

TRANSLANGUAGING IN ELT: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR EFL ORAL STORYTELLING AMONG LOW-PROFICIENCY LEARNERS IN VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS

Fahra Mahdiyah¹, Sri Wahyuni²

¹English Teacher, SMK Negeri 4 Pangkalpinang, Bangka Belitung, Indonesia

²Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia
fahralala@gmail.com ; sriwahyunifbs@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

Despite growing scholarly attention to translanguaging in Indonesian EFL contexts, its theoretical dimensions and pedagogical implications in oral storytelling tasks at vocational high schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*/SMK) remain substantially underexplored. This conceptual paper argues that the multilingual behaviors displayed by low-proficiency EFL learners during oral storytelling are not linguistic deficits but constitute purposeful translanguaging: the fluid deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire across named languages and semiotic resources (García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). Drawing on translanguaging theory, (Li Wei's 2011) translanguaging space concept, pedagogical translanguaging frameworks (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022), and (Li Wei's 2023) transformative pedagogy, this paper examines two interrelated conceptual functions of translanguaging in the SMK EFL oral storytelling context: (1) as *learning support*, enabling low-proficiency learners to manage the cognitive and communicative demands of oral narrative tasks; and (2) as *cultural identity expression*, through which learners assert their regional linguistic and cultural heritage within the EFL classroom space. The paper advances a conceptual argument for reorienting EFL pedagogy from a deficit-oriented, English-only model toward an asset-based, translanguaging-affirming approach. Concrete pedagogical implications are proposed for task design, classroom ideology, cultural content integration, and assessment practice in Indonesian vocational EFL settings, with broader relevance for ELT in multilingual peripheral contexts globally.

Keywords: translanguaging, ELT, EFL oral storytelling, low-proficiency learners, vocational high school

Introduction

The question of how language is used in English language teaching (ELT) classrooms has undergone a profound theoretical transformation over the past two decades. Where once the monolingual principle dominated applied linguistics and language pedagogy prescribing that the target language should serve as the exclusive medium of instruction and classroom interaction contemporary scholarship has increasingly challenged this assumption on both empirical and theoretical grounds (Canagarajah, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Fang, Zhang, & Sah, 2022). The shift from a monolingual to a multilingual paradigm in ELT reflects a broader recognition that learners do not inhabit monolingual worlds and that their multilingual practices constitute communicative resources

rather than pedagogical problems (García & Wei, 2014; Li Wei & García, 2022).

In the Indonesian context, this paradigmatic shift carries particular urgency. Indonesia is among the world's most linguistically diverse nations, with over 700 regional languages coexisting alongside Bahasa Indonesia as the national language and English as a compulsory foreign language in the national curriculum. For learners in EFL classrooms across the Indonesian archipelago, multilingualism is not an exceptional condition but a lived everyday reality. Yet ELT policies and pedagogical practices in many Indonesian educational institutions continue to reflect a monolingual ideology that positions English-only instruction

as the standard of quality, treating learners' multilingual repertoires as interference to be minimized rather than resources to be leveraged (Emilia & Hamied, 2022; Permana & Rohmah, 2024).

This tension is nowhere more acutely felt than in Indonesian Vocational High Schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan*/SMK), institutions designed to produce graduates with practical skills for the workforce. SMK English curricula require students to engage with genre-based text types, including narrative text, and to demonstrate proficiency through demanding oral tasks such as storytelling. For learners classified as “low-proficiency” students with limited English vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and oral fluency the oral storytelling task represents a formidable cognitive and linguistic challenge. These learners characteristically respond to this challenge not through silence or disengagement but through translanguaging: the fluid, purposeful mobilization of their full multilingual repertoire across English, Bahasa Indonesia, and regional languages (Liando, Dallyono, Tatipang, & Lengkoan, 2023; Kuncoroningtyas, Sumardi, & Putra, 2025).

