

## Does Translanguaging Enhance Learning? Examining EFL Students' Perceptions and Success in Bali

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### Abstract

The integration of first and second languages in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, termed translanguaging, is gaining recognition for its potential to improve comprehension and student engagement. This study investigates students' perceptions of translanguaging in Bali, a unique multilingual setting, and examines its correlation with their learning achievement. Bali's sociolinguistic environment, where students frequently use Balinese, Indonesian, and English, offers an ideal context to explore this phenomenon. This study employed a correlational research design, involving 65 fourth-semester students aged 18 to 22, to assess perceptions of translanguaging through a structured questionnaire and their learning achievement through standardized tests. Descriptive statistics showed that students held positive perceptions of translanguaging, finding it beneficial for understanding course content and encouraging participation. However, Pearson correlation analysis revealed a minimal, non-significant correlation between students' positive perceptions and their learning achievement ( $r = 0.039$ ,  $\text{sig.} = 0.758$ ). While translanguaging created a supportive and engaging learning environment, its direct influence on academic achievement was limited. These findings suggest that although translanguaging may foster an inclusive and interactive classroom setting, it does not significantly impact measurable learning achievement. This study contributes valuable insights into the role of multilingual practices in EFL education and encourages further research on their complex effects on learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** Learning achievement, student's perception, translanguaging

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, studies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have predominantly focused on monolingual approaches, which encourage the exclusive use of the target language and discourage the use of students' native or secondary languages (Ali & Raj, 2023; Galali & Cinkara, 2017). This traditional approach aligns with the belief that immersion in the target language facilitates quicker acquisition. However, in multicultural classrooms, this rigid separation can introduce significant challenges, leaving students feeling pressured and often struggling to comprehend complex material solely in the target language. Such

classrooms, filled with diverse linguistic backgrounds, are particularly prone to confusion and disengagement when forced into a monolingual environment. Consequently, recent studies have begun to question the effectiveness of monolingual strategies, noting that they may not only hinder engagement but also reduce comprehension and confidence among learners (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Conteh, 2018; Marsevani & S, 2023; Sah & Kubota, 2022). Research suggests that the monolingual approach can limit students' ability to draw on their complete linguistic resources, resulting in a less inclusive and supportive learning environment. These findings have prompted educators to explore more flexible, multilingual approaches, such as translanguaging, to address the diverse needs of EFL learners more effectively.

In contrast, translanguaging—a pedagogical approach encouraging students to draw upon their entire linguistic repertoire—has become a valuable alternative to monolingual methods, particularly in multilingual settings. This approach fosters a more inclusive and adaptive learning environment, allowing students to leverage their native and secondary languages as cognitive and communicative tools. In Bali, where students frequently use Balinese, Indonesian, and English, translanguaging not only facilitates comprehension but also respects the rich linguistic diversity of the region, fostering a learning experience that is both contextualized and culturally relevant (Sapitri et al., 2018). As an internationally recognized tourist destination, Bali provides students with frequent exposure to English, creating a naturally supportive environment for language acquisition through real-life interactions with native and fluent speakers (Bonafix & Manara, 2016; Matradewi & Sosiowati, 2023). For Balinese students who navigate between these three languages daily, translanguaging becomes an effective tool to enhance understanding and engagement, bridging linguistic gaps and supporting a more dynamic, inclusive classroom experience (Ariani & Krisnawati, 2022; Artawa et al., 2023). By allowing students to use multiple languages as resources rather than barriers, translanguaging aligns closely with the needs of multilingual learners, offering a pathway for meaningful, context-rich language learning.

Translanguaging has emerged as a transformative approach in EFL settings, championed for fostering flexibility and autonomy among teachers and learners (Liu, 2021; Nagy, 2018; Yamauchi, 2018). UNESCO, for instance, advocates incorporating native languages as a foundational component of effective learning, underscoring the value of multilingual approaches in education (UNESCO, 2008). Extensive research highlights translanguaging's benefits, including increased active participation, reduced anxiety, and enhanced cognitive engagement, which are crucial for effective language learning (Liu et al., 2020; Sah & Kubota, 2022; Sobkowiak, 2022). Additionally, qualitative studies indicate that translanguaging deepens students' understanding, stimulates meaningful discussions, and strengthens English proficiency, outcomes that have been observed across diverse educational settings (Sah & Li, 2022; Berlianti & Pradita, 2021; Emilia & Hamied, 2022). Translanguaging transforms linguistic diversity into a valuable asset by enabling fluid movement between languages, enriching the learning environment, and empowering students to navigate complex material more efficiently.

