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Empowering Translanguaging Practices to Encourage Language Preservation and Cultural Awareness in Vocational EFL Classrooms

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of translanguaging in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at vocational high schools in Bantul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with an emphasis on its role in supporting students' comprehension, linguistic sensitivity, and cross-cultural awareness. Recognizing the multilingual reality of Indonesian education, this research specifically explores the students' perceptions of translanguaging and the impact of its implementation in vocational EFL classrooms. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, data were collected from 2,171 students and 45 English teachers across ten vocational schools through questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. This study's findings revealed that most students perceived translanguaging as beneficial for enhancing confidence, motivation, and classroom participation. Additionally, the impact of translanguaging implementation included facilitating a more profound understanding, strengthening linguistic identities, and promoting cultural reflection. A comparative analysis across schools further demonstrated that flexible bilingual policies encouraged richer interaction and intercultural engagement, whereas monolingual English instructions tended to limit communication and comprehension. The study concludes that translanguaging serves not only as an effective pedagogical strategy but also as a sociocultural practice that supports language preservation and prepares students for multilingual

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professional environments. The findings further emphasize the importance of institutional support and teacher training in facilitating the effective and appropriate implementation of translanguaging in vocational EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Cultural awareness, language conservation, translanguaging, vocational schools.

1. INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging is an instructional approach that leverages students' linguistic repertoire and has caught the attention of EFL teachers for its potential to enrich the learning experience, especially in multilingual contexts, such as vocational high schools in Indonesia. In this context, students often use multiple languages, including regional languages, national languages, and English (target language), which can create complex linguistic processes. This is rationalized by the evidence that implementing translanguaging can bridge the gap between students' linguistic backgrounds and the target language, enhancing language comprehension and supporting language identity (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). By allowing students to utilize their native languages as scaffolding tools in English classrooms (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020, 2022), translanguaging not only aids in language retention but also builds language sensitivity and cultural awareness, which are critical for vocational students who will engage in diverse professional fields (Fernández, 2024; García & Wei, 2014). In support of these statements, Margana and Rasman (2022) said that translanguaging is a potential approach that is likely to support language equality and thus promote the maintenance of minoritized languages.

In Indonesia, vocational high schools play a strategic role in preparing students for industry-based employment that increasingly demands cross-cultural communication competence and global awareness. However, English learning in these schools often emphasizes grammar and test-oriented outcomes, leaving little space for students to integrate their linguistic and cultural resources in classroom discourse (Wong & Tian, 2025). The use of translanguaging offers an innovative pedagogical pathway to connect English learning with students' lived linguistic experiences, enabling them to express complex ideas and professional concepts more meaningfully. The rich multilingual environments of Indonesian classrooms, where English, Indonesian, and local languages coexist, provide fertile ground for implementing translanguaging practices that encourage both linguistic proficiency and cultural sensitivity.

In a broader context, the implementation of translanguaging in Indonesian vocational schools, such as those in Bantul, resonates with global movements in multilingual and culturally responsive education. Around the world, translanguaging has been increasingly recognized as a transformative pedagogical practice that empowers learners to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires to construct meaning and identity (Canagarajah, 2011; García & Wei, 2014). Studies in countries such as Wales, Spain, Hong Kong, and the United States have shown that translanguaging not only enhances academic comprehension but also supports equity by validating students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Li, 2018). These studies reflect a shift from monolingual to multilingual education policies that view language diversity as a resource rather than a barrier. In this sense, exploring translanguaging in multilingual classrooms in Bantul contributes to this global discourse by providing insights from a developing EFL context where local languages, national identity, and English learning intersect. The study, therefore, positions Indonesian vocational schools within a worldwide effort to develop inclusive and culturally sustaining language pedagogies that prepare students' participation in globalized, multilingual workplaces.

Although several recent studies have examined translanguaging in various educational contexts (Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2024a; Lu et al., 2023; Sah & Kubota, 2022; Sah & Li, 2022; Tai, 2022), their findings primarily address general pedagogies benefits, such as improved comprehension, learner participation, and identity affirmation, rather than the specific needs of vocational education. Those studies do not investigate how translanguaging supports cross-

cultural understanding or contributes to local language maintenance within Indonesian vocational schools. Consequently, research that focuses explicitly on translanguaging practices in vocational education, particularly within Indonesia, remains limited.

In addition, most studies often focus on general high school environments, leaving a gap in understanding how translanguaging can uniquely support vocational students who need practical communication skills and cultural sensitivity for professional interactions in industries that demand cross-cultural competence (Betaubun et al., 2018; Daniel & Pacheco, 2016; Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2024a). This research addresses the gaps by exploring the implementation of translanguaging strategies in vocational high schools in Bantul, Yogyakarta, and assessing their impact on language maintenance and cultural awareness. Moreover, vocational schools provide a distinct context in which students develop both professional competencies and language skills (Maknun et al., 2024a; Margana & Widyanoro, 2017), creating authentic spaces for translanguaging to emerge in academic and technical instruction. The students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds also make them ideal for examining how translanguaging supports language maintenance and encourages cultural awareness. Furthermore, as vocational education is closely tied to local industries and communities, the integration of translanguaging strategies can equip students with multilingual and multicultural competencies directly relevant to their future professional environments.

