



Perceptions of Translanguaging and Its Pedagogical Benefits from Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students in English Teacher Education

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Received 06/01/2026	ABSTRACT Translanguaging has gained increasing recognition as a transformative approach in multilingual education, yet its application within teacher education contexts, particularly in Vietnam, remains limited. This study explored perceptions of translanguaging and its pedagogical benefits among undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in English teacher education programs at a public university in the Mekong Delta region, Vietnam. A mixed-methods design was employed, beginning with a quantitative phase using a questionnaire (N=193; 117 undergraduate and 76 postgraduate students), followed by qualitative interviews with 18 purposefully selected participants (9 undergraduates and 9 postgraduates). Quantitative results indicated overall positive perceptions toward translanguaging, with undergraduates expressing significantly stronger agreement regarding instructional effectiveness, support for clearer explanations,
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	emotional safety, and reducing confusion, while postgraduates displayed greater recognition of translanguaging’s ideological role in promoting linguistic equity. Regarding pedagogical benefits, both groups acknowledged translanguaging as highly beneficial for comprehension, classroom participation, and increasing communication confidence; undergraduates particularly valued enhancing content understanding, whereas postgraduates emphasized validating students’ identities and linguistic resources. Qualitative data triangulated these findings and revealed two additional benefits: fostering linguistic creativity and promoting critical reflection on language and culture. Findings underscore translanguaging’s potential to foster inclusive pedagogy, linguistic equity, and transformative educational practices in Vietnamese contexts. Keywords: English teacher education, pedagogical benefits, perception, students, translanguaging.
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Introduction

Translanguaging describes the deliberate, dynamic deployment of an individual’s full linguistic and semiotic repertoire to learn (García & Wei, 2014). Its theoretical roots challenge monolingual ideologies by viewing bilinguals not as two language switchers but as flexible multilinguals who draw fluidly on one unified repertoire (Vogel & García, 2017). Over the past decade, classroom studies from Europe, North America, and Latin America have documented how translanguaging strengthens comprehension, fosters metalinguistic awareness, and nurtures learner identity (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Fang et al., 2022).

In Southeast Asia, where ambitious English-medium-instruction (EMI) policies coexist with rich multilingual ecologies, the promise of translanguaging has generated growing scholarly interest (Ngo, 2024). Vietnam, for instance, exemplifies the region’s tensions, saying that the national higher education policy promotes EMI as a pathway to global competitiveness. However, English-only practices remain ideologically valorized and institutionally enforced (Tri, 2023). Such monolingual norms are evident even in English teacher education programs, where preservice teachers must demonstrate high English proficiency while studying in linguistically diverse communities (Davey, 2025).

Recent empirical research paints a complex picture of translanguaging in Vietnamese classrooms. Case studies of EMI programs reveal that lecturers strategically weave Vietnamese alongside English to clarify disciplinary

concepts and democratize participation, despite top-down English-dominant policies (Ngo, 2024). Qualitative analyses of English as foreign language (EFL) lessons show that teachers increasingly shift from intuitive to strategic translanguaging to check comprehension, emphasize content, and reduce language anxiety (Ngo, 2025). From the learner perspective, Vietnamese university students report that translanguaging boosts understanding and classroom confidence, though some worry about first language dependence (Ngo, 2025). Collectively, these studies highlight both the pedagogical value of translanguaging and the lingering prestige accorded to English-only norms, echoing regional findings in Thailand and Indonesia (Sah & Kubota, 2022).

For teachers-in-training, understanding translanguaging is pivotal. Teacher beliefs have long been recognized as powerful determinants of classroom practice (Borg, 2015), and studies in East Asia confirm that explicit engagement with multilingual pedagogy reshapes those beliefs toward greater inclusivity (Liu & Fang, 2022). Translanguaging aligns with critical pedagogy goals by validating students' community languages, disrupting native-speakerism, and widening access to disciplinary knowledge (Wei, 2022). Preparing preservice teachers to leverage, rather than suppress, learners' linguistic resources therefore represents a concrete route to educational equity in multilingual Vietnam.

Despite the gradually increasing body of Vietnamese evidence from EMI and general EFL contexts, systematic investigation into how teacher education students themselves perceive translanguaging remains scarce. Most existing studies have focused on in-service lecturers (e.g., Ngo, 2024) or learners at language centers (e.g., Ngo, 2025), with little research exploring the perceptions of English education majors in professional pathways. Davey (2025) notes that many English teachers still fear that using Vietnamese will erode English proficiency, suggesting unresolved ideological tensions that could obstruct pedagogical innovation. This gap is important because perceptions formed during teacher education may influence future instructional choices and the extent to which multilingual pedagogies are accepted in practice. Addressing these gaps is essential, as a lack of understanding of preservice English teachers' perceptions of translanguaging may lead to resistance toward curriculum reforms.

The present study therefore targets two important cohorts, namely final-year undergraduates and postgraduate students, as they bridge the gap between teacher preparation and classroom practice. Additionally, comparing these groups enables us to trace how perceptions may evolve with heightened academic maturity and practicum experience, guiding the development of interventions tailored to specific stages of professional growth.

