

## THE CONCEPT OF TEACHING ENGLISH USING THE TRANSLANGUAGING METHOD IN A RURAL SCHOOL IN KOTA MARUDU, SABAH

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### ABSTRACT

In the implementation of teaching and learning English, students often experience obstacles that delay the understanding process due to differences in the aspect of grammar. Consequently, this situation causes difficulties for students to understand English efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, students in rural schools who are more bound and exposed to their native language, adding to their difficulties in understanding and learning English vocabulary. Therefore, teachers need to use a method that can help enhancing students' understanding and performance in English. In this regard, this study aimed to examine the concept of teaching English by applying the translanguaging method in a rural school in Kota Marudu, Sabah. This study was qualitative research, and the data were collected using interviews, and observations. The research participants in the study were English teachers and Year 6 pupils. The findings revealed that several incorporated learning strategies used the translanguaging method. In addition, the use of translanguaging method also improved students' understanding and knowledge in English writing and communication skills. The study theoretically creates a new body of knowledge and serves as a pathway and guide in developing English teaching methods particularly for students in rural schools.

**Keywords:** teaching English, translanguaging method, rural school

### INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning English is a subject that has long been a challenge for teachers to teach students successfully (Tai & Li 2020). Therefore, to overcome this challenge, the use of methods and strategies that can help to improve knowledge and skills in teaching and learning English is essential (Holdway & Hitchcock, 2018; Zavala, 2019). Despite the various efforts

that have been carried out and implemented in the teaching syllabus and classroom, the percentage of students who are weak in English has not yet been fully resolved. Therefore, it needs an urgent study. In an effort to ensure that students continue to be able to overcome this problem from continuing to happen. Therefore, this method of teaching and learning in English needs to continue to be strengthened.

In previous studies, the results found that students fail to master English well and the lack interest in learning English because they find English is difficult to understand, especially for students with Bumiputera status (Pacheco, 2019; Lo, 2019). This situation occurs as these students are more exposed to their everyday language that use their native language. For this reason, it becomes a question and a challenge for teachers on how to teach English to students since they actively speak Malay and their native languages.

In relation to the issue experienced by the students who use their native language, teachers should be creative by diversifying methods of teaching and learning English. They should apply a method that can help solve the problems of teaching and learning English. Therefore, to overcome the issue within the context, a study was conducted in a rural school in Kota Marudu, Sabah. The study involved the students who are the local language speakers, who use standard Malay and their native languages which presents a challenge for them to learn English well. Since the teachers in rural schools experience the issue, this study explored the effectiveness of teaching English through the translanguaging method.

Translanguaging is a meaningful pedagogy in the use of language interchangeably in the form of speech or writing as a means of communication. 'Trans' means to go beyond or overcome. In this context, translanguaging is meant as a language teaching pedagogy that goes beyond the use of the targeted language. The use of translanguaging methods in teaching and learning English can improve students' knowledge and skills in learning English. Garcia dan Wei (2014), "Translanguaging differs from the notion of code-switching in that it refers not simply to a shift or a shuttle between two languages, but to the speakers' construction and use of original and complex interrelated discursive practices that cannot be easily assigned to one or another traditional definition of language, but that make up the speakers' complete language repertoire."

The use of translanguaging methods abroad has a significant positive effect on individuals' use of the English language. The concept of learning by using this translanguaging method should also be applied to students to help teachers improve students' understanding and development of English knowledge (Zhu & Jankowicz-Pytel, 2020). Based on this, it could be said that studying the Translanguaging in Rural Sabah: A Qualitative Study of English Teaching Practices in Kota Marudu Year-6 Classrooms is very appropriate and relevant for addressing practical challenges in English teaching and learning.

## **Research Objectives**

- i) To describe how teachers apply translanguaging when teaching English to Year 6 pupils in rural Kota Marudu.
- ii) To explore pupils perceived changes in comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and communication during translanguaging-mediated lessons.

## Research Questions

- i) How do teachers implement translanguaging during English lessons with Year 6 pupils in rural Kota Marudu?
- ii) In what ways do pupils perceive translanguaging to influence their comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and oral communication?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of translanguaging practices has been ongoing for some time. However, its application in teaching and learning English remains insufficient. This gap necessitates new research as English remains a challenging subject for students to master. Difficulties in learning English often lead to reduce interest and motivation among students to learn the language. Thus, addressing this practical gap is critical for improving English learning outcomes is very significant to increase students' knowledge in English.

