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Translanguaging functions in EFL peer interaction speaking activities

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In multilingual EFL classrooms, learners may draw on their multilingual repertoires to manage cognitive, affective, and interactional demands during speaking activities. This study investigates how naturally occurring translanguaging emerges during peer interaction in EFL speaking activities and how learners perceive its functions in supporting participation and engagement. Employing a qualitative research design, the study involved seven undergraduate EFL students at Ibrahimy University, Indonesia. Data were collected through classroom observations, audio- and video-recorded peer interactions, semi-structured interviews, field notes, and a reflexive journal, and were analyzed through interactional and thematic analyses. The findings indicate that translanguaging functioned as a resource for cognitive scaffolding during task comprehension and idea planning, affective and interactional support for sustaining participation, and support for continued English production during peer interaction. The findings also indicate learners' awareness of when and why translanguaging was appropriate, suggesting a context-sensitive orientation toward multilingual language use. Rather than demonstrating changes in speaking proficiency, the study highlights how naturally occurring translanguaging can support participation, interaction, and learners' management of speaking tasks. The study contributes to research on translanguaging and EFL speaking by highlighting learner agency and peer-mediated translanguaging in multilingual classroom contexts.

Keywords: translanguaging; EFL speaking; peer interaction; learner agency; affective factors; Indonesian multilingual context

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, increasing attention has been directed toward the role of learners' linguistic repertoires in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, challenging long-standing monolingual assumptions in language pedagogy. Traditional approaches have often positioned learners' first languages (L1) as sources of interference, promoting maximal use of the target language (L2) as the optimal condition for acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, sociolinguistically informed perspectives have reconceptualized multilingual practices as legitimate and productive resources for learning. Translanguaging, in particular, frames learners' linguistic and semiotic resources as an integrated repertoire that can be flexibly mobilized to support meaning-making, communication, and cognitive engagement (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015).

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most demanding skills for EFL learners, requiring the simultaneous orchestration of linguistic accuracy, fluency, lexical access, and interactional competence (Burns, 2019; Levelt, 1989). Learners frequently encounter

communication breakdowns when they lack vocabulary, struggle to express complex ideas, or attempt to maintain conversational flow under time pressure (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Wen & Skehan, 2021). Previous studies have demonstrated that pedagogical translanguaging, particularly when enacted by teachers, can scaffold comprehension, reduce anxiety, and facilitate task engagement in speaking classrooms (Cahyani, 2018; Otheguy et al., 2015; Rahayu et al., 2023; Seltzer & García, 2020). These studies suggest that drawing on multilingual resources may be especially beneficial in interactionally demanding speaking tasks.

Despite these advances, existing research has predominantly examined translanguaging as a teacher-mediated or pedagogically oriented practice, leaving learner-initiated translanguaging during peer interaction less clearly understood. Peer interaction, however, creates opportunities for negotiation of meaning, collaborative dialogue, and co-construction of knowledge (Kirkpatrick, 2014; Storch, 2013; Swain, 2000), making it an important site for examining how learners independently mobilize their multilingual resources. While recent international studies have begun to examine translanguaging in collaborative tasks (Tai & Li, 2020), less is known about the specific interactional functions of naturally occurring translanguaging during EFL speaking activities and about how learners themselves perceive and regulate its use. Thus, the gap concerns not simply whether translanguaging occurs in peer interaction, but how learners use it and what roles they assign to it while managing speaking tasks.

In Indonesia, EFL classrooms are inherently multilingual, with learners commonly drawing on Bahasa Indonesia alongside local languages such as Javanese or Madurese. In such settings, translanguaging may naturally emerge during peer interaction, serving not only as a compensatory strategy for lexical gaps but also as a resource for negotiating meaning, maintaining interactional continuity, and fostering interpersonal solidarity (Cahyani, 2018; Hamied & Lengkanawati, 2018; Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2023; Rahayu et al., 2023). Existing studies in Indonesia have examined translanguaging in relation to teacher practices, classroom discourse, and learners' experiences of multilingual language use. However, comparatively less attention has been given to how learners themselves mobilize multilingual resources during naturally occurring peer interaction in EFL speaking activities, particularly in higher education contexts.

