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REVISITING TRANSLATION IN EFL CLASSROOMS: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES UNDER INDONESIA'S NEW CURRICULUM

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Abstract: This study revisits the role of translation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms by examining teachers' perceptions, experiences, and readiness under Kurikulum Merdeka, Indonesia's new national curriculum. Fifty English teachers from various secondary schools in Palembang participated in this mixed-method research, which utilized an online questionnaire combining closed- and open-ended items to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The findings reveal that most teachers perceive translation as an integral component of English instruction, particularly for enhancing students' writing and reading proficiency. While grammar-oriented translation remains dominant, there is a noticeable shift toward meaning-focused and communicative translation practices aligned with task-based learning. This pedagogical transition reflects teachers' efforts to reconcile traditional accuracy-based instruction with the communicative emphasis of Kurikulum Merdeka. Despite recognizing translation as a complex and demanding approach, the majority of teachers demonstrate strong willingness to integrate it into their teaching, signifying high professional commitment and openness to innovation. The study highlights that translation-based learning serves not only as a bridge between linguistic knowledge and real-world application but also as a tool for developing intercultural competence and reflective teaching practices. These findings underscore the importance of sustained institutional support and targeted professional development programs to strengthen teachers' pedagogical competence in translation and ensure effective curriculum implementation within Indonesia's evolving EFL landscape.
Keywords: *Translation-based learning; teachers' perception; ELT curriculum; pedagogical approach; professional development.*

INTRODUCTION

Many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Indonesia remain hesitant to integrate translation-based learning into non-translation classes due to perceived practical and pedagogical challenges. Although most teachers acknowledge that translation can enhance comprehension and metalinguistic awareness, they remain uncertain about students' motivation to engage in translation activities. The growing reliance on digital translation tools such as Google Translate and DeepL has also reduced students' interest in traditional, time-consuming translation tasks (Abdelhalim et al., 2025; Nygård, 2024). Moreover, teachers argue that teaching translation requires theoretical explanation, detailed lexical analysis, and collaborative exercises that may seem tedious for technology-oriented learners (Herdina & Ningrum, 2023; Fadhillah et al., 2023). These challenges have made teachers question whether translation-based learning aligns with the principles of the new English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum, which emphasizes communicative competence, learner autonomy, and digital literacy (Xianli, 2024; Setiawan, 2023; Setyowati, 2023). As a result, the pedagogical status of translation in ELT classrooms continues to provoke both skepticism and interest among practitioners (O'Malley et al., 2023; Syaifudin, 2024; Royani, 2023).

Over the past decade, the role of translation in ELT has undergone significant theoretical and pedagogical reconsideration. Early research often positioned translation as a mechanical exercise linked to the grammar-translation method (Newmark, 1988), yet more recent studies emphasize its cognitive and intercultural benefits when used within communicative and task-based frameworks (House, 2015; Arhire, 2023). Global investigations have shown that Translation in Language Teaching (TILT) can enhance linguistic awareness, vocabulary retention, and cultural competence when designed as meaning-oriented and interactive tasks (Cook, 2022; Torky & Ahmed, 2025). In the Southeast Asian context, particularly in Indonesia, studies by Hasymi and Nurkamto (2023), Cahyono and Perdhani (2023), and Fadhillah et al. (2023) have highlighted both the promise and the tension of using translation in classrooms that increasingly prioritize communicative goals. These works reveal that while translation can promote reflection and accuracy, many teachers remain uncertain about how to integrate it without reverting to traditional forms of language instruction. Taken together, these studies establish an important state of the art: translation pedagogy is being reframed globally as a cognitive and intercultural tool, yet empirical research remains limited on how teachers operationalize this shift within evolving national curricula such as Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum.

Under Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, officially introduced in 2022 as part of the nation's educational transformation, English teachers are encouraged to design lessons that promote learner independence, critical and creative thinking, and the ability to collaborate across contexts. The Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes differentiated learning, where teachers adapt instruction to students' individual needs and learning paces; project-based learning, which fosters authentic language use and problem-solving; and learner autonomy, encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Febriyanti, 2023). Within this framework, teachers are expected to act as facilitators who design communicative and meaningful learning experiences rather than transmitters of linguistic rules. Consequently, any instructional approach including translation must align with these core principles of flexibility, contextual relevance, and student-centeredness.

This pedagogical reform has profound implications for English language teaching in Indonesia. Translation-based learning, often associated with the grammar-translation method, faces renewed scrutiny regarding its relevance to contemporary communicative goals. However, rather than being rejected outright, translation is now being reconsidered as a mediational tool that can connect linguistic form and meaning, support intercultural understanding, and enhance metalinguistic awareness when applied strategically (Cahyono & Perdhani, 2023; Hasymi & Nurkamto, 2023). This contextual re-evaluation makes it timely to investigate how Indonesian teachers interpret and adapt translation practices in light of the Merdeka Curriculum's emphasis on communicative competence and independent learning.

