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## Negotiating English-Only Ideology: Translanguaging and L1 Integration in a Multilingual Indonesian EFL Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines translanguaging and first language (L1) integration in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in Pamekasan, Madura, an underrepresented multilingual region of Indonesia. Although translanguaging is increasingly recognized as a resource in multilingual pedagogy, EFL policies and classroom practices in Indonesia often remain aligned with English-only ideology, creating tension between theory and practice. The study aimed to explore how translanguaging is enacted, how teachers and students perceive it, and what learning impacts emerge. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student focus group discussions in a public junior high school. Findings show that translanguaging involving Madurese (L1), Bahasa Indonesia (L2), and English (L3) is naturally embedded in classroom interaction and used strategically to explain complex grammar, clarify tasks, and manage participation. Students drew on L1 and L2 to co-construct meaning, collaborate on problem-solving, and express understanding more confidently. Teachers perceived translanguaging as beneficial for comprehension, engagement, and anxiety reduction, yet remained cautious due to institutional pressure for English-only instruction. The results demonstrate significant cognitive benefits, specifically enhanced conceptual clarity and improved retention of specialized vocabulary, alongside affective gains such as increased learner agency and reduced communicative apprehension. The study underscores the necessity of legitimizing students' full linguistic repertoires and recommends greater policy alignment and teacher education to support context-responsive, inclusive EFL pedagogy.

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## Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Indonesia has long been dominated by monolingual pedagogical approaches that emphasize the exclusive use of English in the classroom (Putrawan & Sinaga, 2022; Rozi, 2023; Santoso & Hamied, 2022). This paradigm rests on the assumption that maximum exposure to the target language leads to more effective language acquisition (Cummins, 1981, 1983). However, such an approach frequently overlooks the sociolinguistic diversity that characterizes the Indonesian classroom, particularly in multilingual regions (Zein et al., 2020). In areas such as Pamekasan, Madura, students navigate daily linguistic environments that

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include Madurese (L1) as the dominant home language, Bahasa Indonesia (L2) as the formal and instructional language, and English (L3) as a foreign language encountered mainly in school settings (Imamah et al., 2020; Misnadin & Yuliawati, 2023).

The linguistic ecology of junior secondary students in Pamekasan reflects a diglossic arrangement in which Madurese is used for everyday informal interaction and Bahasa Indonesia for formal schooling and public communication. This division of labor is consistent with broader sociolinguistic patterns in Indonesia, where regional languages dominate informal domains while Indonesian is reserved for education and other formal spheres (Ferdinand Hasan et al., 2024; Jumadi et al., 2024). In contrast, English remains largely confined to the EFL classroom, with meaningful exposure occurring primarily in structured instructional settings rather than in daily communication (Puspandari & Basthomi, 2022).

The discrepancy between students' everyday linguistic practices (Madurese-Indonesian) and the expectation that they learn English through an English-only approach raises important pedagogical questions. Research on Indonesian EFL classrooms shows that teachers frequently draw on students' full linguistic repertoires to scaffold understanding, clarify instructions, and manage classroom interaction (Agustin et al., 2025; Andy Basoka Iskandar & Failasofah, 2025; Liando et al., 2023). Within broader EMI and EFL scholarship, English-only policies in multilingual contexts have been critiqued for neglecting local linguistic realities and potentially exacerbating comprehension and equity issues, whereas translanguaging-oriented approaches are seen as more inclusive and pedagogically responsive (Liando et al., 2023; Tai, 2022). These debates are particularly relevant for Madurese-dominant regions such as Pamekasan.

Translanguaging offers a theoretically grounded alternative to monolingual instruction (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Permana & Rohmah, 2024; Setyarini & Jocuns, 2025). Conceptualized by García and Wei (2014), translanguaging refers to the dynamic process by which multilingual learners draw upon their full linguistic repertoires to construct meaning. Unlike code-switching, which treats languages as separate systems, translanguaging recognizes the fluid and integrated nature of multilingual competence (García & Kleifgen, 2020; Putrawan & Sinaga, 2022; Wei & García, 2022). This perspective aligns with Cummins' (2007) Interdependence Hypothesis, which posits that knowledge and skills developed in the first language can transfer to additional languages, thereby supporting vocabulary development, conceptual understanding, and discourse organization (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Lou, 2024). Empirical research further suggests that strategic L1 use can reduce cognitive overload and enhance learner engagement in foreign language classrooms (Shin, 2020).

