

Indonesian–English translanguaging practices in bilingual classroom: Distribution and functions in elementary education

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Abstract

English is commonly positioned as the language of instruction in Indonesian bilingual schools, but classroom interaction often reflects the simultaneous use of Indonesian and English to support teaching and learning. This study addresses the translanguaging phenomenon as a flexible practice that allows teachers and students to use both languages as an integrated system. This study aims to examine the distribution of translanguaging utterances compared to monolingual use and to identify the specific functions of translanguaging in classroom activities. The study utilized a mixed-methods design; data were collected through audio recordings and observations of teachers and students in upper classes, grades 4 to 6, in a selected bilingual elementary school in Yogyakarta. Grades 4 to 6 were selected because students at this level demonstrate more stable bilingual development and engage in classroom interaction using both languages. Interactions between teachers and students were transcribed and coded into Indonesian-only, English-only, and translanguaging units based on turn-taking. The coded transcription of translanguaging is continuously categorized into several functions based on the utterances. The research design combined quantitative calculations of language distribution with qualitative discourse analysis of interactional units. The findings indicate a balanced linguistic distribution with Indonesian only (37%), English only (35%), and translanguaging (28%). Furthermore, the study identified six functions of translanguaging, i.e., Conceptual Explanation (41%), Meaning Negotiation (24%), Participant Management (11%), Procedural Instruction (10%), Classroom Management (8%), and Interpersonal Clarity (6%). These findings contribute to bilingual education by demonstrating that translanguaging is a purposeful, functional, and supportive practice that increases conceptual understanding and encourages inclusive participation. This research confirms that translanguaging acts as a significant tool that enhances the quality of bilingual learning environments, particularly in Indonesian and English languages.

Keywords: *bilingual classroom, classroom interaction, elementary education, Indonesian-English, translanguaging*

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Introduction

The use of English in Indonesian schools has widely expanded in recent years particularly in bilingual schools (Pujiani et al., 2023). The implementation of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in bilingual classrooms has become increasingly prominent in Indonesian education (Coloquit & Makmuroh, 2025). While Bahasa Indonesia or Indonesian (L1) remains the national language and the main medium of instruction, English (L2) is increasingly positioned as an important academic language that supports international communication, knowledge, and education (Safira & Shanie, 2022; Abidin et al., 2022).

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This development reflects broader social changes including globalization, digital exposure, and increasing parental demand for English as an education medium (Bhatti et al., [2021](#); Yuswati & Setiawati, [2022](#)). As a result, nowadays classroom interaction in some Indonesian schools reflects the coexistence of Indonesian and English, especially in learning contexts where students are developing English proficiency.

This bilingual classroom environment creates a complex linguistic situation (Safira & Shanie, [2022](#); Coloquit & Makmuroh, [2025](#)). On the one hand, English is expected to function as the target language for instruction and learning (Mckinley & Rose, [2022](#)). On the other hand, Indonesian continues to play a central role in ensuring comprehension, maintaining classroom interaction, and supporting students' participation (Maharani et al., [2023](#)). Students are not only exposed to English in the classroom interaction. Instead, students encounter English through digital platforms like social media and games which often in informal ways (Syah et al., [2025](#)). This matter creates a bilingual pattern when participating in classroom interaction. Students frequently interact on both Indonesian and English to express ideas, respond to teachers' questions, and collaborate with peers (Desliyanah, [2021](#)).

In this bilingual classroom phenomenon, language use does not occur in isolation. As Grosjean ([2013](#)) argues, bilinguals are not two monolingual speakers in one person, but it is how people use two languages as an integrated system that depends on the needs of use and communication. This is why teachers and students flexibly use Indonesian and English as linguistic necessities to manage interactions, construct meaning, and maintain participation (Pujiani et al., [2023](#); Maryansyah & Heli, [2024](#)). Bilingual practices, such as code-switching and code-mixing, frequently emerge during explanations, question and answer sessions, and peer interactions, especially when students experience lexical or conceptual difficulties (Maryansyah & Heli, [2024](#)). Therefore, bilingualism in classroom discourse reflects adaptive and functional language behavior shaped by educational goals and interactional demands, not by the limitations of linguistic knowledge (Ezeh et al., [2022](#)).