More specifically, limited attention has been given to examining the interactional functions of learner-initiated translanguaging through naturally occurring peer interaction while also considering learners' retrospective accounts of their language choices. This gap is important because interactional data can reveal how translanguaging is enacted moment by moment, while learners' retrospective accounts can provide insight into how they understand, justify, and regulate their multilingual practices. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate how naturally occurring translanguaging emerges during peer interaction in EFL speaking activities and how learners perceive its functions in supporting participation and engagement during speaking tasks. By bringing together authentic classroom interaction and learners' perspectives, this study contributes context-sensitive insights into learner-initiated translanguaging in Indonesian higher education EFL speaking contexts.

Research Questions:

1. How do Indonesian EFL learners use translanguaging during peer interaction in speaking activities?
2. How do learners perceive the role of translanguaging in supporting their participation and oral performance during speaking activities?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive-exploratory research design, with interactional discourse analysis used as an analytical approach to examine how naturally occurring translanguaging emerged and functioned during peer interaction in EFL speaking activities. A qualitative descriptive-exploratory design was appropriate because the study aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of learners' multilingual practices and perspectives within their natural classroom context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kim et al., 2017). Rather than introducing or experimentally testing a translanguaging intervention, the study examined naturally occurring language practices during speaking activities and explored how learners understood and experienced these practices.

The interactional analysis focused on instances in which learners drew on their multilingual repertoires during peer interaction, particularly in relation to meaning negotiation, cognitive scaffolding, affective support, target-language production, and learner agency. Learners' perspectives on these practices were further explored through stimulated recall interviews. Thus, the study combined analysis of naturally occurring classroom interaction with participants' retrospective accounts to develop a context-sensitive understanding of learner-initiated translanguaging.

Research Context, Participants, and Data Sources

The study was conducted in the English Education Department at Ibrahimy University, Indonesia. The participants were seven undergraduate female students aged 19–21 years, comprising students from semesters 5 and 7 who were enrolled in an intermediate-level speaking course. The participants came from multilingual backgrounds and used Indonesian, English, and local languages in their everyday and academic interactions. These characteristics were relevant to the study because the research focused on learners' translanguaging practices during peer interaction in speaking activities.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their regular participation in pair- and group-based speaking activities. The sampling strategy was guided by the research questions and the need to obtain information-rich interactional data rather than statistical representativeness (Palinkas et al., 2015). Seven participants were considered sufficient for this qualitative inquiry because the study sought to examine participants' translanguaging practices and interactional experiences in depth, rather than to generalize the findings to a larger population (table 1).

TABLE 1 | Overview of the Data Collection and Research Design

Data source	Participants	Amount of data	Purpose
Classroom observations and video/audio recordings of peer-speaking activities	7	Approximately 14 sessions x 90 minutes; peer-interaction episodes occurred across the sessions	To capture naturally occurring peer interaction and translanguaging practices during speaking activities
Semi-structured interviews	7	Approximately 40-50 minutes per participant	To explore participants' perspectives and reflections to their language choices and interactional experiences
Field notes	—	Approximately 14 sessions	To document classroom dynamics, interactional contexts, and relevant observations
Researcher's reflexive journal	-	Throughout August 2025-January 2026	To document methodological reflections and contextual considerations

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted from August 2025 to January 2026 across 14 face-to-face speaking sessions, with each session lasting approximately 90 minutes. Thus, approximately 21 hours of classroom activities were observed, and all 14 sessions were included in the analysis. During these sessions, students regularly engaged in peer-speaking activities, particularly pair and small-group discussions involving two to three students. The speaking activities required students to interact with their peers to discuss assigned topics and complete the tasks provided in the speaking course. Audio and video recordings were used to document peer interactions during these activities. The recordings captured learners' language choices, turn-taking, and interactional sequences. Transcriptions retained participants' use of English and other languages to accurately represent their translanguaging practices.