Despite increasing advocacy for multilingual pedagogies, translanguaging remains underutilized in Indonesian public schools due to curriculum discourses that privilege English immersion and align with English-only or EMI orientations (Sugiharto, 2023). Consequently, teachers may experience tension between institutional expectations and pedagogical responsiveness (Burner & Carlsen, 2023).

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This study addresses this gap by examining translanguaging and L1 integration in a junior secondary EFL classroom at SMPN 1 Galis, Pamekasan, an underrepresented multilingual context. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do translanguaging and L1 integration manifest in EFL classroom practices at SMPN 1 Galis, Pamekasan?
2. How do English teachers perceive the use of translanguaging and students' first language in instruction?
3. What is the perceived impact of translanguaging on students' English learning, particularly in terms of comprehension, participation, and motivation?

By investigating a trilingual educational ecology involving Madurese, Indonesian, and English, this study contributes empirical insight into how translanguaging operates in a regional Indonesian context. The findings aim to inform context-responsive EFL pedagogy and provide evidence relevant to ongoing discussions about multilingual approaches within Indonesia's English language education policy.

## **Research Methods**

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the phenomena of translanguaging and first language (L1) integration in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom in a multilingual setting (Chaika, 2023). A case study approach was considered appropriate to obtain an in-depth, contextualized understanding of actual classroom language practices, teacher beliefs, and student experiences and as the aim was not generalization but rather insight into a specific social and linguistic context, this study followed an interpretive, constructivist paradigm (Carminati, 2018; Kouam Arthur William, 2024; McChesney & Aldridge, 2019). The chosen design is also aligned with the theoretical framework of this study, particularly Translanguaging Theory (Wei & García, 2022) and Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which position language and learning as socially mediated activities. These perspectives guided not only the research focus, but also the construction of research instruments, data collection procedures, and methods of analysis.

This study was conducted at SMPN 1 Galis, a public junior secondary school in Pamekasan, East Java, Indonesia, which was purposively selected because of its multilingual profile: the majority of students use Madurese as their first language (L1) at home, Indonesian as their second language (L2) and the official medium of instruction at school, and learn English as a third language (L3) in accordance with the national curriculum. The research participants comprised three English teachers, all of whom had more than five years of teaching experience, held formal teaching certification, and were currently teaching EFL, as well as twenty-five eighth-grade students aged 13–14 years, who were recruited through purposive sampling to represent a range of language proficiency levels and degrees of classroom engagement (Andrade, 2020; Campbell et al., 2020). Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and parental consent was secured for students' participation; all participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and

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pseudonyms were used to protect their identities, in line with ethical principles in educational research concerning participant protection, data confidentiality, and the right to be free from harm (Atkins et al., 2025).

Data were collected over a four-week period using multiple sources to enable triangulation and enhance the credibility of the findings, a strategy widely recommended in qualitative classroom research on multilingual and translanguaging practices (Zhou & Mann, 2021). Six 90-minute English lessons were observed and video-recorded, with the researcher acting as a non-participant observer to minimise interference and preserve naturally occurring interaction, in line with qualitative observation principles in language education (Leung et al., 2024). Observation protocols, informed by translanguaging theory, focused on how English (L3), Bahasa Indonesia (L2), and Madurese (L1) were used interchangeably during teacher–student and student–student interaction, while field notes documented teacher talk, student responses, spontaneous language shifts, and classroom dynamics, similar to previous multilingual classroom studies (Tai, 2024).

To complement the observational data and probe teacher cognition, each of the three English teachers participated in a 30–60-minute semi-structured interview exploring beliefs about translanguaging, classroom language strategies, institutional policies, and perceptions of students' language development, reflecting common uses of interviews in classroom-based and translanguaging research (McKinley et al., 2024). Interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, transcribed verbatim, and subsequently translated and coded. In addition, two focus group discussions were held with a subset of ten students, using student-friendly protocols to elicit their experiences of classroom language use, perceived learning challenges, and comfort with language switching, consistent with the use of focus groups to access learners' perspectives in multilingual contexts (Chand, 2025). All research instruments were reviewed by two external experts in applied linguistics to ensure content validity and alignment with the conceptual framework, following best practices in the development of observation and interview tools in multilingual classroom pedagogy and translanguaging theory. This validation focused on ensuring content relevance, cultural appropriateness, and alignment with the study's conceptual framework, following established best practices for instrument development in classroom-based, culturally responsive language-education research (Liando et al., 2023; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). The revised instruments were then piloted in one class session prior to full data collection to confirm clarity and feasibility in the local educational context.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), following six iterative stages: (1) familiarization with the data through transcription, repeated reading, and initial memoing; (2) generating initial codes by identifying recurring patterns; (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes into broader conceptual categories; (4) reviewing themes to ensure their coherence and relevance to the research questions; (5) defining and naming themes by assigning theoretical significance; and (6) producing the report by integrating the themes into coherent narrative findings (Byrne, 2022; Campbell et al., 2020). In terms of coding, it was conducted inductively, allowing patterns to emerge from the data without being constrained by predetermined categories; however, theoretical coding was also employed to relate emergent patterns to key