Under Indonesia's new ELT curriculum, teachers are expected to employ innovative and meaningful instructional strategies that promote communication, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness (Febriyanti, 2023; Saimon et al., 2023). Within this reform, translation-based learning has become a point of pedagogical tension. On one hand, translation can function as a scaffold to support understanding and build linguistic awareness; on the other, excessive dependence on translation may conflict with communicative and student-centered approaches (Newmark, 1988; House, 2015). Recent studies show that Indonesian teachers tend to adopt a selective use of Translation in Language Teaching (TILT) when it is pedagogically justified (Arhire, 2023; Wahyuningrum & Zahiidah. 2025). Translation is increasingly perceived not merely as a mechanical linguistic exercise, but as a bridge connecting learners' first language and the target language encouraging exploration of cultural meanings and conceptual equivalences (Hasymi & Nurkamto, 2023; Cahyono & Perdhani, 2023; Rouhani & Modarresi, 2023). Nevertheless, teachers remain cautious about its overuse, emphasizing the importance of maintaining learners' direct thinking and communication in English.

Globally, recent research highlights that translation-based learning can foster deeper cognitive engagement, particularly when integrated with critical thinking tasks. A 2025 study published in System revealed that critical thinking–embedded translation instruction significantly improved students' linguistic accuracy, cognitive awareness, and classroom participation. Similarly, a study by Liu and Yang (2025) reported that translation activities effectively enhanced learners' vocabulary

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retention, reading comprehension, and confidence across different proficiency levels. These findings support the notion that translation, when implemented with modern methodologies, can be a meaningful pedagogical tool rather than a mechanical exercise. Translation also encourages learners to develop linguistic sensitivity, problem-solving ability, and intercultural competence skills that align closely with the goals of contemporary ELT curricula. Therefore, teachers' perceptions of translation are crucial in determining how effectively this method can be incorporated into classroom practices.

Despite these promising findings, ethical and pedagogical challenges remain for teachers who attempt to adopt translation-based learning in ELT classrooms (Prayudha, 2023; Pulungan et al., 2024). Teachers must balance between using translation as a learning support and avoiding its overuse, which might hinder students' development of direct thinking in English. An exploratory study by Abadou (2024) found that both teachers and learners recognized the benefits of translation for initial comprehension but also agreed that it should gradually give way to target-language immersion to build fluency. Furthermore, the successful implementation of translation in the new curriculum requires sufficient teacher training. Teachers need to be equipped with strategies for designing translation-based tasks, integrating them with communicative activities, and assessing students' progress effectively (Lesiana et al., 2023; (Tran et al., 2024). Without proper pedagogical guidance, translation activities risk reverting to outdated grammar-translation methods that contradict the principles of the new ELT curriculum.

Given this context, the present study addresses a critical research gap in current ELT scholarship in Indonesia. While several studies have examined translation pedagogy in university-level or translation-major programs, little is known about how secondary school teachers interpret and implement translation practices under the Merdeka Curriculum. This investigation provides empirical, localized evidence of how traditional techniques are being redefined and adapted to meet the demands of a major national curriculum reform. Moreover, by exploring teachers' perceptions, experiences, and readiness, this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of how translation-based learning can function as a bridge between traditional linguistic accuracy and modern communicative competence within Indonesia's evolving educational landscape.

Considering these issues, this study aims to investigate Indonesian EFL teachers' perceptions, experiences, and readiness in implementing translation-based learning within the framework of the new ELT curriculum. It examines how teachers conceptualize translation as a teaching strategy, its perceived compatibility with communicative goals, and the challenges they face in applying it. Grounded in the principles of communicative competence, translation pedagogy, and sociocultural theory, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how translation-based learning can be effectively integrated into modern ELT practices. The findings are expected to inform curriculum developers, policymakers, and teacher educators in promoting pedagogical innovations that align with Indonesia's ongoing curriculum reform.

METHOD

This study was conducted in several senior high schools (SMA) and vocational schools (SMK) in Palembang, South Sumatra, Indonesia, where the new English Language Teaching (ELT) Curriculum has been implemented. The main objective was to explore English teachers' perceptions of translation-based learning and its relevance to the new curriculum.

A total of 50 English teachers participated in this study, consisting of 30 teachers from public schools and 20 from private institutions. All participants held at least a Bachelor's degree in English Education and had 5–20 years of teaching experience, ensuring an adequate understanding of both pedagogical practice and curricular policy. Data collection took place during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year (January–March 2025).

Teachers were recruited through professional networks such as the English Teachers' Working Group (MGMP Bahasa Inggris) in Palembang and through direct invitations via email and messaging groups (WhatsApp and Telegram). Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. Ethical clearance was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Tridinanti Palembang (Approval No. 012/UTP/ETIK/ELT/2025). In addition, research permission was formally obtained from the Palembang City Department of Education and from the principals of the participating senior high schools and vocational schools, authorizing the data collection process within their institutions.