Grounded in the need to foster linguistically responsive English teaching in Vietnam, this study aims to (a) document how undergraduate and

postgraduate teacher education students in the Mekong Delta of Vietnam perceive translanguaging, and (b) explore their perceptions on its pedagogical benefits for their own learning and their future pupils. Accordingly, the research asks:

1. How do undergraduate and postgraduate students perceive translanguaging in English teacher education contexts?
2. How do undergraduate and postgraduate students perceive the pedagogical benefits of translanguaging in English teacher education contexts?

By illuminating English education majors' perceptions at two critical junctures in the teacher development continuum, the study will guide curriculum designers, teacher educators, and policymakers in crafting evidence-based programs that reposition translanguaging from a contested practice to a cornerstone of equitable English language education in Vietnam and comparable multilingual settings.

Literature review

Translanguaging

Translanguaging has emerged as a pivotal concept in multilingual education, garnering increasing attention for its potential to transform language teaching and learning. In this study, translanguaging is understood primarily in relation to learners' linguistic repertoires. More specifically, it refers to the deployment of multilingual speakers' full linguistic resources to communicate and construct meaning without strict adherence to the boundaries of named languages (García & Wei, 2014; Otheguy et al., 2015). This understanding departs from traditional monolingual models in language education, wherein languages are taught and used separately. Rather than viewing learners as deficient monolinguals who must master one language at a time, translanguaging positions them as dynamic language users capable of flexibly drawing on diverse linguistic resources in context.

A growing body of research underscores translanguaging's conceptual complexity and theoretical underpinnings. Bonacina-Pugh et al. (2021) identify two major orientations: a fixed language approach, which still makes discrete distinctions between languages, and a fluid language approach, which treats language practices as continually evolving and not strictly bounded by named languages. Cenoz and Gorter (2022) further classify translanguaging into spontaneous and pedagogical modes. Spontaneous translanguaging naturally occurs when speakers alternate languages without explicit instructional design. In contrast, pedagogical translanguaging entails the deliberate integration of multiple languages in teaching and learning

activities (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021, 2022; Fuster & Bardel, 2024). Common pedagogical translanguaging strategies include using bilingual glossaries, translating key terms, comparing linguistic structures, and designing activities that leverage more than one language for both input and output (Ossa Parra & Proctor, 2021; Yuan & Yang, 2023).

In classroom practice, translanguaging can be realized through planned instructional techniques and activities rather than incidental language alternation. In fact, students may read a text or watch a video in one language and then summarize or discuss the content in another language. Translanguaging may also involve cross-linguistic comparison activities, such as examining similarities and differences in vocabulary, syntax, or discourse structures across languages, in order to deepen understanding and develop metalinguistic awareness (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). In teacher education contexts, translanguaging has also been enacted through integrating academic discourse with everyday discourse, linking verbal and other semiotic resources, and strategically using students' first language to support content learning (Yuan & Yang, 2023). Although translanguaging can also involve broader semiotic resources, the present study focuses mainly on linguistic resources because it examines students' perceptions of classroom language use and its pedagogical benefits in English teacher education.

Empirical studies consistently point to the pedagogical value of translanguaging. Liu and Fang (2022) report that teachers, learners, and policymakers often perceive translanguaging positively, citing enhanced comprehension and increased learner confidence. Similarly, Fang et al. (2022) argue that translanguaging can challenge monolingual norms and promote equity by validating students' cultural and linguistic identities. Classroom-based evidence further highlights positive outcomes. For instance, Yasar Yuzlu and Dikilitaş (2022) found that EFL learners exposed to translanguaging-based instruction showed marked improvement in their study. Such benefits are attributed to increased student motivation, richer classroom interaction, and opportunities to negotiate meaning in multiple languages (Fang & Xu, 2025; Ossa Parra & Proctor, 2021).

Despite these promising findings, there are notable challenges. In contexts where English-only ideologies are deeply entrenched, such as university-level English language programs, students may hesitate to use their first language, fearing it undermines English proficiency (Dobinson et al., 2024). Treffers-Daller (2025) cautions against the potential conceptual vagueness of translanguaging, urging scholars to define it rigorously and avoid it becoming merely an educational buzzword. Sah and Kubota (2022) also point out that not all translanguaging is inherently transformative or critical; in some EMI settings, translanguaging simply emerges as an ad hoc coping mechanism, rather than as a thoughtful, equity-oriented strategy. Moreover,

monolingual teachers may face added difficulties implementing translanguaging when they do not share students' home languages (Davey, 2025). This challenge is also evident in English for Academic Purposes settings, where Liu et al. (2020) show that teachers may require substantial support to operationalize translanguaging pedagogy and to negotiate tensions between multilingual practices and entrenched monolingual expectations.

