not suitable to be implemented at the high school level.

Overall, the findings showed that translation does take place in the English classes at the Islamic public senior high school. Both teachers have different language proficiencies which are all used during English lessons. One of the teachers actively uses four languages in teaching: English, Indonesian, Javanese and Arabic, although



the use of languages other than English and Indonesian is relatively minimal. In this context, translanguaging is not merely translating from one language to another as in code-switching, but is a dynamic practice in which speakers combine different languages without restricting themselves to one particular language (García & Wei, 2013). Teachers' use of languages other than English and Indonesian is rare. However, the use of Javanese language as the local language dominantly spoken by both teachers in teaching English shows flexibility in the use of languages used in the classroom, where teachers can adjust the language used to the learning context.

The findings also indicate that almost all students support the continued use of translanguaging due to various factors that highlight the benefits they feel in the cognitive and affective fields. In the cognitive field, students who support the use of translanguaging mention several benefits they feel such as building understanding, facilitating the learning process, and increasing vocabulary. The highest number of students stated that they would better understand the material or instruction if the teacher delivered it in another language that they are more familiar with. This statement is borne out by the response *“I find it **easier to understand** the material when it is explained in Indonesian”* where Indonesian is the language they use on a daily basis. Students also revealed that the use of translanguaging by teachers has had a positive impact on the ease of the learning process. This aligns with the view that translanguaging is a tool that can facilitate the learning process. The impact of translanguaging is evident in the ease that students feel during the learning process, as they are better able to understand the material when the teacher uses a language that they understand well.

In addition, students also stated that translanguaging assisted them in expanding their vocabulary as the teacher used translanguaging by alternating between different languages. This is reflected in a response of *“The teacher's translation makes it easier for me to increase my vocabulary and know the meaning of English that I don't know yet.”*. In reality, the finding contradicts the view that translanguaging can negatively affect students' vocabulary acquisition (Kuteeva, 2020). Conversely, students found translanguaging beneficial in that they were able to add new vocabulary that they did not know before. Through this kind of responses, students consider that translanguaging provides an innovative and effective alternative to deepening vocabulary comprehension (Galante, 2020). Although only mentioned once, the response *“its use (translanguaging) can **strengthen the relationship between teachers and students because we share the same language**”* could underline that students grasped the benefits of translanguaging which affected the relationship between the teacher and them.

Besides the benefits received, the students also supported the continuity of translanguaging due to the feelings they experienced when the teacher implemented this approach. The findings noted several themes within the scope of positive responses such as feelings of fairness, comfort, relaxedness, interest, and increased self-confidence in students' responses to translanguaging practice, which uniquely some of these thematic responses have a relationship with each other. The existence of



translanguaging in terms of supporting students' fairness in language has been mentioned earlier that this approach is indeed used in classrooms with non-native learners in order to encourage bilingualism or multilingualism to build equity for students with language impairments (Yilmaz, 2021). As revealed by a student in the response “*Some students may not understand English, so it's **fairer** if the teacher speaks in a language they understand*”, translanguaging practices in some cases (see Quijano, 2007) do contribute in providing an inclusive environment. It allows students from different backgrounds to feel valued and understood.

This sense of acceptance and appreciation in the classroom also promotes a sense of fairness, whereby all students may feel they are being treated equally. This sentiment of being treated fairly would lead to a sense of comfort and relaxed during learning, which is illustrated in the response of “*I feel **comfortable** because usually my teacher speaks indonesian when explaining the material,*” and “*The use of other languages in learning makes the class feel **less tense and more relaxed***”. This comfortable and relaxed situation is linked to the teacher's smoother communication that can be easily comprehended by the students, so they feel more comfortable when the teacher does not fully use English during the learning process. This in turn has a positive impact on students' motivation (Liando et al., 2023), as seen in the statement “*I became **motivated** to learn English*”. When students have a learning motivation, their confidence and involvement will grow (Simaibang et al., n.d.), as can be seen in the responses “*When the teacher uses translanguaging, the lesson becomes **more engaging** because there is not just one language used.*” and “*We will be more **brave and actively involved** in learning*”.

While most students responded positively to translanguaging, a small number of students were skeptical of the approach. This skepticism emerged under three main themes which were confusion, hesitation, and unsuitability for the level of education. Some students felt confused by the use of multiple languages during teaching, which ultimately disrupted their concentration as noted in the response “*Integrating other languages into English learning makes me **dizzy and don't know where to focus.***” The response corroborates the theory that unexpected or frequent exposure to translanguaging during a lesson might impede the delivery of the material which makes students feel overwhelmed as they have to process information from multiple languages at once (Vallejo & Dooly, 2020). Consequently, they might encounter difficulties in grasping the concepts being taught.

There were also students who were doubtful about the efficacy of translanguaging, worrying that the practice would hinder their ability to become familiar with the target language. This is indicated through the response “*I **doubt I will get used to English** if the teacher continues to use more Indonesian in class*”. When examined further, students with skeptical responses in this theme believe that the use of a language other than English in the learning process can demotivate and inhibit the brain's ability to adapt and develop in the target language. This might be linked to a sense of spoilage to learning that arises automatically due to constant exposure to a familiar language. In accordance with previous studies that have mentioned the brain laziness that may arise



when the mother tongue is continuously used in target language learning (Escobar & Dillard-Paltrineri, 2015). Indeed, a student even opined that translanguaging should not be used at the senior high school level, as it is not suitable for higher academic demands. The findings show that while translanguaging has the potential to facilitate learning, its usage should be customized according to students' convenience and readiness levels, especially at the senior high school level.

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, the issue of the validity of translanguaging as an approach in language learning is the main background. Currently, translanguaging is still debated due to the diverse perceptions and beliefs of the various parties involved. This qualitative case study aims to highlight the islamic public senior high school students' responses towards translanguaging practices applied by teachers during English language teaching.

The results indicated that the majority of students responded positively to translanguaging. They felt that this approach facilitated their understanding of materials and instructions, enriched their vocabulary as well as increased their confidence and motivation in learning English. In addition, many students emphasised the importance of maintaining the use of translanguaging in teaching. However, not all students were in agreement. A few students raised concerns that the overuse of their first language (L1) and the other languages beside English could disrupt their focus and hinder the development of their English language skills. The students skeptically believed that the target language still needs to be the main highlight during the learning process, especially in the grammar aspect, as deep understanding can only be achieved through the use of English itself. For this reason, there needs to be a balance in translanguaging. Teachers should balance the frequency of using the other language with the target language so that learning outcomes can come out well and learning objectives can be achieved.

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