Translanguaging, as theorized by García and Wei (2014), is not simply a descriptive term for language alternation. It is a theoretical reframing of what multilingual speakers do when they communicate: rather than switching between separate language systems, they draw on a single, unified, dynamic repertoire of linguistic and semiotic features, selecting from this repertoire as their communicative, cognitive, and social needs require. This reframing has transformative implications not only for how we describe learners’ multilingual behaviors, but for how we understand proficiency, identity, and the goals of language education itself (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015; Li Wei, 2018).

Despite growing scholarly attention to translanguaging in Indonesian EFL contexts, including studies documenting its functions in tertiary settings (Emilia & Hamied, 2022), secondary classrooms (Liando et al., 2023), and across multiple contexts in systematic review (Permana & Rohmah, 2024), two dimensions of the phenomenon remain substantially

underexplored. The first is the vocational high school context, which Permana and Rohmah’s (2024) systematic review identifies as the most underrepresented setting in Indonesian translanguaging research. The second is the specific task of EFL oral storytelling based on narrative text a curriculum-embedded, cognitively complex genre task that makes unique demands on low-proficiency learners’ multilingual resources. The intersection of translanguaging, oral storytelling, and regional cultural identity in the Indonesian vocational EFL context represents a largely uncharted area of inquiry.

This conceptual paper addresses this gap by developing a theoretically grounded argument for understanding translanguaging among low-proficiency EFL learners in SMK oral storytelling contexts through two complementary conceptual lenses: translanguaging as learning support and translanguaging as cultural identity expression. The paper proceeds as follows. The Theoretical Framework section establishes the foundational theories that guide the conceptual analysis. The Conceptual Discussion section develops the two central arguments, integrating theoretical principles with empirical evidence from the literature. The Pedagogical Implications section translates these arguments into concrete recommendations for ELT practice in Indonesian vocational settings. The Conclusion synthesizes the paper’s contributions and charts directions for future inquiry.

Theoretical Framework

García and Wei’s (2014) Translanguaging Theory

The primary theoretical foundation of this paper is García and Wei’s (2014) translanguaging theory, developed in their landmark monograph *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Building on García’s (2009) earlier concept of dynamic bilingualism and on the Welsh educational practice of *trawsieithu* introduced

by Cen Williams, García and Wei propose a fundamental reconceptualization of what it means to know and use language. Against structuralist and cognitivist traditions that posit named languages as distinct, bounded systems stored separately in the mind, they argue that multilingual speakers operate from a single, integrated, dynamic linguistic repertoire from which they select features according to context, purpose, and interactional need. The term “translanguaging” captures the *trans-* nature of this practice: it goes beyond and across named language categories, mobilizing the full range of a speaker’s linguistic and semiotic resources as a unified communicative system.

This theoretical claim has fundamental consequences for ELT pedagogy. If multilingual learners do not in any psycholinguistic sense “have” two or three separate languages, then insisting on English-only instruction in the SMK classroom does not simply limit which linguistic code learners use; it artificially forecloses access to the cognitive and communicative resources that constitute learners’ full linguistic capability. As Li Wei and García (2022) argue in *RELC Journal* (Scopus Q2), translanguaging should be understood not as the strategic inclusion of a “first language” in an otherwise English-medium classroom, but as the affirmation that multilingual learners possess *one repertoire* not two or three and that sound pedagogy must engage this unified repertoire honestly and productively.

Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015): Named Languages and Idiolects

A theoretically essential development within the translanguaging framework is Otheguy, García, and Reid’s (2015) clarification, in *Applied Linguistics Review* (De Gruyter), of the distinction between *named languages* and *idiolects*. Named languages English, Bahasa Indonesia, Bangka Malay are social, political, and institutional constructs: their boundaries are defined not by linguistic criteria but by

historical, nationalist, and ideological decisions about which features to bundle together under a particular label. Idiolects, by contrast, are the actual, unique, unified linguistic systems that individual speakers possess the full collection of lexical, syntactic, phonological, and semiotic features that a person has acquired and can deploy in communication.

