



Digital Translanguaging in AI-Assisted Business English Writing: EFL Student and Lecturer Perspectives

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Article Info :

Received:
16-07-2026
Revised:
27-07-2026
Accepted:
01-08-2026

Abstract

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has reshaped Business English writing by enabling multilingual learners to coordinate first-language reasoning, English genre practices, and algorithmic output within a single composing process. This study investigated how EFL students and lecturers interpreted digital translanguaging in AI-assisted Business English writing through an interpretive qualitative case study in a higher-education context. The participants consisted of nine EFL students and three lecturers, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, AI chat logs, prompt histories, and sequential drafts, which were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The findings revealed three themes: digital translanguaging as cognitive scaffolding, communicative bridging, and socio-affective support. Students strategically used multilingual resources to deepen conceptual understanding, negotiate professional discourse, and develop confidence in writing tasks, while lecturers emphasized accountability, critical evaluation, and authorship. Productive AI-supported translanguaging occurred when learners could explain, revise, reject, and defend generated language. The study contributes to contemporary pedagogy by proposing accountable digital translanguaging as a framework for integrating multilingual practices and GenAI in Business English education.

Keywords: Business English, Critical AI Literacy, Digital Translanguaging, EFL Writing, Generative Artificial Intelligence.



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INTRODUCTION

Business English writing in higher education currently occupies a contested space shaped by the convergence of globalization, multilingual communication, and rapid advances in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). Traditional academic and professional writing environments have historically been structured around monolingual assumptions in which standardized English proficiency functions as the primary indicator of legitimacy, competence, and employability, particularly through assessment practices, institutional regulations, and professional communication norms. However, the emergence of large language models such as ChatGPT has introduced writing environments where translation, reformulation, feedback, and text generation occur across linguistic boundaries within a single digital interface, challenging the assumption that professional writing develops exclusively through English-only processes (Warschauer et al., 2023). The expansion of AI-assisted writing has transformed composing from an individual linguistic activity into an interactional process involving human cognition, multilingual resources, digital platforms, and algorithmic mediation (Darvin, 2025). This transformation is particularly significant in expanding-circle English contexts, where English continues to operate as a gatekeeping resource for international mobility while learners simultaneously rely on diverse linguistic repertoires to construct meaning and participate in global professional communities. The emerging tension is therefore not merely whether AI should be accepted or restricted in Business English education, but how contemporary pedagogy should conceptualize multilingual writers whose professional communication practices increasingly develop through interactions among languages, technologies, and situated knowledge.

The complexity of this transformation becomes more visible when considering the rhetorical and cognitive demands embedded within Business English writing genres, including professional correspondence, executive summaries, reports, proposals, and persuasive documents. These genres

require writers not only to demonstrate grammatical accuracy but also to negotiate institutional voice, stakeholder expectations, disciplinary terminology, interpersonal positioning, and culturally appropriate rhetorical choices. Business-related concepts such as financial leverage, organizational scalability, market positioning, and return on investment represent complex disciplinary meanings rather than isolated vocabulary units, requiring writers to integrate conceptual understanding with linguistic realization. For tertiary-level EFL learners, these demands intersect with the recursive processes of idea development, argument organization, lexical selection, revision, and evaluation of audience expectations, creating significant cognitive and emotional challenges during writing development. Writing anxiety among EFL learners has been associated with linguistic limitations, fear of negative evaluation, and uncertainty regarding academic performance, conditions that become more pronounced when students must simultaneously demonstrate professional knowledge and communicate through an additional language (Quvanch & Si Na, 2022). The increasing expectation that students produce sophisticated professional texts in English consequently creates a pedagogical dilemma because difficulties in language production may restrict not only textual quality but also students' ability to represent disciplinary understanding and professional identity.

GenAI technologies have increasingly been positioned as potential solutions to these writing constraints because they provide immediate support for brainstorming, vocabulary development, structural organization, and revision during the composing process. Empirical studies indicate that ChatGPT-assisted writing instruction can enhance EFL learners' academic writing performance when integrated through purposeful pedagogical frameworks rather than used as an unrestricted replacement for human composition (Mahapatra, 2024). Learners have also reported that GenAI tools facilitate idea generation, linguistic experimentation, feedback acquisition, and revision practices by providing accessible writing assistance throughout different stages of composition (Meniado et al., 2024). Nevertheless, these benefits do not eliminate cognitive demands but redistribute them toward prompt formulation, output evaluation, rhetorical judgment, and ethical decision-making. Research demonstrates that students must develop the ability to critically examine AI-generated suggestions because linguistic fluency may conceal inaccurate information, inappropriate register, weak argumentation, or contextual misunderstanding (Woo et al., 2024b). In Business English contexts, this issue becomes particularly consequential because professionally acceptable writing depends not only on grammatical correctness but also on accurate reasoning, appropriate interpersonal positioning, and responsible representation of organizational knowledge. The integration of GenAI therefore requires a theoretical perspective that explains how learners combine linguistic resources, technological affordances, and human judgment throughout the writing process.