Although bilingual classroom interactions have been examined through code-switching practices (Nata, [2021](#); Ezeh et al., [2022](#)), this study distinguishes translanguaging as a conceptually different phenomenon. Code-switching and translanguaging represent different theoretical orientations toward bilingual language use (Goodman & Tastanbek, [2020](#)). Code-switching typically refers to the alternation between two languages within or across utterances and often analyzed in terms of structural boundaries and language separation (Fishman, [1972](#); Goodman & Tastanbek, [2020](#)). In contrast, translanguaging conceptualizes bilingual speakers' linguistic ability as an integrated repertoire that is flexibly utilized to construct meaning, manage interaction, and support learning (Garcia & Wei, [2015](#); Goodman & Tastanbek, [2020](#)). Translanguaging practice does not view the use of Indonesian and English as switching between two languages systems, but as an interrelated practice. This distinction is crucial in bilingual classroom since teachers and students simultaneously apply multiple languages to facilitate understanding and classroom management (Supriadin et al., [2025](#)).

Therefore, translanguaging has gained a role as both an educational approach and an interactional practice in classroom settings (Aribah & Pradita, [2022](#); Liando et al., [2023](#); Muis et al., [2023](#)). In the classroom interaction, translanguaging allows teachers and students to combine both Indonesian and English rather than treating them as separate and competing systems (Putrawan, [2022](#)). This flexible use of two languages has become a common feature of everyday classroom discourse in Indonesian EFL settings (Susilowati et al., [2025](#)). In many Indonesian EFL classrooms, students routinely draw on

both Indonesian and English to express ideas, respond to teachers' questions, and collaborate with peers, using translanguaging and code switching as normal interaction (Desliyanah, [2021](#); Sutrisno, [2023](#)). For teachers, translanguaging allows to structure lessons, clarify complex concepts, and maintain learning flow despite students' varying levels of language proficiency (Putrawan, 2022; Supriadin et al., [2025](#)).

Previous research on translanguaging in Indonesian education has provided valuable insights into its functions and educational value. Aribah and Pradita ([2022](#)) investigated translanguaging practices as a central role in meaning negotiation in *Pesantren* which focuses on vocabulary instruction by translating English words into Indonesian to explain meanings using familiar Arabic terms. Liando et al. ([2023](#)) explored the analysis of translanguaging in forming teachers to frequently shift languages to explain lesson content, manage classroom activities, and build interpersonal relationships with students by involving English, Indonesian, and Manadonese. Muis et al. ([2023](#)) also examined translanguaging practices in a private university in South Sulawesi where lecturers combine English with Indonesian and local languages across to clarify complex theoretical concepts, ensure students' understanding, and maintain classroom engagement. Pawapootanon et al. ([2025](#)) and (Vu et al., [2025](#)) explored the translanguaging use in Thailand and Vietnam where teachers implemented it to enhance comprehension, engagement, and support performances.

However, most previous studies have primarily focused on qualitative descriptions of classroom language use, teachers' instructional strategies, or participants' perceptions of translanguaging. While these studies provide valuable insights into the educational functions of translanguaging, these studies rarely quantify the frequency and distribution of translanguaging in comparison with Indonesian-only and English-only classroom interaction. As a result, limited empirical evidence is available regarding how translanguaging functions emerge from naturally occurring teacher–student interaction at the elementary level. Therefore, this study combines detailed classroom discourse analysis with quantitative measurements of language use to provide a more comprehensive understanding of translanguaging as both an interactional phenomenon and an educational practice.

This study is grounded in bilingualism and translanguaging theory, which conceptualizes bilingual speakers as users of an integrated linguistic repertoire rather than as two separate monolinguals (Grosjean, [2013](#); Garcia & Wei, [2015](#)). According to Grosjean ([2013](#)), bilingual speakers use flexibly their languages based on communicative needs and interactional contexts that allows multiple languages to coexist and function together in the classroom. From this view, Garcia and Wei ([2015](#)) define translanguaging as a purposeful, meaning-oriented practice through which bilingual speakers strategically mobilize linguistic resources to support communication and learning. In educational settings, translanguaging carries specific educational and interactional functions, such as explaining academic concepts, negotiating meaning, managing classroom activities, managing student participation, and expressing interpersonal meanings. Rather than representing random language alternation, translanguaging serves as a systematic classroom practice that support understanding, interaction, and instructional goals in bilingual classroom.

To address the identified research gap, this study explores Indonesian–English translanguaging practices in a bilingual classroom through the analysis of teacher–student interaction. This study combines qualitative classroom discourse analysis with quantitative calculation of language use. This study aims to examine the distribution of translanguaging utterances compared to Indonesian-only

and English-only utterances in classroom interaction and to identify the functions of translanguaging based on teachers' and students' utterances during classroom activities.

This study formulates research problem by the following research questions: (1) How is Indonesian–English translanguaging distributed in classroom interaction in comparison with Indonesian-only and English-only language use? (2) What pedagogical and interactional functions does translanguaging serve in Indonesian bilingual elementary classrooms?