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constructs from translanguaging theory, L1 integration, and sociocultural theory (Naeem et al., 2023; Proudfoot, 2023). In addition, observational data were triangulated with interview and focus group findings to enhance the credibility and confirmability of the analysis (Carter et al., 2014; Noble & Heale, 2019). To further strengthen the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher employed member checking by sharing summaries and preliminary themes with participants for validation, engaged in peer debriefing through regular consultation with academic advisors and colleagues, and maintained reflexive journaling to monitor personal biases and positionality throughout data collection and analysis (Ahmed, 2024; Raskind et al., 2019).

## Findings

To address the research aims of this study, the findings are presented in three core themes aligned with the study's objectives: (a) authentic instances of translanguaging and L1 integration in classroom discourse, (b) teacher perceptions toward these practices, and (c) their perceived impact on students' English learning. All data were drawn from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student group discussions at SMPN 1 Galis, Pamekasan.

### *a. Authentic Instances of Translanguaging and L1 Integration*

The classroom observations revealed that translanguaging was a frequent and natural part of teacher-student and peer interactions. Teachers and students fluidly utilized Madurese (L1), Bahasa Indonesia (L2), and English (L3) for various pedagogical and communicative functions, depending on the context. Translanguaging played a strategic role in four key instructional situations:

#### 1. Explaining abstract grammatical points

Teachers often used translanguaging to explain complex grammatical structures, especially verbal tenses. During a lesson on the simple past tense, for example, a teacher introduced the verb "went" in English and clarified its meaning as follows:

*"Kalau bentuk kata kerja lampau, contohnya went. Dalam Bahasa Indonesia artinya pergi, tapi dalam bahasa Madura mangkat".*

This layered metalinguistic explanation across English (L3:went), Indonesian (L2:pergi), Madurese (L1:mangkat) enabled students to conceptually map the grammatical function of the simple past tense by drawing on both national and local linguistic repertoires. In line with theory, this practice illustrates how teachers strategically mobilize students' full linguistic resources to mediate the understanding of abstract L3 grammar. It also reflects an L1-based grammar learning approach, in which L1 and L2 operate as cognitive and effective scaffolds that support English tense morphology.

#### 2. Giving and clarifying task instructions

Translanguaging was frequently employed by teachers to give and clarify task instructions, particularly when students showed signs of confusion. In one observed instance, the teacher initially instructed students in English (L3):

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*“Now, I want you to work in pairs and make five sentences using past tense.”*

When students appeared confused, the teacher formulated the instruction in Bahasa Indonesia (L2):

*“Sekarang, saya ingin kalian berpasangan untuk membuat lima kalimat dengan menggunakan bentuk lampau.”*

And subsequently in Madurese (L1):

*“Sateyah, sengkok akarep be'en kabbi bi' pasanganna a ghâbây lema' kalimat ngangguy bâjâ lambâ”.*

This translanguaging sequence provided progressive clarification, with each language layer reinforcing comprehension. As a result, the instructions became accessible to all students, particularly those with lower English proficiency, and ensured that the task demands were understood accurately.

### 3. Repeating or paraphrasing English content using L1 or L2

Teachers also employed translanguaging by restating English reading content in Bahasa Indonesia and Madurese to secure comprehension of meaning. After reading the sentence “A man went to the market because he needed some fruit” aloud, the teacher initiated a comprehension check in English (L3):

*“So, what happened?”*

When no student responded, the teacher reformulated the message in Bahasa Indonesia (L2):

*“Jadi, orang itu pergi ke pasar karna butuh buah, ya?”*,

And then in Madurese (L1):

*“dhâddhi, orèng ka pasar karana parlo buwâ, yeh?”* .