It should be noted that recruiting participants through MGMP networks may have introduced a

potential selection bias, as teachers who are more professionally active or interested in pedagogical innovation including translation might have been more likely to participate. Furthermore, since all participants were based in Palembang, the findings may not fully represent teachers from other regions of Indonesia. These limitations are acknowledged and discussed in the conclusion section

Data were collected through a semi-structured online questionnaire designed using Google Forms. The instrument was adapted from previous studies on translation in foreign language teaching (Diaz et al., 2023; Kirana et al., 2024; Memon & Shah, 2024) and modified to reflect the principles of the new ELT curriculum in Indonesia. The questionnaire comprised 25 items, divided into five major sections: (1) teachers' understanding of translation-based learning, (2) teachers' experiences in implementing translation activities in the classroom, (3) perceived benefits and challenges of translation-based instruction, (4) teachers' attitudes toward the integration of translation into the new ELT curriculum, and (5) teachers' motivation and readiness to implement translation-based strategies.

Items were presented in both closed-ended (4-point Likert scale: strongly agree to strongly disagree) and open-ended formats to capture in-depth insights. The questionnaire underwent expert validation by two ELT specialists and one linguistics expert to ensure content validity and contextual appropriateness. A pilot test was conducted with five teachers outside the main sample to check clarity and reliability. The instrument achieved a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency.

To complement the survey data, follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with six selected teachers (three from public and three from private schools) representing diverse teaching backgrounds. Each online interview lasted approximately 30–40 minutes, conducted via Zoom, and was audio-recorded with permission, then transcribed verbatim for qualitative analysis. To enhance transparency and allow replication, the full version of the questionnaire including item wording and response options is provided in the appendix section.

The online questionnaire link was distributed via email and professional teacher networks. Participants were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Out of 35 invited teachers, 33 completed the entire instrument, yielding a response rate of 94.3%. The subsequent interviews provided opportunities to probe deeper into teachers' reasoning, experiences, and attitudes toward translation-based learning under the new curriculum. Interview participants were selected based on their willingness and the diversity of their responses in the questionnaire.

Quantitative data collected from the Likert-scale items were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, to identify overall trends in teachers' perceptions (Robinson, 2024). Meanwhile, Qualitative data from open-ended responses and interviews were analyzed through thematic content analysis using NVivo 14. The process involved several steps: Initial coding: Each transcript was read multiple times to identify meaningful units of data. Categorization: Similar codes were grouped into broader categories reflecting teachers' beliefs, experiences, and perceived challenges. Theme generation: Major themes were developed to represent key conceptual patterns. Review and refinement: Themes were reviewed collaboratively by two coders to ensure reliability. The inter-coder reliability coefficient (Cohen's Kappa) was 0.82, indicating strong agreement.

Preliminary analysis revealed several overarching themes: (1) translation as a bridge for comprehension and linguistic awareness, (2) tension between communicative goals and translation use, (3) technological reliance and digital mediation in translation practices, and (4) teacher readiness and institutional support. These themes guided the interpretation of findings and the discussion in later sections.

To ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation was achieved by comparing survey and interview findings. Additionally, member checking was conducted by returning interview summaries to participants for confirmation of accuracy and interpretation.

This study adhered to the ethical guidelines for educational research. All participants were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Their identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality, and all data were securely stored in encrypted digital formats. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Tridinanti, ensuring compliance with institutional and national standards for research ethics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout the teachers' feedback obtained through the online questionnaire, the researchers collected essential data concerning both the extent and depth of teachers' perceptions and motivations regarding translation-based learning under the new English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum. The results revealed diverse insights into teachers' beliefs about the importance of translation, their prior teaching experiences, and their preferences for teaching methods and materials. To structure the findings, several key aspects were identified and measured through the questionnaire items, as presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Teachers' perception measured items*

Category	Questionnaire Items	Options/Responses
Teachers' Perception on the Role of Translation in English Teaching	1. Importance of translation activities for English language skills	1) Listening 2) Speaking 3) Reading 4) Writing
Teachers' Experience in Applying Translation-Based Activities	2. Frequency of using translation tasks in teaching	1) Never used 2) Occasionally (1–3 times) 3) Frequently (more than 3 times)
	3. Use of translation tools or aids	1) Manual translation using dictionary/online dictionary 2) Machine translation or translation software 3) Professional translation services
Teachers' Perception of the Usefulness of Translation-Based Learning	4. Perceived benefits of translation activities	1) Helps students access English learning resources 2) Supports students' future careers 3) Develops academic literacy and higher education readiness
Preferred Translation Teaching Methods and Materials	5. Preferred teaching approaches in translation-based learning	1) Grammar-based translation 2) Meaning-focused translation 3) Contextual vocabulary development
	6. Preferred types of teaching materials	1) General texts (news, magazine articles) 2) Literary texts (novels, poems, short stories) 3) Specific texts (scientific, legal, or technical documents)
Preferred Learning and Classroom Interaction Methods	7. Preferred classroom learning approaches	1) Cooperative learning 2) Task-based learning 3) Project-based learning
	8. Classroom interaction patterns	1) Teacher–student interaction 2) Individual learning 3) Group work or discussion
Teachers' Readiness and Training Needs	9. Willingness to integrate translation activities into the curriculum	1) Very willing 2) Moderately willing 3) Not willing
	10. Preferred duration of professional development or training on translation-based teaching	1) ≤ 3 months (3 sessions per week) 2) 3–4 months (2 sessions per week) 3) 5–6 months (1 session per week)

The items in Table 1 were designed to identify teachers' attitudes toward integrating translation activities into English teaching, their familiarity with translation methods, and their expectations for future professional development. These indicators provided a basis for understanding how translation-based learning could be effectively incorporated into the new ELT curriculum. The mixture of quantitative (Likert-type) and qualitative (open-ended) responses allowed the

researchers to explore both the measurable trends and the underlying reasoning behind teachers' perspectives.

