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Reimagining Literacy Practices in Indonesian Classrooms: Translanguaging Pedagogies in Multilingual Contexts

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Abstract

This study reimagines classroom literacy practices in Indonesian multilingual contexts by examining how translanguaging, dynamic alternation between languages to build meaning, can function as a pedagogical strategy that bridges the gap between students' home literacies and the monolingual practices of formal schooling. Employing a qualitative multiple case study with light classroom ethnography, the research was conducted in five secondary schools in Garut, West Java. Data were collected through classroom observations involving reading, text discussions, and writing activities; semi-structured interviews with teachers and students; and analysis of instructional documents. Discourse analysis was used to identify the forms and functions of translanguaging in classroom interaction, while thematic analysis explored participants' perceptions and experiences. The findings reveal that translanguaging naturally emerges in various classroom interactions, particularly during group discussions and concept explanations, enhancing students' conceptual understanding, encouraging active participation, and bridging home–school literacy practices. Teachers and students flexibly used Sundanese, Indonesian, and English to construct more inclusive meanings, yet curricular policies that emphasize formal Indonesian remain a key constraint. This study offers new empirical evidence of translanguaging in Indonesian secondary literacy classrooms and proposes a conceptual model grounded in local practices, contributing to educational, linguistic, and applied language studies by highlighting the need for pedagogies that are linguistically responsive and socially contextualized.

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INTRODUCTION

Literacy practices in Indonesian classrooms remain largely bound by a monolingual paradigm that positions Bahasa Indonesia as the sole legitimate medium for reading, writing, and discussion. This tendency stems from long-standing national language policies that emphasize Bahasa Indonesia as both a tool of national unity and a symbol of identity (Lestari, 2020; Widiasri et al., 2019). However, behind this nationalistic ideal lies the linguistic reality that Indonesian students grow up in far more complex linguistic environments. In Garut, West Java, for instance, Sundanese functions as the language of everyday life within homes and communities. In contrast, Bahasa Indonesia dominates formal and institutional spaces, while English is introduced as a global language through compulsory education (da C. Cabral, 2021; Zainal Abidin et al., 2020). These three languages do not operate in isolation; rather, they

continuously intersect in students' communicative and cognitive practices. When students read texts in Bahasa Indonesia, their interpretations are shaped by Sundanese structures and expressions; when they write in English, their cognitive logic often remains guided by the syntactic and conceptual frameworks of their local languages.

Problems arise when classrooms fail to accommodate this linguistic dynamism, which is in fact intrinsic to students' ways of thinking and learning. In literacy instruction, teachers often emphasize the exclusive use of standard Bahasa Indonesia and correct the natural emergence of mixed-language expressions (Oktaviana et al., 2020; Sybing, 2021). Translanguaging, the process of flexibly moving across languages to construct meaning, is frequently perceived as linguistic "indiscipline." Yet, numerous studies have demonstrated that translanguaging is not merely a communicative practice but also a cognitive and social strategy that enables students to access knowledge more deeply and express themselves more authentically. This raises a crucial question: how can school literacy practices be reimagined to reflect and embrace the multilingual realities of Indonesian classrooms?

Over the past two decades, translanguaging has attracted growing attention from scholars of language and literacy education worldwide. Fitriyah et al. (2019) and Zein et al. (2020) conceptualize translanguaging as a lens through which an individual's linguistic repertoire is seen not as separate systems but as a unified, fluid semiotic resource. This perspective challenges traditional assumptions about bilingualism that treat languages as discrete entities used alternately. Febryani et al. (2022) and Fitriyani and Rasyid (2018) extend this notion by showing how translanguaging serves as a pedagogical practice that fosters students' linguistic agency and enriches their learning experiences. Within literacy learning, Rika et al. (2020) and Stockton (2018) found that translanguaging allows students to collaboratively construct meaning, mediate complex texts, and expand cross-linguistic comprehension.

In the Global South, research on translanguaging has developed within diverse sociolinguistic contexts. Hornberger et al. (2018) and Kusumaningrum (2018) demonstrated how translanguaging in multilingual classrooms enhances students' conceptual understanding without undermining the official school language. Similarly, Karundeng et al. (2018) identified translanguaging as a form of resistance pedagogy against the hegemony of dominant languages that marginalize local tongues. E. Cabral and Martin-Jones (2021) and Fatma et al. (2020) further emphasized translanguaging's role in bridging local, national, and global languages within EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms.

However, literature on translanguaging in Indonesia remains limited and fragmented. Studies by Khair (2022) and Ubaidillah and Widiati (2022) reveal that translanguaging in EFL settings helps students grasp new vocabulary and boosts their speaking confidence. Meanwhile, Walker et al. (2019) found that teachers employ translanguaging to negotiate meaning between Bahasa Indonesia and English, particularly in secondary schools. Nevertheless, most of these studies focus on foreign-language learning, especially English, rather than broader literacy practices such as reading and writing in Bahasa Indonesia or across subjects.