There are few studies that focus on teaching methods such as conducted by Lo (2019), Karlsson et al. (2018), Lau (2019), and Lin (2019). These studies have demonstrated significant positive effects of various methods on English teaching and learning. However, these methods are not holistic, as many students still fail to master English effectively. Most successful students tend to have prior knowledge and training. However, for those lacking experience and knowledge in English, the existing methods often fail to meet their needs.

On the contrary, several studies highlight the effectiveness of using translanguaging methods in improving students' knowledge and understanding of the English language. Among these studies are those by Karlsson et al. (2019), Sherris and Adami (2019), and Tai and Li (2020). The findings of these studies indicate that the use of the translanguaging method has significantly helped individuals learn and practice English effectively. However, there are very few studies that specifically focus on the use of translanguaging methods in English learning particular for learners in rural area.

In conclusion, through the results of the synthesis from the previous studies, it has been found that research on translanguaging methods remains limited both nationally and internationally. The focus of existing studies predominantly revolves around using models, modules, and developing theoretical aspects of teaching English. However, despite the positive effects on models and modules that have been developed and implemented particularly, English is one of the most difficult subjects to master (Lau, 2019). This issue highlights the need for studies that thoroughly examine and explore effective approaches to learning English. Therefore, based on the synthesis from the findings of the previous studies, a gap was established that can be addressed by new research, which could significantly contribute to the corpus of knowledge in the field of English teaching and in translanguaging method in particular.

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research paradigm is an approach to understanding social phenomena through an emphasis on subjective meaning, experience, and individual interpretation. It is descriptive in nature, gathering in-depth data through observation and interviews, and using inductive analysis to identify themes and build understanding of the "why" and "how" research questions. Therefore, the appropriate research design used for the study of Translanguaging in Rural Sabah: A Qualitative Study of English Teaching Practices in Kota Marudu Year-6 Classrooms is to use a qualitative study.

In the context of qualitative research done by using purposive sampling Purposive sampling is a method in research where the researcher selects respondents specifically based on certain characteristics that are relevant to the purpose of the study, which in this study the researcher has determined a total of 6 research participants consisting of students who have been taught using the translanguaging method and already have a lot of experience and knowledge in the English language, especially in the aspect of essays and oral communication.

Two data collection methods were used: interviews and observations. Data analysis was conducted manually by categorizing interview results into themes to address the study's objectives. The interview method is a way of collecting data through conversation between the researcher and the respondent. There are three main types: structured (fixed questions), unstructured (flexible), and semi-structured (mix of both). This method allows the acquisition of in-depth information, opinions, and feelings of respondents directly through verbal interaction. In the implementation of this study interviewing students with semi-structured questions, the purpose is to obtain in-depth information regarding the extent to which this method of translanguaging helps them in learning English. In using the interview method, the researcher uses notes and recordings to obtain information from the students.

The observational method is a technique of collecting qualitative data by directly observing the behavior of the study subjects. There are two main types, namely participant observation (the researcher participates in the activity) and non-participant observation (the researcher only observes). It provides detailed information but can be affected by observer bias. In the context of this study, the researcher used observations outside the classroom to see the extent of students' knowledge and skills after using the translanguaging method. The protocol for making observations involves four main steps: preparation, implementation, recording, and data analysis. These steps ensure careful and systematic observation, including determining the objective of the observation, choosing an appropriate method (such as a checklist or interview), recording the data in detail, and then developing and analyzing the data. In this observation method, all students' development will be recorded starting from oral communication, writing and showing their ability in speaking English.

