



L1 as a Semiotic Tool: Deconstructing Grammatical Scaffolding Through a Single-Case CDA in an Indonesian Primary EFL Context

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Abstract

Teaching abstract grammatical concepts, such as the Present Continuous, poses substantial cognitive challenges for young learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, particularly when exposure to the target language is limited. Although traditional English-only pedagogies often regard the first language (L1) as an impediment, perspectives associated with the multilingual turn recognize its value as a cognitive resource. This study investigates the pedagogical functions of Indonesian as L1 in a Grade 4 EFL classroom at a public elementary school in the Sumenep region of East Java, Indonesia. Using a descriptive qualitative single-case design, the study applies Classroom Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the verbal interaction of a teacher candidate during a 73-minute lesson. Preliminary analysis showed that L1 accounted for approximately 70%–80% of the instructional discourse, calculated by utterance turns. Rather than indicating limited proficiency, the micro-analysis demonstrates that code-switching functioned as a systematic scaffolding strategy. Four pedagogical functions were identified: (1) metalinguistic scaffolding, which bridged Indonesian lexical time markers and English morphological inflection; (2) interactive scaffolding, which repaired communication breakdowns and sustained the Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) cycle; (3) managerial scaffolding, which reduced extraneous cognitive load during complex task instructions; and (4) affective scaffolding, which built rapport and reduced anxiety. In this low-exposure TEYL case, L1 therefore functioned not as a barrier but as a semiotic tool that helped transform abstract linguistic input into comprehensible intake.

Keywords: L1 Use; Scaffolding; Classroom Discourse Analysis; Translanguaging.

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INTRODUCTION

The global expansion of English as a lingua franca has lowered the age at which English is introduced in school curricula worldwide. Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) has consequently become a prominent feature of educational policy, particularly in Asia. This expansion, however, presents substantial pedagogical challenges, especially regarding the medium of instruction. For decades, English language teaching (ELT) has been shaped by the monolingual principle, or English-only policy, which assumes that maximum exposure to the target language (L2), without recourse to students' first language (L1), produces the best learning outcomes [1]. From this perspective, L1 use is often treated as a source of interference or evidence of pedagogical failure.

Recent applied-linguistics scholarship has challenged this monolingual bias. Researchers argue that the strict exclusion of L1 in EFL settings can create an artificial barrier to learning, particularly for young beginners who lack the cognitive maturity and linguistic repertoire needed to process continuous L2 input [2]. Because young learners are still developing literacy and cognitive skills in their first language, a complete ban on L1 may contribute to cognitive overload, anxiety, and disengagement. Contemporary research has therefore shifted toward a multilingual turn in which L1 is viewed not as a deficit but as a resource for meaning-making and scaffolding [3], [4].

The Indonesian TEYL context is particularly complex. Unlike in postcolonial settings where English has official status, English in Indonesia remains a foreign language with limited exposure outside the classroom. This challenge has been intensified by shifts in educational policy. Under the 2013 Curriculum (K-13), English was removed as a compulsory primary-school subject and designated as local content [5]. Under the current Kurikulum Merdeka framework, however, the Ministry of Education has outlined the gradual reintroduction of English as a compulsory primary-school subject, with wider implementation targeted for 2027. Nevertheless, the legacy of the K-13 period remains visible in uneven teacher qualifications: many primary English educators are general classroom teachers without specialized ELT training and must work with large classes and limited resources [6].

Despite these policy constraints, demand for early English education remains high among Indonesian parents and schools. Classroom realities, however, often diverge from the communicative ideals promoted in teacher education. Indonesian primary students, typically aged 9–11 years in Grades 4–6, may receive only a few hours of English instruction each week. In such a low-exposure environment, expecting students to understand complex linguistic systems through English input alone is often unrealistic. Indonesian studies indicate that, although teachers recognize the English-only ideal, they frequently use Bahasa Indonesia to maintain lesson flow, manage behavior, and explain difficult concepts [7]. This practice is nevertheless often accompanied by guilt or regarded as a temporary weakness rather than a deliberate pedagogical strategy.

A major challenge in TEYL is the teaching of abstract grammar. Foundational accounts of cognitive development suggest that learners in the concrete-operational stage benefit from tangible input and play [8], while contemporary child second-language-acquisition scholarship provides a more detailed linguistic explanation. Pinter [9] and Cameron [8], for example, emphasize that young learners often find explicit morphological rules difficult because their metalinguistic

awareness is still developing. Distinguishing habitual actions in the Present Simple from actions in progress in the Present Continuous is therefore cognitively demanding because it requires an understanding of time and aspect. The Present Continuous involves not only vocabulary but also the syntactic pattern subject + auxiliary be + verb-ing. This pattern is especially challenging for Indonesian learners because Bahasa Indonesia does not mark tense morphologically; instead, it relies on lexical time markers such as *sedang* and *biasanya*.

