

Teacher Practices in Translanguaging and Trans-Semiotizing Pedagogy in ELT classrooms: An Indonesian Case Study

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Abstract

Translanguaging and trans-semiotizing are emerging as pivotal methodologies in modern English teaching. The way a teacher adopts these methods is of paramount importance, especially when considering the combination of native language usage and multimedia resources which can profoundly influence the learning curve of English as a second language. This research delves into the practical application of these techniques in English Language Teaching (ELT) and their inherent benefits. Chosen through a purposive sampling technique based on their duration of English teaching experience (5 to 10 years), three educators from junior high schools in Indonesia were included in the study. Using interviews and classroom observation as primary data sources, a thematic analysis was conducted. The results highlight teachers' inclination towards translation tactics, like translating and code-switching, to foster student engagement. The analysis reveals teachers' proclivity towards utilizing methods such as translating and code-switching to enhance classroom interaction. Additionally, the embracing of trans-semiotization resources, spanning from simple hand gestures to advanced digital materials like videos and online links, stands out as a dominant feature in their pedagogy. This study enhances the existing discourse on translanguaging, offering tangible recommendations for language-teaching stakeholders.

Keywords: ELT, Translanguaging, Trans-semiotizing and Pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational settings, teachers must harness every potential avenue to facilitate students' understanding of English in the classroom. Teachers play a pivotal role, serving not only as instructors but also as guides and mentors. A prominent figure in second language acquisition, posits that learners can assimilate multiple languages subconsciously via comprehensible input. Two particularly significant avenues to achieve this are Translanguaging and Trans-semiotizing.

Building upon this foundation, translanguaging, as defined by Garcia (2009), is the adaptive use of two languages, enhancing communication and bolstering the linguistic prowess of the second language (L2). Essentially, it involves leveraging the native language (L1) to enrich L2 learning. In an ELT setting, teachers typically introduce concepts in L2 and subsequently elucidate them using L1. Lin (2019) further expands upon the interplay of language with other semiotic modes, like visuals and gestures, terming it Trans-semiotizing. Here, various tools and media are used to deliver English lessons, aiding students' grasp of vocabulary and subject matter.

Expanding on the concept of translanguaging, Adinolfi and Astruc (2017) have dissected its nuances as practiced in ELT classrooms. They identify three distinct forms: code-switching between sentences, intra-sentential shifts within sentences, and the exclusive use of the target or another language. Garcia's (2009) perspective views translanguaging as a dynamic linguistic practice, especially prominent among bilingual students. In practical classroom settings, translanguaging integrates two languages cohesively to streamline teaching and learning, enabling teachers to connect with multilingual students (Cahyani et al., 2018). Rerung (2015) states translanguaging is a pivotal pedagogical tool, particularly in multilingual classes, aiding in meaning negotiation.

Diving deeper into the semiotic aspect, Trans-semiotizing offers an enhanced learning experience by correlating ELT with students' sociocultural contexts. Lin (2015) underscores the importance of various semiotic sources, with He et al. (2016) emphasizing the coordination of bodily and facial expressions as communicative tools. In academic circles, the application of Translanguaging and Trans-semiotizing by instructors offers an innovative approach, intertwining multiple languages throughout the learning journey. Studies, such as those by Liu and Fang (2022) and Moody et al. (2019), have delved into the multifaceted realm of translanguaging from multilingual perspectives, revealing positive stakeholder attitudes. Rasman (2018) specifically investigated this practice in Indonesian EFL classrooms, observing students using a mix of languages to negotiate meanings.

Moreover, numerous studies have focused on students' interactions with translanguaging and trans-semiotizing, yet a discernible gap remains regarding the exploration of teachers' strategies in ELT settings, notably in Indonesian junior high schools. Venturing into this uncharted territory, this research endeavors to shine a spotlight on the intricate dynamics and methodologies of translanguaging and trans-semiotizing as wielded by educators in ELT classrooms.

