



## Article

# Pedagogical Translanguaging by EFL Teachers in English Classes in Vietnam

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## A B S T R A C T

This study was undertaken to explore the ways EFL teachers used translanguaging between English and Vietnamese in their classes at a university context. Specifically, it aimed to document the alignment of translanguaging theory with classroom evidence in response to calls for research in this direction. A mixed methods design was adopted to conduct the study. Data were collected from two sources: recorded classroom observations in the natural EFL classes in Vietnam and stimulated recall interviews. The stimulated recall interviews with EFL teachers were carried out when the recording had been completed and extracts of the teachers' translanguaging reviewed. The extracts indicate that during their English teaching, the EFL teachers employed translanguaging frequently to manage classroom activities, provide emotional support, and encourage students' participation. Besides, the stimulated recall interviews reveal that the teachers translanguaged purposefully to scaffold students with English vocabulary and grammar. They also switched between the two languages to create humor and foster a friendly classroom environment to make students feel comfortable during learning. Their use of translanguaging was found to facilitate students' metalinguistic awareness and learning new concepts in the English lessons. Overall, the findings from both sources complement each other, revealing the purposeful translanguaging of the teachers for both teaching and managing classes. The study's findings contribute to supporting intentional translanguaging in context-sensitive language instruction. In addition, the results provide practical implications for EFL teachers to employ translanguaging to assist students in their English learning and more importantly to teach more effectively. The findings also suggest implications for policies embracing the use of L1 intentionally when needed by both EFL teachers and students.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging has been recognized as a tool to support language instruction because it acts as a holistic linguistic system fostering multilingual learners' creativity, critical thinking, and full linguistic potential (Wei, 2022). Moreover, translanguaging has been found to enhance students' comprehension and participation as well as other pedagogical functions, and general pedagogical functions (Escobar, 2019; Thongwichit & Ulla, 2024; Wei, 2022). However, the questions remain: Do EFL teachers consciously or unconsciously

utilize translanguaging, and how does this practice impact target language learning? In this context, research examining the alignment of translanguaging theory with empirical classroom evidence has been called for (Cummins, 2021; Lem, 2025; Tian & Li, 2024; Thongwichit & Ulla, 2024; Xin & Yap, 2025).

The concept of translanguaging was introduced by Williams (2000) in Welsh-English bilingual programs with the purpose of revitalizing the Welsh language. Gradually, it has been used to refer to the switching of languages of multilingual and

immigrant-background students whose education has traditionally focused on the dominant societal language (e.g., Cummins, 2021; Palsrud & Rosén, 2020). Translanguaging can be used intentionally to help students explore their linguistic repertoire, thereby promoting multilingualism (Guan, 2023).

The use of translanguaging in language classrooms is controversial. Yuvayapan (2019) argues that its overuse affects societal expectations related to target language education. Rabbidge (2019) points out that translanguaging limits users' creative and critical thinking; thus, it should not be used in the classroom (Sobkowiak, 2022). Moreover, Ngo (2025) finds that competent language users consider translanguaging to be time-consuming.

In the context of Vietnam, Lem (2025) and Pham and Vu (2023) have found that translanguaging facilitates comprehension and decreases learner anxiety in speaking English. However, Pham and Vu (2023) argue that purposeful translanguaging benefits both teachers and learners. Vietnamese is considered a helpful language for learners to learn the target language. Hence, translanguaging scaffolds learners to naturally utilize all their linguistic resources in both L1 and the target language. It can serve as a tool for cognitive and academic development (Khairunnisa & Lukmana, 2020) and free expression in communication (Guo, 2023).