Semi-structured interviews were subsequently conducted with the seven focal participants. Each interview lasted approximately 40–50 minutes and was conducted through Zoom. Participants were allowed to use English, Indonesian, or a combination of both languages according to their comfort and preference. The interviews were recorded with participants' consent and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Interview data produced in Indonesian were translated into English by the researcher for the purposes of analysis and reporting. The translated data were organized in an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate systematic coding and analysis.

Throughout the data collection period, field notes were also maintained to document contextual information, including task instructions, group configurations, classroom dynamics, and relevant non-verbal interaction. A researcher's reflexive journal was maintained to document methodological observations, contextual considerations, and emerging reflections during the research process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an iterative and inductive process, combining interactional analysis of classroom discourse with thematic analysis of interview data. Initially, recorded interactions were examined to identify instances of translanguaging, defined as the flexible use of multiple linguistic resources within a single interaction. These instances were then categorized according to their interactional functions, such as negotiating meaning, providing scaffolding, managing tasks, or offering affective support. Subsequently, interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) procedures, including familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme development, and refinement. The thematic findings were triangulated with interactional evidence from classroom discourse to ensure analytical coherence and depth.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Triangulation across recordings, interviews, and field notes strengthened the credibility of the analysis. Member checking was conducted by inviting participants to confirm the accuracy of selected interpretations. Additionally, thick description of the research context and interactional episodes was provided to support transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the significance of the findings in relation to the research objectives, situating them within broader theoretical and pedagogical discussions on translanguaging and EFL speaking development. The discussion focuses on interpreting how translanguaging operates in peer interaction and why these findings matter for multilingual EFL contexts.

Translanguaging as Cognitive Scaffolding in Speaking Tasks

The analysis of students' written recount texts revealed a gradual improvement in writing quality over the course of daily writing practice. Students demonstrated clearer idea development, more coherent text organization, and increased control over language features characteristic of recount texts,

Participants' accounts suggest that translanguaging was used as a resource for organizing ideas and overcoming linguistic difficulties before or during English speaking. Rather than describing the use of Indonesian as simply a replacement for English, participants explained that they sometimes moved between languages when they had difficulty finding English words or expressing an idea. One participant explained:

> *"Sometimes we difficult for the describe our ... pengalaman ... with English ... vocabnya itu gak tau ... jadinya lebih relate mix bahasa Indonesia and English."*

This account illustrates how participants drew on Indonesian when they could not readily access the English vocabulary needed to express an idea. The participant did not describe abandoning English altogether; instead, Indonesian and English were combined to maintain the expression of meaning. In this sense, translanguaging appeared to provide temporary linguistic support when lexical resources in English were perceived as insufficient. Such use is particularly relevant to speaking tasks, where learners need to manage content formulation and linguistic encoding simultaneously.

A similar pattern was evident in participants' descriptions of planning and developing ideas. One participant described translanguaging as a gradual process through which ideas could first be developed using a familiar language and then increasingly expressed in English:

> *"Planningnya sih mau lebih diurutkan dulu dari awal mungkin masih pakai bahasa mother tongue-nya ... di stage selanjutnya itu lebih pakai translanguagingnya, ketiga lebih pakai bahasa Inggrisnya, bertahap."*

The participant's description suggests that translanguaging was perceived as part of an incremental process of preparing for English production. The use of the mother tongue at the initial stage was associated with organizing ideas, followed by greater use of mixed linguistic resources and, eventually, more English. Thus, the reported practice was not necessarily an alternative to English production but a resource for managing the transition toward it.

Participants also described translanguaging as useful when they became stuck while trying to express an idea in English. One participant explained:

> *"When sometimes if we really don't know we will stuck ... we takut idenya hilang ... to convey it with try to use Indonesia ... So little by little our idea out but mixing language."*

Here, the participant explicitly connected translanguaging with maintaining the flow of idea expression. The concern was not only the lack of an English word but also the possibility that an idea would be lost if the speaker remained unable to express it. Switching to Indonesian therefore allowed the participant to continue articulating the intended meaning while combining it with available English resources. This indicates that translanguaging was perceived as a means of managing the cognitive and linguistic demands of speaking rather than as an isolated act of language switching.