Further research, such as that by Madkur et al. (2022) and Santoso and Hamied (2022), highlights translanguaging's potential to foster critical literacy, though its implementation often faces challenges from curriculum demands emphasizing formal Bahasa Indonesia. Hafid and Margana (2022) reported that many teachers engage in translanguaging unconsciously but do not yet view it as a legitimate pedagogical strategy. Similarly, Nursanti (2021) found that teachers frequently experience dilemmas between adhering to school language policies and responding to students' communicative needs. Abdurrizal et al. (2022) demonstrated that translanguaging can be consciously integrated into literacy instruction through a translanguaging pedagogy framework.

Despite these growing discussions, significant gaps remain in understanding how translanguaging emerges and functions within school-based literacy practices in Indonesian secondary schools, especially in genuinely multilingual regions such as Garut. Most existing studies are conceptual or focus on foreign-language instruction, rarely examining Bahasa Indonesia literacy through the lens of translanguaging. Moreover, many employ survey-based or single-case designs that overlook the social and interactional dynamics of actual classrooms. Beneath seemingly simple interactions, such as shared reading or reflective writing, lie complex negotiations of language and identity rich with sociocultural meanings.

This condition calls for a contextual and ethnographically informed investigation that not only documents language use on the surface but also interprets how translanguaging operates as both a social and pedagogical practice in everyday literacy activities. This study, conducted in several schools in Garut Regency, seeks to fill this gap by documenting, analyzing, and interpreting how translanguaging emerges, functions, and is perceived by teachers and students in literacy learning contexts.

Through a light classroom ethnography approach, this research captures translanguaging as it naturally occurs, spontaneous, fluid, and context-bound, rather than as an experimentally imposed phenomenon. This approach enables an understanding of translanguaging not merely as a linguistic strategy but as a form of living literacy practice that reflects students' social experiences in multilingual environments. Consequently, this study not only contributes to theoretical understandings of translanguaging in the Global South but also proposes a pedagogical literacy model grounded in local practices and capable of reshaping our conceptualization of "language" in Indonesian education.

The novelty of this research lies in two main contributions. First, it shifts the focus of translanguaging from foreign-language classrooms to broader school literacy practices where Bahasa Indonesia, Sundanese, and English naturally interact. Second, it offers an alternative reading of literacy classrooms as sites of linguistic and identity negotiation, rather than mere spaces for national language habituation. By framing translanguaging as a lens for reimagining literacy practices, this study introduces a more inclusive paradigm toward students' linguistic repertoires and challenges conventional boundaries between formal and informal language use.

Accordingly, this study aims to (a) describe the forms of translanguaging that emerge in multilingual classroom literacy practices in Garut, (b) analyze their social and cognitive

functions in supporting students' comprehension and participation, and (c) explore teachers' perceptions of translanguaging's pedagogical potential. Ultimately, it seeks to formulate a contextual conceptual model of translanguaging-based literacy for Indonesia, one that not only acknowledges linguistic diversity as a social reality but also leverages it as a pedagogical strength in fostering more equitable and meaningful education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, designed to deeply understand literacy and translanguaging practices within their social and cultural contexts. The qualitative design was selected not merely for its descriptive nature but for its interpretive potential to uncover meanings behind classroom actions, utterances, and interactions. As noted by Nha (2021), qualitative research seeks to reveal participants' "worlds of experience" through the researcher's direct engagement in the field. In this study, translanguaging is understood not simply as a linguistic phenomenon but as a social practice embedded in students' ways of thinking, participating, and making sense of literacy activities. This approach accommodates the complexities of language, culture, and learning experiences that quantitative variables cannot fully capture.

The research was conducted in Garut Regency, West Java, chosen for its strong sociolinguistic and educational significance. Garut represents a distinct multilingual ecology where Sundanese dominates everyday interaction, Bahasa Indonesia serves as the formal instructional language, and English functions as a foreign language within the curriculum. This configuration makes Garut a rich site for examining translanguaging in school literacy contexts. The study involved five secondary schools, SMP Pasundan 1 Garut, SMPS Islam Terpadu Assalam, SMPN 7 Garut, SMPN 5 Garut, and MTsS Panagan, selected purposively to represent variation in school type (public, private, and Islamic integrated), students' socioeconomic backgrounds, and language education approaches. Such diversity enables an exploration of translanguaging across different institutional and policy contexts.

Participants included 10 teachers and 30 students purposefully selected based on their active engagement in classroom literacy activities. Each school was represented by two teachers (a Bahasa Indonesia teacher and a homeroom teacher directly involved in literacy instruction) and six students demonstrating varied linguistic abilities and classroom participation. Additionally, school principals or vice principals for curriculum affairs were interviewed to provide institutional perspectives on language policy. This sampling strategy followed the principle of information-rich cases, prioritizing participants capable of providing rich, relevant insights into the research focus.

