



Teachers' Linguistic Backgrounds and Authentic Assessment: A Qualitative Study in Multilingual Early Childhood Education

Theresia Alviani Sum¹✉

¹PG PAUD, Universitas Katolik Indonesia Santu Paulus Ruteng, Indonesia

DOI: [10.31004/aulad.v9i3.1745](https://doi.org/10.31004/aulad.v9i3.1745)

✉ Corresponding author:
[annysum85@gmail.com]

ABSTRAK

Latar belakang: Asesmen autentik dapat kehilangan bukti perkembangan ketika bahasa ekspresi anak berbeda dari bahasa dokumentasi guru. Tujuan: Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana latar belakang kebahasaan guru membentuk asesmen autentik di kelas PAUD multibahasa. Metode: Studi kasus kualitatif melibatkan 10 guru dari 10 satuan PAUD yang dipilih secara purposif. Data berasal dari wawancara semi-terstruktur dan 10 set dokumen berupa ceklis, portofolio, dan catatan anekdot, lalu dianalisis melalui pengodean tematik, perbandingan lintas kasus, triangulasi sumber, dan pemeriksaan anggota. Hasil: Guru yang menguasai bahasa lokal anak lebih sering menggunakan catatan naratif dan observasi peka konteks, sedangkan guru yang praktiknya didominasi Bahasa Indonesia lebih mengandalkan daftar periksa terstruktur. Interaksi multibahasa anak juga belum sepenuhnya terwakili dalam dokumen formal. Kesimpulan: Repertoar kebahasaan guru memengaruhi cara bukti perkembangan dimunculkan, ditafsirkan, dan dicatat. Dokumentasi responsif bahasa serta pelatihan asesmen multibahasa diperlukan untuk meningkatkan keadilan asesmen.

Kata kunci: *asesmen autentik; kelas multibahasa; latar belakang kebahasaan guru; pendidikan anak usia dini; translanguaging*

ABSTRACT

Background: Authentic assessment may overlook developmental evidence when children's expressive language differs from teachers' documentation language. Aim: This study analyzed how teachers' linguistic backgrounds shaped authentic assessment in multilingual early childhood classrooms. Methods: A qualitative case study involved 10 purposively selected teachers from 10 centers. Data came from semi-structured interviews and 10 sets of checklists, portfolios, and anecdotal records, analyzed through thematic coding, cross-case comparison, source triangulation, and member checking. Results: Teachers proficient in children's local languages more often used narrative notes and context-sensitive observations, whereas teachers whose practices were dominated by Bahasa Indonesia relied more on structured checklists. Children's multilingual interactions were also incompletely represented in formal documents. Conclusion: Teachers' linguistic repertoires influenced how developmental evidence was elicited, interpreted, and documented. Language-responsive documentation and multilingual assessment training are needed to improve assessment fairness.

Keywords: *authentic assessment; early childhood education; multilingual classrooms; teacher linguistic background; translanguaging*

Article Info

Copyright (c) 2026 Theresia Alviani Sum

Received 10 August 2026, Accepted 3 October 2026, Published 4 October 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

Authentic assessment in multilingual early childhood classrooms can become inequitable when children demonstrate competence in a language that teachers or formal documentation systems do not fully accommodate. Because early childhood evidence is produced through play, conversation, gestures, routines, and participation, a mismatch between children's expressive language and the language of assessment can obscure developmental performance even when context-based tools are used. Recent research defines authentic assessment as documentation of children's actual functioning, agency, and interaction in meaningful settings rather than the mere use of real-life tasks (Londono et al., 2025; Macy et al., 2022; Montoya-Fernández et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2025). Indonesian studies similarly emphasize observation, anecdotal records, checklists, portfolios, and activity-based evidence for documenting development comprehensively (Karta et al., 2022; Mastikawati et al., 2022). The unresolved issue is therefore not only which assessment instrument teachers use, but whether the linguistic conditions of evidence collection allow children's competence to be recognized accurately.

Language becomes a critical issue when authentic assessment is implemented in multilingual early childhood classrooms. In these settings, children may express understanding, emotion, social intention, and narrative meaning through local languages, Bahasa Indonesia, or mixed language forms. Assessment evidence can become incomplete when the language used to elicit and document children's responses does not match the language children use most confidently. Studies on multilingual children show that language background, home language, school language, and interactional context influence how children demonstrate competence and how adults interpret their performance (Buac & Jarzynski, 2022; Ćatibušić, 2019; MacLeod & Glaspey, 2022; Nag et al., 2019; Sun et al., 2018). Therefore, assessment in multilingual classrooms should be culturally and linguistically responsive so that children are not judged as less competent simply because their strongest evidence of learning appears in a language that is not fully accommodated by the assessment system (Buac & Jarzynski, 2022; Ramírez et al., 2021).