Therefore, this study contributes to bilingual education by providing significant evidence that can inform the language use in the classroom. By showing how translanguaging is distributed and how it functions in the classroom interaction, the findings may help teachers to decide about when and how to use Indonesian and English to support learning. This study contributes to translanguaging research by integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches and by extending evidence from Indonesian primary-level bilingual classrooms. As that, this study deepens understanding of translanguaging as a systematic and functional practice in bilingual classroom.

Method

This study employed concurrent research design that integrated qualitative classroom discourse analysis with quantitative measures of language use to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). As noted by (Creswell, 2014), these two approaches allow for a more holistic view of the data by combining the depth of a qualitative approach with the breadth of a quantitative one. The two approaches were exploratory and integrated to analyse the data, which allows qualitative findings to be based on the quantitative distribution of language use, rather than as an explanatory analysis. This design was suitable for the study to capture both the frequency and functional role of translanguaging in natural bilingual classroom interactions.

Participants

This study was conducted in a bilingual elementary school in Yogyakarta where two upper classes were selected as the research setting. In this school, the upper class consists of mixed-grade students from grades 4 to 6 who learn in the same classroom. Each class consisted of 18 students and 2 teachers, resulting in a total of 36 students and 4 teachers across the two classes. These classes were purposively chosen because students at this level demonstrate more balanced bilingual development and greater integration of Indonesian and English in classroom interaction compared to lower grades, grades 1-3.

Data Collection

The data were collected through a natural classroom observation by audio recordings and field notes in two selected classes, with 7 learning sessions over one day. Audio recording was employed to capture teacher–student and student–student interactions accurately, which is essential for classroom discourse analysis. Field notes were taken during observations to document classroom activities and contextual factors that assisted in interpreting the recorded interactions. No interviews, questionnaires, or document analysis were conducted because the study aimed to focus particularly on observable interactional practices rather than reported preferences or curricular design.

Data Analysis

All audio-recordings were transcribed word for word to preserve the linguistic details of teacher and student utterances. For analysis, the transcription data were divided into interaction units, which were defined as individual speaking turns produced by the teacher or students during classroom interactions. Each unit is categorized into three groups: Indonesian-only (I), English-only (E), and translanguaging (T). Translanguaging is defined as utterances that combine both languages in a single interaction as integrated use of Indonesian and English.

Example of categorizing into three groups (E, I, T) for every unit:

Student : (I4) “*Aku udah belum?*”

Student : (T4) “*Udah kamu, already been a leader.*”

Teacher : (T5) “*Jojo I guess, belum dua kali.*”

Student : (E1) “*Ahh noo, not me!*”

Student : (I5) “*Kamu aja.*”

The quantitative analysis focuses on the frequency and percentage of these categories, using tables and figures to highlight the distribution of language choices and the importance of translanguaging relative to monolingual speech. To complement these findings, the qualitative analysis employed functional classroom discourse analysis rather than thematic analysis. This approach examined how translanguaging operated within interactional turns to fulfill specific pedagogical and interactional functions, including conceptual explanation, meaning negotiation, procedural instruction, classroom management, participant management, and interpersonal clarity. By analysing selected excerpts, this study demonstrates how translanguaging is implemented not only as a linguistic pattern but also as a strategic functional practice in a bilingual environment.

Ethical Consideration

Ethics approval was obtained to ensure that the study adhered to ethical standards related to participant protection and school policies. Permission to conduct the study was granted by the school before data collection. Teachers and parents were informed of the study’s purpose and procedures, and informed consent was obtained before participation. Student participation was voluntary, and participants could withdraw at any time without consequence. To maintain confidentiality, all personal information were removed from the data, and classroom conversations were anonymized. Audio recordings were used for research purposes and were stored securely to protect participants’ privacy.

Results and Discussion

There are two major findings in this study: the distribution of language use, and the functions of translanguaging in class interaction. It is identified that the communication in the class activities is done in three modes: English-only, Indonesian-only, and translanguaging, a mix use of the both. As the matter of our concerns, the translanguaging interaction was explored to identify its various functions.

Distribution of language use in classroom interaction

The quantitative and qualitative findings reported in this section are derived from audio-recorded classroom observations during seven learning sessions in two bilingual classrooms. All recorded interactions were transcribed and segmented into interaction units, which are defined as interactional turns produced by the teacher or students. Each interaction unit was systematically coded as Indonesian-only, English-only, or translanguaging based on the language resources used within a turn. This categorization provides an overall picture of language use in classroom interactions and serves as an analytical basis for the qualitative analysis.