Several studies found that translanguaging serves cognitive scaffolding in explaining difficult grammar, vocabulary, or cultural concepts (Pham & Vu, 2023). It also provides effective support to build rapport and create a comfortable and joyful learning environment (Guan, 2023). Teachers' use of translanguaging contributes to promoting students' participation, as students can utilize their existing language knowledge to participate more actively in classroom discussions (Guan, 2023). Other functions of translanguaging include fostering students' knowledge of how languages work (Cenoz & Santos, 2020). Salimi et al. (2024) investigated translanguaging practices among teachers in Iran. The results show that teachers are aware of using translanguaging in their classes. In these studies, translanguaging pedagogy serves as a scaffolding mechanism, enabling teachers to activate students' pre-existing linguistic abilities and enhance their proficiency in the English

language.

Furthermore, some current research has also reported that teachers scaffold students' language learning. Daniel et al. (2019) focus on scaffolding through translanguaging. The results indicate that the use of planned strategies provides interactional support to students. Other studies (e.g., Tai & Wei, 2021; Wei & Garcia, 2022) focus on learners in multilingual contexts. They point out that translanguaging in multilingual contexts can act as a pedagogical tool that mediates students' existing knowledge and resources in the languages they use. In another study by Wang (2022), the findings indicate that translanguaging can improve students' understanding and lead to higher levels of knowledge processing. Scaffolding via translanguaging is also viewed as an educational method because it enables students to utilize their linguistic repertoire in learning (Henderson & Sayer, 2019). When translanguaging, students establish connections between L1 and L2 concepts, which fosters a deeper comprehension of the target language. In a similar vein, Escobar (2019) finds that translanguaging explicitly encourages students to use their full linguistic repertoire, including Spanish and the target language, to discuss. Besides, translanguaging supports students with meaning-making and fosters engagement.

The reviewed studies indicate that the general pedagogical functions of translanguaging have been identified; however, it is essential to implement in-depth qualitative studies that explore the adoption of translanguaging strategies in EFL contexts to understand *how* and *why* certain practices are effective in particular settings (Lem, 2025). Additionally, exploring translanguaging and its influence on the learning of linguistic features, such as specific vocabulary domains, grammar, and specialized concepts, will provide a deeper understanding of translanguaging's efficacy and offer practical implications for this pedagogical strategy. The current research focuses on

While extant studies have outlined the primary pedagogical functions of translanguaging, there remains a critical need for in-depth qualitative research examining the implementation of translanguaging strategies in EFL settings to elucidate the mechanisms and rationales behind their effectiveness in specific contexts (Lem, 2025). Moreover, investigating the effects of

translanguaging on the acquisition of linguistic elements—such as domain-specific vocabulary, grammar, and specialized concepts—would afford deeper insights into its pedagogical efficacy and yield practical recommendations for its application.

The current research aims to bridge these gaps by integrating translanguaging as both a pedagogical approach and an analytical perspective to comprehensively understand its interplay with L2 motivation, vocabulary learning, and teacher-student interactions in EFL contexts. The research questions guiding this study investigate the methodologies employed by English as a Foreign Language teachers in their use of translanguaging within classroom settings, specifically asking how teachers' translanguaging practices influence students' L2 motivation and vocabulary acquisition, and how teacher-student interactions manifest within translanguaging-oriented EFL classrooms. The findings of this research will contribute to addressing the theoretical gaps in L2 vocabulary instruction, which have often been overlooked in practical classroom implementation and non-verbal dynamics.

## II. METHODS

### Study Design

The study adopted the qualitative approach with video-recorded classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews (SRIs). The actual practices of translanguaging are recorded and SRIs allow the teachers to reflect on their translanguaging use and the pedagogical intentions of the strategy (Daniel et al., 2019; Tai & Wei, 2021). The triangulation of data sources aim to obtain a rich understanding of how translanguaging was enacted in practice and why and how teachers used it.

### Participants

Ten teachers consented to participate in the study. The sample comprised eight females and two males who were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in terms of teaching experience and academic qualifications. All of them were currently teaching English to university students who were not majoring in English. The teachers had at least two years of experience, with most having taught for over six years. The majority held a Master's degree in TESOL or Applied Linguistics, while some were pursuing or had completed doctoral studies. The teachers were

informed of the study's purposes and agreed to be recorded in their classroom teaching and SRIs.