Teachers occupy a central position in this process because they mediate the interaction through which evidence of learning is elicited, interpreted, and documented. The language that teachers use during instruction can shape children's participation, vocabulary use, and willingness to respond. Research on multilingual preschool classrooms shows that teachers bring diverse linguistic backgrounds into (Montoya-Fernández et al., 2024) classroom interaction and use various language strategies to communicate with dual language learners and support children's home-language maintenance (Chan et al., 2022). The quality of the classroom linguistic environment also contributes to children's language growth, especially when teachers provide rich interaction, extended discourse, and meaningful opportunities for children to express ideas (Harvey & Wong, 2024; Justice et al., 2018). In culturally and linguistically diverse early childhood settings, teacher knowledge must therefore include not only general pedagogy but also sensitivity to children's language practices and the ability to respond to linguistic diversity in daily learning and assessment (Harvey & Wong, 2024; Mahyuddin et al., 2024; Veliz et al., 2025).

Translanguaging provides a relevant lens because it treats children's full linguistic repertoires as resources for meaning-making and participation rather than as separate systems that must be used rigidly. Applied to assessment, this lens changes the evaluative question from whether a child responds in the institutionally preferred language to whether the child demonstrates the targeted developmental indicator—such as reasoning, narrative ability, self-regulation, or social communication—through any available linguistic resource. Evidence from multilingual early childhood settings shows that teachers support children through flexible language use, extended discourse, and culturally responsive interaction (Hartmann & Hélot, 2021; Harvey & Wong, 2024; Zheng et al., 2021). However, translanguaging remains more visible in instruction than in formal assessment records, which often continue to require a single standardized language.

Indonesian studies show that authentic assessment supports developmental monitoring but that teachers still need practical documentation tools (Efiawati et al., 2021; Fatmawati & Aziz, 2022; Mufliana et al., 2024). Research on receptive language and classroom language environments further demonstrates that intelligence, family background, interactional quality, and opportunities for extended discourse shape how children display language competence (Hikmatuzzohrah et al., 2024; Justice et al., 2018). Studies of play-based learning and language-learning media indicate that peer interaction and meaningful media use can elicit language differently from teacher-led tasks (Priani & Kristiantari, 2024; Prihatiningsih et al., 2025). These findings imply that assessment strategies must capture the context in which a response occurs, distinguish imitated language from meaningful communication, and provide space for children's spontaneous utterances. International studies likewise show that teachers' language choices and culturally responsive practices affect multilingual children's participation (Chan et al., 2022; Kirsch et al., 2020; Veliz et al., 2025; Zheng et al., 2021). Yet these studies do not sufficiently explain how teachers' own linguistic repertoires influence the conversion of multilingual classroom evidence into formal assessment documentation.

The theoretical gap concerns the mediating role of the teacher's linguistic repertoire between children's multilingual performance and the monolingual form of official assessment records. Existing scholarship explains authentic assessment tools and multilingual pedagogy, but it rarely examines how teacher-child language alignment affects three linked assessment processes: eliciting evidence, interpreting its developmental meaning, and converting it into written documentation. The novelty of this study is its analysis of that mediation across teachers with different linguistic backgrounds, thereby positioning language alignment as a condition of assessment validity rather than merely a feature of classroom communication.

Accordingly, this study analyzes how early childhood teachers' linguistic backgrounds shape authentic assessment in multilingual classrooms through three operational questions: (1) how are teachers' language repertoires associated with their selection of assessment techniques; (2) how are children's local-language and mixed-language expressions interpreted as developmental evidence; and (3) how do formal documentation practices represent or constrain that evidence? By integrating these questions in one qualitative case study, the study aims to formulate principles for language-responsive documentation, teacher professional development, and institutional assessment policy.

2. METHODS

The study employed a qualitative case study design to analyze how early childhood teachers' linguistic backgrounds shape the implementation of authentic assessment in multilingual classroom settings. This design was selected because the study focused on assessment practices as they occur in natural early childhood education environments, where language choice, teacher-child interaction, and documentation routines are embedded in local sociolinguistic contexts. The case study approach enabled an in-depth examination of how teachers elicited, interpreted, and recorded children's learning evidence across multilingual classroom situations.

The participants consisted of 10 early childhood teachers from 10 PAUD centers in Manggarai Regency, with one teacher representing each center. Data collection was conducted from May to July 2026. Participants were selected purposively based on three criteria: they were actively involved in daily classroom instruction, they routinely conducted or contributed to children's developmental assessment, and they worked in classrooms where children used Bahasa Indonesia, local languages, or mixed language forms during interaction. All participating teachers had teaching experience ranging from five to fifteen years. This range was considered appropriate because the study aimed to examine assessment practices shaped by sustained professional routines rather than practices of beginning teachers only.

Teachers' linguistic backgrounds were operationalized from interview data on first language, self-reported proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia and local language(s), and language choices during instruction and assessment. Authentic assessment practices were coded from documents and interviews according to the instrument used (checklist, portfolio, anecdotal record, or open observation), the language of elicitation and documentation, the form of evidence recorded, and any adaptation to children's first language. These operational indicators guided within-case coding and cross-case comparison.

Data were collected through documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews. Documentary data consisted of 10 sets of assessment documents, one set from each participating PAUD center. The documents comprised checklists, portfolios, and anecdotal records used by the centers to document children's development. These materials were examined to identify patterns in assessment techniques, documentation language, evidence recorded, and responsiveness to children's language use. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 10 participating teachers to clarify their language histories, instructional language choices, assessment routines, interpretation of children's local-language responses, and challenges in translating classroom evidence into formal assessment documentation.