The interview data further indicate that the need for such support became more salient when participants encountered unfamiliar or academically demanding vocabulary. For example, when discussing a speaking activity involving political topics, one participant reported:

> *"We don't [have] any much vocabulary ... politic vocabulary is so high ... sometimes ... stuck ... so to help it ya sometimes we use Indonesia again."*

This response illustrates how lexical difficulty could trigger the use of Indonesian as a support for continuing the speaking activity. The participant's account is consistent with the view that speaking requires learners to coordinate conceptual content and lexical formulation under conditions of limited linguistic resources (Kormos, 2006; Skehan, 2018). In the present data, translanguaging appears to have provided participants with an additional resource for maintaining access to meaning when English lexical resources were insufficient.

These findings are consistent with research that views multilingual resources as mediational tools in second-language learning. Pre-task planning and strategic use of familiar linguistic resources can help learners organize content and manage the processing demands associated with L2 speaking (Bygate, 2018; Skehan, 2018; Wen & Skehan, 2021). From this perspective, the participants' accounts suggest that translanguaging functioned as a form of perceived cognitive scaffolding, particularly for idea organization, lexical access, and continued expression.

Importantly, the data also point to the learner-regulated nature of this scaffolding. Participants did not describe using Indonesian indiscriminately. Instead, their accounts repeatedly associated translanguaging with particular difficulties, such as not knowing a word, becoming stuck, or needing to express an idea that was difficult to formulate in English. This pattern suggests that translanguaging was perceived as a situational resource that could be mobilized when English alone was insufficient for the immediate communicative goal. Such learner-directed use complements research emphasizing that multilingual practices can support meaning-making and participation when they are strategically aligned with the demands of particular tasks (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Tai & Li, 2021).

At the same time, the present findings should be interpreted as evidence of participants' perceptions of cognitive support, rather than as direct evidence that translanguaging objectively reduced cognitive load or improved speaking performance. The interview data show how learners themselves understood the function of translanguaging: as a way to organize ideas, access vocabulary, and avoid becoming stuck during speaking. This distinction is important because the study did not quantitatively measure cognitive load or compare speaking performance before and after translanguaging.

Overall, the participants' accounts indicate that translanguaging served as a perceived cognitive resource that helped them manage the demands of speaking tasks. Its role was particularly visible when learners needed to organize ideas, retrieve unfamiliar vocabulary, or continue expressing meaning despite limitations in English. Rather than positioning Indonesian and English as mutually exclusive choices, participants described moving between them

according to their immediate communicative needs. This finding supports a view of translanguaging as a learner-regulated resource for managing the transition between conceptualization and English expression in multilingual EFL speaking contexts.

Translanguaging as an Affective Resource in Peer Interaction

Participants' accounts indicate that translanguaging was not only associated with linguistic and cognitive support but also with their comfort and willingness to continue participating in speaking activities. In particular, participants described situations in which using Indonesian alongside English helped them avoid becoming stuck when they could not immediately formulate an idea in English. One participant explained:

> *"When sometimes if we really don't know we will stuck ... we takut idenya hilang ... to convey it with try to use Indonesia ... So little by little our idea out but mixing language."*

This account illustrates an affective dimension of translanguaging that is closely connected to participation. The participant's concern about becoming stuck and losing an idea suggests that the inability to express meaning in English could create pressure during speaking. Using Indonesian provided an alternative resource that enabled the participant to continue expressing the intended idea. Thus, translanguaging was perceived not simply as a way of solving a lexical problem but also as a means of maintaining participation when English-only production became difficult.

