

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE TEACHER USING L1/L2 IN TEACHING EFL CLASS

Sumiati¹, Amir Hamzah²

SMPN 2 Bayongbong, Institut Pendidikan Indonesia
ssumiati119@gmail.com, amirhamzahgrt@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to find out students' perceptions on the teacher using L1/L2 in teaching EFL Class. It employed a qualitative research which used case study. The participants of this study were three students with categories advance, intermediate, and low. The data were collected by using in-dept interview. The items for the interview were developed from the previous research Elmetwally (2012) which were found appropriate to be used. The findings revealed that the use of Indonesian language in the EFL Class are generally positive. The three participants stated that they preferred when learning with the teachers used of L1/L2 in teaching EFL Classroom e.g explaining the material, explaining difficult vocabulary, translating and presentation. In addition, the students' perceptions has a different percentage of used L1/L2 in EFL Class. The participants with Advance category stated that she was needed 50% Indonesian explanations when explaining materials, giving examples, explaining formulas and theories. Then, she was needed 50% the full English explanations when the teacher greeting and opening the lessons, checking attendance, giving assignments, correcting students mistakes, closing the lessons, giving homework, and announcing grades. Meanwhile, the intermediate students' stated that she was needed a full English explanations as much as 45% and needed to be used when explaining the materials, and the rest 55% was needed on the Indonesian explanations to clarify the materials that was explained using English earlier. Furthermore, the low students' stated that she was needed as much as 80% for Indonesia explanations for explaining the material more deeply so that students become more understand. And the rest 20% was needed for English explanations in opening and closing the teaching activity, and giving an assignment so that the students would get used to it. Moreover, it can be concluded that the use of L1/L2 as a facilitator in their learning, as a tool to help them get a better understanding when learning English.

Keywords: Perceptions of Students', L1/L2 Use, EFL class



INTRODUCTION

First language is the language a person has learned from birth or critical period (Benjamins, 2011). According to Lennenberg (1967) the language that one picks up during the critical period will generally be the person's first language (L1) because it is already attached. Therefore, in the EFL (English as Foreign Language) world it is inevitable that there are many teachers who still use L1/L2 in the teaching and learning process (Campa & Nassaj, 2009), (Levine, 2014), (Mohhebi & Alavi, 2014). If EFL teachers avoid using L1/L2 in their classes, EFL students will find the feel difficulty to convey the lessons/materials. However, L1/L2 should not be overused (Atkinson, 1993), (Widdowson, 2003).

One of the problems of using L1/L2 in EFL classroom is that teachers do not understand what its function. There are several functions of it in EFL class. The first, teaching method uses L1/L2 only as a helper in the EFL class and is not always used (Al-Nofaie, 2010). The second, the use of L1/L2 is only to provide instructions. The third, L1/L2 is to translate and give students understanding. The fourth, it is also used by teachers to provide individual comments and feedback to students (Macaro, 1997). Therefore, if a teacher cannot avoid using L1/L2, he/she can use L1/L2 as little as possible (Cook, 2001).

One of the solutions to avoid using L1/L2 in EFL classroom teachers can use the physical or visual appearance (Pachler and Field, 2001). In other hand, (Clark, 1996; Engle, 1998; Kendon, 2004; McNeill, 1998) stated that teachers can use the gesture as integrated system, audiovisual, ensemble, or composite signal, depending on the theoretical approach. Therefore, avoiding the use of L1/L2 is very important in EFL classes, even if it strengthens the dominance of English (Phillipson, 1992).

L1 (First language) and L2 (Second Language) has become an interesting topic to be explored in research. Some studies investigated the use of L1/L2 by teachers in teaching EFL class. The findings are also still debateble. For example: (1) Scweers (1990), Nation (2003), Miles (2004), Elmetwally (2012), Hidayati (2012), Hartono (2013) showed their findings that they expected teachers to combine both L1/L2 and Foreign Language in order to understand the material easily and encouraged them to use English in the class. (2) Other findings revealed showed that teachers did not agree to the use of L1/L2 in EFL class because it would become dependent on L1 and L2 expertise would be limited (Knight, 1996; Bowen, 2004; Kayaoglu, 2012; Debreli, 2016; Almohaimeed & Almurshed, 2018). (3) Teachers were able to involve the benefits from the use of L1/L2 in EFL class e.g explaining grammar, explaining difficult vocabulary and translating (Carson & Kashihara, 2012; Karimian & Mohammadi, 2015; Kitjaroonchai & Lampadan, 2016; Rerung, 2018). It can be concluded, it is obvious that the use of L1/L2 in EFL classroom gave contributions to English teaching as Foreign Language, since they felt several benefits when using L1/L2 in the teaching.