The research instruments consisted of a document analysis guideline and a semi-structured interview protocol. The document analysis guideline was used to review the checklists, portfolios, and anecdotal records collected from the 10 PAUD centers. It focused on five aspects: the language used in documentation, the type of assessment tool, the form of evidence recorded, the presence or absence of local-language evidence, and the degree of adaptation to children's language use. The interview protocol included questions about teachers' first language, proficiency in local languages and Bahasa Indonesia, daily classroom language practices, preferred assessment techniques, strategies for eliciting responses from children, and difficulties in documenting children's multilingual expressions.

Data analysis followed qualitative content analysis with thematic coding and cross-case comparison. The analysis began with open coding to identify recurring units of meaning related to teachers' language repertoires, instructional language choice, children's preferred language use, assessment tools, and documentation practices. The codes were then grouped into broader categories, including language alignment between teacher and child, narrative versus structured assessment practices, documentation language, and adaptation to children's first language. Cross-case comparison was used to examine similarities and differences among

teachers and centers. Qualitative prevalence descriptors were used for context-level patterns, while a percentage was retained only when a clear case-level denominator was available.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation, member checking, and reflexive analysis. Triangulation was conducted by comparing documentary evidence with teacher interview data. Member checking was carried out with selected teachers to confirm key interpretations, especially those related to teachers' reasons for using certain languages and assessment tools. Reflexive notes were maintained during coding and interpretation to monitor possible researcher assumptions and to ensure that the findings remained grounded in the data.

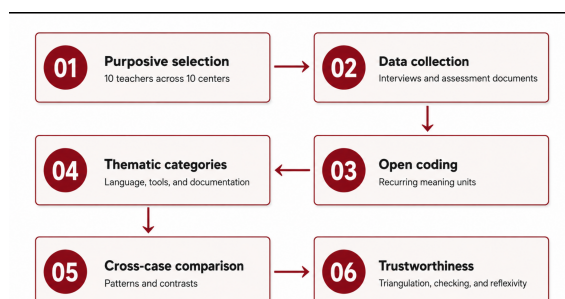


Figure 1. Research design and analysis flow.

Ethical procedures were applied throughout the study. Participation was based on informed consent. Teacher identities and institutional information were protected through the use of codes such as G-01, G-02, and G-03. Documentary materials were used only for research purposes and were reviewed in a way that minimized the disclosure of identifying information about teachers, children, and PAUD centers.

The cross-case tables reported in the Results section were developed from documentary records and interview data. Tables 1, 2, and 4 present selected illustrative teacher cases to display contrasting patterns identified across the full 10-case analysis; they are not participant rosters. Table 3 summarizes context-level language patterns qualitatively. In Table 5, the case-level percentage uses the 10 teacher-center cases as the denominator: formal assessment documentation was completed in Bahasa Indonesia in 10/10 cases (100%).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study examined how early childhood teachers' linguistic backgrounds shaped the implementation of authentic assessment in multilingual PAUD classrooms. The findings were derived from semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers and supported by 10 sets of assessment documents comprising checklists, portfolios, and anecdotal records. Overall, local languages played an important role in daily classroom interaction, while formal assessment documentation was consistently completed in Bahasa Indonesia. This pattern created a gap between the language children commonly used to express learning and the language teachers used to record assessment evidence. Tables 1, 2, and 4 display selected illustrative cases only; all 10 teacher cases were included in the thematic coding and cross-case comparison.

Teachers' language practices and assessment strategies. The first pattern concerns the relationship between teachers' classroom language practices and the assessment strategies they used. Teachers who frequently used the local language during classroom interaction tended to rely on narrative and open-ended forms of assessment. They used anecdotal notes, descriptive observations, and contextual records to capture children's responses during play, conversation, and informal learning activities. In contrast, teachers whose classroom interaction was dominated by Bahasa Indonesia were more likely to use structured assessment forms or checklists.

As shown in Table 1, selected illustrative cases with frequent local-language use, such as G-01 and G-03, applied narrative anecdotal notes and open-ended observations. The contrasting examples G-02 and G-04 used local language less often and relied more on checklists with observational notes or structured assessment forms. These cases illustrate the broader cross-case pattern identified across all 10 teachers: language practices were associated with the type of evidence teachers felt able to capture and document.

Table 1. Illustrative Teacher Language Practices and Assessment Techniques

Teacher ID	Local Language Use	Bahasa Indonesia Use	Assessment Strategy
G-01	Frequent	Moderate	Narrative anecdotal note
G-02	Occasional	Dominant	Checklist with observational notes
G-03	Frequent	Limited	Open-ended observations
G-04	Low	High	Structured assessment forms

Source: Research data analysis based on documentary records and teacher interviews.

Note: G-01–G-04 are selected illustrative cases; all 10 teachers were included in coding and cross-case comparison.