A similar perception emerged when participants discussed situations in which they lacked sufficient vocabulary. One participant described the difficulty of discussing a topic involving unfamiliar academic vocabulary:

> *"We don't [have] any much vocabulary ... politic vocabulary is so high ... sometimes ... stuck ... so to help it ya sometimes we use Indonesia again."*

The response shows how lexical limitations could become an immediate source of difficulty during speaking. Rather than stopping the interaction when an English expression was unavailable, the participant described returning to Indonesian "to help it." This suggests that translanguaging provided a communicative resource through which participants could remain engaged with the task despite moments of linguistic difficulty. In this sense, its affective value appears to be closely intertwined with its interactional function: being able to draw on another language gave learners a way to continue participating rather than remain silent.

The interview data also suggest that participants did not necessarily view the use of Indonesian as incompatible with English learning. Instead, some participants described mixed-language use as a practical way of making communication more manageable. For example, one participant explained that using Indonesian and English together made it easier to express an experience when the appropriate English vocabulary was unavailable:

> *"Sometimes we difficult for the describe our ... pengalaman ... with English ... vocabnya itu gak tau ... jadinya more relate mix bahasa Indonesia and English."*

Here, the participant's account links translanguaging to the difficulty of expressing personal experience in English. The use of Indonesian enabled the participant to maintain the intended meaning while incorporating available English resources. This practice may therefore have contributed to a greater sense of communicative control, particularly when participants encountered lexical gaps during speaking.

Importantly, the data do not suggest that participants regarded translanguaging as something that should be used without limits. Rather, their responses indicate an awareness that its affective and communicative benefits were situational. Participants described using Indonesian particularly when they were "stuck," lacked vocabulary, or needed additional support to express an idea. This conditional use is important because it shows that translanguaging was not necessarily perceived as an escape from English, but as a resource that could help learners remain engaged when exclusive English use became difficult.

These findings are consistent with research suggesting that access to familiar linguistic resources can support learners' participation in multilingual EFL classrooms (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Tai & Li, 2021). Speaking in a foreign language requires learners to manage linguistic formulation while simultaneously maintaining the content and interactional demands of the task. When learners experience difficulty expressing an idea, the availability of additional linguistic resources may help them sustain communication rather than withdraw from the interaction. The present participants' accounts provide support for this interpretation by explicitly connecting translanguaging with moments of difficulty and the need to continue expressing their ideas.

The findings can also be understood from a sociocultural perspective, in which language practices are embedded within socially situated interaction rather than treated as isolated choices between separate linguistic systems (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Swain, 2000). In peer speaking activities, the use of Indonesian alongside English allowed participants to negotiate the demands of communication using resources that were familiar and readily available to them. The affective dimension of this process therefore appears to emerge through interaction: translanguaging helped participants manage moments of difficulty while remaining involved in the communicative activity.

However, the present data support a more cautious interpretation of the relationship between translanguaging and affect. The interview responses suggest that participants perceived translanguaging as helpful for maintaining participation and managing moments of difficulty, but they do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that translanguaging directly reduced foreign language anxiety or objectively increased confidence. Therefore, rather than treating anxiety reduction as a demonstrated outcome, the findings indicate that translanguaging provided participants with a linguistic resource that could make speaking situations feel more manageable.

Overall, the participants' accounts suggest that the affective value of translanguaging was closely connected to its ability to sustain participation. When learners lacked vocabulary, became stuck, or struggled to express an idea in English, drawing on Indonesian allowed them to continue

communicating. Translanguaging therefore functioned as a form of interactional and affective support, helping learners remain engaged in speaking activities while still incorporating English into their communication.

Translanguaging as a Bridge toward Target-Language Performance

Participants' accounts suggest that translanguaging was perceived not as a replacement for English but as a resource that could help them move toward English expression when they encountered linguistic difficulties. In several responses, participants described a gradual movement from using familiar languages to incorporating more English. One participant explicitly described this process as a sequence:

"Planningnya sih mau lebih diurutkan dulu dari awal mungkin masih pakai bahasa mother tongue-nya ... di stage selanjutnya itu lebih pakai translanguagingnya, ketiga lebih pakai bahasa Inggrisnya, bertahap."