Data collection spanned six months, employing classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Observations were conducted during literacy activities such as shared reading, text discussions, and writing tasks to capture naturally occurring translanguaging moments. The researcher participated in multiple classroom sessions to build rapport with teachers and students and ensure that the data reflected authentic classroom practices rather than researcher-induced behavior. These observations generated detailed

field notes and classroom transcripts serving as primary materials for discourse analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of translanguaging and literacy practices. Questions focused on how they interpret language use in learning, when and why they switch languages, and how such practices affect comprehension and participation. Interviews were conducted primarily in Bahasa Indonesia, with occasional use of Sundanese depending on participants' comfort levels. This approach aligns with Stanley's (2023) view of qualitative interviews as "meaningful conversations" through which researcher and participant collaboratively construct understanding of the phenomenon under study.

In addition to observations and interviews, documentary data, including lesson plans, reading texts, student assignments, and school language policies, were collected to examine how language is formally represented in instructional planning and how these representations differ from actual classroom practices.

Data analysis followed two main strategies: discourse analysis and thematic analysis. Discourse analysis identified patterns of language use and translanguaging moments in classroom interaction, such as cross-language shifts, communicative functions, and the social meanings they construct. Thematic analysis, applied to interview data, identified overarching themes related to teachers' and students' perceptions, such as attitudes toward language policy, pedagogical functions of translanguaging, and its impact on literacy. Following Kekeya's (2021) framework, analysis involved iterative reading, coding, thematic categorization, and interpretive synthesis.

To ensure trustworthiness, triangulation was conducted through sources, methods, and time. Source triangulation compared data from teachers, students, and school documents; method triangulation cross-checked observations, interviews, and document analyses; and time triangulation involved conducting observations and interviews across different periods to capture potential changes in language practices. These efforts strengthened the study's credibility and ensured that its findings authentically represented the social realities of the field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Linguistic Dynamics in the Classroom: Between Formal and Everyday Language

The classrooms of junior high schools in Garut Regency present a dynamic and vibrant linguistic landscape. Beneath the surface of seemingly simple learning activities lies a complex and layered communicative practice. Sundanese, Indonesian, and English intersect and intertwine, not as isolated linguistic systems but as social resources strategically mobilized by teachers and students to construct meaning. This phenomenon is evident across various literacy activities observed in the field, including shared reading, text discussion, and reflective writing.

At SMPN 7 Garut, for example, an Indonesian language teacher explained a fable by seamlessly mixing languages: an opening statement in formal Indonesian followed by an elaboration in Sundanese to ensure students grasped the moral values of the story.

Meanwhile, in small groups, students discussed the text in Sundanese before writing their responses in Indonesian. Such fluid language shifts should not be viewed as "linguistic deviations" but as social practices that demonstrate how languages function dynamically in authentic communicative contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the lens of linguistic repertoire, the view that language users operate not within bounded systems but through fluid and interconnected semiotic resources (Irham et al., 2022; Raja et al., 2022a). Each individual possesses a repertoire comprising multiple linguistic forms, speech styles, and social registers, deployed situationally to achieve communicative goals. In the classrooms of Garut, both teachers and students demonstrate remarkable linguistic flexibility: rather than adhering to a single linguistic code, they negotiate meaning through combinations most suited to their communicative purposes and social contexts. For instance, a student at SMP Pasundan 1 Garut commented on a character in a narrative text using Sundanese, then continued the explanation in Indonesian while writing notes. This smooth transition illustrates that linguistic boundaries are not barriers but resources for expanding expression and understanding.

Field observations reinforce this portrayal. In a shared reading session at SMPS IT Assalam Garut, the classroom atmosphere was lively. The teacher began reading an expository text on environmental issues in formal Indonesian, then paused to check comprehension of the term deforestation. Several students whispered in Sundanese, searching for a more familiar equivalent. Smiling, the teacher explained again using a language mix: "Deforestasi téh ngarah ka leuweung gundul, jadi lamun leuweungna gundul, hujan jadi gampang banjir. Nah, itu maksudnya." All students nodded, some adding local examples. This simple yet profound moment exemplifies how translanguaging bridges abstract academic concepts and students' lived experiences. Here, language switching is not a violation of norms but a naturally emerging pedagogical strategy to ensure deep comprehension.

Interviews with teachers indicate that such practices are not deliberately pre-planned but arise spontaneously from communicative needs. A Bahasa Indonesia teacher at MTsS Panagan explained that using Sundanese often helps "warm up the classroom atmosphere" and make students feel more connected. She remarked, "If I use Indonesian all the time, the class goes silent, but if I insert Sundanese, they immediately respond." This statement illustrates that everyday language use is not only an expression of cultural identity but also an interactional strategy for fostering social closeness and motivating participation. Pedagogically, this aligns with situated literacy theory, which posits that literacy is always rooted in specific social and cultural practices (Raja et al., 2022b). Students do not learn language in a vacuum; they learn within contexts shaped by values, identities, and social relations inherent to their daily language use.