Students' perceptions of translanguaging

Research on students' perceptions of translanguaging indicates generally positive perceptions across diverse contexts, although these perceptions are mediated by existing language ideologies, educational norms, and students' prior experiences. In a Thai EFL setting, Mohd Aba sha'ar et al. (2025) reported largely positive student attitudes toward translanguaging, noting that learners perceived it as inclusive, culturally affirming, and conducive to creating a safe classroom atmosphere. Nonetheless, tensions arose among higher-proficiency students, who worried about a potential reduction in English exposure if their L1 were used too frequently. In the context of China, it is noted that students appreciated translanguaging for challenging monolingual ideologies and allowing them to capitalize on their existing multilingual skills, although traditional beliefs about standard English sometimes led to doubts about the legitimacy of mixing languages (Liu & Fang, 2022).

In EMI settings, perceptions have likewise been mixed. While some Chinese international students at an Australian university embraced translanguaging as a means to participate more fully, others felt hesitant due to entrenched English-only expectations from previous schooling (Dobinson et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Fang and Xu (2025) found that Chinese university students consistently valued translanguaging for allowing them to express ideas more freely and handle complex content through their combined linguistic repertoires. Beyond Asia, Turkish EFL students echoed these sentiments, citing comfort, motivation, and the ability to negotiate meaning effectively as key benefits of translanguaging (Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022).

In other EMI contexts, such as those examined by Sah and Kubota (2022) in South Asia, students often resorted to translanguaging informally to cope with strict English-only policies. However, because these practices were not institutionally recognized, students sometimes questioned the legitimacy of translanguaging, and it remained largely a spontaneous rather than systematically integrated pedagogical approach. Offering a broader overview, Prilutskaya's (2021) synthesis of 233 studies revealed that learners generally felt validated when translanguaging was accepted, which in turn fostered a

more positive learner identity, particularly in monolingual-oriented classrooms.

Students' perceptions of pedagogical benefits of translanguaging

Learners worldwide acknowledge multiple pedagogical benefits linked to translanguaging, especially in contexts where English serves as the medium of instruction. First, translanguaging consistently enhances comprehension of complex material, allowing students to access background knowledge in their first language and transfer it to new content in English (Davey, 2025; Mohd Aba sha'ar et al., 2025). Second, it fosters more robust classroom participation; students who might otherwise remain silent in an English-only environment often feel more comfortable contributing in a space that validates all their linguistic resources (Dobinson et al., 2024; Liu & Fang, 2022).

Beyond facilitating communication, translanguaging is reported to bolster learner confidence. Students in multiple studies described how being permitted to use their L1 without stigma helped them feel more at ease and willing to experiment with the target language (Davey, 2025; Mohd Aba sha'ar et al., 2025). Several Thai participants also linked translanguaging to greater learning autonomy and deeper engagement with course content, including more sophisticated reflections on the subject matter (Mohd Aba sha'ar et al., 2025).

From an inclusive education perspective, students frequently perceive translanguaging as supportive of identity affirmation and community building. Liu and Fang (2022) and Fang et al. (2022) highlight how incorporating learners' mother tongue languages enables them to bring their cultural identities into the classroom, reducing feelings of marginalization and promoting a sense of belonging. In a U.S. bilingual elementary context, it is observed that young learners used translanguaging to explore morphological and syntactic similarities and differences between English and Spanish, thus strengthening their metalinguistic awareness and self-perception as capable language users (Ossa Parra & Proctor, 2021).

Furthermore, Fang and Xu (2025) identified educational equity as a key benefit that students associate with translanguaging. By granting learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds equivalent access to knowledge, translanguaging helps dismantle hierarchies often perpetuated in monolingual classrooms. Empirical evidence from Turkey supports this perspective as students in translanguaging-oriented EFL courses achieved higher levels of proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening compared to peers in traditional monolingual or even bilingual programs (Yasar Yuzlu & Dikilitas, 2022). Students linked these outcomes to reduced language anxiety, increased

motivation, and the synergistic use of both L1 and L2 in meaning-making processes. Wei (2022) advances the argument that translanguaging carries ideological and political weight; although many students do not explicitly frame their perceptions in political terms, they often note the sense of empowerment and critical agency that arises when all their linguistic resources are validated in the learning process.

Methodology

Research design

This study adopted a mixed-methods design (Creswell & Clark, 2017), beginning with a quantitative phase that informed the subsequent qualitative phase. The rationale for using this design was twofold: first, to obtain a broad overview of students' perceptions of translanguaging and its pedagogical benefits within English teacher education contexts; and second, to identify and select participants for in-depth interviews. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the design enabled a comprehensive understanding of how undergraduate and postgraduate students perceive translanguaging and its pedagogical benefits (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research participants

The research took place at a public university in a centrally governed city in the Mekong Delta region of Vietnam and involved a total of 193 participants. Of these, 117 were undergraduate students majoring in English Teacher Education (BA level), constituting 60.6% of the sample, while 76 were postgraduate students enrolled in the same major (Master level), making up 39.4% of the sample. A convenience sampling technique was employed over a three-month period, during which students attending English teacher education classes were invited to participate via an online questionnaire distributed through their instructors. These participants were selected since they were directly relevant to the study, as both groups were being prepared for professional practice in English language teaching. The inclusion of both undergraduate and postgraduate students also allowed for comparison across two levels of teacher education. A post hoc sensitivity analysis using G*Power indicated that the sample size was sufficient to detect a medium effect size ($d = 0.41$) at $\alpha = .05$ and power = .80. To reduce potential sampling bias, recruitment was conducted across both undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts during the data collection period.