METHOD

This study employed a case study approach as its primary research methodology to delve into contemporary issues and to unearth underlying dynamics (Yin, 2012). By providing an in-depth perspective set within real-world contexts and drawing from various data sources, case studies facilitate a comprehensive exploration of distinct events and scenarios. The data amassed for this investigation is qualitative, emphasizing the interpretation of concepts to furnish detailed descriptions and explanations. The process of managing qualitative data entails steps like data reduction, organization, and interpretation, ensuring a comprehensive insight into the subjects under study (Creswell, 2013). The

primary data was sourced directly from participant interviews, enriching the overall authenticity and depth of the collected information (Fraenkel et al., 2015).

The data for this study was gained from three principal sources. First, the researchers observed actual classroom teaching and learning activities. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three English teachers, each with distinct teaching experiences and affiliations. Teacher F N, with 10 years of teaching under her belt, teaches at SMPN 1 Karanganom and handles both classes VIII and IX. Meanwhile, Teacher L S, who has accumulated 7 years of teaching experience, is associated with MTsN 1 Surakarta and focuses solely on the VIII class. On the other hand, Teacher M M has been in the profession for 5 years and, like Teacher F N, is also based at SMPN 1 Karanganom, but she primarily instructs the VIII class. These face-to-face sessions aimed to ascertain the strategies teachers employ in leveraging translanguaging—using a second language to bolster target language proficiency—and trans-semiotizing—incorporating supportive tools and media in the English teaching process. The third source of data comprised insights from three English teachers responsible for delivering ELT content.

In this study, the researcher conducted 15 classroom observations to gather information. Detailed field notes were taken during these sessions, which were later cross-referenced with feedback from the teachers to ensure accuracy. Additionally, interviews were conducted with English teachers to gain insights into their teaching experiences and methodologies. The data gathered was then analyzed using thematic analysis. This technique helped identify recurring patterns and themes within the information collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure the validity of the data, it was subjected to multiple checks. The process of coding was employed to categorize and interpret the data, with several coding strategies being utilized (Saldana, 2021). Throughout the research, notes and reflections were maintained to aid in the final analysis. This balanced approach offered a holistic view of the teaching practices under scrutiny.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Teacher Practice in Translanguaging Pedagogy

Translanguaging serves as an effective tool for teachers conducting bilingual classes, accommodating the diverse proficiency levels of students in the target language. Through the process of translation, teachers can introduce students to new vocabulary that they haven't encountered before. The classroom practice focuses on how teachers employ both translanguaging and trans-semiotizing in their ELT sessions. Participants were questioned about their methods of integrating translanguaging components and the benefits they offers to students. Both semi-structured interviews and observations confirmed that each participant utilized translanguaging pedagogy in their ELT class, as unanimously shared by the participants.

*“...the role of the teacher there is trying to explore students' abilities to **translate**. students are asked to bring a dictionary or other translating tool, then they try to find out the meaning first, then the teacher guides them.”*
(Teacher FN, interview, 2023)

*"I **practice translating and code-switching** when delivering material, discussing questions, and interacting with students ..."* (Teacher LS, interview, 2023)

*"Yes, I **practice translation** to interact with students in class ..."* (Teacher MM, interview, 2023)

In the interviews with Teachers FN, LS, and MM, there emerges a shared understanding and advocacy for the use of translanguaging in the ELT classroom. Teacher FN's strategy prioritizes students' translation abilities; she encourages them to utilize tools such as dictionaries, ensuring they actively engage in deciphering meanings. This proactive approach to learning is then supported by the teacher's guidance. On a similar note, Teacher LS incorporates translation and code-switching not only as tools for delivering lessons but also as integral parts of classroom interactions and discussions. Teacher MM echoes this sentiment, underlining translation as a cornerstone of their teaching approach. Their collective rationale behind such methods is clear: translanguaging bridges gaps in students' understanding of English. It's not just about decoding a language but about truly grasping its essence. This sentiment is further substantiated by Teacher LS's assertion about the unpredictable nature of every student's grasp of English.

*"I think this is necessary because we don't know how every **student understands English**"* (Teacher LS, interview, 2023)

Teachers MM and FN further accentuate that these methods simplify the material and instructions for students. Beyond just the methodology, the benefits are palpable.

