

Integrating Traditional Performing Arts and Translanguaging Pedagogy: A Sociocultural Approach to Teaching English through *Randai* in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study investigates the integration of Randai, a traditional Minangkabau performing art, into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction through a translanguaging pedagogy framed within a sociocultural perspective. The research aims to (1) describe the pedagogical strategies employed by lecturers, (2) analyze translanguaging practices in bilingual (Minangkabau–English) performances, (3) examine students’ perceptions of learning English through local performing arts, and (4) identify contextual enablers and constraints. Using a qualitative ethnographic case study in the English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Padang, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews with lecturers and students, performance and video analysis, and document review of course syllabi and bilingual Randai scripts. Thematic analysis examined pedagogical strategies and perceptions, while discourse analysis explored translanguaging patterns. Findings reveal that Randai was creatively integrated as a medium for performance-based learning, particularly in speaking, storytelling, and intercultural communication. Translanguaging emerged as both a natural and strategic practice that enhanced dramatic expression, conveyed cultural meanings, and facilitated bilingual negotiation. This approach increased student engagement, boosted speaking confidence, and strengthened cultural identity. However, challenges included limited curricular guidelines, rehearsal time constraints, and conservative attitudes toward unconventional pedagogy. The study’s novelty lies in demonstrating how traditional performing arts combined with translanguaging pedagogy create a unique sociocultural model of language learning where linguistic, cultural, and artistic dimensions intersect. The research contributes to educational and linguistic scholarship by broadening translanguaging studies into performing arts and advocating culturally responsive, arts-based EFL pedagogy in Indonesian higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

Language, art, and culture have long shared an intrinsic relationship in shaping human identity and modes of communication. However, within the context of English language education in Indonesia, this interconnection often receives limited pedagogical attention. English instruction at the tertiary level tends to remain dominated by textbooks, examinations, and grammar drills that are largely detached from students’ socio-cultural realities (Putri Cahyani & Wahyu Astuti, 2022; Zakaria et al., 2019). Consequently, language is often taught as a rigid system rather than as a medium for interaction, meaning-making, and self-expression within a multilingual world. In contrast, Indonesia possesses an abundance of

traditional performing arts that can serve as rich, contextual, and meaningful resources for language learning (Abdul Samat et al., 2022; Loizzo et al., 2018). One particularly compelling example is *Randai*, a Minangkabau folk theater that fuses oral literature, music, dance, and drama.

This phenomenon merits closer examination in light of globalization and the growing dominance of global popular culture, which have led to declining appreciation for traditional arts among younger generations. In higher education, students often display greater familiarity with Western culture than with their own local heritage, even as they are expected to become competent English users capable of intercultural communication (Setyawan & Dopo, 2020). A crucial question thus arises: can English language learning transcend linguistic accuracy to serve as a medium for preserving and reinterpreting local culture? Integrating *Randai* into English language instruction seeks to address this question by bridging academic and cultural domains through a humanistic and sociocultural pedagogical approach.

Translanguaging, a concept emphasizing the flexible use of multiple linguistic resources in communication, provides a strong theoretical foundation for such an approach. In *Randai* performances where Minangkabau and English are intertwined, translanguaging functions not merely as language mixing, but as an artistic and pedagogical strategy for negotiating meaning across cultures. This approach allows learners to navigate linguistic and identity boundaries while expressing meanings that cannot always be conveyed through a single language. Hence, *Randai* and translanguaging complement each other: the former represents local cultural heritage, while the latter reflects the global communicative reality.

Previous research has highlighted the significance of local art and culture in foreign language learning. Marni et al. (2022) emphasize that language is never neutral, it is always embedded within social and cultural contexts. Through performing arts, language learning becomes a space for intercultural meaning negotiation. Similarly, Tahir et al. (2021) demonstrate that traditional arts can serve as effective media for developing cultural awareness in EFL pedagogy in Indonesia. Sunardi (2019) found that the use of local folk drama enhances students' participation and sense of ownership in the learning process. In a broader sense, Wowor (2022) explains that translanguaging encourages learners to mobilize their entire linguistic repertoire when constructing new knowledge, including within creative and artistic contexts.

In addition, studies by Nursilah (2022) and Pambudi et al. (2020) reveal that incorporating local culture into EFL learning increases motivation and strengthens students' cultural identity. Artasia et al. (2022) also report that performance-based learning, such as drama and theater, enhances learners' speaking skills, empathy, and social awareness. Within the framework of translanguaging, Li (2018) asserts that this practice not only facilitates communication but also serves as an act of resistance against linguistic hierarchies and the colonality of knowledge. Accordingly, when Minangkabau students perform *Randai* using both Minangkabau and English, they are not only learning a language but also exercising cultural agency.

