

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD TEACHER'S INDONESIAN LANGUAGE USE IN EFL CLASSROOM

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### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian bertujuan untuk mengetahui persepsi siswa terhadap penggunaan bahasa Indonesia oleh guru sebagai bahasa pendukung di dalam kelas bahasa Inggris dan juga untuk menemukan manfaat dari penggunaan bahasa Indonesia oleh guru bagi siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan studi kasus sebagai desain penelitian. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah 36 siswa dari kelas 10 di sekolah menengah kejuruan di kota Bogor. Data dalam penelitian ini didapatkan dari kuisioner dan wawancara. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa memberikan persepsi positif terhadap penggunaan bahasa Indonesia oleh guru sebagai bahasa pendukung di dalam kelas bahasa Inggris. Kemudian, sebagian besar siswa berpendapat bahwa penggunaan bahasa Indonesia oleh guru memberikan beberapa manfaat di dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris.*

**Kata kunci :** *persepsi, bahasa pertama, penggunaan Bahasa Indonesia, kelas EFL*

### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to find out the perceptions of students toward the use of Indonesian language by the teacher as a supporting language of instruction in EFL classroom and it was to find out the benefits of the Indonesian Language use by the teacher as the supporting language of instruction in EFL classroom. This study used a qualitative method with a case study as a design of this study. The participants of this study were 36 students of 10<sup>th</sup> grade at vocational high school in Bogor. This study gained the data from questionnaire and interview. The finding revealed that most of students gave the positive perceptions toward the use of Indonesian language as the supporting language of instruction in EFL classroom. Then, most of them argued that the use of Indonesian language gave them some benefits in learning English.*

**Keyword:** *perception, first language, Indonesian language use, EFL classroom*

## INTRODUCTION

The use of first language in English as the foreign language (EFL) classroom has been a debatable issue. Some proponents believe that in learning English, students have to be taught in English-only. On the other hand, some proponents also believe that students still need their first language in learning English especially for students where English is not used as their tool of communication. Therefore, there are two distinctions perspective in learning English:

monolingual approach and bilingual approach.

### Monolingual Approach

The monolingual approach promoters believe that the use of students' first language in English classroom gives some negative impact for students. Thus, English should be taught in English itself. Philipson (1992) as cited in (Cummins, 2007) argued that English is best taught monolingually and the more English is taught, the better the

result. Furthermore, Cook (2001) as quoted by (Snorraddottir, 2014) stated that second language learners acquire the L2 in the same way as they acquired their mother tongue. It believes that students learn English has the same way as they learn their first language. Moreover, Krashen (1982) as cited in (Enama, 2016) holds that the target language should be used to the most in the classroom, given that most EFL learners are exposed to English only in the classroom. Then, Enama (2016) argues that this argument draws the behavioristic view that learner's language develops through imitation and habit formation.

Auerbach (1993) states that L1 has no essential role in the EFL/ESL classroom and that it might deprive students of valuable input in the L2 and impedes progress (as quoted in Booth, Azman, & Ismail, 2014). In addition, Demir (2012) conveys that the use of students' first language has any negative impact, such as students do not acquire the target language in its natural process, they always try to translate target language into their first language and they cannot get the ability of thinking in the target language. From those arguments, some of proponents above believe that students, who are learning the target language (English), should be taught in English-only.

### **Bilingual Approach**

Nevertheless, students who learn English as the foreign language seem unable to follow this approach. It is because English is not used in their environment. If they are taught in English-only, they might not understand the language itself in the class. Tsukamoto (2011) argues that if the students cannot understand what has been mentioned, they will not be comfortable in proceeding with a task or retain it in their mind. Thus, they need the supporting language in learning the target language. It leads to the term of bilingual approach in the class. Cohen (1975) as cited in (Malarz, 2014) states that bilingual approach is the use of two languages as media of instruction for a child or a group of children in part or all of the school curriculum.