Through this systematic shift from English to Indonesian and Madurese, the teacher temporarily foregrounded students' more dominant languages to enable semantic processing of the text before posing further comprehension questions. This translanguaging move is consistent with findings that using L1/L2 as linguistic resources can scaffold understanding of L3 input and reduce processing load in multilingual EFL classrooms (Aribah & Pradita, 2022; Liando et al., 2023; Nursanti, 2021). It also reflects Cummins' (2007) interdependence hypothesis, whereby meaning constructed in L1 can support deeper comprehension and retention of L2/L3 texts (Hungwe, 2019).

### 4. Encouraging participation among less confident students

Translanguaging also surfaced as a key resource for encouraging participation among less confident learners. In one episode, a student hesitated to respond to a comprehension question posed in English (L3):

*“Can you tell me what the man did after that?”*

The student appeared anxious and remained silent. Sensing this, the teacher shifted to Madurese (L1):

*“coba’, apa se orèng lake’ rowa lakonnè mareannah dâri pasar?”* (Try, what did he do after the market?).

The student then replied in Madurese:

*“molè?”* (went home?), which the teacher immediately validated and recast in Bahasa Indonesia/English (L2/L3):

*“Yes! He went home. Good. That’s correct.”*

In this interaction, the move into L1 functioned as an affective bridge as well as a linguistic scaffold, reducing the learner’s anxiety and lowering the perceived risk of speaking in front of peers. Similar to findings in other EFL and CAL contexts, allowing students to draw on their stronger language(s) can mitigate language anxiety, foster a sense of safety, and increase willingness to participate, particularly among lower-proficiency or more reticent learners (Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Shaikh, 2025). Translanguaging in such cases helps construct a more inclusive classroom climate in which hesitant students are positioned as capable contributors rather than deficient speakers (Pawapootanon et al., 2025).

The student’s successful L1 response, followed by positive teacher reinforcement and an L2/L3 reformulation, illustrates how translanguaging can simultaneously support emotional comfort and gradual reorientation back to the target language. This aligns with research showing that judicious use of L1 lowers the affective filter, boosts confidence, and encourages sustained engagement in classroom interaction (Nursanti, 2021; Shaikh, 2025).

Taken together, these interactional episodes show that translanguaging in this classroom fulfilled multiple pedagogical and affective functions: clarifying complex content, reinforcing instructions, facilitating meaning-making, and promoting equitable participation. Rather than signalling a lack of proficiency, the strategic, responsive use of L1 and L2 within English instruction enriched classroom discourse and opened up participation for less confident students, resonating with García and Wei’s (2014) view of translanguaging as both a learning strategy and a broader pedagogical stance.

### **b. Teacher Perceptions Toward Translanguaging and L1 Use**

Interviews with the three English teachers revealed positive yet nuanced attitudes toward the use of L1 and translanguaging in the EFL classroom. All participants acknowledged the practical value of utilizing Madurese (L1) and Bahasa Indonesia (L2) under particular pedagogical circumstances. They emphasized that translanguaging was not only useful but in many cases essential for ensuring access to content, building rapport with students, and maintaining classroom harmony. Based on their reflections, teachers identified four key benefits of translanguaging, each supported by authentic classroom examples:

1. Enhancing Student Understanding, Especially for Complex Topics
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Teachers frequently deployed translanguaging as a scaffold to deepen comprehension during grammar instruction, particularly when addressing abstract concepts such as the passive voice. In one lesson, the teacher first introduced the rule in English (L3):

*“So, we put ‘to be’ before the past participle”.*

When students appeared puzzled, the explanation was reformulated in Bahasa Indonesia (L2):

*“Kalau kalimat pasif, kita mulai dari ‘to be’ ditambah kata kerja bentuk ketiga. Contohnya: ‘The letter was sent.’”* and further elaborated in Madurese (L1):

*“Soradda e’ kèrèm. Jadi subjeknya bukan pelaku, tapi yang dikenai tindakan.”*

This strategic shift across English, Indonesian, and Madurese reduced cognitive load and made the underlying role shift of the subject in passive constructions more transparent by anchoring it in familiar linguistic systems (Witari & Sukamto, 2023). Similar patterns are reported in Indonesian and Pakistani EFL contexts, where teachers combine the target language with students’ L1 to clarify grammar rules, compare structures, and explain metalinguistic terminology, leading to more robust understanding of complex forms (Alam & Razzaq, 2025; Raja et al., 2022; Supriadin et al., 2025). Translanguaging in grammar teaching allows learners to map new L3 structures onto existing L1/L2 schemata, thereby increasing conceptual clarity and accurate application of grammatical rules in subsequent practice.