Several Indonesian studies have explored the integration of art into language learning, such as Khanlou et al. (2022), who employed wayang (shadow puppetry) as a medium for English speaking practice, and Putra and Hakim (2019), who utilized traditional music in communicative approaches. However, most of these studies have focused primarily on motivation or language proficiency, with limited attention to the sociocultural dimensions and naturally occurring translanguaging practices in performative settings. Bräuchler (2022), for instance, found that translanguaging can bridge cross-linguistic understanding in bilingual classrooms, yet did not address its role within artistic or cultural performance contexts.

Globally, the intersection of traditional performing arts and translanguaging pedagogy remains underexplored. While Tahir et al. (2021) examined translanguaging as an academic strategy in multilingual classrooms and Simamora (2020) analyzed language ecologies in education, few studies have positioned translanguaging as both an aesthetic and cultural practice within performance-based education. This gap highlights a promising area for investigation: how translanguaging can be conceptualized not only as a linguistic strategy but also as a social and artistic process that revitalizes local culture within global language learning.

Existing scholarship has also paid limited attention to Indonesia's diverse cultural contexts, particularly the Minangkabau community, whose rich performative traditions hold strong educational value. *Randai* is not merely a folk theater but a form of community education that conveys moral values, solidarity, and leadership through narrative and movement. Yet, to date, no systematic study has examined how *Randai* can serve as a foundation for translanguaging pedagogy in English language teaching. Most existing works remain at the conceptual or cultural-discourse level, overlooking concrete pedagogical practices in classrooms and performance spaces.

Addressing this gap, the present study integrates linguistic, pedagogical, and cultural dimensions to examine how *Randai*, performed bilingually in Minangkabau and English, functions as a performative learning experience that constructs meaning rather than rote linguistic memorization. This approach challenges conventional, Western-oriented EFL pedagogies that often neglect local cultural values. The integration of *Randai* and translanguaging presents a dynamic, dialogic pedagogy in which students act simultaneously as cultural performers and language learners. Teachers no longer serve merely as sources of knowledge but as facilitators who design learning experiences that merge artistic practice and linguistic exploration. In this way, learning outcomes extend beyond linguistic competence to include heightened identity awareness and intercultural understanding.

Implicitly, this study underscores that pedagogical innovation can emerge from local cultural roots. Through *Randai*, students not only learn English but also learn about themselves, their communities, and how local identities can find expression in global spaces. Such an approach opens new possibilities for developing culturally responsive English curricula grounded in translanguaging practices. By positioning traditional performing arts as pedagogical media, this study demonstrates that cultural preservation and foreign language acquisition need not exist in isolation; rather, they can enrich one another within a shared

space, where language becomes art, and art becomes language.

The objectives of this study are threefold: (1) to describe the pedagogical strategies employed by lecturers in integrating *Randai* into EFL instruction; (2) to analyze translanguaging practices emerging from bilingual Minangkabau–English *Randai* performances; and (3) to explore students' experiences and perceptions of English learning through local art forms. Furthermore, the study seeks to identify enabling and constraining factors in implementing this approach. Collectively, these aims offer new insights into language learning as a social, cultural, and artistic practice, a space where language, identity, and creativity converge.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with an ethnographic case study design, as its primary aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of the social, linguistic, and cultural practices emerging when *Randai* is integrated into English language learning. This approach was chosen not only to describe phenomena but also to interpret the meanings underlying participants' actions, interactions, and experiences within their natural contexts. As argued by Sarfo et al. (2021), qualitative inquiry enables researchers to view social reality as dynamic and co-constructed through human interaction. In this regard, *Randai* as a living art form can only be understood through direct engagement with its practitioners and socio-cultural environment.

The research was conducted in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Padang, selected purposively for two main reasons. First, the university is situated within the Minangkabau cultural region, where *Randai* traditions remain vibrant, thus providing cultural proximity relevant to the study's context. Second, several lecturers in the program had previously developed art- and culture-based teaching innovations, including experiments integrating *Randai* into English learning activities. The site was therefore considered representative for examining pedagogical practices that combine traditional performance and translanguaging within Indonesia's higher-education EFL context.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, comprising eleven individuals who were directly involved and knowledgeable about *Randai*-based instruction. They included one course lecturer who designed the integration of *Randai* into the curriculum, eight students actively participating in rehearsals and performances, and two senior students serving as directors and mentors during the production process. The selection was based on their depth of engagement and experiential insight into translanguaging and language learning through performance. This aligns with Priya's (2021) recommendation that qualitative research participants should be chosen for their capacity to provide rich, relevant information to address the research questions.

