

**Students' Attitudes toward Translanguaging Practice  
in EFL Classrooms in Vietnam**

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**Abstract**

In current education, to ensure effective interaction between language learning and disciplinary content, an increasing number of practitioners are aiming to integrate translanguaging in the classroom, which is proposed as a way to provide support for means of teaching instruction. In this study, I shed light on the attitudes of students majoring in social sciences toward translanguaging, taking into account both benefits and challenges when this practice was applied in EFL classes. The participants in this study included 120 students from four English for social science and humanities classes that I was directly assigned to teach at university. To meet the objectives of the research, I combined quantitative and qualitative research methods through questionnaires and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The findings show that students had a positive attitude towards the benefits of translanguaging in all four aspects: emotional, social, cognitive, and managerial engagement, especially in facilitating the language teaching and learning process, and making students feel more comfortable with social topics. However, the study also reveals some challenges of translanguaging practice in inappropriate learning applications and materials. Despite these drawbacks, this study indicates that for countries using English as a foreign language like Vietnam, the mother tongue has a beneficial role in fostering the teaching and learning process, particularly in programs that integrate language and knowledge.

**Key words:** *Translanguaging, attitudes, EFL classrooms, Vietnamese students*

**1. Introduction**

In the current globalization trend, teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) needs to be strategic in the context of integration. When English is taught for specific purposes, it has a diverse and universal audience for all scientific disciplines such as engineering technology, social sciences, economics, and finance. Teaching disciplinary English is an essential component of teaching English as a whole to serve a certain career or a specific major (He, 2020). In current education, to ensure effective interaction between language learning and disciplinary content, an increasing number of practitioners are aiming to integrate translanguaging in the classroom, which is proposed as a way to provide support for means of teaching instruction (García & Sylvan, 2011).

Translanguaging has been shown to be a highly interesting topic in the teaching and learning of foreign languages in earlier research. The academic community is using translanguaging more and more as a communication tool and an approach to teaching major-related English courses (García, 2009). Translanguaging in the classroom is the capacity of students to switch between and process different

languages, according to Canagarajah (2011). Moreover, García et al. (2011) stated that it alludes to hybrid forms of language use that are consistently implicated in the creation of meaning. This idea, however, is not the same as conventional terminology like borrowing, code mixing, code-switching. There is often a misconception that translanguaging and code-switching are the same, but they are different from each other (Sato, 2023). Accordingly, code-switching is frequently characterized by syntactic and grammatical features that are typically linked to seeing languages as two distinct monolingual systems. Researchers have actually found that the belief that multilingual learners have distinct language systems is the root cause of code-switching. Translanguaging, on the other hand, recognizes that individuals possess a single, cohesive language system that incorporates elements of every language they are familiar with. Translanguaging emphasizes how languages are interconnected and flexible. Translanguaging can help students convey their thoughts and improve teacher-student interactions (García & Wei, 2014). The use of translanguaging in the EFL classrooms, especially in those teaching English to a specific discipline, has been revealed to impart knowledge (Melo-Pfeifer, 2024; Ferguson, 2009), strengthen personal connections (McGlynn & Martin, 2009), and help with better classroom management (Shujing, 2013).

In the process of language education, knowledge of language attitudes from learners is fundamental to the formulation of effective language planning strategies; without this understanding, it is impossible to forecast which strategies will be successful and which will not. According to Kircher (2016), language attitude is defined as any affective, cognitive, or formal index of evaluative reactions toward different languages or their speakers. These attitudes may ultimately influence language change or maintenance by influencing a range of behaviors, such as the choice of language to learn and use as one's primary language of communication (Muthanna & Miao, 2015). These attitudes can affect students' learning because they affect the way language learners perceive language. In a broader concept, Urhahne and Kremer (2023) investigated domain specificity of epistemic beliefs from a comprehensive perspective. The study offers compelling proof of the domain specificity of epistemic views about academic topic domains, which intensifies the need for a categorization scheme to identify the primary areas of individual epistemology (Urhahne & Kremer, 2023). From these studies, it can be seen that knowledge of students' attitudes about translanguaging in the classroom, particularly at the tertiary level, is crucial for their success.

In Vietnam, English teaching programs for social science students are often closely tied to reading and writing skills. Moreover, the majority of the readings are lengthy, informative, and packed with unfamiliar names, facts, and abstract notions. Writing assignments related to social studies are also challenging. Essays about social studies events or phenomena often require substantial background knowledge and higher-order thinking skills, such as summarizing and analyzing. Therefore, in EFL classes for social science students, teachers' use of translanguaging is necessary to support students in explaining vocabulary knowledge and academic texts related to social science majors so that students can understand the tasks more thoroughly. As stated in the study of Doiz et al. (2013), translanguaging is regarded as a scaffolding device so that both language and content can be integrated successfully. According to Hornberger and Vaish (2009), translanguaging can also be described as the use of bilingual supportive scaffolding techniques, which allow students and teachers to access academic material using the linguistic resources they already have in the classroom while also learning new ones. Similarly, Walt and Kidd (2012) demonstrated how scaffolding could be implemented by using students' first language (L1) to support the English language learning concepts.

