

EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE USE OF BAHASA INDONESIA IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The issue of using first language (L1) in teaching English has always been a controversy in the field of teaching and learning English. The purpose of this study was to investigate the English as Foreign Language (EFL) students' perceptions towards the use of L1 (*Bahasa Indonesia*) in the English classroom. In this study, the descriptive qualitative method was employed. The participants involved in this study are 40 EFL students in the second semester who learn General English in IKIP Siliwangi. A questionnaire which consists of 15 questions was distributed to the participants to gain primary data. To support the data from questionnaire, observation also conducted in the classroom. The findings reveal that the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia brought positive/negative perceptions towards students. The students give negative perception towards the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in General English classroom. However, the students also recognized the advantages and disadvantages of the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom.

Keywords: EFL, First Language (L1), Foreign Language, Students' Perception.

A. INTRODUCTION

The issue of the use of the students' first language (L1) in the EFL classroom has been debated for years. Literature reflects uncertainties which surround this issue and various positions have been argued for. A number of studies have been conducted, which either support or oppose the use of L1 in EFL classroom. Several authors maintain that L1 has no essential role to play in EFL teaching and that too much L1 use might deprive learners of valuable input in the L2 (Ellis, 1984), but some of the researchers stress the value of using L1 and the positive role in the EFL teaching (Auerbach, 1993; Schweers, 1999).

In Indonesia context, where English is taught as a foreign language, there are fewer chances for students to apply what they have studied outside the classroom, so the only exposure happened in the English classroom. As the consequences of this situation, it is common for EFL teachers to use the students' mother tongue as a tool to convey the message as a means of interaction both in English language institutes and in the classroom.

Meanwhile, previous research conducted by Wong (2010) has studied about learning a foreign language and language use in teaching foreign language in the classroom. Although many researchers believe that teaching through English gives better result and improvement to the students, research on Indonesian students whose English is their foreign language needs to be explored further.

Based on the issue above, this study focused on how the students perceived the use of L1 by the teacher in English learning classroom at IKIP Siliwangi. The purpose of this study is to give deeper insight into what students' opinion toward the use of L1 by teacher during the teaching and learning process. The results also being expected to help teachers understand students preferences in the use of both *bahasa* Indonesia as their mother tongue (L1) and English as target language (L2).

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Importance of Students' Perception

Perception may be defined from physical psychological and physiological perspective. In this study, it will be limited to its scope as mentioned by Allport (1996) who described that perception as the way we judge or evaluate others. Furthermore, Eggen and Kauchak gave cognitive dimension of perception; they see perception as the process by which people attach meaning to experiences (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001). This is in line with Forgas' explanation that perception encourages all processes associated with the recognition, transformation, and organization of sensory information (Forgas, 1966). Based on the explanations of perception above, it can be related to the process of learning where the students gain information through experience and becomes part of one's storage of facts. In other words, students can have a perception towards something if they have experienced the process as mentioned by Forgas. Thus, the way the students perceive the teacher's language use in the classroom may significantly affect the students' academic performance.

2. The Use of L1 in EFL Classroom

In Indonesian classroom, English is being taught as a foreign language and is a compulsory subject. In the EFL context, there are fewer chances for students to apply what they have studied outside the classroom. Students more likely only read and speak English in their limited English class time. In such situation, teacher usually the only proficient speaker and role as comprehensible input provider.

3. The Advantages of Using L1 in the Classroom

The use of first language (L1) by the teacher has some advantages and disadvantages for students in developing their English skills. The following studies show the advantages of using L1 in the classroom. Teacher's use of L1 can help students to use the limited time efficiently with productive or communicative activities (Atkinson, 1992: 351 in Miles 2004). It means the interference of using L1 by the teachers can help students to use valuable class time efficiently. For the students, teachers who teach using L1 can help them find a new word in the target language. This is in line with statement from Swain & Lapkin (1998) who state that L1 can assist in the comprehension and memorization of L2 vocabulary. Furthermore, the use of L1 in the classroom as a translation technique also can avoid misleading. This is because L1 translation is usually clear, short, and familiar, qualities that are very important in effective definitions.

In addition, students also gain the benefit of the use of L1 in the classroom. They can clarify unfamiliar vocabulary and communicate grammar points especially when teacher delivered it by using L1 in the teaching process (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). This is in line with the purpose of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) which allowing students to acquire a foreign language by learning and explaining grammar rules as the basis for drills and exercises in translating from the target language to the mother tongue. It can be concluded that the use of

L1 in the classroom allows learners to understand grammar as well as practicing and discussing the structure or pattern.

Based on the above studies, it can be assumed that the use of L1 by the teacher creates less-threatening atmosphere in English classroom. This situation also brings an advantage for both teacher and students to decrease students' language anxiety in communication. Besides, the use of L1 also encourages students to learn English. It also helps students to understand the expression used by the teacher.