In this way, translanguaging operated not as a fallback for failure, but as a deliberate pedagogical strategy to mediate abstract grammatical knowledge and enable learners to internalize form–meaning relationships more effectively.

## 2. Supporting Classroom Management and Motivation

Translanguaging also operated as a classroom management strategy to sustain student engagement and promote active participation. In one observed session, small-group discussions became stagnant until the teacher intervened by alternately drawing on Madurese, Indonesian, and English to prompt interaction.

Teacher (L1):

*“Mara jha’ ghun coma neng-enneng, jhâjhâl a caca, kabbih neng dinnak reya entar ajhar”.* *“Don’t just sit quietly, try to talk. We’re here to learn”.*

Teacher (L2):

*“Yang penting sekarang latihan dulu komunikasi. Nanti, pelan-pelan baru pakai full English”.* *“What’s important now is practicing communication first. We’ll gradually move to full English.”*

This code-switching was not incidental, but a strategic pedagogical move. By temporarily foregrounding the students’ L1 and L2, the teacher reactivated motivation, clarified the purpose of the task, and lowered the communicative pressure associated with

using English only. Similar patterns are reported in EFL and CLIL contexts, where teachers use translanguaging to boost participation, build rapport, and maintain order, for example by re-focusing off-task groups, disciplining in the local language, and encouraging hesitant learners to contribute (Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Zhou & Mann, 2021). Empirical studies show that such strategic use of students' full linguistic repertoires increases willingness to speak, enhances comfort, and supports more sustained engagement in classroom activities—key indicators of effective classroom management in multilingual environments (Karima et al., 2025).

### 3. Reducing Learner Anxiety in Using English

Another benefit highlighted by the teachers was the emotional support that translanguaging offered to learners who were hesitant to speak or fearful of making mistakes in English. In one classroom episode, the teacher encouraged a student during an oral task using a combination of Madurese and Bahasa Indonesia. Teacher (L1):

*"Ta' arapa, mon ta' samporna. sengko' bân be'en ghi' ajhâr bhâsa Inggris. Se penting reyah be'en kodhu nyoba'.* (It's okay if it's not perfect. We're learning English. What matters is that you try.)

Student (attempts answer):

*"He... go to... eh... market."*

Teacher (L2):

*"Yes, good! Dia pergi ke pasar. That's right, great try!"*

In this interaction, translanguaging functions as affective scaffolding rather than mere linguistic assistance. By momentarily shifting into the learners' L1 and L2, the teacher normalizes errors, validates partial English output, and offers immediate positive feedback. Such practices lower students' emotional barriers, enabling them to take risks in speaking and to view mistakes as part of the learning process.

Empirical studies show that translanguaging and pedagogical code-switching can create an emotional safe space that reduces foreign language anxiety, fosters enjoyment, and boosts confidence, especially during speaking activities (Song et al., 2022). In various EFL contexts, learners report feeling more comfortable, less tense, and more willing to participate when teachers strategically integrate L1 alongside English, thereby lowering the affective filter and supporting sustained engagement (Cahyanti & Dharmawan, 2025)).

### 4. Bridging Cultural–Linguistic Distance Between Teacher and Student

Teachers also recognized translanguaging as a means of narrowing the cultural and linguistic distance between themselves and their students. One participant, who was relatively new to the region, deliberately incorporated Madurese into classroom interaction as a relational strategy.

Teacher (L1):

*“Sampyan sehat, nak, Be’en dâtenng ka sakolah cè’ semangattah arè rèya”*  
(You are allright, kid, You came to school full of spirit today)

The teacher reported that students reacted with laughter, smiles, and heightened warmth, which in turn fostered greater openness and responsiveness during the lesson. This instance of code-meshing positioned the teacher symbolically within the students’ cultural and linguistic world, rather than outside it, thereby cultivating relational proximity and mutual trust.

From a translanguaging perspective, such practices contribute to the construction of a shared classroom translanguaging space, where students’ local languages and identities are legitimized as pedagogical resources rather than treated as obstacles (Tai, 2022). Research shows that when teachers draw on learners’ full linguistic repertoires, they not only facilitate access to content but also affirm students’ identities, strengthen teacher-student relationships, and promote a stronger sense of belonging and classroom community (Andleeb et al., 2024). In culturally and linguistically diverse settings, translanguaging has been found to support inclusive, equity-oriented pedagogies by connecting school discourses with students’ everyday cultural worlds and lived experiences (Duarte, 2019).