Teachers explained that local language use helped them clarify instructions, sustain children's participation, and understand children's spontaneous expressions. One teacher stated, "I always use our local dialect when explaining tasks to the children during playtime. If I use Bahasa Indonesia, many children don't respond because they don't understand." Another teacher gave a similar explanation: "Most of the kids can't follow my instruction in Bahasa Indonesia. I must switch to local language to make them understand." These interview excerpts show that local language use was not incidental; it functioned as a practical strategy to support comprehension and participation during assessment-related interaction.

Alignment between teachers' language backgrounds and assessment tools. The second pattern relates to teachers' linguistic backgrounds, instructional language choices, and the type of assessment tools used. Table 2 presents three illustrative cases representing local-language, Bahasa Indonesia-dominant, and mixed linguistic profiles. Across the full 10-case analysis, teachers whose practices were more aligned with children's local language tended to use narrative notes, whereas Bahasa Indonesia-dominant practice was more closely associated with checklist use. Mixed linguistic practices were associated with greater use of open-ended observations.

Table 2. Illustrative Language Background, Instruction Language, and Assessment Tool Type

Teacher ID	Language Background	Instruction Language	Assessment Tool Type
G-01	Local language	Local language	Narrative notes
G-02	Bahasa Indonesia	Bahasa Indonesia	Checklist
G-03	Mixed	Local language and Bahasa Indonesia	Open-ended observations

Source: Research data analysis based on documentary records and teacher interviews.

Note: G-01–G-03 are selected illustrative cases; all 10 teachers were included in coding and cross-case comparison.

This finding suggests that teachers with broader linguistic repertoires had more flexibility in eliciting and documenting children's responses. Teachers who understood children's local language were able to record more detailed descriptions of what children said and did. In contrast, teachers who were less confident in the local language described structured tools as easier to complete because these tools provided fixed indicators and reduced the need for extended narrative interpretation.

One teacher explained the advantage of sharing the same language with children: "It's easier for me to write down what I observe when I speak the same language as the kids. I can describe exactly what they say or do." This statement illustrates how linguistic alignment supported teachers' confidence in recording authentic evidence from classroom interaction.

Children's dominant language across classroom contexts. The third finding concerns children's language use across different classroom contexts. Interview and documentary data showed that children's spontaneous language was predominantly local, especially during peer play and informal conversation. Bahasa Indonesia appeared more frequently in teacher-led interaction and in limited expressions influenced by digital media.

Table 3 summarizes the relative prominence of language patterns across classroom contexts using qualitative prevalence descriptors. Peer play and conversation were predominantly associated with the local language; teacher interaction was more often associated with Bahasa Indonesia, while digital-media-related expression was occasional. Teachers reported that children often used local language when interacting freely with peers, but shifted partially to Bahasa Indonesia when responding to teachers or repeating phrases from digital content.

Table 3. Language Context and Dominant Language Use

Language Context	Dominant Language	Qualitative Prevalence
Peer play and conversation	Local language	Predominant
Teacher interaction	Bahasa Indonesia	Secondary
Digital-media-related expression	Bahasa Indonesia	Occasional

Source: Research data analysis based on documentary records and teacher interviews.

Note: Prevalence is reported qualitatively because context-level interaction opportunities were not treated as a fixed set of comparable events across cases.

One teacher stated, “They speak Manggarai with friends, but sometimes repeat phrases from cartoons or YouTube in Bahasa Indonesia even if they don’t really understand what it means.” This excerpt indicates that children’s Bahasa Indonesia use was not always a sign of full communicative competence. In some cases, it reflected imitation from media exposure rather than meaningful interaction. Therefore, children’s strongest expressive resources were more visible in local-language peer interaction than in formal teacher-led communication.

Documentation modes and teachers’ first-language backgrounds. The fourth finding concerns the relationship between teachers’ first-language backgrounds and their modes of assessment documentation. Table 4 presents three illustrative cases rather than the complete participant roster. Within the full 10-case analysis, teachers whose first language included Manggarai tended to use more narrative and flexible documentation, whereas Bahasa Indonesia-dominant profiles were more closely associated with structured checklists and formalized records.

Table 4. Illustrative Teachers’ L1 Background and Assessment Documentation Modes

Teacher ID	L1 Background	Assessment Mode	Notes
G-01	Manggarai	Narrative notes and photos	Descriptive and observational
G-02	Bahasa Indonesia	Structured checklist	Emphasis on formal format
G-03	Manggarai and Bahasa Indonesia	Anecdotal notes and open responses	Flexible mixed techniques

Source: Research data analysis based on documentary records and teacher interviews.

Note: G-01–G-03 are selected illustrative cases; all 10 teachers were included in coding and cross-case comparison.

These patterns were also visible in the assessment archives. Narrative documentation generally contained more contextual details about children’s actions, utterances, and interactional situations. Checklist-based documentation was more concise and easier to standardize, but it provided less space for recording children’s actual words or the context in which a response occurred. In multilingual classrooms, this difference was important because children’s meaning was often embedded in local-language expressions, gestures, and peer interaction.