Table 1. Distribution of language use in classroom interaction

Language Use	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Indonesian-only	203	37
English-only	193	35
Translanguaging	156	28
Total	552	100

[Table 1](#) examines the distribution of language use in classroom interaction. Among the 552 interactional utterances obtained from audio-recorded classroom observations conducted during seven sessions in two bilingual classes, Indonesian-only use appears most frequently with 203 utterances (37%), followed closely by English-only use with 193 utterances (35%), while translanguaging accounts for 156 utterances (28%). The slightly higher proportion of Indonesian-only utterances can be attributed to its role in ensuring comprehension, maintaining interaction, and managing classroom, particularly when students encounter linguistic difficulty. This distribution shows that classroom interaction is shaped by the coexistence of L1 and L2 rather than by exclusive reliance on a single language. Such a pattern reflects the bilingual reality of Indonesian elementary classrooms, where both languages are mobilized to support instructional goals and interactional needs.

This finding is in line with Grosjean ([2013](#)) theory, which reflects a functional view of bilingual language use in which speakers select linguistic choice according to communicative and interactional needs instead of maintaining strict language separation. The presence of translanguaging alongside monolingual utterances suggests that teachers and students strategically draw on their bilingual repertoires to interactional needs in the teaching and learning process, particularly in contexts where students are still developing their L2 language skills (Sutrisno, [2023](#)). Garcia and Wei ([2015](#)) theory also stated that rather than replacing the role of L2 or L1, translanguaging functions as a mediative linguistic practice that connects the two languages and supports the process of meaning-making.

These findings align with the previous research where bilingual classrooms in the Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Thai education flexibly perform some languages to facilitate comprehension and participation (Aribah & Pradita, [2022](#); Liando et al., [2023](#); Muis et al., [2023](#); Vu et al., [2025](#); Pawapootanon et al., [2025](#)). However, this study highlights the Indonesian elementary education in utilizing translanguaging as a primarily education needs in bilingual classroom interactions. Unlike in higher education settings where translanguaging may also serve identity-related functions, translanguaging in this study is closely tied to instructional education and learners' developmental

needs in elementary education. This comparison emphasizes how educational level and classroom interactions shape translanguaging practices across Southeast Asian education.

This quantitative analysis provides an important foundation for understanding the qualitative functions of translanguaging identified in subsequent analyses. The distribution of language use indicates that both languages coexist and are mobilized flexibly according to interactional and instructional needs. Within this interactional need, teachers and students use on Indonesian and English to support comprehension, maintain interactional flow, and facilitate participation. These findings demonstrate that bilingual classroom discourse is characterized by integrated language use that enables students to engage meaningfully and express ideas more effectively.

Translanguaging functions in the classroom interaction

The quantitative analysis was used to categorize translanguaging utterances for further qualitative elaboration to explore how translanguaging functions in bilingual classrooms. These translanguaging utterances were analyzed to identify functional patterns, including conceptual explanations, meaning negotiation, procedural instructions, classroom management, participant management, and interpersonal clarity. The quantitative frequencies of these functions provide an overview of how translanguaging is distributed across various classroom purposes, while selected excerpts are presented to illustrate how each function emerges in teacher-student interactions.

Table 2. Translanguaging functions in classroom interaction

Function	Teacher	Student	Total	Percentage (%)
Conceptual Explanation	61	3	64	41
Meaning Negotiation	14	24	38	24
Procedural Instruction	15	0	15	10
Classroom Management	13	0	13	8
Participant Management	8	9	17	11
Interpersonal Clarity	4	5	9	6
Total	115	41	156	100

Table 2 illustrates how translanguaging functions in classroom interactions. A total of 156 translanguaging utterances from 552 interactional utterances were identified. All 552 utterances were first coded quantitatively into Indonesian-only, English-only, and translanguaging categories to establish the whole distribution of language use. These 156 translanguaging were next categorized into six functional types: conceptual explanation, meaning negotiation, procedural instruction, classroom management, participant management, and interpersonal clarity.

These functions indicate that translanguaging was used systematically and purposefully. Conceptual explanation emerged as the most frequent function with 64 utterances (41%). This finding suggests that teachers frequently combine L1 and L2 to explain academic concepts and support student understanding, especially when explanations in L2 alone are insufficient.

The importance of conceptual explanation reflects teachers' strategic use of translanguaging to clarify scientific concepts, introduce technical terms, and prevent misunderstanding. By combining Indonesian and English within a single interactional turn, teachers are able to maintain English as the instructional language while drawing on Indonesian to support comprehension. This practice aligns

with previous studies which report that translanguaging functions as an effective educational practice for explaining complex concepts and maintaining instructional clarity (Aribah & Pradita, 2022; Liando et al., 2023; Muis et al., 2023; Vu et al., 2025; Pawapootanon et al., 2025).

