Pedagogical Translanguaging in Grade 9 English: From Training to Classroom Practice

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Abstract

Pedagogical translanguaging has been adopted in EFL education, but limited evidence is available on how secondary school teachers apply it after formal professional training. This study explored how Grade 9 English teachers conceptualized pedagogical translanguaging after training, how they reported using it in classroom instruction, and what factors influenced its implementation in practice. A qualitative interpretive multiple-case design was employed, involving semi-structured online interviews with ten secondary school English teachers from four schools in Southeast Vietnam. Interview data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns across cases. The findings reveal that professional development helped teachers become more conscious of purposeful language allocation, but classroom enactment remained selective rather than fully integrated. Vietnamese was mainly used to support comprehension, activate ideas, and clarify grammar, whereas English played a dominant role in production tasks due to examination pressure, curriculum pacing, and institutional expectations. The study may contribute to the scholarship on post-training translanguaging in Vietnamese secondary EFL classrooms by showing how teachers integrate it through negotiation between professional learning, personal cognition, and exam-driven constraints. It also highlights practical implications for designing context-responsive teacher training in secondary English education.

Keywords: *pedagogical translanguaging, professional development, EFL teachers, secondary school, Grade 9 English*

1. Introduction

Pedagogical translanguaging has obtained increasing attention in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education since teachers te` nd to encounter linguistic issues in multilingual classrooms amid English-only norms. Rather than treating languages as separate systems, translanguaging refers to the planned use of two or more languages to support learning, with alternation organized as part of instructional design (Cenoz and Gorter, 2020). Such practices are particularly relevant in EFL contexts where exclusive English use is expected, as they can enhance learning and participation (Quinn et al., 2025; Robillos, 2023; Yuzlu and Dikilitas, 2022; Zhang and Chan, 2022). In secondary classrooms, EFL teachers have implemented translanguaging to clarify instructions, explain grammar, and sustain interaction when comprehension difficulties arise (Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Rasman, 2018; Saqinah et al., 2025). Teacher education studies show that training can reshape multilingual awareness and pedagogical beliefs, but evidence remains limited on how in-service teachers carry such learning into classroom decisions, especially under strong institutional expectations (Holdway and Hitchcock, 2018; Orcasitas-Vicandi and Perales-Fernández-de-Gamboa, 2024; Wong, 2024). This is particularly relevant in secondary education, where language-use decisions

are tied to examinations, pacing, and established teaching habits.

In Vietnam, translanguaging has moved from conceptual discussion to classroom inquiry. Prior studies document teachers and students view translanguaging as helpful for comprehension, confidence, and scaffolding, but language choices are still affected by assessment requirements and institutional demands (Nguyen and Tran, 2025; Pham and Nguyen, 2024; Vu et al., 2025). What remains unclear is how secondary teachers interpret translanguaging after professional training and how this understanding is negotiated in actual classrooms, where exam pressures strongly influence instruction. Against this background, the present study investigates how secondary teachers enact translanguaging after professional training. It examines their understanding of the approach, reported integration into instruction, contextual influences, and perceived benefits and challenges. Specifically, four research questions guide the study: (1) How do Grade 9 EFL teachers understand pedagogical translanguaging after the training? (2) How do they report implementing this approach? (3) What contextual factors influence their implementation?; and (4) What benefits and challenges do they perceive?

2. Literature review

2.1. Pedagogical translanguaging in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education

Pedagogical translanguaging has appeared as a deliberate response to the mismatch between multilingual classroom realities and monolingual assumptions in EFL teaching. It is defined as "a pedagogic theory and practice that refers to instructional strategies which integrate two or more languages" (Cenoz and Gorter, 2020: 2), emphasizing intentional design rather than incidental language mixing. Teachers may organize input and output across languages or deliberately mobilize learners' full linguistic repertoires (Cenoz, 2017). A typical example is when learners receive input in one language and produce spoken or written output in another, making cross-linguistic movement systematic (Cenoz and Gorter, 2020). Empirical studies have demonstrated the pedagogical value of this planned multilingual design in EFL settings. In Turkey, translanguaging pedagogy produced stronger gains than grammar-translation and communicative approaches across listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while also improving motivation, confidence, and autonomy (Yuzlu and Dikilitas, 2022); however, the quasi-experimental design focused on learner outcomes within a fixed intervention and did not examine how teachers sustained translanguaging afterwards. Similar listening gains were reported among university students in Thailand (Robillos, 2023). Conversely, the study was limited to higher education and did not address teachers' pedagogical preparation. Classroom-based qualitative research also highlights social and cognitive benefits. In Colombian Indigenous classrooms, translanguaging increased participation, metalinguistic awareness, and learner empowerment, although the analysis involved only two teacher-researchers in a specific ethno-educational setting (Quinn et al., 2025). Although translanguaging is regarded as flexible scaffolding and an important EFL practice (Barahona, 2020; Guo and Feng, 2025).

