

# TRANSLANGUAGING IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: EXPLORING FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS' LANGUAGE PRACTICES IN READING AND WRITING ENGLISH 1 AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY

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## ABSTRACT

*Translanguaging has emerged as a transformative pedagogical framework that challenges monolingual norms by embracing multilingual learners' full linguistic repertoires. Despite its growing theoretical momentum, empirical studies examining translanguaging in Vietnamese higher education contexts remain sparse. This mixed-methods study investigates translanguaging practices among K48 first-year students enrolled in Reading and Writing English 1 at the School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University (TNU). Drawing on García and Li Wei's (2014) translanguaging theory and Norton's (2013) investment theory, the study examines how, why, and to what extent students deploy Vietnamese alongside English in reading comprehension and writing tasks, and how such practices influence academic achievement and affective engagement. Data were collected through classroom observations (n = 12 sessions), semi-structured interviews (n = 20 students), think-aloud protocols (n = 10), teacher interviews (n = 3), and pre/post reading and writing assessments. Thematic analysis and paired t-tests revealed that strategic translanguaging facilitated deeper text comprehension, enhanced ideational development in writing, and reduced foreign language anxiety. However, excessive L1 use correlated with lower writing coherence scores. The findings reveal pedagogical tensions between institutional monolingual policies and students' naturalistic multilingual practices. Implications are offered for curriculum design, teacher professional development, and policy reform in Vietnamese EFL contexts.*

**Keyword:** translanguaging, EFL reading, EFL writing, first-year university students, Vietnamese higher education, multilingual practices, language policy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global expansion of English as a medium of instruction has intensified debates about the role of learners' first languages (L1) in foreign language classrooms. In Vietnam, government-mandated language policies, notably the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project (Decision No. 2080/QĐ-TTg, 2017), have promoted English-only or English-dominant instruction at tertiary level, positioning English proficiency as essential for national socioeconomic development (Nguyen, 2021). Yet classroom realities consistently reveal that students and teachers alike navigate between Vietnamese and English in ways that official curricula rarely account for (Pham & Barnett, 2020).

Translanguaging-understood as the dynamic and strategic deployment of an individual's complete linguistic repertoire across named languages

(García & Li Wei, 2014)-offers a counter-narrative to monolingual ideologies. Rather than treating L1 use as a deficit or interference, translanguaging scholarship positions cross-linguistic practices as cognitive assets that facilitate meaning-making, identity expression, and academic development (Canagarajah, 2011; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020). Foundational work by Cen Williams (1996), García (2009), and García and Li Wei (2014) has established translanguaging as both a descriptive sociolinguistic reality and a prescriptive pedagogical tool.

Despite its theoretical momentum, empirical research on translanguaging in Vietnamese university EFL contexts is nascent. Existing studies (e.g., Nguyen & Walkinshaw, 2018; Tran & Marginson, 2018) have examined code-switching as a compensatory strategy, but few have adopted a fully translanguaging lens that foregrounds students' multilingual agency. Furthermore, the

specific subject area of Reading and Writing English 1-a foundational integrated skills course for first-year students-has received minimal scholarly attention, despite its gatekeeping function in university language programmes.

This study addresses these gaps by investigating translanguaging among K48 first-year students at the School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University (TNU-SFL), one of northern Vietnam's leading institutions for foreign language education. TNU-SFL provides a particularly salient research context given its multi-regional, linguistically diverse student body and the institutional tensions between mandated English-medium instruction and students' lived multilingual realities.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What translanguaging practices do K48 first-year students employ in Reading and Writing English 1 at TNU-SFL?

RQ2: What are the perceived functions and motivations underlying students' translanguaging practices?

RQ3: To what extent do translanguaging practices correlate with students' reading comprehension and writing performance?

RQ4: How do teachers perceive and respond to students' translanguaging in this context?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Translanguaging

The concept of translanguaging was originally coined by Welsh medium education researcher Cen Williams (1996) to describe a bilingual pedagogical practice in which students receive information in one language and produce output in another. García (2009) subsequently broadened the construct beyond pedagogy, reconceptualising it as a natural feature of bilingual cognition that disrupts the artificiality of named language boundaries. García and Li Wei (2014) further theorised translanguaging as a transformative act, arguing that multilingual individuals do not simply switch between discrete linguistic systems but operate from a unitary, dynamic linguistic repertoire that transcends conventional language categories.