Meaning negotiation comprised 38 utterances (24%) and mostly occurred during interaction moments involving unfamiliar vocabulary or unclear concepts. According to Garcia and Wei (2015) theory, this function is in line to perform the active use of translanguaging by teachers and students to clarify meaning, confirm understanding, and maintain a smooth interaction. Procedural instructions with 15 utterances (10%) and classroom management with 13 utterances (8%) indicate that translanguaging contributes to clarity and efficiency in conveying task instructions and organizing classroom activities.

Participant management consisted of 17 utterances (11%) and served to invite student responses, allocate turns, and maintain engagement during classroom interactions. Interpersonal clarity was the least frequent function with only 9 utterances (6%). However, this function plays a crucial role in expressing emotions, personal perspectives, and social bounding. Therefore, these findings suggest that translanguaging is utilized as both functional and interactional translanguaging that supports understanding, participation, and communication in bilingual learning.

This qualitative analysis complements the quantitative distribution of language use by illustrating how translanguaging functions in classroom interaction. The identified translanguaging functions show that bilingual practices are used strategically to support teaching and learning activities. Through translanguaging, teachers are able to guide students' conceptual and linguistic understanding effectively, while students could respond to questions, negotiate meaning, and maintain active participation. These findings indicate that translanguaging utilizes as an interactional support that facilitates expression and comprehension in bilingual classroom.

All classroom excerpts are presented without grammatical correction or normalization to preserve the authentic and natural teacher and student utterances. Any grammatical inaccuracies in English reflect natural classroom interaction.

Translanguaging for conceptual explanation

Excerpt 1 illustrates translanguaging for conceptual explanation in discussing animal adaptation. The teacher presents the core scientific explanation in L2, stating that the spider monkey “adapts to their surroundings by their long tails and strong knees.” This explanation is then reinforced through L1 with “*Bayangkan kalau dia tidak punya strong knees,*” which invites students to visualize the concept through an imagination. The continued use of the L2 term ‘strong knees’ within the L1 explanation reflects intra-sentential code-mixing that helps maintain conceptual clarity while supporting understanding.

Excerpt 1 Explaining Animals' Habits

Teacher : “Spider monkey adapts to their surroundings by their long tails and strong knees to help them to climb to the rain forest tree. *Bayangkan kalau dia tidak punya strong knees, ketika dia bergelantungan ketika dia pindah ke tempat pohon lain nanti dia bisa mual dan muntah.*”

Excerpt 2 Explaining Animals' Reproductive Habits

Teacher : "We talk about salmon, *ikan salmon ya* friends. They will go to their stream when they give birth. This is the female and the male *ini*"

Excerpt 2 illustrates translanguaging for conceptual explanation in explaining animal reproductive habits. The teacher introduces the topic in L2 by stating "We talk about salmon" and describing their behavior of returning to their stream to reproduce. L1 is then used through "*ikan salmon ya* friends" and "*ini*" to clarify reference and ensure students correctly identifying the animal and its gender. By labeling female and male using both languages, the teacher ensures accurate understanding of reproductive roles. The use of two languages helps to explain the biological concept in familiar terms while maintaining the use of L2 for scientific explanation.

Excerpt 3 Explaining Animals' Reproductive Process

Teacher : "So, the female, *apa ini namanya*, seahorse give the eggs or the baby into a small pouch of the male. The male seahorse only carries the baby not pregnant. *Jadi, cuma membawa saja ya* friends *bukan jadi hamil.*"

Excerpt 3 illustrates translanguaging for conceptual explanation in explaining an unusual animal reproductive process. The teacher introduces the concept in L2 by explaining that "the female seahorse give the eggs or the baby into a small pouch of the male" which presents the core biological information. L1 is then used to clarify meaning and prevent misunderstanding, as seen in "*cuma membawa saja ya* friends *bukan jadi hamil,*" which explicitly distinguishes carrying offspring from being pregnant. This alternation between L2 and L1 helps refine students' conceptual understanding of the reproductive process while maintaining the scientific explanation in L2.

Excerpt 4 Clarifying Biological Term

Teacher : "Dia camouflage jadi camouflage *atau berkamuflase itu dia menyerupai lingkungannya. Sloth bisa berubah-ubah sesuai dengan lingkungannya.*"

Excerpt 4 illustrates translanguaging for conceptual explanation in clarifying a biological term. The teacher introduces the L2 term "*camouflage*" and immediately provides its L1 equivalent "*berkamuflase*" to ensure understanding. The teacher also provide a subsequent explanation by describing "*menyerupai lingkungannya.*" This bilingual clarification helps students grasp the meaning of the technical biological term. The teacher then reinforces the concept by applying it to a concrete example, stating that "*Sloth bisa berubah-ubah sesuai dengan lingkungannya,*" which connects the abstract term to observable animal behavior and supports clearer conceptual understanding.