Building upon the quantitative phase, a total of 18 participants, equally divided between the two groups, with 9 from each, were intentionally chosen

for subsequent qualitative interviews. This group accounted for 10% of each group, with selection driven by their questionnaire responses and willingness to participate in follow-up interviews. Participants were organized into three categories based on their perceptions of translanguaging: very low to low (3 individuals), medium (3 individuals), and high to very high (3 individuals). This selection helped ensure variation in perspectives for the interview phase and enabled the qualitative phase to provide deeper insight into patterns identified in the survey data.

Informed consent was obtained from all individuals prior to data collection, and they were informed of the objectives of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw at any time.

Research instruments

A Pro-Translanguaging Questionnaire, adapted from Mohd Aba sha'ar et al. (2025), served as the primary instrument for the quantitative phase. This questionnaire was originally designed to investigate students' perceptions of translanguaging and was modified to focus on English teacher education contexts in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. It consisted of three parts: demographic details (including students' data of level of study and willingness to join follow-up interviews), perceptions of translanguaging and perceptions of its pedagogical benefits (each with 11 items and 2 reverse-coded items). Each item in the latter two sections was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neither Disagree nor Agree), 4 (Agree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Validation procedures were undertaken to ensure construct validity and reliability. An Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) reviewed by five experts in Language Teacher Education yielded a score of 0.91, indicating strong agreement on item clarity and relevance. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha, with all subscales exceeding the 0.83 threshold recommended by Cohen et al. (2018), confirming robust internal consistency.

For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview guide was used to triangulate the quantitative data. Open-ended questions were adapted and expanded based on Bonacina-Pugh et al. (2021) and reviewed by three experts using the IOC to ensure content validity. A pilot interview was also conducted to refine question clarity. The flexible format allowed for follow-up probes, enabling the collection of rich, context-sensitive data while enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings.

Data collection

In the first phase, the questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms, thereby facilitating broad participation among students in English teacher education classes at the targeted institution. Instructors provided the questionnaire link to their respective cohorts, and students were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. Prior to filling out the questionnaire, participants were informed of the study's objectives, assured of their confidentiality, and advised of their right to withdraw at any point without penalty.

Following the analysis of the survey data, a second phase of data collection involved semi-structured interviews with a subset of participants. Qualitative participants were purposively selected to provide more detailed insights into their perceptions. These interviews were conducted in private settings on campus, each lasting up to 45 minutes. Participants were reminded of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the confidentiality protocols in place. Informed consent was reconfirmed prior to recording, ensuring that all ethical obligations were met.

Data analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the online questionnaire were initially analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This analysis included reliability coefficient testing, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics to identify overall trends in students' perceptions of translanguaging and its pedagogical benefits. Additionally, the analysis explored whether significant differences existed between two groups of participants. Mean scores were utilized for categorizing participants based on Moidunny's (2009) scale: 1.00–1.80 (Very Low), 1.81–2.60 (Low), 2.61–3.20 (Medium), 3.21–4.20 (High), and 4.21–5.00 (Very High). This categorization enabled the identification of perception ranges across very low/low, medium, and high/very high groups.

Regarding the qualitative component, thematic analysis was employed, adhering to the six-step framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process commenced with an in-depth reading of interview transcripts to ensure thorough familiarity with the content. Subsequently, initial codes were generated to highlight key perceptions shared by participants. These codes were then grouped into broader themes, reflecting prominent patterns within the data. Throughout the coding and thematic development, transcripts were revisited multiple times to ensure accuracy and coherence, verifying that the themes genuinely represented participants' perceptions. By integrating quantitative findings with thematic insights derived from the interviews, the

study achieved a holistic understanding of how undergraduate and postgraduate students perceive translanguaging in their learning experiences.

Findings and discussion

Differences in perceptions of translanguaging between student groups

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for students' perceptions of translanguaging, comparing undergraduate and postgraduate students. An Independent Samples T-Test was performed to determine differences between the two groups. The significance level was set at .05, following the conventional threshold for educational and social science research recommended by Cohen et al. (2018).