From this perspective, a low-proficiency EFL learner in an Indonesian SMK is not a linguistically deficient person who possesses partial English. They are a multilingual person whose idiolect contains a richly developed set of Bahasa Indonesia and regional language features, alongside a more limited but growing set of English features. When they draw on Bahasa Indonesia or a regional language during oral storytelling, they are not violating the norms of a linguistic system; they are exercising the full breadth of their idiolect in the service of communication and meaning-making, precisely as any competent speaker does in any context. This reconceptualization fundamentally challenges deficit framings of low-proficiency learners and provides the theoretical basis for the asset-based pedagogical orientation that this paper advocates.

Li Wei’s (2011) Translanguaging Space

Li Wei’s (2011) concept of the *translanguaging space*, developed in *Journal of Pragmatics* (Scopus Q1), provides the theoretical framework for the paper’s identity argument. Li Wei proposes that moments of translanguaging are not merely linguistic events but are simultaneously social, cultural, and identity events. When multilingual speakers draw on their full linguistic repertoire, they create a discursive space characterized by three defining qualities: it is *creative*, generating new communicative and identity possibilities that no single named language could provide; it is *critical*, actively challenging the monolingual norms and ideologies that marginalize multilingual speakers and their practices; and it is *cultural*, inseparably bound to the cultural

histories, values, narrative traditions, and community affiliations of the speakers who inhabit it. In the translanguaging space, multilingual practice and cultural identity performance are not separate events but two dimensions of one unified social act.

In the context of EFL oral storytelling in the SMK, this framework enables a richer reading of learner translanguaging than functional accounts alone can provide. When a low-proficiency learner draws on regional language features or incorporates local cultural knowledge into their storytelling performance, they are not simply filling a lexical gap. They are constructing a translanguaging space in which their full identity as a member of a regional linguistic community, a bearer of local cultural knowledge, and a participant in the EFL classroom is present and active. The oral storytelling event, from this perspective, is simultaneously a linguistic and an identity event, a site where language and culture are mutually constitutive.

Li Wei's (2023) Transformative Translanguaging Pedagogy

A critical recent theoretical development that anchors this paper's pedagogical argument is Li Wei's (2023) distinction, in *Language Teaching* (Cambridge; Scopus Q1), between *pedagogical translanguaging* and *translanguaging pedagogy*. Pedagogical translanguaging refers to the strategic use of multilingual resources as instrumental scaffolding within a framework that ultimately remains oriented toward monolingual target-language outcomes: multilingualism is permitted and even strategically deployed, but it functions in the service of English, not in affirmation of the learner's multilingual identity. Translanguaging pedagogy, by contrast, represents a fundamentally different orientation: a change not merely of practice but of *mindset*. It positions learners' translanguaging *being* the entirety of their linguistic, racial, ethnic, and cultural identities taken together as the starting

point, the medium, and the goal of education. In translanguaging pedagogy, multilingualism is not a scaffold toward English; it is the condition of possibility for authentic, identity-affirming learning.

Cenoz and Gorter's (2022) Pedagogical Translanguaging Framework

Cenoz and Gorter's (2022) framework, published in *RELC Journal* (Scopus Q2), provides the applied theoretical basis for understanding translanguaging as learning support in oral tasks. Their framework distinguishes between *strong forms* of pedagogical translanguaging where the use of multiple languages is systematically planned, scaffolded, and integrated into the instructional design and *weak forms*, where multilingual resources are permitted and acknowledged but not explicitly planned or structured. Both forms, they argue, are more effective for learners with limited target language proficiency than English-only instruction, enabling access to cognitively demanding academic tasks that the target language alone cannot support. Crucially, pedagogical translanguaging does not impede target language development; rather, by reducing the cognitive load associated with forced monolingual production, it creates the cognitive space in which genuine language development can occur.