### **c. Perceived Impact on Students’ English Learning**

This third theme explores how translanguaging and L1 integration are perceived to influence students’ learning of English, both cognitively and affectively. Data from student focus group discussions and teacher interviews consistently indicated that translanguaging functions as an effective instructional scaffold that facilitates comprehension, engagement, and learner confidence. Teachers and students alike regarded the multi-language environment not as a hindrance to English development, but as a stepping stone, especially in a rural educational context where English exposure is limited. Below are four interrelated dimensions of perceived impact, each supported with contextual examples and connected to the broader theoretical framework:

#### **1. Enhancing Comprehension and Retention**

Teachers reported that integrating Bahasa Indonesia (L2) and Madurese (L1) alongside English (L3) substantially enhanced learners’ comprehension of complex grammar, vocabulary, and classroom instructions, particularly for lower-proficiency students (Cahyanti & Dharmawan, 2025). One teacher noted:

*“When I switch to Bahasa or Madurese, they immediately connect the concept to what they already know. Their faces change—they engage more.”*

Echoing findings that L1 use makes content more accessible and reduces confusion (Alam & Razzaq, 2025).

In one observed lesson on irregular verb forms, the teacher first presented an English verb chart, then provided key translations in both L2 and L1, and finally asked students to supply Madurese equivalents. Similar multilingual sequencing (English → L1 explanation →

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bilingual elaboration) has been shown to deepen conceptual understanding and support content learning in EFL and CLIL-type classes (Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2025).

This layered translanguaging approach appeared to strengthen semantic retention, as students could anchor abstract L3 items in familiar L1/L2 lexical networks and later use the target verbs accurately in independent tasks. Empirical work on translanguaging and bilingual instruction likewise reports improved recall of vocabulary and grammar when learners can systematically relate new L2/L3 forms to existing L1 resources (Cahyanti & Dharmawan, 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Such dynamics are consistent with Cummins' interdependence hypothesis, whereby cognitive and linguistic resources in the first language support the development of additional languages, rather than competing with them. In this view, pedagogical translanguaging harnesses learners' full repertoires to facilitate durable L3 learning.

## 2. Encouraging Active Engagement and Participation

Both teachers and students reported that translanguaging reduces cognitive load and enables learners to allocate more attention to meaningful participation rather than merely decoding input. In group discussions, when students were permitted to draw on their L1 or L2, they became noticeably more willing to initiate questions and contribute responses, particularly those with lower English proficiency (Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2025; Shaikh, 2025).

One student explained:

*"Kalau bahasa Inggris terus kadang takut salah. Tapi pas dijelaskan pakai Bahasa Indonesia atau Madura, saya ikut aktif. Saya jadi ngerti dan mau jawab."* (If the teacher only uses English, I sometimes fear making mistakes. But when it is explained in Indonesian or Madurese, I become more active. I understand and feel motivated to respond.)

This excerpt illustrates how translanguaging functions not only as linguistic scaffolding, but also as an affective resource that lowers perceived communicative risk and fosters a psychologically safe space for interaction (Pawapootanon et al., 2025). By legitimizing students' full linguistic repertoires, translanguaging enhances willingness to communicate, encourages exploratory talk, and democratizes participation in classroom discourse (Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2025). In line with García and Wei's (2014) view, such practices create translanguaging spaces in which learners can exercise agency and mobilize all their languages as valid tools for meaning-making and knowledge construction.

## 3. Supporting Emotional Comfort and Reducing Anxiety

Many students reported that when teachers deliberately incorporated their home language into instruction, the classroom atmosphere became more relaxed, familiar, and emotionally secure. Translanguaging thus operated as an affective strategy that fostered psychological comfort and helped alleviate anxiety associated with using English as a foreign language (Cahyanti & Dharmawan, 2025). Similar findings show that translanguaging spaces

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can function as emotionally safe environments that reduce foreign language anxiety and support learners' well-being (Capstick, 2020). One student remarked:

*"When the teacher explains in Madurese too, I feel closer and less afraid to ask questions."*

This statement illustrates how the strategic use of Madurese and Indonesian can create a sense of emotional proximity between teacher and students, lowering the perceived risk of speaking and inviting more open interaction (Adam et al., 2025). Such affective support resonates with Vygotskian sociocultural theory, in which learners' progress most effectively within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) when assisted through meaningful, socially mediated linguistic interaction (Cong-Lem, 2025). In this sense, translanguaging not only scaffolds comprehension but also provides emotional scaffolding that nurtures confidence, belonging, and readiness to engage with challenging L2 tasks (Dovchin, 2021).