### Data Collection

The study's data were collected from recorded classroom observations and interviews with the teachers. The recordings served to identify episodes and the pedagogical functions of translanguaging used by the teachers. Each full lesson, lasting approximately two hours and thirty minutes, was recorded to ensure data richness. A total of ten lessons were collected and later used as the basis for the SRIs.

The teachers were teaching their classes as usual and were video recorded with permission. One of the researchers sat quietly in class and used a camera to record the sessions. After the observations, the researchers invited each teacher to view the videos in the SRIs. The SRIs aim to collect the teachers' thoughts at the moments of translanguaging and explain the instructional rationale behind their language choices (Lyle, 2013; Mackey & Gass, 2016). Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and was conducted within a week following the classroom recording to enhance recall accuracy.

### Data Analysis

The recordings and interviews were transcribed by the researchers. They were read and re-read to understand how and why teachers used translanguaging in their classes. For data analysis, a coding framework was adapted from studies by Cenoz and Santos (2020), Guan (2023), Pham and Vu (2023), and Wang (2022).

The participating teachers were coded from T1 to T10 and used consistently across observation notes and interview transcripts (e.g., T1-SRI-dd mm.2024) to ensure traceability of data while maintaining participant anonymity. Extracts with translanguaging by the teachers were used for data analysis. Where the first language/Vietnamese was recorded, translation was provided in square brackets.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, data triangulation was employed by comparing and cross-verifying findings from both classroom observations and SRIs. Specifically, instances of translanguaging were first identified in the video recordings by the researchers and then examined alongside the teachers' explanations

Table 1. Coding Scheme: Pedagogical Functions of Translanguaging

| Coding Theme                                    | Explanation   | Examples from the study's data   |
|---|---|--|
| Cognitive scaffolding (Pham & Vu, 2023)         | Use of translanguaging to clarify complex grammar points, vocabulary, or cultural references.                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom observation (T2-O1): Teacher introduced “used to” in English, then explained in Vietnamese: “Nó chỉ thói quen trong quá khứ nhưng giờ không còn nữa.” [It was a habit in the past but not anymore]</li> <li>Interview (T2-SRI): “I noticed they looked confused, so I gave a short explanation in Vietnamese.”</li> </ul> |
| Affective support (Guan, 2023)                  | Reducing anxiety, building rapport, and creating a comfortable and joyful learning environment                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom observation (T4-O2): After a student gave the wrong answer, the teacher said: “Không sao đâu, em cứ thử lại nhé” [No problem, try again] before rephrasing the question in English</li> <li>Interview (T4-SRI): “They feel safer when I briefly switch to Vietnamese to encourage them”</li> </ul>                        |
| Classroom management (Wang, 2022)               | Giving instructions and managing administrative matters, especially in diverse linguistic settings                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom observation (T6-O1): Teacher said: “Bây giờ làm bài trong 10 phút nhé” [Now, please do the task in 10 minutes] before giving task instructions in English.</li> <li>Interview (T6-SRI): “It helps save time and ensure clarity when I manage the class in Vietnamese.”</li> </ul>   |
| Promoting participation (Guan, 2023)            | Encouraging students to utilize their existing language knowledge to participate more actively in classroom discussions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom observation (T7-O1): Teacher said: “Các em có thể trình bày Tiếng Việt” [First, share your ideas in Vietnamese, then we'll discuss them in English together.]</li> <li>Interview (T7-SRI): “Letting the students think in Vietnamese first boosts their confidence.”</li> </ul>   |
| Metalinguistic awareness (Cenoz & Santos, 2020) | Fostering students' understanding of how languages work and relate to each other  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom observation (T5-O1): Teacher asked: “Tiếng Việt không có thì, còn tiếng Anh thì sao?” [There is no tense in Vietnamese, how about in English?]</li> <li>Interview (T5-SRI): “I wanted them to compare how tenses function across languages.”</li> </ul>   |

of their pedagogical intentions when viewing the recorded videos. This process allowed the researchers to validate interpretations, confirm recurring themes, and address any discrepancies between observed practices and reported rationale. The verified instances were then integrated into the thematic coding framework, which included cognitive scaffolding, affective support, classroom management, promoting participation, and metalinguistic awareness. The coding scheme is summarized in Table 1.