Translanguaging provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding how multilingual learners negotiate meaning across linguistic and technological boundaries during AI-assisted writing activities. Rather than conceptualizing languages as separate and fixed systems, translanguaging views multilingual communication as the strategic mobilization of an integrated repertoire consisting of linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and experiential resources (García et al., 2021). This perspective has expanded contemporary language education research by emphasizing how learners construct meaning through flexible combinations of semiotic resources rather than through strict adherence to named-language boundaries (Wei, 2022). Empirical investigations of academic writing demonstrate that multilingual writers engage in translanguaging throughout planning, note-taking, drafting, problem-solving, and revision processes, indicating that multilingual practices are embedded within the entire trajectory of composition rather than appearing only as visible language switching (Zheng & Drybrough, 2023). Digital environments further intensify these practices because online resources, translation systems, corpora, and AI platforms provide additional spaces through which learners negotiate linguistic and disciplinary knowledge (Koralage et al., 2023). In Business English writing, this means that students' movement between Indonesian explanations, English terminology searches, bilingual conceptual comparisons, and AI-generated formulations should not be interpreted as linguistic deficiency but as part of a complex meaning-making process involving multiple resources. Understanding these processes requires shifting analytical attention from the final English text alone toward the repertoire-based pathways through which professional discourse is developed.

The intersection between translanguaging and digital technologies has generated the emerging concept of digital translanguaging, which examines how multilingual practices are reorganized through digital platforms, multimodal resources, and technologically mediated interactions. Recent scholarship

indicates that digital translanguaging has become an expanding area of inquiry because technological affordances reshape how learners access, transform, evaluate, and circulate linguistic knowledge in educational settings (Lu & Gu, 2024). Digital tools provide multilingual writers with opportunities to translate concepts, examine lexical patterns, compare alternative expressions, and construct texts through interactions among human and technological actors rather than through isolated individual production (Koralage et al., 2023). The development of large language models has further complicated this landscape because AI systems function not only as writing assistants but also as responsive interlocutors capable of explaining concepts, simulating professional scenarios, and generating alternative rhetorical possibilities. Studies on AI-supported translanguaging reveal that EFL learners strategically employ their first language for idea development, problem-solving, prompt construction, and transformation of conceptual understanding into English texts (Yang & Lin, 2025). AI tools may simultaneously expand learner agency and create new dependencies because generated language can support participation while potentially obscuring learners' ownership of rhetorical choices and disciplinary reasoning (Sasaki, 2023). These contradictory affordances demonstrate that digital translanguaging should not be understood as a simple technological advantage but as a complex pedagogical phenomenon requiring investigation into how learners and educators negotiate agency, responsibility, and competence.

Within this unresolved intersection, the present study positions itself within contemporary pedagogy and learning science by examining digital translanguaging as an AI-mediated practice through which EFL students construct, negotiate, and evaluate meaning during Business English writing activities. This qualitative case study aims to investigate how university EFL students strategically employ multilingual repertoires in interaction with GenAI tools, how lecturers interpret these practices within pedagogical and institutional contexts, and what tensions emerge regarding authorship, academic integrity, and professional competence. By examining AI interaction histories, prompt development, writing processes, classroom practices, and stakeholder perspectives, the study moves beyond product-oriented evaluations of AI-generated texts toward a process-oriented understanding of digitally mediated composing practices. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of translanguaging perspectives by explaining how linguistic agency is redistributed across human writers, digital technologies, and disciplinary expectations in professional communication contexts. Methodologically, the study advances qualitative inquiry into AI-assisted writing by integrating multiple sources of evidence to reveal how multilingual learners and educators negotiate accountable, critical, and pedagogically meaningful uses of GenAI in Business English education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed an empirical interpretive qualitative case study design to investigate digital translanguaging practices within AI-assisted Business English writing in a bounded higher-education context. The case consisted of one Business English course, its learning environment, three lecturers, and nine EFL students who participated in AI-supported writing activities and business simulations during the focal teaching period. A qualitative case study approach was selected because digital translanguaging practices are inseparable from the pedagogical, technological, linguistic, and institutional contexts in which they occur (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Participants were recruited through criterion-based purposive sampling to obtain information-rich cases aligned with the analytical objectives rather than statistical representativeness (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025). The participants included all three lecturers involved in the course and nine students representing diverse engagement patterns, including academically proficient, moderate, and passive-anxious profiles based on classroom participation, course performance, and self-reported writing experiences. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and AI-assisted writing artifacts consisting of prompt histories, AI-generated responses, and draft revisions produced during course activities.

The research instruments consisted of separate semi-structured interview protocols for lecturers and students, observation guidelines focusing on multilingual practices and AI-mediated composing behaviors, and documentation procedures for collecting relevant digital writing traces. Interview questions explored language choices, AI interaction strategies, writing challenges, assessment expectations, academic integrity concerns, and perceptions of professional communication development, while observation and artifact analysis examined how students negotiated prompts,

evaluated AI outputs, and transformed multilingual resources into English texts. Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis framework, involving familiarization, coding, theme development, review, refinement, and interpretation of patterns across interviews, observations, and digital artifacts (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Trustworthiness was supported through data triangulation, reflexive documentation, contextual description, and participant reflection procedures, while ethical considerations addressed informed consent, privacy protection, and responsible management of digital trace data in educational research (Hakimi et al., 2021). Continuous consent principles were applied to ensure that participants retained control over the use of their digital records throughout the research process (Klykken, 2022). All participant identities were protected through pseudonyms, and collected materials were limited to course-related AI interactions relevant to the research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Translanguaging as Cognitive Scaffolding and Conceptual Deepening