Despite its recognized benefits, research on translanguaging remains limited, especially in specific contexts and educational levels. In Bali, existing studies have primarily focused on secondary-level students and have relied mainly on qualitative methods, thus leaving a gap in quantitative research that explores translanguaging's impact at the tertiary

level. This study seeks to fill these gaps by quantitatively analyzing university students' perceptions of translanguaging and examining its correlation with their learning achievement within content-specific EFL courses. By focusing on the higher education context, this research provides a new perspective on translanguaging's role in academic success, adding valuable insights to the growing body of literature on multilingual approaches in EFL settings.

If this gap remains unaddressed, educators and policymakers risk missing critical insights into the influence of multilingual approaches on student success in higher education. Without quantitative evidence, universities may persist in monolingual or traditional language instruction methods that fail to leverage students' linguistic backgrounds, potentially hindering comprehension, engagement, and overall academic success in EFL contexts. This oversight could lead to missed opportunities for fostering inclusive and effective learning environments, especially in linguistically diverse areas like Bali. Furthermore, institutions may lack the data to support pedagogical innovations that enhance language acquisition and critical thinking skills without understanding the correlation between translanguaging practices and learning achievement. Ultimately, neglecting this gap could impede the development of adaptable, student-centred approaches crucial for preparing students to navigate multilingual and globalized environments effectively.

This study seeks to provide a critical perspective on the role of translanguaging in tertiary-level EFL education by examining students' perceptions and their correlation with their learning achievement. Recognizing Bali's unique multilingual environment, this research addresses gaps by delivering quantitative insights that complement prior qualitative studies focused on secondary education. Specifically, this study explores two primary research questions: (1) What are university students' perceptions of translanguaging in content-specific EFL courses? Moreover, (2) To what extent is a correlation between students' perceptions of translanguaging and their learning achievement? The study aims to deepen our understanding of translanguaging's impact on comprehension, engagement, and academic success within higher education by investigating these questions. The findings will inform EFL educators and policymakers on the benefits and limitations of translanguaging, encouraging more inclusive, culturally responsive teaching practices. Ultimately, this study aspires to advance the dialogue on effective multilingual strategies, highlighting the importance of pedagogical frameworks that leverage students' linguistic resources to enhance learning outcomes.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative, correlational survey design to investigate the relationship between students' perceptions of translanguaging and their learning achievement. A survey was conducted to gather data on students' attitudes, opinions, and behaviours regarding translanguaging, offering insights into their perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). These survey results were analyzed alongside participants' English learning outcomes to identify potential associations. Correlation analysis, a statistical technique that assesses the strength and direction of relationships between variables, was applied to

explore whether positive perceptions of translanguaging aligned with improved academic achievement in English (Fraenkel et al., 2014).

### Research Context and Participant

The study was conducted in an Indonesian EFL context, focusing on three institutions in Buleleng Regency: Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, STAHN Mpu Kuturan, and STKIP Agama Hindu. To align with the study's objectives, purposive sampling was employed to select participants enrolled in content-based courses (Creswell, 2014). The sample included 65 multilingual students who regularly used Balinese, Indonesian, and English in their daily interactions. Participants were distributed as follows: 22 students from Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha in a Morphosyntax course, 20 students from STAHN Mpu Kuturan studying English for Critical Thinking, and 23 students from STKIP Agama Hindu in a course on Technology in Language Teaching and Learning.

### Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect data: a questionnaire and assessments. The questionnaire was designed to measure students' perceptions of translanguaging, guided by Trowler's (2010) engagement framework. This framework evaluates perceptions through behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement. Behavioural engagement focuses on students' active participation in multilingual tasks; emotional engagement assesses their feelings, such as motivation and anxiety; and cognitive engagement evaluates how translanguaging facilitates their critical thinking and understanding of complex concepts. The questionnaire underwent rigorous development, including item selection, expert validation, piloting, and empirical revision. Two senior English Department lecturers with expertise in Applied Linguistics and English Education conducted content validation, achieving a validity score of 1.0. After piloting with 44 students, the initial 20 items were refined, with four items excluded, leaving a final set of 16 valid items.