When these metalinguistic rules are explained exclusively in English, young learners may fail to understand the relevant distinctions and resort to memorization without conceptual understanding. L1 can therefore play a critical mediating role. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory [10], particularly the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), explains learning as a process in which a more knowledgeable other provides scaffolding that enables learners to perform beyond what they can achieve independently. In an EFL grammar classroom, L1 may function as an immediate semiotic tool for mediating this understanding [11], [12].

A clear conceptual distinction is needed among traditional L1 translation, code-switching, and pedagogical translanguaging. Traditional approaches such as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) maintain separation between languages and emphasize translation in reading and writing, with limited attention to communication [13]. Code-switching generally refers to the sequential, and sometimes spontaneous, alternation between distinct language codes in response to social or situational conditions [14]. Pedagogical translanguaging, by contrast, involves the planned, systematic, and strategic use of learners' full linguistic repertoires to support meaning-making, cognitive engagement, and subsequent L2 production [15]. Empirical evidence concerning how such practices function as real-time scaffolds is still developing. Many studies have used questionnaires to identify why teachers use L1, commonly reporting efficiency or discipline, whereas fewer have applied Classroom Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the moment-by-moment interactional organization of primary grammar lessons [16], [17]. A specific gap therefore concerns how explicit L1 mapping—often dismissed as an outdated translation technique—may operate within a translanguaging framework as cognitive scaffolding for young beginners. For example, mapping “She is cooking” onto “Dia sedang memasak” enables a teacher to foreground the auxiliary verb, which has no direct structural equivalent in Indonesian. Without such comparison, learners may overlook the auxiliary and produce forms such as “She cooking.” Micro-analysis is thus necessary to explain how these interactional processes support learning in low-exposure contexts.

This study addresses that gap by investigating instructional discourse in a Grade 4 Indonesian primary EFL classroom. Preliminary observation indicated a high frequency of teacher L1 use—approximately 70%–80% of utterance turns—within a lesson that relied heavily on translation and L1-mediated interaction. Rather than treating this practice as inherently teacher-centered or traditional, the study adopts a critical CDA perspective to identify the pedagogical functions of the teacher's language choices. The analysis focuses on the teaching of the Present Continuous, a foundational grammatical structure for young learners. Using video-recorded data and transcripts, the study asks: How does the teacher use L1 (Indonesian) as a scaffolding strategy to facilitate Grade 4 learners' understanding of grammar rules, classroom participation, and task completion? The study contributes to literature that recognizes the bilingual reality of EFL classrooms and offers practical insight into the strategic and systematic use of L1 as a bridge toward English proficiency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

L1 Use, Code-Switching, and Pedagogical Translanguaging

Debate over classroom language choice has shifted from a binary question of whether L1 should be permitted to a more pedagogically useful question of when, why, and how it should be employed. Hall and Cook [1] show that learners' own languages remain widely used in language classrooms and argue for an optimal rather than absolute approach to their use. Kerr [2] similarly positions L1 as a resource that can support explanation, comprehension, classroom management, and learner confidence when its use is purposeful. Within this view, the central concern is not the mere presence of L1, but whether it creates clearer access to L2 input and supports subsequent L2 participation.

Code-switching and pedagogical translanguaging provide related but distinct explanations for this practice. Macaro [3] treats classroom code-switching as a communicative and learning strategy, and Tian and Macaro [4] demonstrate that carefully timed L1 explanations can strengthen access to unfamiliar linguistic items. By contrast, GTM organizes instruction around systematic translation and formal equivalence [13], whereas code-switching concerns alternation between identifiable language codes [14]. Pedagogical translanguaging is broader and more intentional, drawing on learners' complete linguistic repertoires to facilitate meaning-making and participation [12], [15]. Accordingly, productive L1 use should be temporary, goal-directed, and followed by opportunities to notice, rehearse, and produce the target form in English.

Sociocultural Scaffolding and Classroom Discourse

Sociocultural theory explains why L1 can function as more than a translation device. Vygotsky [10] conceptualizes learning as a mediated process in which culturally available signs enable learners to perform beyond their independent level. In L2 development, mediation may be provided through teacher prompts, models, questions, feedback, and shared linguistic resources [11]. L1 therefore becomes one possible semiotic tool within the ZPD, especially when beginners lack sufficient English to interpret a rule or sustain an interaction. Its pedagogical value depends on whether the support transfers cognitive responsibility to learners rather than simply supplying answers.

This interactional perspective requires analysis at the level of classroom discourse. Walsh [16] argues that teacher talk shapes the learning opportunities available in particular pedagogical contexts, while research on Asian English classrooms stresses the need to interpret discourse in relation to local institutional and linguistic conditions [17]. CDA can consequently identify where a switch occurs within an IRF sequence, what problem it addresses, and what learners do after the switch. Such analysis distinguishes scaffolding from habitual translation: a switch functions as scaffolding when it repairs understanding, elicits a learner response, clarifies a task, or enables continued engagement. This focus on sequential consequences is particularly important because a high overall proportion of L1 cannot, by itself, establish whether classroom language use is pedagogically supportive or restrictive.