2.2. Pedagogical translanguaging in EFL secondary education

In secondary EFL classrooms, pedagogical translanguaging supports comprehension, interaction, and classroom management, although it is often applied spontaneously rather than

systematically. Across qualitative classroom studies, translanguaging consistently supports meaning-making through both teacher-led and student-mediated practices (Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Rasman, 2018; Saqinah et al., 2025). In Indonesia, a junior high school teacher used intrasentential, intersentential, and tag-switching across Indonesian, Sundanese, and English to clarify instructions and reduce confusion (Saqinah et al., 2025). Meanwhile, in Thailand, teachers alternated between Thai, Isan, and English in both planned and spontaneous ways to improve understanding, confidence, and classroom management despite English-only policy pressures (Pawapootanon et al., 2025). This functional flexibility is also evident in a study by Sapitri et al. (2018), who identified translanguaging as supporting knowledge construction, classroom management, and interpersonal relations in EFL classrooms in Bali. In terms of teacher cognition, Indonesian junior high school teachers generally valued translanguaging for improving comprehension, reducing anxiety, and supporting mixed-ability learners through both teacher-directed and student-directed practices (Raja et al., 2022). However, these practices were mainly based on teaching experience and contextual adaptation rather than formal preparation. In general, although previous studies provide strong evidence of translanguaging benefits in secondary EFL classrooms, they prioritize naturally occurring practice and give limited examination on how explicit pedagogical translanguaging training influences classroom implementation and teacher development afterwards.

2.3. Teacher professional development on pedagogical translanguaging

Professional development is essential for turning pedagogical translanguaging from theory into instructional practice because many teachers are still prepared within monolingual traditions. However, previous studies have mainly concentrated on pre-service preparation rather than post-training classroom use. For example, in the Basque trilingual context, after four theoretical sessions and a portfolio task, pre-service primary teachers associated pedagogical translanguaging with cross-linguistic transfer, multilingual awareness, and curricular competence development (Orcasitas-Vicandi and Perales-Fernández-de-Gamboa, 2024); however, pedagogical translanguaging was applied more readily to English and cross-language tasks than to Basque-medium teaching, suggesting that language hierarchies still shaped pedagogical decisions. Likewise, a semester-long university course in the United States enabled teacher candidates to reconsider monolingual beliefs and integrate translanguaging into emerging professional identities (Wong, 2024), and pre-service teachers were found to incorporate translanguaging into lesson plans and express dynamic views of bilingualism, though concerns about institutional resistance and language overuse indicated uncertainty in implementation (Tian and Zhang-Wu, 2022). Among in-service teachers, professional development has directly addressed ideological change, yet evidence of classroom enactment remains limited. For instance, a 15-week online course helped mathematics teachers reconsider first-language use as a legitimate instructional resource, although responses were uneven and resistance persisted under English achievement pressures (Holdway and Hitchcock, 2018). Graduate-level coursework also encouraged teachers to articulate a translanguaging stance despite contextual

constraints (Deroo and Ponzio, 2019), while translanguaging-oriented EFL training reshaped teachers' professional identities (Yüzlü and Dikilitaş, 2022). Nonetheless, these studies paid more attention to beliefs and identity than to how pedagogical translanguaging was later implemented in lessons. Overall, evidence remains insufficient to understand how in-service secondary English teachers sustain pedagogical translanguaging in classroom practice after formal training.

2.4. Research on Pedagogical Translanguaging in Vietnam

Pedagogical translanguaging in Vietnam has gradually transformed from conceptual advocacy to classroom-based documentation, but the evidence is diverse across educational levels and research purposes. Translanguaging pedagogy is contrast to English-only traditions, particularly in rural and under-resourced classrooms, but relevant research remained conceptual, drawing on international evidence rather than Vietnamese classroom data (Vu et al., 2025). This argument has been complemented by empirical studies, almost concentrating on tertiary education. For example, university students generally viewed translanguaging positively because it clarified instructions, increased confidence, and supported engagement (Pham and Nguyen, 2024), while lecturers' translanguaging ranged from intuitive to strategic depending on professional experience and pedagogical reasoning (Cong-Lem, 2025). Similarly, purposeful Vietnamese-English alternation for scaffolding, assessment explanation, and affective support was documented (Nguyen et al., 2025; Minh Toan, 2025), indicating that translanguaging in higher education is frequently deliberate but strongly shaped by institutional and assessment demands. At school level, the evidence is more limited and context-specific. For instance, high school teachers valued translanguaging for explaining grammar, reducing anxiety, and sustaining participation, yet their practices were constrained by examination pressure and uncertainty about acceptable L1 use (Nguyen and Tran, 2025). In lower secondary ethnic minority settings, translanguaging could extend beyond Vietnamese-English interaction to trilingual mediation, mainly serving interpretive and managerial purposes through teacher-initiated moves (Vo and Nguyen, 2025). As a whole, prior studies have established that translanguaging in Vietnam is increasingly recognized as pedagogically useful, but the field still relies on small-scale, teacher-focused, or perception-based studies. Little is known about how secondary teachers implement pedagogical translanguaging after professional development, how such training shapes classroom decisions, or how translanguaging develops in EFL classrooms where policy expectations and daily practice intersect. This unresolved connection between pedagogical preparation and enacted practice reveals a remarkable gap for the present study.

