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EFL Teaching Strategies in Multilingual Classrooms: A Case Study of Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS)

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the teaching strategies employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturers, using Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS) as a case study. The qualitative case study examines how EFL lecturers manage multilingual classroom realities. These classrooms include native speakers of Javanese, Bahasa Indonesia, and various international first languages. Data were gathered through six classroom observations, three semi-structured interviews, and two focus group discussions with students (N = 12). Reflexive thematic analysis revealed four themes: (1) gaps in participation due to differences in proficiency and fear of making mistakes; (2) strategic use of L1 for clarification, vocabulary support, and reducing anxiety; (3) multimodal scaffolding involving images, peer tutoring, and task-oriented work; and (4) policy negotiation, with phased L1 decrease in high-stakes testing. The study draws primarily on sociocultural theory and translanguaging, with interlanguage providing supplementary insights into the development of learner language. This study extends translanguaging and sociocultural theories by introducing *negotiated translanguaging*—showing how multilingual practices adapt strategically under EMI policy constraints in higher education contexts. The significance of this research lies in addressing the growing challenge of dealing with multilingual classrooms in Indonesian higher education. Linguistically diverse backgrounds frequently restrict learner participation and understanding. The findings support an adaptable language policy. They also stress training and evaluation in multilingual pedagogy aligned with classroom contexts. This study gives practical recommendations to lecturers, managers, and policymakers working in linguistically diverse higher education institutions.

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Highlights

- The study investigates EFL teaching strategies in multilingual classrooms at Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, focusing on how lecturers address diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- Findings reveal four key themes: participation gaps, strategic use of L1, multimodal scaffolding, and phased policy negotiation in assessment contexts.
- The research highlights the role of translanguaging and sociocultural theory in supporting learner participation, comprehension, and confidence.

Keywords: EFL Teaching Strategies; Multilingual Classrooms; Negotiated Translanguaging; Indonesian Higher Education; Language Policy; Multilingual Pedagogy

1. Introduction

English is used as a global lingua franca, and it dominates communication, learning, and research worldwide [1,2]. The rise of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching reflects a shift in global language learning. Multilingual classrooms present both opportunities and challenges. Learners come from diverse first-language backgrounds, which influence understanding, participation, and learning patterns. Multilingualism can enhance EFL classes through cultural exchange and varied opinions [3,4]. However, multilingual classrooms may also experience unequal understanding and reduced participation among learners from different linguistic backgrounds [5]. English-only policies are enforced in some contexts to maximize exposure [6,7]. Yet, in multilingual environments, students tend to employ their whole linguistic repertoires to negotiate meaning [8]. This tension shapes classroom participation and is further examined in this study. Translanguaging can facilitate understanding and reduce learner anxiety, but its implementation depends on teacher beliefs, institutional culture, and policy restrictions.

Indonesia is a highly linguistically heterogeneous country that has over 700 indigenous languages besides Bahasa Indonesia [9]. Although English is not an official language, it holds a major academic and professional significance. It is included in the school curriculum and used more extensively in higher education. University students tend to move between local languages, Bahasa Indonesia, and English. International students create additional linguistic diversity. Institutional policies often encourage English-only instruction. However, multilingual approaches can sometimes be more effective. While such diversity enriches learning, it can also inhibit understanding and participation. The majority of Indonesian EFL research has focused on school settings [10,11]. Research on multilingual strategies in universities, particularly those with both international and local students, is relatively unexplored. Previous research highlights the promise of translanguaging in supporting engagement and understanding, but also notes constraints due to vague policies and varied teacher practices.

Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (UMS) provides a unique setting within which to investigate these matters. It admits both national and international students, creating highly multilingual EFL classrooms. National students use Bahasa Indonesia and local languages like Javanese. International peers introduce languages such as Thai, Arabic, Urdu, and Lao. Such diversity often creates language gaps, reluctance to participate, and overuse of L1 in peer communication. Many universities encourage English-Medium Instruction (EMI) to attract international students and increase global competitiveness. At UMS, EMI is favored in international classes [12]. This makes it an appropriate case study to examine EFL teaching strategies.

Lecturers have the task of reconciling English-medium instruction demands with measures to facilitate learner comprehension. Strategic translanguaging could provide a bridge; however, its effectiveness depends on teacher awareness and institutional flexibility. Few studies examine how Indonesian university lecturers understand and address multilingual EFL dynamics. In the absence of such information, institutional policies might lose touch with classroom realities. They might even become overly prescriptive for inclusive pedagogy. This research addresses a gap in multilingual studies in Indonesian tertiary education. It provides practical

recommendations to administrators, lecturers, and policymakers. In illustrating how adaptive strategies work under the constraints of policy, it also contributes to global debates on inclusive multilingual education. A focused case study can offer contextualized evidence to inform policy, teacher training, and curriculum design. This research investigates how EFL lecturers at UMS negotiate multilingual classroom realities. It scrutinizes their experiences, strategies, and the impact of institutional language policies. In particular, it aims to:

1. Investigate lecturers' views of multilingual EFL classrooms.
2. Identify strategies for bridging linguistic gaps and enhancing participation.
3. Investigate how institutional language policies influence teaching practice.

