

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

Language plays an essential role in shaping students' participation, understanding, and engagement in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. In multilingual contexts such as Indonesia, teachers and students naturally draw upon their entire linguistic repertoires Indonesian, local languages, and English to negotiate meaning, build understanding, and scaffold learning. This dynamic and fluid language use is known as translanguaging, a term first popularized by Williams (1994) and later expanded theoretically by García and Wei (2014). Translanguaging refers to the flexible use of languages by bilingual speakers as an integrated linguistic system that allows them to make meaning, communicate more effectively, and support learning. In classroom settings, translanguaging is not merely code switching; it is a purposeful pedagogical practice that allows teachers to strategically use multiple languages to enhance comprehension, reduce cognitive load, and create a more inclusive learning environment.

In Indonesian EFL classrooms, translanguaging practices are common and often unavoidable. Teachers frequently switch between English and Indonesian to explain difficult vocabulary, clarify grammar points, or provide instructions. Research shows that when teachers utilize translanguaging strategically, it can help students understand abstract concepts, participate more confidently, and connect new knowledge with prior linguistic and cultural experiences (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García & Lin, 2017). Instead of forbidding the first language

(L1), many scholars argue that translanguaging can serve as a scaffold that supports students' language development and content learning (García & Kano, 2014; Canagarajah, 2011). Therefore, studying how teachers employ translanguaging is crucial for understanding language instruction in multilingual EFL contexts.

The teaching of narrative texts is one area where translanguaging becomes particularly relevant. Narrative text is one of the compulsory genres taught in the Indonesian junior high school curriculum. It includes stories, legends, fairy tales, and fables that require students to understand plot, characters, setting, conflict, and moral values (Anderson, 1997). Many students face challenges in comprehending narrative texts written in English due to unfamiliar vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and cultural differences embedded in the stories. As a result, teachers often employ translanguaging strategies to bridge the linguistic gap, clarify narrative elements, and guide students in analyzing and constructing their own stories.

However, although translanguaging is widely practiced in Indonesian classrooms, most studies in Indonesia focus on its impact on students' reading comprehension (Sari, 2020), vocabulary retention (Haryanto, 2021), or general English performance (Fitriani, 2022). Only a limited number of studies examine the specific strategies used by teachers and how these strategies are utilized during actual classroom interactions. Moreover, studies specifically focusing on translanguaging in the teaching of narrative texts remain scarce. This creates a gap in the literature, particularly in understanding what kinds of translanguaging

strategies teachers use, how frequently they employ them, and how these strategies support the teaching and learning process.

Given these gaps, it is essential to examine translanguaging not merely as an outcome related variable but as a classroom practice a set of strategies that teachers employ intentionally or spontaneously during instruction. García and Wei (2014) argue that translanguaging pedagogy involves the deliberate design of learning spaces that allow students to use their full linguistic repertoires. In this view, translanguaging is not simply switching languages; it is a pedagogical tool that teachers can utilize to scaffold learning, provide meaningful explanations, and facilitate deeper comprehension. Understanding how teachers utilize translanguaging strategies during lessons is therefore crucial to portraying the authentic nature of EFL teaching in multilingual environments such as Indonesia.

Classroom based studies have shown that translanguaging serves several pedagogical functions. Creese and Blackledge (2010) note that teachers use translanguaging to maintain topical coherence, manage classroom discourse, and build rapport with learners. Ferguson (2009) identifies three major functions of L1 use in EFL classrooms: (1) facilitating comprehension, (2) managing classroom interaction, and (3) supporting affective engagement. These functions align with translanguaging strategies such as using students' L1 to clarify difficult terms, providing bilingual explanations of grammatical structures, and encouraging students to express ideas using mixed linguistic resources when constructing stories. In the Indonesian context, where students' English proficiency varies significantly across schools, translanguaging emerges as a natural and supportive instructional strategy.

In the teaching of narrative texts, these strategies become particularly necessary. The complexity of narrative structures often requires students to understand both content and linguistic forms simultaneously. For example, students must recognize elements such as orientation, complication, climax, and resolution (Derewianka, 1990). When the story contains culturally unfamiliar elements, students may struggle to interpret events or moral lessons. Teachers, therefore, frequently rely on translanguaging to bridge cultural references, translate key vocabulary, or draw parallels between English narratives and Indonesian folktales. Through these practices, teachers help students connect prior knowledge with new linguistic input, making narrative instruction more accessible and engaging.

Despite the importance of translanguaging in narrative text instruction, there is limited empirical research that documents how teachers actually utilize these strategies in their daily teaching practices. Many studies focus on students' language production, learning outcomes, or general perceptions of bilingual classroom practices (e.g., Lubis, 2019; Kustati, 2014). However, fewer studies investigate the specific, observable strategies that teachers employ during narrative text lessons. This creates a need for more descriptive classroom based studies that capture authentic teacher behavior, the forms of translanguaging that occur, and the purposes behind these actions.

Furthermore, examining translanguaging strategies at a specific school, such as SMP Negeri 39 Medan, provides contextualized insights into how multilingual realities shape instructional practices. Like many public schools in Indonesia, SMP Negeri 39 Medan serves students with diverse linguistic

backgrounds, making it a rich site for exploring translanguaging in an EFL setting. Understanding how the English teacher at this school employs translanguaging strategies during narrative text instruction may offer valuable contributions to both research and practice. It can inform teacher education programs, guide curriculum development, and provide practical examples for teachers seeking to implement translanguaging pedagogy effectively.