From the previous studies above, it is found that they only focused on teachers' perceptions, evaluating L1/L2, teachers' practice and perspective in general. In other hand, this study focuses on students' perceptions on the teacher using L1/L2 in teaching EFL class. Therefore, it aims to find out the students' perceptions on the teacher using L1/L2 in teaching EFL class.



METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative method in term case study design, since this is aimed at investigating the real phenomena in depth about the students' perceptions of their teacher using L1/L2 in teaching EFL Class. It is said that Creswell (2009) a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection. This research was conducted in one of State Senior High Schools in Garut, West Java, Indonesia. This research site was chosen for several reasons, i.e., (1) The variety of background, socio economic, gender, sociocultural, etc. (2) The appropriateness of site, prospective of site and prospective participants for the purposes of the study. (3) The use of mixed language instruction (English and Indonesian) in teaching EFL by the teachers.

The participants who became the sample of this research consisted of three students. The small number of participants who were chosen in this research was expected to maximize the researcher analysis. It is in line with Creswell (2012:16) who said that collecting data based on words from a small number of individuals so that the participants views were obtained. Furthermore, in selecting participants, purposive sampling was chosen in this research. As cited in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), "purposive sampling is a technique to pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought (p.114)." The researcher used semi- structured interview to collecting data. Semi structured interview was verbal questionnaires to obtain the information in this research. Interviews can provide us with information about people's attitudes, their values, what they think and they do (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Moreover, interview was done to strengthen participant's answer.

The obtained data from interview were analyzed using some steps Dornyei (2007) (see also Creswell, 2014): (1) *Transcribing the data*: The result of the video and voice recording were transcribed into the textual and original transcription (including non-verbal acts and the field notes). Therefore, the interview transcript was returned to the owners to confirm the validity of what they said before (Kvale, 1996, cited in Emilia, 2005). (2) *Interpreting the data and drawing a conclusion*: The final step is that the data were interpreted based on the research questions. Finally, the conclusions were drawn, including suggestions and recommendations, even stating further questions (Wolcott, 1994 as cited in Creswell, 2014).

FINDINGS

Based on the data above, the researcher elaborates some brief and clear explanations concerning the research data which had been obtained through the interview.

3.1 Students' perceptions when L1/L2 is used in Class

The interview results showed students' perceptions in one of the schools in Garut about their teacher using Indonesian in English class. Based on the data, a student in the Advance category disagreed if the teacher did not speak English but agreed the teacher switched Indonesian to English or vice versa. She said that learning English must be spoken well and correctly. Krashen (1985) said that the first language should not be used in class because it would not be the maximum for learning English. However, some students in the Intermediate and Low categories



agreed that the teacher switched Indonesian to English in the class. They said learning English using Indonesian was easier to understand. Al-Nofaire (2010) stated that the first language can be used in learning English to explain the meaning of new words and provide introductory classes, which are difficult to understand.

Even though the needs of students are different, the teacher have to use Indonesian in explaining the material so that would increase the students' understanding and the teaching and learning activities are more meaningful. The participants with Advance category stated that she was needed 50% Indonesian explanations when explaining materials, giving examples, explaining formulas and theories. Then, she was needed 50% the full English explanations when the teacher greeting and opening the lessons, checking attendance, giving assignments, correcting students mistakes, closing the lessons, giving homework, and announcing grades.

Meanwhile, the intermediate students' stated that she was needed a full English explanations as much as 45% and needed to be used when explaining the materials, and the rest 55% was needed on the Indonesian explanations to clarify the materials that was explained using English earlier.

Futhermore, the low students' stated that she was needed as much as 80% for Indonesia explanations foe explaining the material more deeply so that students become more understand. And the rest 20% was needed for English explanations in opening and closing the teaching activity, and giving an assignment so that the students would get used to it.

Based on the percentage above, it can be concluded that the use of Indonesian was still needed by students. In addition, the first language did not prevent students from learning English but could be an instrument to communicate in class and help them learn English (Miles, 2004).