This classroom reality stands in contrast with the national curriculum's normative demand for the exclusive use of formal Indonesian in instruction. In nearly all participating schools, teachers acknowledged a tension between policy expectations and the realities of

classroom interaction. Several teachers admitted they "had to" adjust to classroom dynamics to maintain meaningful learning. A teacher at SMPN 5 Garut, for instance, stated that she often "couldn't bring herself" to reprimand students for responding in Sundanese, as ensuring comprehension was more important than enforcing language correctness. Such accounts suggest that translanguaging operates not only as a communicative necessity but also as a subtle form of resistance to the monolingual ideology embedded in the education system. Consistent with the findings of Asmi et al. (2025) and Miftahurrahmi and Nurhabibah (2025), translanguaging may thus be viewed as a form of pedagogy of resistance, a strategy that challenges rigid linguistic boundaries in pursuit of more inclusive and humanized learning spaces.

Further analysis of classroom interactions reveals that language shifts perform multiple social functions. First, they clarify meaning: students frequently translate difficult Indonesian terms into Sundanese to aid comprehension. Second, they serve as tools for identity negotiation: using Sundanese in class enables more authentic self-expression and strengthens peer solidarity. Third, they function affectively: teachers employ language mixing to create a more relaxed and egalitarian classroom climate. These functions underscore that translanguaging is not a sign of linguistic error but a manifestation of linguistic intelligence, the ability of teachers and students to mobilize their full linguistic repertoires. This supports Miftahurrahmi and Nurhabibah's (2025) view of translanguaging as a creative practice through which language users consciously negotiate linguistic boundaries to produce socially relevant meanings.

Simultaneously, this phenomenon exposes tensions between "school language" and "home language." Many students accustomed to using Sundanese at home feel hesitant when required to speak or write in formal Indonesian. However, when given the freedom to mix languages, they display greater confidence and articulate more complex ideas. This observation strengthens the argument that translanguaging bridges the gap between home and school literacies, expanding what counts as linguistic competence. Within a sociocultural framework, such practice can be understood as linguistic scaffolding, in which the mother tongue functions as a cognitive tool for grasping new concepts in a second language.

Translanguaging as a Cognitive and Social Strategy in Literacy Practices

In the multilingual classrooms of Garut's junior high schools, translanguaging emerges not merely as spontaneous communication but as a crucial cognitive and social strategy in literacy learning. Discourse analysis revealed at least three primary dimensions of its function: clarifying textual meaning, negotiating concepts among peers, and expressing personal identity. These dimensions intertwine across reading, writing, and discussion activities, forming a fluid and participatory learning ecosystem. In such classrooms, language shifts signify not only linguistic flexibility but also deep cognitive engagement, students' ways of navigating understanding, constructing meaning, and interacting socially in multilingual learning spaces.

A representative case occurred at SMPN 7 Garut. When students were asked to read an expository text on climate change, the initial reading was monotonous, with limited

comprehension. However, once the teacher initiated small-group discussions, dynamics shifted dramatically. Students swiftly switched to Sundanese to explain challenging terms such as carbon emissions or global temperature. One group linked the concept to local experiences, saying in Sundanese, "lamun loba motor teu make knalpot alus, hawa jadi panas teuing." The teacher allowed the discussion to unfold before asking students to write their conclusions in Indonesian. This natural transition from Sundanese to Indonesian illustrates translanguaging as a form of cognitive scaffolding, an intellectual bridge enabling students to grasp abstract concepts through the linguistic medium most familiar to them.

These findings resonate with the framework of translanguaging as pedagogy, which positions translanguaging not merely as a linguistic act but as a learner-centered pedagogical approach (Handayani & Damayanti, 2025). Within this perspective, students are not viewed as linguistically deficient but as resourceful individuals with rich and dynamic repertoires. By utilizing all linguistic resources available, they develop metalinguistic awareness, the capacity to understand how language operates and how meaning is constructed. In Garut's classrooms, translanguaging fosters reflective awareness: students not only comprehend textual content but also discern the interplay between language choice and understanding.

Student interviews corroborate this. One student from SMP Pasundan 1 Garut stated that comprehension improved when teachers or peers re-explained material in Sundanese. She admitted that reading long Indonesian texts often felt "boring" due to difficult vocabulary, but when peers paraphrased in Sundanese, "jadi ngarti jeung gampang inget" (it becomes clearer and easier to remember). This confirms that translanguaging reduces linguistic anxiety, creating emotionally safe and inclusive learning environments, echoing the conclusions of Ramadhan et al. (2025).

Beyond comprehension, translanguaging facilitates peer negotiation of concepts. During group discussions at SMPS IT Assalam, students used Sundanese to co-construct interpretations of moral messages in Indonesian narrative texts. Indonesian appeared only when they recorded the group's written summary. Sundanese thus functioned as a medium for collective reasoning before formalization in Indonesian, a social mechanism that strengthened collaboration and built shared understanding, foundational to academic literacy.