2. Literature Review

Multilingual education research offers various theoretical models for explaining how languages interact in the classroom. Interlanguage theory[12] explains how learners of a second language construct an evolving linguistic system. This is influenced both by their L1 and L2. Interlanguage development in multilingual EFL settings does not merely mirror individual L1–L2 transfer but also includes exposure to peer varieties of language. The complexity allows for the possibility of hybrid forms and differential rates of progress[13]. Sociocultural Theory[14] emphasizes learning as a socially mediated process. Scaffolding may occur through linguistic adjustments, multimodal resources, and collaborative tasks that help learners' access material despite proficiency gaps. For classes that are multilingual, this perspective demonstrates how language acquisition occurs within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) via scaffolding by both lecturers and learners. Translanguaging theory[15] challenges the segregation of languages by showing how speakers draw on their full repertoires. This study extends the discussion by locating translanguaging in Indonesian higher education, where English-medium instruction policies constrain its practice. In higher education, translanguaging is not only spontaneous but also strategically negotiated. This study introduces the concept of *negotiated translanguaging*—a form of multilingual practice that is neither fully free nor completely restricted, but strategically adapted in response to institutional expectations. This concept offers a way to theorize how lecturers and learners manage multilingual resources under policy pressure, extending current debates in applied linguistics and multilingual pedagogy.

2.1. Multilingual Realities in Higher Education

Higher education multilingualism is different from multilingualism in school settings. University classrooms typically feature learners with varied academic histories. They also have different exposure to English and different literacy skills[16]. In Southeast Asia, the rise of English-medium instruction (EMI) further adds to this complexity. EMI policy is intended to enhance target language exposure and conform to international scholarly standards[17]. But when competency levels are uneven, EMI may limit access and impede understanding. This is especially so for rural or non-English-dominant schooled students[18]. Indonesia adds an extra layer of difficulty with the presence of Bahasa Indonesia, local languages, and foreign languages in the same class. In Indonesia, multilingual classrooms are highly diverse based on regional and institutional settings. The attitudes and beliefs of lecturers play a significant role in the application of multilingual strategies. A recent study from Sumba indicates the opportunities and challenges in maintaining multilingual education[19]. Research on EMI has proliferated worldwide. Most Indonesian research, though, has concerned implementation issues in STEM and business fields[20]. Relatively little concern for EFL-specific contexts in higher education has been given.

2.2. Classroom Language Practices: Beyond English-Only Policies

While English-only instruction has long been assumed to accelerate acquisition[6], evidence increasingly shows it may reduce participation and confidence in multilingual classrooms[21]. Moore[22] found that selective use of L1 enhanced conceptual understanding. Studies in Asia demonstrate that lecturers often adopt covert multilingual practices despite official EMI policies[23]. Astuti and Lammers[24] observed covert translanguaging in Indonesian EFL classes. In Indonesia, this policy–practice gap has been noted mainly in STEM and business fields[20], with limited focus on EFL.

Comparative studies in China and Japan[23] reveal similar tensions, suggesting that Indonesia's case is part of a wider regional challenge. This positions the present study not just as confirming known issues but as extending them into underexplored higher-education EFL contexts. Institutional policies such as UMS's Panduan Akademik and International Class further illustrate how English-only rules are formally mandated yet pragmatically adapted in practice.

2.3. Translanguaging as Pedagogical Practice in Universities

Although translanguaging has been extensively researched in primary and secondary education, its application in tertiary education is a growing area of research. In tertiary EFL lessons, translanguaging facilitates access to educational content. It enables students to work together regardless of proficiency levels. Lastly, it relates new knowledge to existing linguistic resources[25]. In Indonesia, university-level research is still limited but promising. Liando et al.[26] observed that translanguaging stimulated understanding and peer-to-peer assistance during EFL conversation. Umam et al.[27] concluded that online translanguaging during COVID-19 pandemic raised the meaning negotiation and reduced the breakdowns of communication. Translanguaging has been reported in Indonesian universities as well, where local languages act as supportive aids for learning English. Setyarini[28], for instance, illustrates the strategic use of Javanese in EFL classrooms to scaffold understanding and enhance cultural identity. Witari and Sukamto[29], however, observed that without institutional support, translanguaging continues to be unevenly used and reliant on the discretion of individual lecturers. The struggle between the pedagogical possibilities of translanguaging and the monolingual orientation of EMI creates an urgent space for increased investigation.

2.4. Teacher Agency and Strategy Adaptation

Teacher agency is essential in multilingual EFL contexts[30]. Lecturers demonstrate agency when making choices about whether, when, and how to deploy learners' L1s. Their agency is also evident in the introduction of materials in multiple languages and the reformulation of tasks for varied learners. In multilingual tertiary education, strategy accommodation regularly entails:

1. Differentiation instruction to align with various levels of proficiency.
2. Visual, gestural scaffolds and written information.
3. Peer learning combinations that are aligned with higher and lower ability students.
4. Bilingual glossaries and joint note-taking.