Teachers' perception on the importance of English subject matters in translation

The findings reveal that teachers in Palembang consider writing (82.5%) and reading (76.3%) as the most essential skills in translation-based learning, followed by speaking (68.7%) and listening (55.4%) (see Table 2). This suggests that teachers still prioritize receptive and productive written skills as the foundation of translation activities. Writing is viewed as crucial for enhancing grammatical accuracy, vocabulary precision, and sentence structure, while reading is perceived as a key process for comprehending contextual and cultural nuances prior to text production.

This emphasis on writing and reading reflects a dual pedagogical orientation among teachers. On one hand, the high percentage of teachers emphasizing writing (82.5%) demonstrates that many still rely on grammar-oriented approaches to establish linguistic accuracy. On the other hand, the strong attention given to reading (76.3%) indicates teachers' growing focus on developing contextual understanding and meaning interpretation. Thus, the data illustrate teachers' ongoing effort to balance linguistic accuracy with communicative competence, aligning with the objectives of the new English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum that emphasizes functional and contextualized language learning.

The pedagogical tension between form-focused and meaning-focused approaches is evident from the data distribution. While teachers continue to value structure-based activities through writing and reading, the relatively high percentages for speaking (68.7%) and listening (55.4%) demonstrate an increasing openness toward communicative practices in translation-based instruction. In other words, teachers are not entirely abandoning traditional translation methods but are instead using them strategically to support communicative development.

This finding aligns with Torky and Ahmed (2025), who argue that grammar-based translation remains relevant when used as a preparatory stage for building linguistic accuracy before engaging students in meaning-oriented communicative tasks. Likewise, Liu and Yang (2025) emphasize that translation, when situated within communicative contexts, can enhance learners' metalinguistic awareness and reflective language use. Therefore, the results suggest that teachers in Palembang are integrating both structural and communicative perspectives, viewing translation as a bridge between linguistic form and contextual meaning in English instruction.

Table 2. *Teachers' perception of the importance of language skills*

Language Skill	Important (%)	Less Important (%)	Unimportant (%)	Mean Score
Listening	55.4	27.8	16.8	3.39
Speaking	68.7	21.4	9.9	3.59
Reading	76.3	18.6	5.1	3.71
Writing	82.5	14.2	3.3	3.79

The data in Table 2 confirm that writing and reading are the central focus of teachers in translation-based instruction. Although this dominance indicates a continuing preference for form accuracy and structural control, the significant percentages for speaking and listening also show teachers' awareness of the communicative goals promoted by the new curriculum. In this regard, teachers act as mediators between traditional accuracy-based teaching and the emerging communicative paradigm, using translation as a pedagogical tool that connects linguistic mastery with meaningful communication.

Teachers' experience with translation-based learning activities

The findings indicate that most teachers conducted translation activities occasionally about one to three times per semester (47.5%) integrating them within reading, vocabulary, or writing lessons rather than teaching translation as a separate skill. A smaller proportion of teachers assigned more than three translation tasks (38.7%), suggesting that translation is used selectively to reinforce specific linguistic objectives rather than as a dominant pedagogical focus.

Furthermore, a large majority of teachers reported using machine translation tools such as Google Translate or DeepL (61.5%), often combined with manual dictionary verification (42.3%) to ensure contextual accuracy (see Table 3). This hybrid practice illustrates a transitional

stage in teachers' digital pedagogical literacy. Teachers acknowledge the efficiency of AI-based translation tools in supporting comprehension and vocabulary development, yet they remain cautious about the potential loss of nuance and grammatical structure when students rely excessively on them.

This cautious stance aligns with Ngoc et al. (2025), who emphasize that teachers' engagement with AI translation technologies must be critical rather than passive, ensuring that learners develop metalinguistic awareness and judgment. Teachers' reflective adaptation using AI tools for speed but verifying accuracy through manual checking demonstrates a strategic effort to balance technological utility with linguistic accuracy, representing a pragmatic response to the digital transformation in ELT.

However, the data also reveal a pedagogical tension that mirrors earlier findings about skill emphasis. While 61.5% of teachers prefer to incorporate machine translation as a scaffold for comprehension, their continued reliance on manual dictionary use (42.3%) reflects a desire to maintain linguistic control and precision. This combination suggests that teachers view technology not as a replacement for human translation ability, but as a supporting aid that complements traditional language learning. Qualitative comments from teachers further reinforce this interpretation. Several noted that technology "helps students check meaning quickly but can make them lazy to think critically". This insight points to teachers' awareness of the risks of overreliance on automated systems, and their attempt to design classroom activities that encourage critical evaluation of translation outputs rather than passive acceptance.