Grammar Learning in Indonesian Primary EFL Contexts

Grammar learning places particular demands on young learners. Cameron [8] and Pinter [9] emphasize that children learn most effectively when language is connected to accessible meanings, actions, routines, and concrete examples. Their developing metalinguistic awareness makes abstract explanations about tense, aspect, auxiliaries, and inflection difficult to process, especially through

unfamiliar English metalanguage. In this situation, a brief cross-linguistic comparison may make a hidden formal contrast visible. Mapping the Indonesian lexical marker *sedang* onto the English pattern *be + verb-ing*, for example, can provide an initial conceptual anchor, provided that the comparison is subsequently connected to English examples and learner production.

These challenges are intensified in Indonesian primary EFL settings, where exposure to English may be limited and teacher preparation is uneven. Studies of primary EFL teacher development in Indonesia identify continuing needs in linguistic knowledge, age-appropriate pedagogy, and classroom implementation [5], while policy debates show that the status and provision of English at the primary level have remained variable [6]. Existing scholarship therefore supports deliberate L1 use, but it offers less detailed evidence of how a teacher deploys L1 moment by moment while teaching a specific grammatical form to novice primary learners. The present study addresses this gap by examining L1 as metalinguistic, interactive, managerial, and affective scaffolding within one bounded lesson. This framework connects the conceptual literature on translanguaging and sociocultural mediation with observable discourse practices in a low-exposure classroom.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative single-case design using CDA. Qualitative case studies investigate bounded systems through detailed and in-depth data collection [18], [19]. Whereas some designs examine multiple systems, an intrinsic single-case study provides the bounded, information-rich context required for micro-analytic inquiry [20], [21]. Focusing on one teacher and one continuous 73-minute lesson enabled an intensive, moment-by-moment examination of the interactional organization of scaffolding, a level of detail that broader surveys or multi-site observations may obscure. The study was conducted at a public elementary school in the Sumenep region of East Java, Indonesia. The school and teacher represent a typical grassroots context for Indonesian primary English education, where English is offered as local content rather than as a national compulsory subject. English exposure outside the classroom is minimal, and the linguistic environment is predominantly Indonesian–Madurese bilingual, making the setting informative for examining L1 mediation in classroom interaction.

Research Participants

The primary participant was SE, an in-service teacher enrolled in a Teacher Professional Education (PPG) program at a private university in Purwokerto, Indonesia. SE had two years of primary-school teaching experience and an estimated B2 level of English proficiency. Her formal preparation had emphasized conventional monolingual approaches more strongly than translanguaging pedagogy. SE was selected because she was the instructor in the recorded lesson. Her position as a teacher in professional training offered a useful analytical perspective: she possessed theoretical knowledge of teaching methods, including the English-only ideal commonly promoted in universities, while also confronting the practical demands of teaching beginners. The secondary participants were 25 fourth-grade students aged approximately 9–10 years. Within second language acquisition, they were categorized as young learners at approximately the Novice/A1 level. Their limited English vocabulary and grammar required substantial teacher mediation and made the class suitable for investigating scaffolding strategies. The local language

ecology was strongly bilingual: students primarily used Madurese at home and Indonesian in formal schooling.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through non-participant observation. Before data collection, ethical procedures included obtaining formal permission from the school administration, written consent from the participating teacher, and parental or guardian consent for all minors. Participant identities were anonymized through pseudonyms, and the raw video files were stored on a secure, encrypted drive.

SE's lesson was video-recorded. Video recording was selected instead of on-site researcher observation to preserve the natural flow of classroom interaction and minimize potential observer effects. The recording lasted 1 hour and 13 minutes (73 minutes). Preliminary viewing showed that the teacher opened the lesson in English to establish a target-language atmosphere but conducted most core instructional activity in Bahasa Indonesia. L1 use accounted for approximately 70%–80% of the discourse, calculated as the proportion of Indonesian utterance turns relative to English utterance turns in the transcript.

The researcher first watched the entire 73-minute video without interruption to obtain a holistic understanding of the lesson and confirm its focus on the Present Continuous. Although the full recording was reviewed, selected episodes were identified for micro-analysis. These excerpts primarily represented moments of interactional trouble, such as instances in which students did not understand an English instruction and the teacher subsequently switched to Indonesian to repair the breakdown. To provide a balanced representation of classroom dynamics, the selection also included non-instructional uses of L1, such as discipline, and episodes in which L1 did not immediately resolve student confusion. Figure 1 summarizes the overall procedure.