2.5. Theoretical framework

The study uses Borg's (2015) teacher cognition framework as its theoretical lens to explain how teachers interpret pedagogical translanguaging after training and how these interpretations are reflected in classroom decisions. According to Borg (2015), teacher cognition refers to the beliefs, knowledge, assumptions, and prior experiences that teachers draw on when making instructional choices, and such cognition does not operate independently from contextual realities. This perspective suits the present study because of Grade 9 teachers' response to both new acquired knowledge and professional routines. In this study, teacher cognition is formed by the interaction between professional development, accumulated classroom

experience, school expectations, and curriculum demands. These cognitive dimensions are expected to influence how teachers apply Vietnamese and English appropriately, and adapt translanguaging to lesson objectives. Additionally, Borg's (2015) framework also explains why reported pedagogical intentions may not always appear fully in practice, since classroom action is mediated by contextual pressures such as examination requirements, students' language proficiency, and established school norms. Based on this logic, the study interprets teachers' post-training implementation through the sequence of training, cognition, reported classroom use, and contextual mediation.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative interpretive multiple-case design to explore how Grade 9 English teachers implemented pedagogical translanguaging after professional training in their own teaching contexts. A qualitative interpretive approach is suitable for examining how participants construct meaning from experience within specific social and institutional contexts (Elbardan and Kholeif, 2017). Thanks to its flexible character, data collection and analysis can develop responsively as new insights emerge during the inquiry. In this study, each teacher was an individual case because pedagogical translanguaging was supposed to shaped by personal cognition, classroom routines, and school conditions differently among participants. Moreover, the multiple-case design enabled thematic comparison across cases to identify recurring patterns and contextual variation (Hunziker and Blankenagel, 2021). Semi-structured interviews were the main source of qualitative data, allowing teachers to explain their understanding, reported practices, and instructional decisions in depth. This design was particularly suitable for examining how post-training pedagogical intentions were interpreted and adapted in secondary English classrooms in Vietnam.

3.2. Research Context and Participants

The participants included ten secondary school English teachers working at four different secondary schools in Southeast Vietnam, including seven females and three males. They were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the research focus (Dörnyei, 2007). Selection followed four criteria: they were currently teaching Grade 9, had completed professional training on pedagogical translanguaging, were teaching in secondary schools in the region, and agreed to participate in online interviews. To protect confidentiality, they were identified as Teacher 1 to Teacher 10 throughout the study. All participants had attended a one-month professional development program organized by the provincial Department of Education and Training in the previous year, in which several sessions introduced pedagogical translanguaging in EFL teaching, such as giving instructions, explaining abstract content, and organizing classroom activities. A sample of ten was sufficient for qualitative analysis prioritizing depth of understanding rather than broad statistical generalization (Mocănașu, 2020).

3.3. Research instrument

Semi-structured interviews manage to combine a clear thematic structure with sufficient flexibility for participants to explain their experiences, reasoning, and instructional decisions in depth (Adams, 2015). Thus, this instrument was suitable for the present study because the research not only identified whether teachers implemented pedagogical translanguaging after training, but also clarified how they interpreted this pedagogical approach and how contextual realities influenced their

classroom choices. All ten interviews were conducted individually via Zoom, with each session lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. Online interviewing gave access to teachers from different schools and generated a convenient environment for extended professional reflection. The interviews were carried out in Vietnamese so that participants could discuss pedagogical experiences precisely and express nuanced views without linguistic limitation. Oral informed consent was obtained before each session, and both audio and video were recorded for transcription and analysis.

The interview protocol was designed based on the research aims, research questions, and Borg's (2015) teacher cognition framework, which highlights the interaction between teacher beliefs, prior experience, professional learning, contextual influences, and pedagogical action. Accordingly, the final protocol (the Appendix) was organized into six domains following the sequence from training to classroom enactment: teachers' understanding after professional training, prior teaching beliefs and routines, reported implementation in Grade 9 lessons, lesson-based illustrations, contextual influences and constraints, and perceived challenges and outcomes. Core questions addressed what teachers learned from training, how they currently allocated Vietnamese and English during instruction, how translanguaging appeared in a recent lesson, what factors influenced language choices, what difficulties emerged in practice, and how students responded. Follow-up prompts were used whenever clarification, elaboration, or concrete examples were required.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

Data collection occurred in four sequential phases to ensure consistency across cases and close alignment with the study's interpretive design. First, all participants had completed the professional training programme on pedagogical translanguaging before recruitment began. Second, eligible teachers were invited through existing school and professional networks based on the purposive criteria already established. Third, individual interview schedules were arranged according to participants' availability, and online interviews were conducted via Zoom. In the final phase, all interviews were audio- and video-recorded with oral consent, then transcribed verbatim for analysis. Vietnamese was used throughout the interviews because it helped participants to explain pedagogical experiences, classroom reasoning, and contextual concerns more precisely; relevant excerpts were consequently translated carefully into English to preserve meaning and analytical accuracy.