4. The Disadvantages of Using L1 in the Classroom

Based on the following studies, the use of L1 also shows some disadvantages to the English teaching process in the classroom. Fillmore (1983) explained that the students who are used to hear their teachers using L1 will tend to ignore the target language. When teacher used L1 in the learning process, the students will be accustomed to the use L1 and will wait for the translations. This situation can lead to the failure of the maximum use of English. Miles (2004) explained that the use of L1 by teachers can over simplify differences between two languages, create laziness among students and a failure to maximize English use in the classroom.

Furthermore, Zacharias (2003) stated that L1 can be seen as a barrier to English exposure. This could be a main disadvantage of teaching foreign language since in English is considered as a foreign language and not being used in daily communication.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a descriptive research which uses qualitative method in order to explore students' perception towards the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in EFL classroom. This research was conducted in a General English class in IKIP Siliwangi. The participants are 30 students in the second semester of Mathematic Department in IKIP Siliwangi. The main data for this research was gained through questionnaire. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher also observed and recorded the class in two hours to see the occurrences of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom. The questionnaire contained 15 closed questions. The questions were categorized into following concerns: students' preferences, students' feeling, students' perceptions, and the advantages and disadvantages toward teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in English learning classroom. The questionnaire then distributed to 40 participants. All the questions and explanations were in *bahasa* Indonesia in order to create relaxed atmosphere and to enable students to understand the instructions.

The data from questionnaire were analyzed by calculating the frequency and percentage of students' responses. The findings from questionnaire and observation are being presented and discussed in the following chapter.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following discussion shows the analysis of students' perceptions toward teachers' use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom based on the observation and questionnaire result. The discussion is divided into three parts: the first discussion is about the use of *bahasa* Indonesia by the teacher in the classroom. The second part discusses the students feeling towards the use of *bahasa* Indonesia by the teacher in the classroom. The last part explains the findings which relates to the advantages and disadvantages of the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom.

1. The Use of Bahasa Indonesia by the Teacher in the Classroom

Based on the observation in the class, the teacher used *bahasa* Indonesia for some purposes. Mostly, teacher used *bahasa* Indonesia to clarify the explanation or to check students' understanding. The topic discussed in the classroom was verbalizing algebraic expression. The explanation covered the vocabulary and pronunciation of mathematical symbols and numbers.

Teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia was seen when she explained the use of capitalization in pronouncing the formula. The formula was $A=a^2$, the teacher used *bahasa* Indonesia when she asked students to read the formula in *bahasa* Indonesia. The expression used was "*A sama dengan a kecil kuadrat*". Teacher used *bahasa* Indonesia to explain about the formula. Then she translated the formula into English expression. The purpose was to introduce the use of capital A (A) in the formula is pronounced differently with the small a (a). From the data, it can be seen that the teacher used Grammar Translation Method in explaining the formula. This is in line with the statement from Swain & Lapkin (1998) which state that using L1 (*bahasa* Indonesia) can assist students in the comprehension and memorization of L2.

The use of *bahasa* Indonesia also captured in the observation when the teacher checked students understanding about the subject she explained. The expressions used were "*Mengerti yah?*" and "*Sudah bisa yah?*" In addition, the findings from observation also show that the teacher used *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom to have small talk with the students. It was seen in when the teacher began the class. To break the ice, a small talk in *bahasa* Indonesia with some of the students was occurred. This is in line with the idea that the use of *bahasa* Indonesia can decrease students' language anxiety in communication.

2. Students' Feeling toward Teacher's Use of Bahasa Indonesia in English Learning Classroom

Table 1.
Students' preferences toward the use of Bahasa Indonesia in the classroom.

No.	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%
1.	I prefer teacher using Bahasa Indonesia in General English classroom	7	17.5%	28	70%	5	12.5%	0	0%

The table above shows us the students' preferences toward the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in General English classroom. It can be seen that 70% of the students disagree with the statement. Furthermore, 17.5% of the students strongly disagree with the statement. From this data, it can be seen that the students preferred the teacher to use English in the classroom. However, there are 12.5% of the students who preferred the teacher to speak in *bahasa* Indonesia during the English learning in the classroom. This finding leads us to the assumption that students have high expectation for the teacher to speak in English during the General English classroom.

This is in line with the findings of students' feeling towards the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom. The questionnaire revealed that most of the students are not comfortable with the use of *bahasa* Indonesia by the teacher. It can be seen from the Table 2 below.

Table 2.
Students feeling towards the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom

No	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
4.	I feel more comfortable when the teacher explained the material in Bahasa Indonesia	7	17.5%	1	40%	1	37.5%	2	5%

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that students feel and preferred for the teacher to use English when it is related to the material explanation.