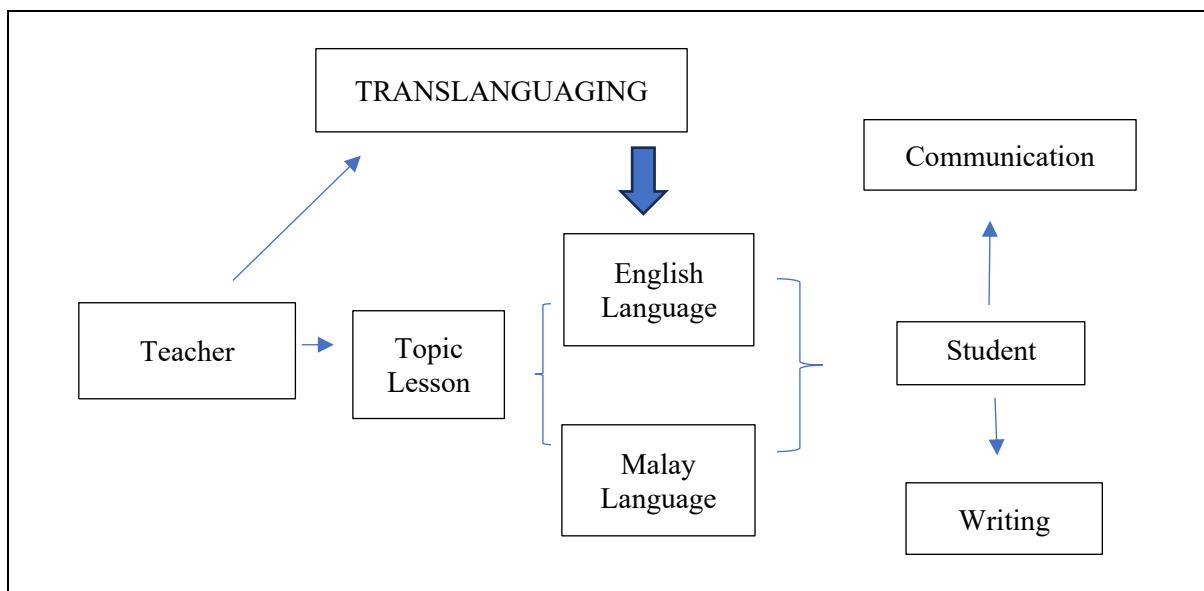
In the context of research ethics, the interview participants including school teachers will be given confidence that the information in this study will only be used for research purposes only. At the same time, they are also assured that their identity will also be kept confidential in order to maintain the safety and confidentiality of the study participants. The purpose is to provide comfort and avoid various questions that are the concern of the study participants involved in making this study a success.

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to discover patterns of meaning in data, by identifying, analyzing and reporting themes within it. This method is not tied to strict categories and allows researchers to explore the hidden meaning behind the data. In the context of this study, this thematic analysis was carried out by comparing the answers between all study participants. In the thematic analysis process, investigators carry out the process by following the first process: Getting to know the data: Reading and familiarizing themselves with the data thoroughly. Second Generate initial codes: Generate descriptive initial codes from the data. Third: Looking for themes: Grouping similar codes to form potential themes. fourth Review themes: Review and refine themes to ensure they are coherent and represent the data well. fifth Organize and analyze themes: Give each theme a name and define it, then analyze it with data to see deeper meaning. sixth Prepare the report: Integrate the analysis into a complete final report. All of these thematic analysis processes are carried out so that managing the study results can help facilitate the study analysis process.

In an effort to ensure the saturation of the study data, the researcher also asked for help from the English teacher to read and re-evaluate the results of the study that have been analyzed for review and if there is a need to improve, the improvement process is carried out until the study data is perfect.

## FINDINGS

The findings of this study discuss the concept of implementing translanguaging methods formed by teachers in teaching English. There are several concepts in the implementation procedure of translanguaging in English language teaching. The findings are as follows:



**Figure 1.** Concepts of Teaching and Learning Using Translanguaging Method

## **The Concept of Applying Translanguaging When Teaching English to Year 6 Pupils in Rural Kota Marudu**

In the implementation of the concept of translanguaging, it consists of several implementation themes that are characterized based on certain phases. The classification of this phase is a sub-theme in this study that systematically explains how the process in the implementation of the translanguaging method in the classroom.

Objective 1: “To describe how teachers apply translanguaging when teaching English to Year 6 pupils in rural Kota Marudu.”

### ***Subtheme 1: Phase One***

In the first phase, the students were exposed and taught to the English grammar system. This exposure was done so that the students could use the concepts and basic knowledge of English grammar and to ensure that students were prepared with the basic knowledge of English grammar taught to them. Through that process, they would start to learn and try to understand. From here, questions would emerge about how it was adapted to their understanding. Then, the role of translanguaging would take place as in the description below afterward using the systematic teaching and learning of English. The teaching and learning process was systematically carried out by the teacher by forming a module following the teaching syllabus.

***Teacher Interview Verbatim:*** *I do apply translanguaging in primary English classrooms by integrating students' home languages to support English learning through activities like using bilingual resources, encouraging collaborative work, and making explicit connections between languages. This approach views students' full linguistic repertoire as a resource for learning, rather than a barrier, to enhance comprehension and higher order thinking in English.*

Based on the sub-theme above, the teacher explained that the implementation of the study in the first stage was done by giving exposure to English language learning activities using a bilingual learning system, which aims to give exposure to students about the use of translanguaging in the early stages. So, with that, students will get used to using the translanguaging method and know how they can ask questions and start the early learning process by using the translanguaging method.