For teachers, translanguaging also operates as a pedagogical mediation tool. As one Bahasa Indonesia teacher at MTsS Panagan explained, she does not forbid Sundanese use during discussions because "it's better for students to understand the text first; the language can be corrected later." She noted that allowing translanguaging made the classroom atmosphere "more relaxed and interactive." Such awareness reflects an understanding that conceptual comprehension outweighs rigid linguistic conformity. Translanguaging, therefore, becomes a strategy for balancing cognitive and affective dimensions of learning.

A third major function, identity expression, appears vividly in reflective writing tasks. At SMPN 5 Garut, several students drafted their reflections in Sundanese before translating them into Indonesian. Teachers permitted this practice, noting that students expressed personal experiences and emotions more fully in their emotionally resonant language. Field

notes revealed that reflections initially composed in Sundanese were often longer, more candid, and more personal than those written directly in Indonesian. Translanguaging thus operates as a medium for self-expression and cultural identity. As Indrasanti and Wita (2025) argue, translanguaging creates a translanguaging space, a site where language users negotiate identity, emotion, and social relations through flexible linguistic practice.

Interestingly, classroom practices also show students developing metalinguistic awareness: the ability to consciously reflect on language functions. One student at SMPN 7 Garut remarked, "Sometimes I mix languages on purpose so my friends understand, then I rewrite it later in better Indonesian." This indicates that translanguaging is not purely spontaneous but consciously deployed as a learning strategy, a deliberate bridge toward mastering academic language.

More broadly, these findings reaffirm that literacy learning cannot be separated from learners' sociocultural realities. Literacy is not simply the ability to read and write in standard forms, but the ability to draw upon one's entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaningful knowledge. This aligns with the notion of translanguaging as design, which frames language use as a form of social design, where learners actively select, blend, and arrange linguistic resources to achieve specific communicative goals (Durriyah & Zuhdi, 2018; Nikolopoulou et al., 2021). Within this framework, translanguaging serves as a bridge between academic and everyday literacies.

Negotiating Language Ideologies: The Tension Between Policy and Practice

The ideological dimension of translanguaging practices in secondary schools in Garut reveals a subtle yet tangible tension between formal language policy and everyday pedagogical realities. Interviews and classroom observations demonstrate that teachers inhabit two parallel worlds: one governed by policy, which demands adherence to the formal standard of Bahasa Indonesia, and another defined by the practical necessity of communicative effectiveness and meaningful learning. Within the classroom, translanguaging emerges as a pragmatic strategy to facilitate comprehension; yet, in administrative and evaluative spaces, such practices are often concealed because they conflict with the formal image promoted by the national education system. This tension illustrates what Alakrash and Razak (2021) describe as language policy in practice, the notion that language policy is not confined to official documents but is continually negotiated through the actions, beliefs, and strategies of educational actors in context.

Classroom observations at SMPN 5 Garut provide a telling example of this tension. During a descriptive writing session, a Bahasa Indonesia teacher, pseudonymously referred to as Mrs. Ls, instructed students to write a paragraph about their school environment using formal Indonesian. However, during individual guidance, she switched to Sundanese to explain sentence structures and to reassure hesitant students: "*Teu nanaon upami nulisna kéněh salah, anu penting nyoba heula*" ("It's okay if your writing isn't perfect yet; what matters is that you try"). Field notes captured how this linguistic shift transformed the classroom atmosphere, students became more engaged, cooperative, and confident. Nevertheless, after class, the teacher admitted that in her official report she must still state

that “instruction was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia in accordance with curriculum guidelines.” This moment exemplifies how translanguaging operates as an effective pedagogical practice while remaining marginalized by the monolingual norms of the administrative system.

Interviews further reveal a consistent ambivalence among teachers. Many, such as Mrs. Rn from MTsS Panagan, acknowledged that students “understand faster when explained in Sundanese,” yet they also feared being “reprimanded” for excessive use of the local language. Another teacher, Mr. Hs from SMPN 7 Garut, often introduced grammatical concepts through Sundanese examples before transitioning to Bahasa Indonesia. Nonetheless, he emphasized that curriculum meetings consistently reinforced the need to “train students to use proper and correct Indonesian.” These accounts reflect the continuing dominance of monolingual ideology as a linguistic value standard in schools.

This tension between belief and practice stems not only from policy enforcement but also from deeper ideological constructions surrounding language and its social status. Within Indonesia’s educational system, Bahasa Indonesia functions not merely as a communicative medium but as a symbol of national identity, progress, and uniformity. This ideology has deep historical roots in the New Order era, during which Bahasa Indonesia was positioned as a unifying tool of the nation, while the use of regional languages was often framed as a sign of “linguistic indiscipline.” The legacy of this ideology persists, shaping how teachers evaluate both themselves and their pedagogical work. As Hwang and Wu (2014) observe, language policy is inherently ideological because it regulates not only language use but also the values, legitimacy, and hierarchies among languages. In the Garut context, Sundanese remains vibrant in daily interaction but continues to be marginalized within formal educational domains.