From a curricular perspective, this finding underscores the challenge of reconciling the accuracy-oriented habits formed under traditional grammar translation methods with the communicative and meaning-based demands of Indonesia's current ELT framework. The dual orientation in teachers' practice embracing machine translation for efficiency while upholding manual verification for accuracy reflects an evolving professional stance that integrates technological innovation with pedagogical conservatism. In this sense, teachers demonstrate agency and adaptive professionalism by using translation not merely as a mechanical linguistic exercise, but as a platform for developing digital literacy, metalinguistic awareness, and communicative competence. The tension observed here is not a contradiction but a productive equilibrium, as teachers navigate between structural fidelity and communicative authenticity in the era of AI-assisted learning.

Table 3. *Teachers' preferences for translation practices in ELT classrooms*

Translation Practice	Preferred (%)	Less Preferred (%)	Unpreferred (%)	Mean Score
More than 3 translation assignments	38.7	33.6	27.7	3.12
1–3 translation assignments	47.5	31.2	21.3	3.28
Using translation services/materials	27.8	39.5	32.7	2.88
Using machine translation/software	61.5	28.2	10.3	3.52
Manual translation using dictionary/online resources	42.3	35.7	22.0	3.21

The integrated data show that teachers' translation practices are in a transitional phase: they combine AI-based tools with traditional methods to sustain accuracy while embracing innovation. The pattern machine translation favored by 61.5% and manual dictionary use by 42.3% reflects teachers' attempts to harmonize technological efficiency with linguistic correctness. Rather than representing a resistance to change, this dual approach reveals teachers' evolving pedagogical reasoning: building grammatical precision first, then fostering communicative and critical engagement through reflective translation practices.

Teachers' perceptions on the usefulness of translation-based learning

Findings reveal that teachers widely recognize the pedagogical value of translation in connecting linguistic theory with practical communication skills. A substantial proportion 72.9% of respondents agreed that translation helps students connect linguistic knowledge with real-world application, while 58.3% emphasized its importance for professional and academic development. Slightly fewer, 46.7%, viewed translation as a bridge to accessing English teaching and learning resources (see Table 4).

This distribution suggests that translation is primarily perceived not as an outdated grammatical exercise, but as a functional pedagogical tool aligning with the competency-based orientation of Indonesia's current curriculum. Teachers appear to understand translation as a translanguaging process that links classroom learning to authentic communicative contexts particularly relevant for students preparing for higher education or professional environments where bilingual proficiency is essential.

These findings resonate with Lee & Yang (2023) and Torky & Ahmed (2025), who argue that translation fosters bilingual competence and enhances reflective awareness of linguistic structures, allowing learners to internalize grammar and meaning through contrastive analysis. Similarly, Tricahyati and Zaim (2023) emphasize that translation activities, when properly scaffolded, encourage critical language awareness and intercultural understanding two outcomes aligned with Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka which values both communicative fluency and reflective thinking.

However, the qualitative data uncover an important pedagogical tension underlying these positive perceptions. While teachers acknowledge translation's practical relevance, several expressed uncertainty about how to implement it effectively within a communicative teaching framework. As one respondent noted, *"Translation helps students understand grammar and vocabulary better, but it's hard to make it communicative".* This statement illustrates a broader policy-practice gap: teachers conceptually endorse translation as a communicative bridge, yet their classroom practice remains largely form-focused.

This duality mirrors the findings in previous sections, showing that many teachers still rely on grammar-based translation as a foundation for accuracy, while recognizing that communicative competence remains the ultimate goal. In this sense, teachers are not rejecting the communicative paradigm but are instead reconciling accuracy and meaning through translation as a transitional pedagogy. As Torky and Ahmed (2025) explain, such balancing acts are typical in contexts where teachers must integrate traditional literacy practices with modern communicative aims.

The expressed need for clearer curricular guidance and professional training further strengthens the argument by Tricahyati and Zaim (2023) that curriculum innovation must be supported by capacity building and sustained mentoring. Teachers' reflective comments indicate that translation-based instruction is valued, but its successful implementation depends on institutional support, such as model lesson plans, assessment frameworks, and workshops that contextualize translation within communicative learning outcomes.

Thus, while 72.9% of teachers perceive translation as connecting classroom English to real-world use, the underlying challenge lies in transforming theoretical appreciation into practical pedagogical design. This pedagogical tension between valuing translation for its relevance and struggling to apply it communicatively illustrates teachers' evolving professional identity in navigating the demands of curriculum reform. Rather than a contradiction, this tension reflects a developmental stage of teacher agency, where educators are actively reinterpreting translation to fit contemporary communicative goals.