Translanguaging for meaning negotiation

Excerpt 5 illustrates translanguaging for meaning negotiation in explaining homophone terms. The student shows confusion by asking question, "*Pray itu bukannya berdoa toh?*" which signals uncertainty because of phonological similarity. The teacher responds by strategically alternating between L1 and L2 to negotiate meaning. The teacher carefully explains that *prey* is written with /e/ "*pakai 'e'*" and refers to "*mangsa*", while *pray* is written with /a/ "*pakai 'a'*" and means "*berdoa.*" The teacher also emphasizes that both words are pronounced similarly as "[prei]" which clarify for the

confusion. This bilingual explanation enables shared understanding by linking pronunciation, spelling, and meaning across both languages.

Excerpt 5 Explaining Homophone Terms

- Student : “Pray itu bukannya berdoa toh?”
 Teacher : “Bukan itu beda lagi itu kalau prey yang ini itu pakai ‘e’ kalau berdoa itu pakai ‘a’, so it’s pray tapi sama-sama bacanya [prei] gitu, mirip. Jadi, kalau yang p-r-e-y apa mangsa itu dia prey, kalau berdoa itu p-r-a-y.”

Excerpt 6 Clarifying Similar Phonological Terms

- Student : “Apa? Waste? Ways?”
 Teacher : “Ways, cara kita bekerjasama dengan orang lain dengan melakukan apa?”

Excerpt 6 illustrates translanguaging for meaning negotiation in clarifying similar phonological terms. The student expresses uncertainty by asking “Waste? Ways?”, which indicates confusion caused by similar pronunciation. The teacher responds by repeating the target word in L2 “Ways” and immediately translating it into L1 as “cara” to ensure lexical clarity. The teacher then continues to provide a brief contextual explanation in L1 “cara kita bekerjasama dengan orang lain,” to reinforce the intended meaning. This use of translanguaging enables real-time negotiation of meaning and supports accurate comprehension by connecting unfamiliar L2 vocabulary to familiar L1 meaning.

Excerpt 7 Clarifying Biological Term

- Student : “Kecebong? What is kecebong?”
 Teacher : “Iya kecebong, bayi frog.”

Excerpt 7 illustrates translanguaging for meaning negotiation in clarifying a biological term. The student initiates the negotiation by asking “Kecebong? What is kecebong?” which indicates the uncertainty about the meaning of the L1 word. The teacher responds by confirming the term “kecebong” and immediately explaining it in L2 as “bayi frog” in order to link the unfamiliar L1 term to the known L2 concept. This bilingual clarification enables shared understanding and ensures that the biological reference is comprehended by connecting L1 and L2 lexical knowledge.

Translanguaging for procedural instruction

Excerpt 8 illustrates translanguaging for procedural instruction during a daily reflection activity. The teacher begins by using L2 to frame the activity by stating “our sharing question for today” and providing the reflection sentence starter “Ways I can work with others...,” which functions as a reflection model for student responses. The teacher then shifts to L1 with “cara kita bekerjasama dengan orang lain itu dengan apa sih?” to clarify the task and make the instruction more understandable. This alternation between L2 and L1 ensures that students understand both the procedure of the activity, the effective participation, and the content they are expected to share.

Excerpt 8 Asking Daily Reflection

Teacher : “Okay, *teman-teman*, our sharing question for today. *Pertanyaan kita hari ini adalah Ways I can work with others is by blablabla. Jadi, cara kita bekerjasama dengan orang lain itu dengan apa sih?*”

Excerpt 9 Setting Classroom Rules

Teacher : “You may choose *apa aja tapi dibatasi gaboleh bola dan sepeda ya, kalau bola nanti bisa kena temannya.*”

Excerpt 9 illustrates translanguaging for procedural instruction in classroom rules setting. The teacher starts with L2 by saying “You may choose,” which indicates permission and initiates the instruction for the students to select their preferable activity. The teacher then shifts to L1 to clearly state the restrictions, “*apa aja tapi dibatasi gaboleh bola dan sepeda*” which ensures that the rules are fully understood by students. The further clarification “*kalau bola nanti bisa kena temannya*” explains the reason behind the rule. This use of both languages supports clear procedural guidance and helps students follow the classroom instructions appropriately.