This theoretical reorientation carries significant implications for EFL instruction. If learners possess a single, integrated linguistic resource rather than separate, compartmentalised language systems, then classroom policies that prohibit L1 use may impede rather than facilitate language development. Canagarajah (2011) extended this argument by situating translanguaging within a translanguaging practice framework, emphasising how cross-linguistic negotiation builds communicative competence in globalised contexts. Similarly, Cenoz and Gorter (2020) demonstrated that translanguaging correlates positively with metalinguistic awareness -a key predictor of academic literacy development.

### 2.2 Translanguaging in Reading Comprehension

In reading contexts, translanguaging facilitates what Goodman (1967) termed "psycholinguistic guessing games"-the use of prior knowledge and linguistic resources to construct meaning from text. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that allowing students to draw on their L1 during reading improves comprehension monitoring, inferencing, and vocabulary acquisition (Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Makalela, 2015). Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) found that EFL learners who engaged in L1 discussion during reading tasks demonstrated greater depth of text processing than those restricted to English-only interaction.

In Vietnamese EFL contexts specifically, Nguyen and Walkinshaw (2018) observed that university students who employed Vietnamese to discuss reading content exhibited stronger critical engagement with texts, though teachers often perceived such practices negatively due to institutional English-only norms. The tension between cognitive utility and institutional acceptability is a recurring theme in translanguaging research across Southeast Asian higher education (Kirkpatrick, 2014).

### 2.3 Translanguaging in Academic Writing

The role of translanguaging in L2 writing has attracted increasing scholarly attention, particularly in the context of ideation and organisation. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2013) demonstrated that allowing Japanese EFL students to brainstorm in L1 before writing in English significantly enhanced essay coherence and idea development. This finding aligns with sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which

posits that inner speech-often conducted in L1-mediates complex cognitive tasks such as planning and revision.

More recent translanguaging studies in writing have moved beyond strategy to examine identity and investment. Norton (2013) argued that students' willingness to engage with L2 writing is mediated by their investment in the target language and the identities it affords. When students are permitted to translanguage-drawing on Vietnamese cultural schemata, indigenous rhetorical conventions, and bilingual brainstorming-they may experience greater ownership of their texts, potentially enhancing motivation and sustained engagement (Canagarajah, 2015).

#### **2.4 Translanguaging in Vietnamese EFL Contexts**

Research on language use in Vietnamese higher education reveals persistent tensions between policy and practice. Official Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) guidelines promote English-medium instruction, particularly following the 2020 Foreign Language Project, yet empirical studies document widespread Vietnamese use in EFL classrooms (Pham, 2010; Nguyen, 2021). Tran and Marginson (2018) highlighted how first-generation university students from ethnic minority and rural backgrounds-a demographic profile shared by many TNU students-rely on L1 as a cognitive scaffold for comprehending complex academic content in English.

Critically, existing Vietnamese studies have primarily employed code-switching frameworks, which position L1 and L2 as separate, alternating systems. A translanguaging perspective, which foregrounds students' agentic and creative use of their full linguistic repertoire, has rarely been applied in this context. This study responds to Canagarajah's (2013) call for translingual research that examines under-resourced, non-Western educational settings where multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception.

#### **2.5 Research Gap and Conceptual Framework**

Despite the theoretical richness of translanguaging scholarship, empirical studies addressing first-year Vietnamese university students' translanguaging in integrated reading and writing courses are absent from the literature.

Existing research has examined either reading or writing in isolation, overlooked the specific K48 cohort at TNU-SFL, or relied on code-switching frameworks that lack the transformative potential of translanguaging theory. This study bridges these gaps by adopting García and Li Wei's (2014) translanguaging theory as its primary analytical lens, supplemented by Norton's (2013) investment theory to account for motivational and identity dimensions of students' language choices.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), integrating quantitative assessment data with rich qualitative observational and interview data. The mixed-methods approach is epistemologically grounded in pragmatism (Morgan, 2007), which privileges the research questions over paradigmatic constraints and supports triangulation across data sources. Quantitative data illuminate the relationship between translanguaging frequency and academic performance, while qualitative data provide contextual depth regarding functions, motivations, and teacher responses.