#### 4. Promoting Language Confidence While Avoiding Overdependence

While supportive of translanguaging, teachers also emphasized the need to balance L1/L2 scaffolding with gradual, structured exposure to L3 (English). Several described this as a "phase-based transition," in which reliance on students' home languages is intentionally high at the outset and then progressively reduced as learners' proficiency and confidence increase (Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). One teacher explained:

*"At first, I use Madurese and Indonesian a lot. But step by step, I encourage more answers in English. Some students begin to try spontaneously—this shows progress."*

Subsequent classroom observations showed that, over time, some students began to switch back into English voluntarily during presentations and in response to teacher prompts, signalling growing learner autonomy and willingness to communicate in the L3 (Chong & Reinders, 2025). This pattern suggests that translanguaging, when used strategically, does not foster long-term L1 dependence; instead, it operates as a launchpad that supports confidence-building and facilitates more independent L3 production (Cahyanti & Dharmawan, 2025).

These findings resonate with Ruiz's (1984) language-as-resource orientation and conceptualizations of pedagogical translanguaging, which frame learners' full repertoires as assets rather than obstacles and view L1 use as temporary scaffolding rather than a permanent instructional crutch (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). At the same time, teachers and students in this study navigated institutional monolingual norms that privilege English-only practices, echoing research showing that flexible, multilingual pedagogies often coexist in tension with dominant language ideologies (Pawapootanon et al., 2025).

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## Discussion

This study investigated how translanguaging and L1 integration manifest in authentic EFL classroom interaction, how teachers perceive and negotiate these practices, and how they shape students' English learning in a multilingual setting. The findings add to a substantial body of scholarship that critiques monolingual ideologies in EFL/EMI pedagogy and instead advocates multilingual, flexible practices that better reflect learners' lived linguistic repertoires. Emerging from an Indonesian context, the discussion foregrounds three key themes and connects them to the study's theoretical frames: (a) classroom translanguaging as a purposeful meaning-making practice, (b) teacher perceptions shaped and constrained by policy and pedagogical realities, and (c) the perceived cognitive, affective, and behavioural impact on student learning.

### a. Translanguaging as a Purposeful Meaning-Making Practice

Translanguaging in this study emerged as a fluid, strategic resource in both teacher-student and peer interaction, rather than as an indicator of linguistic deficit, echoing work that conceptualizes translanguaging as an agentive, equity-oriented pedagogy for multilingual learners (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Rajendram, 2023; Yilmaz, 2021). Consistent with classroom research in Turkey, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia, the mobilisation of students' full repertoires supported clarification of abstract grammar, revoicing of complex instructions, and paraphrasing of dense texts, thereby strengthening comprehension, participation, and learner engagement (Cong-Lem, 2025; Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Sutrisno, 2023; Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). This pattern is in line with García and Li Wei's framing of translanguaging as a dynamic, semiotic practice that transcends narrow code-switching and treats multilinguals' repertoires as a unified resource for deeper cognitive and discursive engagement (García & Kleifgen, 2020).

The socioculturally embedded nature of these practices resonates with Vygotskian views of language as a meditational tool situated in social activity, a perspective increasingly used to theorize translanguaging as proximal scaffolding within learners' Zones of Proximal Development (Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). In the present context, the differentiated roles of English (as target output), Bahasa Indonesia (for academic and procedural mediation), and Madurese (for affective bonding and peer support) index a functionally distributed multilingual ecology, comparable to Hornberger's continua of biliteracy and to empirical work on multilingual classroom ecologies in Indonesia and elsewhere (Sutrisno, 2023). Rather than approximating an English-only immersion environment, the classroom functions as a translanguaging space in which multiple named languages and semiotic modes interact to pursue shared meaning-making and instructional goals.

### b. Teacher Perceptions: Pedagogical Appreciation and Institutional Tensions

Teachers in this study recognized translanguaging as pedagogically valuable for clarifying complex content, motivating disengaged learners, managing mixed-ability classes, and reducing anxiety, in line with evidence from Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia that attributes cognitive, interactive, and socio-affective benefits to systematic translanguaging (Cong-Lem, 2025; Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Sutrisno, 2023). They also

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emphasised its role in fostering relational proximity and cultural alignment with students, echoing research that links translanguaging to enhanced rapport, validation of identities, and more equitable participation for language-minoritised learners (Zano & Mpiti, 2025).