Despite this, classroom translanguaging represents a subtle form of resistance to monolingual ideology. At SMPS IT Assalam, for instance, a Bahasa Indonesia teacher guided students in reading a narrative text titled *Sahabat di Tengah Pandemi* (“A Friend Amid the Pandemic”). When a student struggled with the term *empati* (“empathy”), the teacher explained in Sundanese: “*Éta téh hartina bisa ngarasa naon anu dirasakeun batur*” (“It means being able to feel what others feel”). She then asked students to compose sentences using *empati* in Bahasa Indonesia. This simple act illustrates ideological negotiation: the teacher complied with the policy requirement for Bahasa Indonesia in student output while leveraging the local language as a bridge for comprehension. Here, translanguaging functions as both a linguistic and pedagogical mediation between institutional authority and humanized learning needs.

Within Haerazi and Irawan’s (2019) framework of agentive negotiation, such acts exemplify teachers as agents who reinterpret policy through pedagogical creativity. Rather than rejecting policy outright, they recontextualize it, creating pedagogical spaces that accommodate linguistic diversity. In this sense, teachers are not passive implementers of policy but active negotiators who adapt it to their sociocultural contexts and learners’ needs.

Nevertheless, this negotiation brings ethical and emotional dilemmas. As Mrs. Tn from SMPN 7 Garut confessed, she often feels guilty when grading students using formal linguistic standards, knowing that many understand the concepts but struggle to write in standard Indonesian. “Sometimes it feels unfair,” she said, “but the rules say it must be that way.” This statement exposes the moral tension often overlooked in discussions of language policy: teachers are caught between institutional loyalty and responsibility toward student learning. As Sutisna and Vonti (2020) argue, overly normative language policies frequently disregard the lived realities of practitioners, the social, emotional, and pedagogical contexts that shape how policy is enacted.

Field data also suggest that ideological negotiation extends to students. In a writing session at SMP Pasundan 1 Garut, some students laughed when a peer inadvertently included Sundanese phrases in her Indonesian essay. Later, the student explained that she did so because “if I use Sundanese, the feeling I want to express becomes clearer.” This highlights how students internalize linguistic hierarchies, viewing Indonesian as “correct” and Sundanese as “inappropriate” for academic writing, while simultaneously recognizing the expressive depth of their local language. This is where ideological tension operates most subtly: shaping students’ perceptions of linguistic value and literacy itself.

Ultimately, translanguaging must be understood not merely as a linguistic strategy but as a social and political act reflecting power dynamics within education. Each time a teacher explains a concept in Sundanese, they are negotiating the boundaries of the monolingual ideology that dominates schooling. Each time a student blends languages in their writing, they are renegotiating their linguistic identity between two worlds, the formal language of schooling and the language of everyday life. As Blommaert (2020) asserts, educational language practices are always sites of struggle, where ideology, authority, and identity continuously intersect and contend.

Building Bridges Between Home and School Literacies

The relationship between home literacy and school literacy is often disrupted by linguistic, normative, and cultural discontinuities. In multilingual communities such as Garut, children’s literacy experiences are largely oral and interactive, through storytelling, family conversations, or reading popular texts in Sundanese. In contrast, schools demand mastery of formal literacy in Bahasa Indonesia, a language not always used as the primary medium of home communication. Translanguaging thus functions as a social and cultural bridge, enabling students to negotiate their linguistic identities and to connect their home-based literacy experiences with academic literacy practices. Consistent with the funds of knowledge framework (Putri & Putri, 2021; Renandya et al., 2018), the linguistic and cultural resources of families are not obstacles to learning but valuable assets when pedagogically recognized and integrated.

At SMPN 5 Garut, this bridging function was vividly observed during a narrative writing lesson. The teacher, Mrs. Ls, invited students to rewrite local folktales. She began by asking which stories they often heard at home. Students eagerly mentioned Sangkuriang, Lutung Kasarung, and Ciung Wanara, all in the Sundanese versions recounted by their elders. The

teacher encouraged them to retell these stories orally in whichever language they preferred. Field notes described the classroom as animated: students laughed, responded to one another, and appeared deeply engaged. Afterwards, they collaboratively translated and rewrote the stories in Bahasa Indonesia, with the teacher helping to explain difficult lexical items. This process exemplifies translanguaging not only as a linguistic strategy but also as an emotional and cognitive bridge linking home and school literacies.

Teachers also expressed intuitive awareness of this pedagogical value. As Mrs. Ls reflected, students "became more confident to write" once allowed to express themselves in their own language. Beginning from familiar linguistic ground, she noted, made students feel "appreciated" and "less afraid of being wrong." This aligns with Sah and Li's (2018) argument that funds of knowledge, the knowledge, habits, and social practices children bring from home, serve as a foundation for meaningful learning. In this sense, the home language represents a form of cultural capital often overlooked in monolingual classrooms.