Table 1

Students' perceptions of translanguaging by group

Shortened items	Mean (SD)			t	p
	Overall (N=193)	Undergraduate (N=117)	Postgraduate (N=76)		
1. Effective pedagogical approach	3.91 (0.78)	4.00 (0.73)	3.77 (0.82)	3.40	<.001*
2. Vietnamese facilitates clearer explanations	4.02 (0.75)	4.12 (0.71)	3.86 (0.78)	2.35	.020*
3. Recognizes students' cultural backgrounds	3.84 (0.81)	3.94 (0.79)	3.69 (0.83)	1.30	.194
4. Encourages active participation	3.86 (0.85)	3.97 (0.82)	3.69 (0.88)	1.04	.302
5. Clarifies complex vocabulary in English	3.95 (0.79)	4.03 (0.75)	3.82 (0.84)	1.01	.313
6. Vietnamese should not be used	3.48 (0.94)	3.57 (0.91)	3.34 (0.97)	1.20	.843
7. Provides secure learning environment	3.70 (0.83)	3.81 (0.80)	3.54 (0.86)	2.54	.012*
8. Bridges gaps for low proficiency students	3.69 (0.82)	3.78 (0.79)	3.56 (0.86)	2.52	.013*
9. Increases initiative to engage	3.67 (0.87)	3.76 (0.84)	3.53 (0.90)	2.03	.044*
10. Switching creates confusion	3.42 (0.95)	3.49 (0.91)	3.32 (0.99)	2.62	.009*

11. Naturally reflects multilingual communication	3.83 (0.80)	3.92 (0.77)	3.70 (0.84)	1.10	.273
Overall Mean Score	3.70 (0.72)	3.79 (0.68)	3.57 (0.74)	2.31	.022*

Note. Items 6 and 10 were reverse-coded; higher scores indicate disagreement with these statements. * $p < .05$.

Overall, participants exhibited high positive perceptions of translanguaging ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.72$). When comparing groups, undergraduate students reported significantly more positive perceptions ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.68$) than postgraduate students ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.74$), as indicated by a significant difference in overall mean scores ($t(191) = 2.31$, $p = .022$).

Item-level analysis revealed statistically significant differences in six specific items. Undergraduate students significantly agreed more strongly than postgraduate students on translanguaging as an effective pedagogical approach (Item 1; $p < .001$) and on its utility in facilitating clearer explanations of lesson content (Item 2; $p = .020$). Furthermore, undergraduates showed significantly stronger agreement about translanguaging providing a secure learning environment (Item 7; $p = .012$), bridging learning gaps for students with lower English proficiency (Item 8; $p = .013$), and increasing students' initiative to engage actively in classes (Item 9; $p = .044$). Additionally, undergraduates significantly disagreed more with the negative statement suggesting switching between languages creates confusion (reverse-coded, Item 10; $p = .009$), indicating a clearer rejection of the idea that translanguaging is confusing.

In contrast, there were no significant differences between undergraduate and postgraduate groups on items concerning recognition of students' cultural backgrounds (Item 3; $p = .190$), encouragement of active participation (Item 4; $p = .300$), clarifying complex vocabulary (Item 5; $p = .310$), beliefs regarding the exclusive use of English (reverse-coded, Item 6; $p = .240$), and the perception that translanguaging naturally reflects multilingual communication (Item 11; $p = .270$).

The qualitative findings derived from the semi-structured interviews further elaborated students' quantitative responses regarding their perceptions of translanguaging. These findings consistently aligned with the quantitative data, confirming positive perceptions toward translanguaging, but also reflecting nuanced differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students. The thematic analysis highlighted three major themes: (1) translanguaging as a supportive pedagogical strategy, (2) translanguaging

as enhancing student confidence and participation, and (3) tensions around language proficiency concerns.

Participants from both undergraduate (7 out of 9) and postgraduate groups (4 out of 9) described translanguaging as a beneficial pedagogical tool that effectively supported their comprehension of challenging lesson content. As one undergraduate student explained, “Using Vietnamese during class helps me understand the lesson much better. Sometimes the concepts are very complicated, and translanguaging makes everything clearer. I really appreciate it when my teachers use both languages” (Undergraduate Student 4). Similarly, a postgraduate student echoed these opinions, although less emphatically, stating, “Translanguaging is useful, especially for difficult terms or theories. It does help my learning process, even though I sometimes worry if it affects my English improvement” (Postgraduate Student 2).

Participants also highlighted the role of translanguaging in fostering confidence and participation in classroom activities. A majority of undergraduates (8 out of 9) and several postgraduates (4 out of 9) reported feeling more confident and more willing to actively engage in discussions when Vietnamese was permitted. One undergraduate clearly expressed this benefit, “When I’m allowed to switch between English and Vietnamese, I feel less anxious about making mistakes. I participate more because I’m not afraid anymore” (Undergraduate Student 7).

In line with the quantitative findings, postgraduate students were more reserved, with one participant reflecting on translanguaging’s positive but limited impact, “It makes me more comfortable to speak, but I still prefer to practice more English. I understand the benefits, but I’m cautious because I’m training to become a teacher, and English proficiency is crucial” (Postgraduate Student 8).

However, the qualitative data also provided deeper insights into students’ concerns, reflecting a key quantitative finding that switching languages might cause confusion. Approximately a third of participants (3 out of 9 undergraduates and 4 out of 9 postgraduates) explicitly voiced occasional confusion related to frequent language switching. A postgraduate student articulated this tension clearly, “Sometimes, when switching is too frequent, it interrupts my thought process. It’s like I lose my concentration. A balanced approach would probably be best” (Postgraduate Student 5).

