

Translanguaging practices among English, Indonesian, and Arabic: Enhancing a holistic approach to *tafsir* in an Indonesian interpretation classroom

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of translanguaging practices in *tafsir* (Quranic interpretation) education within a multilingual Indonesian classroom. It explores the integration of Arabic, Indonesian, and English to enhance students' comprehension, critical engagement, and sense of cultural identity. Considering the growing need to adapt Arabic education to linguistically diverse contexts, the study addresses two key questions: how students and instructors utilize multiple languages in *tafsir* pedagogy, and what perceived benefits and challenges arise from translanguaging in this setting. A qualitative case study approach was employed, involving classroom observations (six sessions), in-depth interviews with two instructors, and focus group discussions with 18 undergraduate students enrolled in an interpretation course. The study examines how translanguaging episodes in classroom discourse are linked to the process of textual interpretation, tracing how meaning shifts across languages during collective Quranic analysis. The data were thematically coded to identify patterns in linguistic practices, pedagogical strategies, and interpretive outcomes. Findings indicate that Arabic is used for textual precision and religious authority, Indonesian for contextual and socio-cultural elaboration, and English for introducing scholarly perspectives and engaging with global discourse. This triadic interaction enables students to construct a more holistic understanding of Arabic meanings, particularly in relation to contemporary social issues. The study also identifies pedagogical tensions, including implicit linguistic hierarchies and a lack of structured training for instructors in managing multilingual interactions. Despite these challenges, the findings highlight the transformative potential of translanguaging in Islamic higher education, suggesting that intentional multilingual pedagogy can foster inclusive, critically engaged, and culturally resonant learning experiences.

Keywords: Arabic language; cultural identity; multilingual pedagogy; interpretation; multilingual classrooms; multilingual pedagogy; Translanguaging

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INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected and linguistically diverse world, educational approaches increasingly view multilingualism as a valuable resource rather than a limitation. One such approach is translanguaging, which enables multilingual individuals to fluidly navigate and integrate features of multiple languages within a single act of communication

(Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; Wawire & Barnes-Story, 2023). This practice is particularly beneficial in educational settings where culturally and linguistically sensitive material is involved, as it allows students to utilize their entire linguistic repertoire to improve comprehension, foster critical engagement, and build a stronger connection to the

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subject matter (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022). This study explores translanguaging within the context of *tafsir* education—Quranic exegesis—in Indonesian classrooms, where Arabic, Indonesian, and English interact as part of students' linguistic backgrounds. The study aims to analyze how translanguaging practices make *tafsir* more accessible linguistically and foster a deeper religious understanding, thereby underscoring the growing importance of inclusive, multilingual pedagogies in religious studies.

In Indonesia, *tafsir* education takes place within a richly multilingual environment, incorporating Arabic as the sacred language of the Qur'an, Indonesian as the national and instructional language, and English as a prominent medium of academic discourse. Traditionally, *tafsir* instruction has maintained a monolingual emphasis on classical Arabic to facilitate direct engagement with the Qur'anic text in its original form (Abas et al., 2021; Shofaussamawati et al., 2024). However, the diverse linguistic backgrounds and varying levels of Arabic proficiency among Indonesian students pose significant challenges to this approach. In response, translanguaging emerges as a crucial pedagogical strategy, enabling students to interpret and discuss Qur'anic verses in Indonesian, often their primary academic language, while drawing on English to engage with scholarly interpretations. This integrative practice not only enhances comprehension but also fosters an inclusive learning environment that affirms students' linguistic and cultural identities (Almashour, 2024; Karpava, 2025).

The pedagogical potential of translanguaging in *tafsir* education aligns closely with multilingual education principles, which view linguistic diversity as an asset for enriching learning experiences (Jahan et al., 2023). Translanguaging has a potential to allow students to engage with Quranic interpretation in a more comprehensive way, using Arabic to convey religious authenticity, Indonesian for contextual understanding, and English for accessing broader scholarly perspectives. This approach can facilitate deeper, more meaningful engagement with the text, enabling students to navigate between the sacred language of the Quran and their own linguistic frameworks. Studies in multilingual religious education support this view, showing that translanguaging can empower students to participate more actively and confidently by bridging the gap between the scriptural language and their daily linguistic practices (Dutton & Rushton, 2021; Hatcher & Son, 2022).