Given these considerations, this study aims to identify the translanguaging strategies used by the English teacher in teaching narrative texts and to describe how these strategies are utilized in the classroom. Rather than focusing on the effects on students' writing or academic achievement, this research prioritizes understanding the teacher's instructional practices as they naturally occur. Through classroom observation and interview, this study seeks to depict translanguaging as a pedagogical tool that supports meaning making processes during narrative text lessons.

In addition to its pedagogical relevance, translanguaging has also gained recognition as a response to the traditional monolingual ideology that still shapes many EFL classrooms. Historically, English teaching in Indonesia has followed a "target language only" approach, where the use of Indonesian or local languages is discouraged. However, recent perspectives in bilingual education increasingly challenge this assumption. Scholars argue that restricting students to one language ignores the complex linguistic realities of multilingual learners and may even hinder learning (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Instead, allowing students and teachers to draw upon all available linguistic resources creates richer opportunities for meaning making and deeper cognitive engagement (Vogel & García, 2017). This

shift toward a more flexible, student centered view of language use positions translanguaging as not only a strategy but a transformative pedagogical approach aligned with modern multilingual education.

Moreover, translanguaging supports the sociocultural perspective on learning, which views knowledge as something constructed through interaction and mediated by language (Vygotsky, 1978). In narrative text instruction, students must navigate complex linguistic structures, cultural meanings, and textual organization. Through translanguaging, teachers can scaffold students' learning by connecting English narrative features with familiar structures in Indonesian or local stories. For instance, teachers may explain "orientation" by relating it to the Indonesian term "pengenalan tokoh dan latar," helping students quickly grasp the concept using culturally grounded references. Such scaffolding aligns with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners achieve more with guided support than on their own. Thus, translanguaging becomes an essential tool for mediating comprehension and supporting students progression toward independent mastery of narrative texts.

Additionally, examining translanguaging in the Indonesian junior high school context is timely and relevant because the national curriculum encourages communicative and student-centered learning. The 2013 Curriculum (K 13) and the Merdeka Curriculum emphasize critical thinking, creativity, and meaningful communication goals that align naturally with translanguaging pedagogy. When teachers use translanguaging, they create spaces where students can actively participate, express ideas freely, and connect prior linguistic knowledge with new English learning. These practices support the development of communicative

competence and help students build confidence, especially when dealing with challenging genres such as narrative texts.

Therefore, studying how translanguaging strategies are utilized by the English teacher at SMP Negeri 10 Medan significantly contributes to the understanding of contemporary language teaching practices. This research not only documents the strategies used but also captures the classroom realities that shape teaching and learning processes. The findings are expected to provide insights that can help teacher adopt more inclusive and effective approaches to teaching narrative texts in multilingual contexts.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

Based on the background of study above, the research questions of this research are formulated as follows :

1. What translanguaging strategies are used by the English teacher in teaching narrative texts at SMP Negeri 10 Medan?
2. How are translanguaging strategies utilized in the classroom during the teaching of narrative texts?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Based on problems of the study, the objectives of study are :

1. To identify the translanguaging strategies employed by English teacher in teaching narrative texts at SMP Negeri 10 Medan.
2. To describe how these translanguaging strategies are utilized by the English teacher in the classroom during the teaching of narrative texts.

1.4 The Scope of the Study

This study is limited to examining the translanguaging strategies used by one English teacher in teaching narrative texts to Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 10 Medan. The research focuses solely on identifying the types of translanguaging strategies employed by the teacher and describing how these strategies are utilized during classroom instruction, without measuring their effectiveness or investigating their impact on students' reading or writing abilities. The scope is restricted to the narrative text genre and does not include other genres such as descriptive, recount, or procedure texts. In addition, the study is confined to one school and one grade level, and therefore its findings are not intended to be generalized beyond this setting. The theoretical framework of this research is based on García and Wei's (2014) concept of translanguaging, which emphasizes the flexible use of learners' linguistic repertoires in classroom interaction, and Derewianka's (1990) explanation of narrative text structure. Through this bounded scope, the study aims to provide a focused and descriptive account of translanguaging practices within an authentic EFL classroom context.

1.5 The Significances of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English language education, particularly in multilingual EFL classroom contexts. Theoretically, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on translanguaging by offering empirical insights into how translanguaging strategies are utilized by an English teacher during the teaching of narrative texts. The findings may strengthen García and Wei's (2014) conceptualization of translanguaging as a pedagogical resource that enables

learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoires during meaning-making processes. This research also supports previous scholarship that emphasizes the role of multilingual practices in facilitating classroom interaction and comprehension (Creese & Blackledge, 2010), thereby broadening the understanding of translanguaging within Indonesian junior high school settings.

Practically, the study may benefit English teachers by providing a descriptive account of classroom-based translanguaging strategies that can serve as examples for managing multilingual learners in narrative text instruction. Although the study does not evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies, it offers insights that may help teachers create more supportive and accessible learning experiences. For future researchers, this study can serve as a reference for investigating translanguaging practices in similar EFL contexts. For students, the study highlights classroom practices that acknowledge and legitimize their linguistic backgrounds, potentially helping them participate more comfortably and confidently in English learning activities.