### ***Subtheme 2: Phase to Prioritise the Explanations in English***

The concept in the use of the translanguaging method initiated with an explanation in English, then the teacher would re-explain the topic in Malay. This explanation in Malay was intended to explain the meaning and concept in a topic so that it could be understood by the students since the conceptual aspect of the English language is very different from the Malay language. Not to mention, the students also comfortably communicate using their dialect language. As a result, the situation causes difficulty in understanding English vocabulary. They use dialect language vocabulary to comprehend English vocabulary. Based on this scenario, so it requires

English translanguaging methods in English teaching and learning as described in the English teacher's description below.

**Teacher interview verbatim:** *In the second stage, I will teach students to emphasize learning by emphasizing the use of the English language. However, I will explain in depth into English so that students can understand what I am teaching them. Through this way, the students will be more confident in learning English and will want to ask more questions so that it can help in enriching their grammar knowledge.*

Based on the explanation of the English teacher above, the second phase represents the second sub-theme of the data interpretation in this study. The findings of the interview can be interpreted that the students in this second phase were given explanations about vocabulary and vocabulary in English. However, at this stage they will be helped by the teacher's explanation of the overall meaning of the examples of English language teaching materials given to them. So, in this way, they have the opportunity to understand the teaching material given to them in two dimensions, the first in English and the second reinforced with explanations in English. So, in this way, will facilitate and expand students' understanding of the English language learning given to them.

#### ***Subtheme 3: Explanations in Malay and Malay Dialects***

The explanations were delivered in Malay and Malay dialects for the students since the grammar in English is different in terms of literal and conceptual meanings. The teacher provided an explanation in Malay of the meaning of a sentence in English and was explained in terms of literal and conceptual meaning. The translanguaging method was conducted by giving explanations using Malay and English alternately to the topic. As a result, it would open the dimension and encourage efficient and critical thinking among the students in understanding the English language well as explained by the English teacher below.

**Teacher interview verbatim:** *In the third phase, I focus on explanations in Malay and try my best to use their dialects so that they can understand what they are being taught easily. The aspect that I emphasize is related to the meaning and gives lessons on how to use sentences in English.*

#### ***Subtheme 4: Guide Students in Mastering More Vocabulary***

In the use of teaching methods using the translanguaging method, students would be given notes on how to increase the English vocabulary. At the same time, the students also had the opportunity to increase their vocabulary while the teacher was delivering explanations about the topic in the classroom. The use of both languages during teaching and learning in the classroom enhanced students' vocabulary.

**Teacher interview verbatim:** *In the fourth phase I will give notes to students with vocabulary and teach them how to understand and use in English sentences. At the same time the students can use their existing knowledge to further develop the knowledge they have.*

Based on the verbatim interview given by the teacher, explaining the fourth sub-theme about how this translanguaging method is used in teaching English, which is through giving notes and in-depth explanations about the notes given to students and teaching how to use the notes given to further develop talent in students. At the same time the cognitive process takes place where the students have the opportunity to connect their knowledge with the related topics taught to them by the teacher.

Based on the verbatim interview given by the teacher, explaining the fourth sub-theme about how this translanguaging method is used in teaching English, which is through giving notes and in-depth explanations about the notes given to students and teaching how to use the notes given to further develop talent in students. At the same time the cognitive process takes place where the students have the opportunity to connect their knowledge with the related topics taught to them by the teacher.

### ***Subtheme 5: Answer the Questions Asked by the Students by Giving Bilingual Explanations***

In this learning system, students would be given the opportunity to answer in a bilingual way. This was done to enhance confidence and increase motivation among students in learning English. During the teacher's explanation, it increased students' enthusiasm and excitement to try and keep trying until they were able to understand and follow the English topics taught by the teacher well.

*Teacher interview verbatim: After I believe that the students have the ability in English, then I will give questions to the students to test their level of understanding. Through this way it will help students to remember vocabulary in English easily.*

Based on the explanation of the English language teacher, the last step to ensure that the students can really master what the teacher teaches is to re-test that is by giving questions for the students to answer.

### **Changes in Comprehension, Vocabulary, Writing, and Communication during Translanguaging-Mediated Lessons**

Objective 2: "To explore pupils' perceived changes in comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and communication during translanguaging-mediated lessons."