The first reflexive theme generated from the qualitative analysis demonstrates that digital translanguaging functioned as a cognitive scaffolding process through which students developed conceptual understanding before producing Business English texts. The practices of S1–S3 showed that Indonesian was not employed because students lacked the ability to write in English, but because their first language provided a more accessible space for examining complex business concepts, questioning relationships among terms, and organizing disciplinary knowledge. Their composing processes involved repeated movements among Indonesian explanations, English terminology, AI-generated responses, and genre-based revisions. This pattern indicates that multilingual resources became part of the reasoning process rather than a temporary stage preceding legitimate English writing. Such findings correspond with the translanguaging perspective that multilingual learners strategically mobilize their entire linguistic repertoire to construct meaning within specific social and educational contexts (García et al., 2021).

Table 1. Typology of Reflexive Themes, Sub-themes, and Participant Mapping

Reflexive theme	Constitutive sub-themes	Participant mapping	Triangulated data sources	Required illustrated evidence
Digital translanguaging as cognitive scaffolding and conceptual deepening	L1-mediated conceptual unpacking; bilingual prompt engineering; disciplinary-term calibration; critical appropriation and rejection of AI output	Proficient/active students S1–S3; pedagogical interpretations from L1 and L2	Student and lecturer interviews; classroom observations; AI prompt histories; English draft sequences	Exact S1–S3 prompts concerning concepts such as leveraged buyouts, liquidity ratios, leverage, or return on investment; interview excerpts explaining why Indonesian was used; L1/L2 comments on semantic accuracy and student control
Digital translanguaging as communicative bridging in collaborative writing	Multilingual peer metatalk; collaborative lexical negotiation; AI-mediated reformulation; distributed digital literacy; movement from informal reasoning to	Moderate students S4–S6; principal lecturer interpretation from L3, with contrasting evidence from L1/L2 where relevant	Interviews; Google Docs revision histories or field-note records; AI feedback exchanges; proposal and email drafts	Exact S4–S6 exchanges showing Indonesian–English lexical negotiation; AI feedback followed by peer acceptance, modification, or rejection; L3's interpretation of multilingual collaboration

Digital translanguage as a socio-affective buffer and site of professional-identity rehearsal	professional English Reduced fear of immediate evaluation; private rehearsal; gradual participation; AI-supported professional voice; risks of dependency and voice displacement	Passive/anxious students S7–S9; observations and interpretations from L1–L3	Student and lecturer interviews; simulation observations; AI chat logs; corporate-email drafts and revisions	Exact S7–S9 statements about anxiety, judgment, confidence, or professional identity; observation evidence of changed participation; logs showing progressive movement from Indonesian explanation to independently revised English
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The evidence from interviews, classroom observations, and AI interaction records indicates that cognitive scaffolding emerged through four interconnected practices: L1-mediated conceptual unpacking, bilingual prompt engineering, disciplinary-term calibration, and critical evaluation of AI-generated language. Students did not simply request complete answers from generative AI; they used prompts to expose uncertainty, compare interpretations, and test whether machine-generated explanations corresponded with business knowledge. This process reflects the characteristics of digital translanguage in higher education, where technological environments enable learners to coordinate multilingual resources, digital tools, and disciplinary practices during meaning construction (Lu & Gu, 2024). The role of AI in this process was therefore positioned as a mediating resource rather than an independent producer of knowledge.

The AI interaction records from S1 illustrated how multilingual prompting supported conceptual investigation of specialized Business English terminology. The student used Indonesian to formulate a question regarding the conceptual boundary between leveraged buyout and ordinary acquisition, particularly focusing on the relationship between debt financing, company assets, and repayment mechanisms. The AI response provided an English explanation comparing both acquisition models and introduced an example involving borrowed funds and future cash flows. However, the learning process was not located in the generated explanation itself, but in the student's subsequent evaluation of whether the explanation accurately represented the financial concept.

S1 Prompt:

“Aku masih belum benar-benar nangkap batasnya. Leveraged buyout itu berbeda dari ordinary acquisition karena pembelinya pakai utang, atau karena aset dan cash flow perusahaan target dipakai untuk membayar utangnya? Tolong jelaskan pakai contoh perusahaan A membeli perusahaan B. Jangan hanya kasih definisi textbook.”

AI Response:

“In an ordinary acquisition, a company may use cash, shares, debt, or a combination of financing sources to purchase another company. In a leveraged buyout, the purchaser relies heavily on borrowed funds, and the acquired company's assets and future cash flows are commonly expected to support repayment. For example, an investment firm may acquire a retail company for USD 100 million by contributing USD 25 million of its own capital and borrowing the remaining USD 75 million.”

he interaction demonstrates that Indonesian operated as an epistemic resource that allowed students to articulate conceptual problems before engaging with English professional discourse. The student was not translating an already completed idea into English but constructing the idea itself through multilingual inquiry and AI-mediated explanation. This finding supports research showing that EFL learners use first-language resources during AI-assisted writing to generate ideas, solve problems, and transform conceptual understanding into English texts (Yang & Lin, 2025). The pattern also extends

previous observations that translanguaging occurs throughout the writing process, including planning, drafting, problem-solving, and self-regulation activities (Zheng & Drybrough, 2023).