Indonesian studies[31] identify ways in which such approaches are influenced by institutional culture and the beliefs of lecturers. Whereas a few lecturers welcome multilingual approaches, others strictly follow EMI standards because they believe there is a professional expectation to do so.

2.5. The Indonesian Higher Education Gap

Most studies on Indonesian multilingual education have focused at the primary and secondary school levels[10,11]. University EFL studies are less common and tend to center on learner outcomes of proficiency rather than pedagogy. When lecturer views are discussed, they are seldom linked to policy analysis within institutions or overall theoretical frameworks. With the growing numbers of international students on Indonesian campuses and EMI program growth, there is a demand for locally situated evidence concerning how lecturers deal with multilingual classrooms. How this dynamic plays out requires knowledge if pedagogically successful and socially sustainable language policy is to be developed.

2.6. Locating the Current Study

The current study fills the identified gaps in the research. This research explores the way UMS EFL lecturers negotiate multilingual classroom realities. It explores how lecturer strategies, student participation, and EMI policy intersect. Sociocultural and translanguaging theories are employed to analyze the data, while interlanguage theory is used as a supplementary lens. By researching in the relatively underdeveloped area of Indonesian higher education EFL, the study adds to local practice and international scholarship in inclusive multilingual pedagogy. It also offers applied guidance for universities looking to balance EMI objectives with the language diversity of their student body.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

This study primarily draws on sociocultural theory and translanguaging, while interlanguage theory provides supplementary insights. This focus enables a deeper analysis of how multilingual strategies operate within classroom interaction and policy constraints. Translanguaging [15] disrupts the conventional separation of languages in learning settings. Rather than addressing multilingualism as an obstacle, translanguaging sees it as a teaching resource. It promotes more open and inclusive practice in EFL teaching. Learners are thus enabled to access their entire linguistic repertoires. Sociocultural theory [14] also focuses on the importance of social interaction, cultural tools, and mediated learning. Learning in language education takes place through conversation, scaffolding, and guidance within the ZPD. This theory informs the examination of teacher–student interaction and how linguistic diversity can be managed via classroom practices. Interlanguage theory [12] explains how learners construct a transitional linguistic system shaped by both their native and target languages. In UMS classrooms, this lens helps analyze how students negotiate meaning, produce language, and respond to pedagogy in a setting shaped by multiple linguistic influences. Together, these theories link language development with interactional support and pedagogical choice. They establish an evident groundwork for the analysis of how multilingual classrooms operate and how lecturers manage linguistic diversity. This study extends these theories by examining how they operate under institutional constraints. Specifically, we introduce the concept of *negotiated translanguaging* to capture the strategic, policy-shaped nature of multilingual practices in Indonesian EMI classrooms—a phenomenon distinct from the spontaneous translanguaging documented in school contexts.

3. Methodology

This research employed a qualitative case study design [32]. It examined the instructional practices and challenges encountered by EFL lecturers in multilingual classrooms in UMS. The case study research design was used due to its capacity to obtain rich, contextualized information on the teaching practice in a defined setting [32,33]. This design enabled an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. This approach uncovered strategies lecturers employed in teaching students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

The qualitative paradigm was used as the research sought to:

1. Investigate the approaches and motivations behind instructional practices rather than measuring frequency.
2. Examine intricate social and cultural dynamics in multilingual classrooms.
3. Contribute to pedagogical and theoretical knowledge instead of statistical generalization.

UMS is a private institution of higher learning in Central Java, Indonesia. It is a university with a multicultural student population consisting of both domestic and international students. International students come from countries including Thailand, Yemen, Pakistan, Laos, and Palestine. UMS conducts EFL classes in both regular and international programs. Students' linguistic repertoires include Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, and other first languages, while the main medium of instruction is English. This creates a multilingual learning environment.

3.1. Participants

Participants were chosen by purposive sampling, which helped to ensure the participation of members directly involved in multilingual EFL classrooms. Two groups of participants were included: EFL lecturers and students (domestic and international). Three experienced EFL lecturers (L = 3) participated in the study. Lecturer A (LA) is a female with 15 years of teaching experience and coordinates international program courses. Lecturer B (LB) is a male with 8 years of teaching experience and teaches both domestic and international classes. Lecturer C (LC) is a female with 12 years of teaching experience and specializes in academic writing courses. The lecturers were approached based on the following criteria: a minimum of three years' experience teaching at UMS, practice in teaching classes with linguistically diverse students, and availability to participate in interviews and classroom observations.

A total of twelve undergraduate students (S = 12) were recruited, including both domestic and international students from the observed classes. The student selection criteria were: enrollment in the courses taught by the involved lecturers, diversity of first-language representation, and voluntary

consent to participate in focus group discussions. Among the students, seven were local (with Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese as their native languages), while five were foreign (with Thai, Arabic, Lao, and Urdu as their native languages). The age range of students was 19–22, while lecturers were between 34–50 years old. To ensure anonymity, participants were given a participant code (e.g., L1 for Lecturer 1, S3 for Student 3).