The interview data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). First, all interview transcripts were read repeatedly to achieve familiarity with the data and to identify recurring patterns related to teachers' understanding, classroom implementation, and perceptions of pedagogical translanguaging. Initial coding was then conducted manually through line-by-line examination of meaning units, focusing on references to professional training, language allocation, classroom decision-making, examination pressure, and perceived instructional benefits or challenges.

After the initial coding stage, conceptually related codes were grouped into broader analytical categories through constant comparison across participants' responses. For example, codes such as *"Vietnamese for brainstorming"*, *"L1 support before speaking"*, and *"idea generation in Vietnamese"* were clustered into a broader category concerning cognitive scaffolding during lesson entry

stages. Similarly, codes related to *"grammar clarification"*, *"exam preparation"*, and *"English-only production"* contributed to themes linked to selective translanguaging implementation and institutional constraints.

The themes were subsequently reviewed and refined through multiple rounds of comparison between coded extracts and the full dataset to ensure internal coherence and conceptual distinction. This iterative process resulted in four final themes: (1) post-training understanding of pedagogical translanguaging, (2) reconstructed teacher cognition and language use routines, (3) selective classroom implementation of pedagogical translanguaging, and (4) contextual constraints, benefits, and limitations. Throughout the analysis, the interpretation of themes was informed by Borg's (2015) teacher cognition framework, particularly the interaction between professional learning, prior beliefs, and contextual influences on classroom practice.

To strengthen trustworthiness, interview summaries were returned to participants for confirmation, coding decisions were recorded throughout the analysis process, and a reflexive journal was maintained to monitor interpretive bias.

3.5. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were considered throughout the study to protect participants' privacy and ensure responsible handling of data. Before each interview, participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the use of recorded data, and their right to decline any question or withdraw at any stage without consequence. Oral informed consent was recorded before the interview began. To maintain confidentiality, all teachers were identified by pseudonyms (Teacher 1 to Teacher 10), and no school names or identifying institutional details were mentioned in transcripts or reporting. Because interviews were conducted on Zoom, each session was arranged in a password-protected meeting room to avoid unauthorized access. Audio and video recordings were stored locally on a password-protected device, and all files were kept in encrypted form for research use only.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Post-training understanding of pedagogical translanguaging

From ten interviews, teachers described professional training as the preliminary context where translanguaging was initially presented as a planned pedagogical approach rather than spontaneous code-switching. Most participants recalled that training sessions emphasized intentional bilingual sequencing, especially moving from Vietnamese input to English output, bilingual task design, and controlled explanation of difficult content. Teacher 3 explained that the training introduced translanguaging as *"intentionally creating bridges between Vietnamese and English"*, adding that classroom examples such as Vietnamese storytelling before English idiom teaching helped her reconsider how lesson transitions could be organized more purposefully. Teacher 10 similarly remembered sample procedures such as *"Vietnamese pre-teach for listening scripts followed by English note-taking"*, and described this as *"deliberate bilingual orchestration"*.

However, teachers did not adopt the training message equally. Several participants accepted translanguaging as a practical resource but not as a major teaching orientation. Teacher 7 defined it as *"an optional tool for occasional support"*, mainly useful when English explanation failed, while Teacher 8 described it as *"a flexible add-on for support"* rather than a principal methogology. Even among teachers who valued the training, reservations were

evident. Teacher 10 stated that much of the content *"focused on theory over our specific test formats"*, making full adoption difficult in Grade 9 classes.

Differences also appeared in what teachers considered transferable from training. Teachers with stronger acceptance (Teachers 1, 3, 4) referred to lesson design principles such as bilingual reflection, planned vocabulary mapping, and staged language movement. Teacher 3 described *"pre-lesson language mapping"* and bilingual vocabulary handouts with English terms, Vietnamese equivalents, and example sentences, while Teacher 4 reported preparing *"lesson blueprints with language % targets"* and using post-task reflection on where Vietnamese had supported understanding. Teacher 1 similarly explained that she now planned *"which parts should be English-dominant, which parts allow brief Vietnamese clarification, and where bilingual materials might be useful"*.

In contrast, more cautious participants (Teachers 7, 9) selected only short Vietnamese clarification techniques linked directly to grammar explanation or vocabulary support. Teacher 7 limited translanguaging to *"brief Vietnamese clarifications for exam vocabulary"* and short task instructions, whereas Teacher 9 emphasized *"one or two planned switches per lesson"*, mainly for grammar exceptions such as *"used to"* or *"quick bilingual instructions"* during controlled practice.