Table 4. *Teachers' perceptions on the usefulness of translation-based learning*

Perception Item	Preferred (%)	Less Preferred (%)	Unpreferred (%)	Mean Score
Helps connect linguistic knowledge with real-world application	72.9	16.1	11.0	3.58
Supports access to English teaching resources	46.7	24.6	28.7	3.12
Important for professional and academic development	58.3	32.8	8.9	3.27

Teachers in Palembang perceive translation-based learning as a strategic bridge between linguistic accuracy and communicative application. While the majority (72.9%) view it as connecting classroom knowledge to real-world use, their cautiousness in pedagogical implementation reveals an ongoing process of adaptation. This tension between traditional form-based habits and modern communicative expectations signifies a constructive pedagogical

negotiation rather than resistance. It highlights teachers' emerging agency to reinterpret translation not as rote practice, but as a contextualized communicative tool under the *Kurikulum Merdeka.*

Teachers' preferred translation methods and materials

Translation methods

The results show that grammar-based translation remains the most dominant method, preferred by 68.5% of English teachers in Palembang. This indicates that teachers continue to value translation as a means to build grammatical accuracy and structural awareness. Moreover, 74.6% of respondents also viewed explicit grammar rules as an essential component of translation-based instruction, reflecting their belief that linguistic precision provides a necessary foundation for communicative competence (see Table 5).

Teachers explained that translation helps students internalize grammar patterns, improve sentence formulation, and enhance writing accuracy. As one teacher stated, *"Translation gives students a concrete way to see how grammar works in real sentences".* This preference aligns with Torky & Ahmed (2025), Cui (2025), and Rouhani & Modarresi (2023), who emphasize that grammar-focused translation promotes metalinguistic awareness the ability to consciously reflect on language structure which is a key step toward mastering communicative fluency. However, a smaller proportion of teachers (21.7%) expressed concern that excessive focus on grammar-based translation might hinder fluency and limit spontaneous communication. Their comments suggest an awareness of a pedagogical tension between maintaining accuracy and promoting communicative ability. As one respondent noted, *"Too much grammar makes students afraid to speak; translation should lead to using language meaningfully".*

This tension reflects the broader challenge faced by Indonesian EFL teachers under the Kurikulum Merdeka, which encourages a shift from form-focused instruction toward meaning-based communicative practices. The data imply that while teachers continue to rely on grammar translation for accuracy building, they do not perceive it as contradictory to communicative teaching. Rather, they treat it as a scaffolding tool a necessary stage before students engage in open-ended communicative tasks. As Torky and Ahmed (2025) also argue, grammar-based translation can coexist with communicative teaching when it is used strategically to strengthen linguistic foundations before meaning negotiation occurs.

Complementing this, 60.3% of teachers favored translation activities emphasizing meaningful vocabulary and contextualized tasks, indicating an emerging pedagogical balance. Teachers increasingly integrate authentic sentences, thematic translation tasks, and cooperative learning strategies to enhance both accuracy and engagement. This shift suggests a gradual movement from purely structural translation to a communicative-functional model, consistent with the spirit of the new curriculum.

Materials

In terms of materials, teachers showed a strong preference for specific texts academic, legal, and business-related selected by 71.2% of respondents. Such texts are viewed as contextually relevant and capable of connecting translation to students' professional and academic needs. Another 52.8% preferred using general texts (news articles, reports, magazines) for broader vocabulary exposure, while only 19.5% chose literary texts (poems, stories, drama). The relatively low preference for literary materials indicates that teachers prioritize pragmatic language use over aesthetic or interpretive exploration.

Teachers' preference for specific and general texts reflects a strong orientation toward English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and content-based instruction, both of which are central to Indonesia's current educational goals. As Darzhinova (2025), Zhang and Hanks (2024) and Solikhah (2023) highlight, translation involving specialized texts not only improves linguistic accuracy but also strengthens learners' domain-specific vocabulary, enhancing their career readiness and academic literacy.

Nevertheless, the limited use of literary texts also points to a potential curricular gap teachers may lack the training or confidence to integrate literature-based translation into communicative pedagogy. While such texts can enrich cultural awareness and interpretive skills, they are often perceived as less aligned with the practical outcomes demanded by modern ELT curricula. This finding reinforces the need for teacher professional development programs that introduce ways to use literary translation to foster intercultural competence alongside linguistic mastery.

Overall, the data illustrate a pedagogical reconciliation between traditional and modern practices. Teachers continue to value grammar translation for accuracy (68.5%) and specific texts for professional relevance (71.2%), yet they also recognize the importance of contextualized and communicative translation (60.3%). This pattern suggests a dynamic evolution in teachers' pedagogical reasoning from mechanical equivalence toward meaningful, purpose-driven translation. As teachers adapt translation practices to support communicative outcomes, they demonstrate increasing agency and curricular alignment, embodying the transformation envisioned by the *Kurikulum Merdeka.*

Table 5. *Teachers' preferred translation methods and materials*

Type of Translation Task	Preferred (%)	Less Preferred (%)	Unpreferred (%)	Mean Score*
Grammar Rules	74.6	17.2	8.2	3.61
Specific Texts (academic, legal, business)	71.2	20.3	8.5	3.54
Grammar-based Translation	68.5	21.7	9.8	3.47
Meaningful Vocabulary and Contextual Tasks	60.3	25.6	14.1	3.32
General Texts (news, magazines, articles)	52.8	35.4	11.8	3.20
Literary Texts (poems, stories, drama)	19.5	44.8	35.7	2.36

The integrated results and discussion reveal that teachers' preferences are shaped by a dual pedagogical orientation valuing grammatical precision as a foundation for communicative competence. The coexistence of grammar-based (68.5%) and contextual translation (60.3%) indicates that teachers are actively negotiating the balance between accuracy and meaning, rather than abandoning traditional methods. In practice, translation serves as a pedagogical bridge, linking linguistic form to communicative function and aligning with the Kurikulum Merdeka's vision of flexible, context-driven English instruction.