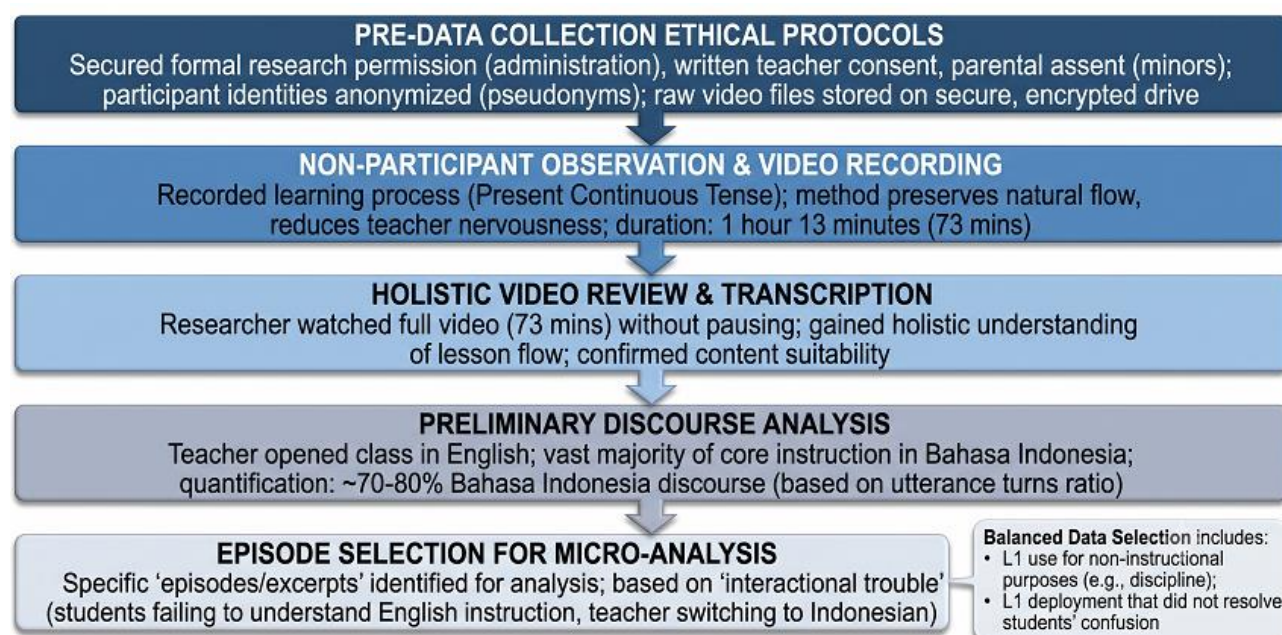


Figure 1. Data collection procedure

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis followed systematic procedures of CDA and the qualitative phases proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña [22]: data condensation, data display, and conclusion

drawing/verification. The first and most critical step was converting the 73-minute audiovisual record into textual data. Transcription was treated not as a clerical activity but as the initial stage of analysis. The study used broad transcription supplemented by selected Jeffersonian symbols [23] to represent interactional features relevant to the research focus. Because a full micro-analytic transcript was beyond the scope of the study, only symbols needed to identify interactional trouble and scaffolding were included: micropause (.), overlap [], emphasis (underlining), and transcriber descriptions of nonverbal behavior or context (()).

After transcription, the researcher coded the functions of the teacher's L1 use. Coding was primarily deductive, based on Ferguson's framework of classroom code-switching functions [24], while remaining open to inductive categories. Before analysis, each L1 function was assigned an operational definition. Coding proceeded through three phases: identification of every switch from English to Indonesian, functional labeling of each instance, and pattern recognition to determine dominant uses and whether L1 appeared systematically at particular structural boundaries of the lesson, such as grammar explanation.

Two analysts coded the data independently to strengthen analytical reliability. Disagreements during functional labeling were resolved through negotiated consensus. Peer debriefing was also used throughout the analysis to document and scrutinize interpretive decisions. After categorization, selected excerpts underwent detailed analysis of Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF) sequences. Particular attention was given to how Indonesian in the feedback move supported student understanding—for example, whether L1 merely supplied an answer or guided learners toward producing the answer themselves.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CDA revealed a consistent pattern of language choice that prioritized pedagogical function over monolingual exclusivity. As described in the Methods section, Bahasa Indonesia accounted for approximately 80% of instructional discourse, based on utterance turns. Micro-analysis showed that this L1 dominance was neither random nor, by itself, evidence of limited teacher proficiency. Instead, L1 occurred systematically at specific interactional boundaries to support understanding. Four pedagogical functions were identified: (1) metalinguistic scaffolding, used to deconstruct abstract grammatical rules; (2) interactive scaffolding, used to prompt participation and check comprehension; (3) managerial scaffolding, used to regulate task performance and behavior; and (4) affective scaffolding, used to build rapport and reduce anxiety. Table 1 summarizes the codes, representative excerpts, and utterance-turn frequencies.

Table 1. Frequency and Pedagogical Functions of L1 Discourse

Code	Pedagogical Function	Representative Excerpt(s)	Frequency (Utterance Turns)
MLS	Metalinguistic Scaffolding	Excerpt 1	42
IS	Interactive Scaffolding	Excerpts 2, 3	68
MS	Managerial Scaffolding	Excerpt 4	35
AS	Affective Scaffolding	Excerpt 5	15

Results

The most prominent function of L1 was the explanation of the structural mechanics of the Present Continuous. For Grade 4 learners, grammatical tense—the principle that verb forms vary according to temporal meaning—is cognitively abstract. Bahasa Indonesia does not inflect verbs to mark time; for example, *makan* remains unchanged whether the event occurs now, yesterday, or tomorrow. The English requirement to use an auxiliary form of *be* and modify the lexical verb with *-ing* therefore creates a substantial conceptual gap. The teacher bridged this gap through interlinear translation, or word-by-word structural analysis. Rather than relying only on English metalinguistic labels, such as “subject + *be* + verb-*ing*,” she mapped the English structure onto the learners' existing Indonesian linguistic knowledge.