At the same time, teacher narratives revealed a degree of ambivalence, largely shaped by assessment regimes and institutional expectations that equate “good” English teaching with maximal English use, a tension widely documented in EFL, EMI, and CLIL contexts (Nguyen, 2022; Santoso & Hamied, 2022). These tensions can be understood, in Hornberger’s terms, as struggles within constrained ideological and implementational spaces, where teachers negotiate between bottom-up multilingual practices and top-down monolingual norms (Sutrisno, 2023). Differences between teachers who planned translanguaging proactively and those who drew on it reactively reflect cross-context findings that pedagogical awareness, theoretical grounding, and professional confidence strongly mediate how systematically translanguaging is enacted.

These dynamics highlight the need for sustained, research-informed professional development on multilingual pedagogy, alongside policy frameworks that explicitly legitimise translanguaging rather than tolerating it as an unofficial workaround (Wang et al., 2025).

### **c. Translanguaging as Cognitive and Affective Scaffolding for Learners**

For both teachers and students, the impact of translanguaging in this study extended beyond immediate comprehension. Empirical work across Turkey, Thailand, Vietnam, and other EFL contexts shows that strategic L1 use can lower anxiety, nurture a sense of belonging, and draw less proficient learners into more active participation (Cong-Lem, 2025; Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). In complex tasks and group work, translanguaging in this setting facilitated joint problem-solving, peer explanation, and incremental movement toward English production, paralleling findings that translanguaging can enhance engagement and interaction without hindering, and in some cases enhancing, L2 development (Shaikh, 2025; Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022).

Interpreted through Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development, these practices operate as scaffolded support: learners initially appropriate concepts via familiar languages and subsequently re-articulate them in English as confidence and control grow, a process compatible with Cummins’ interdependence hypothesis and evidence of positive cross-linguistic transfer when students’ repertoires are treated as resources (Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). Ruiz’s language-as-resource orientation is likewise borne out, as learners’ multilingual capacities are reframed as assets rather than deficits, a perspective closely aligned with translanguaging as pedagogy for equity and linguistic justice (Zano & Mpiti, 2025).

Concerns about overreliance on L1 are tempered by experimental and quasi-experimental work, particularly in Turkey and other EFL contexts, showing that translanguaging, when deliberately phased, can foster rather than impede independent L2 production (Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). Phase-based reductions in L1 support, combined

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with explicit expectations for increasing English output, appear to promote confidence, autonomy, and sustained language growth rather than stagnation (Shaikh, 2025).

## **Conclusion**

This study set out to explore how translanguaging and first language (L1) integration function as pedagogical practices in an Indonesian EFL classroom located in the multilingual, rural context of Pamekasan, Madura. Through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and student focus group discussions, it becomes evident that translanguaging is not merely a spontaneous communicative behavior, but also a deliberate and educationally meaningful strategy—aligning with existing national and international scholarship.

The data illustrate how both teachers and students fluidly navigated between Madurese (L1), Bahasa Indonesia (L2), and English (L3) in their day-to-day classroom interactions. Teachers drew upon all three languages strategically to explain abstract grammar points, clarify instructions, and foster engagement. Students, in turn, employed their full linguistic repertoires collaboratively, using translanguaging as a means to co-construct understanding and negotiate meaning. Rather than hindering learning, this multilingual engagement appeared to support deeper cognitive processing, ease task completion, and enhance overall comprehension, reinforcing the role of translanguaging as a scaffold for meaningful learning.

Teacher perspectives further revealed generally positive attitudes towards translanguaging practices, albeit tempered by a sense of caution. While acknowledging the pedagogical value of allowing students to draw on their home languages—particularly in terms of improving comprehension, motivation, and classroom rapport—teachers also noted concerns regarding over-dependence on the L1 and existing institutional pressures that uphold English-only orientations. This reflects a continuing tension between top-down language policies and the multilingual realities faced in everyday classrooms.

Equally important, students expressed appreciation for the inclusion of their linguistic and cultural identities through translanguaging. They described enhanced emotional comfort, greater participation, and increased confidence in using English when their home languages were welcomed within the learning space. Over time, this encouraged more active engagement and a gradual shift toward higher English usage, echoing prior evidence of translanguaging's dual cognitive and socio-affective benefits in EFL contexts.

By offering a thick, context-sensitive account of translanguaging in a rural, Madurese-dominant EFL classroom, a setting often overlooked in existing literature, this study contributes fresh insights to the broader discourse on multilingual pedagogy. It underscores the importance of grounding instructional practices in local linguistic ecologies, highlighting the need for pedagogical approaches and language policies that are context-responsive, inclusive, and supportive of students' full linguistic resources.

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