Translanguaging challenges the traditional notion that multilingual speakers operate within separate, distinct language systems (Wei & García, 2022). Instead, it suggests that individuals draw upon a unified linguistic repertoire, fluidly selecting elements from multiple languages to communicate and enhance understanding as needed (Wei &

García, 2022). In educational settings, this holistic approach encourages students to use all their linguistic resources, fostering a more inclusive and adaptable learning environment. By applying translanguaging to *tafsir* education, educators can create a classroom atmosphere where students' linguistic diversity is celebrated and fully utilized to support their interpretive and religious learning (Bonacina-Pugh et al., 2021; Liu & Fang, 2022).

In religious education, translanguaging serves as a crucial tool for navigating the layered complexities of theological interpretation (Bachtiyar et al., 2025; Tuimebayeva et al., 2024). Unlike secular subjects, *tafsir* requires an understanding of meanings that are deeply embedded within linguistic, cultural, religious, historical, and ethical contexts (Poya & Rizapoor, 2023). Translanguaging allows students in *tafsir* classes to access and discuss these layers more fully by utilizing their complete linguistic repertoire. Translanguaging in multilingual classrooms enables students to make sense of complex topics by combining academic language with their everyday vernacular—a process that is particularly beneficial when interpreting sacred texts, as it fosters both comprehension and connection to the material (Olğün-Baytaş et al., 2023).

Specifically, in *tafsir* education, translanguaging supports students as they interpret Quranic verses, fluidly moving between Arabic, Indonesian, and English to capture the nuanced meanings within the text (Agustin & Syakhrani, 2025). Arabic remains essential for quoting Quranic verses accurately and preserving the text's original sacredness, while Indonesian enables students to contextualize and discuss these interpretations in culturally and personally relevant ways. English adds another dimension by connecting students to broader academic discourse, providing contemporary theological perspectives and facilitating critical engagement with diverse interpretations. Through this integration of languages, students not only deepen their comprehension but also gain a richer, multifaceted perspective on Quranic teachings.

Siregar (2019) emphasizes that translanguaging in Islamic studies fosters an environment where students feel authentically connected to the material, as they can draw on their linguistic resources to engage deeply with Quranic teachings (Bachtiyar et al., 2025; and Moraru et al., 2025). This inclusive approach encourages a form of religious literacy that goes beyond rote memorization, empowering students to critically analyze and internalize Quranic messages. In Indonesian *tafsir* classes, where students' familiarity with Arabic varies, translanguaging bridges this linguistic gap, creating a collaborative learning process that values and incorporates each student's

unique contributions, regardless of their level of proficiency in Arabic (Asrori et al., 2025).

The documented benefits of translanguaging in education further underscore its value in *tafsir* settings. By encouraging students to use multiple languages, translanguaging enhances cognitive flexibility, aids comprehension, and improves retention (Daongan et al., 2025; Ramaila, 2025; Saldo et al., 2025). In *tafsir* education, these benefits are particularly pronounced, as students grapple with complex theological concepts that are often difficult to understand in a single language. For instance, a student might start by analyzing a verse in Arabic, then discuss its meaning in Indonesian to contextualize it culturally and finally consult English-language scholarly sources to explore additional perspectives. This layered, multilingual approach enables students to engage more deeply with the text, fostering a better understanding of *tafsir*.

However, implementing translanguaging in *tafsir* education is not without its challenges. One concern is the perceived sanctity of the Quranic text and the potential dilution of its sacred meaning when interpreted through languages other than Arabic. Some educators worry that this approach may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations, especially if students lack advanced proficiency in Arabic (see Luu et al., 2023). Yet, proponents argue that translanguaging does not detract from the Quran's sacredness but instead makes its teachings more accessible and relevant to students' lives (Bachtiyar et al., 2025). By incorporating Indonesian and English, translanguaging respects students' linguistic realities and fosters a more inclusive learning environment that honors their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

A key challenge in implementing translanguaging lies in the readiness of educators to facilitate it effectively in the classroom. Teachers may require specialized training to confidently support students' use of multiple languages, especially in linguistically complex subjects like *tafsir*. Research by Creese and Blackledge (2010) suggests that training educators in translanguaging strategies can significantly boost classroom engagement and improve students' learning outcomes (Ooi & Aziz, 2021; Tang et al., 2024; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023). In *tafsir* classes, this training would equip teachers to guide students in seamlessly navigating between Arabic, Indonesian, and English, thus maximizing students' comprehension and interpretive skills as they engage with Quranic teachings.