Vigotsky (1962) as cited in (Enama, 2016) is one of the earliest proponents of this approach. He argues that success in learning the target or foreign language is contingent on a certain degree of maturity in the native language. Moreover, Cummins (1978) in his hypothesis about linguistic developmental independence emphasizes that success in target language acquisition depends on L1 development and competence. It is lined with Atkinson (1987), he claims that the use of students' first language can help student in learning L2 effectively (as quoted in Booth, Azman, & Ismail, 2014).

Furthermore, Nation (2003) argues that students' first language should not completely avoided from the foreign language class and reiterated that a judicious and well-planned use of the students' first language can give positive results. Besides, Atkinson (1987) as cited in (Vergara, 2016) explains that the use of students' first language is helpful in checking comprehension. Teacher might ask in the target language, if students understand the topic but sometimes if the level of students is not high enough, they will not comprehend the question so it is necessary to repeat it in the their first language.

Moreover, Atkinson (1987) as quoted in Enama (2016) suggested nine instances under which the L1 could be used in the EFL classroom, including eliciting target language, checking comprehension, giving complex instructions to basic levels, cooperating in group work situations, explaining classroom methodology at basic levels, highlighting a recently taught item, checking sense, explaining testing instructions and developing circumlocution strategies.

In addition, the use of students' first language is still needed in the EFL class. It can be useful for both teacher and students. The use of students' first language has some roles in the class, such as to maintain a comfortable classroom atmosphere, to promote the students' comprehension (Tsukamoto, 2011). Still, Kovacic (2011) mentions that students' first language can be used for explaining grammar, defining vocabulary and explaining difficult concept.

Since this study involves the EFL students in Indonesian, the use of Indonesian language cannot be avoided in English classroom. In school, the students or teachers commonly use Indonesian language as the tool of their communication. It is because Nurakhir (2016) states that Indonesian is the multilingual country where its societies have a thousand of languages across the nation (first language, i.e. Sundanese and Javanese). It makes the government of Indonesian creates the Law No.24/2009 article 25. It states that Indonesian language is the national language that has functions as official language, medium of instruction in education, and tool of communication across regional culture.

### Previous Study

Refers to the monolingual approach theories that believe that student's first language should not be used in English classroom, this study tries to find out the perceptions of students toward the use of Indonesian language in English classroom as well its benefits for the students. Some studies have been conducted related to the use of students' first language in English classroom. Booth (2014) conducted his study to 45 EFL second year undergraduate students from Department of English Foreign Language, University in Yemen. This study used questionnaire and interview to gain the data. It aimed to examine the use of first language in the EFL reading classroom. This study revealed that the students perceive the use of Arabic (L1) as functional strategy in their EFL (L2) classroom and it is used to serve a number of purposes: to translate new word, to define concept, to give some explanations and to help each other in their group.

Agustin (2015) also conducted her study to 7 lecturers and 169 students college from IAIN Cirebon in order to explore and explain the use of students' native language (Indonesian language) and their attitudes toward it. Questionnaire, interview, and observation were used to gather the data. The result showed that the use of Indonesian language was mainly influenced by students' level of English proficiency and the skill of language being taught. Indonesian language also has the potential to be a tool for

supporting teaching and learning. Another study was also conducted by Nursanti (2016) to 7<sup>th</sup> grade of junior high school in Bandung. This study aimed to find out students' perception to the use of teacher's bilingual language (English-Indonesian) and its benefits. Questionnaire and interview were used to gather the data. This study revealed that students show their positive perceptions to the use of bilingual language done by the teacher as language of instruction in their English classroom and it give some benefits for them.

In addition, Fitriani, Prasetyaningsih and Samad (2017) conducted the study to a teacher and 6 students of 10<sup>th</sup> grade at senior high school in Aceh. This study used interview to collect the data. This study aimed to examine the influence of first language used by the teacher in Indonesian EFL classroom. This study showed about the perspective of teacher and students on the use of first language use in EFL classroom. Most of the students agreed the teacher includes the first language in their English classroom as it positively helps them in learning the target language. Besides, the teacher supports the students' view because the inclusion of the first language in EFL classroom is considered as a way to solve the students' problem in learning the target language.