4.2. Reconstructed teacher cognition and language use routines

Teachers consistently reported that before the professional training, Vietnamese is prefered in classrooms activities than English due to the failure of applying English as instructional language. Teacher 7 explained that she *"stuck mostly to English for lessons"*, but switched when *"half the class stared blankly during grammar drills"*, revealing that students frequently asked *"Dịch đi cô!"* although she resisted because she wanted them to develop listening stamina.

Teacher 10 similarly described that English *"ruled skills and examples"*, whereas Vietnamese appeared for *"repeats, rules, or chaos control"*, especially during grammar sections where explanations often expanded beyond the planned time. Teacher 1 also acknowledged that pre-training language decisions were largely intuitive; although she aimed for English-only teaching, she *"automatically switched to Vietnamese to save time"* whenever students repeatedly misunderstood instructions or made the same errors. In several accounts, teachers associated Vietnamese use with a sense of pedagogical uncertainty, often describing it as something done when English teaching no longer sustained lesson flow.

After training, most participants reported greater awareness of why, when, and how each language could be allocated, although the degree of change differed considerably. Teacher 3 described the clearest transformation in cognition, stating that translanguaging became *"a core part of my teaching toolkit"*, particularly for managing mixed-ability classes. She explained that she now planned *"pre-lesson language mapping"*, deciding in advance where Vietnamese would scaffold understanding and where English would remain dominant, for example through bilingual handouts, Vietnamese brainstorming, and English reformulation tasks. Teacher 1 similarly reported that she now deliberately identified *"which parts should be English-dominant, which parts allow brief Vietnamese clarification, and where bilingual materials might be useful"*, especially in exam-oriented grammar lessons. For these teachers, Vietnamese

was no longer treated as a spontaneous rescue strategy but as a planned component within lesson sequencing.

On the other hand, several teachers described only modest adjustment, with prior beliefs about English exposure continuing to shape classroom routines. Teacher 7 stated that the training only *"softened my view slightly that Vietnamese is always a crutch"*, but she still limited Vietnamese to *"5-10% of time"* and valued English-dominant teaching because exam performance and parental expectations had great influences on her teaching decisions. Teacher 8 also reported only marginal change, explaining that the training *"justified some Vietnamese use"*, but her belief that *"English immersion still best for output skills"* did not change, and she only noted brief Vietnamese moments in lesson plans rather than redesigning lesson stages. Teacher 10 additionally described translanguaging as *"a niche support tactic"*, useful mainly for isolated comprehension gaps such as vocabulary mapping or grammar contrasts, while *"routines stay English-centric as high-stakes outcomes validate them"*. Teacher 9 expressed a similarly cautious view, permitting only *"one or two deliberate switches"* in each lesson; still, he held firmly to the principle of maximizing English exposure because of improved exam results under immersion drills as evidence of its effectiveness.

4.3. Selective implementation of pedagogical translanguaging in the classroom

Reported classroom practice showed a highly consistent feature among the participants. Vietnamese was concentrated in lesson stages where comprehension demands were the highest, while English became dominant once students moved into controlled output, assessed practice, or textbook-based production. Translanguaging emerged in short, functional segments attached to specific instructional purposes, particularly when teachers needed to activate prior knowledge, clarify task expectations, or avoid misunderstanding before students produced English.

Warm-up and idea generation were the most frequently mentioned entry points for Vietnamese. Several teachers explained that beginning with Vietnamese helped weaker students participate immediately, especially in writing and speaking lessons requiring personal ideas. In a writing lesson on inventions, Teacher 8 first asked students *"Phát minh nào thay đổi cuộc sống em nhất?"* and collected short Vietnamese responses such as *"điện thoại thông minh"* or *"máy giặt"* before guiding students to reformulate them into English expressions such as *"smartphones revolutionized communication"* or *"washing machines save time for families"*. Teacher 10 described a similar sequence in a lesson, beginning with *"Nơi nào em muốn đến nhất?"* and allowing brief Vietnamese sharing before shifting students into English *"wish"* structures such as *"I wish I could visit Paris"* and *"I wish I had enough money to travel abroad"*. She noted that students *"spoke more quickly after Vietnamese brainstorming because ideas were already ready"*. Teacher 3 also used Vietnamese prompts before reading tasks, asking students to predict content in Vietnamese before identifying English key words in the text, particularly when lesson topics involved unfamiliar social issues or environmental vocabulary. These examples suggest that Vietnamese functioned as brief scaffolding before English task performance.

Grammar explanation formed a second stable site of translanguaging across nearly all interviews. Teachers repeatedly referred to brief Vietnamese intervention when introducing structures considered conceptually difficult, especially conditional

sentences, passive constructions, relative clauses, and vocabulary with abstract meanings. Teacher 10 explained that she often introduced *"Giả sử"* before if-clause drills because students confused hypothetical meaning when only English examples were provided; once the semantic frame was obvious, she returned to English sentence patterns and substitution exercises. Teacher 7 similarly described inserting Vietnamese when teaching difficult reading vocabulary such as "*hypothesis"*, stating that direct Vietnamese explanation saved time and reduced repeated guessing. She added that if she insisted on English-only paraphrasing, *"students lost focus very quickly"*. Teacher 1 reported that grammar exceptions often triggered planned Vietnamese clarification, especially where textbook explanations were too condensed for low-proficiency students, while Teacher 9 admitted using Vietnamese comparisons between English and Vietnamese sentence order when introducing relative clauses. In these accounts, Vietnamese was used briefly to establish meaning before English drills resumed.