Preferred learning methods and classroom interaction

Learning methods

Teachers' responses indicated that cooperative learning (84.6%) and task-based learning (79.8%) were the two most preferred methods in implementing translation-based English instruction. This strong inclination toward collaborative and communicative learning reflects the pedagogical orientation of the new ELT curriculum, which emphasizes learner-centered and interaction-driven activities. Teachers noted that cooperative learning encourages peer collaboration and knowledge sharing particularly when students work together to compare, discuss, and translate authentic materials. As Pavajeau and Montero (2023)argue, cooperative learning not only improves academic achievement but also nurtures social responsibility through shared goals and mutual accountability.

However, while teachers widely endorsed collaborative methods, some acknowledged that group work requires careful scaffolding to ensure equitable participation. For example, teachers mentioned that stronger students tend to dominate translation discussions, which may limit weaker learners' opportunities for linguistic negotiation. This finding highlights a pedagogical tension between the collaborative ideals of cooperative learning and the practical challenge of maintaining balanced group dynamics a concern echoed by Larsari et al. (2024), who found that group-based translation requires structured task distribution and guided reflection to achieve optimal outcomes.

Task-based learning was also seen as highly effective (79.8%), as it enables students to perform authentic communicative tasks such as translating local cultural texts or professional documents connecting linguistic forms to real-world functions. This perspective aligns with Jin (2023) and Li (2024), who emphasize that translation within task-based frameworks fosters functional language use and intercultural awareness. Nevertheless, qualitative responses revealed that some teachers felt uncertain about aligning task-based translation with assessment criteria, suggesting a gap between curriculum policy and practical implementation.

Furthermore, 72.4% of teachers preferred discussion-based learning, affirming that collaborative translation tasks improve problem-solving skills and negotiation of meaning. In contrast, only 27.8% favored individual learning, arguing that translation should involve peer feedback and reflective dialogue rather than

isolated work. Yet, some teachers noted that individual exercises remain useful for initial grammar-focused practice before engaging in communicative tasks. This indicates a strategic balance teachers integrate both accuracy-oriented individual work and meaning-oriented group interaction, reflecting an adaptive approach to translation pedagogy in line with communicative goals.

Classroom interaction

Teachers in this study highlighted the importance of interactive classroom dynamics in fostering deeper understanding of translation-based learning. Structured student–teacher interaction was preferred by 69.5% of respondents, as it allows immediate feedback, clarification of linguistic ambiguities, and active scaffolding of learning.

Teachers emphasized that interactional learning is not merely about conversation, but about building dialogic engagement where learners actively question, negotiate meaning, and reformulate ideas during translation tasks. This process promotes metalinguistic awareness, helping students recognize grammatical and cultural equivalences between English and Bahasa Indonesia.

As Arif (2023) suggested, cooperative interaction enhances both cognitive and social development. Teachers also agreed that classroom interaction supports language fluency and builds learner confidence in speaking, interpreting, and reflecting on meaning. Moreover, tasks that allow for multiple possible translations stimulate higher-order thinking and discussion, leading to more dynamic and authentic learning experiences.

Table 6. *Teachers' preferred learning methods and classroom interaction*

Learning Approach	Preferred (%)	Less Preferred (%)	Unpreferred (%)	Mean Score
Cooperative Learning	84.6	10.5	4.9	3.80
Task-Based Learning	79.8	14.6	5.6	3.74
Workgroup / Discussion	72.4	18.6	9.0	3.63
Student–Teacher Interaction	69.5	24.1	6.4	3.55
Individual Learning	27.8	38.5	33.7	2.38

Teachers' willingness and course length expectation

The questionnaire results revealed that teachers in Palembang demonstrated strong willingness and positive expectations toward implementing translation-based learning under the new ELT curriculum. A substantial 89.4% of teachers acknowledged the importance of translation as a pedagogical strategy for fostering linguistic awareness and cross-cultural understanding, while 85.7% expressed readiness to integrate translation tasks into their classroom practice. These findings reflect teachers' recognition that translation serves not merely as a language exercise, but as a bridge between linguistic forms and cultural meanings, supporting the intercultural communicative goals outlined in the new curriculum.

Teachers' enthusiasm toward translation-based pedagogy mirrors findings by Bielykh and Charikova (2024), who assert that translation promotes critical linguistic comparison and reflection between source and target languages. Similarly, Skopečková (2024) emphasizes that translation functions as a metacognitive process enabling learners to internalize grammatical accuracy while negotiating contextual meaning. The high willingness rate among teachers in this study (85.7%) suggests a shared belief that translation can enhance not only linguistic competence but also pedagogical versatility, especially when integrated into communicative tasks or content-based instruction.