### III. RESULT

#### EFL Teachers' translanguaging Strategies

The extracts from classroom recordings illustrate various ways in which translanguaging was integrated into teaching practices by the teachers.

##### Clarifying Vocabulary

In Extract 1, the teacher used English alongside Vietnamese to introduce and explain unfamiliar vocabulary to students.

##### Extract 1: Class Recording, T3 (15 October 2024)

T: OK, campervan [writing campervan on the board] mình che cái chữ camper ở đầu đì, còn lại chữ van ở đằng sau á thì cái chữ van này á một chiếc xe 16 chỗ mà người Mỹ họ hay dùng... người ta sẽ bố trí cái bếp, rồi là cái giường ngủ ở trong cái chiếc xe đó... nếu mà bạn vừa đi du lịch, vừa ăn uống ngủ nghỉ trong chiếc xe đó, thì cái đó là xe cắm trại.

[I cover the word ‘camper’ at the beginning, and what’s left is the word ‘van’ at the end. This word ‘van’ refers to a 16-seat vehicle that Americans often use... people will set up a kitchen and a bed inside that vehicle... if you both travel and eat, sleep, and rest in that vehicle, then that is a camper van.]

Extract 1 shows how Teacher 3 used translanguaging to support vocabulary learning. She introduced “campervan” in English, then switched to Vietnamese to explain its meaning, structure, and cultural context, making it more relatable to students. In the SRI, T3 said, “I used Vietnamese to elaborate on campervan because many students may not visualize the concept from English alone. I wanted to connect the new word to their real-life experiences and prior knowledge.” (T3-SRI, 17 October 2024). Her Vietnamese explanation helped students visualize and better understand the word, linking it to prior knowledge.

##### Explaining Grammar Points

The use of translanguaging to explain grammar points was evident in Extract 2.

##### Extract 2: Class Recording, T8 (9 November 2024)

T: So now I will highlight all the verbs... in the paragraph, and you tell me which one is... present. Lived, died, trained, worked, ah... climbed, was, was, didn't have, helped, uh... works, is... Yep! Which verbs... are in present tense? Which one?... (pointing at the slide) Here. Is [Ss: works.] and... [Ss: works.] works. *Thé còn các động từ còn lại?*... [How about the other verbs?] Phân lớn là nó đều có ed ở phía sau. Thị đó là gì? [Most of them end with ed. What tense is it?]

S: Quá khú. [past tense]

T: Quá khú, quá khú gì? [what kind of past tense?]

S: Quá khú đơn. [simple past tense]

T: (smiling) Okay! This one... We have... was born, grew up, was, had... [S: to become]. No, to become. Sau “to” thì động từ bắt buộc phải dạng... nguyên mẫu rồi... [After ‘to’, the verb must be in the base form.] Ah... gave, was, saw, [S: loved] ... loved, [S: built] ... built, good, ah... [S: wasn’t] wasn’t, [S: went] went, [S: had] had, [S: didn’t win] yah didn’t win, [S: entered] entered, um... are... Như vậy trong này chỉ có.. duy nhất [S: are] một động từ are được chia ở hiện tại còn lại đều là quá khú. Vậy cẩn cứ vào trong hai cái đoạn này thì... động từ như thế nào thì được chia ở quá khú, nó diễn tả cái gì thì nó được đặt, được chia ở quá khú. [So in this passage, there is only one verb — ‘are’ — that is in the present tense; the rest are in the past tense. Based on these two excerpts, what kind of verb is conjugated in the past tense, and what does it describe when it is used in the past tense?]