Metalinguistic Scaffolding

Table 2. Metalinguistic Scaffolding

Line	Speaker	Utterance
1	T	<i>Ya. Contohnya ini. Silahkan dibaca di slide.</i> [Yes. For example this one. Please read the slide.]
2		<i>Perhatikan, ayo! Di slide!</i> [Pay attention, come on! On the slide!]
3		"They are reading a culture book."
4		<i>Apa artinya? Mereka sedang membaca buku...</i> [What does it mean? They are currently reading a book...]
5	Ss	<i>Membaca buku</i> ((confused tone)) [Reading a book]
6	T	<i>Kebudayaan. Ya.</i> [Culture. Yes.]
7		"I am eating Rujak Cingur."
8		<i>Saya sedang..?</i> [I am currently..?]
9	S1	<i>Saya sedang makan Rujak Cingur.</i> [I am currently eating Rujak Cingur.]
10	T	Oke. "My sister is playing Congklak."
11	S2	<i>Saudara perempuan saya sedang bermain Congklak.</i> [My sister is currently playing Congklak.]
12	T	Congklak. <i>Nah perhatikan.</i> [Congklak. Now pay attention.]
13		<i>Ketika Verb kita beri -ing, dan di depan verb ada to be "Am, Is atau Are"</i> [When we give the Verb an -ing, and in front of the verb there is to be "Am, Is or Are"]
14		<i>Maka dia bermakna "sedang". Paham? Bermakna, sedang.</i> [Then it means "currently/in progress". Understand? Meaning, currently.]
15		"Eat", <i>apa artinya?</i> ["Eat", what does it mean?]
16	Ss	<i>Makan.</i> [Eat.]
17	T	<i>Makan. Ketika ada to be "am" dan eat diberi -Ing, "eating" jadi apa artinya?</i> [Eat. When there is to be "am" and eat is given -Ing, what does "eating" mean?]
18		<i>Sedang...?</i> [Currently...?]
19	Ss	<i>Sedang makan.</i> [Currently eating.]
20	T	<i>Jadi apabila ada to be dan kata kerja diimbui dengan -ing dibelakangnya maka maknanya sedang.</i> [So if there is to be and a verb suffixed with -ing behind it, then the meaning is currently.]

Line	Speaker	Utterance
21		<i>Sedang makan, sedang belajar. Oke. Ibu lanjutkan.</i> [Currently eating, currently studying. Okay. I will continue.]

As shown in Table 2, lines 13–14, the teacher switched explicitly to Indonesian to define the grammatical rule. She isolated the English suffix -ing and the auxiliary forms “am,” “is,” and “are,” then linked the construction to the Indonesian lexical marker sedang (currently/in progress). In lines 15–18, she tested this mapping by presenting the base verb “eat” and prompting students to apply the newly introduced pattern to infer the meaning of “eating.”

This sequence supports an interpretation of metalinguistic scaffolding rather than simple teacher-fronted translation. The teacher did not merely provide complete L1 equivalents for memorization; she deconstructed L2 morphology step by step. By prompting learners to combine the elements and produce “sedang makan” in lines 18–19, she transferred part of the cognitive work to the students. L1 thus functioned as a semiotic resource through which learners could notice otherwise unfamiliar L2 syntactic constraints. Anchoring the abstract rule in familiar linguistic knowledge created a cognitive bridge for Novice/A1 learners and may help prevent structural omissions such as dropping the auxiliary verb.

Interactive Scaffolding: Prompting

The second theme concerns the teacher's use of L1 to sustain interaction and verify that students were following the lesson. In EFL classrooms, the IRF cycle may break down when an English initiation is followed by silence. The video showed a recurring repair pattern: when an English question did not elicit a response or produced visible confusion, the teacher reformulated it in Bahasa Indonesia. This strategy was particularly evident during the guessing-game and meaning-checking stages, in which the teacher presented sentences or images and asked students to identify their meaning.

Table 3. Interactive Scaffolding: Prompting

Line	Speaker	Utterance
1	T	<i>Nomer berapa?</i> [Which number?]
2	Ss	<i>Nomer 4.</i> [Number 4.]
3	T	"Listen, the bird Blablabla on the tree?"
4	Ss	((Silence and confused expressions))
5	T	<i>Kalo burung titik titik di atas pohon, itu ngapain?</i> [If a bird bla bla bla on the tree, what is it doing?]
6		<i>Burung ngapain di pohon?</i> [What does a bird do on a tree?]
7	Ss	<i>Terbang, Bu Guru!</i> [Flying, Ma'am!]
8	T	<i>Terbang? Kalau yang cuit cuit itu apa?</i> [Flying? If the one that goes tweet tweet, what is that?]
9	Ss	<i>Berkicau Bu?</i> [Chirping Ma'am?]
10	T	<i>Ya, itu. Bahasa Inggrisnya berkicau atau bernyanyi, apa?</i> [Yes, that. What is the English for chirping or singing?]
11	Ss	Singing.