A similar process appeared in S2's use of Indonesian when examining financial analysis concepts related to liquidity. Although the student already understood the formula for calculating current ratio, the interaction with AI was directed toward interpreting what the ratio represented in a real business context. The student intentionally avoided using English at the initial stage because linguistic accuracy could shift attention away from financial reasoning. The AI response became a point of comparison that encouraged further questioning rather than a final answer accepted without examination.

S2 explained:

"For liquidity, actually I already knew the formula, current assets divided by current liabilities. But knowing the formula is different from understanding what the number tells us about the company. I asked in Indonesian, 'Kalau current ratio terlalu tinggi, apakah selalu berarti kondisi perusahaan bagus?' From that question, I could discuss idle inventory and inefficient cash. When I prompt only in English, sometimes my attention goes to whether my question is grammatically correct. I become busy arranging the sentence, so I do not challenge the concept deeply. Also, when the AI answers in very fluent English, it is easy to think the answer must be correct. Using Indonesian first helps me check, 'Do I really understand this, or do I only recognize the terminology?' After that, I can decide how to express the idea in formal English."

This practice illustrates that digital translanguaging may reduce the separation between linguistic competence and disciplinary reasoning in Business English learning. The students' multilingual interactions with AI created opportunities to examine whether professional expressions represented accurate business meanings before incorporating them into formal writing. The finding is consistent with the view that AI-supported writing requires learners to evaluate, modify, and justify generated content rather than relying on linguistic fluency as an indicator of quality (Wang & Wang, 2025). Cognitive scaffolding emerged when students maintained responsibility for interpreting and transforming AI-generated information.

Lecturer perspectives further confirmed that AI-assisted translanguaging became pedagogically valuable only when students demonstrated conceptual ownership of the final text. L1 and L2 both distinguished between students who used AI to clarify ideas and students who adopted professional-sounding expressions without understanding their disciplinary implications. Their evaluations focused on whether students could explain terminology, connect language choices with business contexts, and defend the reasoning behind revisions. L1 provided an example involving inaccurate use of financial terminology.

L1 offered a concrete example:

"One student submitted the sentence, 'Increasing leverage will strengthen the company's liquidity position.' Linguistically, the sentence was clean and sounded quite authoritative. However, the case showed that the company already had substantial short-term liabilities. When I asked the student which liquidity measure was being strengthened and how additional borrowing would improve short-term payment capacity, the student could not explain it. She said that leverage and liquidity both referred to finance, so she assumed the sentence was acceptable. In my assessment, polished language cannot compensate for an incorrect financial relationship. I give credit when the student can paraphrase the concept, connect it with the case figures, and defend why the term is appropriate."

L2 reported a similar issue:

"I found a similar issue with the word synergy. In one proposal, the AI-generated sentence stated that the partnership would 'create immediate operational synergy.' I asked the group, 'Which operations will be combined, and where will the efficiency come from?' They could not identify any shared distribution, technology, or staffing process. They were using synergy as another word for benefit. We removed the term. My criterion is not whether the vocabulary

sounds advanced. The student must demonstrate that the expression refers to something observable in the business case.”

The lecturers’ accounts indicate that AI-generated language can increase textual sophistication while simultaneously masking conceptual limitations. This finding reflects concerns that AI-generated text provides significant linguistic affordances but may also reproduce difficulties when learners lack the ability to evaluate accuracy, relevance, and disciplinary appropriateness (Warschauer et al., 2023). The present data suggest that stronger students benefited from AI because they possessed the analytical resources required to question outputs, request clarification, and reject unsuitable formulations. Similar patterns have been identified in research showing that AI assistance produces different outcomes depending on learners’ existing writing capabilities and critical engagement with generated texts (Woo et al., 2024a).

The theme therefore demonstrates that digital translanguaging combined with AI assistance does not automatically produce deeper learning. The productive element was determined by how students positioned AI responses within the writing process. Students who treated AI-generated language as material for evaluation and transformation demonstrated cognitive engagement, whereas students who accepted fluent output without examination risked replacing reasoning with textual imitation. The findings position digital translanguaging as a process of accountable meaning construction in which Indonesian, English, and AI-generated resources interact to support disciplinary understanding. This interpretation aligns with the argument that critical AI literacy requires learners to evaluate output, recognize limitations, and maintain control over rhetorical and conceptual decisions during AI-assisted writing (Ou et al., 2024).

Digital Translanguaging as Communicative Bridging in Collaborative Writing

The second reflexive theme demonstrates that digital translanguaging functioned as a communicative bridge that enabled students to coordinate ideas, negotiate meanings, and construct Business English texts collaboratively. While the first theme emphasized individual conceptual exploration, this theme highlights how multilingual resources operated within peer interaction, AI-mediated revision, and shared decision-making during writing activities. Students S4–S6 used Indonesian, English, and AI-generated suggestions to maintain participation, clarify intentions, and evaluate whether particular expressions aligned with professional communication expectations. Indonesian was frequently employed during collaborative reasoning when students discussed rhetorical effects, interpersonal relationships, and contextual appropriateness, while English became the primary resource for testing and presenting the final written product. This pattern indicates that translanguaging supported collaborative meaning-making rather than representing a limitation in English development (Koralage et al., 2023).