In recent years, investigation into the effectiveness of translanguaging in EFL classrooms has also been the concerning topic of many Vietnamese scholars such as Tran (2024), Pham and Vu (2023), Le (2022), Tran (2022), Nguyen (2022), Tran et al. (2021). At Vietnam National University (VNU) where I am teaching English now, the English for Specific Purposes program has attracted special attention from educators and school administrators. Not only does this program provide students with strong disciplinary knowledge, but it also assists them in meeting the demands of using English in accordance with international standards when they eventually enter a competitive and professional working environment. Consequently, starting at the most basic levels of English instruction, disciplinary themes have been incorporated into the English curriculum to help students get familiar with disciplinary themes from the very beginning of their English language studies. Despite playing such an important role, the issues associated with translanguaging and understanding the attitudes of students, especially those from social science majors, are still left open at VNU. Therefore, I conducted this research to study this open issue, seeking to determine what attitudes social and science students have toward translanguaging practices in EFL classes. From there, I hope to provide useful information for teachers in using translanguaging strategies flexibly with other majors at Vietnamese universities.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1. Review of Studies on the Students' Attitudes toward Translanguaging Practice in EFL Classes in the World***

International studies have examined the effectiveness of translanguaging, emphasizing students' positive attitudes toward this practice in EFL classrooms. Translanguaging was examined by Adamson and Coulson (2015) in a content and language integrated learning course as a practical way to help young university students advance their proficiency in lengthy, critical academic writing. The results showed that students had positive opinions of this policy and that their written work improved because of their awareness of translanguaging (Adamson & Coulson, 2015). Kucukali and Koçbaş (2021) examined translanguaging pedagogies on language learning from students' perspectives and concluded that translanguaging pedagogies improved students' emotive, cognitive, and social involvement. According to Xiao and Lertlitb (2023), Thai students had positive perceptions towards the use of translanguaging in English language classes since it made difficult lessons easier to understand and enhanced their ability to communicate in English. Besides, Nkhi and Shange (2024) stated that most students would rather receive instruction in both their mother tongue and the target language than only the target language. These results demonstrate how crucial it is to implement pedagogical translanguaging in the classroom to include students from diverse backgrounds in their own education. Similarly, the study of Shawaqfeh et al. (2024) investigated the prevalence of translanguaging in Jordan classrooms and how it can affect instructional methods and teacher-student relationships. All students felt that translanguaging improved the quality of their educational experiences and allowed them to take advantage of their linguistic diversity in order to improve interpersonal communication (Shawaqfeh et al., 2024).

Despite its obvious benefits, some studies have also shown negative views among students about the use of translanguaging in EFL classes. In South African research by Thesen and Cooper, the interplay between L1 and L2 was seen as a "contact zone" (Thesen & Cooper, 2014, p. 2) between languages and has a degree of "risk" or "tension" (p. 6) when deciding which to use. Thesen and Copper argued that the L2 (English) can act as a normativizing influence over the L1 in an asymmetrical, biased

manner, thus devaluing L1 language. Besides, in Sweden, Toth and Paulsrud (2017) concluded that the ways in which learners access languages in seeking meaning can be an “affordance or a constraint” (p. 191) depending on both their own and the teachers' language proficiency. In a study by Tabatabaei (2019), although the findings showed the students' attitudes - both positive and negative - about translanguaging, their perspectives were more unfavorable. They thought that if they exclusively spoke English in EFL classes, they would learn more effectively. It became clear from the students' responses that they might experience linguistic anxiety. Even while some participants stated that they use their L1 to better comprehend the target language, most participants saw a possible danger of receiving a poorer mark if they used their L1 (Tabatabaei, 2019). According to Włosowicz (2020), translanguaging has a few limitations for students such as students' lack of translanguaging experience and reluctance to apply their multilingual repertoires when learning new languages. Besides, Raja et al. (2021) implemented research on how Indonesian students perceived the difficulties of translanguaging in an EFL classroom. The findings revealed some main challenges from students' opinions for both teacher-directed and student-directed classroom translanguaging: indigenous language diversity, English only ideology, desire to be familiarized with English, and students' guilt. Moreover, the guilt of students was also mentioned by Setati et al. (2002) in South Africa who pointed out that some individuals may experience a sense of "guilt" (p. 147) in translanguaging. Although translanguaging can be seen by researchers as a way to decenter monolingual language practices, it can also be regarded as a sign of "unprofessionalism and subterfuge" (Gallagher & Colohan, 2014, p. 2) by the teacher. Sharing the same purpose of investigating the challenges students faced with translanguaging in classrooms, Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) revealed that the implementation of translanguaging techniques in the classroom was linked to certain difficulties, such as the inconsistency between the language of instruction and the dominant learners' familiar languages in the classroom; the strictness of the language policy; rigorous monolingual assessment; and inadequate teaching and learning materials. In Raja et al.'s (2022) study, the majority of students felt negative about student-directed translanguaging. They claimed that when they spoke in languages other than English in the EFL classroom, they felt guilty, awkward, improper, and strange (Raja et al., 2022).