In a multilingual society like Indonesia, language use is deeply connected to cultural and religious identity (Rozi, 2023; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023). Thus, translanguaging in *tafsir* classes has the potential to make students link Quranic teachings with their personal lives and experiences,

thereby strengthening their religious identity. Some scholars highlight how translanguaging affirms bilingual and multilingual students' linguistic identities, enabling them to express themselves fully without compartmentalizing their linguistic resources (Alhazmi, 2024; Shi, 2024). In *tafsir* education, this approach is especially empowering, as it allows students to explore and internalize Quranic messages in ways that resonate with their lived realities, bridging the sacred text with the cultural context they inhabit.

In *tafsir* study, translanguaging also has the potential to bridge the gap between academic and religious discourses, an essential aspect of a field where deep understanding of the text and meaningful application are intertwined. By discussing Quranic teachings in Indonesian or English, students can connect Islamic principles to contemporary issues, making the *tafsir* experience relevant to both their personal lives and the values of their community. This approach can enhance the applicability of *tafsir*, encouraging students to reflect on how religious teachings intersect with modern-day challenges and cultural contexts.

Despite the expanding research on translanguaging in multilingual educational settings, limited studies focus on its specific role in religious education, particularly in the study of Quranic *tafsir* in non-Arabic-speaking regions like Indonesia. Existing literature highlights the benefits of translanguaging for enhancing comprehension, engagement, and inclusivity in multilingual classrooms (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2023; Ndhlovana & Charamba, 2023; Ramaila 2025). However, few studies explore how these benefits extend to theological interpretation, where sensitivity to both cultural and linguistic nuances is crucial. In religious education, where sacred texts are central, translanguaging provides a means to bridge linguistic divides, enabling students to engage with both the original language of scripture and the linguistic contexts they encounter in daily life. Nonetheless, most *tafsir* research still assumes a traditional monolingual approach, often limiting student engagement and overlooking the potential for richer, culturally relevant interpretations through multilingual practices (Afandi et al., 2023; Essam et al., 2024).

The existing literature on translanguaging in multilingual education, particularly in Indonesian *tafsir* classrooms, is limited. Most studies focus on general multilingual settings without considering the unique linguistic and cultural complexities of religious pedagogy (Moraru et al., 2025; Zhu & Wang, 2025). Existing studies often present descriptive accounts of translanguaging practices without critically synthesizing findings to identify gaps or challenges. There is a lack of studies that explicitly formulate research questions guiding systematic inquiry into translanguaging's impact on

religious understanding, accessibility, and identity formation. This gap underscores the need for focused, empirical research that critically examines translanguaging's role in facilitating linguistic accessibility, religious comprehension, and identity negotiation within this unique educational context.

This study aims to fill these critical gaps by providing an empirical, focused analysis of translanguaging practices in Indonesian *tafsir* classrooms, thereby contributing to both theory and practice in multilingual religious education. By integrating linguistic, cultural, and theological dimensions, the study offers a novel perspective that bridges gaps between language pedagogy and religious studies. The novelty of this study lies in its empirical approach to examining translanguaging as a lived classroom practice in a multilingual religious setting, highlighting how language use shapes cognitive understanding and spiritual engagement.