Data were collected using four primary techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, document analysis, and video analysis. Participant observation was carried out over three months during *Randai* rehearsals and performances to capture the natural emergence of linguistic and pedagogical interactions. The researcher acted as a moderate

participant, observing while engaging in certain activities such as assisting in rehearsals and informal discussions with students, to gain a more authentic understanding of the social and cultural context. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to explore their perceptions, motivations, and reflections regarding the use of *Randai* in English learning, allowing for flexibility and the emergence of new themes during conversations.

Additionally, relevant documents, including course syllabi, bilingual *Randai* scripts, and classroom materials, were analyzed to understand how *Randai* was pedagogically designed within the curriculum. Video recordings of rehearsals and performances were examined to identify translanguaging practices manifested in real-time interactions on stage. This multimodal approach enabled the researcher to capture both verbal and non-verbal dimensions of communication, as recommended by Kodithuwakku (2022) in performative ethnographic studies.

Data analysis was conducted through thematic and discourse analysis. Interview and observation data were openly coded to identify themes related to pedagogical strategies, student learning experiences, and cultural meanings in language instruction. Performance video data were analyzed to highlight moments of translanguaging, language shifts, and communicative functions within performative contexts. This combined approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of linguistic practice, social action, and cultural context.

To ensure data credibility, triangulation was applied across data sources and collection methods. Source triangulation involved cross-checking findings from lecturer and student interviews with observational data, while methodological triangulation integrated results from observation, interviews, document analysis, and video analysis. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to confirm interpretative accuracy. Finally, interpretive validity was maintained through researcher reflexivity concerning positionality and involvement in the research context, consistent with Khan's (2019) recommendations for qualitative inquiry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Creative Pedagogical Integration of *Randai* in EFL Classrooms

The integration of *Randai* into English language learning in EFL classrooms at Universitas Negeri Padang represents a pedagogical innovation that moves beyond linguistic outcomes to place art, culture, and social collaboration at the core of the learning process. The lecturer responsible for the course positions *Randai* as a primary medium within a performance-based learning approach, where language is taught not merely through texts and grammar exercises but through performative practices demanding expression, improvisation, and cooperation. This approach stems from the understanding that students cannot simply "learn a language" theoretically; they must "live the language" through authentic practice grounded in their own cultural contexts.

In designing the course, the lecturer developed a semester-long thematic syllabus in which *Randai* serves as the central framework of instruction. The chosen themes often reflect Minangkabau cultural values such as leadership, solidarity, and social responsibility, yet are

articulated in English. As noted during the interviews, the lecturer emphasized that *Randai* is not treated as entertainment, but rather as a “space for intercultural communication practice,” where students retell traditional Minangkabau stories in English while preserving the expressive essence of their culture. Consequently, class assignments no longer take the form of essays or formal presentations but evolve into staged performances that integrate dialogue, narration, music, and movement.

Field observations during *Randai* rehearsals revealed that the classroom transformed into a dynamic and interactive space filled with laughter and active engagement. Students formed a circle in the faculty hall, rehearsing self-written dialogues while performing traditional silat movements. They discussed how to translate local expressions into English without losing their cultural meaning. For example, one student sought to find an English equivalent for the Minangkabau idiom *barek samo dipikua, ringan samo dijinjiang* by explaining the notion of community solidarity to peers in English and dramatizing it through a cooperative scene. In such moments, English becomes a living medium, not merely an academic tool but a bridge between local experience and global expression.

The lecturer assumes the role of facilitator rather than knowledge authority, guiding rather than dominating the learning process. Feedback is reflective rather than corrective. In post-rehearsal discussions, questions such as “Why did you choose that word?” or “What does that movement mean in our cultural context?” prompt students to reflect critically on their linguistic and cultural choices. This approach aligns with the sociocultural learning principles of Vygotsky (2008), who posits that learning occurs through social interaction and cultural mediation. Language, in this sense, becomes a collaborative meaning-making tool rather than an individual mastery system.