## ***2.2. Review of Studies on the Students' Attitudes toward Translanguaging Practice in EFL Classes in Vietnam***

In Vietnam, the students' positive attitudes toward translanguaging have received moderate attention from authors. Tran et al. (2021) stated that students had a positive attitude toward translanguaging in improving their speaking ability. When studying English, their use of L1 is said to be a helpful strategy for boosting their confidence and communication proficiency. Additionally, the findings showed that the students' language in the English class had a favorable impact on motivation, engagement, and behavior (Tran et al., 2021). In the study of Nguyen (2022), students believed that translanguaging is a useful technique for improving their engagement with and understanding of the material. Similarly, the results of Le's (2022) study stated that the students were content with the way their teacher used L1. Additionally, L1 usage was preferable for the following functions: social, managerial, effective, and linguistic functionality, among which language functionality was chosen the most (Le, 2022). From students' perspectives, translanguaging can enable students to critically examine both their own and other people's language practices and identities. Besides, dismantling unequal power dynamics between the teacher and the student is another benefit of translanguaging (Pham & Vu, 2023). In addition, due to the significance of grammar and vocabulary for exam preparation, participants held positive opinions about translanguaging and believed it was essential for scaffolding students' learning,

particularly for cognitive purposes (e.g., explaining difficult grammar/vocabulary) (Pham & Vu, 2023).

Besides positive views, opposing views from learners were also mentioned in some studies but not many. Translanguaging was not used as much as EFL teachers and students stated since EMI classrooms operate on the idea of a monolingual approach. Conservative opinions were even expressed by a few attendees who opposed adding more languages to the EMI classroom (Nguyen, 2022). Similarly, Tran (2022) mentioned some challenges of translanguaging from students' perceptions: the lack of competent educators, poor English language skills, unequal access to school, and irrelevant content. According to Pham and Vu (2023), students may oppose to translanguaging because this type of practice still raises certain potential issues, particularly when used in Vietnamese contexts, including its inappropriate application, the uniformity of language regulations and the widespread notion that using "English only" is the best strategy.

### ***2.3. The Spread of EMI and CLIL in the World and in the Vietnamese Context***

Because of globalization and the growing popularity of international trade, English has become a lingua franca (Balakrishnan et al., 2020). Due to its widespread use, English has been included in traditional educational programs. As a result, students are now exposed to a number of contemporary teaching methods, the most popular of which is Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). With regard to English-medium instruction (EMI), the subject is primarily promoted through an English-speaking setting, whereas CLIL seeks to advance both the subject content and English language competency (Ho et al., 2023). The spread of CLIL and EMI attracted the attention of authors both in the world and in Vietnam.

Since its first introduction in Europe in the 1990s, numerous scholars have documented the application of CLIL in the European setting (Wei & Feng, 2015; Heras & Lasagabaster, 2014; European Commission, 2006). When implementing EMI, instructors utilized elements of CLIL since they were concerned about how to increase student engagement when teaching in English (Antov & Pancheva, 2017). Lasagabaster (2013) also conducted research on the use of the L1 in CLIL classes from the teachers' perspective. The findings showed that the participants had a favorable opinion of L1 use because they thought it could help scaffold language and subject learning. Similarly, previous studies such as Cenoz (2015) and Ouazizi (2016) extensively investigated the crucial role that CLIL plays in promoting linguistic proficiency for second language (L2) learners. According to Cenoz (2015), it was necessary to adopt CLIL programs at various levels in order to exchange best practices in educational research. When it comes to helping students reach high levels of competency in the subject matter and fluency in the target language (English), CLIL education was argued as being more effective than traditional educational programs (Ouazizi, 2016).

In Asian universities, CLIL seems to be a new approach and it has attracted moderate attention from authors. CLIL has gained widespread acceptance as a language-learning approach among students in the last two decades. The study of Kim et al. (2021) investigated how instructors and new students at a Korean scientific and engineering school perceived integrating content and language classes. According to the majority of participants, the CLIL classes made it easier for students to comprehend content lectures and what to anticipate from regular content lectures (Kim et al., 2021). Moreover, in an EFL setting, Kanoksilapatham and Khamkhien (2022) investigated the functions of CLIL in an engineering research methods course in Thailand. They discovered that CLIL could assist in enhancing students' vocabulary and reading comprehension. In addition, Adamson and Ng's (2023) study investigated the two instructors' conceptualization and implementation of their CLIL curricula as well

as the opportunities and constraints that CLIL provided at a provincial Japanese institution offering EMI. Both instructors scaffolded language and subject resources in this study, particularly when it came to general cultural and social science themes. The findings revealed that the development of practical Japanese language integration in the classroom was aided by translanguaging (Adamson & Ng, 2023).

In Vietnam, it is necessary to establish English programs to help Vietnamese students prepare for the challenges of studying disciplinary subjects in English. This is why General English programs are being superseded by EFL programs adopting the CLIL approach. In addition to helping students learn the language, CLIL helps them develop a number of soft skills, including communication, teamwork, project management, and presentation (Nguyen, 2019). Besides, Ngo and Barnett's (2022) study detailed how one lecturer successfully implemented "CLIL-ized" techniques in an Electrical Engineering course. It demonstrated how the use of such methods aided in the program's adaptation to the Vietnamese context. Moreover, it allowed students to improve their English proficiency to be ready for their final year, as well as their critical thinking, design thinking, and teamwork abilities to foster positive attitudes toward language learning. It is determined that CLIL approaches offer a potent avenue for advancing EMI pedagogy in Vietnamese institutions. Besides, with the aim of reassessing and investigating CLIL's advantages and disadvantages from the viewpoints of the students, Nguyen et al.'s (2023) study sought to investigate and articulate students' opinions about the current state-of-the-art CLIL implementation in a regional public university at an early stage. The findings showed that students have positive opinions about the advantages and potential of CLIL programs at the university under survey. These include their increased English proficiency, language skills, and language knowledge; a welcoming, international learning environment; and the satisfaction of excellent training programs with qualified faculty, up-to-date learning resources, and extracurricular academic activities. These findings suggested that, if students appreciated all of the advantages that CLIL education provides, learning a university subject in a non-native language could be both challenging and enjoyable.