A notable and somewhat surprising finding emerging from the qualitative interviews was the clear recognition by participants, especially among postgraduates (5 out of 9), that translanguaging not only supported learning but also represented a significant ideological shift toward a more inclusive pedagogy. One postgraduate participant critically reflected, “I initially saw translanguaging just as a practical tool for understanding content. However, now I realize it’s deeper- it challenges traditional language norms and values

our Vietnamese identity. This ideological change is important for us as teachers” (Postgraduate Student 1). This perspective, expressed strongly among postgraduate students despite their overall lower quantitative ratings, suggests a critical awareness of translanguaging’s ideological significance. It indicates that even those somewhat cautious about translanguaging as a practice appreciate its underlying philosophical shift toward linguistic equity and cultural inclusivity.

The findings of this study contribute valuable insights into the emerging concepts of translanguaging, specifically in Vietnamese English teacher education contexts. Both quantitative and qualitative results indicate that undergraduate and postgraduate students generally perceive translanguaging positively, viewing it as a supportive instructional approach beneficial for comprehension, participation, and identity affirmation. These perceptions align with prior research highlighting translanguaging’s potential to create inclusive educational spaces and enhance learner confidence (Davey, 2025; Liu & Fang, 2022; Mohd Aba sha’ar et al., 2025).

Significant differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students emerged clearly in this study. Undergraduates consistently showed stronger agreement on translanguaging’s instructional effectiveness, its role in providing a supportive learning environment, bridging proficiency gaps, and boosting engagement, echoing findings from previous studies indicating younger students’ openness to multilingual practices (Davey, 2025; Sah & Kubota, 2022). Conversely, postgraduate students’ slightly lower perceptions reflect possible adherence to traditional monolingual norms and heightened awareness of English proficiency expectations at advanced academic levels (Dobinson et al., 2024; Treffers-Daller, 2025).

Moreover, participants emphasized translanguaging’s capacity to reduce anxiety and enhance engagement. However, a notable number, particularly postgraduate students, expressed concerns about potential confusion from frequent language-switching, indicating that translanguaging requires careful pedagogical planning to avoid cognitive overload (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Dobinson et al., 2024). Interestingly, a surprising qualitative finding was postgraduate students’ explicit recognition of translanguaging’s ideological significance, appreciating its role in challenging monolingual ideologies and promoting linguistic equity, aligning with Wei’s (2022) views of translanguaging as a political and transformative pedagogical stance.

From these findings, several practical implications emerge. Undergraduate programs could strategically integrate translanguaging to leverage students’ positive perceptions, reinforcing inclusive and multilingual pedagogies early in teacher training. Postgraduate curricula, on the other hand, may benefit from carefully structured translanguaging practices addressing proficiency-related concerns and highlighting ideological

dimensions to facilitate deeper acceptance. Finally, the study underscores the need for targeted professional development for teachers, promoting strategic implementation of translanguaging to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability within Vietnamese English teacher education programs (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021; Davey, 2025; Sah & Kubota, 2022).

Differences in perceptions of translanguaging's pedagogical benefits between student groups

Table 2 displays how undergraduate and postgraduate students in English teacher education programs perceived the pedagogical benefits of translanguaging. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics to compare the two groups. An Independent Samples T-Test was employed to identify significant differences between the two groups, with the significance level set at $p < .05$, consistent with conventional standards in educational research (Cohen et al., 2018).

Table 2

Students' perceptions of translanguaging's pedagogical benefits by group

Shortened items	Mean (SD)			t	p
	Overall (N=193)	Undergraduate (N=117)	Postgraduate (N=76)		
1. Comprehend complex materials	3.94 (0.69)	4.10 (0.70)	3.85 (0.78)	2.35	.021*
2. Robust classroom participation	4.01 (0.73)	4.02 (0.72)	3.75 (0.81)	1.58	.115
3. Hinders mastering English	3.51 (0.94)	3.30 (1.01)	3.50 (0.79)	0.14	.892
4. Increases communication confidence	3.90 (0.77)	4.01 (0.73)	3.75 (0.89)	2.94	.004*
5. Fosters engagement with content	3.85 (0.81)	3.95 (0.74)	3.70 (0.81)	0.58	.565
6. Supports identity	3.87 (0.75)	3.90 (0.77)	3.68 (0.84)	1.01	.312
7. Strengthens multilingual self-perception	3.74 (0.81)	3.65 (0.85)	3.85 (0.78)	2.21	.029*
8. Promotes educational equity	3.93 (0.74)	3.92 (0.75)	3.70 (0.82)	3.72	<.001*
9. Distracts from target content	3.58 (0.98)	3.55 (0.96)	3.35 (0.98)	1.55	.124

10. Higher English proficiency	4.01 (0.77)	4.09 (0.76)	3.87 (0.76)	1.93	.056
11. Validates linguistic resources	3.82 (0.72)	3.72 (0.80)	3.95 (0.77)	2.58	.011*
Overall Mean Score	3.83 (0.79)	3.84 (0.80)	3.72 (0.82)	1.01	.314

Note. Items 3 and 9 were reverse-coded; higher scores indicate disagreement with these statements. * $p < .05$.