#### **3.2 Research Site and Participants**

The study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages, Thai Nguyen University (TNU-SFL), Quyet Thang Ward, Thai Nguyen City, Vietnam. TNU-SFL is a prominent regional institution offering undergraduate programmes in English, Russian, Chinese, and French, and serves a diverse student population including ethnic majority Kinh and ethnic minority students from northern mountain provinces.

Participants comprised 60 K48 first-year students enrolled in Reading and Writing English 1 during the academic year 2024–2025 and three course instructors. K48 denotes the cohort admitted in 2023, making them first-year students in the 2023–2024 academic year. Students were purposively sampled from two intact classes (Class A:  $n = 30$ ; Class B:  $n = 30$ ) taught by three instructors with 5–18 years of EFL teaching experience. Table 1 summarises participant demographics.

**Table 1. Participant Demographics**

Characteristic	Class A (n=30)	Class B (n=30)	Total (n=60)	Teachers (n=3)
Age (mean)	18.6	18.9	18.7	32.4
Gender (F/M)	22/8	24/6	46/14	2F/1M
Province of origin	Thai Nguyen, Bac Kan, Cao Bang	Thai Nguyen, Lang Son, Tuyen Quang	8 provinces	Thai Nguyen
VSTEP/B1 equivalent	17 (56.7%)	19 (63.3%)	36 (60%)	B2–C1
Teaching experience (yrs)	–	–	–	5 / 12 / 18

Note. VSTEP = Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency.

All participants provided written informed consent. Ethical approval was obtained from the TNU-SFL Institutional Review Board (Ref: TNU-SFL-IRB-2024-07). Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect confidentiality.

### 3.3 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Multiple data sources were employed to ensure triangulation and construct validity (Denzin, 1978). Data collection occurred over one academic semester (15 weeks), encompassing five instrument types.

#### 3.3.1 Classroom Observations

Twelve 90-minute classroom observations were conducted across both classes (six per class) using a structured observation protocol adapted from Creese and Blackledge (2010). The protocol documented the frequency, direction (English→Vietnamese; Vietnamese→English; L1 mediation), and apparent function (comprehension monitoring, vocabulary clarification, idea generation, metalinguistic discussion) of translanguaging episodes. Field notes supplemented audio recordings. Observations were distributed evenly across reading-focused, writing-focused, and integrated task lessons.

#### 3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews (30–45 minutes) were conducted with 20 purposively selected students (10 per class, stratified by proficiency level and gender) and three instructors. Student interview protocols explored perceived utility of Vietnamese in comprehension and writing tasks, investment in English, anxiety, and metalinguistic awareness. Teacher interviews examined perceptions of translanguaging, institutional policy constraints, and pedagogical responses. Interviews were conducted in Vietnamese or English per participant preference and transcribed verbatim, with Vietnamese transcripts translated and back-translated by a bilingual colleague.

#### 3.3.3 Think-Aloud Protocols

Ten students participated in concurrent think-aloud protocols (Ericsson & Simon, 1993) during reading comprehension tasks and writing planning stages. This method provided direct access to students' cognitive processes and language choices during literacy tasks, complementing self-report interview data. Protocols were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed for translanguaging episodes and associated cognitive functions.

#### 3.3.4 Pre- and Post-Assessments

Reading comprehension (multiple choice and short-answer items drawn from authentic academic texts) and writing performance (a 250-word argumentative paragraph) were assessed at Week 1 (pre-) and Week 15 (post-). Writing

samples were scored using a modified Jacobs et al. (1981) analytical rubric assessing content, organisation, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Two raters independently scored all writing samples; inter-rater reliability was established at Cohen's  $\kappa = .82$ , indicating strong agreement. Reading scores were machine-scored for objectivity.

### 3.3.5 Field Notes and Document Analysis

Complementary data were gathered through reflective field notes maintained by the researcher and analysis of course documents including the English 1 syllabus, lesson plans, and institutional language policy statements. This documentary evidence contextualised observed translanguaging practices within the curricular and policy frameworks governing the course.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data (observations, interviews, think-alouds, field notes) were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). Initial codes were generated inductively across the full data corpus, then grouped into candidate themes informed by García and Li Wei's (2014) translanguaging functions (sense-making, metalinguistic, interactional, identity-expressing). Themes were reviewed against the full dataset, refined through negative case analysis, and member-checked with eight student participants

and two teacher participants to enhance credibility.