#### **2.4. Research Foci and Questions**

As we can see from the review of the literature, academics from all over the world are interested in translanguaging, particularly in light of its usefulness in EFL classes. In Vietnam, translanguaging also attracted moderate attention from authors, and positive views from learners about this practice were presented in many studies. However, little is known about the negative aspects or challenges of translanguaging practice at universities in Vietnam, even though understanding those negative aspects are important and could influence the goals and adjustment of language learning and teaching. Moreover, the views of students in a certain field such as social science - a major with many complex vocabulary and issues related to culture and society remain unexplored, although learning English to a specific purpose also plays a role in affecting students' perceptions of translanguaging. As a result, I conducted this study to investigate social science students' opinions regarding the effectiveness of translanguaging, taking into consideration both the advantages and difficulties that students faced when utilizing this technique in EFL classes. These objectives can be attained through the following two research questions:

1. *What benefits did social science students gain from translanguaging practice in EFL classes?*
2. *What challenges did social science students encounter when using translanguaging in EFL classes?*

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

In this work, I adopted purposive sampling to choose the participants. The participants in this study were 120 students from four English for Social Science and Humanities classes that I was directly assigned to teach at Vietnam National University (VNU). This group of students has an entry English level of A2 (equivalent to level 2) according to the 6-level foreign language competency framework for Vietnam and aims to achieve the output standard B1 (equivalent to level 3).

English for Social Sciences and Humanities course is an English program designed to teach English specifically for students majoring in social sciences at VNU such as sociology, philosophy, tourism, journalism, linguistics and so on. In addition to helping students reach a general English proficiency of B1, the course aims to provide social science students with the fundamental knowledge and terminology associated with social science disciplines, enabling them to pursue disciplinary English courses in the following semesters. Thus, each week, students learned skills with content based on topics related to the social sciences.

In this course, the use of English was encouraged as much as possible in the classroom so that students could improve all four skills. However, translanguaging was also allowed to perform a number of functions related to lesson content, creating a learning atmosphere, and classroom management. Specifically, I employed translanguaging to help students master the necessary vocabulary in the lesson. For example, I asked students to translate some social science terms into Vietnamese to check if they understood their exact meaning, and for the whole class to grasp the most accurate translation. Translanguaging was also adopted in the classroom to clarify and assist students in differentiating the meaning of challenging social science terminology. I also used translanguaging to accurately comprehend students' meaning when they attempted to explain a problem but were unable to do so. Furthermore, students were permitted to communicate complex viewpoints during group discussions by using translanguaging.

#### **3.2. Data Collection and Analysis**

To meet the objectives of the research, I combined quantitative and qualitative research methods. Specifically, I collected data from students in two ways.

First, the questionnaire was adopted to investigate social science students' attitudes toward the benefits as well as the challenges of translanguaging practice in EFL classrooms (Appendix 1). Mazikana (2023) asserted that questionnaires are incredibly effective and cost-effective for compiling a substantial amount of data on subjects related to basic education. The questionnaire was divided into two main parts corresponding to two research questions. Part 1 includes 12 statements related to the benefits of translanguaging for social science students in EFL classrooms. Based on the study of Kucukali and Koçbaşı (2021) on students' perspectives of benefits and issues of translanguaging pedagogies on language learning, I divided the benefits in part 1 into 4 main groups including emotional engagement, social engagement, cognitive engagement, managerial engagement. The study of Kucukali and Koçbaşı (2021) seeks to explore the advantages and problems of translanguaging pedagogies in language instruction from the viewpoints of Turkish State University students. These students expressed a range of opinions, which provided information about how translanguaging affects their learning engagement. Part 2 of the questionnaire focuses on challenges of translanguaging. I developed 12 statements in this part based on the classification of Pham and Vu

(2023) including 3 main groups of challenges: inappropriate application in learning, English only ideology, mismatch in materials and assessment. I adopted a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree) for all 24 items in 2 parts. According to Bouranta et al. (2009), the use of 5-point Likert scales would result in higher response rates and less confusion, which is why the participants found it easy to read the entire list of scale descriptions.

Second, I used the interview method to clarify the information obtained from the survey, thereby providing more accurate and reliable data for the research. There are three types of interviews: semi-structured, highly structured, and unstructured. In this study, I adopted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 20 students (Appendix 2). According to Eppich et al. (2019), semi-structured interview guides allow for the exploration of emergent subjects based on the research question, while also include prepared questions. The interview questions include 10 questions focusing on aspects related to the two research questions and issues arising from the survey such as: the role of translanguaging in EFL classes for social science students, the frequency of translanguaging use, the main benefits and challenges of translanguaging in EFL class, especially for social science majors, translanguaging in the English courses for social science students in the future.

To ensure data reliability, the reliability coefficient was verified using a split-half approach based on the Spearman-Brown formula. With  $R_{sb} = 0.73$  for part 1 and  $R_{sb} = 0.81$  for part 2 of the questionnaire, the Spearman-Brown reliability ( $R_{sb}$ ) in this case is high, above the 0.7 criterion. Thus, it can be concluded that the collected data is trustworthy.