Overall, both undergraduate and postgraduate students expressed positive perceptions of translanguaging's pedagogical benefits, with mean scores generally falling within the "High" range (3.21-4.20) as defined by Moidunny (2009). This indicates a general agreement among the total sample that translanguaging offers valuable benefits within the English teacher education context. Notably, the highest levels of agreement across all participants were observed for the potential of translanguaging to promote robust classroom participation ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.73$) and to enhance students' English proficiency ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.77$). Students also expressed strong agreement that translanguaging facilitates the comprehension of complex materials ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 0.69$), promotes educational equity ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.74$), and increases students' confidence in communication ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.77$). Furthermore, participants generally disagreed with statements suggesting potential drawbacks of translanguaging, indicating that it does not hinder English proficiency ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.94$) or distract from target content ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.98$).

Independent Samples T-Tests revealed statistically significant differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students in their perceptions of certain benefits. Undergraduates perceived translanguaging as significantly more beneficial for facilitating the comprehension of complex materials ($t(191) = 2.35$, $p = .021$) and for increasing communication confidence ($t(191) = 2.94$, $p = .004$) compared to postgraduates. Undergraduates also expressed stronger agreement that translanguaging promotes educational equity ($t(191) = 3.72$, $p < .001$). Conversely, postgraduates perceived translanguaging as significantly more effective in strengthening students' self-perception as competent multilingual users ($t(191) = 2.21$, $p = .029$) and in empowering students by validating their linguistic resources ($t(191) = 2.58$, $p = .011$) compared to undergraduates.

Despite these differences, there were several areas where undergraduate and postgraduate students held similar perceptions. No significant difference was found between the groups regarding the belief that translanguaging fosters robust classroom participation, does not hinder English proficiency, fosters engagement with content, supports students' identity and sense of

community, does not distract from target content, and helps students achieve higher English proficiency.

Qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews provided further insights that triangulated the quantitative results regarding students' perceptions of translanguaging's pedagogical benefits. Three key themes emerged from the qualitative data, each closely aligning with quantitative findings while adding richness through direct participant voices.

First, students strongly emphasized translanguaging's benefits in enhancing comprehension of complex academic content, corroborating the high quantitative agreement on this item. Both undergraduate (7 out of 9) and postgraduate (5 out of 9) students highlighted how using Vietnamese alongside English facilitated clearer understanding. An undergraduate student elaborated, "When my teachers use Vietnamese during lessons, complicated concepts or theories become much clearer, so it helps me understand difficult concepts faster" (Undergraduate Student 3). Similarly, a postgraduate student confirmed, "I find it easier to understand advanced ideas when the instructor switches languages. It clarifies the meaning immediately and keeps me engaged" (Postgraduate Student 6).

Second, participants reinforced the quantitative findings related to translanguaging's benefits in increasing communication confidence. Several undergraduates (8 out of 9) and postgraduates (6 out of 9) described feeling more confident speaking and participating in class when allowed to switch between languages. An undergraduate clearly articulated this benefit, "Knowing I can use Vietnamese when I get stuck gives me confidence. I feel safer and less worried about making mistakes, which encourages me to speak more" (Undergraduate Student 2). Postgraduates echoed this sentiment, but with a slightly cautious tone, "Using Vietnamese does boost my confidence in discussion, although I sometimes wonder if it's the best way to improve my English skills" (Postgraduate Student 7).

Third, translanguaging was consistently recognized as promoting educational equity by validating students' linguistic resources and identities, aligning closely with the quantitative results. More than half students, notably postgraduates (7 out of 9), expressed a strong ideological appreciation for translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy. One postgraduate explained: "Initially, I saw translanguaging simply as a practical tool. Now, I realize it validates our Vietnamese identity and challenges traditional language hierarchies, making our classroom more equitable and inclusive" (Postgraduate Student 1).

Alongside these confirmations, the qualitative analysis uncovered two additional pedagogical benefits not explicitly captured by the quantitative instrument. First, students (5 undergraduates and 4 postgraduates) identified translanguaging as fostering creativity in language use. Participants noted that

the flexible movement between languages allowed them to explore different expressions and deepen their understanding. One undergraduate reflected: “Translanguaging lets me creatively express my ideas. It allows me to choose the language that best conveys my thoughts clearly, which traditional English-only teaching cannot offer” (Undergraduate Student 8).

Second, participants (4 undergraduates and 5 postgraduates) highlighted translanguaging’s potential to foster critical reflection on language and culture. This critical dimension emerged as students described translanguaging as more than just a practical aid but also a pedagogical tool that enhanced their awareness of linguistic diversity and intercultural understanding. A postgraduate participant noted:

Using translanguaging makes me think critically about language itself. It encourages me to reflect on how language influences culture, identity, and teaching practices. For instance, when we discuss complex educational theories, switching to Vietnamese helps clarify, but it also makes me question why ‘English-only’ is often the default in teacher training. It pushes me to consider how I might use translanguaging intentionally in my classes to validate my students’ backgrounds (Postgraduate Student 4).