This pedagogical model also reflects the principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Arsih et al., 2019; Prameswari et al., 2020), which asserts that education should not only respect but actively sustain and develop cultural diversity. Here, *Randai* is not simply a teaching aid but a symbol of Minangkabau identity preservation amid global language learning. By narrating local values through English, students experience cultural pride rather than alienation, bringing their heritage into academic and international discourse.

Interviews with students revealed reflective dimensions of this approach. One student (RZ) noted that before joining the class, learning English felt “foreign” and “too formal.” After engaging in *Randai* performances, they felt “freer to use English without fear of mistakes,” as the artistic context emphasized meaning and expression over grammatical perfection. This finding illustrates that performance-based learning can lower affective filters and boost linguistic confidence. Field observations corroborated this: students spoke English spontaneously during script discussions and scene rehearsals, free from the anxiety typical of formal classrooms.

Collaboration emerged as another key dimension of the *Randai* integration. Students worked in mixed-proficiency groups to write scripts, translate scenes, and compose dialogues consistent with character roles. They engaged in peer correction, retranslation, and negotiation of meaning, fluidly blending English and Minangkabau. Peer assistance

exemplified Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD), where learning occurs as learners receive scaffolding from more proficient peers.

The impact of this approach extended beyond linguistic competence to include social classroom dynamics. The learning atmosphere became more participatory and inclusive. Students who were usually passive in conventional classrooms appeared more active when interpreting cultural meanings through movement and storytelling. As the lecturer observed, students were "more willing to speak and more enthusiastic because they feel this activity belongs to them." Such experiences demonstrate that when learning connects with culture and identity, language becomes a means of self-affirmation rather than an academic burden.

From an analytical perspective, this pedagogical practice embodies sociocultural mediation, where *Randai* serves as a cultural artifact mediating the relationship between students, language, and community. Consistent with Cohen (2019) and Moehkardi (2019), cultural tools such as performance arts can facilitate collective meaning-making in learning processes. Through performing *Randai*, students construct social narratives of who they are as multilingual English speakers from Indonesia.

Ultimately, the integration of *Randai* into English learning shifts the EFL classroom from a space of knowledge reproduction to one of meaning production. Students become discourse creators who connect language and culture. This arts-based learning aligns with what Agustina et al. (2020) describe as a culturally sustaining classroom, a space where linguistic and cultural diversity is not merely accepted but celebrated as a source of strength. In the Indonesian context, where English instruction is often detached from local culture, such an approach offers a constructive form of resistance against linguistic homogenization.

Translanguaging Practices in Minangkabau–English *Randai* Performances

Translanguaging practices observed in bilingual Minangkabau–English *Randai* performances in EFL classrooms at Universitas Negeri Padang reveal rich and meaningful linguistic dynamics. The shifts between Minangkabau and English are not mere acts of spontaneous improvisation but deliberate communicative and artistic strategies that enhance dramatic expression and reinforce cultural identity. In this context, translanguaging becomes not only a tool for comprehension but also the heart of aesthetic expression and meaning negotiation. Students flexibly employ both languages to convey humor, express emotion, and connect local values with global perspectives, exemplifying what Kuning (2018) and Masunah et al. (2021) term translanguaging as an aesthetic practice, where language blending serves as a creative act infused with emotion and cultural resonance.

Field observations show that translanguaging occurs in almost every scene, often without explicit instructor guidance. In one rehearsal, a student portraying a *panghulu* (traditional leader) began in formal Minangkabau: "Anak kamanakan, ingeklah pepatah urang tuo, di nan sabalun kito indak tau, di nan sabalun kito indak paham," then paused and continued in English: "It means, before we judge others, we should know their story first." This shift, far from signaling hesitation, enhanced the dramatic power of the moment, allowing both local authenticity and global comprehensibility. Such instances illustrate translanguaging as a bridge between local wisdom and global literacy.

In interviews, another student (AD) explained that code-shifting was not due to lexical limitation but to preserve cultural “feeling.” They stated, “If we translate proverbs directly into English, the meaning is often lost. So we use both languages to keep the Minangkabau essence while ensuring others understand.” This reflects conscious linguistic agency, students use their full linguistic repertoires to communicate authentically rather than conforming to monolingual norms.

Beyond interpretation, translanguaging also functions as an artistic strategy to intensify emotion and character portrayal. In a scene depicting conflict between two young characters, shifts between English and Minangkabau marked emotional tension. English conveyed rationality and self-explanation, while Minangkabau was used to express anger or intimacy, as in “Indak sangko ang tu, kawan!” (“I didn’t expect that from you!”). Here, translanguaging operates as an affective medium, the local language carrying deeper emotional resonance, while English provides reflective distance.