The results of interviews conducted with students, revealed that there were many positive effects of using translanguaging methods in helping to improve students' understanding and comprehension in learning English. The findings of the study are as follows:

#### ***Enhancing the Comprehension of Sentences Given by the Teacher***

All the students who have been interviewed stated that they found it easy to understand the sentences given by their teachers despite the differences in the grammatical aspects. This understanding occurred because students could understand each phrase and vocabulary and

know how to use them correctly. In addition, the findings of the study also revealed that the use of translanguaging methods increased students' interest and motivation to learn English. The students also mentioned that they are not interested learning English because they face difficulties and confusion in understanding the English language. Basically, what they need is the best explanation so that they could understand English well. With the use of translanguaging method, the students are excited and motivated to learn and express English words.

### ***Improve and Expand English Vocabulary***

The findings of the interview also revealed that the effect of the use of translanguaging methods expanded the students' vocabulary in English. The students explained that every time they learn English, they find that their knowledge of English has improved over time. This happened because teachers prepared vocabulary notes, and the teachers actively used bilingual teaching methods. As a result, it will make bilingualism a culture in teaching and learning, ensuring consistency in applying various knowledge to students.

### ***Independent Learning for Communication and Writing***

The findings of the study also show that the students stated that teaching and learning using the translanguaging method has caused them to be independent in learning English in communication and writing. Although at the beginning they stated that they were able only to form, speak, and write a few sentences, it was enough to make them happy because of the process of learning that took place.

## **DISCUSSION**

Through the analysis of the research that has been conducted, it was found that the use of the concept of translanguaging could facilitate the teaching and learning of English. Indeed, the English language has its own grammatical structure that is difficult for students to understand, let alone for those who actively speak their mother tongue (Yuvayapan, 2019). The study regarding the use of translanguaging has been proven to help the teaching and learning of English in the social aspects of community life, either urban or rural area, for those that are less fluent in English, as found in the study. The findings of the study found that the use of translanguaging methods can help them communicate in English.

The findings of several studies also show that there are many positive effects from the use of the translanguaging method on students, which helped in providing understanding and comprehension to them to master sentences in English (Somerville & Faltis, 2019; Gort, 2015). The English lesson was explained by the teacher using Malay, which gives a more in-depth explanation about the sentences in English while saying the word (Vogel et al., 2019). The use of translanguaging methods is a source and solution to help give students interest and motivation in learning English.

Therefore, translanguaging makes it easier for students to memorize and know the context of using a sentence, whether in communication or speech (Duarte, 2019). In relation to

the findings from different setting, the use of the translanguaging method has proven many positive effects that lead to the development of individual knowledge about how to learn English easily and at the same time how they can speak the language.

In addition, through the analysis of studies that have been done (Ascenzi-Moreno, 2018), Charamba (2020) found that the use of translanguaging methods can help in solving the constraints and difficulties in learning English for students. Obstacles in learning English occur when students do not understand topics and sentences in English (Charamba, 2019). Regardless of how hard they try to memorize; they are still not able to use English well. Therefore, in this study, the use of the translanguaging method is a teaching and learning method that could provide understanding and a way for students and individuals to master the English language. Lau, S.M.C. (2019) states that the use of the translanguaging method can help in forming an individual's independent spirit in learning English.

While giving explanations using both languages, translanguaging facilitates in improving students' knowledge of vocabulary. The more vocabulary students know, the more English they will know (Pacheco, 2019). This knowledge of English will further help in improving students' understanding of the content taught by their teacher.

In previous studies, basically there have been studies on teaching and learning English, for example, which use classroom-embedded translanguaging, confidence/motivation mechanisms). However, the limitations of this study occur because the use of translanguaging methods has not been widely applied in teaching and learning English, especially for primary school students. At this point, their level of knowledge is still low and requires systematic adjustment so that they can understand and learn and develop knowledge in English effectively. This study also provides practical implications where teachers can form teacher PD modules; bilingual glossaries; pacing for rural classrooms) and research implications (mixed-methods with writing/reading gains; design-based research across multiple rural schools. Therefore, this study provides a positive effect to help facilitate the teaching and learning process in the classroom to empower students' English knowledge.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be said that the use of the translanguaging method is a simple concept of learning English and can help solve the problems of teaching and learning English. The concept of teaching and learning English is bilingual, in which explanations are given in English first and then explained again using Malay. It helps in shaping and strengthening students' understanding of the English language from beginning until they can develop their skill in communications and writing. Overall, based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that, the translanguaging method is important in learning English because it increases understanding by allowing students to use their mother tongue, increases self-confidence by acknowledging and appreciating their language, and supports cognitive development by encouraging higher-order thinking and metalinguistic awareness. Therefore, this method needs to be applied in teaching and learning, especially for students who lack English skills. The findings in this study found that this approach allows students to use their entire linguistic ability to process information more easily, making it an innovative strategy to make learning English more accessible and meaningful.

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