#### 4. Research Results and Discussions

##### 4.1. Research question 1: What benefits did social science students gain from translanguaging practice in EFL classes?

Students' attitudes toward the benefits of translanguaging in four specific groups (emotional engagement, social engagement, cognitive engagement, managerial engagement) were first explored through a questionnaire. The results of the survey are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Benefits of Translanguaging

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Emotional Engagement</b>		
1. Translanguaging maintains a pleasant classroom environment.	4.25	0.54
2. Translanguaging helps students feel more comfortable with social topics.	4.63	0.49
3. Translanguaging enables students to make effective use of class time.	3.93	0.68
<b>Social Engagement</b>		
4. Translanguaging enhances classroom relationships among students.	4.53	0.55
5. Translanguaging fosters teacher-students connection and understanding.	4.51	0.53
6. Translanguaging increases comprehension of culture issues in lessons.	4.63	0.48
<b>Cognitive Engagement</b>		
7. Translanguaging helps facilitate the language teaching and learning process.	4.70	0.46



8. Translanguaging makes students become more autonomous learners.	3.82	0.63
9. Translanguaging functions as a problem-solving strategy to avoid misunderstandings.	4.50	0.55
<b>Managerial Engagement</b>		
10. Translanguaging fosters students' attention to the lessons.	3.87	0.76
11. Translanguaging facilitates students in implementing pair and group work.	4.38	0.54
12. Translanguaging makes students informed about important tasks clearly.	4.54	0.50

Table 1 shows that students have a positive attitude about the benefits which translanguaging brings them in all four aspects mentioned ( $M > 3.8$ ). In particular, it can be seen that in all four aspects there are benefits achieving very high mean scores ( $M > 4.5$ ). In addition, every factor also displays a low standard deviation ( $SD < 0.8$ ), which suggests that the data were closely distributed around the mean.

First, regarding the emotional engagement benefits, the majority of students concurred that translanguaging made them feel more comfortable to discuss social themes ( $M = 4.63$ ). This is an outstanding benefit that translanguaging can bring to students majoring in social sciences compared to other majors. As previously mentioned, the content of the English for Social Sciences and Humanities course is structured around social themes. This includes topics like philosophy, religion, and politics, which can be highly scholarly and challenging to comprehend when speaking in English. Subsequently, a flexible approach to translanguaging can boost students' motivation and emotional engagement in their learning. One student shared that:

Some topics are related to anthropology or psychology. The vocabulary in these topics is quite difficult, and we sometimes do not understand the Vietnamese meaning. So using translanguaging makes us feel easier to understand and more comfortable discussing these topics with teachers and other friends. (S1)

Another student highlighted how translanguaging increased students' motivation and participation in social topic discussions, saying:

As a history major, there are moments when I found it difficult to express myself adequately when I shared this topic with friends in English. At that time, I felt very frustrated and did not want to talk. Translanguaging made me feel more confident and comfortable in class discussions to demonstrate my knowledge. (S2)

In addition, translanguaging also made class more interesting and pleasant ( $M = 4.25$ ). This seems to be especially true for social sciences students. One student said, *"The social sciences field is complex, but the content is very close to everyday life. Using translanguaging helps us share more interesting stories and evidence with everyone"* (S3). This classroom atmosphere encouraged students to feel engaged and participate more enthusiastically in the lessons. Although no research was done globally or in Vietnam on the advantages of translanguaging for social science majors, many authors also affirmed the aspect of emotional engagement for students in EFL classes. In the study of Kucukali and Koçbaşı (2021), students expressed a desire to hear the lessons presented in a language with which they were also familiar. If not, they became disinterested, unmotivated, and lost interest in learning. In the context of Vietnam, according to Le (2022), students felt more encouraged to speak up and share their stories to the class when they have the backing of their mother tongue. Similarly, Tran et al. (2021) reported that the use of translanguaging is thought to be a beneficial study method for

improving students' confidence and communication skills when learning English. In the study of Adamson and Ng (2023), both authors agreed that using the students' first language fosters the bilingual competency that is frequently needed in the workplace and in real life and students cannot be expected to be able to discuss content knowledge solely in English.

Second, in terms of social engagement benefits, all 3 statements in this group gain high mean scores ( $M > 4.5$ ). During the interview, students highlighted the significance of translanguaging in fostering stronger relationships within the classroom as well as between teachers and students. One student shared that, *"With the support of the mother tongue, teachers can inspire us to speak up, share our experiences, and help us feel more involved in the class"* (S4). This finding was reported in the study of Kucukali and Koçbaşı (2021). By using the language that students understand and find most comfortable, teachers may provide feedback, make clear arguments, and establish a sincere connection with their students through translanguaging (Kucukali & Koçbaşı, 2021). Similarly, according to Le (2022), one issue that all EFL students have in common is the language barrier. The usage of Vietnamese will undoubtedly reduce their nervousness and miscommunication between teachers and students since they are unsure if the teacher can comprehend what they are saying or if they can grasp what is being said (Le, 2022). Besides, one finding from researching social science students is that by better comprehending cultural concerns in the classroom, students might enhance social cohesiveness through translanguaging ( $M = 4.63$ ).