The classroom observations and writing artifacts revealed that collaborative translanguaging involved multilingual peer metatalk, lexical negotiation, AI-mediated reformulation, and distributed digital literacy practices. Students did not use AI as an individual replacement for writing but incorporated it into collective discussions where generated suggestions were examined, modified, or rejected. Their interactions showed that AI responses became conversational objects around which students negotiated professional meanings. The writing process therefore involved multiple layers of mediation, including peer explanations, digital tools, existing disciplinary knowledge, and lecturer expectations. This finding supports the argument that digital translanguaging in higher education involves the coordination of linguistic and technological resources within complex learning ecologies rather than isolated language practices (Lu & Gu, 2024).

An example of this process appeared during a collaborative business complaint-response writing task. S4, S5, and S6 initially produced a sentence requesting product replacement from a business partner, but they questioned whether the selected verb represented an appropriate balance between contractual authority and relationship management. Their discussion moved between Indonesian and English as they examined the pragmatic consequences of alternative expressions.

S4 opened:

“For the second paragraph, we wrote, ‘We demand PT Aruna to replace the defective units.’ Terlalu keras nggak, especially because we still want a long-term contract?”

S5 responded:

“Demand sounds like ultimatum. Tapi kalau request, maybe it sounds too weak because they already missed the quality standard twice.”

S6 proposed an alternative:

“What about recommend? ‘We recommend that PT Aruna replace the defective units.’”

S4 pushed back:

“Kalau recommend, they can treat it as optional. We are the buyer, and replacement is already in the agreement.”

S5 offered a synthesis:

“Maybe ‘We request the immediate replacement.’ Jadi tetap polite, but the expected action is clear.”

S6 added the final refinement:

“Yes, and add the contractual basis. Not only emotional complaint.”

The interaction illustrates that students were not searching for direct linguistic equivalents but evaluating how language choices shaped professional relationships. The use of Indonesian allowed students to discuss pragmatic meanings more explicitly before returning to English formulation. Their decision-making process involved considerations of politeness, authority, and contractual expectations, which are essential components of Business English communication. This finding extends the understanding of translanguaging as a practice that supports rhetorical awareness and knowledge construction rather than merely facilitating comprehension (Tai & Wei, 2021). The students’ multilingual discussion functioned as a bridge between informal reasoning and formal professional discourse.

AI-generated feedback further expanded this collaborative process by providing alternative formulations that students collectively evaluated. One example occurred when students revised a marketing proposal containing an overly certain prediction regarding sales growth. The AI system suggested a more professional expression, but students recognized that the revised sentence still contained an unsupported assumption. They retained some linguistic features from the AI response while rejecting its excessive certainty.

The original student sentence read:

“Our marketing strategy guarantees that your company will obtain 30% sales growth within three months.”

The AI recommended:

“We are confident that our marketing strategy will deliver at least 30% sales growth within the first three months of implementation.”

S5 identified a problem:

“AI only changed guarantees into we are confident, but the claim is still too absolute.”

S6 agreed:

“Yes, and it added at least 30%. Itu malah lebih berani. In our calculation, 30% is the optimistic projection, not the minimum.”

S5 proposed a revision:

“What if we use ‘is projected to generate sales growth of up to 30%’?”

S6 offered a refinement:

"I prefer support rather than generate. The campaign is not the only factor. Price, stock availability and competitor response also affect sales."

S5 concurred

"Right. So we accept the more formal structure from AI, but not the certainty."

The final collaboratively revised sentence read:

"Based on the projected market reach, the proposed campaign is expected to support sales growth of up to 30% within the first three months, subject to product availability and market conditions."

This revision episode demonstrates that AI functioned as a provisional resource within collaborative writing rather than as an authoritative writing agent. Students used the generated text to identify possible structures and vocabulary choices, but the final decision emerged from peer negotiation and contextual evaluation. Such practices correspond with research indicating that AI-assisted writing requires learners to develop critical capacities for evaluating generated content, identifying limitations, and making purposeful rhetorical decisions (Wang & Wang, 2025). The finding also reinforces that AI support becomes educationally meaningful when learners remain actively involved in transforming and contextualizing generated suggestions.

Lecturer L3 interpreted these multilingual collaborative practices as a form of contemporary digital literacy rather than evidence of inadequate English proficiency. The lecturer emphasized that professional communication increasingly involves interaction across languages, digital platforms, and technological resources. In this context, the ability to negotiate meaning across different resources represents a relevant workplace competence, provided that students remain capable of explaining and defending their final choices.

L3 elaborated:

"In an actual workplace, employees do not necessarily complete every stage of a document in one language. A team may discuss the client's problem in Indonesian, read an English market report, ask an AI tool to generate two possible openings, and then negotiate which English version should be sent to the client. I regard that as a legitimate digital-professional practice, not automatically as evidence of poor English. The important point is whether movement across languages leads to a reasoned decision that the students can explain. It becomes unproductive when the process is only mechanical translation, Indonesian sentence in, English sentence out, or when students cannot continue revising after the translation tool or AI is removed. At that point, the technology is not extending their repertoire. It is replacing their participation."

