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DEVELOPING HARMONY OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN ELT

Examining the Perceptions of Translanguaging by Pre-service Teachers in Indonesian EFL Higher Education Classrooms

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Abstract

This study explores pre-service teachers' perceptions of translanguaging practices in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in multilingual Indonesia. Through a qualitative research approach, the research involved three pre-service teachers who were attending university courses. The results showed that these pre-service teachers perceived translanguaging as an effective, flexible, and inclusive learning tool. They saw the benefits of translanguaging in improving pre-service teachers' engagement, learning motivation, comprehension, and language skills. However, major obstacles emerged in the implementation of translanguaging, mainly related to the lack of curriculum policy support, which resulted in confusion in the guidelines for its use. The lack of resources and materials that support translanguaging is also a challenge. Some pre-service teachers also faced disapproval or incomprehension from others regarding the use of translanguaging. This research underscores the need for policy changes and further support to effectively utilize translanguaging in English language learning in Indonesia. Better training and awareness of translanguaging are also needed among English language educators. The results of this study provide an important foundation for the development of more effective translanguaging practices in English language learning in Indonesia. To achieve this, collaboration between educators, curriculum developers, and policy makers was identified as an important step towards creating an educational environment that supports successful translanguaging practices.

Keywords: EFL classrooms; higher education; perceptions; pre-service teacher; translanguaging

INTRODUCTION

English as a foreign language (EFL) is one of the most important and popular subjects in Indonesia (Subroto, 2019). This is because English is considered an international language that can open opportunities for pre-service teachers to communicate, learn and develop in the era of globalization. However, teaching and learning English in Indonesia also faces various challenges, one of which is multilingualism. Indonesia is a multilingual country with more than 700 regional languages spoken by various ethnic groups (Simbolon, 2013; Cummins, 2003). In addition, the Indonesian national language is also used as the official language and language of instruction in schools. Therefore, EFL pre-service teachers in Indonesia must master at least three languages: local language, national language, and

foreign language (Widiati & Cahyono, 2006).

Multilingualism can be a source of cultural and cognitive richness, but it can also be a source of difficulty and conflict in language learning (Baker, 2011). One issue that often arises in EFL learning in Indonesia is the role and status of languages other than English in the EFL classroom. Some educators and researchers argue that the use of other languages should be minimized or avoided as it can disrupt the English learning process and lower the quality of teaching (Syah, 2015). However, some educators and other researchers argue that the use of other languages can be a useful and beneficial resource in EFL learning as it can facilitate pre-service teachers' interaction, comprehension, transfer, and expression (Aryadoust et al., 2018; Setiadi et al., 2016).

One approach that recognizes and utilizes multilingualism in EFL learning is translanguaging. Translanguaging is a practice that enables and encourages EFL learners to use their entire language repertoire to empower them and help them reach their full potential (García & Wei, 2014). Translanguaging is not just about switching or mixing codes between two or more separate languages, but also about using the various linguistic features and modes available to multilingual learners as one unified language system (Otheguy et al., 2015; Hornberger, 2012). Translanguaging can be done by both pre-service teachers and lecturers, either spontaneously or planned, either individually or collaboratively, either orally or in writing, either inside or outside the classroom (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Translanguaging has been a topic of interest for many researchers and practitioners in the EFL field, especially in multilingual contexts such as Indonesia. Several studies have been conducted to explore the practices, benefits, challenges, and factors that influence translanguaging in EFL classrooms in Indonesia (Aryadoust et al., 2018; Setiadi et al., 2016; Zain, 2019). However, most of these studies focus on primary and secondary school contexts, while research on translanguaging in EFL classrooms in higher education is still very limited. In fact, higher education is an important and strategic place to develop pre-service teachers' English competence as they will face greater challenges and opportunities in the working and academic world. In addition, college is also a potential place to implement translanguaging because pre-service teachers there have diverse language, cultural and disciplinary backgrounds.

One interesting group of pre-service teachers to be studied in the context of translanguaging in college EFL classes is pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers are English language education pre-service teachers in universities. Pre-service teachers are future teachers who will teach English in Indonesian schools. Therefore, they need to have good English competence as well as effective teaching skills. Translanguaging can be one of the strategies that can help pre-service teachers improve their competence and skills as learners and future teachers of English.