Language mismatch in assessment documentation. The fifth finding shows a consistent mismatch between the language of children’s expression and the language of formal assessment documentation. Across all 10 teacher-center cases, formal assessment documents were completed in Bahasa Indonesia, even when the observed evidence emerged in the local language. Table 5 reports this directly as 10/10 cases (100%), using the 10 teacher-center cases as the denominator. Children’s dominant expression was local language in most cases, while adaptation to children’s first language occurred only in a limited portion of assessment practice; these latter patterns are reported qualitatively rather than as percentages.

Table 5. Language Patterns in Documentation and Assessment Adaptation

Category	Language Used	Cross-case Pattern
Assessment documentation	Bahasa Indonesia	10/10 cases (100%)
Dominant child expression	Local language	Most cases
Assessment adapted to child L1	Mixed	Limited portion of cases

Source: Research data analysis based on documentary records and teacher interviews.

Note: The 100% value uses the 10 teacher-center cases as the denominator (10/10). Other patterns are reported qualitatively.

Teachers reported that they often needed to translate children's local-language utterances into Bahasa Indonesia when completing formal records. This process was not always straightforward. One teacher explained, "Sometimes the real meaning is lost when I translate what the child said in Manggarai into Bahasa Indonesia; it doesn't sound natural anymore." This statement shows that translation was not only a linguistic task but also an interpretive process. Teachers sometimes simplified, generalized, or paraphrased children's responses so that they could fit the formal assessment format.

The mismatch was most visible in indicators related to oral language, narrative expression, socio-emotional communication, and peer interaction. These indicators depended heavily on children's spontaneous language use. When children's local-language expressions were translated into Bahasa Indonesia, some contextual meaning and interactional nuance could be reduced in the final documentation.

Taken together, the findings show that teachers' linguistic backgrounds shaped authentic assessment in two main ways. First, teachers who shared or understood children's local language were more likely to use narrative and context-sensitive assessment techniques, such as anecdotal notes and open-ended observations. Second, formal documentation requirements in Bahasa Indonesia created a gap between children's multilingual classroom performance and the written record of that performance. These findings indicate that teachers' language repertoires influenced what evidence could be elicited, how it was interpreted, and how fully it was represented in assessment documentation.

Discussion

The findings show that authentic assessment in multilingual early childhood classrooms is shaped by the relationship between children's language practices, teachers' linguistic backgrounds, and institutional documentation requirements. Authentic assessment is expected to represent children's learning as it occurs in meaningful activity, including play, conversation, observation, portfolios, and other forms of natural evidence. However, the present study demonstrates that the authenticity of assessment evidence depends not only on the assessment tool but also on the language through which evidence is elicited, interpreted, and documented. This finding extends the concept of authentic assessment by showing that, in multilingual PAUD classrooms, language is not a neutral medium of assessment. It is part of the condition that determines whether children's competence can be fully recognized and recorded.

Comparison with prior research clarifies the contribution of these findings. Indonesian studies have primarily emphasized instrument implementation, digital documentation, and teachers' general assessment competence (Efriawati et al., 2021; Karta et al., 2022; Mastikawati et al., 2022; Mufliana et al., 2024), whereas international studies have emphasized dynamic language assessment, teacher language use, and multilingual pedagogies (Buac & Jarzynski, 2022; Chan et al., 2022; MacLeod & Glaspey, 2022; Zheng et al., 2021). The present study connects these strands by showing that the same checklist or anecdotal format can yield different evidence depending on whether teachers understand the language in which children perform. It therefore extends earlier work from language-responsive interaction to language-responsive documentation.

The first major finding concerns the mismatch between children's everyday language and the language of formal assessment documentation. Children in the observed classrooms expressed ideas most spontaneously through local language, especially during peer play and informal interaction. At the same time, formal assessment records were completed in Bahasa Indonesia. This condition indicates that children's actual performance and official assessment documentation did not always occur in the same language. Previous studies have emphasized that multilingual children's competence should be interpreted within their full communicative repertoire rather than through a single institutional language (Buac & Jarzynski, 2022; MacLeod & Glaspey, 2022; Nag et al., 2019). The present findings support this view by showing that formal documentation can simplify children's multilingual performance when local-language expressions must be translated into Bahasa Indonesia. The issue is not merely translation accuracy, but also the possible loss of contextual meaning, cultural nuance, and interactional detail.

This mismatch has important implications for assessment fairness. In early childhood education, many developmental indicators are observed through interaction rather than written products. Children show reasoning, vocabulary, self-regulation, social understanding, and narrative ability through talk, gestures, play, and peer communication. When these forms of evidence emerge in a local language but are recorded only in Bahasa Indonesia, the assessment process may shift from documenting children's performance to documenting teachers' interpretation of that performance. Language-responsive assessment is therefore needed to prevent children's competence from being underestimated because it appears in a language that the documentation system does not fully accommodate (Buac & Jarzynski, 2022; MacLeod & Glaspey, 2022; Ramírez et al., 2021).