L3's interpretation highlights that collaborative translanguaging redistributed participation among students, peers, and digital tools. The students' ability to discuss ideas in Indonesian, evaluate AI suggestions, and return to accountable English writing reflects a broader understanding of authorship in digitally mediated environments. Similar perspectives suggest that AI tools can function as affordances and contradictions simultaneously because they expand access to linguistic resources while requiring users to maintain critical control over generated texts (Sasaki, 2023). The findings indicate that moderate students developed agency not by avoiding AI assistance, but by negotiating how AI-generated possibilities should be incorporated into their own professional writing.

The communicative bridging function of digital translanguaging therefore demonstrates that multilingual collaboration can strengthen Business English writing when students engage in purposeful negotiation and maintain responsibility for textual decisions. The practice was productive because Indonesian discussion did not replace English production but supported the development of more accurate and context-sensitive English expressions. The findings also suggest that AI-assisted collaborative writing should be designed around visible processes of explanation, revision, and reflection rather than evaluation based solely on final text quality. Research on GenAI-supported business writing similarly shows that structured pedagogical integration produces more meaningful learning outcomes than unrestricted use of generated templates (Tsai, 2025). Within this case, digital

translanguaging operated as a communicative infrastructure that connected multilingual reasoning, peer collaboration, and AI-supported professional writing development.

Digital Translanguaging as a Socio-Affective Buffer and Site of Professional-Identity Rehearsal

The third thematic pattern demonstrated that digital translanguaging operated as a socio-affective resource for students who experienced Business English writing and professional simulations as high-risk communicative situations. Students S7–S9 associated English production with hesitation, fear of negative evaluation, uncertainty about appropriate professional expression, and concerns about appearing incompetent in front of peers and lecturers. Unlike proficient students who primarily used multilingual resources to interrogate disciplinary concepts, these students initially used Indonesian and AI interaction as a psychologically safer entry point into writing activities. Their practices revealed that language choice was not only related to linguistic accessibility but also connected to emotional regulation, participation willingness, and the construction of confidence during professional communication tasks. This finding reflects previous research indicating that second-language writing anxiety influences how learners perceive and adopt AI-supported writing technologies as sources of assistance and evaluation (Liu, 2024). Within the present case, digital translanguaging reduced immediate communicative pressure by allowing students to externalize intentions before confronting the demands of formal English production.

For anxious learners, AI-assisted translanguaging changed the temporal structure of composing. Instead of beginning directly with an English draft, students first articulated their intended meaning in Indonesian, requested explanations or possible formulations from AI, evaluated the generated response, and gradually transformed the output into a personally acceptable English text. This sequence created an intermediate reflective space where students could experiment with professional language without immediate social exposure. S7's experience illustrated how AI functioned as a private rehearsal environment that supported movement from avoidance toward participation.

S7 described the transformation vividly:

“Before using AI, usually I opened the blank document and just waited. I was afraid to start because if the first sentence was wrong, I felt the lecturer or my friends would think I did not understand the business situation. Sometimes I already had the idea, but I did not know how a professional person should say it. With ChatGPT, I could first type in Indonesian, for example, ‘Saya mau menagih pembayaran, tetapi jangan terdengar marah.’ Nobody was directly judging the question, so I was more willing to try. After it showed a structure, I changed the greeting, shortened some sentences, and added the actual invoice information. I still checked it many times, but at least I started earlier and submitted the email on time. In the role-play, I prepared two sentences from that process, and for the first time I volunteered to speak before being called.”

The account indicates that AI-mediated translanguaging influenced not only the linguistic outcome but also students' willingness to initiate communication. The reduction of perceived judgment enabled hesitant learners to engage in repeated experimentation with professional discourse patterns before participating publicly. Similar patterns have been identified in research on conversational GenAI, where interaction with AI systems may improve learners' willingness to communicate and self-perceived competence while reducing affective barriers associated with foreign-language communication (Wang et al., 2024). However, emotional support should not be interpreted as equivalent to language development because increased confidence does not automatically guarantee independent communicative competence. The relationship between anxiety reduction and professional identity formation became visible when students used AI-generated language as material for negotiation rather than as final answers. S9's customer complaint response activity illustrates that the student used Indonesian to clarify interpersonal intentions, requested an English formulation from AI, and then critically adjusted the output according to business responsibility and contextual accuracy.

S9 Indonesian prompt:

“Saya harus membalas customer yang komplain karena Order 5482 terlambat lima hari. Tolong buat email bahasa Inggris yang meminta maaf, menjelaskan bahwa keterlambatan

terjadi karena pemeriksaan bea cukai oleh pihak ketiga, dan menawarkan refund biaya pengiriman express. Jangan menyalahkan customer dan jangan terlalu defensif.”

S9 explained during the retrospective interview:

“I did not use it directly because ‘we take full responsibility’ was not completely accurate. The customs inspection was outside the company, although we still had responsibility to communicate. I also thought ‘the inconvenience’ was too general, so I mentioned the five-day delay and what we would do next.”

This episode demonstrates that digital translanguaging created opportunities for students to rehearse professional positioning rather than simply acquire formulaic expressions. S9 evaluated whether AI-generated language accurately represented the company’s responsibility, customer relationship, and communicative purpose. The student’s professional voice emerged through selection, rejection, and modification of AI suggestions. Research on AI-assisted L2 writing emphasizes that voice remains a central concern because generated language can either support writers’ expression or obscure their individual positioning when accepted without reflection (Sandstead & Kibler, 2025). The present findings extend this perspective by showing that professional identity development occurs through the interaction between emotional security and critical control over generated language.