However, what are pre-service teachers' perceptions of translanguaging in college EFL classes? Do they see translanguaging as positive or negative? Do they experience benefits or challenges in

implementing translanguaging? What are the factors that influence their perceptions and practices about translanguaging? This research aims to answer these questions by conducting a comprehensive investigation on pre-service teachers who are currently enrolled in programs at one of the state universities in Central Java. This research is expected to contribute significantly to the advancement of translanguaging theory and its practical application within EFL classrooms in higher education, with a particular focus on the Indonesian context.

METHOD

This research adopts a thematic analysis approach with qualitative methods. Thematic analysis is a research approach that allows researchers to identify, categorize, and analyze the main themes that emerge in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative method is a research method that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behaviors that can be observed (Sugiyono, 2017). This study chose a thematic analysis approach with qualitative methods because the researcher wanted to investigate in depth and holistically the pre-service teachers' perceptions of translanguaging in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in one of the public universities in Surakarta, Central Java.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were used to interact with participants to explore their perceptions of translanguaging in EFL learning contexts. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. Second, document analysis, including syllabus, teachers' notes, and learning materials, was conducted to provide an understanding of the implementation of translanguaging in learning contexts.

The data obtained from interviews and document analysis were then analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. This approach involved identifying key themes in the data, coding the data based on those themes, and developing a deeper understanding of pre-service teachers' perceptions and practices related to translanguaging.

In addition, this study adhered to the ethical principles of research by obtaining informed consent from all participants and maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Triangulation was used to increase the validity and reliability of the findings by comparing data from interviews with the results of document analysis. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the use of translanguaging in EFL learning contexts in Indonesia without involving classroom observation.

RESULT

In this section, we present the findings derived from the analysis of interviews conducted with pre-service teachers, aimed at addressing several research inquiries framed within the thematic scope of this study. To ensure the confidentiality of participant identities, the identities of the pre-service teachers who took part in this study will remain undisclosed. The outcomes of these interviews

illuminate the multifaceted perspectives held by pre-service teachers concerning instructional methodologies, particularly within the context of translanguaging practices. Despite variations in viewpoints, a unanimous consensus among all pre-service teachers emerges, underscoring the pivotal role of translanguaging practices in enhancing their educational experiences.

A. Participants in this study gave concrete examples of their translanguaging practices in EFL teaching:

Participant A describes the practice of translanguaging by explaining, "On my campus, lecturers frequently teach using both English and Indonesian, and there is a blend of Indonesian and English in interactions among prospective teachers. When lecturers explain, they often use a mixture of English or mostly English during the question-and-answer sessions. Additionally, in the interaction between lecturers and prospective teachers, both English and Indonesian are frequently employed."

In this study, the description of translanguaging practices highlights that on Participant A's campus, lecturers often use English and Indonesian simultaneously in their teaching. Prospective teachers are also engaged in interactions that involve a mixture of Indonesian and English during the learning process. The use of mixed English or predominantly English during question-and-answer sessions reflects a translanguaging practice that supports students' understanding within the context of English language teaching. Duarte's study (2019) on mainstream education demonstrates that translanguaging plays a role in assisting pre-service teachers in collaborative conversations during cognitively demanding tasks and scaffolding meaning-making through interactions to complete assignments.

Participant B illustrates how lecturers can implement translanguaging in EFL classes. For instance, "Translanguaging practices that can be employed by lecturers in class involve direct delivery techniques. For example, when lecturers explain the material in English, they immediately follow with Indonesian. Such translanguaging practices are crucial for pre-service teachers to truly comprehend what is conveyed by the lecturers."

In this context, lecturers describe how they can apply translanguaging in EFL classes. For example, when lecturers explain the material in English, they can promptly switch to Indonesian to ensure students' understanding. These participants believe that such practices are necessary to ensure that pre-service teachers genuinely grasp the lecturer's communication, reflecting a responsive approach to students' needs during the learning process. Lin and He's study (2017), investigating the role of translanguaging in Hong Kong classrooms, reveals that the native language of pre-service teachers is used to negotiate meaning, provide encouragement, and build relationships. Interestingly, the research also finds that pre-service teachers utilize their full repertoire for identity reinforcement.