This study was designed to pursue two primary objectives. First, it investigates the students' perceptions of translanguaging in vocational high school English classrooms to promote language preservation, enhance language sensitivity, and support cross-cultural awareness. Second, this study examines the impact of translanguaging implemented in vocational high school English classrooms, providing insights into how integrating students' linguistic resources can strengthen English language proficiency and contribute to broader educational goals that support students' readiness for the professional world. Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions.

1. What are the students' perceptions regarding the use of translanguaging in vocational high school EFL classrooms?
2. What are the impacts of translanguaging implementation in vocational high school EFL classrooms?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Translanguaging in ELT and Its Pedagogical Benefits

Translanguaging, as stated by García and Wei (2014), involves using multiple languages to make meaning, gain understanding, and communicate effectively. In English Language Teaching (ELT), translanguaging has been shown to have positive impacts on students' linguistic, cognitive, and socio-emotional development (Bonacina et al., 2021; Macaro, 2009; Mazzaferro, 2018; D. Wang, 2019). Translanguaging enables multilingual students to integrate their existing language skills with new language learning, particularly in regions with rich linguistic diversity. Studies revealed that translanguaging practices in classrooms promoted deeper language comprehension and encouraged students' active engagement (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; García & Lin, 2017; Jones, 2017). This relates to Fang and Liu's (2020) statement that translanguaging promoted a harmonious classroom atmosphere. In vocational settings, where practical communication skills are essential, translanguaging can serve as a pedagogical approach (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Deroo, 2020; Menken & Sanchez, 2019) that reinforces students' linguistic and cultural identities while enhancing their English proficiency.

Within the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework, translanguaging plays a vital role in bridging disciplinary knowledge and language learning. ESP focuses on equipping learners with English communication skills tailored to specific professional or academic fields (Basturkmen, 2010; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In EFL contexts, such as in Indonesia, where English is not used daily, translanguaging can support ESP learning by allowing students to draw

upon their first language to comprehend technical vocabulary, interpret specialized text, and relate new information to their existing knowledge base (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020). For vocational students whose learning often involves industry-specific terminology, translanguaging enhances conceptual understanding by linking English expressions to real-world professional contexts. Research in Asian EFL settings (Li & García, 2022) also indicated that translanguaging encouraged learners to negotiate meaning across languages, supporting critical thinking and cross-cultural communication skills essential in the globalized workplaces. Thus, integrating translanguaging within ESP instruction provides both linguistic and cognitive scaffolding, supporting vocational learners in developing English proficiency related to their professional aspirations.

2.2 Translanguaging in Indonesian EFL Classrooms

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, translanguaging has emerged as an effective approach to address students' diverse linguistic backgrounds and enhance their engagement with English. Numerous studies have shown that translanguaging enables learners to draw on their first language (L1) to support English language development. For instance, Kuncoroningtyas et al. (2024b) reported that translanguaging in vocational colleges improved students' comprehension, speaking confidence, vocabulary knowledge, and classroom interaction while creating a more comfortable learning atmosphere. Similarly, Rahayu and Margana (2018) found that allowing students to switch between Indonesian and English during discussions increased their oral fluency and willingness to participate. At the tertiary level, Emilia and Hamied (2022) observed that translanguaging provided both cognitive and emotional support in online English classes, with 82% of students preferring mixed-language instruction.

Further evidence from Rasman and Margana (2022) and Yolandana et al. (2024) revealed that translanguaging fostered inclusivity, encouraged cognitive growth, enhanced language skills, and strengthened teacher–student interaction. Additionally, translanguaging created a more accessible and participatory learning environment, helping students understand complex materials and improving vocabulary acquisition and learning motivation (Mateus, 2014; Mendoza et al., 2023; X. Wang et al., 2025). These findings highlighted the key benefits of translanguaging, including bridging comprehension gaps, reducing language anxiety, and improving learners' communicative competence in Indonesian EFL contexts.

2.3 Translanguaging for Language Maintenance and Cultural Awareness

Translanguaging not only facilitates English language learning but also supports the preservation of local languages and promotes cultural awareness. By allowing students to draw on their regional and national linguistic resources during classroom interaction, translanguaging affirms the value of these languages within formal education, helping prevent their marginalization. This process also enables students to connect linguistic practices with cultural knowledge, thereby strengthening their understanding of cultural identities and promoting respect for linguistic diversity. Additionally, translanguaging facilitated bilingual development by enhancing learners' linguistic adaptability, connecting heritage languages with the dominant societal language, and addressing the needs of diverse sociolinguistic environments (Karpava et al., 2025).