The socio-affective function of digital translanguaging was therefore characterized by both affordances and risks. AI provided students with privacy, immediate feedback, and opportunities for repeated practice, which were particularly valuable for learners who avoided English communication because of fear of failure. Nevertheless, excessive dependence on generated language could limit the development of autonomous rhetorical decision-making if students relied on AI to determine tone, structure, and meaning without sufficient evaluation. Research on AI-supported EFL writing similarly highlights that technological assistance can redistribute cognitive demands rather than eliminate them because learners remain responsible for judging appropriateness, reliability, and contextual relevance (Woo et al., 2024b). In this study, the pedagogical value of AI depended on whether students gradually moved from requesting complete formulations toward evaluating and refining specific linguistic and rhetorical choices.

The findings suggest that socio-affective support should be conceptualized as a pathway toward agency rather than a substitute for learner development. Students S7–S9 benefited when digital translanguaging enabled them to enter professional communication tasks that previously appeared inaccessible, but meaningful development occurred when they became capable of defending their linguistic decisions independently. This pattern corresponds with the argument that critical GenAI literacy requires learners to maintain control over rhetorical judgment, ethical decision-making, and ownership of the final text (Ou et al., 2024). Digital translanguaging supported professional identity rehearsal when students used AI as a space for experimentation while retaining responsibility for the meanings they constructed.

Across the anxious student group, the evidence indicates that AI-mediated translanguaging reshaped the relationship between affect, language learning, and professional communication. The practice did not eliminate anxiety but transformed anxiety management from avoidance into preparation and reflection. Students were able to test professional voices, evaluate interpersonal positioning, and gradually participate in Business English activities with greater confidence. The central issue was not whether AI reduced emotional barriers, but whether the support provided enabled students to develop independent judgment after the temporary scaffold was removed. This distinction positions digital translanguaging as a potentially productive pedagogical practice when emotional accessibility is integrated with critical evaluation and accountable authorship.

Pedagogical Tensions and Theoretical Synthesis

The final thematic pattern integrated the perspectives of lecturers and revealed the pedagogical tensions emerging from AI-assisted Business English writing. While students experienced digital translanguaging as a resource for conceptual development, collaboration, and confidence building, lecturers were required to negotiate the boundaries between legitimate learning support and the displacement of student authorship. The findings indicate that the central issue was not whether multilingual practices or GenAI use should be permitted, but how these practices could be aligned with

the educational objectives of developing professional communication competence. Within the observed course, lecturers recognized that contemporary writing processes increasingly involve digital tools, multilingual resources, and algorithmic assistance, yet they maintained that students must remain accountable for the meanings, evidence, and rhetorical decisions represented in their texts. This tension reflects broader debates regarding the role of generative AI in education, where opportunities for learning coexist with concerns about authenticity, dependency, and assessment validity (Barrett & Pack, 2023). The findings therefore position AI-assisted translanguaging as a pedagogical negotiation rather than a simple technological adoption issue.

Lecturers' perspectives demonstrated that English-only expectations and AI-mediated multilingual practices existed in continuous negotiation. L1, L2, and L3 did not reject students' use of Indonesian or AI tools when these resources supported conceptual understanding and rhetorical decision-making. Their concern emerged when students relied on generated text without demonstrating ownership of the underlying ideas. L1 explained that professional competence could not be inferred from linguistic sophistication alone because business communication requires accurate interpretation of financial concepts, audience relationships, and contextual constraints.

L1 articulated the institutional constraint:

"The institutional expectation is that Business English classes should maximize English exposure, particularly during presentations, simulations, and the final submitted product. I still allow Indonesian during planning when students need to clarify a business concept, but I ask them to show the transition into English. AI may be used to explain terminology or suggest alternatives. What I cannot accept is a complete AI-generated answer that appears as the student's independent performance. The final competence we assess remains the student's ability to communicate the business meaning in English."

This perspective illustrates that translanguaging was accepted when it functioned as a bridge toward accountable English production rather than as a replacement for learning. The distinction between support and substitution became central to lecturers' evaluation practices. Such an approach corresponds with research arguing that AI-generated text creates both affordances and contradictions for L2 writers because access to fluent language does not automatically represent the development of writing competence (Warschauer et al., 2023). The lecturers' interpretations also align with translanguaging theory, which challenges restrictive views of language learning while maintaining that multilingual resources must contribute to meaningful knowledge construction rather than merely facilitate surface-level text production (García et al., 2021).

The issue of disclosure emerged as another important dimension of pedagogical judgment. L2 emphasized that transparency regarding AI interaction was necessary because assessment should capture students' decision-making processes rather than only the final written product. For the lecturer, disclosure was not considered sufficient evidence of ethical practice; students were expected to demonstrate the ability to evaluate, revise, and justify AI-assisted language choices.

L2 emphasized disclosure:

"For me, disclosure is central. I ask students to submit important prompts and indicate which parts of the text were substantially influenced by AI. I do not automatically reduce the score because they used ChatGPT or Claude. I examine whether they can justify the selected expression, identify a suggestion they rejected, and revise the paragraph when I change the audience or purpose. When a student cannot explain a phrase or reproduce the reasoning behind it, that sentence may be fluent, but it is not reliable evidence of the student's competence."