3.2 Students' positive perceptions when L1/L2 is beneficial for use in Class

The interview results showed a positive perception from students in one of senior high schools in Garut about how their teacher used L1/L2 in their English class. The results, showed that most students prefered the teacher to use Indonesian. The positive perception of students was the result of their experiences with the use of Indonesian in English learning classes. The results of positive perceptions could be described into two aspects; Indonesian could be used to explain the material and could be a translation technique to avoid misleading. As English learners, students felt that understanding a material was a difficult subject so students need teachers to use Indonesian to explain the material. In addition, they believed that Indonesian could make learning difficulties easier. Storch and Winggleswort (2003) explain that students can benefit from the first use of language to clarify unknown vocabulary. Translation in Indonesian can help in understanding and memorizing English vocabulary (Swain and Lapkin, 2000). First language translation makes it easier, clearer for students to understand content. According to students, Indonesian could be used to explain words difficult to understand. Al-Nofaire (2010) stated that the first language could be used in learning English to explain the meaning of new words and provide classroom instructions, especially those that were difficult to explain.



3.3 Students' Perceptions When Indonesian Language is banned from Use in Class

The interview results showed a negative perception when Indonesian had to be banned from English class. They said that not all students understand English. Therefore, they disagreed that the use of Indonesian was banned. In the other hand, if they had to learn to fully use English, sometimes they were confused, they did not understand, they were frustrated, so that their enthusiasm for learning was lost, they would rather think to sleep better than study.

3.4 The tendency to use L1/L2 in Asking

The interview results showed the language preference of students when asking to the teacher or vice versa. Most students still used L1/L2 to ask their teacher. The reason for this phenomenon they did not fluent when they ask in English. Howat (1984) stated that if students were given freedom of the use first language, it might cause negative effect of English. The negative effect was that it might create a tendency to speak using first language rather than using English. This is because the students might feel more comfortable using their first language rather than English. Howatt (1984) believes that the limitation to the use of first language is important so that the goals of teaching English to the students might be achieved.

3.5 Students' perceptions to specify the skill of English

The interview results showed students' perceptions about to specify the skill of English their teacher using Indonesian in English class. Based on the data, a student in the Advance category stated that the materials related to writing and reading. According to her, the explanation of material related to speaking is usually less than reading and writing but more emphasizes in practice. Likewise with listening material, which emphasizes the sharpness of hearing sense when the audio material is played. She also explained that in the material related to writing, there are several things that are require formulas. And she also explained that the explanation is better to use Indonesian, so that the material which used the formulas can be understood easily.

In addition, participants with intermediate and low category had a different perceptions. Students' in the Intermediate category stated that she really needs an explanation using Indonesian on the material related to speaking. Because of, her confusion when the teacher provides instructions. there are some words that are not understood what they mean in Indonesia. So that, the teacher have to use Indonesian during the explanation of the speaking material.

While the students' in the low category stated that she is rather need explanation in Indonesian when the teacher explains writing material. Additionally she explained that she encountered obstacles during writing teaching in learning process. She also explained that it was due to her limited vocabulary knowledge and a lack of grammar understanding. She is afraid of misunderstanding the material, so she needs a teacher to explain the material using Indonesian when explaining writing material.

DISCUSSIONS

The participants with Advance category stated that she was needed 50% Indonesian explanations when explaining materials, giving examples, explaining formulas and



theories. Then, she was needed 50% the full English explanations when the teacher greeting and opening the lessons, checking attendance, giving assignments, correcting students mistakes, closing the lessons, giving homework, and announcing grades.

Meanwhile, the intermediate students' stated that she was needed a full English explanations as much as 45% and needed to be used when explaining the materials, and the rest 55% was needed on the Indonesian explanations to clarify the materials that was explained using English earlier.

Futhermore, the low students' stated that she was needed as much as 80% for Indonesia explanations foe explaining the material more deeply so that students become more understand. And the rest 20% was needed for English explanations in opening and closing the teaching activity, and giving an assignment so that the students would get used to it. Based on the percentage above, it can be concluded that the use of Indonesian was still needed by students. In addition, the first language did not prevent students from learning English but could be an instrument to communicate in class and help them learn English (Miles, 2004).