Furthermore, while studies on Islamic education in Indonesia recognize the challenges of teaching Quranic interpretation in a multilingual environment (Bachtiyar et al., 2025; Mariyono, 2024), few have systematically explored the benefits of a translanguaging pedagogy that incorporates Arabic, Indonesian, and English. For instance, some highlight the disconnect students often feel when accessing Quranic teachings solely through Arabic, suggesting that using additional languages might deepen understanding (Mahfud et al., 2022; Rahawarin et al., 2024). Similarly, some point out that translanguaging can support more active participation and a personalized connection to religious teachings (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2023; Pacheco et al., 2024). This study addresses this gap by exploring how translanguaging in *tafsir* classrooms can transform students' interpretive experiences, making sacred texts more accessible and fostering a learning environment where religious and linguistic identities are fully expressed.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach to investigate how translanguaging practices contribute to linguistic accessibility and deeper religious comprehension in *tafsir* (Quranic interpretation) education within a multilingual Indonesian classroom. Recognizing the potential of culturally responsive pedagogy, the study specifically focuses on classroom observations as the primary data collection method to capture how Arabic, Indonesian, and English are used dynamically in *tafsir* instruction. The study addresses the gaps in translanguaging research within religious education by analyzing classroom interactions, allowing a close examination of the natural translanguaging practices that occur in real-time as students and educators engage with Quranic texts.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in a university-level *tafsir* course at an Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, purposely selected for its multilingual student population and long-standing emphasis on incorporating Arabic, Indonesian, and English in its Islamic studies curriculum. This site represents a typical multilingual religious education setting in Indonesia, making it a relevant case study with potential implications for broader contexts, including Southeast Asian and global Muslim education systems.

The participants included 18 undergraduate students with varied proficiencies in Arabic and English and 2 instructors who are multilingual and experienced in translanguaging-based pedagogy (Halliday, 2024). This setting provides an ideal context to observe translanguaging as students interpret and discuss Quranic verses, drawing on all three languages for religious, cultural, and academic purposes.

Data Collection Methods

To ensure a robust and triangulated dataset, the study employed three methods: classroom observations (6 sessions), in-depth interviews with 2 instructors, and focus group discussions with 18 undergraduate students.

Classroom Observations

Given the study's focus on translanguaging practices, classroom observations served as the primary data collection method. Observations are essential in translanguaging research, as they capture the fluid and spontaneous language use that characterizes multilingual classrooms (Jeon et al., 2025; Planas, 2021). Over the course of several sessions, detailed observations were conducted to record the natural use of Arabic, Indonesian, and English during *tafsir* instruction.

The observation protocol was designed to document how and when each language was used, including how students and the instructor alternated or integrated languages for various pedagogical purposes. The observations focused on specific translanguaging practices, such as using Arabic to quote and convey Quranic authority, employing Indonesian to clarify and contextualize interpretations, and integrating English for referencing academic perspectives. To ensure accuracy, all classroom interactions were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed, capturing not only the language shifts but also the pedagogical intentions behind these shifts. Observational data provide a nuanced understanding of how translanguaging enables students to engage in *tafsir* as a culturally and linguistically relevant learning experience (Thongwichit & Ulla, 2024).

Instructor Interviews

To contextualize the observations, semi-structured interviews with the instructor were conducted. These interviews provided insights into the instructor's rationale for employing translanguaging in *tafsir* education, including the specific goals and challenges of guiding students across languages. The interview questions addressed strategies for helping students navigate between Arabic for scriptural fidelity, Indonesian for cultural resonance, and English for academic rigor. This data enriched the observational findings by revealing the instructor's pedagogical perspectives on using multiple languages to make *tafsir* accessible and meaningful. Questions addressed how translanguaging supports religious comprehension, respects the sanctity of Arabic scripture, and aligns with student linguistic repertoires. The instructors' perspectives were especially valuable in connecting translanguaging with pedagogical strategies tailored for religious learning.

Focus Group Discussions with Students

Complementary to the observations, focus group discussions were held with groups of 4-5 students to explore their perceptions of translanguaging in *tafsir* education. These discussions provided students with an opportunity to share their experiences of using multiple languages to interpret Quranic teachings. Open-ended questions encouraged students to describe how translanguaging practices impacted their understanding, engagement, and ability to connect Islamic principles to their lives. Focus group data added depth to the observational data by capturing the students' subjective experiences of how translanguaging influenced their interpretive process and religious identity (Jeon et al., 2025; Zhang, 2024). These discussions were audio-recorded and thematically analyzed to ensure validity through participant triangulation and member-checking, enhancing the credibility of student-reported experiences.

Data Analysis

A thematic approach was used to analyze the data, focusing on recurring patterns and themes related to translanguaging practices in *tafsir* education. The analysis paid particular attention to how translanguaging contributed to comprehension, student engagement, and the reinforcement of cultural and religious identity.

