

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the study. It explores the background of the study and formulation of the problem to provide insight into the context and urgency of the issue under study. Following this, operational definitions, the aim of the research, and its significance are discussed, thus clarifying the research objectives and the benefits derived from this study.

A. Background of the Study

In English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, delivering material requires an appropriate language selection strategy to ensure students understand the material. Instructors must consider their students' language proficiency levels and provide appropriate scaffolding to help them understand the lesson. When the instructor delivers the material fully in English, many EFL students face difficulties because their limited vocabulary and background knowledge hinder their understanding of the material (Somakanna et al., 2023). On the other hand, using only Indonesian (L1) limits students' exposure to English, which is essential for developing the four language skills (Inal & Turhanlı, 2019), even though it can help students understand better (Silvani, 2024, as cited in Kim et al., 2024). According to Septiani et al. (2021), instructors need to be deliberate in selecting and employing the appropriate language to ensure students comprehend the material. To address these challenges, translanguaging combines Indonesian as the first language and English to deliver materials in a way that supports students' understanding.

Translanguaging is understood as the use of two or more languages in the classroom (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021), either for giving instructions or explaining material. The term "translanguaging," which was first used in Welsh by Cen Williams (1994), describes a teaching approach that strategically alternates between a student's different languages, using one language for input and another for output, to enhance learning (Sakkir et al., 2024). Furthermore, Efendi and Syafryadin (2024) stated that translanguaging is an educational method that involves the use of two or more languages interchangeably to receive and produce information in a

single activity. Thus, given its flexible use of multiple languages, translanguaging becomes particularly essential for students who are just beginning to adjust to a new academic environment in higher education, such as freshmen in their first year of university.

Freshmen often face several challenges when transitioning from high school to higher education English instruction. Many of them come from learning environments where English was primarily taught through textbooks and grammar drills, with limited exposure to the target language and a strong reliance on Indonesian as the first language (Madkur, 2024). However, the learning environment in higher education, especially in the English Education Department, changes significantly; students are more likely to use English-dominant or even full-English instruction to encourage comprehension and active English language use (Rasmin et al., 2024). As Efendi and Syafryadin (2024) noted, this abrupt change can be overwhelming for students still developing their vocabulary and confidence, making translanguaging an essential pedagogical tool. According to Setya Ningrum and Sahiruddin (2023), as scaffolding, translanguaging assists students in navigating new academic demands, reducing anxiety, and gradually adapting to a new learning environment. Therefore, understanding how freshmen perceive this strategy is crucial for understanding the role of translanguaging in facilitating their understanding in EFL classrooms.

Two previous studies have explored translanguaging in EFL university settings with different focuses and outcomes (Madkur, 2024; Santoso, 2020). Madkur (2024) highlighted that the strategic use of English and Indonesian in a university syntax course enhanced comprehension, reduced anxiety, and encouraged student participation among second-year English Education students. Similarly, Santoso (2020) examined translanguaging practices among sixth-semester English Education students in Jakarta and found that students used their combined linguistic repertoires to understand difficult concepts, stimulate creativity and the critical use of the English language, and engage in collaborative dialogue. However, although both studies explored translanguaging in English classroom settings, neither of them addressed how freshmen English Education students

perceive translanguaging in facilitating their understanding of complex materials and task instructions, as their focus remained on specific learning outcomes such as comprehension, participation, creativity, and critical thinking rather than on first-year English Education students' perceptions specifically during their transition from Indonesian-dominant to English-dominant instruction. This is crucial to explore because freshmen English Language Education students are still adapting from a high school environment to higher education, particularly in the English Language Education Department, meaning that how they perceive translanguaging may significantly impact their future understanding of materials and task instructions shaped by classroom language use. To address these gaps, this study explores how freshmen English Education students perceive instructors' translanguaging as facilitating their understanding of complex materials and task instructions during their transition to English-dominant instruction in EFL classrooms.

B. Formulation of the Problem

The problem of this study is formulated in the following research question: What are freshmen English Education students' perceptions of instructors' translanguaging to facilitate their understanding in EFL classrooms during their transition to higher education?

C. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study, the researcher provides some definitions related to this research as follows:

1. Instructors' Translanguaging

Instructors' translanguaging is defined as the purposeful and flexible use of two or more languages by instructors in EFL classrooms to facilitate students' understanding. It is used to explain complex materials and clarify task instructions.

2. Freshmen English Education Students

Freshmen English Education Students refer to students who are in their first year of study in the English Education Department at a university in

Tasikmalaya. These students are non-native English speakers who learn English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in a context where English is not the primary language of daily life.

3. EFL Classrooms

EFL classrooms in this study refer to the English Education Department courses attended by freshmen students during their first and second semesters. In these classrooms, English is used both as the subject being learned and as the primary medium of instruction. In contrast, Indonesian may be used as instructional support to facilitate students' understanding.

D. Aim of the Study

According to the research question, this research aims to explore freshmen English Education Students' perceptions of instructors' translanguaging to facilitate their understanding in EFL classrooms during their transition to higher education.

E. Significance of the Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This study holds theoretical significance as it contributes to expanding the existing understanding of translanguaging, particularly the framework of pedagogical and spontaneous translanguaging, the role of translanguaging in facilitating comprehension, and the three dimensions of multilingualism proposed by Cenoz and Gorter (2021) namely the multilingual speaker, the multilingual repertoire, and the social context, as well as the concept of linguistic repertoire introduced by García and Wei (2014). By examining how freshmen English Education students perceive translanguaging during their transition from Indonesian-dominant to English-dominant instruction, this study extends the theoretical understanding of translanguaging not only as a strategy in EFL classrooms but also as a situated practice that reflects how students use their multilingual repertoire within a specific social context, which is the transitional phase from high school to higher education. Furthermore, this study highlights how translanguaging functions as an instructional tool to facilitate students' understanding of complex materials and task instructions in EFL classrooms.

2. Empirical Significance

This study provides empirical qualitative data from freshmen in English education who are non-native English speakers, as they transition from Indonesian-dominant instruction in high school to English-dominant instruction in higher education. This context is frequently underrepresented in existing research, as most previous studies focused on general university students or specific course contexts rather than on first-year students during their early adaptation phase. The findings expand the empirical understanding of how freshmen English education students perceive instructors' translanguaging in facilitating their understanding of complex materials and task instructions, specifically during this transitional phase, contributing new insight to the growing body of research on translanguaging in EFL classroom higher education contexts.

3. Practical Significance

In a practical sense, the findings of this study are expected to benefit instructors in the English Education Department and future researchers. For instructors, this study provides valuable insights into how freshmen perceive their instructors' translanguaging practices during the early stages of academic transition, which can help them make more informed decisions in designing and implementing translanguaging to support freshmen students' understanding of complex materials and task instructions in EFL classrooms. For future researchers, this study may serve as a reference for further studies exploring freshmen English Education students' perceptions of translanguaging, the role of translanguaging during academic transitional phases, and the broader implications of language use in higher education contexts, especially in the English education context.