The interview results showed a positive perception from students in one of senior high schools in Garut about how their teacher used L1/L2 in their English class. The results, showed that most students prefered the teacher to use Indonesian. The positive perception of students was the result of their experiences with the use of Indonesian in English learning classes. The results of positive perceptions could be described into two aspects; Indonesian could be used to explain the material and could be a translation technique to avoid misleading. As English learners, students felt that understanding a material was a difficult subject so students need teachers to use Indonesian to explain the material. In addition, they believed that Indonesian could make learning difficulties easier.

Students' Perceptions When Indonesian Language is banned from Use in Class, results showed a negative perception when Indonesian had to banned from English class. They said that not all students understand English. Therefore, they disagreed that the use of Indonesian was banned. The tendency to use L1/L2 in Asking results showed the language preference of students when asking to the teacher or vice versa. Most students still used L1/L2 to ask their teacher. The reason for this phenomenon they did not fluent when they ask in English. Students' perceptions to specify the skill of English results showed students' perceptions about to specify the skill of English their teacher using Indonesian in English class. Based on the data, a student in the Advance category stated that the materials related to writing and reading.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings and discussion, the researcher has concluded: Students in one of senior high schools in garut perceived Indonesian Language in their learning as a tool to help them get a better understanding when learning English. The use of Indonesian language was actually important in their learning English such as explaining the material, explaining difficult vocabulary, translating, asking the teacher, the teacher asking students, and presentation. In other words, students got advantages when teachers used Indonesian language in teaching



English classroom. They had a better understanding on grammar points and mastered the translation technique of new word. Another important factor is that they disagreed that the use of Indonesian was prohibited in English class. Especially if teachers only used English entirely when teaching, sometimes they were confused, they did not understand, they were frustrated, so that their enthusiasm for learning is lost, they would want feel sleepy/were not interested.

REFERENCES

- Almohaimeed, M., & Almurshed, H. (2018). Foreign Language Learners' Attitudes and Perceptions of L1 Use in L2 Classroom.
- Alnofaie, H. (2010). The Attitudes Of Teachers And Students Towards Using L1. 4 (1), 64-95.
- Burno. (2014). The Use of the Mother Tongue in English. *MASARYK UNIVERSITY*.
- Carson, E., & Kashihara, H. (2012). Using the L1 in the. *Hiroshima City University*.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). Research Method in Education.
- Cook. (2001). The use of L1 in English Language Teaching.
- Cook, & Vivian. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom.
- Creswell, J. (2012). Educational Research . *Planning, Conducting, Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research*.
- Debreli, E. (2016). Perceptions of Non-native EFL Teachers' on L1 Use in L2 Classrooms:. *English Language Teaching*.
- Ellis, R. (1987). The Study of Second Language Acquisition.
- Elmetwally. (2012). Students' and teachers' attitudes toward the use of learners' mother tongue in English language classrooms in UAE public high schools.
- Kayaoglu, M. N. (2012). The Use of Mother Tongue in Foreign Language Teaching from. *Pamukkale Universitesi Egitim Fakultesi Dergisi*.
- Kitjaroonchai, T., & Lampadan, R. M. (2016). Perceptions of Students towards the Use of Thai in English Classrooms.
- Kocaman, O., & Aslan, E. (2018). The students' perceptions of the use of L1 in EFL classes: A Private Anatolian High School Sample. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 4(4), 179-189. Laura, M. (2016). Students' opinions about the use of L1 in an. *Master Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. University of St Mark and St John*.
- Lenneberg. (1967). Age and the critical period hypothesis. *ELT Journal*.



- Lestari, L. A. (2013). Should English Be A Compulsory Subject in Primary Schools.
- Manty, M., & Shah, P. M. (2017). Students' Perception: Reasons And Opinions On The Use Of First. *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*.
- Miles, R. (2004). Evaluating The Use Of L1 In The English Language Classroom.
- Nation, P. (2001). The role of the first language in foreign language learning. *Asian EFL Jurnal Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*.
- Pachler, N., & Field, K. (2001). Learning to Teach Modern Foreign Languages in Secondary School. *A Companion to School Experience London and New York*.
- Phillipson, R. (2018). Linguistic Imperialism. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*.
- Rerung, M. (2018). Learners' Perception on Bilingual Approach in an EAP Classroom. *English Language and Culture Department, Bunda Mulia University*.
- Tang, J. (2002). Using L1 the English Classroom. *English Teaching Forum*.
- Turnbull, B. (2018). The potential impact of cultural and educational background on foreign language teachers' use of the L1. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 8(1), 53-70.