*"Because in my experience, in these ways students can **understand** the material easily..."* (Teacher MM, interview, 2023)

*"Because these things will help students **understand** the explanation from the teacher..."* (Teacher FN, interview, 2023)

Moreover, Teacher FN sees a transformation in students – from a place of not knowing to comprehension. Teacher LS points to the enrichment of vocabulary, coupled with practical strategies like writing translations, to bolster retention. Meanwhile, Teacher MM believes that translanguaging doesn't just enhance linguistic prowess; it boosts students' confidence by allowing them the freedom to navigate between two languages.

*"There are so many **benefits** Those who didn't know before now know. Those who already know now understand more..."* (Teacher FN, interview, 2023)

*"Of course, there are various kinds of **benefits** because students can enrich their vocabulary with this translating method. Apart from that, I also ask students to write down what needs to be translated so they can easily remember the meaning of the word they have translated..."* (Teacher LS, interview, 2023)

*"The **benefit** of practicing translanguaging in class is students' self-confidence will increase. ... because the teacher gives them the opportunity to speak two languages"* (Teacher MM, interview, 2023)

The observations affirmed the interview findings, revealing that all participants actively employed translanguaging in their ELT classes.

Table 1. Teachers practiced translanguaging in ELT class

| No | Participants | Translating | Code-switching |
|----|--------------|--|---|
| 1 | Teacher FN | <p><i>"Who is absent today? Siapa yang tidak berangkat anak-anak?"</i> (Teacher FN practiced translating in ELT class)</p> <p><i>"Jaka, what is the meaning of siti swept classroom this morning in Bahasa?"</i> (Teacher FN practiced translating in ELT class)</p> | <p><i>"Hayo, please remember... tolong di ingat-ingat lagi. The previous meeting kita belajar apa ya?"</i> (Teacher FN practiced code-switching in ELT class)</p> <p><i>"Ok class, Zaskia teman kalian sedang sakit. Let's pray for your friends to get better soon"</i> (Teacher FN practiced code-switching in ELT class)</p> |
| 2 | Teacher LS | <p><i>"Hi class, she is Mbak Sartika. She will observe atau mengobservasi, mengamati our class, kegiatan belajar kita, for several days. Apa itu several days?"</i> (Teacher LS practiced translating in ELT class)</p> <p><i>"Where did you go last month anak-anak? Bulan lalu pergi kemana kalian?"</i> (Teacher LS practiced translating in ELT class)</p> | <p><i>"Aryan, silahkan maju ke depan, and write your sentences"</i> (Teacher LS practiced code-switching in ELT class)</p> <p><i>"Oke good, zafran. Tapi kalimatnya salah ya, you should use verb 2 of go. Apa verb 2nya go?"</i> (Teacher LS practiced code-switching in ELT class)</p> |
| 3 | Teacher MM | <p><i>"So which part of generic structure in first paragraph, termasuk yang bagian apa di paragraph pertama ini?"</i> (Teacher MM practiced translating in ELT class)</p> <p><i>"Adi, can you find past tense sentences from the text? Yang mana coba yang ada past tense nya?"</i> (Teacher MM practiced translating in ELT class)</p> | <p><i>"Then, if you see advertisement on the banner or the poster, apa saja macamnya?"</i> (Teacher MM practiced code-switching in ELT class)</p> <p><i>"Ok, I will divide into two kinds of advertisement in this class. Bagi siswa yang bernomer absen genap, boleh membuat iklan product seperti minuman, makanan, pakaian. Then, untuk siswa yang bernomer absen ganjil membuat iklan service atau jasa for example, laundry, babershop, and other services. Atau jasa lainnya seperti servis</i></p> |

mobil, motor boleh. So, do you get it?"
(Teacher MM practiced code-switching
in ELT class)

From the interviews and observation results, all teachers revealed that they integrated translating and code-switching into their ELT lessons. They believed these strategies were essential, as they enhanced students' comprehension of English, the material presented, and the teachers' explanations. These techniques also offered numerous advantages: they bolstered students' understanding and vocabulary—particularly since students noted down translations—and made it easier for students to recall words. Importantly, these practices fostered self-confidence as students were permitted to use both languages. Liu (2020) indicated mixed feelings among teachers about translanguaging: while some appreciated its benefits, others saw no value and even expressed guilt when employing it. Moreover, observational data corroborated the teachers' claims, showcasing their robust commitment to translanguaging elements, such as translating and code-switching. This was especially evident when teachers provided instructions or expounded on materials. He (2021) emphasized that translanguaging facilitates a dynamic bilingual exchange between students and teachers.