3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected over a six-week period during the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year. Three methods were used simultaneously to promote data richness and triangulation. The first method was semi-structured interviews with lecturers, aimed at identifying their attitudes toward issues of multilingualism, EFL classroom challenges, and EFL classroom practices. The procedure involved face-to-face interviews with each lecturer, lasting 45–60 min. Each interview was conducted in English, with participant consent, audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. Sample questions included: How do you adjust your teaching for students with varying L1s? What is the use of students' L1 in your daily classroom activities? How do institutional language policies impact your teaching?

The second method was classroom observations, designed to record actual classroom teaching practices, student interactions, and instances of code-switching or translanguaging. Two sessions of each lecturer were observed, making a total of six observation sessions, with each lasting 90 min. An observation checklist was used to record the instructional strategies employed, examples and reasons for L1 use, and patterns of student participation. Field notes were also taken, including reflective and descriptive remarks to capture observable behavior along with the researcher's interpretations.

The third method was focus group discussions (FGDs) with students, conducted to gain insights into student perceptions of multilingual teaching and its influence on learning. Two FGDs were organized: one among domestic students and the other among international students. Both discussions lasted about 60 min, facilitated in English with occasional L1 explanations when necessary. The FGDs were digitally recorded, transcribed, and coded. Each discussion focused on student experiences of multilingual classroom dynamics, lecturer strategies and their effectiveness, the drawbacks and advantages of language diversity in EFL learning, and language preferences for different classroom activities.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was guided by thematic analysis as suggested by Braun and Clarke [34]. The procedure involved six phases. In the familiarization phase, transcripts, observation fieldnotes, and FGD records were read multiple times to gain familiarity with the data. In the initial coding phase, data were coded line-by-line using NVivo software, generating codes for concepts such as code-switching for clarification, peer support, and policy constraints. During the theme-searching phase, related codes were grouped into categories such as instructional adaptation, policy influence, and cultural enrichment. The reviewing themes phase refined these themes to ensure internal consistency and uniqueness. In the naming and defining themes phase, each theme was clearly stated and supported with relevant quotes. Finally, in the reporting phase, data excerpts were integrated with relevant literature to present a coherent narrative in the Findings and Discussion sections.

To guarantee the strength of the research, several strategies were employed. Triangulation of three data sources (interviews, observations, FGDs) minimized bias and maximized credibility. Member checking was conducted by sharing initial results with two lecturers involved in the study to confirm accuracy. Peer debriefing involved discussing the research process and emerging themes with a senior qualitative research colleague for external validation. An audit trail was maintained to document data collection and analysis decisions transparently. The study was ethically approved by the UMS Research Ethics Committee. Participants were informed about the purpose, procedure, and voluntary nature of the study. Written consent was obtained prior to participation. Confidentiality was ensured by depersonalizing personal identifiers, and all data were securely stored. Participants were also assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing academic or professional penalties. RQ1 (Perceptions) was addressed through lecturer interviews and student FGDs. RQ2 (Strategies) was investigated using classroom observations and lecturer interviews. RQ3 (Policy Influence) was explored through lecturer interviews, observation notes, and student FGDs.

Codes were developed inductively through close read-

ing of transcripts and field notes. Initial codes such as clarification through L1, peer support, and policy negotiation were grouped into broader categories after repeated cycles of coding. To enhance reliability, coding decisions were discussed with a senior qualitative researcher, and discrepancies were resolved through consensus. Member checking was conducted by sharing emerging themes with two participating lecturers, ensuring alignment with their experiences. Given the small qualitative sample, inter-coder reliability statistics were not calculated. Instead, coding decisions were validated through consensus coding with a senior qualitative researcher, peer debriefing, and member checking with two lecturers. Member checking was conducted in June 2025 by sharing preliminary themes with two lecturers; their clarifications were incorporated to refine the coding categories. These steps increased trustworthiness of the analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the emerging themes from interviews and observations conducted with EFL lecturers at UMS. The data demonstrates how multilingual realities influence classroom interaction, instructional strategies, and policy application. The findings highlight teaching challenges and adaptive practices. To present the findings systematically, **Table 1** summarizes the key themes, associated sub-codes, representative quotations, and data sources. This framework provides an overview of how the evidence was organized before moving into a detailed discussion.

Table 1. Thematic Coding Framework.

Theme	Sub-Codes	Example Quotes	Sources
Participation Gaps	Fear of errors, uneven proficiency	"I remain silent because I fear mistakes." (Student S5, Lao L1)	Interviews, FGDs
Strategic L1 Use	Clarification, vocabulary support, anxiety relief	"I use L1 when defining abstract words." (Lecturer B)	Observations, Interviews
Multimodal Scaffolding	Visual aids, peer tutoring, group work	"When the lecturer uses pictures and videos, it's easier to understand." (Student S4, Thai L1)	Observations, FGDs
Policy Negotiation	Exam language, gradual L1 reduction	"For exams, I ask students to answer in English." (Lecturer A)	Interviews, Policy Docs

Lecturers reported teaching students who speak a variety of regional Indonesian and foreign languages. This multilingualism influences student participation as well as patterns of interaction. As one of the lecturers explained: *I have been teaching EFL classes with students with various language backgrounds, such as Thailand, Yemen, Palestine, Pakistan and Laos. I employ visual aids and differentiation instruction to meet their different levels of proficiency* (Lecturer A).