In addition, production stages were primarily English-only across all cases. Teachers consistently stated that speaking tasks, paragraph writing, oral presentations, and exam-oriented exercises were protected as English spaces because they were closely compatible with assessment expectations. Teacher 8 summarized this pattern *"brief Vietnamese in warm-ups... grammar presentation if examples confuse. Practice and production stay English-only"*. Teacher 3 explained that even when students discussed ideas in Vietnamese during preparation, final speaking still had to be delivered in English because *"they must train output for tests"*. Teacher 7 reported that once pair work began, she discouraged Vietnamese use unless groups completely stopped progressing. These patterns reveal that teachers viewed translanguaging primarily as temporary pedagogical scaffolding, reflecting the continuing dominance of English-only achievement norms in secondary education.

4.4. Contextual constraints and benefits

All participants attributed their classroom language choices to contextual pressure, particularly Grade 9 examination demands, curriculum pacing, and institutional expectations surrounding English-medium teaching. Examination requirements were mentioned more commonly than any other external factor and were regarded as the strongest boundary on translanguaging practice. Teachers repeatedly explained that because end-of-term tests, entrance examinations, and school assessments required monolingual English performance, Vietnamese had to remain limited and strategically controlled. Teacher 7 stated that translanguaging became less acceptable when examinations approached because *"we must cover two units per week"*, explaining that near testing periods she reduced Vietnamese even during grammar explanation because *"students need to hear English patterns continuously"*. She also noted that parents sometimes reacted negatively if they heard extended Vietnamese was applied, interpreting it as reduced English teaching. Teacher 10 similarly explained that *"coverage pressure favors minimalism"*, especially when lesson objectives were tightly associated with textbook completion, and she noted that school evaluation focused primarily on test outcomes rather than classroom language choices. Teacher 9 reported that lesson observations by school leaders and colleagues encouraged *"visible English teaching"*, so Vietnamese clarification was often kept brief or shifted into quieter interaction with weaker students rather than addressed openly to the whole class. A similar institutional expectation appeared in Teacher 4's response, where the principal

encouraged *"authentic English atmosphere"*, leading teachers to maintain English during observed stages even when students were struggling.

Despite these constraints, participants consistently identified noticeable benefits when translanguaging was used selectively. Stronger comprehension was the most frequently reported outcome. Teacher 3 explained that translanguaging enabled students to engage with complex content *"without being blocked by limited English"*, particularly when reading tasks involved unfamiliar concepts or when grammar explanations required semantic contrast between two languages. She also noted that comparing Vietnamese and English sentence patterns helped students notice structural differences more clearly, especially in conditional forms and passive constructions. Teacher 1 reported relevant benefits during writing preparation, where short Vietnamese discussion allowed low-proficiency students to generate ideas before reformulating them into English sentences. Teacher 8 described stronger participation when bilingual support was implemented in early task stages, stating that weaker students who usually remained silent *"started speaking more because they already had ideas first"*, and in some pair activities *"output volume doubles"*. Several teachers also noted reduced hesitation when vocabulary had first been anchored in Vietnamese meaning (Teacher 1, 3, 8).

With regards to limitations, some participants noted slower lesson flow, possible learner dependency on Vietnamese, and reduced fluency if Vietnamese support extended beyond short explanation. Teacher 3 acknowledged that some students could *"default to Vietnamese whenever they feel unsure"*, especially in mixed-ability groups where stronger students completed tasks faster than weaker classmates. Teacher 10 described the benefits as *"incremental at best"* and questioned whether translanguaging could remain practical under sustained exam pressure because repeated bilingual clarification consumed time needed for controlled practice. Teacher 7 also observed that brilliant students sometimes lost concentration when explanation became too detailed in Vietnamese, particularly during grammar sections they already understood. Teacher 9 also reported that if Vietnamese lasted too long, some groups delayed returning to English task completion.

4.5. Discussion

This study demonstrates that post-training pedagogical translanguaging is not transferred directly from professional development into classroom practice, but it is cognitively reconstructed by teachers under exam-oriented institutional conditions. Although training expanded teachers' awareness of purposeful bilingual pedagogy, classroom implementation remained selective because teachers continuously negotiated between newly introduced pedagogical principles and pre-existing beliefs about English exposure, assessment demands, and instructional efficiency. Rather than perfomring as a complete pedagogical shift, translanguaging became a regulated instructional resource affected by local classroom realities.