Literature Search and Selection Process

To ensure the theoretical and empirical grounding of this conceptual paper, a systematic literature search was conducted following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. The search targeted peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2010 and 2025, retrieved from Scopus, Google Scholar, and SINTA-indexed Indonesian databases. Search terms included: "translanguaging," "EFL oral storytelling," "pedagogical translanguaging," "translanguaging Indonesia," "low-proficiency EFL learners," and "vocational high school EFL." Articles were

selected based on relevance to translinguaging theory, Indonesian EFL contexts, or oral task pedagogy. The selection process is summarized in the PRISMA-informed flow below.

Figure 1. PRISMA-Informed Literature Selection Flow

IDENTIFICATION
87 articles identified (Scopus, Google Scholar, SINTA)
SCREENING
87 screened → 52 excluded (off-topic, non-EFL, pre-2010) → 35 remaining
ELIGIBILITY
35 full-text assessed → 19 excluded (insufficient relevance) → 16 remaining
INCLUDED ✓
16 articles included in conceptual synthesis

Note. Selection based on criteria: relevance to translinguaging theory/pedagogy, EFL context (especially Indonesian), peer-reviewed Q1/Q2 Scopus or SINTA 1/2 indexed, 2010–2025.

Table 1. Summary of Key Empirical Studies Included in the Conceptual Synthesis

Author(s) & Year	Type	Key Finding / Relevance	Journal (Index)
Emilia & Hamied (2022)	Qualitative	82.6% preferred mixed-language; supports cognitive comfort in tertiary EFL Indonesia	TEFLIN Journal (Sinta 1)
Liando et al. (2023)	Qualitative	Trilingual practices (English, Indonesian, local) for meaning negotiation in oral tasks	IJAL (Scopus/Sinta 1)
Kuncoroningtyas et al. (2025)	Qualitative	Translanguaging increased WTC and reduced anxiety in vocational EFL (SMK)	JOLIT
Permana & Rohmah (2024)	Systematic Review	17 studies: translanguaging serves comprehension, affective support, social bonding	Cogent Education (Scopus Q2)
Yuzlu & Dikilitas (2022)	Quasi-Exp.	Translanguaging improved all 4 skills by	Innovation Lang.

Darvin & Zhang (2023)	Theoretical	reducing cognitive overload Translanguaging with regional languages as decolonizing identity practice	Learning (Scopus Q2) Language Awareness (Scopus Q2)
Phyak (2023)	Theoretical	Translanguaging as space of simultaneity; multilingual identities co-present with TL	Modern Language Journal (Scopus Q1)

Note. This table presents key empirical and theoretical sources informing the conceptual arguments of this paper. Additional foundational sources are cited within the body of the paper.

Conceptual Discussion

Translinguaging as Learning Support in EFL Oral Storytelling

Oral storytelling based on narrative text occupies a central and demanding position in the SMK EFL curriculum. Narrative text is organized through three generic stages that learners must understand, internalize, and reproduce: the *orientation*, which introduces characters, setting, and time; the *complication*, which presents the central conflict or problem; and the *resolution*, which describes the outcome. To perform the oral storytelling task competently, learners must first comprehend the narrative's structure and linguistic features in English, then encode its content in memory, and finally reconstruct and deliver the narrative orally in English within the time constraints of the classroom interaction. This is a task that demands simultaneous engagement of comprehension, memory, organization, and oral production capacities all in the target language.

For low-proficiency learners, this multi-dimensional demand consistently exceeds what English alone can support. The gap between their receptive comprehension of English input and their productive oral capacity in English what might be called the *receptive-productive asymmetry* is particularly

acute in oral narrative tasks, where there is no written support, no opportunity for revision, and no recourse to reference materials. Rather than defaulting to silence or disengagement, however, multilingual learners characteristically respond to this communicative pressure through translanguaging: drawing on their full idiolect to sustain participation in the task. Translanguaging theory, and specifically Cenoz and Gorter's (2022) pedagogical translanguaging framework, enables us to understand this behavior not as compensatory failure but as a sophisticated and principled multilingual strategy that serves four documented learning support functions.