This response presents translanguaging as part of a gradual process of preparing for English production. The participant described the initial use of the mother tongue as a way of organizing the content, followed by mixed-language use and, subsequently, greater use of English. Rather than positioning Indonesian and English as competing choices, the participant perceived movement across languages as part of the process of preparing to communicate in English.

A similar pattern can be seen in participants' descriptions of situations in which they became stuck while speaking. One participant explained:

"When sometimes if we really don't know we will stuck ... we takut idenya hilang ... to convey it with try to use Indonesia ... So little by little our idea out but mixing language."

The phrase "so little by little our idea out" is particularly relevant to understanding the perceived bridging function of translanguaging. The participant did not describe Indonesian as the final goal of the speaking activity. Instead, Indonesian was used when English was insufficient to maintain the expression of an idea. The mixed-language practice therefore allowed the participant to continue developing and expressing the idea rather than abandoning it when an English expression was unavailable.

Participants also associated translanguaging with the development of ideas when English vocabulary was limited. For example, one participant explained:

"Sometimes we difficult for the describe our ... pengalaman ... with English ... vocabnya itu gak tau ... jadinya more relate mix bahasa Indonesia and English."

Here, the participant described mixing Indonesian and English when they did not know the English vocabulary needed to describe an experience. The response suggests that translanguaging enabled the participant to retain the intended meaning while using whatever English resources were available. In this sense, translanguaging functioned as a bridge between what the learner wanted to communicate and what the learner was currently able to formulate in English.

This bridging function was also evident when participants encountered more demanding vocabulary. One participant referred to a discussion involving political topics:

"We don't [have] any much vocabulary ... politic vocabulary is so high ... sometimes ... stuck ... so to help it ya sometimes we use Indonesia again."

The participant's response illustrates that the movement toward English was not necessarily linear. When the linguistic demands of the task exceeded the participant's available English vocabulary, Indonesian could be reintroduced to maintain the communicative process. Thus, translanguaging appears to have operated as a flexible transitional resource rather than as a fixed preliminary stage that was always followed by full English production.

This pattern is consistent with research on strategic L1 use and translanguaging, which suggests that familiar linguistic resources can support learners in organizing meaning and managing the demands of L2 speaking (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Burns, 2019; Wen & Skehan, 2021). Previous research on planning similarly emphasizes that learners benefit from having opportunities to organize conceptual content before or during oral production (Bygate, 2018; Skehan, 2018). The present data extend this perspective by showing how participants themselves described movement between languages as part of their effort to maintain and develop an English-speaking response.

Importantly, the interview data also indicate that participants did not necessarily view translanguaging as an endpoint. In several responses, they expressed the importance of eventually increasing their use of English. One participant, for example, suggested that learners should initially be allowed to use translanguaging when necessary but gradually increase their English use as their proficiency develops. Another participant similarly noted that Indonesian could be used when learners were unable to explain something in English, while English should remain the main language when possible. These accounts suggest that participants perceived a tension between using multilingual resources for immediate communicative support and maintaining sufficient opportunities for English practice.

This tension is important when considering concerns that extensive L1 use may reduce opportunities for target-language exposure and practice (Kiramba & Scott, 2021; Macaro, 2018). Rather than rejecting English use, the participants' responses suggest a more conditional position: translanguaging was considered useful when English resources were insufficient, but English remained the desired language for continued practice and speaking development. The value of translanguaging therefore appeared to depend on when and why it was used, rather than simply on the presence or absence of Indonesian.

From the perspective of the Complexity–Accuracy–Fluency framework, translanguaging may theoretically provide additional support during the conceptualization and formulation of speaking tasks (Skehan, 2018). However, the present interview data do not allow us to claim that translanguaging directly improved participants' fluency, accuracy, or complexity. No quantitative CAF measures were collected, and the interview responses primarily capture participants' perceptions of how multilingual resources helped them manage speaking tasks. Accordingly, the present finding is better understood as evidence of a perceived bridge

toward English production, rather than evidence of measured improvement in English performance.