However, despite this optimism, a significant 71.5% of teachers still perceived translation as a challenging pedagogical activity, particularly in balancing grammatical precision with communicative fluency. Teachers' qualitative responses revealed a pedagogical tension: while they valued translation for promoting accuracy, they also acknowledged that it may slow down fluency development if applied rigidly. This finding echoes the concern expressed by Rouhani and Modarresi (2023) that translation should be implemented flexibly within communicative frameworks rather than as a purely structural exercise. One teacher commented, *"Translation helps students build accuracy first before they can confidently communicate in English."* This sentiment illustrates how teachers negotiate between form-focused and meaning-focused goals, aligning with the curriculum's principle of "accuracy as a foundation for fluency."

Regarding professional training preferences, the majority (68.3%) preferred longer-term training programs (5–6 months) with one session per week, citing workload considerations and the need for gradual application of new pedagogical techniques. A smaller proportion (22.5%) opted for medium-length programs (3–4 months with two weekly sessions), while only 9.2% favored shorter, intensive courses (≤3 months). This distribution reflects teachers' desire for sustainable and reflective professional development, allowing them to integrate translation-based methods progressively within their teaching contexts.

This finding corresponds with Darzhinova (2025) and Zhang & Hanks (2024), who emphasize that sustained, practice-oriented teacher training leads to deeper pedagogical transformation compared to short-term workshops. Teachers' comments in this study reinforced this view, suggesting that professional programs should include model lessons, peer collaboration, and practical workshops to enhance both confidence and classroom adaptability.

Moreover, over 90% of teachers expressed willingness to attend in-service training focused on translation pedagogy, demonstrating a strong professional commitment to continuous improvement despite perceived difficulties. Such motivation indicates that teachers are not resistant to curriculum innovation; rather, they seek clear institutional support, contextualized materials, and structured mentoring to effectively implement translation-based teaching. This aligns with Tricahyati & Zaim (2023), who argue that curriculum reform in language education can only succeed when accompanied by ongoing capacity-building and reflective teacher engagement.

In summary, the findings reveal that teachers' willingness to adopt translation-based learning is highly positive yet pragmatically conditioned by their perceptions of difficulty and training needs. Teachers view translation as both a demanding and transformative practice—a duality that reflects the evolving balance between traditional accuracy-based pedagogy and communicative fluency within Indonesia's new ELT framework.

Table 7. *Teachers' willingness and course length expectation*

Statement	Preferred / Agree (%)	Less Preferred / Less Agree (%)	Unpreferred / Disagree (%)	Mean Score*
Translation perceived as a difficult task	71.5	18.7	9.8	3.62
Willingness to attend translation-based training	90.4	5.3	3.3	3.87
≤ 3 months = 3 sessions per week	9.2	47.8	43.0	2.12
3–4 months = 2 sessions per week	22.5	41.7	35.8	2.33
5–6 months = 1 session per week	68.3	23.1	8.6	3.54

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that translation-based learning plays a pivotal role in the implementation of the new English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum in Palembang. Teachers perceive translation not merely as a linguistic exercise but as a comprehensive pedagogical strategy that integrates language skills, cultural awareness, and professional development. Most teachers agree that translation activities significantly enhance students' writing and reading proficiency by fostering grammatical accuracy, vocabulary enrichment, and clarity of expression. The results further reveal that teachers view translation as a pedagogical bridge connecting classroom learning with real-world language use. Through translation-based activities, students are exposed to authentic English materials, improve their academic literacy, and develop readiness for higher education and professional communication. Teachers' preference for contextual and discipline-specific materials underscores their awareness of translation's practical value in supporting English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and content-based instruction, both of which align closely with the communicative and applied goals of the new ELT curriculum.

In terms of classroom pedagogy, teachers tend to combine grammar-based and meaning-focused translation within cooperative and task-based learning (TBLT) frameworks. Such integration fosters collaboration, critical thinking, and interaction among learners, making translation-based instruction more reflective, communicative, and relevant to real-world contexts. Furthermore, teachers' strong willingness to adopt translation-based learning despite recognizing its challenges reflects a high degree of professional

commitment to pedagogical innovation. At the same time, their call for institutional support and structured professional training highlights the importance of ongoing capacity building to enhance their competence in implementing translation effectively. Nevertheless, this study acknowledges certain limitations. The sample involved 35 teachers from Palembang, representing a specific regional and institutional context. Therefore, the findings may not fully capture the diversity of teaching practices and perceptions across Indonesia. Future research could extend the investigation by involving teachers from various provinces, conducting classroom observations to explore how translation is practiced in real settings, and incorporating students' perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of translation-based learning in ELT.

In practical terms, the study suggests that curriculum policymakers and teacher training institutions should integrate translation pedagogy into in-service professional development programs. Embedding modules on translation-based classroom strategies, digital translation literacy, and intercultural communication would better equip teachers to align classroom instruction with the communicative and contextual objectives of Indonesia's evolving ELT curriculum. In conclusion, translation-based learning contributes not only to linguistic competence but also to the development of key 21st-century skills communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. It serves as a pedagogical bridge that connects language learning with authentic communication and intercultural understanding. With sustained institutional support, reflective practice, and continuous professional development, translation pedagogy can play a transformative role in strengthening the quality and relevance of English education within the national ELT curriculum framework.

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