Excerpt 10 Emphasizing Respectful Language Use

Teacher : “*Kita diberi mulut untuk berbicara teman-teman, jangan berkata kasar, yang baik baik. Biar aman, nyaman, bagi teman-teman dan diri kalian juga. So, you have your mouth, speak softly, speak nicely not for something bad.*”

Excerpt 10 illustrates translanguaging for procedural instruction in emphasizing respectful language use. The teacher begins in using L1 to explain the purpose of speech by stating “*kita diberi mulut untuk berbicara*” and giving a clear directive “*jangan berkata kasar, yang baik baik.*” The explanation and instruction are expanded in L1 to highlight the consequences of respectful language, “*biar aman, nyaman, bagi teman-teman dan diri kalian juga.*” The teacher then switches to use L2 with “you have your mouth, speak softly, speak nicely not for something bad” to restate the rule and strengthen it as classroom procedure and rules. This alternation between L1 and L2 helps students to ensure understanding both the rule and its importance in daily classroom interaction.

Translanguaging for Classroom Management

Excerpt 11 illustrates translanguaging for classroom management in choosing a classroom leader. The teacher initiates the instruction in L2 to maintain the classroom’s instructional language by asking “Is there anyone who want to be the leader for the second turn? ”. Then, the teacher switches to L1 to ensure that all students clearly understand the selection instruction. The L1 phrase “*Yang belum-belum*” functions as an emphasis marker that narrows the instruction and prevents confusion. The L2 clarification “not yet to be leader” reinforce the message and specify the selection criterion. This alternation between both languages helps ensure that all students understand the instruction and supports smooth management of classroom roles.

Excerpt 11 Choosing Classroom Leader

Teacher : “Is there anyone who want to be the leader for the second turn? *Yang belum-belum, not yet to be leader.*”

Excerpt 12 Recalling Game Rules

Teacher : “Friends, *ulang ya? Peraturannya jangan sampai orang tahu isinya apa, jangan sampai orang lain tahu. Jangan sampai chameleonnya tahu.* Keep it by yourselves. *Kita ulangi ya!*”

Excerpt 12 illustrates translanguaging for classroom management in recalling game rules. The teacher begins in using L1 to repeatedly emphasize the core rule of the game by stating “*jangan sampai orang tahu isinya apa*” and “*jangan sampai chameleonnya tahu,*” which highlights the importance of secrecy. The repetition in L1 functions to regain students’ attention and reinforce compliance. The teacher then shifts to L2 with “Keep it by yourselves” which provides a concise and authoritative summary of the rule. This bilingual repetition helps ensure that all students understand and follow the game rules and supports smooth classroom management during the activity.

Excerpt 13 Inviting Collaborative Work

Teacher : “Friends, this is the time for us to go home, but there is still scissors, lot of papers. Do you have cleaned up already? *Kita ngga usah pulang aja, kita clean up dulu.*”

Excerpt 13 illustrates translanguaging for classroom management in inviting collaborative work before going home. The teacher begins in L2 by drawing attention to the situation and noting that “there is still scissors, lot of papers,”, also asking “Do you have cleaned up already?” to maintain awareness and responsibility. The teacher then shifts to L1 with “*kita ngga usah pulang aja, kita clean up dulu*” to give a clear directive that strengthens urgency and shared obligation. This alternation between L2 and L1 helps manage the transition at the end of class from learning time before going home and encourages students to work together in maintaining classroom order.

Translanguaging for participant management

Excerpt 14 illustrates translanguaging for participant management when asking students’ knowledge about an unfamiliar animal. The teacher alternates between L2 and L1 by confirming prior answers in L2 and then introducing the new topic with “next *ada tapir*” followed by the question “*Tahu apa itu tapir?*”. This bilingual question invites student participation and lowers the barrier to responding. The student’s response “*Kayak gajah ngga sih itu?*” shows active engagement and willingness to contribute despite limited knowledge. Through translanguaging, the teacher successfully manages participation by encouraging students to share tentative ideas and sustain interaction.

Excerpt 14 Asking Unfamiliar Animal

Teacher : “Yes, correct! So, orangutan lives in Borneo and Sumatera ya, next *ada tapir. Tahu apa itu tapir?*”

Student : *"Kayak gajah ngga sih itu?"*

Excerpt 15 Asking Plant Growth Needs

Teacher : "Our topic today is plant and animal needs. So, what do plants needs to grow?"

Student : *"Aku! Air, water, and sun."*

Excerpt 15 illustrates translanguaging for participant management in asking about plant growth needs. The teacher introduces the topic and question in L2 by asking "what do plants needs to grow?", which frames the academic discussion. The student responds enthusiastically by mixing L1 and L2, *"Aku! Air, water, and sun,"* to claim the turn and provide the answer. This flexible use of both languages enables the student to participate actively without being constrained by language choice. The shift shows how translanguaging supports inclusive participation and encourages student involvement in classroom interaction.