Students use their language of origin in preliminary conversations before they present ideas in English. This practice facilitated comprehension but occasionally delayed students' use of the target language. As one local student illustrated: *When we talk in Javanese first, we know what we want to say in English. But sometimes we speak our language comfortably and do not change back* (Student S3, Javanese L1). This was echoed by several students across different L1s. For instance, a Lao student explained: *Sometimes I know the answer in Lao, but I need more time to find English words* (Student S5, Lao L1). Similarly, a Thai student added: *We first confirm meaning in Thai, then practice English together* (Student S8, Thai L1). These overlapping accounts show that translanguaging was not an isolated behavior but a recurring strategy across language groups. Linguistic diversity, challenges to equitable comprehension, multilingualism as a resource, adaptive strategies, policy influence, and support needs are the common themes analyzed through data. The following **Table 2** presents the key pedagogical strategies identified during classroom observations.

A recurring challenge is ensuring all students, regardless of L1, achieve the same level of understanding in lesson material. The difference is most noticeable between students with higher and lower English proficiency. Fear of making errors often curtails participation: *Some students from the same country prefer discussing ideas in their own language initially before sharing in English. Others occasionally fear errors* (Lecturer B). This resistance may cause an imbalanced classroom engagement process, where more proficient students take over the conversation. The students testified to this problem: *I get the lesson and when I speak in English I am*

afraid of committing grammatical errors. So I remain silent (Student S5, Lao L1). Another student explained: *Sometimes I know the answer in Javanese, but English words are hard to find. Other students talk before I have time to think about how to say it* (Student S2, Javanese L1). Lecturers uniformly saw multilingualism both as a resource and a challenge. In one sense, it makes teaching and marking more difficult. On the other hand, it enhances cultural enrichment within the classroom: *Multilingualism also enriches learning. Students can draw on each other's cultural knowledge, which enhances their appreciation of English in a global context* (Lecturer C).

Table 2. Summary of Key Findings from Lecturer Interviews.

Theme	Description	Example Evidence
Linguistic Diversity	Students from varied linguistic and national backgrounds	"Students from Thailand, Yemen, Palestine, Pakistan, and Laos…"
Equitable Comprehension Challenge	Differences in confidence and proficiency levels hinder equal participation	"Others sometimes fear mistakes."
Multilingualism as a Resource	Cultural exchange enriches learning	"Students can share cultural perspectives…"
Adaptive Strategies	Use of visual aids, peer tutoring, multimodal resources, selective L1 use	"I use L1 when explaining abstract vocabulary…"
Policy Influence	Institutional encouragement of English-only use shapes classroom decisions	"For exams, I ask students to answer in English."
Support Needs	Training in translanguaging, multilingual resources, peer exchange of strategies	"Training on translanguaging, access to multilingual materials…"

Students acknowledged both the benefits and challenges of learning in a multilingual environment. One international student observed: *Learning with students from different countries helps me understand English is used differently around the world (Student S9, Arabic L1)*. However, a domestic student noted the difficulty: *Sometimes it's confusing because everyone has different accents and ways of speaking English* (Student S6, Sundanese L1). Participants mentioned employing multimodal materials, peer tutoring, and case study-based learning in order to address linguistic gaps. L1 is used selectively for specific purposes: *I make use of L1 when defining abstract words, clarifying directions, or verifying understanding. But I restrict the use of L1 to provide an immersive English environment* (Lecturer B).

These strategies aim to balance comprehension with sustained English exposure. Students reported that they benefited from these flexible strategies: *When the lecturer uses pictures and videos, it's easier to understand even if my English is not perfect (Student S4, Thai L1).* Another student enjoyed peer assistance: *Working with different classmates helps because we can help each other with vocabulary and pronunciation* (Student S7, Urdu L1). Students and lecturers consistently described English-only requirements as motivating yet restrictive. For example, one lecturer noted, *For exams, I ask students to answer in English* (Lecturer A), reflecting policy compliance.

These patterns suggest that translanguaging in UMS classrooms is not fully free but strategically managed by both lecturers and students. Lecturers reduce L1 use gradually, while students rely on peer scaffolding across languages. Together, these practices reveal translanguaging as a negotiated practice shaped by both policy constraints and classroom realities. We term this process *negotiated translanguaging*—a dynamic form of multilingual practice that is deliberate rather than spontaneous, and adaptive rather than suppressed. Unlike spontaneous translanguaging in school contexts, which emerges freely, *negotiated translanguaging* involves lecturers phasing L1 use strategically across the semester. Whereas constrained translanguaging involves policies that simply restrict resources, negotiation implies agency: lecturers and students actively adapt language choices to balance comprehension with institutional demands. This conceptual refinement highlights how translanguaging in higher education is co-constructed within policy frameworks, extending existing theory and contributing to international debates on EMI and multilingual pedagogy.