The second major finding shows that teachers' linguistic backgrounds influence the selection and use of assessment techniques. Teachers who shared or understood children's local language tended to use narrative anecdotal notes, open-ended observations, and contextual descriptions. These teachers were more confident in recording what children said, how they responded, and what meanings were embedded in their interaction. In contrast, teachers whose practice was dominated by Bahasa Indonesia more often used checklists and

structured forms. Structured tools helped teachers maintain formal completeness, but they provided less space to document children's local-language expressions and interactional context. This finding is consistent with research showing that teachers' language use in multilingual early childhood classrooms shapes children's participation and communication opportunities (Chan et al., 2022). It also supports the argument that teacher knowledge in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts must include sensitivity to children's language practices, not only general pedagogical skill (Kirsch et al., 2020; Veliz et al., 2025).

These findings suggest that teachers' linguistic repertoires operate as an assessment resource. Teachers who understand children's local language can elicit richer responses, recognize culturally embedded meanings, and produce more detailed documentation. Teachers with limited access to children's local language may depend more on fixed indicators because such tools reduce the demand for narrative interpretation. This does not mean that checklists are inappropriate. Checklists can support consistency and coverage of developmental indicators. However, in multilingual PAUD classrooms, checklists need to be complemented by narrative notes, examples of child utterances, photographs, portfolios, or brief contextual explanations so that assessment evidence remains connected to children's actual performance (Karta et al., 2022; Mastikawati et al., 2022; Saputri et al., 2025; Warmansyah et al., 2022).

The third major finding relates to children's dominant language across classroom contexts. Children used local language most frequently during peer play and informal conversation, while Bahasa Indonesia appeared more often in teacher-led interaction and media-related expressions. This pattern confirms that children's language use varies according to context, interlocutor, and exposure. Research on children's language development shows that home language, school language, peer interaction, and the linguistic environment influence children's vocabulary, communication, and literacy growth (Justice et al., 2018; Nag et al., 2019; Prihatiningsih et al., 2025). In this study, children's use of Bahasa Indonesia in digital-media-related expressions did not always indicate full communicative competence. Some expressions appeared to be imitative or formulaic, which is consistent with research showing that audiovisual media exposure can shape young children's language experience but should be interpreted carefully in relation to meaningful communication (Novikova et al., 2025). Therefore, teachers need to distinguish between repeated language forms and meaningful language use when interpreting children's development.

The findings also strengthen the relevance of translanguaging for authentic assessment. Translanguaging enables children to draw on their full linguistic repertoires to communicate meaning and demonstrate understanding. Studies show that multilingual early childhood education benefits from interaction-promoting, linguistically responsive, and culture-based strategies (Harvey & Wong, 2024; Zheng et al., 2021). In this study, teachers practiced interactional translanguaging by switching to local languages, accepting mixed-language responses, and clarifying instructions in languages children understood. However, these adaptations were not consistently transferred into formal records. Translanguaging therefore functioned as an oral teaching strategy but had not yet become a principle of assessment documentation.

For authentic assessment to become more language-responsive, translanguaging needs to move from classroom interaction into assessment records. Teachers should be allowed to record children's exact utterances in the local language, add Bahasa Indonesia interpretations, and explain the context in which the utterance occurred. This approach would help preserve the authenticity of children's performance while still meeting institutional reporting requirements. It would also help teachers assess developmental indicators such as reasoning, narrative structure, social communication, and emotional expression without reducing children's competence to their ability to respond only in Bahasa Indonesia. Similar arguments have been advanced in studies emphasizing culturally and linguistically responsive assessment, multilingual pedagogy, and documentation systems that support richer evidence of children's development (Buac & Jarzynski, 2022; Hapsari et al., 2025; Mufliana et al., 2024).

In relation to the Indonesian PAUD context, this study contributes to ongoing discussions about the need for practical, contextual, and developmentally appropriate assessment systems. Previous studies have reported the importance of assessment for monitoring children's development and supporting teacher decision making in PAUD (Efiawati et al., 2021; Fatmawati & Aziz, 2022; Mahyuddin et al., 2024). Other studies have highlighted the role of learning media, social interaction, play-based learning, and classroom environment in children's language development (Hikmatuzzohrah et al., 2024; Priani & Kristiantari, 2024). Research on trilingual and bilingual language development also indicates that children's linguistic growth cannot be interpreted apart from their broader exposure, language dominance, and communicative contexts (Potgieter, 2016; Sun et al., 2018). The present study adds a more specific contribution by showing that, in multilingual PAUD classrooms, the quality of assessment also depends on the alignment between teachers' language repertoires, children's expressive language, and the format used to document learning evidence.

The practical implication is that teacher assessment literacy should include language responsiveness. Training should address not only the use of checklists, anecdotal records, portfolios, and observations, but also how to elicit responses across languages, document mixed-language evidence, and translate children's

utterances without losing meaning. Institutions should provide documentation fields for the original local-language utterance, its Bahasa Indonesia interpretation, contextual notes, and supporting photographs or portfolio samples. Such formats would preserve children's actual performance while maintaining institutional reporting requirements (Londono et al., 2025; Montoya-Fernández et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2025).

This study has four limitations. First, its qualitative case-study design and small purposive sample support analytical transferability rather than statistical generalization. Second, documentary evidence varied in completeness across centers, which may have limited the comparability of recorded practices. Third, the analysis centered on teachers and existing documents; children's perspectives, family language practices, and independent observation of developmental outcomes were not included. Fourth, the study identified requirements for multilingual documentation but did not test a standardized tool. These limitations restrict causal claims and mean that the reported associations should be interpreted within the participating cases.