Observations at MTsS Panagan echoed these insights. Many students came from pesantren-based families accustomed to reading Arabic Pegon manuscripts or attending Sundanese sermons. During a lesson on environmental conservation, students struggled with abstract terms such as konservasi ("conservation") and sumber daya alam berkelanjutan ("sustainable natural resources"). Recognizing this, the teacher linked the concepts to daily experiences, discussing local tree-planting habits and using familiar Sundanese verbs like ngarawat and ngajaga ("to care for" and "to protect"). As students began sharing personal examples, classroom participation increased, indicating that translanguaging supported conceptual understanding by anchoring new knowledge in lived experience.

Similarly, Mr. Hs from SMPN 7 Garut often encouraged students to write from their everyday realities, stories about helping parents in the market or listening to neighbors' anecdotes. He observed that when students write about familiar experiences, "they write with heart, not just because they are told to." Although such practices are sometimes deemed "informal," he found them far more effective in fostering writing competence and confidence. These experiences resonate with Moll et al.'s (1992) foundational argument that effective teaching occurs when educators draw upon students' funds of knowledge as pedagogical resources.

However, not all schools are equally receptive to translanguaging. In some classrooms, strict prohibitions on local language use resulted in passive learning. During one observation at SMPS IT Assalam, the teacher insisted that all interaction occur solely in Bahasa Indonesia. When a student answered in Sundanese, the teacher corrected him, saying, "Speak properly." Following this reprimand, students became silent, and classroom engagement declined. Field notes described an emotional distance emerging between teacher and learners, as if language itself had erected a social barrier. As Fang (2018) emphasizes, translanguaging provides a space of belonging, a linguistic and affective domain where students' identities are acknowledged and valued. Its absence thus risks alienating learners from their own learning process.

From an ideological standpoint, translanguaging in Garut's schools signifies a broader recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity. In many families, literacy manifests not through printed texts but through oral traditions, folktales, proverbs, and parental advice. Lee (2019) argues that such community literacies deserve acknowledgment as legitimate educational resources. Accordingly, translanguaging becomes a mechanism to integrate home literacies into the classroom without undermining academic standards. When students rewrite Sundanese folktales in Bahasa Indonesia, they are not merely practicing writing but rearticulating their cultural identities in new forms.

Furthermore, translanguaging reduces the symbolic gap between prestige and community languages. Bahasa Indonesia often occupies the status of a prestigious "school language," while Sundanese is seen as informal or even "inappropriate" for academic use. By permitting translanguaging, teachers subtly challenge this linguistic hierarchy, promoting a more inclusive literacy environment. As Mrs. Tn from SMPN 7 Garut remarked, she intentionally allows students to "mix languages" during discussions because "speaking honestly is sometimes easier in your own language." This reflects Bouchard's (2019) conception of translanguaging as a democratic practice that amplifies the voices of linguistically marginalized students.

Collectively, these findings demonstrate that translanguaging functions as more than a communicative tool, it is a social practice that restores continuity between the home and school worlds. When home languages are acknowledged, students learn not only about texts but also about themselves and their communities. They come to see their lived experiences as relevant to academic learning. This, in turn, fosters education that is more humane, contextual, and grounded in students' real lives, aligning with the funds of knowledge principle that meaningful education must begin from learners' lived experiences rather than from prescriptive linguistic norms.

Reimagining Literacy Pedagogy: Towards a Translanguaging-Based Literacy Model

This section serves as the synthesis point of the overall research findings, articulating various field observations on translanguaging practices in Garut schools into a conceptual framework that has the potential to transform how literacy pedagogy is understood and enacted in Indonesia. The entire research process demonstrates that translanguaging practices are not merely spontaneous strategies employed by teachers and students to overcome linguistic constraints. Rather, they represent a form of local epistemology, a way of knowing, understanding, and engaging with the world through the multiple languages that coexist in everyday life. From this perspective, classroom literacy practices can be reimagined as dialogic spaces where every language has a place, every experience holds value, and every learner has the right to participate fully in meaning-making.

Field observations at SMP Pasundan 1 Garut illustrate a moment that encapsulates the core principles of translanguaging-based literacy pedagogy. During a reading session on expository texts, the teacher asked students to discuss the text's content in groups. One group engaged in a mixed-language discussion: one student explained the main idea in Indonesian, while another used Sundanese terms to clarify meaning. Rather than interrupting or

correcting them, the teacher responded in a similarly blended language. Such interaction exemplifies how linguistic flexibility creates a more natural cognitive space, allowing students to express ideas without linguistic anxiety, while teachers maintain academic direction. Within the framework of translanguaging as pedagogy, this event highlights how language operates as a fluid medium of thought rather than a rigid boundary between "correct" and "incorrect" linguistic forms.