Pedagogically, translanguaging serves as a cognitive strategy for cross-linguistic understanding. When students encounter difficulties grasping vocabulary or structures, they discuss meanings in Minangkabau before presenting English versions on stage. For example, in translating *ka nan bana* (“to the truth”), students elaborated that it signifies moral righteousness rather than spatial correctness, enriching their conceptual understanding. Thus, translanguaging emerges as a meaning-making process rather than linguistic disorder.

Narrative sections also exhibit translanguaging artistry. Narrators often employ English for exposition and Minangkabau for proverbs or moral emphasis. In one performance, a narrator began, “In the heart of the village, where the drums echo wisdom,” and continued, “Di sinan lah urang nan tuo barundiang, mencari kato nan bana.” This alternation created a unique linguistic rhythm, blending poetic English with oral Minangkabau, echoing findings by Damşa et al. (2021) and Faisal and Martin (2019), who argue that translanguaging in performance art extends expressive and aesthetic possibilities.

The lecturer confirmed that translanguaging is not restricted but encouraged as a form of linguistic creativity. According to the lecturer (SR), students are free to use whichever language best conveys meaning and emotion. This openness cultivates confidence and playfulness with language. Observations support this: students appeared more willing to use English knowing they could revert to Minangkabau for cultural emphasis or clarity. Such freedom transforms translanguaging into a pedagogical practice that fosters both linguistic confidence and cultural awareness.

Through translanguaging, a third space emerges, a linguistic zone where boundaries between local and global dissolve, and hybrid identities are negotiated. Within this space, students no longer see themselves merely as Minangkabau speakers learning English, but as multilingual individuals navigating between symbolic worlds. As O’Brien et al. (2020) argue, translanguaging allows multilinguals to express their whole linguistic repertoires without being constrained by monolingual ideologies.

Finally, translanguaging fosters a sense of community within the classroom. When students use Minangkabau expressions such as “Mantap tu, lanjutkan!” (“Great, keep

going!”) to encourage peers amid English dialogue, the act reinforces solidarity and inclusion. The local language becomes a symbol of belonging, while English serves as a channel for global expression, together forming a complementary, empowering linguistic ecology.

Student Engagement, Identity, and Confidence through Local Performing Arts

Student engagement in English language learning through *Randai* represents a pedagogical experience that extends far beyond the boundaries of the classroom and textbook. In this context, language functions not merely as a communicative or academic tool, but as a medium for self-expression, negotiation of cultural identity, and the cultivation of confidence. For many students in the English Education Department of Universitas Negeri Padang, the integration of *Randai*, a traditional Minangkabau performing art, into English learning marked a turning point in how they perceived language learning. Through performance, they discovered a new dimension of linguistic practice: speaking English does not mean abandoning one's local identity but rather becoming able to celebrate and articulate it on a global stage.

Field observations during *Randai* rehearsals and performances revealed a profound transformation in the classroom atmosphere compared to conventional EFL settings. The usually formal and rigid learning space became lively with laughter, discussion, and creative improvisation. Students rehearsed enthusiastically, repeating scenes while adjusting intonation, gestures, and lexical choices in both English and Minangkabau. One rehearsal in the faculty hall captured this vividly: a group of students stood in a circle, clapping in rhythm with the *talempong* percussion as one of them recited an opening line in English, followed by a reinforcing statement in Minangkabau. When the practice ended, they exchanged applause and positive feedback, an interaction rarely observed in traditional speaking classes. The lecturer (SR) sat quietly at the edge of the room, occasionally offering brief comments while allowing learning to emerge organically from student collaboration.

Interviews with students consistently highlighted that participation in *Randai* allowed them to experience language holistically, engaging body, emotion, and culture. One student (YR) expressed that performing on stage made her “feel as if living inside the language itself.” She no longer thought consciously about grammar or sentence structure because the performance context demanded spontaneity and full presence. Reflecting on the experience, she added that repetitive rehearsals not only helped her internalize the dialogues but also strengthened her confidence in using English in other contexts, such as classroom presentations or interactions with foreign visitors. This indicates that artistic performance in *Randai* functions as a form of confidence building, helping students overcome speaking anxiety through embodied and socially meaningful experience.