The unanimous sentiment among the teachers was the value of translanguaging in the ELT context, emphasizing its role in bolstering student confidence, expanding their linguistic range, and deepening their understanding. Observations of five sessions with each teacher confirmed the consistent use of translanguaging components. Tse (2013) highlighted the ubiquitous presence of translating and code-switching in such setups. García and Wei (2014) described translanguaging as a versatile bilingual pedagogical tool tailored to meet academic demands. Sahib (2019) further outlined the motivations for teachers' translanguaging practices, highlighting benefits such as increased student engagement, improved teacher-student communication, enriched English vocabulary, and the inclusion of local languages in the ELT framework.

Teacher Practice in Tans-semiotizing Pedagogy

The interviews highlighted the integration of both translanguaging and trans-semiotizing pedagogies in English Language Teaching (ELT). Teacher MM, for instance, emphasized the use of multiple modalities like body language, facial expressions, visual, and auditory aids in her lessons. Similarly, Teacher FN expounded upon the technological resources available in the school, such as smart TVs and LCD projectors, that allowed the integration of visual and auditory media. She noted the regular use of gestures, facial expressions, and symbols alongside translation in her teaching methods.

"I practice body language, facial expressions, pictures, text, video or audio when teaching according to the material to be delivered ..." (Teacher MM, interview, 2023)

"... Besides, I brought up the translation earlier, I also brought up some media such as pictures and videos, at school, there are smart TV and LCD projectors, so we as teachers can easily apply that. Apart from the media, I also often use

facial expressions and symbols when teaching English ...” (Teacher FN, interview, 2023)

“Yes, I use **various kinds of media in class** ... I use facial expressions and gestures when playing games with students.” (Teacher LS, interview, 2023)

Moreover, observations of Teacher FN's class provided evidence of her actively employing trans-semiotizing techniques. For instance, she was observed using physical gestures, like raising her hand while introducing the concept of past tense or pointing towards the front of the class to instruct students to present their tasks. In the interviews, both Teacher FN and Teacher MM cited the effectiveness of such techniques in engaging students, making lessons livelier, and enhancing comprehension. They believed that the methods prevented boredom and fostered enthusiasm during lessons.

“Please raise your hand and follow me, *ikuti saya ya!* past tense (while raising hands and directed back)”. (Teacher FN practiced trans-semiotizing in ELT class)

“Ayo urut absen ya, please stand in front of the class (while pointing to the front of the class) and present your task ...” (Teacher FN practiced trans-semiotizing in ELT class)

“Because this really **helps students** when they receive material, and of course they also don't feel bored ...” (Teacher FN, interview, 2023)

“Because these things will **help students** more understand the material and be enthusiastic in undergoing the teaching and learning process ...” (Teacher MM, interview, 2023)

Teacher LS provided a different perspective. While she, too, integrated varied media, she highlighted the importance of adapting to technological advancements in teaching methodologies. Her viewpoint was rooted in ensuring that ELT remains relevant and engaging in the age of rapid technological changes. Moreover, her classroom observations corroborated her claims, revealing her use of multimedia presentations, online platforms like Quiziz, and gestures to drive home language concepts. Notably, she employed physical gestures to question students about their alertness, ensuring their active participation.

“... I learned many new things and was **not blind to technological developments** that could be applied to teaching. Besides that, the existence of various media is a solution so that students **did not feel bored** ...” (Teacher LS, interview, 2023)

Across the board, all the interviewed teachers believed in the manifold benefits of practicing trans-semiotizing. Teacher FN felt that it made students more open-minded and raised their interest in learning. Teacher LS saw it as an antidote to the classroom lethargy, ensuring students stayed attentive. Teacher MM echoed this sentiment, suggesting that varied teaching aids made students more enthusiastic.