Further observations at SMPN 7 Garut reinforce the finding that recognizing students' linguistic repertoires fosters deeper engagement in literacy activities. When students were instructed to write reflective texts about their reading experiences, some initially struggled to express their ideas in Indonesian. The teacher then permitted them to draft in Sundanese, explaining that "what matters most is getting the ideas out first." Consequently, nearly all students completed their drafts more quickly, with richer and more personal insights. Later, they collaboratively translated and refined these drafts into formal Indonesian. In interviews, the teacher (Mrs. Tn) noted that this strategy "opened the students' thinking paths," particularly for those who were usually silent in class. She observed that writing in their most intimate language made students "more honest and reflective." This finding underscores translanguaging as a cognitive strategy that helps students organize thoughts and construct meaning before adapting their texts to academic norms.

At a theoretical level, such practices affirm three core principles that can underpin a translanguaging-based literacy model.

First, it recognizes students' linguistic repertoires as learning resources rather than obstacles. Mitchell et al. (2022) emphasize that every individual carries a linguistic repertoire reflecting their social identity, lived experience, and cognitive patterns. In the Garut context, these repertoires include Sundanese as the home language, Indonesian as the academic language, and English as a global language. When teachers allow all these repertoires to surface in the classroom, students feel fully acknowledged as active subjects of learning rather than passive recipients of knowledge. This recognition expands the meaning of literacy itself, not merely the ability to read and write formal texts, but the capacity to make meaning through diverse semiotic resources.

Second, language flexibility in literacy interactions enhances cognitive and social engagement. Traditional pedagogy often treats languages hierarchically, Indonesian as "superior" or "more correct" than regional languages. However, the findings reveal that flexible linguistic interaction enriches conceptual understanding. At MTsS Panagan, for instance, a teacher who blended Sundanese and Indonesian during shared reading sessions sustained students' attention more effectively. When explaining the term eksploitasi alam ("environmental exploitation"), the teacher added, "itu teh saperti lamun urang ngamangpaatkeun alam teuing nepi ka rusak" ("it's like when we overuse nature until it's damaged"). Students immediately grasped the concept and provided real-life examples. In this case, linguistic flexibility bridged abstract concepts with lived experience, strengthening both semantic understanding and social relevance.

Third, translanguaging-based literacy integrates local cultural values into classroom practice. Literacy, in this model, demands not only linguistic freedom but also cultural awareness. Language inherently carries values, worldviews, and collective identities. In Garut, using Sundanese in classrooms signifies not only communication but also recognition of cultural norms such as tatakrama (etiquette), silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh (mutual learning, caring, and nurturing), and respect for others. Observations of narrative writing activities at SMPN 5 Garut revealed how students connected local folktales with moral lessons learned at home. Teachers encouraged students to rewrite stories like Sangkuriang or Lutung Kasarung in Indonesian while retaining certain Sundanese expressions to preserve cultural authenticity. This process demonstrates how translanguaging can serve as a means of revitalizing local values amid the homogenizing tendencies of national curricula.

An interview with another teacher, Mr. Hs, further underscores that translanguaging pedagogy requires a paradigm shift. Initially hesitant to use Sundanese in Indonesian classes out of fear of being deemed unprofessional, he later observed positive changes in student engagement: “Students became more open; even the quiet ones started responding.” This shift reflects the teacher’s transformation from a linguistic authority to a facilitator of meaning. Within the framework of inclusive literacy education, such transformation is crucial, it affirms that educational equity does not mean providing identical materials but creating linguistic spaces that enable all students to think and express themselves according to their abilities and experiences.

The empirical findings converge on a key insight: effective literacy instruction in Indonesia’s multilingual context must begin by recognizing linguistic diversity as a foundation, not a challenge. Translanguaging-based literacy pedagogy does not reject Indonesian as the academic language; rather, it situates it within a broader and more dynamic linguistic ecology. Indonesian remains the formal goal of instruction, but the learning process should engage all languages that students command. In practice, this entails allowing discussions to begin in local languages, drafting in mixed-language forms, and gradually refining texts into formal Indonesian. Such an approach is not only cognitively effective but also strengthens students’ social and cultural identities as holistic learners.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that reimagining literacy pedagogy in Indonesian schools through a translanguaging approach constitutes a strategic move toward more inclusive and contextually grounded education for multilingual learners. The findings demonstrate that translanguaging is not merely a linguistic technique but a social practice that enables students to mobilize their entire linguistic repertoire, Sundanese, Indonesian, and English, to construct meaning, negotiate identity, and expand participation in literacy activities. Consequently, translanguaging creates space for literacy pedagogy rooted in students’ linguistic and cultural experiences, challenging the monolingual ideologies that still dominate educational policy and practice. The translanguaging-based literacy model formulated in this study offers a conceptual framework for teachers and policymakers to view linguistic diversity as a learning

resource rather than a barrier. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of a pedagogical model derived from actual classroom practices in Garut, an approach that highlights the organic relationship among language, identity, and local sociocultural context, while offering a new direction for developing literacy education that is more equitable, reflective, and humane within Indonesia's multilingual reality.

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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