In summary, most of the findings above show that the use of Indonesian language in EFL classroom gives some positive impacts for both teacher and students. Nevertheless, these studies were conducted in different participants. Different participant have the different perception since Robbin and Judge (2010) convey that someone will have different perception because it is influenced by some factors, such as attitudes, interest, experience, and background of someone itself. Moreover, Sugunasriri (1971) states that there are some factors that affect in learning a language, these are age, motivation and environment. Thus, this study tries to find out the students' perception in vocational high school that has the same level with senior high school. Although it has been done by Fitriani, Prasetyaningsih and Samad (2017) in senior high school, this study only involves 6 students to gain the data.

Moreover, the term of Indonesian language in these studies mostly is equated with the term of first language. However, the students' first language in Indonesian might be not same because as explained before that Indonesian is the multicultural country. It needs to be clarified.

Hence, this study tries to find out the students' perceptions toward the use of Indonesian language in EFL classroom as well to find out its benefits for students.

## METHOD

This study was conducted in 6<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> of March, 2019 at SMK TARUNA TERPADU II in Bogor, West Java. The researcher involved one class in grammar class. The researcher chose this school because the teacher used both English and Indonesian language as the language of instruction in English class.

The researcher used qualitative method with a case study approach. This study involved 36 students of 10<sup>th</sup> grade. The researcher chose this class because it was the beginner class in this school furthermore, 10<sup>th</sup> grade is the transition class between junior high school and senior high school.

The researcher used questionnaire and interview to gain the data. All of the students were involved to answer the questionnaire. Meanwhile, 12 students were involved in interview session. The researcher chose 12 students based on the criteria from the high, middle, and low English achievement students. 4 students were taken from each of criteria.

The result of the questionnaire was analyzed by using Likert-scale analysis (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 22) meanwhile the result of the interview was transcribed and analyzed by using structural coding technique (Saldana, 2009, p. 66). Then, the data from the questionnaire was validated by using data triangulation technique from the interview result (Creswell, 2012).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

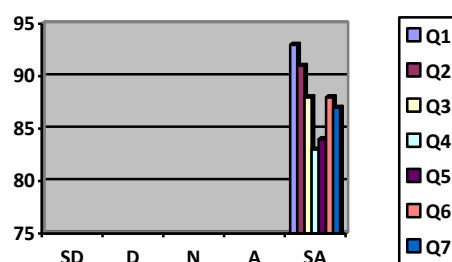


Figure 1. The percentage of questionnaire result

The result of the questionnaire indicated that most of students chose SA (Strongly Agree). They gave positive perceptions toward the use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom. It could be seen from the figure 1 above, there were 7 statements (see appendix 1) about the use of Indonesian language use in English classroom. Figure 1 showed that most of students agreed toward the use of Indonesian language use by the teacher in English classroom.

Based on the statement number 1 & 2 from the questionnaire, most of students agreed that the use of Indonesian language by the teacher could help them in learning English. It was because all of the students could understand the English materials when teacher also used Indonesian in English class. Some students reported in the interview session:

- P12 : *"It was useful because it could be understood for all of students."*
- P1 : *"Yes. It was because the Indonesian language use could help me in learning English and it was easier to understand."*
- P2 : *"Yes, because the use of Indonesian language helped me in understanding the English materials."*

Moreover, they agreed that the use of Indonesian language could help them in learning English and understanding the English materials because there was a translation when teacher used Indonesian

language in explaining the materials. It was reported by some students from the interview session.

P1 : *"Yes, because there was English, then it was translated to Indonesian language."*

P10 : *"It really helped me when there was a translation in learning English."*

In addition, based from the two questions above, all of students agreed that the use of Indonesian language in English classroom could help them in learning English and could make them easy in understanding the materials of English. It was lined with Atkinson (1987), he claims that the use of students' first language can help student in learning L2 effectively (as quoted in Booth, Azman, & Ismail, 2014).

Based on the statement number 3, most of students agreed that the use of Indonesian language by the teacher helped them in defining new vocabulary. They agreed because they could understand the meaning of a certain word that they did not know before. Some students reported:

P3 : *"Yes, because the use of Indonesian language could ease me in learning a vocabulary as well the meaning of what the teacher delivered."*

P6 : *"...I could know the meaning of a new vocabulary."*

From the statement number 4 in questionnaire, most of students agreed that the use of Indonesian language could help them in understanding grammar concept. They felt that if their teacher used English and Indonesian when explaining grammar, they could understand it better.