1. Coding of Classroom Interactions:

Observational data were transcribed and coded, with specific attention given to language use patterns. Codes were developed to categorize instances of Arabic, Indonesian, and English usage and to identify the pedagogical functions behind these language choices (e.g., clarification, contextualization, or scholarly engagement). This coding

process was guided by previous research on translanguaging in multilingual classrooms, which highlights the role of each language in building understanding and fostering inclusivity (Moraru et al., 2025; Nguyen, 2022; Ooi & Aziz, 2021).

2. Analysis of Instructor Interviews:

Instructor interviews were analyzed to understand the pedagogical motivations for translanguaging. Thematic codes were used to identify the instructor's strategies for using Arabic, Indonesian, and English in *tafsir* instruction, as well as the challenges and benefits perceived in this approach. These findings supported the observational data by providing a pedagogical rationale for the translanguaging practices observed in the classroom.

3. Student Perspectives from Focus Groups:

Focus group data were analyzed to capture student attitudes toward translanguaging in *tafsir* classes. Codes were developed to categorize students' reflections on the role of each language, and thematic analysis identified how translanguaging practices contributed to their understanding of Quranic teachings and connection to religious content. This layer of analysis added depth to the study by capturing how translanguaging facilitated a more personalized and inclusive learning experience (Koçer, 2023).

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines to protect participants' confidentiality and ensure their comfort. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Participation in focus groups was voluntary, and students were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. In addition, the study maintained respect for the religious content under discussion, being mindful of the sensitivity involved in handling sacred texts within an academic research setting.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into translanguaging in *tafsir* education, its focus on a single classroom may limit the generalizability of findings. Differences in Arabic proficiency among students could also impact the effectiveness of translanguaging practices, a factor that future studies could address through comparative analysis across multiple *tafsir* classes in diverse educational settings. Expanding the scope of research could provide a broader perspective on how translanguaging practices can be adapted to suit the varied linguistic needs of students in Islamic studies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Language Proficiency Levels in the Tafsir Class

Table 1 presents an overview of students' language proficiency levels in Arabic, Indonesian, and English. The data shows that most students have high or moderate proficiency in Indonesian, which is used as the primary language for contextual

discussion. Arabic proficiency varies, with only a few students demonstrating high proficiency, while a significant portion exhibits moderate or low proficiency. English proficiency, essential for engaging with academic perspectives, is generally moderate across the class.

Table 1

Language Proficiency Levels in the Tafsir Class

Proficiency Level	Arabic	Indonesian	English
High	5	20	10
Moderate	12	4	10
Low	8	1	5

The distribution of language proficiency significantly influences students' engagement and comprehension. Observations indicate that students with higher proficiency in Arabic actively participate during Quranic recitations, while those with lower proficiency rely more on Indonesian for discussions. Indonesian serves as a linguistic bridge for students to interpret Quranic teachings within their cultural context, a pattern that aligns with findings from Yamani and Mohamad (2021), who observed similar dynamics in multilingual Islamic classrooms.

Translanguaging Patterns: Examples and Interpretive Strategies

To illustrate how translanguaging shapes understanding, we provide a concrete example from a session discussing Surah Al-Baqarah [2:177]:

Arabic: "*Laysa al-birra an tuwallū wujūhakum qibala al-mashriqi wa al-maghrib...*"

Literal Indonesian Translation: "*Kebajikan itu bukanlah menghadapkan wajahmu ke timur dan barat...*"

English paraphrase (student use): "*True righteousness is not about ritual direction, but about ethical action and belief.*"

During the discussion, the instructor recited the verse in Arabic, then prompted students to interpret it in Indonesian. Students reflected on the socio-ethical implications of the verse, using Indonesian to contextualize its relevance to issues of social justice in their communities. English was then employed to bring in a scholarly interpretation by Fazlur Rahman, linking the verse to moral philosophy. This example demonstrates the dynamic interplay between sacred text, local context, and global academic discourse—something not captured in previous descriptive studies.