Participant C describes situations in which translanguaging can occur. "In the context of academic writing instruction, sometimes, to prevent confusion among pre-service teachers, we can

provide simple examples in Indonesian, or a language understood by the students, and then explain it in English. Translanguaging is also susceptible to code switching, language switching, or even code mixing, which involves language blending. For instance, if we come from Solo and speak Javanese, we tend to mix Indonesian with Javanese, but there are some parts that we may not realize have mixed with English. However, we don't force it and allow our conversation partners to speak in whichever language they prefer that's where translanguaging occurs."

In the context of academic writing instruction, lecturers can provide direct examples in Indonesian, or a language understood by the students, followed by explanations in English. This practice can also involve translanguaging, especially when lecturers and students have different native languages. According to the participants, translanguaging occurs when lecturers and students let the conversation flow in their chosen languages, reflecting flexibility in their practices. Wang's study (2019), using various instruments, found that over half of the pre-service teachers in Chinese universities preferred multilingual teaching, enabling them to use their integrated linguistic repertoire to negotiate meaning and peer support. Although the pre-service teachers were aware of the practical importance of language translanguaging, they hoped to incorporate more languages into their repertoire. In observation, translanguaging practices serve various functions, such as providing cognitive and metalinguistic scaffolding, interpreting cultural meanings, and engaging in lecture-student relationships."

B. Pre-service Teachers' Perspectives on the Translanguaging Practice:

Participants in this study provided insights into the advantages of translanguaging for their comprehension of teaching materials. For instance, Participant A expressed a preference for translanguaging, stating, "I find translanguaging practice enjoyable because it enhances material understanding. While practicing translanguaging, learning becomes more enjoyable." Participant A acknowledged that while studying, there is an improvement in English language skills. However, to ensure a deeper understanding of the material, lecturers often resort to translanguaging explanations originally presented in English. Additionally, Participant A raised concerns about the challenges in employing translanguaging, stating, "School policies do not consistently support translanguaging. We require more school support." Some pre-service teachers encountered obstacles stemming from curriculum policies that do not strongly advocate for translanguaging. They yearned for clearer directives concerning translanguaging integration into the EFL curriculum. Iversen's research (2019) highlighted the utilization of translanguaging by pre-service teachers during their field placements in Norwegian primary schools, where they effectively drew upon their linguistic repertoire to assist multilingual pre-service teachers.

Participant B shared their perspective on how translanguaging facilitated better comprehension of lecturer's explanations. They commented, "Personally, I appreciate the infusion of languages in

English class. It eases my learning process and understanding of the material." Participant B elucidated that lecturer first explained the material in English and then reiterated it in Indonesian. This practice catered to the varying levels of English comprehension among pre-service teachers. Participant B also highlighted the scarcity of resources and materials that support translanguaging, underscoring the challenges in its implementation. They referred to Budiman & Kristfani's findings (2020), which revealed that many pre-service teachers preferred their lecturers to use their native language (L1) in the learning process, as it motivated them, created a comfortable learning environment, and facilitated idea expression and comprehension.

In the view of Participant C, translanguaging contributed to a more dynamic classroom atmosphere. They noted, "I favor translanguaging because it makes regular classes more engaging." Participant C emphasized the benefits of effective communication between lecturers and pre-service teachers, reducing apprehensions about asking questions and enhancing comprehension of lecturer's explanations. However, they acknowledged resistance from some pre-service teachers who believed that English should always be the medium of instruction. Overcoming skepticism toward translanguaging was identified as a challenge. Carstens (2016) explored pre-service teachers' perspectives on translanguaging in the South African context and found positive attitudes toward using their linguistic resources, leading to cognitive and affective advantages, such as simplifying complex concepts, facilitating conceptual content expression, fostering a comfortable classroom environment, and encouraging collaboration. These findings paralleled those of Budiman & Kristfani (2020), highlighting pre-service teachers' preference for L1 use due to enhanced motivation, comfort, and comprehension.

The interviews revealed pre-service teachers' unanimous preference for translanguaging, primarily because it improved comprehension compared to the use of a single language. The participants found that mixing languages aided in grasping complex concepts and instructions more effectively. This preference for translanguaging aligned with pre-service teachers' observations during the interviews. Pre-service teachers welcomed the opportunity to leverage their linguistic resources to overcome language barriers and enhance their understanding of English lessons. Remarkably, this preference for translanguaging extended beyond pre-service teachers with lower English proficiency; even those proficient in English recognized the approach's value in enriching their learning experiences.