A significant finding is that professional training contributes to a shift from intuitive to more conscious language use, although the depth of this shift varies among teachers. Some participants developed a clear pedagogical rationale, planning bilingual sequencing and aligning language choice with lesson objectives, reflecting the role of professional development in reshaping teacher cognition (Borg, 2015), where new knowledge interacts with prior experience and beliefs to inform instructional decisions. However, several teachers partially incorporated training

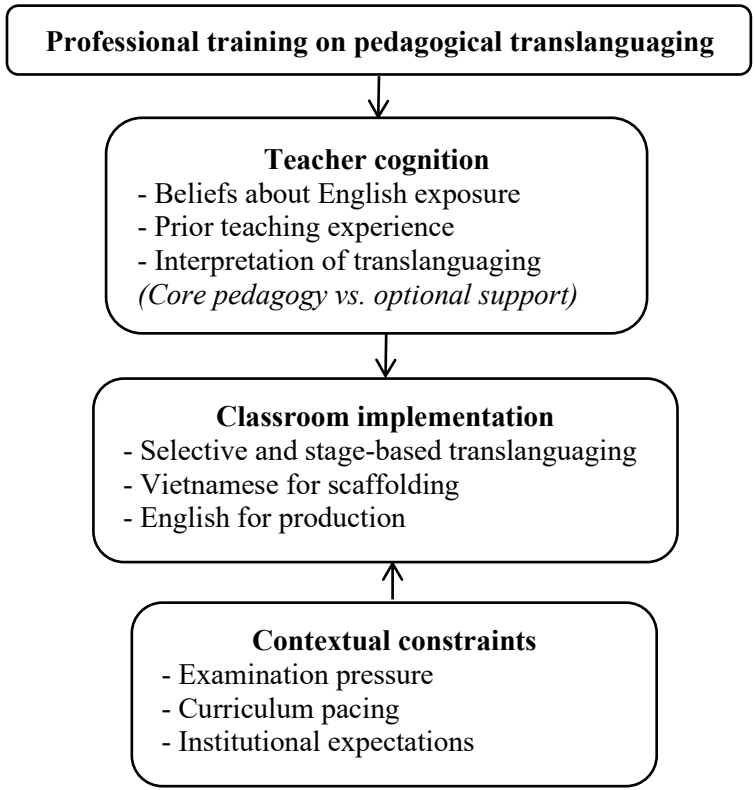
content, treating translanguaging as an occasional support strategy, which echoes previous studies showing that training can influence teachers' awareness and identity (Wong, 2024; Yüzlü and Dikilitaş, 2022), but does not automatically result in consistent classroom implementation, particularly when present routines and expectations remain strong. This finding indicates that only professional development is insufficient to transform classroom practice unless newly introduced pedagogical knowledge becomes compatible with teachers' existing instructional identities and the accountability structures surrounding secondary English education.

To illustrate this dynamic, it is depicted how teachers' post-training practices emerge via the interplay of professional learning, cognition, and contextual pressures (Figure 1). Instead of a linear path from training to practice, the model highlights a mediated process where teachers reinterpret training through beliefs and experiences, while classroom implementation adapts to institutional and assessment demands.

The interpretion should not be applied as a linear sequence in which professional training directly produces classroom translanguaging practices (Figure 1). Alternatively, by training, a mediated relationship shapes teachers' pedagogical awareness, reconstructed through prior beliefs, examination priorities, classroom conditions, and institutional expectations. Although professional development widened teachers' understanding of purposeful bilingual pedagogy, implementation remained conditional and context-sensitive. It is represented an ongoing negotiation between professional learning, teacher cognition, and organizational constraints in Vietnamese secondary EFL education.

Figure 1. Mediated relationship between professional training, teacher cognition, contextual influences, and translanguaging implementation in Vietnamese secondary EFL classrooms

The findings also indicate that translanguaging is implemented in highly patterned and pedagogically intentional manners. Teachers tend to use



Vietnamese in short and targeted moments, such as idea generation, grammar explanation, and task clarification, while preserving English dominance in practice and production stages. This functional distribution aligns with prior classroom-based research, where translanguaging facilitates comprehension, scaffolding, and classroom management (Pawapootanon et al., 2025; Sapitri et al., 2018; Saqinah et al., 2025). Rather than reshaping the overall lesson design, translanguaging operated as a targeted compensatory move within established English-medium routines. This suggests that teachers aimed to balance communicative support with institutional demands for visible English immersion, resulting in a hybrid model, not a fully multilingual pedagogy.

Furthermore, the study underscores how contextual pressures mediated teachers' practices. Examination pressure, curriculum pacing, and institutional expectations consistently limit the extent to which translanguaging can be expanded. Teachers prioritize English output because assessment systems require monolingual performance, triggering a careful balancing act between pedagogical effectiveness and accountability demands. This finding is consistent with research in Vietnam and similar contexts, where translanguaging is often restricted by exam-oriented systems and English-only ideologies (Nguyen and Tran, 2025; Vu et al., 2025). From a teacher cognition lens, classroom practices are not simply a reflection of beliefs or training, but are negotiated within socio-institutional conditions (Borg, 2015).