S: (...)

T: Ví dụ như là Martjan was born in Afghanistan... sinh ra ở Afghanistan. Grew up... trưởng thành lớn lên ở thủ đô... [Ss: (...)] Yup! Nó diễn tả cái gì?... [Ss: (...)] Thị nó diễn tả quá khú chứ cái gì của... yes (giggling). Yes, một hành động diễn ra hoặc là một trạng thái ở quá khú. [For example, Martjan was born in Afghanistan... born in Afghanistan. Grew up... grew up in the capital city... [Students: (...)] Yup! What does it describe?... [Students: (...)] Well, of course it describes the past... yes (giggling). Yes, an action that happened or a state in the past.] (Observation, 9 November 2024).

Later in the SRI, Teacher 8 commented: “*My students didn’t understand clearly in English, so I explained the tense in Vietnamese for them to recognize the past form and its function.*” (T8-SRI, 11 November 2024)

Extract 2 shows how Teacher 8 used translanguaging to teach English verb tenses. She began in English, then switched to Vietnamese to explain past tense forms, spelling rules like “-ed,” and grammar terms such as “quá khú đơn.” This shift helped bridge new input with students’ existing knowledge. In her SRI, she noted that Vietnamese was necessary for students to fully understand the concept.

### Providing Praises

The teachers also used translanguaging as in Extract 3 to give compliments or encourage comments.

#### Extract 3: Class Recording, T7 (5 November 2024)

T: *Very good. Mouse and horse aren’t as strong. As a lion. Very good. Yes, good sentence, three bonuses. Câu trả lời tốt, ba điểm tốt.* [A good answer, three bonus points]

As it can be seen from Extract 3, the teacher used L1 to praise students. In the SRI, she said, “*I*

*praised them in both languages. Using Vietnamese made them feel more recognized and motivated because they fully understood the praise.*” (T7-SRI, 7 November 2024).

### ***Creating Humor and Fostering a Friendly Environment***

In Extract 4 below, the teacher’s humor is realized in her use of Vietnamese and English.

#### Extract 4: Class Recording, T2 (11 October 2024)

T: She’ll be as pretty as you. Câu này có ngọt ngào không nha? Đây là khen cô này đẹp gián tiếp đúng không? [Is this sentence sweet? This is a way of indirectly complimenting the woman on her beauty, right?]

In her SRI, Teacher 2 shared: “*I used humor and Vietnamese to make grammar less dry. When they laughed, I knew they followed the idea and felt more relaxed.*” (T2-SRI, 13 October 2024). This indicates the purpose use of translanguaging by the teacher to make the class feel at ease. The fact that the students laughed suggests that her joke worked as a catalyst bringing about comfortable feelings in students.

### ***Giving Instructions and Organizing Activities***

In another recorded class, the teacher (T4) switched to Vietnamese to give instructions and organize classroom activities.

#### Extract 5: Class Recording, T4 (18 October 2024):

T: You got time to discuss with your friends and I need two groups dealing with question 20 to 22 and two are there with 23 to 25... Cho cô hai nhóm nào... làm phần từ câu 20 tới 22... nhanh lên các em... Em, please. Là 20 đến 22 đúng không?... 3 câu ha... và hai nhóm làm câu 23 đến câu 25. [“Give me two groups... work on the part from sentence 20 to 22... hurry up, everyone... You, please. It’s from 20 to 22, right?... 3 sentences, okay... and two groups work on sentence 23 to sentence 25.”]