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS 29.0. Paired t-tests assessed pre/post gains in reading and writing scores. Pearson correlation coefficients examined relationships between translanguaging frequency (episodes per session, derived from observation coding) and assessment performance. An independent samples t-test compared performance between high-translanguaging and low-translanguaging subgroups, classified using median-split of observation frequency data.

## 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 Translanguaging Practices in Reading and Writing English 1 (RQ1)

Observation data across 12 sessions revealed 847 discrete translanguaging episodes ( $M = 70.6$  per session,  $SD = 14.3$ ). Translanguaging was substantially more prevalent during group reading tasks ( $M = 42.1$  episodes/session) than during individual writing tasks ( $M = 28.5$  episodes/session), reflecting the collaborative nature of reading activities. Four primary practice types were identified, illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2. Translanguaging Practice Types: Frequency and Illustrative Examples**

Practice Type	Frequency (%)	Illustrative Example
Comprehension monitoring	34.2%	Student checks Vietnamese meaning of 'discourse' before answering reading question
Ideational scaffolding	27.8%	Student brainstorms essay ideas in Vietnamese, then reformulates in English
Metalinguistic discussion	22.1%	Peer explains English grammar rule using Vietnamese; teacher confirms
Identity/affective expression	15.9%	Student expresses frustration with writing task in Vietnamese; peer responds bilingually

The predominance of comprehension monitoring (34.2%) and ideational scaffolding (27.8%) underscores translanguaging's cognitive functions in this context. Metalinguistic discussion (22.1%) was notably common during writing instruction, while identity/affective expression (15.9%) appeared most frequently during peer feedback

exchanges, suggesting translanguaging also serves social and emotional functions.

#### 4.2 Functions and Motivations of Translanguaging (RQ2)

Interview and think-aloud data revealed five interrelated motivational dimensions underlying students' translanguaging practices.

First, cognitive efficiency emerged as the most prominently cited motivation. Students consistently reported that processing complex reading passages or planning multi-paragraph arguments required the cognitive resources of Vietnamese. As Linh (pseudonym), a lower-intermediate student, explained: "When I read a difficult paragraph, I translate it inside my head first. If I don't, I cannot understand the meaning deeply. My brain needs Vietnamese to think." Think-aloud protocols confirmed this pattern: 8 of 10 participants spontaneously shifted to Vietnamese during inference-making phases of reading comprehension tasks.

Second, anxiety reduction was closely linked to translanguaging, particularly during writing tasks. Foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) manifested in students' reluctance to commit ideas to paper in English without first articulating them in Vietnamese. Minh (pseudonym), a first-generation university student from a mountainous province, noted: "Writing in English is scary. When I write my ideas in Vietnamese first, I feel more confident because I know what I want to say. Then I translate it."

Third, identity investment (Norton, 2013) was evident in students' selective translanguaging during topics connected to Vietnamese culture, history, or personal experience. Students

articulated a sense of greater authenticity and ownership when their Vietnamese cultural knowledge could inform their English writing. Huong (pseudonym) reflected: "When we write about traditional festivals, I think in Vietnamese because that is my real experience. I can express much more meaning that way."

Fourth, collaborative meaning-making drove peer-directed translanguaging during group reading activities. Students reported that discussing texts with peers in Vietnamese-then collectively constructing English summaries or responses-deepened comprehension and reduced individual cognitive load. Teacher observation data confirmed that Vietnamese-mediated peer discussions often preceded higher quality English output.

Fifth, institutional ambiguity facilitated translanguaging. Students perceived inconsistency between official English-only policies and teachers' de facto tolerance of Vietnamese in low-stakes peer interaction, creating a permissive space for translanguaging. This ambiguity, while enabling naturalistic language practices, also generated uncertainty about appropriate language use.

#### 4.3 Translanguaging and Academic Performance (RQ3)

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics and paired t-test results for pre/post reading and writing assessments across the full sample.