Future research should test bilingual or multilingual assessment templates that include original child utterances, Bahasa Indonesia interpretations, contextual notes, and multimodal evidence. Longitudinal observation is needed to examine whether such tools improve the continuity, fairness, and accuracy of developmental records over time. Studies should also involve children, families, teachers with varied language profiles, and PAUD centers from different linguistic ecologies. Quasi-experimental or design-based research could evaluate professional-development models that help teachers integrate translanguaging into assessment rather than only classroom instruction.

Overall, the discussion shows that teachers' linguistic backgrounds do not merely influence classroom communication; they shape the assessment process itself. The teacher's ability to understand and document children's language becomes a condition for authentic evidence to emerge. This study therefore positions multilingualism as an assessment reality, not only an instructional context. By doing so, it strengthens the argument that authentic assessment in PAUD must be designed to recognize children's full linguistic repertoires as valid evidence of learning and development.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teachers' linguistic backgrounds shaped the authentic assessment practices observed in multilingual early childhood classrooms. Teachers who understood children's local languages were better positioned to elicit contextual responses and document them through narrative or open-ended records, whereas reliance on Bahasa Indonesia and structured formats could reduce the visibility of multilingual evidence. The study's contribution is to identify the teacher's linguistic repertoire as a mediating condition between children's performance and official documentation across three processes: elicitation, interpretation, and recording. PAUD institutions should therefore allow teachers to record children's original local-language utterances alongside Bahasa Indonesia interpretations and contextual evidence. Policymakers and program managers should incorporate multilingual assessment literacy into teacher training and provide documentation formats that recognize mixed-language responses as valid developmental evidence. Future studies should use longitudinal designs and test the validity, usability, and effects of bilingual or multilingual assessment tools with teachers, children, and families across diverse language ecologies.

5. DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the affiliated institution.

6. FUNDING

The author received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

7. COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no financial or personal conflict of interest that could have influenced the research or preparation of this article.

8. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Theresia Alviani Sum was solely responsible for the study conception, methodology, data collection, data analysis, interpretation, manuscript drafting, review, and approval of the final version.

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author sincerely thanks the heads of the participating early childhood education centers and all teacher participants for their cooperation and contributions to the study.

10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Formal ethical clearance was not obtained for this study. The research involved adult teacher participants and analysis of educational documents. Permission was obtained from the participating early childhood education centers, participation was voluntary and based on informed consent, and teacher and institutional identities were anonymized to protect confidentiality.

11. REFERENCES

- Buac, M., & Jarzynski, R. (2022). Providing culturally and linguistically responsive language assessment services for multilingual children with developmental language disorder: A scoping review. *Current Developmental Disorders Reports*, 9(4), 204–212. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40474-022-00260-6>
- Ćatibušić, B. (2019). Minority language development in early childhood: A study of siblings acquiring Bosnian and English in Ireland. *TEANGA, the Journal of the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics*, 10, 139–161. <https://doi.org/10.35903/teanga.v10i0.75>
- Chan, M., Buttiler, M. B., Yang, F., Yang, J., Uchikoshi, Y., & Zhou, Q. (2022). Teachers' language use in multilingual Head Start classrooms: Implications for dual language learners. *Children*, 9(12), 1871. <https://doi.org/10.3390/children9121871>
- Efiawati, E., Fauziyah, D. N., Syafrida, R., & Parapat, A. (2021). Asesmen perkembangan anak usia dini di PAUD MPA Daycare. *Al-Athfaal: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 4(2), 172–186. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajipaud.v4i2.9676>
- Fatmawati, D. S., & Aziz, H. (2022). Studi analisis pelaksanaan asesmen terhadap perkembangan anak usia dini di KB X Pangandaran. *Jurnal Riset Pendidikan Guru PAUD*, 1(2), 109–117. <https://doi.org/10.29313/jrpgp.v1i2.532>
- Hapsari, Y., Hamied, F. A., & Emilia, E. (2025). Assessment in translanguaging classrooms: Indonesian university English teachers' experiences and recommendations. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 13(1), 383–396. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v13i1.11246>
- Hartmann, E. C., & Hélot, C. (2021). The three robbers in three languages: Exploring a multilingual picturebook with bilingual student teachers. *Journal of Literary Education*, 4, 174–195. <https://doi.org/10.7203/JLE.4.21023>
- Harvey, R. E., & Wong, K. M. (2024). Promoting emergent literacy in preschool through extended discourse: Covert translanguaging in a Mandarin immersion environment. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 24(3), 663–691. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687984241276292>
- Hikmatuzzohrah, S., Syamsudin, A., & Maryatun, I. B. (2024). Factors influencing receptive language skills in preschoolers: The role of intelligence, social environment, and family background. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Undiksha*, 12(2), 223–234. <https://doi.org/10.23887/paud.v12i2.73630>
- Justice, L. M., Jiang, H., & Strasser, K. (2018). Linguistic environment of preschool classrooms: What dimensions support children's language growth? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 42, 79–92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.09.003>
- Karta, I. W., Astawa, I. M. S., Buahana, B. N., & Sativa, F. E. (2022). Implementasi asesmen otentik pada pembelajaran di masa COVID-19 dalam mengoptimalkan tumbuh-kembang anak usia dini. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(5), 5135–5144. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i5.2789>
- Kirsch, C., Aleksić, G., Mortini, S., & Andersen, K. (2020). Developing multilingual practices in early childhood education through professional development in Luxembourg. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 14(4), 319–337. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2020.1730023>
- Londono, M. C., Dionne, C., & Lacharité, C. (2025). Authentic assessment of executive functions in early childhood: A scoping review. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 47(2), 224–247. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10538151241271134>
- MacLeod, A. A. N., & Glaspey, A. M. (2022). Dynamic assessment of multilingual children's word learning. *International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders*, 57(4), 822–851. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1460-6984.12723>
- Macy, M., Pool, J., Chen, C.-I., Rusiana, T.-A., & Sawyer, M. (2022). A preliminary examination of a kindergarten school readiness assessment. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 50(6), 1035–1046. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01237-7>
- Mahyuddin, N., Melindra, E., Nosarima, P., & Azzahra, R. (2024). Optimizing the teacher's role in assessment of children's language development in accordance with the Merdeka Curriculum at Mekar Sari Preschool. *International Journal of Emerging Issues in Early Childhood Education*, 5(2), 30–36. <https://doi.org/10.33830/ijeiece.v5i2.1616>
- Mastikawati, M., Baharun, H., Wahid, A. H., Solehatin, S., & Adawiyah, R. (2022). Strengthening early childhood learning outcomes through authentic assessment of students. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 6(5), 4547–4556. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v6i5.2525>