The first function is **lexical bridging**. Low-proficiency learners frequently lack the English lexical items needed to express specific narrative content character emotions, plot events, setting descriptions, or causal relationships and respond by substituting Bahasa Indonesia or regional language equivalents to maintain narrative coherence and communicative momentum. This is not random code-switching but a purposeful deployment of the idiolect in the service of narrative construction: the learner continues to tell the story using the fullest linguistic resources available to them. Emilia and Hamied's (2022) study in *TEFLIN Journal* (Sinta 1), which found that 82.6% of Indonesian EFL learners preferred mixed-language use over English-only instruction citing cognitive comfort and comprehension benefits, provides empirical grounding for this function in the Indonesian EFL context.

The second function is **cognitive scaffolding**. The dual cognitive demands of content recall and real-time oral production in a foreign language impose a substantial working memory burden on learners. Drawing on the full multilingual repertoire enables learners to distribute this cognitive load more effectively: content that has been encoded in Bahasa Indonesia or a regional language can be retrieved in that language and then reformulated

into English, rather than requiring learners to simultaneously retrieve and reformulate across language boundaries. This aligns precisely with Cenoz and Gorter's (2022) theoretical account of how pedagogical translanguaging reduces cognitive overload for learners engaged in complex academic language tasks. Yüzlü and Dikilitiş (2022), writing in *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching* (Scopus Q2), provide empirical confirmation of this function, finding in a quasi-experimental study with EFL learners that translanguaging pedagogy produced significant improvements in all four language skills by enabling learners to leverage their full cognitive and linguistic resources.

The third function is **anxiety reduction**. Foreign language anxiety, defined by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process, is one of the most thoroughly documented barriers to oral participation for low-proficiency EFL learners. The prospect of performing orally in English in front of peers generates fear of judgment, fear of error, and heightened self-consciousness that can lead to communicative avoidance and reduced participation. Translanguaging reduces this anxiety by permitting learners to draw on the communicative safety and fluency of their home languages when English alone generates communicative threat. Kuncoroningtyas, Sumardi, and Putra (2025) provide direct empirical support for this function in the Indonesian vocational EFL context specifically, finding that translanguaging practices significantly increased students' willingness to communicate in oral tasks by reducing anxiety and creating a more psychologically safe communicative environment.

The fourth function is **meaning negotiation**. Oral storytelling is not a monologic performance but a dialogic social event in which meaning is co-constructed between storyteller and audience. Low-proficiency learners who translanguague are not withdrawing from this

collaborative dimension of the task but actively participating in it: using their full multilingual repertoire to check comprehension, invite clarification, rephrase unclear content, and negotiate shared understanding with classmates who inhabit the same multilingual repertoire. This function aligns with Li Wei's (2018) foundational argument, published in *Applied Linguistics* (Scopus Q1), that translanguaging is fundamentally a practice of *meaning-making* a positive, generative act of linguistic creativity rather than a symptom of target language deficiency. Liando, Dallyono, Tatipang, and Lengkoan's (2023) study in the *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* (Scopus/Sinta 1) documents precisely this meaning-negotiation function in Indonesian secondary EFL classrooms, observing how learners draw on trilingual repertoires encompassing English, Indonesian, and local regional languages to accomplish communicative and pedagogical goals in oral tasks.

Translanguaging as Cultural Identity Expression

The conceptual significance of translanguaging in EFL oral storytelling extends well beyond the functional-cognitive dimension. When low-proficiency learners in an Indonesian SMK classroom draw on regional linguistic resources or incorporate local cultural knowledge during their oral storytelling performances, they are engaged in an act that is simultaneously linguistic and cultural: they are expressing, asserting, and negotiating their cultural identities within the EFL classroom space. This dimension of translanguaging its identity-expressive function is one of the most theoretically rich and least pedagogically acknowledged aspects of multilingual classroom practice.