3. Students' Advantages and Disadvantages toward the Use of Bahasa Indonesia by the Teacher

The first advantage discussed in this part is the use of time in the classroom when the teacher used bahasa Indonesia to explain the material. This is mentioned by Atkinson (1992 in Miles, 2004) who believed that teacher's use of L1 can help students to use the limited time efficiently with productive or communicative activities. The table 3 below shows us the findings related to this issue.

Table 3.
Advantage: The use of time to learn effectively when the teacher used bahasa Indonesia in the classroom

No.	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		F	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
9	I can maximize the time to learn in the class when the teacher used bahasa Indonesia to explain the material.	0	0%	15	37.5%	25	62.5%	0	0%

Based on the table 3 above, most of the students agree to the statement. There are 62.5% of the students who agree. On the other hand, the rest of them (37.5%) disagree to this statement. It can be concluded that the teacher's use of bahasa Indonesia in the classroom helps the students to maximize their time to learn in the class. This finding also supported by the finding from observation where the students are more focused to the assignment after the teacher explained how to pronounce brackets in the formula. The teacher used bahasa Indonesia to explain the use of bracket in the formula "in the brackets, *jangan gini (bracket)*".

Furthermore, the finding also shows the use of bahasa Indonesia by the teacher in the classroom also helps students to clarify unfamiliar vocabulary (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003). It can be seen from the students' response to the question number two in the questionnaire.

Table 4.

Advantage: better understanding of new vocabularies after the teacher translated it

No.	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
2.	I have better understanding when the teacher translated new vocabularies into bahasa Indonesia.	0	0	2	5%	24	60%	14	35%

From the table 4 above, it can be seen that almost all the students agree that they have better understanding when the teacher translated new vocabularies into *bahasa* Indonesia. Only 5% or two of the students disagree with this statement, the rest of them agree (60%) and even strongly agree (35%). This finding also supported by the finding from the observation where the teacher used *bahasa* Indonesia to explain the material. It can be seen from the extract below.

Teacher wrote x^5 on the board and asked the students how to read the formula. Then she wrote x to the (power of) 5.

Teacher: Do you know why there is a bracket? “*Karena ada yang suka menyebutnya to the power of five, ada juga yang menyebutnya to the 5*”.

Based on the finding above, the teacher used Grammar translation method to make better understanding of new vocabularies.

However, this method also brings disadvantage in the process of learning English. The table 5 below shows us the finding from the questionnaire which relate to the disadvantage of the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom.

Table 5.

Disadvantage: students being dependent on the teacher’s translation in the classroom

No.	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
11.	Teacher’s habit in using bahasa Indonesia makes me depend on her translating everything (the explanation) into bahasa Indonesia.	5	12.5%	15	37.5%	17	42.5%	3	7.5%

The table 5 above shows us the disadvantage of the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom. There are 42% students agree with the statement and 7.5% strongly agree that they are being depended on the teacher’s translation into *bahasa* Indonesia when she explain the material in the classroom. However, there are 37.5% of the students who disagree with the statement and 12.5% students strongly disagree that they are being depended to teacher’s translation.

Although the finding from the questionnaire of use of *bahasa* Indonesia shows us disadvantage for the students, it still revealed some more advantages. One of the advantages revealed from

the questionnaire data deals with students' confidence in the classroom. It can be seen from the questionnaires' finding in number 6. The table 6 below shows us the data.

Table 6.
Students confidence related to the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom

No.	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		f	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
6.	I feel more confidence when I used <i>bahasa</i> Indonesia in the classroom to speak up my idea or answer question from the teacher.	2	5%	14	35%	21	52.5%	3	7.5%

Futhermore, this finding is opposite with the finding of question number 15 which stated that the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom does not make the students less confident in speaking English. It can be seen from the table below.

Table 7.
Disadvantage: teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia makes students less confidence in speaking English.

No.	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
15.	Teacher's habit in using <i>bahasa</i> Indonesia makes me less confidence in speaking English.	9	22.5%	18	45%	11	27.5%	2	5%

The table 7 above shows us that 45% of the students disagree with the statement, while 22.5% of the students strongly agree. On the other hand, 27.5% of the students agree and only 5% students strongly agree that the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom makes them less confidence in speaking English.

Furthermore, the questionnaire also reveals findings related to the students' motivation in learning English. In the table below, from the question 5 and the question 14, we can see that the students still have the motivation to learn English whether the teacher used English or *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom.