Ss : (Discussing)

T: Now, quickly, *nhanh lên các em* [Hurry up]

Ss: (Raising hand)

T: Yes. Em, please. *Là 20 đến 22 đúng không? Okay. 23 đến 25?* [It’s from 20 to 22, right? Okay. 23 to 25?] (Choosing student)

One more? *Một nhóm nữa?* [another group] (Waiting for the students’ response)

Ss: (Raising hand)

T: Okay. 4 groups. Cô có đủ bốn nhóm cho phần này. [I got four groups for this part].

In SRI, commenting on this, Teacher 4 said: “*I started in English, but switched to Vietnamese to make sure all students got the group task correctly.*

*Otherwise, they might be confused.*" (T4-SRI, 20 October 2024). The purpose of the teacher's translanguaging was to make students understand what they ought to do. The class then ran smoothly thanks to the clear instruction from T4.

### **Encouraging Participants**

Engaging students into the lesson is what teachers usually do in the classroom. In Extract 6 below, the teacher used L1 to ask for students' opinion and attention to the lesson showed on the screen.

#### Extract 06: Class Recording, T2 (11 October 2024)

T: "On the screen, you can see some photos (pointing at the slide) of the things that appeared in your reading. So, can you find me the words to describe number one? Yah, very quick. Can I invite you? Number one. Let's see the mask. *Mask là gì?*"  
S: "Mặt nạ." [A mask]

T: "Mặt nạ. Yes, that's so good. So number 2... what word do you think is for number 2, *Suông*?"

S: "Float."

T: "Float là gì?" [What does "float" mean?]

S: "Xe hoa." [Translated into Vietnamese the meaning of a float]

T: "Yes, the float. So we have in Vietnamese, *xe hoa*..."

In this extract, T2 consistently used Vietnamese to prompt and acknowledge student contributions, switching between the L1 and L2 to co-construct meaning. This practice not only ensured comprehension but also encouraged students to speak without fear of making mistakes.

As confirmed in the SRI, T2 shared: "*This use of CS not only aids in clarifying concepts but also creates a more interactive learning environment, encouraging students to actively contribute to the discussion.*" (T2-SRI, 13 October 2024). Answering the interview, Teacher clearly explained how she scaffolded students' participation and understanding of the lesson. She also confirmed that her translanguaging aimed at creating an interactive and safe learning environment.

### **Fostering Students' Metalinguistic Awareness**

Another function of translanguaging used by the teachers in this study was to foster students' metalinguistic awareness. In Extract 7, the teacher switched between English and Vietnamese to ask for students' comparison and reflections.

#### Extract 07: Class recording T1/10 October 2024)

T: *Let's look at this word: "sympathy". It sounds like "sympathy" in Vietnamese, đúng không? [Right?] Nhung các*

*em chú ý nhé, trong tiếng Việt "sympathy" mình dùng để nói là "cảm thông", còn trong tiếng Anh, nó khác đây. Nó không giống "empathy". Sympathy nghĩa là mình cảm thấy buồn khi ai đó gặp chuyện không may.* [But please pay attention, everyone. In Vietnamese, we use 'sympathy' to mean 'cảm thông' (compassion), but in English, it's different. It's not the same as 'empathy'. 'Sympathy' means you feel sad when someone experiences something unfortunate.] (Observation, 10 October 2024)

In the SRC, T1 explained: "*I often make comparisons between English and Vietnamese when I know students are likely to misunderstand a word due to false friends. It helps them reflect on the differences between the two languages and avoid confusion*" (T1-SRI-12 October 2024). The transcript of Extract 7 and the interview indicate that the teacher used translanguaging for activate students' metalinguistic awareness. The comparison of the word "sympathy" with reference to its different meanings prompted students to do cross-linguistic contrasts.

### **Pedagogical translanguaging by EFL teachers**

#### **Engaging Students**

One pedagogical function seen from the transcript was to engage students in class activities. The teacher allowed students to think or brainstorm in Vietnamese before expressing their ideas in English as seen in Extract 6. The teacher posed a question in English, noticed hesitation, and immediately followed up in Vietnamese to draw out responses. The shift gave students a moment to process their ideas and empowered them to respond without fear of making mistakes. meaningfully to classroom activities.