Overall, participants' accounts portray translanguaging as a flexible bridge between conceptualizing an idea and expressing that idea in English. When participants lacked vocabulary, became stuck, or found an idea difficult to formulate in English, they could draw on Indonesian to keep the communicative process moving. At the same time, their responses indicate an awareness that English should remain central to speaking practice. Translanguaging was therefore perceived neither as a substitute for English nor as an inherently problematic practice, but as a situational resource that could help learners sustain the transition toward English expression.

Learner Agency, Boundary Awareness, and Regulated Translanguaging

An important finding emerging from the participants' accounts is their awareness that translanguaging may be useful but should not necessarily replace opportunities for English use. While participants described translanguaging as helpful when they experienced difficulties in expressing ideas, accessing vocabulary, or maintaining communication, they also emphasized the importance of continuing to use English for speaking practice. This tension suggests that participants did not perceive translanguaging as an inherently beneficial practice that should be used without limitation. Instead, they evaluated its usefulness in relation to the immediate communicative context and their broader goal of developing English-speaking ability. Such a perspective is consistent with views of translanguaging that emphasize the strategic and context-sensitive use of multilingual resources rather than a simple alternation between languages (García & Wei, 2014; Wei, 2018; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

This awareness was evident in participants' recommendations about when translanguaging should be used. One participant stated:

> *"Sarannya sih better jangan sering pakai translanguaging... siswa/mahasiswa focus ke English biar lebih terbiasa... but if you need use Indonesian language to explain more you use translanguaging... Yes every thing depend on context."*

The response indicates that the participant recognized a potential tension between translanguaging as immediate communicative support and English as the primary language for speaking practice. Rather than rejecting Indonesian, the participant positioned it as a resource to be used when necessary, while maintaining English as the main language for developing familiarity with the target language. This view is compatible with pedagogical translanguaging approaches in which multilingual resources are used purposefully and in relation to particular learning objectives (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Cenoz, 2017).

A similar orientation appeared in another participant's suggestion that English should be attempted first and translanguaging used when learners encountered difficulty:

> *"Better kita pakai full English yang gampang-gampang dulu... academic word belum menguasai... pakai yang sederhana... baru ketika stuck gak bisa pakai English baru deh kita di translanguaging."*

Here, translanguaging was described as a response to a perceived limitation in English resources rather than as the default mode of interaction. The participant's account therefore points to an element of learner regulation: the decision to use Indonesian was linked to the moment when English resources were perceived as insufficient. This finding complements research emphasizing that translanguaging practices are shaped by learners' communicative needs, available linguistic resources, and the immediate interactional context (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Kiramba & Scott, 2021). In an EFL context, where English is primarily learned and practiced within educational settings, such context-sensitive language choices may be particularly relevant because learners must simultaneously maintain communication and maximize opportunities to use the target language.

Participants also differentiated their preferred language use according to the type of speaking activity. One participant explained:

> *"Kalau diskusi ... be better use English... discuss each other English... more enjoy... improve... vocabulary... kalau presentasi pakai mix saja use translanguaging tapi lebih dominan ke Inggris."*

This response suggests that participants did not necessarily apply a single language rule across all speaking activities. Instead, they considered the communicative purpose of the activity when evaluating whether translanguaging was appropriate. English was associated with discussion and opportunities to improve vocabulary, while mixed-language use was considered acceptable during presentations as long as English remained dominant. Such accounts are relevant to research on translanguaging as a flexible practice shaped by activity, interlocutors, and communicative purposes rather than by fixed language boundaries (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; García & Lin, 2017). They also support the argument that translanguaging pedagogy needs to consider the relationship between multilingual resources and the specific goals of a learning task (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

The participants' comments therefore provide evidence of boundary awareness rather than simple acceptance of translanguaging. Their responses indicate that they recognized both the immediate value of using Indonesian or mixed language and the longer-term importance of sustained English practice. This finding is relevant to learner agency because participants were not positioned merely as recipients of a teacher-designed translanguaging practice. Through their accounts, they expressed preferences about the amount, timing, and purpose of multilingual language use. Learner agency in this sense can be understood as situated and mediated rather than as an entirely individual capacity, consistent with sociocultural perspectives on agency in language learning (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Lantolf et al., 2015). Agency becomes visible in how learners respond to particular conditions and make choices within the linguistic and pedagogical resources available to them.