According to García and Lin (2017), incorporating translanguaging encouraged students to view their home languages as valuable assets rather than obstacles in language learning. Translanguaging has been advanced as both a theoretical lens and a pedagogical approach for responding to the challenges of instruction in linguistically diverse classrooms (Karpava et al., 2025). This perspective is significant in the Indonesian context, where the use of Indonesian often marginalizes regional languages. By implementing translanguaging, vocational high schools can encourage students' appreciation for cultural diversity and equip them for interactions in multilingual environments (Baker, 2011; Mazzaferro, 2018). Given the context of Indonesia's

linguistic and cultural diversity, especially in vocational education, the application of translanguaging can address both educational and sociocultural goals.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in ‘translanguaging theory’ (García & Wei, 2014), which conceptualizes language as an evolving, integrated vocabulary used by multilingual speakers to make meaning, communicate, and learn. Within this framework, students are not viewed as possessing separate linguistic systems, but as drawing flexibly, they seamlessly and flexibly use all their linguistic resources (e.g., their home language, a second language, different dialects, and academic vocabulary) to construct understanding.

The study also draws on ‘sociocultural theory’ (Vygotsky, 1978), emphasizing that language learning occurs through mediated social interaction. Translanguaging serves as a form of scaffolding that bridges students’ prior linguistic and cultural knowledge with new English language learning. Furthermore, the study relates to the ‘ecological perspective’ (van Lier, 2004), which emphasizes how classroom environments, linguistic diversity, and social interactions jointly shape the students’ learning outcomes. Together, these frameworks inform the design and interpretation of the current study, positioning translanguaging not merely as a teaching strategy but as a theoretical orientation to language learning in multilingual contexts.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine both the perceptions and the implications of translanguaging in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at vocational high schools in Bantul, Yogyakarta. The mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Clark, 2018; Endahati et al., 2024; Hanson et al., 2005; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) enables the integration of quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of translanguaging practices and their pedagogical impact. The study adopted an explanatory sequential design, in which quantitative data collection and analysis were conducted first to identify general trends in students’ perceptions of translanguaging and the impact of its implementation, followed by qualitative observations and interviews to provide deeper insights and explanations of those patterns. This structure relates to the mixed-methods framework proposed by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), emphasizing complementarity and triangulation between data types to achieve richer interpretations. The use of an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design enabled this study to triangulate its findings by linking measurable student perceptions of translanguaging and its impact with observable pedagogical practices and interview data. This triangulation provided a more holistic understanding of translanguaging’s educational role in practice, particularly within the context of vocational EFL classrooms.

3.2 Research Settings and Participants

The study was conducted in Yogyakarta, involving 2,171 students and 45 English teachers from ten vocational high schools in Bantul Regency. The participating schools were selected based on preliminary interviews with English teachers, which indicated that the use of local languages, Indonesian and English, in the teaching and learning process had become a common practice in the schools, aiming to create an engaging learning environment for students with varied English proficiency levels. The inclusion of vocational high schools was related to the study’s focus on practical language application and cross-cultural readiness, which were essential for the students’ future professional engagement.

The participants in this study represented students from grades 10 to 12 and English teachers across various study programs in each selected vocational high schools, including

hospitality, tourism, business management, and technology in all of the ten participating schools. For the observation and interview data collection purposes, 10 English teachers were purposively selected based on their teaching experiences, frequency of translanguaging use in the classroom, and willingness to participate. Meanwhile, to expand the interview data, 20 students were also selected through purposive sampling. They were selected to represent different proficiency levels and study programs to capture diverse perspectives on translanguaging practices.

3.3 Research Instruments and Data Collection

Data in this study were collected using three primary instruments, including a questionnaire, classroom observations, and interviews. The questionnaire was used as the quantitative data, and classroom observations and interview sessions were used as the qualitative data to strengthen the quantitative results of both formulated research questions.

A closed-ended questionnaire was distributed to all 2,171 participants through the Google Forms platform to ensure broad participation. The link to the questionnaire was shared via WhatsApp groups, classroom online platforms, and teacher-coordinated announcements. This approach allowed students to access and complete the questionnaire easily using their personal devices. The questionnaire consisted of 25 items, developed based on previous validated instruments. The items in the questionnaire were adapted from [Canagarajah \(2011\)](#) and [García and Wei \(2014\)](#) on translanguaging practices in multilingual education. The items were categorized into four sections: (1) students' perceptions of translanguaging use, (2) classroom interaction, (3) language sensitivity and preservation, and (4) cultural relevance. Responses were measured on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). This questionnaire data provided quantitative insights into the perceptions, impacts, and variations in the implementation of translanguaging in enhancing students' comprehension, language sensitivity, and cross-cultural awareness.