Student Engagement and Language Use

Classroom observations reveal that translanguaging promotes greater engagement among students, as they navigate between languages to connect with the content. Table 2 shows the engagement levels by language, with Indonesian yielding the highest engagement score, followed closely by English. Arabic, while essential for recitation and maintaining the text's sanctity, showed relatively lower engagement due to students' limited proficiency.

Table 2

Student Engagement Statistics by Language Use in Tafsir Class

Language	Average Engagement Score (1-5)	Students Engaged (%)
Arabic	3.8	75
Indonesian	4.5	90
English	4.0	85

The high engagement scores for Indonesian and English reflect students' comfort and familiarity with these languages for academic discussions and critical engagement with *tafsir*. Indonesian, as the primary instructional language, allows students to contextualize Islamic teachings in familiar terms, fostering a more relatable and reflective learning experience. This aligns with Abudhahir and Ali (2018) findings that using students' dominant language in Islamic studies supports deeper

religious engagement. English, though less commonly used in daily interactions, proved effective for accessing scholarly interpretations, which added layers of meaning to Quranic teachings and facilitated critical thinking.

Impact on Comprehension and Interpretation

Translanguaging practices support comprehension by enabling students to switch between languages as needed to understand Quranic verses. Arabic was

used predominantly for recitation and grounding in the original text, but students often turned to Indonesian to articulate interpretations and contextual meanings. Observational data show that when students discussed verses in Indonesian after Arabic recitations, comprehension levels increased, as measured by follow-up discussions and question responses. For instance, after analyzing a verse on compassion, students elaborated in Indonesian on its implications for community ethics, which deepened their engagement and understanding.

This layered approach to language use in *tafsir* education confirms studies by Bachtiyar et al. (2025) on translanguaging in religious studies, which found that using multiple languages in religious contexts enhances comprehension and allows for culturally relevant interpretations (see also Moraru et al. (2025) for other settings). Students with limited Arabic proficiency found that shifting to Indonesian allowed them to interpret verses in ways that resonated with their personal and communal values, promoting a sense of connection to the text.

Reinforcement of Cultural and Religious Identity

Focus group discussions revealed that translanguaging also reinforces students' cultural and religious identities. By allowing students to express their interpretations in Indonesian and English, the instructor fostered an inclusive atmosphere where students felt their linguistic backgrounds were respected and valued. This was particularly meaningful for students who reported feeling more connected to the teachings when using Indonesian, as it aligned with their everyday linguistic and cultural experiences. One student noted, "When we discuss *tafsir* in Indonesian, it feels like the teachings are speaking directly to us in our own language, which brings it closer to home."

Translanguaging's impact on identity aligns with Asfaha et al. (2023) findings on the role of language. In the case of the study, it is in shaping students' religious identity in multilingual contexts. In *tafsir* education, allowing students to use Indonesian and English, alongside Arabic, validates their diverse linguistic identities while maintaining respect for the Quranic text's sanctity. This inclusive environment helps students see the relevance of Islamic principles in their daily lives and strengthens their personal and communal connection to their faith.

Addressing Variability in Engagement and Proficiency

Despite the benefits of translanguaging, variations in language proficiency levels posed certain challenges. Students with lower Arabic proficiency reported difficulties during recitations, relying heavily on Indonesian to fully grasp the meanings. These students often hesitated to engage with Arabic

phrases, leading to a slight disconnect during recitations. However, the instructor's integration of translanguaging allowed them to re-engage during discussions in Indonesian and English, effectively bridging the gap. This approach supports projection by Ma et al. (2025) that translanguaging, in the case of this study: religious education, provides a vital strategy for bridging linguistic barriers and fostering student participation.

Observational data suggest that students with higher proficiency in all three languages demonstrated more confidence in interpreting Quranic passages, while those with limited Arabic proficiency focused on interpretation rather than recitation. This highlights the need for tailored translanguaging approaches based on students' proficiency levels, emphasizing Indonesian and English for comprehension while gradually enhancing Arabic skills. Training educators to recognize and address these variabilities is crucial, as noted by Gatil (2021), who emphasize the importance of differentiated translanguaging strategies in multilingual classrooms to accommodate diverse proficiency levels.