P4 : *"...made me understand the English materials, for example when the teacher was explaining grammar."*

On the other hand, if their English teacher used English only, they could not understand what the teacher said and even it made them confused. It was because as

discussed before that English is a foreign language for them. Thus, they did not use English as their tool of communication.

P6 : *"...if the teacher only used English, it made me confused."*

In addition, students felt that teacher's Indonesian language use in English classroom could help them in defining vocabulary and understanding grammar concept. It was lined with the theory from Kovacic (2011), he mentioned that students' first language could be used for explaining grammar, defining vocabulary and explaining difficult concept.

Furthermore, based on the statement number 5 & 6, most of students agreed that the use of Indonesian language use by the teacher could make them understand what their teacher said in English classroom and it made them quickly understand the materials compared when their teacher used English-only. Further, they also could understand the teacher's instruction when they had a task.

P8 : *"Yes, because I could understand better what was the teacher saying and understand the new vocabulary."*

P11 : *"...if the teacher used English I didn't completely understand."*

P9 : *"...it also helped me in understanding the instruction that was given by the teacher in doing the task."*

Hence, most of students gave their positive perception that the teacher's Indonesian language use could help them in understanding the meaning of the teacher's speech, teacher's instruction and it could make them understand it quickly compared if their teacher used English-only. Thus, teacher's Indonesian language use helped them in increasing their comprehension in English classroom. It related to the theory from Atkinson (1987) as quoted in Enama (2016).

In addition, in the last statement number 7, most of students agreed toward the use of Indonesian language use in English classroom. They felt that by using

Indonesian language as the supporting language could help them in learning English, such as increasing them in understanding the English materials, defining vocabulary, helping them in understanding grammar concept and helping them in interpreting the meaning of teacher's speech. Some students also reported in interview session:

P1 : *"It was because the Indonesian language use could help me in learning English and it was easier to understand."*

P3 : *"...the use of Indonesian language could ease me in learning a vocabulary as well the meaning of what the teacher delivered."*

P4 : *"...made me understand the English materials, for example when the teacher was explaining grammar concept."*

P10 : *"...made me easier in understanding what was the teacher said."*

Nonetheless, although most of students agreed toward the Indonesian language use by the teacher, most of them claimed that teacher should use Indonesian language judiciously. They argued that the teacher should use English dominantly in order they could achieve the English learning.

P1 : *"English, because it was English class."*

P2 : *"English, because we learned English. It could make me in order to be more capable to practice English speaking."*

P4 : *"English, because we were learning English not Indonesian. The more often we heard the teacher spoke in English, the more it trained ourselves in the aspect of pronunciation in English."*

P9 : *"English because English is very useful in my major. So, it should use English dominantly. The use of Indonesian language was only as the*

*supporting language when I didn't understand a certain materials."*

From students' opinions above, it could be seen that they expected that the teacher should use English dominantly rather than Indonesian in their English class. They believe that the more they were taught in English the more they get better achievement in learning English. It was related with the theory from Philipson (1992) as quoted in Cummins (2007).

## CONCLUSION

As the conclusion, based on the result of questionnaire and interview, most of students give the positive perceptions toward the use of Indonesian language by the teacher. It can be seen in the figure 1 above. They agree that the teacher's Indonesian language use in English classroom can help them in learning English, defining vocabulary, understanding grammar concept and increasing their comprehension of English materials. Nevertheless, Indonesian language use should be used judiciously in order they get better achievements in English learning.

Moreover, there were still limitations in this study that would need to be addressed in the future study. First, this study only used questionnaire and interview. Future studies are recommended to gather the data through questionnaire, interview, and observation. Second, this study chose the participant only from their background at 10<sup>th</sup> grade in vocational high school. Further studies are recommended to find out the perception of students toward the use of Indonesian language in English classroom based on their age, motivation and English language proficiency.

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