Line	Speaker	Utterance
12	T	<i>Coba baca yang lengkap kalimatnya!</i> [Try to read the complete sentence!]
13	Ss	"The bird is singing on the tree."
14	T	Good Job!

Table 3 illustrates the role of L1 in sustaining student agency. Had the teacher remained exclusively in English after the initial silence, the interaction might have stalled or ended with the teacher answering her own question. Switching to L1 lowered the threshold for participation. The excerpt also displays elicitation through translation: the teacher provided an English stimulus and used an Indonesian prompt to check meaning and elicit subsequent English production.

Interactive Scaffolding: Comprehension Checking

Table 4. Interactive Scaffolding: Comprehension Checking

Line	Speaker	Utterance
1	T	<i>Nah ini, Ibu punya beberapa contoh dari "verb-ing".</i> [Now this, I have some examples of "verb-ing".]
2		"Do", <i>do ketika diberi -ing dia akan berubah menjadi "verb-ing" maka dia menjadi "doing".</i> [Do, do when given -ing it will change into verb-ing so it becomes doing.]
3		Doing.
4		"Play" <i>diberi -ing maka jadi "playing".</i> ["Play" given -ing so becomes playing.]
5		"Study" <i>ditambah -ing maka jadi?</i> ["Study" added with -ing then becomes?]
6	Ss	Studying.
7	T	<i>Ya. "Eat" tambah -ing, "eat", "eating".</i> [Yes. "Eat" plus -ing, "eat", "eating".]
8		<i>Terus. "Drink". "Drinking".</i> [Next. "Drink". "Drinking".]
9		<i>Apa "drinking" artinya?</i> [What does "drinking" mean?]
10	Ss	<i>Sedang minum.</i> [Currently drinking.]
11	T	"Dance", <i>jadi apa?</i> ["Dance", becomes what?]
12	Ss	Dancing.
13	T	<i>Jadi "dancing". Ya apa artinya "dancing"?</i> [So dancing. Yes what does dancing mean?]
14	Ss	<i>Sedang menari.</i> [Currently dancing.]

In Table 4, the interaction shifts to choral response. The teacher's question "Artinya apa?" functions as a rapid diagnostic check that enables her to assess whole-class understanding in real time. A correct Indonesian response indicates that meaning has been established and allows the lesson to proceed to pronunciation or form; hesitation signals the need for further explanation. This rapid alternation supports an energetic pace that may be difficult to maintain through complex English concept-checking questions that exceed learners' proficiency.

The third theme extends beyond lesson content to the organization of learning. A substantial proportion of L1 use occurred during transitions, particularly when the teacher formed groups and

assigned tasks. Communicative activities often require complex procedural information: group membership, materials, time limits, and expected outputs. For Grade 4 learners, processing these multi-step instructions in English may impose considerable extraneous cognitive load. When students devote their limited processing capacity to determining what to do, fewer cognitive resources remain for the language required by the task.

Managerial Scaffolding

Table 5. Managerial Scaffolding: Regulating Task Performance

Line	Speaker	Utterance
1	T	<i>Paham ya?</i> [Do you understand?]
2	Ss	<i>Ya Bu.</i> [Yes Ma'am.]
3	T	<i>Nah ayo, sekarang nah Ibu bagi kalian menjadi 3 kelompok.</i> [Alright come on, now I will divide you into 3 groups.]
4		<i>Silakan perhatikan di slide.</i> [Please pay attention to the slide.]
5		<i>Kalau sudah ketemu kelompoknya siapa langsung bergabung dengan kelompoknya, yok ayok.</i> [If you have found whose group you are in, immediately join the group, come on let's go.]
6	Ss	((Students move to join their respective groups))
7	T	<i>Untuk kelompok 1 Nindi, Bobi, Serlin, silakan di bangku yang paling sana, ayo langsung pindah.</i> [For group 1 Nindi, Bobi, Serlin, please go to the bench over there, come on move immediately.]
8		<i>Ngga usah, tasnya ga usah dibawa, bukunya aja.</i> [No need, the bags don't need to be brought, just the books.]
9		<i>Yuk, kelompok 2 Linda ee yaa Ani, Fadilah, Raka, Rohim.</i> [Come on, group 2 Linda uh yeah Ani, Fadilah, Raka, Rohim.]
10		<i>Kelompok 3 Ozil, Zafran, Inda, silakan di sini.</i> [Group 3 Ozil, Zafran, Inda, please be here.]
11		<i>Zul kau di tengah Zul.</i> [Zul, you be in the middle, Zul.]
12		<i>Sudah ya, sudah bergabung dengan kelompok masing-masing?</i> [Done yes, have you joined your respective groups?]