However, students also noted the cost of these constraints: *I can show my knowledge better if I first explain in Bahasa Indonesia* (Student S1). The findings indicate that these constraints do not simply suppress L1 use but interact dynamically with lecturer strategies. This shows that English-only rules were not passively imposed but actively negotiated, producing differentiated effects across domestic and international students. The relationship between classroom challenges, adaptive strategies, and learning outcomes is illustrated in **Figure 1** below.

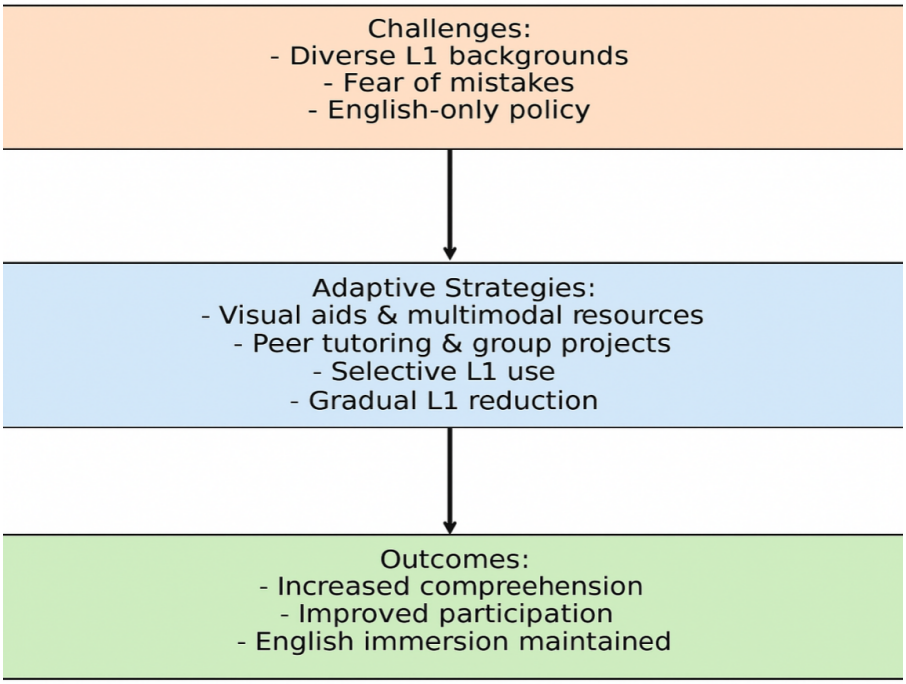

Figure 1. Relationship between Challenges, Pedagogical Strategies, and Outcomes.

Faculty members mentioned the need for professional development in translanguaging skills. They also value opportunities to share practices with colleagues. Students further acknowledged the need for improvement in multilingual support and made some recommendations. One local student proposed: *Perhaps lecturers can also learn some words from our languages, so that they know when we struggle* (Student S11, Javanese L1). An international student suggested: *It would be helpful if we had more group sessions combining Indonesian and foreign students, so we can exchange each other's English* (Student S12, Arabic L1). Another student highlighted peer assistance: *When seniors who speak my language assist me in explaining tricky concepts, I learn quicker and am more confident to join in* (Student S4, Thai L1).

This initial analysis shows that multilingualism in UMS EFL classrooms presents both challenges and possibilities. It creates barriers to equitable participation but also enhances cultural and linguistic contact. Successful teaching involves balancing English-only policies with versatile approaches. Such practices must be accommodative and sensitive to the needs of various learners. This study discusses how UMS EFL lecturers manage multilingual classroom realities. The results are indicative of complicated associations among language variety, pedagogical practice, and institutional policy. The following section accounts for these findings through relevant theories and literature, with pedagogic and research implications. The data confirms García and Wei's [15] view of multilingualism as a dual force. It creates barriers to comprehension but also enriches learning. Lecturers described uneven participation caused by differences in English proficiency. As Lecturer B noted, "Some students … prefer discussing concepts in their native language before sharing in English. Others sometimes fear mistakes." This aligns with Probyn's [5] finding that L1 use supports understanding but can marginalize less proficient learners.

While García and Wei's translanguaging theory has primarily documented spontaneous, relatively unrestricted language use in school settings, this study reveals a qualitatively different phenomenon in Indonesian higher education. We introduce the concept of *negotiated translanguaging* to capture how multilingual practices operate under institutional constraints. Unlike the fluid translanguaging observed in primary and secondary schools, our data shows that EMI policies create a bounded space where translanguaging becomes strategic rather than spontaneous. Lecturers at UMS deliberately phase out L1 use across the semester, students employ peer scaffolding covertly to circumvent English-only rules, and both parties continuously calibrate their language choices against institutional expectations. This is not sim-

ply "constrained" translanguaging—it represents a distinct pedagogical mode where multilingual practices are actively negotiated between policy compliance and comprehension needs.

This finding advances translanguaging theory by demonstrating that in policy-regulated environments, translanguaging functions as a *negotiation process* rather than an inherent right to linguistic repertoire. The theoretical implication is significant: translanguaging in higher education cannot be understood using the same frameworks that have been developed for school contexts. It requires acknowledging how institutional power shapes the conditions under which multilingual resources can be mobilized.