Translanguaging for interpersonal clarity

Excerpt 16 illustrates translanguaging for interpersonal clarity in acknowledging different preferences between the teacher and students. The teacher begins in L1 by checking shared knowledge *"Kalian tahu tarzan?"*, and immediately responds to the students' unfamiliarity with a light and self-reflective comment. The shift between L1 and L2 in *"My bad my bad"* and *"Preferensinya ngga sama"* functions to express humor, reduce social gap, and take responsibility for the misunderstanding. This use of translanguaging helps maintain a positive interpersonal relationship and creates a comfortable classroom atmosphere.

Excerpt 16 Acknowledging Different Preference

Teacher : "Kalian tahu tarzan? Oh, friends ngga tahu? My bad my bad, salahnya mister, terlalu jadul ya. Preferensinya ngga sama."

Excerpt 17 Expressing Emotional Reaction

Teacher : *"Kemudian ada yang namanya unfertilized, jadi telur yg dibuahi jadi female, kalo tidak dibuahi jadi male disebut sebagai haplodiploidy."*

Student : *"Kasian banget kok ngga fair sih."*

Excerpt 17 illustrates translanguaging for interpersonal clarity in expressing emotional reactions during classroom interaction. The teacher explains the biological concept in L1 by using technical terms such as "unfertilized" and "haplodiploidy". The teacher also explains about if the fertilized egg becomes female, but the unfertilized one becomes male. This explanation creates student to respond with an emotional comment, *"Kasian banget kok ngga fair sih,"* which expresses empathy and personal feeling. This response shows how students draw on their linguistic ability to express feelings and stance. The interaction demonstrates that translanguaging supports interpersonal expression and emotional engagement alongside academic discussion.

The findings of this study extend existing translanguaging theory by demonstrating that translanguaging practices are not only shaped by bilingual speakers' repertoires, but are also strongly conditioned by educational level and instructional needs. Align with the translanguaging theory conceptualizes bilingual communication as the integrated use of linguistic resources (Garcia & Wei, 2015), this study shows that translanguaging is primarily pedagogical and interaction-oriented in elementary classroom education. Rather than serving primarily as a means of identity construction or ideological positioning (Pawapootanon et al., 2025), translanguaging in this study functions as a classroom-based resource for supporting understanding, facilitating participation, and managing instructional activities.

The six translanguaging functions identified in the study which are conceptual explanation, meaning negotiation, procedural instruction, classroom management, participant management, and interpersonal clarity can be understood as a context-based typology of translanguaging practices in Indonesian elementary classrooms. This typology reflects the interactional and educational needs of elementary education. Bilingual ability is systematically integrated to support learning and maintain classroom interaction. By considering translanguaging functions as a typology, the study offers an analytical framework that connects translanguaging theory more closely to classroom practice.

Therefore, this study refines translanguaging theory by highlighting the role of classroom interactions and learner development in shaping how two languages are integrated in educational interaction. The systematic distribution of translanguaging alongside Indonesian-only and English-only utterances suggests that translanguaging performs in collaboration with monolingual practices rather than in opposition to them (Putrawan, 2022; Sutrisno, 2023; Supriadin et al., 2025). These findings position translanguaging as a complementary and goal-oriented practice within classroom discourse.

Conclusion

This study found that classroom interactions in Indonesian bilingual schools are defined by the integrated coexistence of Indonesian and English, rather than a strict separation of both languages. Translanguaging is a significant linguistic practice with 28% of all classroom speech, alongside the use of Indonesian-only (37%) and English-only (35%). These findings fulfill the primary objective of this study, which was to examine the distribution of translanguaging compared to monolingual speech and to identify its specific functions in teacher-student interactions. The study also identified that translanguaging was used systematically across six functional types, with conceptual explanation (41%) and meaning negotiation (24%) being the most prominent. This confirms that translanguaging is a purposeful, meaning-oriented practice that supports active learning and participation.

This study has important theoretical and practical implications for bilingual education. The study theoretically demonstrates that translanguaging in bilingual elementary classrooms operates as a systematic and pedagogical practice shaped by instructional and interactional needs. By conceptualizing translanguaging functions as a context-based typology, this study refines translanguaging theory and highlights the central role of classroom instruction in shaping bilingual language use. The study also practically suggests that teachers can strategically employ translanguaging to support teaching and learning activities in the classroom without decreasing the role of English as the target language instruction. Despite these contributions, the study is limited by its focus on a single bilingual school and a relatively short observation period, which may restrict the

generalization of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine translanguaging practices across multiple schools, longer instructional periods, and different educational levels to further explore how translanguaging functions develop in diverse bilingual classrooms.

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