Third, concerning cognitive engagement benefits, with the highest mean scores ( $M = 4.70$ ), all students agreed that translanguaging helps facilitate the language teaching and learning process. It was followed by the beneficial function of translanguaging as a problem-solving strategy to avoid misunderstandings ( $M = 4.50$ ). These benefits were confirmed in the interviews when one student expressed his opinion:

It is difficult for me to keep up with tertiary English because I hardly spoke English during my high school education. I am among the students who always ask the teacher to clarify certain concepts in Vietnamese as I learn better when they do so. (S5)

Besides, another student thought that translanguaging was a useful tactic for them since it enables them to translate both from English to Vietnamese and from Vietnamese to English. She said, *"If I think in my mother tongue, I will remember the knowledge more. I find it difficult to forget what was taught in Vietnamese"* (S6). The cognitive benefits of translanguaging were reported by Lasagabaster (2013) who claimed that using L1 could enable teachers to explain vocabulary and concepts, particularly those that are more abstract and hence need more cognitive processing, to students more clearly. Besides, this finding was also in line with the favorable opinions of students on translanguaging in the study of Xiao and Lertlitb (2023) because it improved their comprehension of challenging material and improved their capacity to communicate in English. Furthermore, according to Pham and Vu (2023), participants had positive opinions about translanguaging and thought it was crucial for scaffolding students' learning, especially for cognitive purposes (e.g., explaining difficult grammar/vocabulary), because of the importance of grammar and vocabulary for exam preparation. Adamson and Ng (2023) also mentioned that the development of a practical integration of students' Japanese in the classroom was aided by translanguaging. Similarly, Nguyen (2022) revealed that translanguaging is a helpful strategy for increasing their involvement and comprehension of the subject matter.

Fourth, as regards managerial engagement benefits, students could be informed about important tasks clearly ( $M = 4.54$ ) and found it easier to implement pair and group work ( $M = 4.38$ ). Students stated in

the interviews that translanguaging made them more excited to participate in class activities. They admitted that comprehension is the prerequisite for involvement. This implies that they are able to engage because they comprehend the information being provided; if they did not understand, they could not participate. A student made the following statement:

It is simple to participate in what you understand; thus, providing instructions in both Vietnamese and English makes it easier for us to feel motivated to participate in our education, especially getting some important information about presentation or project tasks during the semester. (S7)

Sharing the same opinions, the participants in Lasagabaster's (2013) study mentioned that translanguaging was crucial to establish guidelines for how the class was to operate as well as to explain instructions pertaining to the tasks that needed to be completed in class. Besides, Lasagabaster (2013) also added that when it came to handling classroom discipline, the L1 was also frequently used. Translanguaging allows students to resolve potential problems in the classroom, where there should be no room for uncertainty or ambiguity (Lasagabaster, 2013). In addition, in the interviews, students also revealed that translanguaging gave them more confidence when working in groups or in pairs with their peers. They said that if they knew the answer to a question but found it difficult to explain themselves in English, they would occasionally respond to it in Vietnamese. This suggests that even students with little English proficiency will experience a sense of belonging when translanguaging is allowed in class time. One student expressed her opinions:

My confidence to talk and participate in pair work or group work activities is increased when I can use my mother tongue in the classroom. Unlike in situations where everything is done in English only, I am not afraid to make mistakes. Thus, my understanding, participation, and confidence will all be improved. (S8)

This finding was reported by Nodoushan (2023), who implied that translanguaging is an effective tactic because it boosts students' comprehension, self-assurance, and involvement in the classroom. Moreover, translanguaging fosters a supportive environment where all students, regardless of their English proficiency levels, participate actively in their own education (Nodoushan, 2023). In agreement, participants in the study of Kucukali and Koçbaşı (2021) noted that their social involvement in the classroom activities was enhanced in multiple ways by their translanguaging practice. Similarly, Shawaqfeh et al. (2024) claimed that translanguaging enabled students to improve their interpersonal communication in class activities.

It can be seen that translanguaging has brought undeniable benefits to social science students in all aspects of emotional, social, cognitive, and managerial engagement. However, based on the literature review, translanguaging also has limitations when applied in the classroom. To learn more deeply about whether these challenges have any similarities or differences with those of social science students, the disadvantages of translanguaging are discussed in the next section.

#### ***4.2. Research question 2: What challenges did social science students encounter when using translanguaging in EFL classes?***

Based on the classification of Pham and Vu (2023), part 2 of the questionnaire includes 3 main groups of challenges: inappropriate application in learning, English only ideology, mismatch in materials and assessment. The average mean values and their standard deviation were illustrated in Table 2 below.

*Table 2. Challenges of Translanguaging*

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Inappropriate Application in Learning</b>		
13. Translanguaging makes students depend on the mother tongue.	4.10	0.44
14. Translanguaging hinders students from improving their English skills.	3.80	0.64
15. Students feel it is unnecessary to listen to teachers speaking English.	4.23	0.48
16. Students lack necessary English resources to express their disciplinary knowledge.	3.53	0.74
<b>English Only Ideology</b>		
17. Students believe that an English-only learning approach is the best.	2.98	0.68
18. Students prefer teachers to use English as the sole language of instruction.	3.44	0.74
19. Students are expected by parents to learn in an English only environment.	3.40	0.74
20. Students feel guilty of using translanguaging in an EFL class.	3.82	0.63
<b>Mismatch in Materials and Assessment</b>		
21. Translanguaging requires resources that support bilingual languages.	4.38	0.54
22. Translanguaging confuses students using materials designed exclusively for English.	3.87	0.76
23. Translanguaging practices may not align with standardized English assessments.	2.75	0.52
24. Translanguaging hinders a thorough evaluation of students' linguistic competence.	2.63	0.52