Additionally, the teachers agreed on pedagogical benefits when translanguaging was used strategically. These advantages include improved comprehension, increased participation, and stronger idea generation, particularly among lower-proficiency students. Such findings support earlier research highlighting the cognitive and affective merits of translanguaging in EFL classrooms (Barahona, 2020; Guo and Feng, 2025; Pham and Nguyen, 2024). Notably, the present study shows that even limited and selective use of Vietnamese can make a meaningful difference in fostering learning, suggesting that translanguaging does not need to be extensive to be effective. However, concerns about overuse, learner dependency, and time constraints indicate that teachers remain cautious, reinforcing the idea that translanguaging is perceived as a regulated resource rather than a fully legitimized pedagogy.

All in all, the findings extend existing translanguaging research by demonstrating that post-training classroom implementation is not a linear outcome of professional development, but a mediated process formed by teacher cognition, institutional ideology, and examination culture. The study therefore reframes translanguaging in secondary EFL education as a negotiated and context-sensitive practice. It also offers empirical evidence from Vietnam, where research has been limited. Practically, the findings suggest that translanguaging should be integrated more explicitly into secondary English teacher education and in-service professional development programs. Rather than presenting translanguaging only as a theoretical orientation, training programs should provide teachers with lesson models compatible with exams, classroom-based demonstrations, guided reflection on language allocation, and opportunities to adapt bilingual strategies to different proficiency levels. The findings also suggest that teacher training programs in Vietnam need to address the tension

between communicative pedagogy and examination requirements more directly so that teachers can apply translanguaging strategically without perceiving it as conflicting with institutional expectations. In addition, curriculum planners and school administrators may consider acknowledging flexible bilingual scaffolding as a legitimate instructional support practice in secondary EFL classrooms.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated how Grade 9 English teachers in some secondary school in Southeast Vietnam made sense of pedagogical translanguaging after professional training and how that understanding was reflected in reported classroom practice. The findings suggest that training helped teachers use Vietnamese more strategically, but still maintain English dominance during key instructional stages. However, this shift did not lead to an entire pedagogical change. Translanguaging was typically confined to short moments of scaffolding, idea generation, grammar explanation, and task clarification, and English continued to dominate production stages because teachers remained strongly guided by examination demands, curriculum pacing, and institutional expectations. These patterns demonstrate that professional learning does not determine classroom practice; what teachers adopt is filtered through established beliefs and local teaching conditions, which supports the relevance of Borg's (2015) teacher cognition perspective. The study also suggests that even limited translanguaging can improve comprehension and participation when used purposefully, which has implications for teacher education in exam-oriented EFL settings. More specifically, the findings emphasize the necessity for teacher-training programs that equip secondary English teachers to use translanguaging selectively and strategically, in ways that remain aligned with curriculum and assessment requirements. The study may also inform future curriculum planning by encouraging flexible approaches to classroom language use in Vietnamese secondary English programs.

This study has several limitations. Beginning with involving only ten Grade 9 English teachers from Vietnamese secondary schools was the restriction of the transferability of the findings to other levels or institutional contexts. Additionally, the analysis relied primarily on self-reported interview data rather than classroom observation, which contrasted the interviews offering rich insights into teachers' cognition and reporting practices, actual enactment may have varied across teaching situations. Furthermore, the study focused on post-training teacher perspectives but did not examine students' responses or learning outcomes related to translanguaging). Finally, due to the situation of the research in an exam oriented secondary system, the findings may reflect contextual pressures not present in less assessment-driven EFL environments.

Future research could integrate interviews with classroom observations, teaching artifacts, or student perspectives to provide a more comprehensive account of translanguaging implementation in Vietnamese EFL education.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest is declared by this study's authors.

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Appendix
Semi-structured interview protocol

I. Professional training and emerging understanding:

1. Can you describe what you learned from the translanguaging sessions during the professional training?
2. After the training, how do you now understand pedagogical translanguaging in English teaching?
3. Which ideas from the training did you find most relevant to your Grade 9 teaching?

II. Teacher cognition and prior professional experience:

4. Before the training, how did you usually manage Vietnamese and English in your classroom?
5. Did the training change any previous beliefs or routines about language use? How?

III. Reported classroom implementation:

6. How do you currently use Vietnamese and English during instruction in Grade 9 classes?
7. In which lesson stages do you intentionally alternate languages?

IV. Lesson-based illustration:

8. Can you describe one recent Grade 9 lesson where you applied translanguaging?
9. Why did you choose those moments to use Vietnamese or English?

V. Contextual influences and constraints:

10. What factors influence your decision to apply translanguaging?
11. How do curriculum demands, examinations, or school expectations affect your choices?

VI. Challenges and perceived outcomes:

12. What difficulties do you encounter when applying translanguaging?
13. How do students usually respond?
14. In your view, what learning benefits or limitations does this practice create?

Closing prompts:

15. Is there anything else about your post-training experience that you consider important?
16. What suggestions would you make for future teacher training on pedagogical translanguaging?