#### **Classroom Management**

Besides using translanguaging to engage students into the lessons, the teachers in the study employed the strategy to implement classroom management. This happened when they wanted to give instructions, organize group activities, or conduct other administrative work. This finding is evident in Extract 5 when the teacher introduced the task in English but switched to Vietnamese for checking to ensure her students understood what they needed to do. The extracts tend to confirm the finding by Wang's (2022) study stating that translanguaging is essential for classroom management.

#### **Cognitive Scaffolding**

Scaffolding is another pedagogical function

of translanguaging by the teachers when they support students with understanding new and complex lesson contents. In other words, they were employing cognitive scaffolding (Pham & Vu, 2023) to support learners' comprehension and processing of linguistic input. Extract 1 shows that the teachers introduced new vocabulary items in English and followed up with Vietnamese explanations. This translanguaging enabled students to grasp not only the direct meanings but also how the words should be used in real life contexts.

### **Affective Support**

The teachers in this study also used Vietnamese to provide emotional support in various forms, such as encouraging nervous students, giving praise to acknowledge effort, or incorporating humor to make lessons more enjoyable. For example, in Extract 3, the teacher responded to a hesitant student with the Vietnamese phrase: “*Câu trả lời tốt, ba điểm tốt*” [a good answer, three bonus points]. In Extract 4, the humor or the teacher conveyed encouragement, creating a sense of emotional safety and motivating the student to continue engaging with the lesson. Evidence of teachers' use of encouraging and praising translanguaging in this study is in line with the findings in the study by Guan (2023) who pointed out that the strategy is needed to create affective scaffold students emotionally during lessons.

### **Metalinguistic Awareness**

The recordings reveal the last function of translanguaging which is for metalinguistic awareness or students' ability to reflect on the structure and function of language itself. Specifically, the teachers engaged students in cross-linguistic comparison to draw attention to structural or semantic differences between two languages as in the study by Cenoz and Santos (2020). In Extract 7 for instance, the teacher introduced the word *sympathy* and contrasted its use in English and Vietnamese to illustrate the concept of false friends. The teacher noted that *sympathy* in English refers to feelings of sorrow for someone's misfortune, while in Vietnamese it is often used more broadly to mean “understanding” or “cảm thông” [sympathy].

## **IV. DISCUSSION**

The findings of the study contribute to literature of the use of translanguaging in a specific

EFL context.

Surprisingly, the study found that the strategic alternation between English and Vietnamese was not random but reflected a deliberate pedagogical stance aiming at maximizing student understanding. The extracts indicate the flows of L1 use; however, the teachers in the SRIs reflect that they intentionally employed translanguaging for pedagogical purposes. This result suggests that the teachers are aware of using translanguaging in their classes as similarly found in the study by Salimi et al. (2024). More specifically, the teachers' language switch serves as a cognitive scaffolding (Pham & Vu, 2023) to enhance students' learning of difficult grammar points, vocabulary, or cultural concepts. This pedagogical function of translanguaging is even more beneficial in the EFL classrooms in Vietnam because it assists both teachers and students in language education (Pham & Vu, 2023). Since English is a foreign language in Vietnam, translanguaging between the target language and L1 by the teachers as shown in the extracts tended to foster students' knowledge of how languages work (Cenoz & Santos, 2020). In other words, the pedagogical translanguaging by the teachers in the current study reflects planned strategies serving as interactional scaffolding to students.