“Are you sleepy? Or are you sleep? (While giving a sleepy gesture and closing his eyes)” (Teacher FN practiced trans-semiotizing in ELT class)

*“There are many **benefits for students**, so students are more open-minded ... So, it is very supportive and raises students' interest in learning it will be better.”*
(Teacher FN, interview, 2023)

*“And the **benefit of trans-semiotizing** is that students don't feel bored or sleepy. That's the main point”* (Teacher LS, interview, 2023)

*“When I practiced body language, facial expressions, pictures, writing, videos, or audio when teaching, there are **benefits** for students to be more enthusiastic to following the learning process”* (Teacher MM, interview, 2023)

Further observations, especially with Teacher MM, reaffirmed the integration of trans-semiotizing in classroom teachings. In her classes, she showcased real-world applications, such as using advertising images, to enhance students' understanding. Through these methods, the intent was clear: to create a dynamic and engaging environment for language learning.

From the interviews conducted, all participants confirmed they incorporated elements of trans-semiotizing in their teaching, including gestures, facial expressions, photos, videos, and web media. They believed that employing these elements in the classroom aids students in comprehending the material more effortlessly and keeps them engaged. Furthermore, Teacher LS emphasized the importance of using media in teaching, asserting that educators should stay updated with technological advancements. All the interviewed teachers identified multiple benefits of the trans-semiotizing approach, particularly noting an enhanced student interest and enthusiasm in the classroom. [Chen et al. \(2021\)](#) reinforced this notion, highlighting the connection between language and semiotic resources. Their study found that trans-semiotizing helps students delve deeper into learning activities and attain educational objectives.

In their English Language Teaching (ELT) sessions, all the teachers integrated aspects of trans-semiotizing such as videos, audio, texts, images, and gestures. Two participants expressed that this approach supports students in grasping the material. Echoing this sentiment, [Rincon-Mendoza and Canagarajah \(2020\)](#) posited that trans-semiotizing augments interaction between educators and learners, thereby enhancing English learning. [Lin's \(2019\)](#) research in a Chinese school setting where teachers did not speak the local language illuminated how both educators and students collaboratively utilize semiotic resources to foster understanding — a clear testament to the potency of trans-semiotizing.

In contrast, one participant felt that the practice of trans-semiotizing is crucial for teachers to stay abreast with technological progress. Regardless of this singular differing viewpoint, a consensus emerged among all teachers about the inherent advantages of trans-semiotizing in stimulating students' passion for learning English. Supporting this, [Gao and Zhang \(2020\)](#) documented a teaching session wherein an educator leveraged diverse semiotic resources to invigorate the class environment and boost student motivation. Trans-semiotizing, as described by [He et al. \(2016\)](#), embodies a mix of communicative elements like movements, facial expressions, and visuals. This blend contributes to a continually evolving semiotic repertoire, fostering a dynamic flow of understanding and meaning creation.

CONCLUSION

This article explores the practices of translanguaging and trans-semiotizing within English language teaching (ELT) environments. It highlights the crucial role of teachers in enhancing students' understanding of English and presents the approach of translanguaging. This method integrates two languages, refining the process of second language acquisition. Further, the discussion transitions to trans-semiotizing, showcasing its capacity to incorporate visual cues and gestures to enrich students' comprehension. A call for extended studies into these pedagogical techniques in the context of ELT classrooms is made clear.

The results and discussion emphasize how educators actively incorporate translanguaging and trans-semiotizing techniques. Common practices among teachers feature elements of translanguaging, such as translation and code-switching, aimed at optimizing interactions with students. Moreover, educators utilize various trans-semiotizing tools, including gestures, imagery, audio-visual materials, and web links. Their preference for these methods arises from their efficacy in clarifying concepts, invigorating lessons, and sparking enthusiasm among students. The synergistic use of translanguaging and trans-semiotizing is seen to benefit students by bolstering their confidence, expanding their English vocabulary, and deepening their overall linguistic grasp.

In conclusion, this research emphasizes the consistent adoption of translanguaging and trans-semiotizing by teachers in ELT settings, resulting in notable improvements in student comprehension. These findings not only enhance the existing knowledge base on translanguaging but also provide actionable insights for educators and policymakers. The potential of translanguaging and trans-semiotizing in offering a deeper dive into multilingual and multimodal communication makes it a promising avenue for further academic exploration.

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