The project also created a space for students to negotiate and affirm their cultural identities. Every *Randai* performance centers on Minangkabau values such as solidarity (*sakato*), consensus (*mufakat*), and respect for elders. When students conveyed these values in English, they engaged in a unique process of translation, rendering local concepts within a global linguistic frame while preserving their cultural meanings. For instance, student AN shared that when he said, “*In our land, wisdom grows from discussion, not from argument,*”

he was inspired by the Minangkabau proverb “*bulek aia dek pambuluah, bulek kato dek mufakat*.” He described expressing indigenous values in English as “bringing my village’s voice to the world.”

This illustrates that language learning through local arts not only develops linguistic competence but also reinforces identity investment, the notion that learners’ motivation to participate in language learning depends on how the language aligns with their social identity and symbolic capital (Bailey et al., 2020; Lapada et al., 2020). In this case, students were motivated not merely by academic requirements but by a sense that English could serve as a medium for cultural affirmation. The *Randai* project thus became a site for identity reconciliation, bridging local pride with global aspiration. As one student (MR) reflected, before joining the project, speaking English felt like “wearing someone else’s clothes,” but after months of rehearsal and performance, she realized that English could become “my own attire” when intertwined with familiar cultural narratives.

Increased confidence was also evident during open rehearsals. Students who were typically quiet in conventional classes performed expressively on stage, embodying characters with energy and spontaneity. For instance, a usually shy student (DS) took on the role of *anak daro* (bride) and delivered an emotionally rich monologue in English, interwoven with Minangkabau expressions such as “*Alah denai sabana ikhlas, nan lalu biarlah lalu*.” After the show, her peers cheered and congratulated her, and DS smiled proudly. The lecturer remarked that “the stage gives students space to find their own voice.” Pedagogically, this demonstrates the value of performance as embodied learning, a mode of learning that engages emotion, movement, and expression, rather than cognition alone.

Moreover, *Randai*-based learning fostered a strong sense of social connectedness among students. During rehearsals, they collaborated closely, correcting each other’s pronunciation, offering feedback, and supporting one another through linguistic and technical challenges. In a focus group discussion, student LN explained, “Whenever we practice, no one feels superior in English; we all help each other.” This solidarity formed an egalitarian learning community, where every member contributed. From a Vygotskian perspective, such experiences exemplify social interaction and collaborative learning as the foundations of language development (Vygotsky, 2008).

Interestingly, many students reported that through *Randai*, they began to perceive English not as a symbol of global domination but as a bridge for intercultural connection. In her reflective writing, student FH noted, “I used to think English belonged to outsiders; now I feel it also belongs to me, because I can use it to tell Minangkabau stories.” This shift illustrates a move from linguistic subordination to agentic authorship, where learners become cultural narrators capable of articulating local identity in global discourse.

Contextual Enablers and Constraints in Implementing the Model

The implementation of *Randai*-integrated English learning in higher education presents a pedagogical experiment that is both innovative and complex. It is driven by a desire to link language learning with local cultural contexts while challenging the limits of formal education, which often remains bound to cognitive and academic conventions. Based on

classroom observations, interviews, and reflective analysis, it became evident that the success and challenges of this model are shaped by a web of contextual factors, both enablers and constraints. Following the framework of context-responsive pedagogy (Verge et al., 2018), such an approach demands adaptive strategies aligned with the social, cultural, and institutional realities in which it is implemented.

A key enabling factor is the teacher's innovative agency, the willingness to move beyond conventional methodologies. The lecturer facilitating this project (SR) was widely recognized for a reflective and experimental teaching approach. Several students described SR as "not only teaching but also learning with us," creating a more dialogic than directive atmosphere. Observations showed that SR rarely issued rigid instructions, instead allowing students to interpret scripts, adapt dialogues, and improvise freely. This exemplifies teacher agency, defined by O'Doherty et al. (2018) as the creative capacity of educators to act within institutional constraints. Such agency proved essential for realizing a culturally grounded and student-centered pedagogy.

Another supporting factor is students' emotional and cultural proximity to *Randai* and Minangkabau traditions. Most participants were local students who possessed implicit understanding of the values, symbols, and aesthetics embedded in the performance. As student AN explained, "We are not performing something foreign, we're performing what we've known since childhood." This sense of familiarity nurtured ownership and intrinsic motivation, creating relevance, a critical condition in context-responsive pedagogy, where learning acquires meaning when connected to learners' lived experiences and identities.

The flexibility of a project-based learning framework also proved advantageous. Freed from rigid classroom constraints, students could explore language creatively and collaboratively, forming production teams, dividing roles, writing and translating scripts, and arranging costumes and music. During observations, the atmosphere was vibrant: some students discussed diction choices in English, while others synchronized traditional *Randai* gestures. Such flexibility encouraged integrative learning, blending linguistic, artistic, and social dimensions into a unified educational experience.