Table 8.
Students' motivation related to the use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom

No.	Statement	SD		D		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%
5.	When teacher used <i>bahasa</i> Indonesia in the classroom, I feel more motivated to learn English.	8	20%	17	42.5%	11	27.5%	4	10%
14.	Ehen teacher used <i>bahasa</i> Indonesia in the classroom, I feel demotivated to learn English.	24	60%	11	27.5%	3	7.5%	2	5%

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the students' motivation is not related to the use of *bahasa* Indonesia by the teacher in the classroom.

The findings have revealed the students' preferences and feelings towards the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in General English classroom. In addition, the advantages and disadvantages of the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom also being discussed in this section. The next section extracts the discussion into conclusion of this study.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the use of *bahasa Indonesia* by the teacher in General English classroom brought negative perception to the students. The negative perception towards the use of *bahasa* Indonesia by the teacher in the classroom can be seen from the preference and the feeling of the students when the teacher used *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom. The students preferred the teacher to use English instead of *bahasa* Indonesia in explaining the material in General English classroom. Furthermore, the students feel more comfortable when the teacher used English in the classroom when it is related to the material explanation. However, students also expecting the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom when it is related to new vocabularies and structure. This also leads us to the conclusion that although students have negative perception towards the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the General English classroom, they recognized the advantages that they gained from the teacher's use of *bahasa* Indonesia in the classroom.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Kuesioner ini bertujuan untuk mendapatkan data dalam penelitian saya yang berjudul "Students' Perception towards the Use of Bahasa Indonesia in the EFL Classroom". Saya sangat berterima kasih sekali jika anda mau mengisi kuesioner sesuai dengan apa yang anda rasakan / pikirkan.

Lengkapi kuesioner berikut dengan memberi tanda centang (✓) pada kolom sesuai dengan pendapat anda.

TS = Tidak Setuju

S = Setuju

KS = Kurang Setuju

SS = Sangat Setuju

No	Pernyataan	Frequency / Percentage							
		TS	KS	S	SS				
1.	Saya lebih menyukai Dosen menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia pada saat perkuliahan General English	7	17,5 %	28	70%	5	12,5%	0	0
2.	Saya lebih memahami ketika Dosen menerjemahkan kata kata baru maupun text bacaan ke dalam Bahasa Indonesia	0	0	2	5%	24	60%	14	35%
3.	Saya lebih mengerti apa yang saya pelajari / apa yang harus saya lakukan ketika Dosen memberikan penjelasan dalam Bahasa Indonesia	1	2,5%	6	15%	27	67,5%	6	15%
4.	Saya merasa lebih nyaman ketika Dosen menerangkan materi dalam Bahasa Indonesia	7	17,5 %	16	40%	15	37,5%	2	5%
5.	Ketika dosen menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia, saya merasa termotivasi dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris	8	20%	17	42,5%	11	27,5%	4	10%
6.	Saya lebih merasa percaya diri ketika menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia saat mengemukakan ide/ pengalaman/ jawaban di kelas Bahasa Inggris	2	5%	14	35%	21	52,5%	3	7,5%
7.	Saat mempelajari struktur/ pola kata bahasa Inggris (grammar), saya lebih mengerti jika Dosen menjelaskannya menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia.	1	2,5%	9	22,5%	27	67,5%	3	7,5%
8.	Dengan Dosen menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia, saya lebih memahami perbedaan tata bahasa Indonesia dan Bahasa Inggris	2	5%	9	22,5%	23	57,5%	6	15%
9.	Saya dapat memaksimalkan waktu untuk belajar dikelas ketika Dosen menjelaskan menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia.	0	0	15	37,5%	25	62,5%	0	0

10.	<i>Saya akan mengurangi partisipasi dalam aktivitas kelas ketika Dosen tidak menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia.</i>	12	30%	20	50%	8	20%	0	0
11.	<i>Kebiasaan Dosen menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia menjadikan saya selalu bergantung pada Dosen untuk menerjemahkan segala sesuatu terlebih dulu.</i>	5	12,5 %	15	37,5%	17	42,5%	3	7,5%
12.	<i>Kebiasaan Dosen menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia membuat saya menyepelekan arti penting Bahasa Inggris</i>	10	25%	19	47,5%	8	20%	3	7,5%
13.	<i>Saya memiliki sedikit kesempatan untuk mendengar dan menggunakan Bahasa Inggris ketika Dosen menerangkan menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia.</i>	2	5%	12	30%	20	50%	6	15%
14.	<i>Saat Dosen menerangkan menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia, saya tidak berkeinginan untuk mempelajari Bahasa Inggris lebih dalam.</i>	24	60%	11	27,5%	3	7,5%	2	5%
15.	<i>Kebiasaan menggunakan Bahasa Indonesian= yang dilakukan oleh Dosen membuat saya takut melakukan kesalahan dalam menggunakan Bahasa Inggris</i>	9	22,5 %	18	45%	11	27,5%	2	5%