**Table 3. Pre- and Post-Assessment Results (N = 60)**

Measure	Pre-M (SD)	Post-M (SD)	Mean Diff.	t (df=59)	p / d
Reading Comprehension (/50)	28.4 (5.2)	35.7 (4.8)	+7.3	11.42	< .001 / 0.74
Writing: Content (/20)	11.2 (2.8)	14.6 (2.4)	+3.4	9.18	< .001 / 0.68
Writing: Organisation (/20)	10.9 (2.6)	13.8 (2.5)	+2.9	7.64	< .001 / 0.57
Writing: Language Use (/20)	10.4 (3.1)	12.7 (2.9)	+2.3	5.21	< .001 / 0.39
Total Writing Score (/100)	53.6 (9.4)	66.2 (8.7)	+12.6	9.74	< .001 / 0.70

Note. *d* = Cohen's *d* effect size. All results significant at  $p < .001$ .

All performance improvements were statistically significant with medium-to-large effect sizes ( $d =$

0.39–0.74). Notably, content development in writing demonstrated the largest effect size among writing sub-scores ( $d = 0.68$ ), suggesting that translanguaging-mediated ideation particularly benefited the elaboration of ideas.

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between moderate translanguaging frequency and reading comprehension scores ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and writing content scores ( $r = .38$ ,  $p < .01$ ). However, an inverted-U relationship was observed for writing coherence (organisation): very high translanguaging frequency (top quartile,  $M = 94.2$  episodes/session) correlated negatively with organisation scores ( $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ), suggesting that excessive L1 reliance may impede the development of English-medium organisational schemas.

Independent samples t-tests comparing high-translanguaging ( $n = 30$ , median-split upper half) and low-translanguaging subgroups ( $n = 30$ ) confirmed significantly higher post-test reading scores for the high-translanguaging group ( $M = 37.2$  vs.  $M = 34.1$ ,  $t(58) = 2.89$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = 0.66$ ). Writing content scores followed a similar pattern ( $M = 15.4$  vs.  $M = 13.8$ ,  $p < .05$ ), though organisation scores showed no significant between-group difference.

#### **4.4 Teacher Perceptions and Responses (RQ4)**

Teacher interview data revealed ambivalent, evolving attitudes toward student translanguaging, shaped by tensions between institutional policy, pedagogical beliefs, and observed learning outcomes.

Teacher 1 (18 years experience) held the most restrictive position, stating: "The official curriculum requires English-medium instruction. When students use Vietnamese, they are not practising English. My job is to push them to use English even when it is difficult." This perspective reflects an additive bilingualism model (Lambert, 1974) that construes languages as separate entities to be kept distinct during instruction.

Teacher 2 (12 years experience) adopted a pragmatic stance, distinguishing between "productive" and "unproductive" translanguaging: "I allow Vietnamese when they are discussing ideas in groups, but not when they are supposed to be writing in English. There is a difference between using Vietnamese to think and using it as

a crutch." This teacher's de facto acceptance of ideational translanguaging aligns with García and Li Wei's (2014) concept of translanguaging as a cognitive scaffold.

Teacher 3 (5 years experience), the youngest and most recently trained, expressed the most explicitly translanguaging-informed perspective: "I studied about translanguaging in my MA programme. I think denying students Vietnamese is unrealistic and counterproductive. We should teach them when and how to translanguage strategically, not pretend they only have one language." Teacher 3's view resonates with Canagarajah's (2013) advocacy for translanguaging pedagogy.

Across all three teachers, a common concern emerged regarding assessment: institutional rubrics and external examinations (VSTEP, TOEIC) reward English-only performance, creating structural disincentives for translanguaging-inclusive pedagogy. As Teacher 2 noted: "Even if translanguaging helps them learn, they will not be allowed to use Vietnamese in exams. So I worry that encouraging it gives them a false sense of security."

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Translanguaging as Cognitive and Affective Resource**

The findings substantiate García and Li Wei's (2014) argument that translanguaging constitutes a dynamic cognitive resource rather than a compensatory deficit strategy. The dominance of comprehension monitoring (34.2%) and ideational scaffolding (27.8%) across all observed translanguaging episodes confirms that students deployed Vietnamese purposefully and strategically, not randomly or unreflectively. This finding challenges deficit-oriented interpretations of L1 use prevalent in Vietnamese EFL pedagogy (Pham, 2010) and aligns with Makalela's (2015) multilingual research in South African contexts, extending evidence for translanguaging's cognitive utility to Southeast Asian tertiary education.