To complement the questionnaire data, classroom observations were conducted in ten selected classes across five vocational schools. The observations focused on both teachers' and students' use of translanguaging during instructional activities, including classroom explanations, question-answer sessions, and group discussions. Each observation lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and was conducted over two months. The observation notes provided qualitative insights into classroom dynamics, complementing the quantitative data from the questionnaire.

Furthermore, to deepen understanding of the participants' experiences and to validate the questionnaire and observational findings, semi-structured interviews with ten English teachers and twenty students were conducted. The interviews aimed to explore students' perceptions of translanguaging in instructional practice and the impact of translanguaging on promoting language learning and cultural sensitivity. The interview questions were adapted from [García and Wei \(2014\)](#) and [Li \(2018\)](#), in which the consistency was ensured with translanguaging theoretical perspectives. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and was conducted face-to-face in either English or Indonesian, depending on the participant's preference. All interviews were also audio-recorded with consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

To ensure comprehensive interpretation and triangulation of students' perceptions and the impact of translanguaging implementation, the quantitative questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, and standard deviation). These results addressed both research objectives by providing numerical evidence of overall trends in classroom translanguaging practices.

Meanwhile, the qualitative data from observations and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns that complemented the statistical findings, thereby linking numerical trends to classroom realities. Specifically, they were systematically analyzed using thematic analysis by following [Braun and Clarke's \(2006\)](#) six-step model. First, all observation data and transcripts from the interviews were read repeatedly to become familiar with the content.

Second, the initial codes were generated manually by marking meaningful units related to translanguaging practices and classroom interactions based on the study’s objectives. Third, these codes were organized into potential themes that reflected patterns across the data. Fourth, the themes were reviewed by comparing them with the original data to ensure accuracy and coherence. Fifth, each theme was clearly defined and refined to capture its central meaning. Finally, a narrative report was produced to present the thematic findings. All interview participants were anonymized using alphanumeric codes (e.g., S1, S2, S3 for students and T1, T2, and T3 for teachers) to maintain confidentiality during the coding and analysis process.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The Perceptions of Translanguaging in Vocational High School English Classrooms

This part reveals the results related to students’ perceptions of translanguaging, addressing the first research objective in exploring how translanguaging promotes comprehension, language preservation, enhances language sensitivity, and promotes cross-cultural awareness in vocational high school English classrooms. The quantitative results (Table 1) indicate strong agreement that the use of Indonesian and local languages supported the students’ English learning experience. Students felt more confident ($M = 3.18$), motivated ($M = 3.12$), and engaged when permitted to use their native language.

Table 1. Students’ perceptions.

Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Interpretation	Std. dev.
Teachers need to provide opportunities to use local languages	2171	1	4	3.26	Strongly agree	0.66
Local language improves English skills	2171	1	4	3.03	Strongly agree	0.61
Feel confident when allowed to use the local language	2171	1	4	3.18	Strongly agree	0.61
Motivated to learn when allowed to use the local language	2171	1	4	3.12	Strongly agree	0.61

Students’ responses from the questionnaire and classroom observations both show that translanguaging was not merely a practical aid, but a cultural bridge. Observational notes indicated that when teachers employed local analogies (e.g., idioms or proverbs) during grammar explanations, students became more attentive and interactive. This indicated that the students had a positive perception regarding the implementation of translanguaging in the vocational high school English classroom. The qualitative responses from the interview further emphasized emotional and cultural dimensions of translanguaging. Students felt less anxious and more respected when their languages were recognized in class, showing that language choice directly influenced language sensitivity and self-esteem.

- (1) When the teacher explains the lesson using the local language, I can understand it more quickly. Sometimes English is difficult, but when it is explained in the language I use every day, I can grasp the meaning more easily. (S3)
- (2) I often feel anxious about making mistakes when I have to speak English in front of the class. However, if I am allowed to mix in some Indonesian first, I feel more confident to try. (S7)

These findings emphasized that translanguaging supported both emotional security and cultural inclusion, encouraging students to see English learning not as a linguistic replacement but as an extension of their own language and identity. Thus, the students’ perceptions revealed that translanguaging was desired not only for comprehension but also for sustaining their linguistic heritage, cultural awareness, and sensitivity to language use in multilingual communication. This sentiment pinpointed the emotional support that local language use offered, particularly in reducing affective filters, such as the fear of making mistakes, which was essential

for language acquisition. Another common theme was motivation. Students indicated that they felt more eager to participate when not restricted to English-only communication.

- (3) I feel more motivated to learn when I am allowed to use Indonesian first to ask or answer questions. If I have to use English right away, I often feel confused and end up staying silent. (S10)

This interview finding supported the quantitative result, where a high mean score (3.12) was recorded for the item on motivation to learn when permitted to use the local language. It exposed that language flexibility enabled students to take ownership of the learning process. Moreover, some students noted that using their mother tongue helped them relate new English concepts to everyday life, making the learning experience more meaningful.