As shown in Table 5, the teacher used Bahasa Indonesia almost exclusively during the procedural phase. The discourse was directive because it organized immediate movement and task participation. This switch ensured that all students, regardless of English proficiency, understood the expectations. Once the procedure had been clarified through L1, students engaged more confidently with the English worksheet. In this sense, L1 scaffolded the learning process by reducing confusion, anxiety, and potential behavioral disruption. It also maximized time on task because students did not need repeated clarification of the activity procedure.

Although it was not the primary focus of the lesson content, a fourth theme emerged concerning the interpersonal function of L1. The teacher frequently used informal Indonesian and culturally familiar expressions for humor, praise, and encouragement. In TEYL, the affective filter [25] is important because stress and disengagement can constrain language learning. The teacher's L1 use helped humanize classroom interaction and reduce social distance between teacher and students.

Table 6. Affective Scaffolding: Building Rapport and Reducing Anxiety

Line	Speaker	Utterance
1	T	<i>Nanti, nanti icebreaking-nya tunggu dulu ya.</i> [Later, later the icebreaking waits for a moment okay.]
2		<i>Alhamdulillah kalian, ee, sudah melaksanakan tugas presentasi, tugas diskusi dan presentasi dengan baik.</i> [Praise God you, uh, have carried out the presentation task, discussion task and presentation well.]
3		<i>Yuk tepuk tangan dulu buat kita semua.</i> [Come on let's clap hands for all of us.]
4	Ss	((Students clap hands))
5	T	<i>Ya tepuk tangan sebagai reward untuk diri kita ya yang sudah berusaha sampai di sini.</i> [Yes clap hands as a reward for ourselves okay who have tried/struggled up to this point.]
6		<i>Ayo kita tepuk WOW ya! Ayo siap?</i> [Let's do the WOW clap okay! Come on ready?]
7	Ss	<i>Siap!</i> [Ready!]
8	T	<i>Tepuk WOW, dikasih apa?</i> [WOW clap, given what?]
9	Ss	<i>Dikasih W, kasih O, kasih W. Wow keren, wow wow keren.</i> [Given W, give O, give W. Wow cool, wow wow cool.]
10	T	<i>Untuk penghargaan pada diri kita, ya kan, yuk, kita ulang lagi ya, diulang lagi.</i> [For appreciation to ourselves, right, come on, let's repeat it okay, repeat again.]
11		<i>Dikasih apa?</i> [Given what?]
12	Ss	<i>Dikasih W, kasih O, kasih W. Wow keren, wow wow wow keren, wow wow keren.</i> [Given W, give O, give W. Wow cool, wow wow wow cool, wow wow cool.]
13	T	<i>Masih semangat? Masih?</i> [Still spirited/enthusiastic? Still?]
14	Ss	<i>Masih.</i> [Still.]
15	T	<i>Masih. Alhamdulillah, kalian ke sekolah itu harus selalu bersemangat tak boleh ca.. capek.</i> [Still. Praise God, you go to school must always be spirited, cannot be ti... tired.]
16	Ss	<i>Capek.</i> [Tired.]

In Table 6, L1 functions as an emotional anchor. Learning a foreign language can be intimidating for young children; interspersing English practice with L1 encouragement signaled that the classroom was supportive. Students remained active and enthusiastic throughout the 73-minute session despite the difficulty of the grammatical content. L1 discourse therefore served as a form of social cohesion that helped sustain collective attention.

Discussion

The findings depict a classroom in which Bahasa Indonesia accounted for approximately 80% of instructional discourse. A traditional communicative language teaching perspective might interpret such extensive L1 use as inadequate target-language exposure. The present analysis, however,

indicates that the teacher's language choices were context-sensitive and served identifiable scaffolding functions.

The first major finding—the teacher's use of L1 for interlinear explanation of grammatical structure, as shown in Tables 2 and 4—challenges a rigid English-only approach for young beginners. The teacher explicitly mapped “be + verb-ing” onto the Indonesian marker *sedang*. This practice is consistent with Vygotsky's ZPD [10]. For Grade 4 learners in a low-exposure Indonesian context, grammatical aspect lies beyond what many can readily understand without mediation. Cameron [8] emphasizes that young learners benefit from concrete support, while Indonesian expresses temporal meanings primarily through lexical rather than inflectional marking [7]. L1 therefore provided a schema-building resource that connected the unfamiliar English form is playing with the familiar concept *sedang bermain*. This interpretation is consistent with Tian and Macaro [4], who found advantages for L1-supported explanation of complex lexical information compared with English-only explanation.