Nevertheless, the implementation faced several institutional and ideological barriers. The primary constraint lay in the absence of formal curricular guidelines. The *Randai*-English project operated as an individual lecturer's initiative rather than an official course component, creating administrative dilemmas regarding assessment and recognition of learning outcomes. As SR reflected, "It is not easy to convince the department that this is also a valid form of language learning." Some colleagues still viewed it as extracurricular rather than academic. This reflects institutional constraints (Fong, 2019), where existing norms and policies fail to align with pedagogical innovation, forcing creative educators to work at the "margins of the system."

Time limitation posed another major challenge. Conducted alongside regular coursework, the project allowed only about two weeks of rehearsal before the final performance. Many students juggled lectures, part-time jobs, and organizational duties. Evening practices often continued until late at night in a modestly lit campus hall. Despite

high enthusiasm, physical fatigue and scheduling conflicts limited the depth of linguistic and artistic exploration. As YR noted, “Sometimes we finished at nine at night but kept going because we didn’t want to underperform.” The compressed timeline shifted focus more toward performance readiness than linguistic reflection.

An additional ideological barrier stemmed from perceptions of “non-academic” learning. In Indonesian higher education, methods involving art and embodiment are often undervalued. Several students admitted initial discomfort “playing drama” in a language class, fearing it would be deemed unserious. Yet, over time, they recognized its pedagogical value. Student DS reflected that after performing, she “felt more in control of English than after any written test.” This underscores both a transformation in learners’ own conceptions of language learning and the persistence of formal systems resistant to performative, culturally grounded methods.

The tension between formal systems and local practices exemplifies contextual negotiation (Flores & Gago, 2020), the ongoing interplay between individual innovation and institutional structure. In this case, the lecturer and students exercised agency by exploiting gaps within the system to construct alternative learning spaces. However, without institutional support or policy recognition, such innovations risk remaining temporary and unsustainable. Some students even expressed concern that the project might discontinue once its initiator leaves the department.

At the institutional level, the absence of systematic evaluation and documentation mechanisms further limited sustainability. There were no standardized criteria for assessing artistic performance as linguistic achievement. Consequently, the project’s outcomes were recognized more qualitatively than administratively. Yet, as Yunis et al. (2018) argue, context-responsive pedagogy requires not only creative teacher agency but also institutional structures that embed innovation within long-term educational practice.

Despite these constraints, field observations and student reflections make it clear that this initiative successfully opened new space for contextual and humanistic language pedagogy. Students did not simply learn English, they learned to collaborate, adapt, and reinterpret their own culture within global discourse. This modest success demonstrates that educational innovation need not await systemic reform; it can emerge from the courage of teachers and students to redefine the meaning of learning within their own context.

A Sociocultural Model of Language Learning through Living Culture

The sociocultural model of language learning through living culture developed in this study demonstrates that language can be taught not merely as a system of signs or a set of grammatical rules, but as a living social experience deeply embedded in cultural practices and human interaction. The integration of *Randai*, a traditional Minangkabau performing art, with a translanguaging pedagogy creates what can be termed a living pedagogy: a form of pedagogy that grows from everyday life, from cultural heritage that continues to thrive within the community, and from the social relations that unfold in the learning space. In this context, language learning becomes a socially meaningful event where words, body movements, musical rhythm, and cultural symbols interweave to create an authentic and grounded

learning experience.

Field observations reveal that the process of learning through *Randai* is never static. In the campus hall where the rehearsals take place, students do not merely perform dialogues in English and Minangkabau, but also negotiate meaning, co-construct understanding, and revitalize inherited cultural values. In one scene, for instance, a student (AL) attempted to translate the Minangkabau proverb *alam takambang jadi guru* into English. A lively discussion followed on whether “nature as our teacher” adequately captured its underlying philosophical meaning. Such micro-processes embody the essence of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 2008), which posits that learning occurs through social interaction and meaning negotiation rather than the mere transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. Within this *Randai-English* space, students learn language through mediation, wherein language, culture, and social interaction function as mediational tools that shape their linguistic and cultural consciousness.