The positive correlation between moderate translanguaging frequency and reading comprehension performance ( $r = .43$ ) supports Storch and Wigglesworth's (2003) findings and corroborates Vygotskian theoretical premises: language mediates cognitive activity, and

restricting students to a developing linguistic system during complex cognitive tasks may impose unnecessary processing demands that inhibit deep comprehension. The anxiety-reduction function reported by students-particularly first-generation rural participants-further underscores the affective dimension of translanguaging, consistent with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) foreign language anxiety framework and Norton's (2013) investment construct.

### ***5.2 Pedagogical Tensions and the Optimal Translanguaging Zone***

Perhaps the most theoretically significant finding is the inverted-U relationship between translanguaging frequency and writing coherence. While moderate translanguaging predicted better content development, excessive translanguaging (top quartile) correlated negatively with organisational coherence. This suggests the existence of an optimal translanguaging zone—a threshold beyond which continued Vietnamese mediation may impede the development of English-medium academic discourse conventions. This concept extends García and Li Wei's (2014) framework by introducing a frequency dimension often absent from translanguaging advocacy literature, which has sometimes overcorrected toward uncritical celebration of all L1 use (Macaro, 2019).

These findings have direct implications for translanguaging pedagogy. Rather than adopting binary English-only or Vietnamese-permissive approaches, teachers should consider scaffolded translanguaging—explicitly teaching students to deploy Vietnamese for ideation and comprehension monitoring while gradually building English-medium organisational schemata through sustained genre instruction. This approach resonates with Canagarajah's (2015) advocacy for strategic code meshing and Cenoz and Gorter's (2020) pedagogical translanguaging framework.

### ***5.3 Institutional Tensions and Policy Implications***

The institutional ambiguity documented in this study—official English-only policy coexisting with de facto teacher tolerance of translanguaging—reflects broader contradictions in Vietnamese language education policy (Nguyen, 2021). This ambiguity, while enabling naturalistic multilingual practices, simultaneously generates student

uncertainty, teacher anxiety, and assessment misalignment. Translanguaging research consistently demonstrates that overt pedagogical translanguaging—where language mixing is explicitly sanctioned and guided rather than merely tolerated—produces superior outcomes to covert translanguaging enabled by policy non-enforcement (Lewis et al., 2012).

The divergence between Teacher 1's restrictive monolingual stance, Teacher 2's pragmatic tolerance, and Teacher 3's explicit translanguaging advocacy reflects the heterogeneous impact of recent MOET reforms and graduate teacher education curricula. As translanguaging theory increasingly permeates Vietnamese university TESOL programmes, a generational pedagogical shift may be underway. However, this shift requires structural support through assessment reform, explicit policy revision, and teacher professional development that moves beyond theoretical awareness toward practical translanguaging pedagogy.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study contributes to the growing body of translanguaging research in non-Western EFL contexts by providing empirically grounded, mixed-methods evidence of translanguaging's cognitive, affective, and academic functions among K48 first-year students in Reading and Writing English 1 at TNU-SFL. The findings collectively support a nuanced translanguaging pedagogy that harnesses the cognitive benefits of L1 mediation for comprehension and ideation while scaffolding students toward English-medium academic discourse conventions.

Three principal contributions emerge. Theoretically, this study extends García and Li Wei's (2014) framework by introducing the concept of an optimal translanguaging zone, demonstrating that translanguaging effects are non-linear and frequency-dependent. Empirically, it provides the first mixed-methods translanguaging study focused specifically on K48 students in an integrated reading-writing course at a Vietnamese provincial university. Pedagogically, the divergent teacher perspectives identified call for structured professional development that equips instructors with specific translanguaging strategies rather than leaving policy implementation to individual interpretation.

The study is bounded by its single-institution focus and the absence of a control group design, which limits causal inference. Future research should employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs across multiple Vietnamese universities, examine translanguaging longitudinally across academic years, and explore the experiences of ethnic minority students who navigate three linguistic systems (ethnic minority language, Vietnamese, English). Comparative studies across ASEAN contexts would further illuminate how post-colonial language ideologies shape translanguaging practices and policies in regional higher education.

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