- (4) When the teacher explained grammar using examples in the local language, I understood it immediately because the sentence patterns were similar to those I usually use at home. (S5)

This kind of response emphasized the role of local language in contextualizing abstract ideas. When English grammar rules were compared with structures from the students' native language, it not only clarified the content but also enhanced retention. In short, these qualitative insights reinforced the quantitative findings, in which the use of Indonesian or local languages in the classroom helped students understand better, feel more confident, stay motivated, and become more actively engaged. This also indicated that incorporating local language as a strategic pedagogical tool rather than treating it as a barrier can result in a more inclusive and effective language learning environment.

4.2 The Impact of Translanguaging Implementation in Vocational High School English Classrooms

This section presents findings on the impact of translanguaging implemented in vocational high school English classrooms, based on questionnaires, classroom observation, and interview data. The analysis was organized according to three theoretically grounded dimensions, adapted from [Cenoz and Gorter \(2017\)](#) and [Li \(2018\)](#): (1) pedagogical comprehension and engagement, focusing on how translanguaging supported understanding and participation, (2) language preservation and sensitivity, focusing on how bilingual practices sustained local language use while developing awareness of linguistic form and function, and (3) cross-cultural awareness, focusing on how translanguaging connected local and global cultural understandings. These dimensions were selected because they directly corresponded to the study's objectives and were consistent with translanguaging theory, which views multilingual classroom practice as promoting both cognitive development and cross-cultural competence.

4.2.1 Pedagogical comprehension and engagement

Table 2 summarizes the questionnaire results related to the implementation of translanguaging in classroom interaction and its impact on students' comprehension and engagement.

Table 2. Classroom interaction analysis.

Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Interpretation	Std. dev.
Local languages improve the quality and quantity of interactions in learning.	2171	1	4	3.06	Strongly agree	0.57
Local languages improve classroom communication skills.	2171	1	4	3.06	Strongly agree	0.57
Teachers do not allow the use of local languages.	2171	1	4	2,10	Agree	0.89
Local languages foster communication skills.	2171	1	4	3.11	Strongly agree	0.56

The quantitative findings indicated that translanguaging significantly supported pedagogical comprehension and student engagement in the vocational EFL classroom. As shown in Table 2, students strongly agreed that the use of local languages enhanced the quality and quantity of classroom interactions ($M=3.06$, $SD=0.57$) and improved classroom communication skills ($M=3.06$, $SD=0.57$). The highest mean score was recorded for the item, indicating that local languages supported communication skills ($M=3.11$, $SD=0.56$), suggesting that bilingual practices facilitated more active participation and meaningful interaction. In contrast, the lower mean score was found in the statement that teachers do not allow the use of local languages ($M=2.10$, $Sd=0.89$), indicating that most teachers permitted bilingual language use, which further supported student engagement and comprehension. These quantitative results demonstrated that translanguaging practices played an important part in promoting pedagogical understanding and interaction in vocational English classrooms.

Observation notes also confirmed that when teachers began lessons in Indonesian or the local language, students' participation increased, as they asked more questions, clarified meanings, and responded spontaneously during the teaching and learning process. For instance, in one class observation, the students started group discussions in Javanese with the teachers' permission before switching to English for presentation, demonstrating scaffolded bilingual learning. This is further emphasized by the interview findings.

- 3
- (5) I feel more comfortable speaking in class when I am allowed to use Javanese, as it helps me avoid mistakes and makes me feel at ease. (S15)
 - (6) I allow the use of Javanese in learning English because sometimes my students get stuck. So, the students really need help with Indonesian or Javanese to make it easier to understand the context of the instructions and to get them directly involved in communication. (T3)

This revealed that both students and teachers viewed the use of their native language as a crucial support in classroom interactions. Increased participation was observed when the use of Indonesian was permitted, enhancing students' confidence to ask questions and to engage in discussions. This finding was consistent with the questionnaire data for the item about local language role in improving communication skills ($N=3.06$). Conversely, occasional teacher-imposed restrictions, reflected in a lower mean score of 2.10, were perceived as inhibiting communication, though these were situational rather than common.

Group work activities often began in local languages before transitioning to English, facilitating comprehension and idea formulation. Teachers similarly viewed the strategic use of local language as an essential pedagogical scaffold, particularly when students experienced difficulty in understanding English instruction. As a result, the use of the local language enabled students to participate more actively in the classroom interaction. Increased engagement was also evident in the students' willingness to ask questions, contribute to discussions, and collaborate during group work activities, which often began in the local language before transitioning to English for the task completion. In general, the strategic use of local languages supported interaction, participation, and communication skills, creating more inclusive and effective learning environments by accommodating diverse proficiency levels while sustaining active participation and meaningful communication.