The positive perceptions and preferences for translanguaging practices among both lecturers and pre-service teachers underscore the potential advantages of more comprehensive integration of this approach into Indonesian higher education's EFL classrooms. Nevertheless, addressing challenges and constraints, including curriculum policies and varying language proficiencies among pre-service teachers, requires collaborative efforts between educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers to create an environment conducive to effective translanguaging practices in EFL education.

DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher outlines the findings from interviews with pre-service teachers and the analysis of documents, while also explaining the implications and challenges arising from these findings. The interviews with pre-service teachers unveiled various translanguaging practices they employ in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia. These practices encompass the simultaneous use of Indonesian and English in diverse learning contexts, fostering an inclusive learning environment conducive to enhanced comprehension.

Furthermore, the analysis of documents related to syllabi, pre-service teachers' notes and textbooks underscores the significant impact these materials have on pre-service teachers' teaching approaches. The syllabus provides valuable guidance on the integration of Indonesian and English into the learning process, while the teacher notes reflect the pre-service teachers' earnest efforts to adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of their students. Official textbooks also provide valuable insights into the material to be taught in English.

The Benefits of Translanguaging in Enhancing Pre-service Teachers' Engagement: The discovery that translanguaging can enhance pre-service teachers' engagement, motivation, comprehension, and language skills constitutes a significant outcome. This implies that translanguaging can effectively address the language barriers frequently encountered by pre-service EFL teachers. As a result, English educators should contemplate the integration of translanguaging strategies into their lesson planning, particularly when instructing pre-service teachers with multilingual backgrounds.

Challenges in Implementing Translanguaging: The challenges faced by pre-service teachers in implementing translanguaging highlight the existence of several formidable barriers that demand resolution. The absence of curriculum policy support, limited resources, and insufficient awareness and acceptance from certain stakeholders signal the existence of room for improvement. Consequently, there is an urgent need for stronger policy backing to facilitate the utilization of translanguaging in the EFL curriculum. The provision of clearer policies and supportive guidelines can play a pivotal role in surmounting these challenges. Furthermore, proactive endeavors should be undertaken to develop resources and learning materials that align with and bolster translanguaging. This may encompass the creation of materials that allow for the utilization of the pre-service teachers' mother tongue in the learning process. Equally important is the elevation of awareness and the provision of training opportunities for both lecturers and pre-service teachers, aiming to enhance their understanding of the advantages and effective implementation of translanguaging. Additionally, there should be an active campaign to promote translanguaging among relevant parties, including parents and fellow educators.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study focuses on translanguaging practices in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) education in Indonesia. Pre-service teachers adopt translanguaging by using Indonesian and English simultaneously, creating an inclusive learning environment that strengthens students' understanding. Analysis of documents, such as syllabus and textbooks, played an important role in shaping pre-service teachers' teaching approaches. Translanguaging proves its worth in improving pre-service teachers' engagement, language skills and overcoming the language barriers they often face. However, challenges arise due to a lack of policy support, limited resources, and a lack of awareness of translanguaging. To overcome this, concrete measures such as policy strengthening, resource development, and thorough training that promotes translanguaging at all levels of the educational community are needed.

This research confirms that translanguaging has great potential as an effective EFL learning tool in Indonesia, despite facing several challenges. Stronger policy support, resource development, awareness raising, and adequate training are needed to maximize the benefits of translanguaging in English language learning in Indonesia. The discussion also highlighted the urgency of translanguaging in facing multilingual challenges in English language learning in Indonesia. With appropriate measures, the practice of translanguaging can make a positive contribution to improving the English competence of pre-service teachers in higher education and preparing them for the challenges and opportunities in an increasingly globalized world of work and academia. In conclusion, the results of this study confirm the importance of recognizing and utilizing the multilingual resources available in EFL classrooms. Translanguaging is not only a tool for learning English, but also a promoter of inclusivity and effective communication. Through understanding the diverse translanguaging practices of lecturers and teacher candidates, educational institutions can design better language curricula that meet the needs of multilingual teacher candidates, which will ultimately improve the quality of English education in Indonesia.

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