Another important finding of this study lies in documenting translanguaging's affective functions as indicated in Extracts 3, 4, and 6. The teachers frequently used Vietnamese to praise students when their students gave correct answers, create humor to make students laugh while learning, and foster a positive classroom atmosphere. Guan (2023) found that teachers' translanguaging promotes affective support, builds rapport, and creates a comfortable and joyful learning environment; the teachers in the current study intentionally switched to L1 for these purposes. The teachers reflected that these affective moves were employed to contribute to lowering learners' anxiety and encouraging risk-taking in language production. While the study's findings are largely consistent with international literature (e.g., Salimi et al., 2024; Leonet et al., 2024), they also offer context-specific insights into how translanguaging is enacted in Vietnamese university classrooms where the teachers and students found a sense of belonging and the students were supported by teachers' use of L1 to create rapport with the students for class participation.

It is evident from the recorded classroom extracts and the interviews with the teachers that translanguaging in the current study serves both cognitive and affective scaffolding functions. While the literature classifies two types of translanguaging, including cognitive scaffolding (e.g. Khairunnisa & Lukmana, 2020; Pham & Vũ, 2024) and affective scaffolding (e.g. Guan, 2023), the study's results indicate that both of them were used simultaneously depending on the lessons and the classroom activities in which the teachers considered that their switch to L1 facilitated students' understanding of the target language and new concepts in the lessons and feel engaged at the same time. This finding suggests the contextual factor in the classroom that stimulates how and when EFL teachers use translanguaging.

The results contribute to extend previous scholarship on translanguaging as a dynamic classroom resource (García & Wei, 2014; Pham & Vu, 2023; Tai & Wei, 2021; Wang, 2022). As reported by the teachers in SRIs, translanguaging was used purposefully to scaffold students especially in lessons with grammar structures, vocabulary, and cultural concepts that students were unable to understand deeply in English-only instruction. In other words, the teachers in this study switched to L1 when giving instructions or organizing classroom tasks, ensuring clarity and saving instructional time. This indicates that translanguaging could help students with metalinguistic awareness. The teachers also used L1 as part of classroom instruction for both cognitive and affective pedagogical functions. Cognitively, translanguaging by the teachers scaffolded students in understanding English grammar, vocabulary, and semantic matters. Affectively, the use of L1 by the teachers to make jokes, praises, and compliments to students ensured a comfortable classroom atmosphere for inclusive learning.

Nonetheless, some teachers expressed concern during interviews about students' potential overreliance on Vietnamese and the risk of undermining English output. Thus, teachers should use structured translanguaging in which Vietnamese is for meaning-making while English remains the primary language output. However, teachers should gradually reduce the use of L1 scaffolding when students have signalled capacity to do language tasks by themselves.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study explored the use of translanguaging by EFL teachers in the classrooms which served various pedagogical functions including managing the classroom, encouraging engagement, scaffolding understanding, fostering emotional support, and raising metalinguistic awareness. Given its educational values, translanguaging should be integrated into English courses in EFL contexts in general and in Vietnam in particular to explain complex concepts, scaffolding learning during group and pair work activities to reduce language anxiety and promote more inclusive participation. For other ELT contexts, translanguaging by teachers should be applied with awareness of its use as a cognitive and scaffolding tool, not as a habitual linguistic means so that both teachers and students can be engaged in the process of language education.

This study has several limitations. It is limited by its small sample size and focus on a specific Vietnamese EFL context, which may limit generalizability. Besides, it relied on qualitative methods, which might introduce interpretation bias. It is suggested that further studies should employ mixed methods design for studies on translanguaging to compare factors creating catalysts for the strategy use. Comparing translanguaging in traditional classrooms and in digital environments (Mahayanti et al., 2024) would also provide more comprehensive insights of the topic.

## CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

**Nguyen Pham Thanh Van:** Planning, literature review, data collection and analysis.

**Le Pham Hoai Huong:** Planning, discussion, and corresponding.

**Huynh Thi Long Ha:** Implications, references, and editing.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The work described has been carried out in accordance with The Code of Ethics of the World Medical Association (Declaration of Helsinki) for experiments involving humans. The participants were informed of the study's purpose and consented to participate.

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**DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS**

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

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