4.2.2 Language preservation and sensitivity

Table 3 presents the questionnaire results related to the impact of translanguaging implementation on language awareness aspects, including language sensitivity and language preservation. Based on the results displayed in Table 3, the students' agreement ($M \approx 3.0$) indicated the strong impact of translanguaging practices to promote both language preservation and language sensitivity. The students reflected their recognition that translanguaging helped maintain local languages and enhanced language sensitivity ($M = 3.06$). The observation data corroborated this, in which teachers frequently encouraged students to compare English sentence forms with Javanese or Indonesian equivalents, reinforcing structural understanding and

appreciation for each language’s unique characteristics. This comparison of sentence structure among languages helped students understand English structure better.

Table 3. Language sensitivity and preservation analysis.

Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Interpretation	Std. dev.
Cultivating awareness of linguistic differences	2171	1	4	3.04	Strongly Agree	0.56
Maintaining Indonesian and local languages in learning	2171	1	4	3.03	Strongly Agree	0.57
Supporting pride in linguistic heritage	2171	1	4	3.06	Strongly Agree	0.56

This finding is also supported by the interview data.

- (7) When grammar is explained with examples in the local language, I understand faster. (S2)
- (8) I usually use Javanese, Indonesian, and English, using context, for example, when analyzing text. So, when there’s a reading section or reading comprehension, I definitely direct the child there because it helps develop their vocabulary-building skills. However, if it’s not for improving vocabulary building, I don’t use it. (T5)

Student 2 reported that the grammar explanations using local language enable faster comprehension, indicating increased awareness of how linguistic structures function across languages. Teacher 5 emphasized the deliberate use of Javanese, Indonesian, and English when analyzing texts, particularly in reading comprehension activities, supported vocabulary development, and meaning-making. This translanguaging implementation further helped teachers achieve the specific learning objectives more easily compared to the use of the local language indiscriminately in the teaching and learning process.

This finding further confirmed that translanguaging promoted language awareness, a form of linguistic sensitivity that enabled learners to discern meaning and form across languages. Through this process, students became more conscious of how languages interacted and complemented one another in communication. At the same time, maintaining the use of Indonesian and local languages in formal education contributed to language preservation by affirming their legitimacy in academic discourse. This practice contributes to sustainable multilingual education by maintaining linguistic diversity while promoting English language development, suggesting the implementation of translanguaging in English learning, especially in vocational English classrooms.

4.2.3 Cross-cultural awareness

Table 4 presents the questionnaire results related to the impact of translanguaging implementation in cross-cultural awareness aspect.

Table 4. Cultural relevance analysis.

Items	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Interpretation	Std. dev.
Understanding the target culture in the local language.	2171	1	4	3.07	Strongly agree	0.53
Preventing cross-cultural misconceptions.	2171	1	4	3.02	Strongly agree	0.53
More comprehensive cultural learning experiences.	2171	1	4	3.05	Strongly agree	0.52
Building students’ cross-cultural sensitivity.	2171	1	4	3.02	Strongly agree	0.53

Based on Table 4, the implementation of translanguaging had a positive impact on students’ cross-cultural awareness in vocational high school English classrooms. All items received a high mean score from 3.02 to 3.07 with a ‘strongly agree’ interpretation, indicating strong students’ consensus regarding the cultural benefits of translanguaging. Students reported that using local languages alongside English helped them better understand the target culture, reduced cross-cultural misconceptions, and provided more comprehensive cultural learning experiences. In

addition, translanguaging was perceived as effective in developing students' cross-cultural sensitivity, enabling them to navigate cultural differences more thoughtfully. These results suggest that translanguaging plays a significant role in enhancing cross-cultural awareness.

Observation and interview data further revealed that teachers often compared English cultural concepts with local traditions, facilitating comprehension through translanguaging. For example, teachers related English idioms or customs (e.g., greeting norms and politeness strategies) to local equivalents in Indonesian or Javanese, helping students avoid cultural misinterpretations. This reveals that students saw local language as a helpful medium for acquiring cross-cultural awareness and preventing misunderstandings.

- (9) When the teacher explains foreign cultures by comparing them with local culture, it's easier for me to understand. (S18)
- (10) I also typically use a mix of Javanese and Indonesian, especially refined Javanese, because it minimizes the use of minority languages, thereby enhancing and maintaining language and cross-linguistic awareness. Therefore, support for language retention is also very beneficial when learning English while maintaining both the mother tongue and Indonesian, as it helps to familiarize oneself with the new language. (T8)

This qualitative response offered deeper insights into how and why local language use benefited cultural learning. Several students noted that teachers often explained foreign cultural practices by comparing them to familiar ones in their local context. This cultural juxtaposition, when communicated in a shared mother tongue, helped students make sense of abstract cultural concepts and relate them to their own lived experiences. Moreover, students also reported a clearer understanding of foreign customs when they were clarified in Indonesian or the local language, which reduced stereotypes and ethnocentric views. Teachers 8 further emphasized that the strategic use of Javanese and Indonesian played an important role in sustaining cross-linguistic and cultural awareness. By minimizing the marginalization of minority languages, this practice helped students value their linguistic and cultural heritage while engaging with new cultural knowledge embedded in English learning. As a result, translanguaging not only facilitated a clearer understanding of foreign customs but also promoted cultural empathy, sensitivity, and reflective awareness of both local and global cultural identities, thereby reducing the risk of cross-cultural misinterpretation.