This position reflects a shift from product-oriented assessment toward process-visible assessment, where writing development is evaluated through interactions among prompts, revisions, reflections, and rhetorical decisions. Previous studies have emphasized that academic integrity in the era of ChatGPT cannot be effectively maintained through detection mechanisms alone because educational practices must address how students engage with AI systems during knowledge production (Cotton et al., 2024). The findings further support the need for assessment models that recognize AI as

part of contemporary writing environments while preserving student accountability for intellectual and communicative choices.

L3 further conceptualized authorship as the practical boundary separating productive AI assistance from substitution. According to this interpretation, AI use remained educationally meaningful when students employed the tool to explore alternatives, compare expressions, or receive explanations, whereas authorship was compromised when students delegated the entire writing process to the system.

L3 proposed authorship as the boundary:

“I use authorship as the practical boundary. Asking for feedback on tone, comparing three subject lines, checking whether a request sounds too direct, or obtaining an explanation in Indonesian can function as scaffolding. Asking the system to write the entire proposal and then changing only the company name is authorship substitution. Even when the student declares the AI use, disclosure alone does not satisfy the learning outcome. The student must still make consequential decisions about content, evidence, audience, and language. Otherwise, we are assessing the model’s performance rather than the student’s development.”

This understanding contributes to the conceptualization of accountable digital translanguaging, in which students are permitted to mobilize multilingual and technological resources while remaining responsible for the final communicative outcome. Such a perspective extends current discussions of critical AI literacy by emphasizing that effective GenAI-supported writing requires not only operational competence but also the ability to evaluate algorithmic suggestions, recognize limitations, and maintain rhetorical agency (Darvin, 2025). Critical AI literacy is therefore inseparable from disciplinary knowledge because professional writers must understand why a particular expression is appropriate within a specific business context.

The synthesis of the three thematic findings suggests that digital translanguaging in AI-assisted Business English writing represents a redistribution of agency rather than a simple increase or reduction of student control. Proficient students exercised agency through critical interrogation of AI-generated language, moderate students developed agency through collaborative negotiation, and anxious students initially accessed agency through emotionally safer forms of participation. Across these different trajectories, agency depended on students’ ability to question, modify, and justify AI-supported decisions. Research on multilingual writers in AI-mediated environments similarly indicates that emerging writer identities are shaped through processes of translanguaging, repositioning, and negotiation with technological systems rather than through isolated individual production (Ou et al., 2026).

The pedagogical implication emerging from this study is that Business English education requires movement beyond the binary between English-only authorship and unrestricted AI automation. Effective instruction should incorporate process-oriented practices that make students’ linguistic and technological decisions visible through prompt documentation, reflection on AI suggestions, explanation of terminology, and independent revision activities. Such an approach recognizes the realities of AI-mediated professional communication while preserving the central objective of language education: developing writers who can construct, evaluate, and defend meaningful communication. The concept of accountable digital translanguaging proposed through this study provides a framework for integrating multilingual resources, AI affordances, and professional writing development without reducing competence to either linguistic purity or technological efficiency.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how students and lecturers interpreted digital translanguaging within AI-assisted Business English writing and revealed that the phenomenon extended beyond simple alternation between Indonesian and English. Digital translanguaging operated as a dynamic linguistic and technological ecology in which languages, disciplinary knowledge, AI interfaces, peer interaction, genre expectations, and emerging professional identities were continuously coordinated according to specific communicative demands. Proficient students mobilized multilingual prompting to deepen conceptual understanding, evaluate AI-generated information, and refine business terminology, while moderate students used multilingual interaction as a bridge for negotiating tone, lexical precision, and

audience expectations during collaborative writing. Passive and anxious students employed AI-mediated first-language interaction as a low-risk environment for initiating writing, rehearsing professional voices, and increasing participation in business communication tasks. These benefits, however, depended on students' capacity to critically appropriate AI-generated language through explanation, revision, rejection, and justification, because fluent output without conceptual control risked weakening reasoning and authorship. The findings position digital translanguaging as a productive pedagogical resource when integrated with critical evaluation, disciplinary awareness, and accountable decision-making rather than unrestricted reliance on automated text generation.

The study also highlights a structural tension between institutional expectations of English-dominant performance and the multilingual, digitally mediated practices increasingly present in contemporary professional communication. Business English pedagogy requires a shift from evaluating only final textual products toward recognizing the processes through which students coordinate linguistic resources, digital tools, and rhetorical choices. Process-visible accountability, including documentation of significant prompts, reflection on AI suggestions, disclosure of substantial assistance, explanation of terminology, and demonstration of independent revision, provides a more appropriate framework for assessing competence in AI-mediated writing environments. Such an approach maintains the importance of English proficiency while acknowledging that professional communication increasingly involves interaction among multiple languages, technologies, and knowledge systems. This interpretive qualitative case study remains limited by its bounded context, involving one institution, one course cohort, a specific teaching period, three lecturers, and nine students, which positions contextual transferability rather than statistical generalization as the relevant criterion. Future research should examine broader institutional settings and longitudinal writing trajectories to investigate how learners develop autonomy, rhetorical judgment, and professional voice as AI scaffolding is gradually reduced.

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