The finding also contributes to discussions of learner autonomy and language learning strategy. Participants' preference for using English first and turning to translanguaging when they became stuck suggests an

awareness of the need to balance communicative success with opportunities for target-language practice. This does not mean that participants possessed a fully developed metacognitive framework for regulating translanguaging; rather, their interview accounts reveal an emerging awareness of when multilingual resources were perceived as useful or unnecessary. Such awareness is important in EFL contexts because learners may need to negotiate between maintaining communication and creating sufficient opportunities for target-language production. Previous work on learner autonomy similarly emphasizes learners' active involvement in making decisions about their learning processes and strategies (Ushioda, 2011).

Importantly, however, these findings should be interpreted as evidence of participants' perceptions and articulated preferences, rather than direct evidence that they consistently regulated their translanguaging during classroom interaction. The interview data show that participants could explain when and why they considered translanguaging appropriate, but they do not by themselves establish how consistently these preferences were enacted across the 14 speaking sessions. This distinction is important because language attitudes, reported practices, and observed interactional practices may not always correspond directly (Dewaele et al., 2019; Kiramba & Scott, 2021). The present findings therefore point to learner awareness of translanguaging boundaries without assuming that such awareness automatically resulted in consistent classroom behavior.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that translanguaging in EFL speaking activities may benefit from being treated as a regulated and purposeful resource rather than either an unrestricted practice or a practice to be avoided altogether. Teachers may provide learners with opportunities to discuss when multilingual resources can support meaning-making while also establishing moments in which English use is prioritized. Such an approach is compatible with pedagogical translanguaging frameworks that emphasize intentionality, task objectives, and the strategic use of learners' complete linguistic repertoires (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Seltzer & García, 2020). It also allows learners to participate in decisions about language use rather than positioning translanguaging solely as a teacher-controlled pedagogical technique.

Overall, the findings suggest that learner agency in translanguaging is reflected not simply in learners' ability to move between languages, but also in their awareness of the purposes and boundaries of that movement. Participants valued translanguaging when it helped them overcome linguistic difficulties and sustain communication, yet they simultaneously emphasized the need to maintain English practice. In this respect, translanguaging was perceived neither as a substitute for English nor as a practice that should be eliminated, but as a context-dependent resource whose usefulness was related to learners' immediate communicative needs and longer-term speaking goals. This learner-oriented perspective adds nuance to existing translanguaging research by drawing attention to how EFL learners themselves understand and negotiate the limits of multilingual practices.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how Indonesian EFL learners described their use of translanguaging during speaking activities and how they perceived its role in supporting participation and speaking development. The findings suggest that learners viewed translanguaging as a useful resource for managing difficulties in expressing ideas, accessing vocabulary, and maintaining participation in speaking activities. Participants also described translanguaging as a way to gradually move toward greater use of English rather than simply replacing English with other languages.

The findings also indicate that learners did not view translanguaging as something that should be used without limits. Participants described its use as dependent on the context, task difficulty, and their ability to express ideas in English. They also emphasized the importance of continuing to use English and using other languages when necessary. These accounts suggest that learners had an awareness of the need to balance multilingual resources with opportunities for English practice.

Pedagogically, these findings suggest that EFL speaking instruction may benefit from a flexible approach to language use. Rather than treating the use of other languages as inherently problematic, lecturers may acknowledge their potential role in supporting learners when they experience difficulty during speaking activities. At the same time, learners can be encouraged to return to English and use translanguaging as temporary support rather than as a substitute for English practice.

This study is limited by its focus on seven learners in one Indonesian higher education context and by its reliance on participants' reported experiences. The findings therefore should not be interpreted as evidence of direct improvement in speaking proficiency or as representing all Indonesian EFL learners. Future research could examine translanguaging across different proficiency levels, task types, and educational contexts, including studies that combine learners' accounts with detailed analysis of classroom interaction.

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