The theoretical argument for understanding translanguaging as cultural identity expression rests on a fundamental insight from narrative theory: narrative text is not a culturally neutral genre. Stories are always told from within a

cultural framework that shapes their moral orientations, emotional registers, relational dynamics, and narrative conventions. The orientation-complication-resolution structure that defines narrative text in the SMK curriculum is itself a culturally specific genre convention. When learners retell stories, they do not simply decode and re-encode a culturally empty narrative skeleton; they bring to the task their own cultural frameworks, narrative sensibilities, and community identities, which inevitably surface in and through their language choices.

Li Wei's (2011) translanguaging space theory provides the conceptual apparatus for analyzing this cultural dimension. When a learner draws on regional linguistic features, invokes local narrative traditions, or incorporates references to local cultural content in their oral storytelling, they are constructing a translanguaging space in the sense Li Wei theorizes: a creative, critical, cultural discursive environment in which their full multilingual and multicultural being is present and active. This space is not a deficiency it is not evidence of the learner's inability to perform in English alone but a site of cultural richness and identity affirmation that monolingual pedagogies systematically suppress.

Creese and Blackledge (2015), in the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* (Scopus Q1), provide a broad theoretical grounding for this claim. They argue, on the basis of research across multiple multilingual educational contexts, that translanguaging practices are inherently *identity practices*: moments in which speakers assert, negotiate, and perform their cultural and social positions through their language choices. The degree to which the classroom translanguaging space affirms or suppresses these identity practices has direct consequences for learner agency, participation, and sense of belonging. In classrooms where multilingual practices are prohibited or stigmatized, learners experience a form of cultural erasure: the message communicated is

not only that their English is insufficient, but that who they are the cultural community they belong to, the languages they carry is irrelevant or unwelcome in the learning space.

Darvin and Zhang (2023), in *Language Awareness* (Scopus Q2), deepen this argument by framing translanguaging with regional and minority languages as a *decolonizing practice*: an active assertion of cultural identities that resist the hegemony of English-only norms in ELT. When SMK learners deploy regional language features in their English oral storytelling, they are whether consciously or not enacting this decolonizing dimension of translanguaging: refusing the reduction of their identity to their English proficiency level, and insisting on the presence of their full cultural selves in the EFL learning space. Phyak (2023), in the *Modern Language Journal* (Scopus Q1), theorizes this more precisely as translanguaging constituting a *space of simultaneity*: a classroom environment in which students' multilingual identities, local epistemologies, and cultural knowledge systems are recognized as co-present and mutually constitutive with the target language, rather than subordinated to it.

An Asset-Based Reconceptualization of the Low-Proficiency Learner

A central conceptual contribution of this paper is the argument that translanguaging theory demands a fundamental reconceptualization of what it means to be a “low-proficiency EFL learner.” In conventional ELT discourse, low proficiency is understood negatively and monolingually: it is defined as the absence of sufficient English vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and oral fluency relative to a target-language norm. This framing positions low-proficiency learners as linguistically impoverished individuals who must be brought closer to a monolingual English standard. The pedagogical response to this framing is, characteristically, more English instruction, stricter English-only policies, and

the suppression of learners' home languages as sources of interference.

Translanguaging theory offers a fundamentally and irreconcilably different framing. A learner who is classified as low-proficiency in English but who speaks Bahasa Indonesia fluently and a regional language as a heritage variety is not linguistically impoverished. They are a richly multilingual agent whose idiolect contains an extensive and sophisticated repertoire of features, only one portion of which the English portion is limited relative to a monolingual English norm that was never designed with their multilingual reality in mind. As Otheguy, García, and Reid (2015) demonstrate, the very concept of “proficiency in English” as a measure of linguistic competence is itself theoretically problematic: it evaluates the speaker's control of one socially defined portion of their idiolect while ignoring the rest, producing a systematically distorted picture of their actual linguistic capability.