First, in terms of inappropriate application in learning, all students agreed that translanguaging can make students feel unnecessary to teachers speaking English (M= 4.23) and depend on the mother tongue (M= 4.10). To explain more about these challenges, in the interviews, one student expressed her opinions, *"I think translanguaging is very useful, but overusing it can give us the impression that we can just speak in Vietnamese whenever we find it difficult to express ourselves in English"* (S9). Sharing the same views, another student said, *"Sometimes, we are certain that the teacher will use Vietnamese to clarify her ideas, so we will not pay attention to her English speaking. Gradually, we may become less motivated to enhance our English, leading to lower proficiency levels"* (S10). This finding is consistent with that of Pham and Vu (2023) who emphasized that it is crucial to increase the knowledge and proficiency of teachers and students in using translanguaging in classes. This is because, in the absence of clear intentions, students may misuse or use L1 in an unstrategic manner, which increases their dependence on their mother tongue (Pham & Vu, 2023). Similarly, according to Tabatabaei (2019), while some participants claimed to utilize their L1 to help them understand the target language, the majority of participants believed that using their L1 could put them at risk of getting a lower grade in English proficiency.

Second, as regards challenges related to English only ideology, it can be seen that the mean scores in this group are not high (M< 4), which means students did not believe that the English-only learning approach is the best. This result is entirely in line with the data obtained from Table 1 in the previous

section, which showed that students were generally in favor of using translanguaging in the classroom to help them learn social sciences oriented English. This finding is contrasting with some studies in which English-only ideology was regarded as the main obstacle in translanguaging practice in classes. For example, in the study of Raja et al. (2021), the participants thought they should only speak English in the EFL lesson. When the other students spoke in their mother tongue, they conveyed their guilt. They believed it was a mistake and a sign of their poor English skill because they were using languages other than English in the EFL class (Raja et al., 2021). Similarly, another literature by Setati et al. (2002) in South Africa noted that some students might feel guilt when using translanguaging in classes. It is also possible to view translanguaging as an indication of the teacher's lack of professionalism and deceit (Gallagher & Colohan, 2014). Besides, according to Nguyen (2022), since EMI classrooms are based on the concept of a monolingual approach, translanguaging was not employed as extensively as EFL teachers and students claimed. To explore why this study has different results in this aspect compared to other studies, my students were asked to explain more in the interviews. One student shared that, *"Studying English for social science and humanities requires us to learn knowledge and vocabulary related to social sciences. Many complex expressions are difficult to convey in English, so using translanguaging is necessary for us to understand the lesson"* (S11). In agreement, another student expressed his opinions of the English-only ideology:

I don't think the English-only approach is suitable for the English course for social science students. Maybe this method will be great for a Basic English course, but for a course that requires students to master not only skills but also social knowledge and vocabulary, translanguaging will be able to facilitate our learning process. (S12)

The above explanations show that the contrasting results are due to different student populations and classroom environments. L1 is an essential instrument for learning a language successfully. Krashen (1981) asserted that exposure to intelligible content is necessary for language acquisition. Learners will not be able to finish a task or retain information in their brains if they are unable to understand what has been spoken (Krashen, 1981). Furthermore, according to Le (2022), many complex vocabulary and grammatical aspects are challenging to clarify in target language. Monolingual instruction in English-only classrooms prevents students from developing their bilingual competence, particularly when they are required to discuss assignments or translate passages of books in their mother tongue for an essay or project (Adamson & Ng, 2023). Therefore, the English-only learning approach is not always the best in every learning environment.

Third, concerning the mismatch in materials and assessment, one aspect all students agreed on is that translanguaging requires resources that support bilingual languages (M= 4.38). In the interview, one student said, *"The textbooks for the course are written in English. I think resources that support both Vietnamese and English are needed for translanguaging; however, they might not always be easily accessible"* (S13). Besides, translanguaging might confuse students using materials designed exclusively for English (M= 3.87). Thus, one student (S14) expressed his hope that teachers would modify current resources or develop new ones to support translanguaging techniques. This finding was aligned with the study of Pham and Vu (2023) and Tran (2022), which claimed that the effective implementation of translanguaging is hampered by the presence of imported materials. It is necessary to use Vietnamese-language resources in response to the needs of the learners in solving their language problems. Sharing the same viewpoints, Pham and Doan (2020) stated that teachers needed to employ equivalent materials and articles in Vietnamese since they thought that academic materials

written in English could make it more difficult for students to comprehend subject matter. Besides, teachers must obtain access to foreign materials and update their lesson presentation slides in order to accommodate changes in the language of instruction (Tran et al., 2018).

## 5. Conclusion

In the context of globalization, although English increasingly occupies a high position in the fields of culture, society, and education, the mother tongue still plays an important role and actively contributes to the success of learners' foreign language learning process. The purpose of this study was to investigate what social science students perceived about the translanguaging practice, considering both the benefits and challenges that students encountered when using this method in EFL classes. With the combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods, the findings reveal that social science students had a positive attitude toward the benefits of translanguaging in all four aspects: emotional, social, cognitive, and managerial engagement. Specifically, the most obvious benefits of translanguaging include facilitating the language teaching and learning process, increasing comprehension of culture issues in lessons, making students feel more comfortable with social topics and being informed about important tasks clearly.