The assessments included formative tasks such as assignments and summative evaluations like mid-term and final exams, which measured students' learning achievement. These tests were tailored to each course's content and validated by the same experts to ensure accuracy and relevance. The assessments received a content validity score 1.0, affirming their reliability and appropriateness (Gregory, 2015).

### Procedure of Data Collection

The data collection process adhered to systematic protocols to ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments. The questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms, allowing participants easy access. Piloting was conducted to refine the instrument and confirm the clarity and reliability of each item, following best practices in survey research (Leon et al., 2022; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Data from the assessments were collected to calculate mean scores, summarizing participants' formative and summative performance. Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were applied to comprehensively understand the findings (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

### Data Analysis

Data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics to explore trends in students' perceptions of translanguaging. Measures such as mean, median, standard deviation, and range were calculated using SPSS version 26, offering insights into

overall patterns and variability (Pallant, 2020). For the inferential analysis, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was applied to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between students' perceptions of transanguaging and learning achievement. Pre-requisite tests, including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality and an ANOVA-based linearity test, were performed to ensure the data met the assumptions for correlation analysis. These statistical procedures ensured reliable and valid insights into the influence of transanguaging on academic performance (Cohen et al., 2018).

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section addresses the two research questions by exploring students' perceptions of transanguaging in EFL classrooms and its relationship with their learning achievement. The findings reveal that students generally hold positive views of transanguaging as a pedagogical tool, particularly regarding engagement and comprehension. However, its direct impact on learning achievement appears minimal.

### Student's Perception of Transanguaging in the English Content Course

To address the first research question, descriptive statistics were used to analyze data from a questionnaire designed to measure students' perceptions of transanguaging across three key dimensions of engagement: behavioural, emotional, and cognitive. The questionnaire, comprising 16 items, provided insights into how students perceive transanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in EFL classrooms. Table 1 summarizes the results for each engagement dimension.

Table 1. Questionnaire Results

Aspect	Mean Score	Category
Behavioural engagement	12.72	Positive
Emotional engagement	25.82	Positive
Cognitive skills engagement	12.80	Very Positive
Total	51.34	

The data in Table 1 reveal that students generally hold positive perceptions of transanguaging, as indicated by the scores in behavioural and emotional engagement categories. Notably, cognitive engagement received the highest mean score, categorized as "very positive," suggesting that transanguaging is particularly effective in enhancing students' cognitive processing and understanding of complex material. The aggregated total score of 51.34 confirms that students perceive transanguaging favourably within their EFL classrooms. Additional descriptive statistics were calculated, as shown in Table 2, to provide a more precise interpretation of these scores.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Students' Perception of Transanguaging

N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	
Valid	65	51.34	50.00	7.072	33	64
Missing	0					

The range of scores, spanning from 33 to 64, with a mean of 51.34, reflects a strong positive trend in student perceptions. The scores were categorised using benchmarks derived from the Mean Ideal (Mi) and Standard Deviation Index (Sdi) to understand the general trend of student attitudes better. The calculated values of Mi (48.5) and Sdi (5.17) allowed for precise classification of the average score, positioning it in the "positive" category, as defined by the criteria in Table 3.

Table 3. The Calculation Criteria based on Nurkancana and Sunartana (1992)

Score	Calculation	Criteria
$X \geq Mi + 1.5Sdi$	$X \geq 56.255$	Very positive
$Mi + 0.5Sdi \leq X < Mi + 1.5Sdi$	$51.085 \leq X < 56.255$	Positive
$Mi - 0.5Sdi \leq X < Mi + 0.5Sdi$	$45.915 \leq X < 51.085$	Neutral
$Mi - 1.5Sdi \leq X < Mi - 0.5Sdi$	$40.745 \leq X < 45.915$	Negative
$X < Mi - 1.5Sdi$	$X < 40.745$	Very Negative

The findings demonstrate that students perceive translanguaging as an effective tool for communication and learning in content-specific English courses. This aligns with recent studies highlighting translanguaging's capacity to enhance comprehension, particularly in multilingual classrooms where learners navigate complex linguistic and cognitive demands. [Wei and García \(2022\)](#) emphasize that translanguaging allows learners to mobilize their entire linguistic repertoire, facilitating deeper understanding while reducing cognitive load. By serving as a scaffold, translanguaging enables students to incrementally construct knowledge, particularly in cognitively demanding tasks, fostering both linguistic and cognitive engagement.