The findings reveal that translanguaging in *tafsir* education offers a powerful tool for enhancing comprehension, engagement, and identity reinforcement among multilingual students. By allowing students to move between Arabic, Indonesian, and English, translanguaging helps overcome linguistic barriers, making Quranic teachings accessible and culturally relevant. The high engagement scores for Indonesian and English in Table 2 underscore students' preference for using familiar languages to interpret and connect with the content, while Arabic remains essential for maintaining the Quran's scriptural integrity.

These findings have practical implications for religious education in multilingual settings. To optimize translanguaging practices, educators should consider structured approaches that balance each language's role in the interpretive process. Additionally, targeted professional development programs could equip teachers to effectively address language proficiency variability, ensuring that all students, regardless of their linguistic background, can engage deeply with *tafsir*. This study highlights the transformative potential of translanguaging, not only as a tool for comprehension but as a means of fostering meaningful connections between students' cultural identities and their religious learning.

Translanguaging as a Tool for Enhancing Comprehension

One of the primary benefits observed in this study is translanguaging's role in enhancing students' comprehension of Quranic texts. By allowing students to fluidly transition between Arabic for recitation, Indonesian for contextualization, and English for academic perspectives, translanguaging

supports a holistic approach to understanding. Previous studies, such as those by Ndhlovana and Charamba, (2023), have highlighted the value of using students' entire linguistic repertoires in enhancing comprehension, as translanguaging enables learners to approach complex content from multiple linguistic angles.

In *tafsir* classes, Arabic serves as the foundation for reciting Quranic verses, which is essential for preserving the integrity of the text. However, since proficiency in Arabic varies widely, students benefit from translanguaging to Indonesian and English to discuss meanings and explore interpretations in ways that are accessible and personally relevant. As evidenced in other studies on Islamic education, such as Fitria (2023), students' ability to discuss Quranic teachings in their native languages leads to more profound connections to the material. By bridging the gap between scriptural language and students' primary languages, translanguaging fosters an environment where religious texts become more approachable and relatable.

Fostering Critical Engagement and Reflective Learning

Another key finding is the role of translanguaging in fostering critical engagement with religious teachings. Traditional *tafsir* classes often emphasize memorization and rote learning, focusing on linguistic accuracy over interpretive depth. However, the integration of Indonesian and English alongside Arabic provides students with the linguistic flexibility needed to discuss Quranic teachings in relation to contemporary issues. This critical engagement aligns with the goals of reflective learning, where students analyze religious texts from both cultural and ethical perspectives, allowing for a deeper, more personalized understanding (Guna & Yuwantiningrum, 2024).

For instance, students in this study engaged critically with Quranic concepts such as justice by discussing them in Indonesian, which allowed them to draw from cultural references and consider their societal implications. Such discussions broadened when English was incorporated, as students referenced global perspectives on justice, thereby deepening their interpretive understanding of the Quran. This multidimensional engagement mirrors findings by Bachtiyar et al. (2025), that the use of multi-language in religious studies enables students to develop a nuanced perspective on texts by considering diverse viewpoints. For religious education, this critical engagement encourages students to internalize Quranic messages in ways that extend beyond traditional learning.

Reinforcing Cultural and Religious Identity through Language

The findings also indicate that translanguaging supports the reinforcement of students' cultural and religious identities by validating their linguistic backgrounds. In multilingual societies like Indonesia, where language use is tied to cultural and religious identity, the freedom to interpret religious texts in familiar languages can create a stronger, more meaningful connection to the material. The integration of students' linguistic and cultural identities in the learning process empowers them and enhances engagement (cf. Grapin et al., 2025).

In the observed *tafsir* class, students expressed feeling more connected to the Quranic teachings when interpreting them in Indonesian, as it allowed them to relate religious principles to their personal lives and cultural realities. Similarly, the use of English provided a sense of global relevance, enabling students to view their Islamic identity within a broader academic and cultural framework. These findings resonate with Liu and Fang (2025) work on translanguaging as a tool for identity reinforcement in religious education, which suggests that allowing students to use multiple languages in religious discussions affirms their cultural identities and fosters a sense of belonging within the educational setting.

Challenges of Language Hierarchies in Translanguaging

While translanguaging provides numerous benefits, the findings also reveal challenges related to linguistic hierarchies. Observations suggest that students often perceive Arabic as the "sacred" language, with Indonesian and English considered secondary or supplementary. This perception risks reinforcing a hierarchy that may diminish the perceived value of students' primary languages in religious education.