4.3 Variations in Translanguaging Implementation Across Schools

Classroom observations and interview data revealed notable variations in the implementation of translanguaging across the participating schools. While all schools recognized the potential of translanguaging to enhance students' comprehension and engagement, the extent and manner of its use varied significantly depending on institutional policies, teacher beliefs, and students' linguistic backgrounds.

In Schools A, C, D, and E, English instruction largely followed a monolingual approach, where Indonesian was only used occasionally to translate key terms or clarify complex grammar. Teachers in this setting prioritized English exposure as a means of building communicative competence, expressing concerns that frequent use of the first language might inhibit fluency. Consequently, translanguaging practices were limited and mainly teacher-initiated, often occurring during error corrections or new vocabulary explanations. While this approach offered consistent English input, it also restricted students' opportunities to draw on their local language resources for deeper comprehension and self-expression.

In contrast, School B exhibited a more dynamic and flexible translanguaging environment. Teachers and students actively integrated Indonesian and Javanese across lessons, particularly during interactive and task-based activities. Teachers deliberately employed local languages to illustrate cultural analogies, clarify abstract concepts, and scaffold vocabulary comprehension. Students also engaged in spontaneous translanguaging during group discussions and peer collaboration, using local expressions to connect English materials with authentic vocational contexts (e.g., hotel front-office dialogues or culinary service instructions). These practices not

only supported comprehension but also promoted language sensitivity and cross-cultural understanding, as learners reflected on similarities and differences between local and English-speaking cultural practices. The differences among the schools can be summarized as follows.

Table 5. Comparative overview of translanguaging practices in Schools A, C, D, and E, and School B.

Aspect	Schools A, C, D, and E	School B
Language policy orientation	Implicit English-only orientation; limited use of Indonesian for clarification.	Flexible bilingual policy; local and national languages integrated strategically.
Teacher pedagogical beliefs	Emphasize English immersion for fluency; view L1 use as a potential barrier.	View translanguaging as a scaffold to comprehension and cultural engagement.
Classroom practices	Minimal translanguaging, mainly teacher-initiated; limited student code-mixing.	Frequent, natural translanguaging by both teachers and students during discussions and explanations.
Functions of translanguaging	Clarifying difficult vocabulary or grammar; translation of key terms.	Building comprehension, connecting cultural analogies, reducing anxiety, and enhancing confidence.
Students' participation	Relatively passive; hesitant to use L1 due to policy restrictions.	Highly participative; students actively use both English and local languages to construct meaning.
Cultural integration	Limited; English presented as separate from the local context.	Strong; English is linked with local culture and vocational practices.
Alignment with study objectives	Focused on comprehension only.	Addresses all three objectives: comprehension, language sensitivity, and cross-cultural awareness.

These findings confirmed that translanguaging practices were context-dependent, shaped by institutional policies, teacher beliefs, and students' proficiency levels. Schools that adopted flexible bilingual approaches, such as School B, offered richer environments for language preservation, linguistic sensitivity, and cross-cultural understanding. Conversely, contexts that enforced strict monolingual policies risked limiting the potential of translanguaging as a pedagogical and sociocultural resource. This comparison pinpointed that the successful implementation of translanguaging required supportive institutional policies, teacher training, and an understanding of local linguistic ecologies. When these elements align, translanguaging becomes an inclusive, culturally responsive pedagogy that not only enhances comprehension but also sustains students' linguistic identities and cross-cultural competencies, key priorities in vocational EFL education.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that translanguaging in vocational EFL classrooms serves as an effective pedagogical, linguistic, and cultural strategy. The quantitative and qualitative data revealed that students perceived translanguaging as highly beneficial for building comprehension, confidence, and motivation. These findings corroborate García and Wei's (2014) assertion that translanguaging enables learners to mobilize their full linguistic repertoire, thus lowering affective barriers and increasing participation. The positive affective impact, particularly reduced anxiety and improved motivation, is related to the sociocultural perspective (Maknun et al., 2024b; Vygotsky, 1978) that learning occurs most effectively in supportive and interactive environments. Translanguaging also allows teachers to mediate understanding through familiar linguistic channels, thereby creating what Li (2018) refers to as a 'translanguaging space', where students can freely express meaning without linguistic inhibition. This also correlates with García and Wei's (2014) concept of translanguaging as an engaging pedagogical practice that bridges linguistic repertoires to aid comprehension and participation.