The uniqueness of this model lies in its balanced integration of cultural practice and linguistic dynamics. In every rehearsal, students not only memorize scripts but also comprehend the cultural contexts underlying them. They reinterpret Minangkabau symbols and values in English, thereby building bridges between two linguistic worlds. Several students expressed that this process helped them “understand who they are” while also becoming “more confident in speaking English.” Within the framework of sociocultural learning, such experiences show that language is acquired through participation in meaningful activity, active involvement in socially and personally significant practices (Anderson, 2019). *Randai* provides an organic setting for this process as it merges narrative, dialogue, music, and movement within a collaborative context that requires interaction and reflection.

Moreover, the translanguaging practices that emerged during the *Randai-English* performances demonstrate that students do not merely switch between two languages, but between two systems of meaning and two social worlds. The shift from Minangkabau to English and vice versa often occurred not due to linguistic limitations, but because of expressive and aesthetic needs. In one scene, a student (RS) used Minangkabau to convey the character’s anger with emotional intensity that was difficult to achieve in English. Subsequently, she switched back to English to narrate the meaning of that action to the audience. Such instances exemplify what Fong (2019) terms translanguaging as an aesthetic practice, a multilingual practice that serves not only communicative but also aesthetic, affective, and identity functions. Within the *Randai-English* context, translanguaging thus operates both as an artistic strategy enriching dramatic expression and as a pedagogical strategy facilitating intercultural understanding.

This phenomenon illustrates how the model constructs a form of third space, a new linguistic and cultural arena where students can negotiate their linguistic identities without conforming to the monolingual norms of formal education. Within this space, English ceases to represent global dominance and instead becomes a tool for expressing local culture creatively. As one student (MR) remarked, “We feel like we’re bringing *Randai* to the world,

but still in our own voice.” Such reflections signify a paradigm shift in language learning, from linguistic assimilation to cultural empowerment. Herein lies the theoretical contribution of this model: it extends the understanding of translanguaging pedagogy by situating it in a non-Western context, where language practice is inherently tied to cultural roots, oral traditions, and communal values.

In global scholarship, translanguaging is often explored within modern urban multilingual settings such as bilingual classrooms in Europe or the United States. However, this study demonstrates that translanguaging can also emerge organically within traditional cultural spaces such as *Randai*, where performativity, social values, and communal expression are integral to communication. This enriches theoretical perspectives by positioning translanguaging not solely as a contemporary linguistic practice, but as part of a living cultural heritage that continues to evolve. Thus, the *Randai-English* model contributes not only to language learning but also to the revitalization of local culture through the medium of a second language.

Pedagogically, this model challenges conventional EFL approaches that often remain detached from learners’ social and cultural contexts. In *Randai*-based learning, students act as social participants who use language for authentic purposes: narrating, negotiating, and expressing their cultural identities. This aligns with the concept of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Bailey et al., 2020), which emphasizes that education should not merely acknowledge cultural diversity but actively sustain it through contextual and participatory learning practices. The *Randai-English* Project thus exemplifies how language education can become a practice of cultural sustainability rather than merely a process of linguistic acquisition.

Classroom observations further reveal that when students are given the space to connect language with their culture, learning dynamics become far more vibrant. During rehearsals, students discussed in mixed codes, English, Indonesian, and Minangkabau, to find the most accurate lexical choices or to unpack the moral values embedded in each scene. Such activities illustrate collaborative learning, where language functions as a tool for thought rather than solely an instrument of testing. The lecturer (SR) acted not as an authoritative center but as a co-participant guiding students’ reflection. When a student struggled to express an idiom, SR did not provide the answer immediately but encouraged the class to explore equivalent expressions in Minangkabau and then reframe them in English. This process embodies the scaffolding principle of Vygotskian theory, where learning occurs through temporary and contextual social support.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of *Randai* into English language learning through a translanguaging pedagogy has resulted in a dynamic sociocultural model of learning where language, culture, and art intertwine in meaningful educational experiences. The lecturer’s performance-based approach successfully transformed *Randai* into an authentic space for students to develop speaking, storytelling, and intercultural communication skills.

Within the bilingual Minangkabau–English performances, translanguaging emerged not as linguistic irregularity but as an artistic expression and pedagogical strategy that deepened cultural meaning, emotional resonance, and identity formation. Students demonstrated not only improved confidence in using English but also experienced identity investment, rediscovering pride in their cultural heritage through a foreign language. Despite challenges related to curricular constraints and conservative perceptions of nontraditional methods, the success of this model underscores that language learning grounded in local cultural practices can serve as an innovative alternative for language education in Indonesia. By combining traditional performing arts with translanguaging pedagogy, this study offers a new paradigm for contextual, humanistic, and sustainable language learning, a living pedagogy affirming that language is not merely learned but lived through culture.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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