These findings are further supported by research indicating that translanguaging promotes cognitive flexibility, an essential skill for navigating diverse linguistic frameworks. Recent work by [Wei and Lin \(2023\)](#) highlights how translanguaging empowers learners to approach abstract concepts by drawing on known language structures, bridging gaps between languages to facilitate meaning-making. In multilingual EFL contexts, where proficiency levels can vary widely, translanguaging mitigates linguistic barriers and creates opportunities for cooperative learning. [Canagarajah \(2023\)](#) suggest that this inclusivity fosters an environment conducive to collaboration, where students feel empowered to participate actively despite varying levels of target-language proficiency.

The positive perceptions observed in this study also align with research on the affective benefits of translanguaging. Recent findings by [Nagy and Ahmed \(2023\)](#) indicate that incorporating students' native languages into learning activities enhances their motivation and confidence. This inclusive approach reduces affective barriers such as anxiety and apprehension, creating a supportive and relaxed learning atmosphere. Such environments are critical for language acquisition, as they encourage risk-taking and active engagement, essential components of effective learning ([Simatupang et al., 2023](#)). These affective benefits highlight translanguaging's role in improving comprehension and fostering emotional resilience in EFL learners.

The results position transanguaging as a transformative pedagogical tool in multilingual education. Transanguaging bridges the gap between comprehension and application by enabling students to leverage their linguistic strengths, allowing for more holistic learning. This study supports a growing body of evidence, including recent reviews by [Fuster and Bardel \(2024\)](#) and [Turner and Lin \(2024\)](#), which advocate for transanguaging to foster inclusion and engagement in multilingual classrooms. For educators, these findings underscore the importance of integrating transanguaging into content-based courses to promote linguistic equity and support diverse learner needs.

### Correlation between Transanguaging and Learning Achievement

This study investigated the relationship between students' perceptions of transanguaging and their learning achievement, analyzing data from questionnaires and academic assessments. Preparatory statistical tests confirmed the data's suitability for correlation analysis. A normality test yielded a significance value of  $p=0.200$ , indicating that the data followed a normal distribution. Similarly, a linearity test returned a deviation from the linearity value of  $p=0.580$ , confirming a linear relationship between the two variables. These results validated the use of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between students' perceptions and their learning outcomes.

Following these preliminary tests, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was employed to evaluate the strength and direction of the relationship between students' perceptions of transanguaging and their learning achievement scores. The analysis identified a positive but weak correlation between the two variables, suggesting a direct relationship, albeit one of limited strength. These results indicate that while students' perceptions of transanguaging may influence their achievement, the effect is minimal. The detailed findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Result

		Perception	Learning Achievements
Perception	Pearson Correlation	1	.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.758
	N	65	65
Learning Achievements	Pearson Correlation	.039	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.758	
	N	65	65

The correlation analysis revealed a positive but weak relationship between students' perceptions of transanguaging and learning achievement ( $r=0.039$ ). While this suggests a direct relationship, the correlation's minimal strength indicates that students' perceptions of transanguaging had negligible influence on their learning achievement as measured by test scores. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) further demonstrated that only 0.01% of the variance in achievement scores could be attributed to students' perceptions. These results align with the findings by [Garcia and Lin \(2016\)](#), who noted that while transanguaging supports engagement and comprehension, it may not significantly affect standardised academic performance due to the narrow scope of traditional assessments.

Although the correlation between students' perceptions of translanguaging and their test scores was weak, the findings underscore translanguaging's substantial role in enhancing conceptual understanding and active engagement. Many students view translanguaging as a valuable pedagogical tool, enabling them to leverage their linguistic repertoire to learn complex concepts. This observation aligns with previous research, such as [Vogel and García \(2017\)](#) and [Wei et al. \(2018\)](#), who highlight that translanguaging facilitates deeper cognitive processing by allowing students to integrate knowledge across languages, ultimately supporting comprehension and engagement.

As a pedagogical strategy, translanguaging offers students a scaffold for navigating and internalising abstract and challenging content. It provides an accessible approach to meaning-making in multilingual contexts, where learners often struggle with a foreign language. By drawing on familiar linguistic structures and contexts, students can bridge gaps between their existing knowledge and new material ([Cenoz & Gorter, 2017](#)). This bridge-building process enhances their cognitive engagement and fosters a more holistic understanding of the subject matter, as [Fuster and Bardel \(2024\)](#) and [Turner and Lin \(2024\)](#) highlighted.