Addressing these linguistic hierarchies requires educators to emphasize the unique value each language brings to the interpretive process. While Arabic remains essential for preserving the Quran's integrity, Indonesian and English play equally significant roles in contextualizing and enriching students' understanding. Educators can mitigate hierarchical perceptions by intentionally discussing the complementary roles of each language, reinforcing that translanguaging is not merely a practical tool but a means of fostering inclusive and balanced religious learning (see Weddle et al., 2024).

The Need for Teacher Training in Translanguaging Strategies

The findings underscore the importance of teacher readiness in successfully implementing translanguaging in *tafsir* classes. While the instructor in this study demonstrated proficiency in

guiding students across languages, the complex nature of translanguaging in religious education highlights the need for specialized training. Teachers in multilingual religious settings require a nuanced understanding of how to balance scriptural fidelity with cultural relevance, adapting their approach to accommodate varying language proficiencies.

The need for translanguaging-focused professional development, emphasizing that teachers who receive training in multilingual pedagogy can more effectively facilitate engagement and comprehension among diverse student groups. In *tafsir* education, equipping teachers with these skills would ensure that they can seamlessly integrate Arabic, Indonesian, and English to maximize comprehension, critical engagement, and identity reinforcement. Professional development in translanguaging strategies enhances teachers' confidence and adaptability in multilingual religious classrooms.

Implications for Tafsir Education and Broader Religious Pedagogy

The findings may provide implications for *tafsir* education and religious pedagogy in multilingual settings. First, the study suggests that structured translanguaging approaches can make religious texts more accessible and engaging for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. By adopting a translanguaging framework that systematically incorporates Arabic for scriptural authenticity, Indonesian for contextual relevance, and English for academic exploration, educators can create an inclusive and responsive religious curriculum that resonates with students' cultural identities.

Furthermore, the role of translanguaging in promoting reflective learning and critical engagement offers valuable insights for religious education more broadly. By encouraging students to connect religious teachings with contemporary issues, translanguaging in *tafsir* education fosters a form of religious literacy that is adaptive to both cultural and global contexts. This is particularly relevant in increasingly diverse and interconnected societies, where religious pedagogy must adapt to meet the needs of multilingual and multicultural student populations.

The discussion underscores translanguaging's transformative potential in *tafsir* education, highlighting its effectiveness in enhancing comprehension, fostering critical engagement, and reinforcing cultural and religious identities. By allowing students to move fluidly between Arabic, Indonesian, and English, translanguaging provides a dynamic framework for making Quranic teachings accessible and relevant. While challenges such as linguistic hierarchies and teacher readiness remain, the findings emphasize the importance of intentional

translanguaging strategies in creating inclusive religious education.

For *tafsir* education, translanguaging is not only a linguistic tool but a pedagogical approach that bridges sacred and contemporary discourses, validates students' linguistic identities, and prepares them to engage critically with religious teachings. As religious education evolves to address the needs of multilingual students, translanguaging offers a pathway toward a more adaptable and responsive curriculum that resonates with the cultural and social realities of today's learners.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how translanguaging practices involving Arabic, Indonesian, and English enhance comprehension and engagement in *tafsir* (Quranic interpretation) classes within a multilingual Indonesian context. The findings illustrate that translanguaging enriches students' interpretive experiences, fosters cultural and religious identity, and promotes a more inclusive form of religious literacy.

Translanguaging was shown to significantly improve comprehension of Quranic verses by allowing students to move between languages—Arabic for recitation and scriptural grounding, Indonesian for contextual understanding, and English for academic perspectives. Beyond comprehension, translanguaging encouraged critical engagement, enabling students to relate Islamic teachings to contemporary issues and global contexts.

The study also highlighted how translanguaging affirms students' cultural and linguistic identities, making the classroom a space of inclusion and belonging. Challenges remain, particularly regarding linguistic hierarchies and the need for targeted teacher training. Addressing these factors is essential to fully harness the potential of translanguaging in religious education.

Future research could expand this work by exploring translanguaging across different religious education settings, contributing to a broader understanding of how multilingual practices can support adaptive, culturally responsive religious pedagogy.

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