Throughout all this, multilingualism was clearly beneficial. Cultural exchange was part of learning. Thai, Yemeni, Palestinian, Pakistani, and Laotian students brought unique mindsets. This would add weight to Cook's[35] contention that multilingual classes could promote intercultural competence. Pedagogical agency is widely used by lecturers. Peer tutoring, use of visual aids, and multimodal materials are used to bridge language gaps. Selective use of L1 was also a crucial mechanism. As another lecturer explained, "I use L1 when explaining abstract vocabulary… but I limit L1 so there is an immersive English environment." Such activities are common to the sociocultural theory's focus on scaffolding in the ZPD[14]. They also coincide with the argument given by Sert[36]: *The best code-switching is the one that is planned and calculated.* This tension between support and immersion is a distinctive feature of the UMS environment. Sociocultural theory traditionally views scaffolding as unidirectional: teachers support learners within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Our findings reveal a more complex pattern. In UMS classrooms, scaffolding operates multidirectionally:

1. Teachers scaffold comprehension through strategic L1 use and multimodal resources.
2. Higher-proficiency peers scaffold for lower-proficiency peers across different L1 groups.
3. Students with different L1s scaffold each other through translanguaging combinations that neither the teacher nor any single student could provide.

For example, when a Thai student collaborates with a Javanese student, they create a unique scaffolding dynamic. They negotiate meaning through English while drawing on their respective L1s. This produces a collective ZPD that extends beyond typical teacher-student or peer-peer interactions.

This multidirectional model advances sociocultural theory in a specific way. It shows that in linguistically diverse classrooms, learning support emerges from the collective linguistic ecology rather than flowing from a single source. The ZPD in multilingual contexts is co-constructed across multiple linguistic resources simultaneously. This challenges the traditional notion of a singular "more knowledgeable other" and reveals how diverse language resources function as distributed scaffolding tools.

UMS policies promote English as the predominant medium, particularly in the English Department and foreign courses. This is a mirror image of global patterns of English-medium instruction[37]. Lecturers, however, need to make these goals workable according to the needs of the students. They increasingly reduce the use of L1 during tests. This reflects the way lecturers negotiate between institutional control and learner realities. Similar tensions have arisen in other Indonesian universities[10]. UMS is further evidence that policy compliance tends to happen through gradual changes, not strict enforcement. Interlanguage theory[12] explains how L1s of multiple learners influence their emerging English systems. These learners develop hybrid patterns influenced by several source languages. This outcome justifies Ellis's[13] argument that L1 can serve as a learning bridge. The classroom practices also fall under translanguaging theory[15]. The lecturers allowed for dynamic language use in certain activities. This enabled students to draw on their full linguistic repertoires. The policy encouraged taking up English as dominant. However, classroom practice reflected a mixed practice. This contrast highlights a key difference for multilingual pedagogy.

Our data reveals an additional dimension in multilingual classrooms. Learners' developing English is shaped not only by their own L1 but also by exposure to peer interlanguages and multiple L1 transfer patterns.

UMS students encounter Thai-influenced English, Arabic-influenced English, and Javanese-influenced English simultaneously. This creates collective interlanguage environments where learners' developing systems are influenced by multiple non-native varieties. Students reported learn-

ing English expressions "from other international friends" that reflect neither standard English nor their own L1 patterns. One student explained how peers' different ways of using English helped expand her understanding of acceptable variation.

This finding extends interlanguage theory beyond individual cognitive development. It demonstrates that peer-mediated language learning operates differently in superdiverse settings. Interlanguage development in contemporary multilingual universities may follow trajectories not captured by traditional theory. Learners incorporate features from multiple linguistic influences simultaneously rather than progressing along a single L1-to-L2 continuum.

The paper recommends a hybrid model for multilingual university settings. English has to be the prevailing medium, but L1 may be used strategically for comprehension. Translanguaging professional development would enhance lecturer proficiency in handling diverse classrooms [38]. Accessibility to multilingual resources is also required. Respondents emphasized the need for teaching materials to be available in multiple languages. Faculty collaboration on best practices would also improve teaching quality in such settings. Past research on Indonesia's multilingual education has largely focused on primary and secondary levels [11,39]. This present research fills the gap by investigating university-level teaching. It shows that university classrooms also face the same challenges, such as participation imbalance, disparity in skill, and policy constraints. However, such classrooms require specialized approaches. Applying interlanguage, sociocultural, and translanguaging theories concurrently, this research offers a multi-layered model of analysis. The method combines socio-cultural as well as cognitive elements of learning more than one language. These observations can be traced back to the recent studies that stress the importance of curriculum design that is mindful of multilingual realities.