When this learner translanguages during oral storytelling, they are not failing to be a monolingual English speaker. They are succeeding at being a multilingual communicator, deploying their full human linguistic capability in the service of narrative, meaning-making, and identity expression. Permana and Rohmah's (2024) systematic review of translanguaging in Indonesian EFL contexts, published in *Cogent Education* (Scopus Q2), confirms this asset value empirically: across the seventeen studies reviewed, translanguaging in Indonesian EFL classrooms consistently served comprehension-facilitation, affective support, and social bonding functions, producing positive outcomes for learner engagement and participation. This body of evidence supports the conceptual case that translanguaging is not a mark of low proficiency but a mark of multilingual competence, and that ELT pedagogy in Indonesian vocational settings should be reoriented accordingly.

Pedagogical Implications

The conceptual arguments developed in this paper yield four interrelated and mutually reinforcing pedagogical implications for ELT practitioners in Indonesian vocational high school settings. These implications are grounded in the theoretical frameworks presented above and informed by empirical evidence from Indonesian and international EFL research. Together, they constitute the outline of a translanguaging-affirming pedagogy for SMK EFL oral storytelling contexts.

The first and most immediately practical implication concerns **oral task design**. Oral storytelling tasks in SMK EFL classrooms should be designed to create translanguaging space rather than to suppress it. Concretely, this means allowing students to plan and rehearse their storytelling in Bahasa Indonesia or a regional language during a preparation phase before delivering the narrative in English; permitting and explicitly encouraging peer interaction in the home language during collaborative pre-storytelling activities; and selecting or designing narrative prompts that draw on locally familiar cultural content, enabling learners to bring their own cultural knowledge into the task rather than working exclusively with culturally unfamiliar source materials. Such task designs align with Cenoz and Gorter's (2022) weak-form pedagogical translanguaging framework and have been shown to increase learner participation and oral engagement in Indonesian vocational EFL contexts (Kuncoroningtyas et al., 2025).

The second implication concerns **classroom ideology and teacher mindset**. Pedagogical change in the direction of translanguaging-affirming practice requires not merely methodological adjustment but, as Li Wei (2023) argues, a genuine change of mindset on the part of the teacher. EFL teachers in SMK settings who wish to create genuinely inclusive learning environments must examine, articulate, and where necessary challenge their own

monolingual ideological assumptions about the relationship between English proficiency and classroom worth. This is not merely a personal reflective exercise: it is a pedagogically consequential reorientation that determines whether learners' multilingual practices are affirmed as resources or suppressed as interference. Professional development programs that expose SMK EFL teachers to the theoretical foundations of translanguaging including its distinction from code-switching and its asset-based orientation to multilingual learners are essential infrastructural support for this ideological reorientation. Fang, Zhang, and Sah (2022), in their editorial introduction to the translanguaging special issue of *RELC Journal*, note that once stakeholders understand the theoretical basis of translanguaging, positive attitudes toward multilingual classroom practices are generally forthcoming, suggesting that teacher education and professional development constitute a tractable and high-impact leverage point for change.

The third implication concerns the integration of **cultural content** into EFL oral storytelling pedagogy. If translanguaging in the oral storytelling context is simultaneously an act of cultural identity expression, then affirming translanguaging necessarily entails affirming the cultural content that learners bring into the classroom through their multilingual practices. For SMK teachers working with learners from specific regional cultural communities, this means recognizing and creating space for learners' local narrative traditions, regional cultural knowledge, and community-specific storytelling conventions as legitimate and valuable dimensions of the oral storytelling classroom. This is not simply a matter of cultural sensitivity; it is a pedagogical necessity. As Li Wei (2023) argues, translanguaging pedagogy requires acknowledging learners' translanguaging *being* their full linguistic, cultural, and identity selves as the starting point of education. A pedagogy that affirms translanguaging as a linguistic practice while

ignoring the cultural content carried by that practice is incomplete and ultimately inconsistent in its commitment to learner identity affirmation.