The qualitative observations and interviews complement the statistical data by illustrating the impact of translanguaging practices. It was found that translanguaging enhanced deeper comprehension, promoted language awareness, and cultivated cultural reflection. Teachers' strategic use of Indonesian and Javanese in scaffolding the English content facilitated conceptual understanding and helped students relate new material to their lived experiences. This dual-language scaffolding process affirms the ecological framework (van Lier, 2004), in which the learning environment and linguistic diversity interact to co-construct meaning. Moreover, the practice of comparing linguistic forms across English, Indonesian, and local languages nurtured the linguistic awareness, in which the students became more sensitive to grammatical, pragmatic, and semantic differences, indicating that translanguaging promotes metalinguistic competence. This indicates that the flexible use of multiple languages helps learners develop a deeper and more conscious understanding of how language works as a whole (Cenoz & Gorter, 2020).

The contribution of translanguaging to language preservation and cross-cultural awareness is also emphasized in this study's findings. Students expressed pride in using their local language during class, seeing it as validation of their linguistic identity rather than a barrier to English mastery. This reflects previous studies, which emphasize that translanguaging sustains minoritized languages by legitimizing them in formal education (Karpava et al., 2025; Rasman & Margana, 2022). By bridging English instruction with local linguistic and cultural contexts, translanguaging resists linguistic homogenization and encourages appreciation for Indonesia's linguistic diversity. In addition, the use of translanguaging was also found to promote the students' cultural awareness. Teachers, who contextualized English culture by comparing it with local norms, enabled students to avoid cultural misunderstandings and develop intercultural empathy as key components of Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence model. In vocational education, this is particularly significant since students must navigate multicultural workplaces where understanding both local and global cultural codes is essential.

The variation between schools further emphasized the contextual dimension of translanguaging implementation. Schools that embraced flexible bilingual policies, such as School B, demonstrated richer student engagement and stronger integration of linguistic and cultural resources. In contrast, monolingual English-oriented schools (e.g., School A, C, D, and E) displayed limited participation and less cultural contextualization. These differences show that translanguaging thrives in supportive institutional ecosystems where teacher beliefs, classroom practices, and school policies meet. This finding echoes García and Lin's (2017) argument that translanguaging is both a pedagogical and political act, where its success depends not only on teacher initiatives but also on institutional recognition of multilingualism as a resource. Overall, the findings validate translanguaging as a multifaceted practice that advances the core objectives of this study, which include enhancing comprehension, preserving linguistic identity, encouraging language preservation, and cultural awareness. It suggests a transformative shift from traditional, monolingual EFL instruction toward a creative pedagogy that values students' full linguistic and cultural repertoires.

6. CONCLUSION

5 This study reveals that translanguaging serves as an effective pedagogical and sociocultural strategy in vocational EFL classrooms. By integrating Indonesian and local languages into English instruction, teachers and students were able to develop a deeper understanding, enhance their linguistic sensitivity, and support cultural reflection. The results showed that translanguaging enhanced comprehension, confidence, and motivation, allowing learners to connect new concepts with their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, it served as a bridge between local and global identities, empowering students to appreciate their linguistic heritage while developing their English proficiency and promoting cross-cultural awareness. The variation observed across schools also suggested that translanguaging implementation was highly context-dependent, influenced by institutional language policies, teachers' beliefs, and students' proficiency levels. Schools with flexible bilingual policies demonstrated richer classroom

interactions and higher student engagement, whereas those enforcing monolingual English instruction offered fewer opportunities for linguistic inclusion.

Pedagogically, the study emphasizes the importance of adopting translanguaging as an intentional teaching approach rather than viewing it as code-switching or linguistic interference. Teacher education programs should provide training in planning, implementing, and evaluating effective translanguaging-based instruction. At the institutional level, schools and policymakers should design supportive bilingual policies that recognize local and national languages as legitimate resources for learning. Additionally, translanguaging also holds sociocultural values as it promotes language preservation and encourages cross-cultural understanding, preparing vocational students to engage confidently in diverse professional and global environments.

Despite these promising outcomes, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted within one regency, limiting the generalizability of findings to regions with different linguistic contexts. The observation period was also relatively short, providing only a snapshot of classroom practices rather than longitudinal insights into long-term outcomes. Future studies should examine the long-term effects of translanguaging on students' language proficiency, intercultural competence, and professional readiness, and include stakeholders such as administrators and curriculum designers to better understand institutional and policy support.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

M.M. – Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – Original Draft, Supervision

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L.M. – Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Writing-Review & Editing

E.P.N.S. – Data Curation, Investigation, Formal Analysis

Declaration of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work, the authors used ChatGPT to improve language and readability only. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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