According to Sari et al. [40], Indonesian multilingual learning curricula should be inclusive and bilingual competent to ensure that the needs of the diverse students are properly addressed. Translanguaging as a means of reducing student anxiety and enabling participation is not limited to higher education. Indonesian secondary school evidence confirms that lecturers apply translanguaging with overt pedagogic motives, reinforcing the evidence of its value in various settings [41]. The study's ambit was limited only on a small sample and lecturer reports. More participants from different faculties would generalize. Student observation and feedback data straight from them would aid analysis. Future research might combine qualitative with quantitative information. Tracking attendance rates, understanding levels, and confidence levels may provide quantifiable proof of effectiveness in strategy. Comparative studies on Indonesian universities may reveal patterns.

This study illustrates that EFL classroom multilingualism is context-sensitive. At UMS, lecturers negotiate between policy demands and reality. Peraturan Akademik [42] enforces the utilisation of English in official academic contexts, lecturers pragmatically negotiate on approaches to accommodate different students' needs. This pragmatic accommodation is in line with the adaptive nature encouraged in the Panduan Kelas Internasional, suggesting institutional guidelines recognize the pedagogic richness of multilingual classrooms [43]. The findings thus reveal how lecturers deal with institutional pressures. They use L1 to clarify without ever giving up English immersion [44]. This is not only more efficient in terms of understanding but also helps to promote cultural exchange. The findings underpin a shift in policy perception. Multilingualism may be understood as a resource for value addition, rather than as a hindrance. Effective pedagogy for successful English learning in multilingual university settings relies on flexible, theory-informed pedagogy.

The findings advance existing theories in three ways. First, it extends interlanguage theory by showing that multilingual learners draw not only on their own L1 but also on the repertoires of peers, producing hybrid forms. Second, it develops sociocultural theory by showing that scaffolding occurs across multiple directions: from teacher to student and between peers with different L1s [45]. Third, it refines translanguaging theory by demonstrating that translanguaging is not fully free in higher education but a negotiated practice shaped by English-only policies. Together, these contributions show how theories of language learning and pedagogy adapt when tested in Indonesian EMI classrooms.

More importantly, the concept of *negotiated translanguaging* illustrates how translanguaging in higher education differs from school contexts. It is neither entirely free nor strictly prohibited, but is continuously balanced with EMI

expectations. This adds a conceptual layer to translanguaging theory and positions Indonesian EMI classrooms as key sites for refining multilingual pedagogy.

This study moves beyond confirming established findings that translanguaging "works" or that L1 supports learning. Instead, it reveals how multilingual practices adapt and transform under institutional pressure. The adaptation process itself becomes a theoretical object worthy of investigation. This opens new directions for multilingual pedagogy research in policy-constrained environments where English-only ideologies and multilingual realities coexist.

Although situated in Indonesia, the findings contribute to wider debates on multilingual higher education. They demonstrate how translanguaging can coexist with English-medium instruction when framed as negotiated practice. This is relevant for other expanding-circle contexts (e.g., Southeast Asia, Africa) where EMI policies are rising but multilingual realities remain strong. The study thus provides comparative insight into how institutions worldwide might balance global competitiveness with inclusive pedagogy.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, multilingualism affects both the potential and the constraints in English language teaching. Classroom participation is influenced by linguistic diversity. The majority of students process material in their home language before transitioning to English. This promotes understanding but can delay immersion into the target language. Some students do not contribute due to fear of making mistakes, while more confident students dominate discussions. Lecturers react with the utilization of visual aids, peer mentoring, and differentiation. Native languages are used sparingly by lecturers for purposes of clarity, lexis, and comprehension checks. These strategies promote participation without compromising English as the primary medium. Institutional priorities to maintain English-only teaching limit flexibility. These findings underscore the need for policies that balance immersion goals with multilingual realities. First language (L1) contribution to scaffolding learning needs to be recognized by institutions. Translanguaging and flexible guidelines can be introduced by lecturers through adaptive strategies. Professional development is also required. Instructional practice can be supported by training in multilingual pedagogy. Exposure to diverse teaching materials further facilitates learning. In addition, peer sharing of strategies results in improved teaching. Institutional support can also help them address classroom diversity. This research contributes by providing a university-level case study in the Indonesian context. It provides practical suggestions for policy and practice alignment in multilingual EFL classrooms. Limitations must be acknowledged. Student opinions and larger samples, and comparison studies across institutions must be added in subsequent research. Multilingual classrooms can become spaces of deeper engagement and more equitable learning. Achieving this requires balanced policies, reflexive pedagogy, and strong institutional support. Beyond practical implications, this study contributes to the global debates on multilingual pedagogy. It shows that translanguaging can coexist with English-medium instruction when framed as a negotiated practice rather than merely spontaneous or constrained use. It also extends core applied linguistics theories to new institutional realities in Southeast Asia. This research is open for application in diverse higher education contexts. Future studies could compare EFL approaches across institutions or examine learner attitudes toward EMI to extend these findings. It may add to the findings of this research and strengthen multilingual pedagogy and EFL teaching strategies. By introducing the idea of *negotiated translanguaging*, this study moves beyond synthesis to offer a conceptual contribution. It shows how translanguaging adapts under EMI policy pressures, providing a framework that may be applied in other multilingual higher education contexts worldwide.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and writing of this study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the Institutional Review Board.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed written consent was obtained from all the participants before data collection.

Data Availability Statement

The data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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