The findings of this research question revealed strong positive perceptions among both undergraduate and postgraduate students regarding translanguaging’s pedagogical benefits in English teacher education programs. Overall, participants agreed on benefits highlighted in the existing literature, including enhanced comprehension of complex content, robust classroom participation, and increased confidence in communication (Davey, 2025; Liu & Fang, 2022; Mohd Aba sha’ar et al., 2025). Notably, undergraduates demonstrated significantly higher levels of agreement regarding translanguaging’s effectiveness in aiding comprehension and bolstering communication confidence, possibly due to their more immediate struggles with English proficiency and greater reliance on their first language as a learning scaffold. This aligns closely with previous research suggesting that translanguaging effectively bridges learning gaps, particularly for students who are still developing English skills (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022; Fang & Xu, 2025).

Conversely, postgraduate students were more likely to emphasize the role of translanguaging in strengthening multilingual self-perception and validating linguistic resources. This finding is particularly noteworthy, given their generally lower quantitative ratings on other items. Qualitative data further illuminated this perspective, revealing that postgraduate students critically recognized translanguaging as not merely a pedagogical tool but also an ideological stance that promotes equity and inclusivity by challenging

traditional monolingual educational norms (Wei, 2022). Such reflective insights highlight a more sophisticated awareness among postgraduate students of translanguage's transformative potential in teacher education contexts.

From these perspectives, these findings suggest that the two groups valued translanguage differently, with undergraduates emphasizing its immediate pedagogical support and postgraduates attaching greater importance to its broader identity- and equity-related dimensions. Accordingly, teacher education should present translanguage as both a practical classroom resource and a broader pedagogical orientation, with emphasis adjusted to the students' stage of professional preparation.

Additionally, qualitative findings expanded upon the quantitative results, uncovering two further benefits: translanguage's capacity to foster linguistic creativity and encourage critical reflection on language and culture. Students explicitly noted that translanguage offered them greater flexibility and creativity in expressing complex ideas, allowing more nuanced communication than permitted by monolingual approaches. Furthermore, the critical reflection encouraged participants, especially postgraduates, to question prevailing language hierarchies and consider more inclusive pedagogical approaches for their future teaching. These insights resonate strongly with the literature advocating translanguage as both an equitable and reflective pedagogical approach that foregrounds students' linguistic identities and cultural experiences (Fang et al., 2022; Ossa Parra & Proctor, 2021).

Nevertheless, the findings also revealed certain complexities regarding students' perceptions, particularly around potential tensions between translanguage practices and English proficiency goals. While most students rejected the idea that translanguage distracts from English content mastery, qualitative data indicated lingering concerns among postgraduates about balancing translanguage with proficiency expectations. These tensions echo previous studies cautioning that translanguage practices, though beneficial, need to be carefully integrated with explicit language development goals to avoid confusion and ensure effective English language learning (Dobinson et al., 2024; Sah & Kubota, 2022). Thus, teacher educators and curriculum designers should be mindful of addressing these concerns through targeted professional development.

Limitations of the study

This study has several limitations. First, the findings relied mainly on self-reported perception data, which are useful for examining participants' perceptions but do not provide direct evidence of actual classroom practices.

Second, the study was limited to one public university in the Mekong Delta and used convenience sampling, which restricts broader generalizability. Third, the cross-sectional design captured perceptions at a single point in time. Future research may incorporate classroom observation, practicum-based data, and longitudinal approaches to provide a fuller understanding of translanguaging in teacher education.

Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive exploration of translanguaging perceptions among undergraduate and postgraduate students in English teacher education programs in Vietnam's Mekong Delta. Both quantitative and qualitative findings highlight positive perceptions toward translanguaging and its pedagogical benefits, particularly in fostering comprehension, enhancing classroom participation, and increasing learner confidence. Undergraduates showed a stronger appreciation for translanguaging's immediate instructional benefits, such as clearer explanations and reduced language anxiety, reflecting their closer engagement with learning challenges. Conversely, postgraduates, though somewhat reserved about frequent language-switching, expressed a deeper ideological awareness, recognizing translanguaging's potential to validate linguistic identities and promote educational equity.

Significantly, the qualitative insights revealed additional dimensions of translanguaging benefits, including enhanced linguistic creativity and critical reflection on language and culture, emphasizing translanguaging's transformative role beyond mere instructional support. These nuanced differences suggest tailored approaches in curriculum development, highlighting the necessity of strategic integration and careful implementation to address proficiency concerns, especially among postgraduate students.

Ultimately, the findings underscore translanguaging's substantial potential to support inclusive, equitable, and critically reflective pedagogies in English teacher education. For educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers, this research provides compelling evidence advocating translanguaging not only as a practical teaching strategy but also as an ideological shift toward more inclusive language education practices in multilingual contexts like Vietnam.

Disclosure statement of competing interests

We hereby confirm that there are no relevant financial or non-financial competing interests to report in this study.

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