[Canagarajah \(2011\)](#) emphasises that translanguaging reduces linguistic barriers by enabling students to use their first language as a resource for interpreting and internalising new information. This flexible approach is precious in educational environments, prioritising inclusivity and active participation. Research also indicates that translanguaging alleviates students' anxiety and promotes a more comfortable learning atmosphere, critical for sustained engagement ([Simatupang & Supri, 2024](#); [Nagy, 2018](#)). This practical support further strengthens the pedagogical value of translanguaging, creating a learning environment where students feel empowered to take risks and actively participate in their educational journey.

Despite its evident benefits for cognitive and emotional engagement, translanguaging's impact on measurable learning achievement remains inconclusive. Studies by [Gort and Sembante \(2015\)](#) and [Velasco and García \(2014\)](#) reveal that while translanguaging enhances students' comprehension and engagement, these gains do not necessarily translate into higher scores on formal assessments. Traditional academic tests often prioritise isolated target-language proficiency, overlooking the multilingual processing integral to translanguaging practices. This misalignment between translanguaging's strengths and the narrow focus of standardised evaluations underscores the need for alternative assessment approaches that capture the broader impacts of translanguaging.

The findings suggest that translanguaging is most beneficial in real-time, interactive learning settings, supporting inclusivity and knowledge transfer. Positive student feedback highlights translanguaging's role in fostering engagement and comprehension, demonstrating its contribution to the broader learning process. However, the weak link to formal learning achievement reinforces the necessity of future research to explore the specific conditions under which translanguaging could significantly impact measurable outcomes. Longitudinal studies and alternative assessments, such as task-based evaluations, could provide deeper insights into its long-term effects and efficacy.

Using students' first language in translanguaging practices is a scaffold that aids in understanding new and abstract material ([Sah & Li, 2022](#)). However, as [Velasco and García \(2014\)](#) observe, this scaffolding process is rarely reflected in formal test scores, which focus



exclusively on isolated language skills. The gap between conceptually driven learning and standardised assessments highlights the limitations of traditional academic metrics in multilingual education.

The findings underscore the need to differentiate between conceptual understanding and traditional performance metrics in evaluating the impact of translanguaging. While translanguaging significantly enhances comprehension and engagement, its strengths appear more pronounced in informal or discussion-based learning environments than in formal assessments. This aligns with existing research advocating for broader definitions of academic success in multilingual classrooms (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017;). By fostering linguistic flexibility and cognitive engagement, translanguaging supports comprehension and contributes to creating more inclusive, equitable, and holistic educational experiences.

Translanguaging is particularly impactful in fostering real-time comprehension, active engagement, and inclusivity within interactive learning environments. While its benefits may not directly result in higher test scores, translanguaging is critical in providing multilingual learners with a supportive space to explore and process challenging material. This is especially relevant in classrooms characterized by linguistic diversity, where learners bring varied language proficiencies and cultural contexts. For educators, these findings highlight the importance of integrating translanguaging practices into EFL instruction to enhance student participation and conceptual understanding.

Future research should investigate the specific conditions under which translanguaging might positively influence measurable academic outcomes. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into whether translanguaging's cognitive and affective benefits accumulate over time to improve learning performance. Additionally, alternative assessment methods, such as portfolio-based or task-oriented assessments, may offer a more nuanced understanding of translanguaging's impact on academic success. These approaches could better capture translanguaging's dynamic and integrative nature, which is often overlooked by standardized testing frameworks.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that students generally perceive translanguaging positively, valuing it as a tool that fosters comfort, engagement, and participation in the learning process. While a slight positive correlation was observed between students' perceptions of translanguaging and their learning achievement, the correlation is not strong enough to suggest that translanguaging directly enhances measurable academic outcomes. This suggests that translanguaging's strengths may lie more in creating an inclusive, motivating atmosphere conducive to informal learning and engagement rather than impacting formal learning achievement metrics. However, the study's limitations, particularly its small sample size, suggest that further research with larger, more diverse populations is needed to confirm these findings and deepen understanding of translanguaging's role in academic success. Future studies could explore the combined effects of translanguaging with other factors, such as motivation, sense of security, and teaching strategies, potentially using varied research designs to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how translanguaging may impact EFL students' outcomes across different learning contexts.

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