- Montoya-Fernández, C., Losada-Puente, L., Gómez-Barreto, I. M., & Gil-Madrona, P. (2024). Developmental play-based assessment in early childhood education: A systematic review. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 32(5), 788–813. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2024.2311100>
- Mufliana, W., Harun, H., Syamsudin, A., & Ratnawati, S. (2024). Pengembangan aplikasi SI-PAUD sebagai media penilaian perkembangan anak usia dini. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 8(1), 109–120. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v8i1.5911>
- Nag, S., Vagh, S. B., Dulay, K. M., & Snowling, M. J. (2019). Home language, school language and children's literacy attainments: A systematic review of evidence from low- and middle-income countries. *Review of Education*, 7(1), 91–150. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3130>
- Novikova, E., Su, P. L., & Morini, G. (2025). Exposure to audiovisual media and its role in toddlers' language development. *Acta Paediatrica*, 114(7), 1602–1608. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.70000>
- Potgieter, A. P. (2016). Lexical and grammatical development in trilingual speakers of isiXhosa, English and Afrikaans. *South African Journal of Communication Disorders*, 63(2), a141. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajcd.v63i2.141>
- Priani, N. K. D., & Kristiantari, M. G. R. (2024). Interactive daily spin board: Revolutionizing language learning for young children. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Undiksha*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.23887/paud.v12i2.78120>
- Prihatiningsih, M. I., Apriyansyah, C., Priyanti, N., Sukatmi, S., & Ismail, M. (2025). Hubungan antara interaksi sosial, teman sebaya, dan perkembangan bahasa anak melalui play-based learning. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 9(5). <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v9i5.7508>
- Ramírez, N. F., Hippe, D. S., & Kuhl, P. K. (2021). Comparing automatic and manual measures of parent–infant conversational turns: A word of caution. *Child Development*, 92(2), 672–681. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13495>
- Saputri, C. A., Hanyfa, N. N., Salsabila, A. A., Kartika, A., Fortuna, S. B. C., & Putri, A. A. P. (2025). Implementasi dual-kurikulum dalam asesmen PAUD di Esa Cipta Harapan Kindergarten Kota Samarinda. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 9(6), 2749–2760. <https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v9i6.7149>
- Sun, H., Yin, B., Amsah, N. F. B. B., & O'Brien, B. A. (2018). Differential effects of internal and external factors in early bilingual vocabulary learning: The case of Singapore. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 39(2), 383–411. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S014271641700039X>
- Veliz, L., Zhang, Z., & Akhlagh, S. B. (2025). Early childhood educators' pedagogical knowledge for effective practice in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 53(8), 2909–2919. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-025-01912-z>
- Warmansyah, J., Sari, M., Halif, A., Ismandela, A., Nabila, D. F., Ravidah, R., & Niarman, A. (2022). E-portfolio as an early childhood assessment tool in kindergarten. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Undiksha*, 10(3). <https://doi.org/10.23887/paud.v10i3.53021>
- Wu, B., Callahan, S., Pale, M., & Goff, W. (2025). The meanings of authenticity in early childhood education: A systematic review. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 12, 101850. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101850>
- Zheng, Z., Degotardi, S., & Djonov, E. (2021). Supporting multilingual development in early childhood education: A scoping review. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 110, 101894. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2021.101894>