However, translanguaging practice may receive some concerns from researchers and educators all over the world as it still raises certain potential issues, particularly when being applied in Vietnamese learning contexts. Based on the results obtained from this study, due to inappropriate application in learning, translanguaging practice made students depend on Vietnamese and feel unnecessary to listen to teachers speaking English, which leads to less motivation to enhance English proficiency levels. Besides, translanguaging requires resources that support bilingual languages because students may be confused using materials designed exclusively for English. Thus, teachers need to spend time upgrading old materials and producing updated handouts for the new curriculum. Despite these certain difficulties, one interesting point is that when translanguaging practice was applied to social science students, they did not encounter many obstacles related to English-only ideology. Social science students in this study had a favorable view toward translanguaging and did not consider the English-only approach to be the best strategy. This is a very different point from many previous studies conducted on translanguaging. This also indicates that for countries using English as a foreign language like Vietnam, the mother tongue has a beneficial role in fostering the teaching and learning process, particularly in programs that integrate language and content.

This study has contributed knowledge to the previous research on translanguaging and CLIL programs in Vietnam. Because translanguaging functions as a scaffolding activity that teachers can employ to enhance learning, I recommend that “pedagogical translanguaging” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010) be implemented at the tertiary level. Therefore, it is necessary that institutions and educators consider how to best implement translanguaging in language classes. Second, there appears to be inconsistent use of translanguaging in universities because there are not many official documents outlining how teachers implement translanguaging in English classes. This suggests policymakers should take translanguaging into consideration. Besides, as Vietnam is a developing nation with a notable average development rate, English is essential in higher education, particularly in light of growing internalization and globalization. Therefore, the implementation of CLIL programs is needed due to its benefits such as enhancing motivation to learn foreign languages, improving cognitive ability, and boosting cultural awareness. If students are able to see all of the benefits that CLIL education

offers, then learning a university subject in a non-native language is not just challenging but worthwhile.

The research has certain limitations. Owing to the purposive sampling technique and small sample size, my study cannot be broadly applied to the perspectives of Vietnamese social science students regarding translanguaging. More participants majoring in other disciplines could be included in future studies to gain insight into whether pedagogical translanguaging could be extensively employed as a strategy in other disciplines where much concept clarification is required. I hope that this study can provide both teachers and students with the effectiveness of translanguaging when applied to a social studies-oriented English class. From that, they can acknowledge the significance of translanguaging and incorporate it into their teaching and learning process most effectively.

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## Appendix 1 – Questionnaire

Circle the number that best describes your choice.

Strongly disagree      Disagree      Neutral      Agree      Strongly agree  
1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

Benefits of Translanguaging					
Emotional Engagement					
1. Translanguaging maintains a pleasant classroom environment.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Translanguaging helps students feel more comfortable with social topics.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Translanguaging enables students to make effective use of class time.	1	2	3	4	5
Social Engagement					
4. Translanguaging enhances classroom relationships among students.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Translanguaging fosters teacher-students connection and understanding.	1	2	3	4	5

6. Translanguaging increases comprehension of culture issues in lessons.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Cognitive Engagement</b>					
7. Translanguaging helps facilitate the language teaching and learning process.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Translanguaging makes students become more autonomous learners.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Translanguaging functions as a problem-solving strategy to avoid misunderstandings.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Managerial Engagement</b>					
10. Translanguaging fosters students' attention to the lessons.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Translanguaging facilitates students in implementing pair and group work.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Translanguaging makes students informed about important tasks clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Challenges of Translanguaging</b>					
<b>Inappropriate Application in Learning</b>					
13. Translanguaging makes students depend on the mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Translanguaging hinders students from improving their English skills.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Students feel it is unnecessary to listen to teachers speaking English.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Students lack necessary English resources to express their disciplinary knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>English Only Ideology</b>					
17. Students believe that an English-only learning approach is the best.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Students prefer teachers to use English as the sole language of instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Students are expected by parents to learn in an English only environment.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Students feel guilty of using translanguaging in an EFL class.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Mismatch in Materials and Assessment</b>					
21. Translanguaging requires resources that support bilingual languages.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Translanguaging confuses students using materials designed exclusively for English.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Translanguaging practices may not align with standardized English assessments.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Translanguaging hinders a thorough evaluation of students' linguistic competence.	1	2	3	4	5

### Appendix 2 – Interviews

1. Do you think translanguaging is necessary in EFL classes for social science students?
2. How often do you use translanguaging in your English class?
3. How would you feel during English sessions if you felt the need to ask inquiries or share your ideas in your native tongue?
4. Do you feel that you can benefit by using translanguaging during English lessons?
5. What is the most benefit you can gain from translanguaging in EFL class, especially for social science majors like you?

6. Do you feel that it is negative to speak Vietnamese during English lessons?
7. Have you encountered any challenges when translanguaging was used in English lessons?
8. What is the most challenging thing? Can you explain why?
9. Do you think using Vietnamese in your English classes will make you fail the course?
10. Do you think translanguaging should be encouraged in the English courses for social science students in the future?

#### **Brief author biography**

Dr. Phan Thi Ngoc Le is currently an English lecturer at VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Hanoi, Vietnam. Her research interests include English Linguistics, World Englishes, L1 transfer to L2, EMI, and ESP. She has contributed to numerous publications with her works appearing in various journals such as Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning, Journal of Mekong Societies, among others.