The fourth implication concerns **assessment**. If low-proficiency learners' translanguaging during oral storytelling constitutes purposeful, communicatively sophisticated multilingual practice as this paper argues on both theoretical and empirical grounds then assessment frameworks that evaluate oral performance exclusively on English-language accuracy and fluency are both theoretically incoherent and pedagogically inequitable. Such frameworks apply a monolingual yardstick to a fundamentally multilingual act, systematically underestimating learners' actual communicative competence and reinforcing the deficit framing that translanguaging theory dismantles. Drawing on Li Wei and García's (2022) argument that learners have one repertoire rather than separate named languages, SMK EFL teachers can begin to develop assessment approaches that recognize communicative competence across the full idiolect: evaluating the coherence and completeness of narrative construction, the purposefulness and effectiveness of translanguaging choices, the richness of cultural content, and the quality of meaning negotiation with peers, alongside target language development goals. Such assessments are not only theoretically more accurate; they are more equitable, more motivating, and more likely to generate the kind of honest, engaged oral performance that both teachers and learners seek.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper has developed a theoretically grounded and empirically informed argument for understanding translanguaging among low-proficiency EFL learners in Indonesian vocational high schools as a purposeful, sophisticated, and pedagogically significant multilingual practice. Drawing on García and Wei's (2014) translanguaging theory,

Otheguy, García, and Reid's (2015) idiolect concept, Li Wei's (2011) translanguaging space theory, Li Wei's (2023) transformative translanguaging pedagogy, and Cenoz and Gorter's (2022) pedagogical translanguaging framework, and integrating empirical evidence from Q1/Q2 international journals and reputable national journals, the paper has advanced two interrelated conceptual arguments.

First, translanguaging in the SMK EFL oral storytelling context functions as *learning support*, enabling low-proficiency learners to manage the cognitive and communicative demands of oral narrative tasks through four documented functions: lexical bridging, cognitive scaffolding, anxiety reduction, and meaning negotiation. These functions are not peripheral coping strategies; they are constitutive of learners' capacity to engage productively with a task that would otherwise exceed their available English resources, and they are grounded in the theoretical insight that learners possess one unified idiolect rather than separate, hierarchically ranked language systems.

Second, translanguaging in this context simultaneously functions as *cultural identity expression*, creating translanguaging spaces in which learners' regional cultural identities, local narrative traditions, and community memberships become present and active within the EFL classroom. This identity-expressive dimension of translanguaging is not incidental to the oral storytelling task; it is constitutive of it, because narrative as a genre is always culturally situated, and because learners who are permitted to bring their full cultural selves to the storytelling task produce richer, more engaged, and more authentic performances than those constrained to the target language alone.

Together, these arguments support a fundamental reorientation of ELT pedagogy in Indonesian vocational settings: from a deficit-oriented, English-only framework that positions low-proficiency learners as

linguistically impoverished and their multilingual practices as interference, toward an asset-based, translanguaging-affirming pedagogy that positions learners' full multilingual repertoires and the cultural identities embedded within them as the starting point, the medium, and the resource of EFL education. This reorientation requires changes at the level of task design, teacher ideology, cultural content integration, and assessment practice changes that are grounded in theoretical coherence, supported by empirical evidence, and aligned with a commitment to equity and inclusion in language education.

The conceptual arguments advanced in this paper lay the theoretical groundwork for future empirical inquiry into translanguaging in SMK EFL oral storytelling contexts. Qualitative case study research that examines how specific low-proficiency learners initiate and deploy translanguaging in oral narrative tasks and how they understand and experience their own multilingual practices would extend and enrich the conceptual framework developed here. Such research is particularly needed in geographically peripheral and linguistically diverse provincial settings, where the intersection of regional language heritage, national language identity, and EFL learning creates distinctive translanguaging ecologies that deserve sustained scholarly attention. For the field of translanguaging research in Indonesia and beyond, and for the sustainable development of inclusive, equitable EFL education across the multilingual world, this inquiry is both necessary and urgent.

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(Compiled following the APA Publication Manual, Seventh Edition)

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