The second finding distinguishes the teacher's practice from traditional GTM. Whereas GTM emphasizes text translation and written form, the interaction in Table 3 shows a dynamic process more closely aligned with pedagogical translanguaging [12], [15]. Indonesian prompts such as “Cuit cuit ... burung ngapain?” were used to elicit English production, including the word “singing.” L1 therefore acted as a catalyst rather than the final communicative goal. This interpretation is consistent with Copland and Garton [26] and Copland and Neokleous [27], who argue that rigid English-only policies in low-resource classrooms may produce silence or minimal participation. Strategic L1 use maintained student agency and lesson pace, preventing interactional breakdowns [16]. Nevertheless, this benefit must be balanced against reduced L2 exposure. If Indonesian consistently carries the main burden of meaning negotiation, learners may have fewer opportunities to develop extended English production and independent strategies for processing L2 input. Unplanned or excessive reliance on translation could therefore foster dependency and constrain long-term communicative autonomy.

The third finding—the near-exclusive use of Indonesian for logistical instructions in Table 5—can be interpreted through Cognitive Load Theory [28]. Learning unfamiliar language already creates substantial intrinsic cognitive demands. Delivering complex procedural instructions in English may add extraneous load for novice learners. When students must devote considerable effort to understanding where to sit, which materials to use, or what output to produce, less capacity remains for processing the target grammar. The finding supports Bruen and Kelly [29], who describe the strategic use of a shared L1 to reduce cognitive overload and anxiety. In this case, Indonesian enabled an efficient transition and protected time for engagement with the English learning task. The decision was therefore pragmatic: it prioritized successful task implementation while preserving cognitive resources for the instructional objective.

The fourth finding concerns L1 use for encouragement and rapport building, illustrated by the “Tepuk WOW” sequence in Table 6. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis [25] proposes that anxiety can inhibit language acquisition. In the Indonesian context, English may be perceived as difficult or socially distant. Informal Indonesian and familiar collective chants reduced the social distance between teacher and students and supported a psychologically safe environment [30]. Exclusive use of formal English might have made the teacher appear less accessible to novice learners. Praise and humor in the shared language instead affirmed students' identities and participation. This interpretation also supports Zein's [5] observation that effective Indonesian

primary English teaching requires a balance between linguistic expertise and the nurturing responsibilities of primary education. The high proportion of L1 use should therefore be understood not only as linguistic behavior but also as relational work that helped sustain motivation.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the pedagogical functions of L1 in an Indonesian TEYL classroom by analyzing the discourse of an in-service teacher enrolled in professional education while teaching the Present Continuous to Grade 4 learners. Evidence from this bounded case indicates that the teacher's extensive use of Bahasa Indonesia—approximately 80% of utterance turns—was neither arbitrary nor necessarily evidence of limited proficiency. Instead, L1 was deployed systematically in response to the cognitive, interactional, managerial, and affective needs of novice learners. Four functions were identified: metalinguistic scaffolding, which deconstructed abstract grammatical rules by linking “be + verb-ing” to *sedang*; interactive scaffolding, which repaired communication breakdowns and prompted participation; managerial scaffolding, which reduced extraneous cognitive load during procedural instructions; and affective scaffolding, which built rapport and reduced anxiety. Because the evidence derives from a single qualitative case, the pedagogical implications are necessarily conditional. Teachers in comparable low-exposure settings need not regard all L1 use as failure; it may serve as a legitimate temporary resource when used deliberately. The appropriate objective is optimal rather than exclusive use. L1 can support explanations of abstract concepts, complex classroom management, and rapid comprehension checks. To prevent dependency and protect opportunities for L2 exposure, however, this support should be progressively faded. As learners' English repertoires expand, teachers should replace L1 mediation with simplified English, modeling, gestures, and visual cues. L1 is most productive when it functions as a temporary bridge toward, rather than a permanent substitute for, communicative autonomy in English.

LIMITATIONS

This study provides an in-depth micro-analysis of classroom discourse, but its findings are bounded by one teacher and one lesson within a PPG program in Sumenep, East Java. The observed 80% L1 use may partly reflect a structured teaching performance for certification rather than fully routine classroom practice, limiting transferability to other Indonesian primary EFL settings. Additional methodological constraints should also be acknowledged. First, video recording may have produced an observer effect and altered interactional behavior. Second, qualitative interpretation inevitably involves researcher judgment, particularly in selecting discourse episodes for detailed analysis. Third, the study relies on observation without participant interviews, so the learners' and teacher's perceptions of the cognitive and affective effects could not be directly confirmed. Finally, a single recording captures immediate interactional repair but cannot establish the long-term effect of extensive L1 use on English development. Future studies should use longitudinal designs, larger and comparative samples, and teacher and learner interviews to examine acquisition over time and strengthen interpretive triangulation.

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F.A. conceptualized the study, supervised the research process, and contributed to drafting and revising the manuscript. N.A., A.Mus. collected and analyzed the data and prepared the initial manuscript draft. A.Mas. contributed to the research design, provided critical feedback, and assisted with revision. J.L.D.G. supported data interpretation, drafted selected sections, and reviewed the final manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors used ChatGPT during manuscript preparation to support language refinement, grammar checking, and clarity of expression. The authors subsequently reviewed and edited all generated or revised content and assume full responsibility for the final manuscript.

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