
Learners' Perception on the Use of L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) in English as Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore how students' perception about the teaching-learning processes in their EFL classroom using their first language (Bahasa Indonesia). A questionnaire was used as the instrument in this quantitative study. 30 students from MTs Muhammadiyah 01 Pekanbaru junior high schools participated in this study. Students were given questionnaires, which were then rated on a Likert scale of 1-4. Data analysis shows that teachers mostly speak English in class and just occasionally use Indonesian. Students agree to the teacher's use of Indonesian when necessary. Students also agree that they may speak Indonesian during the lesson. The use of Indonesian encourages students to be more enthusiastic about learning English. The results show that students improve their English when they use it frequently in class. All of the students agree that the more English they use, the better it gets.

Keywords: Perception, English Foreign Language Classroom (EFL), L1, L2

Introduction

Learners of a second/foreign language are divided into groups or categories in language teaching. Language users are divided into several groups based on their De Swaan level (Cook, 2010). The group begins with Group A (local), which is defined as people communicating with each other using their L1. Then, in Group B (central), people use an L2 within a larger community, primarily for education and government. Following that, Group C (super-central) refers to those who use an L2 for a specific function. Furthermore, Group D (hyper-central) is understandable because people used an L2 for a variety of functions. Furthermore, Group E might be characterized as persons who have historically come from a specific community and have learned its language as an L2. Finally, Group F includes those who use an L2 with their parents, siblings, or friends. As a result, language users are divided into numerous groups based on where and why they use the language. In relation to the language user groups discussed above, the writer focuses her writing on how group B acquires the language, particularly in the EFL context.

English is increasingly used for worldwide communication on a global scale and as a common language (Brutt-Griffler, 2008). It makes it possible for people from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds to interact and exchange knowledge. Additionally, English is a crucial component of instructional procedures in a huge number of nations (Graddol, 2006). In an effort to assist its people in becoming proficient users of English in the future, the government is making efforts to incorporate as much English as possible into their educational system.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language (EFL), where Indonesian language is the first language (L1). From elementary through university levels, English has been taught as a foreign language in Indonesian classrooms. It may seem out of place to use the students' native language (L1) in an EFL lesson, but this is a common phenomenon, particularly in nations where English is used as a foreign language. Allowing or even encouraging the use of students' native languages in EFL classes is still a controversial topic that calls for more research by perceptive teachers and academics (Cook, 2001).

The use of first language (L1) in the EFL learning process has long been contentious point. Numerous research has been conducted on this subject, and the results show either support for or opposed to the use of the L1 in EFL classrooms. In reality, it was once believed that only English should be used in English classrooms for a very long time. The L1 does not serve a crucial role in EFL instruction. Since the L1 can become a barrier to learning the L2, using the L1 excessively may prevent students from receiving significant input in the L2 (Ellis, 2008). Manara (2007) states that the use of L1 would depend on the competency level of the students; in other words, L1 might be used if the students' proficiency level was still low. However, as their proficiency level rises, less L1 should be required. The final conclusion was that the students' L1 will be used to connect their L1 knowledge to their L2 learning.

Methods

This study is being conducted using a quantitative research design. Participants in this survey study design are expected to complete a questionnaire and provide answers to questions that will be graded on a Likert scale from 1-4. The researcher conducted a descriptive analysis. When describing variables or conditions in a situation, descriptive analysis is used to characterize "what existing" and learn more about the phenomenon's current condition. It was addressed 30 learners from MTS Muhamadiyah 01 Pekanbaru. Purposive sampling was the method used in this study to choose respondents.

In order to collect quantitative data on language use in English courses and student attitudes toward L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) and L2 (English) use, the researcher developed a questionnaire adopted from Snorraddottir (2014), cited by Anggi et al (2018). There were 18 questions in all, and three of them were the indicators listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Blueprint of the Questionnaire

No.	Indicators	Items Number	Frequency
1	Frequency of language used during English lessons	1	1
2	Learners' perceptions on teachers' use of Bahasa Indonesia throughout English lessons	3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18	15
3	Learners' understanding while communicating to teacher in English Lessons	2, 5	2
Total			18

Results and Discussion

Frequency of Language Used during English Lessons

Table 2. Learners' Perception of Language Use in the EFL Classroom

No.	Language Use in English Lessons	A	O	R	N
1	How often does the teacher speak in English during the lessons?	40%	50%	10%	0%

Findings on the indicator 1 about the frequency of language used during English lesson shows that the teachers often use English during English lesson (50%). It can be seen that L1 is also used by the teachers in a very little percentage. Tang (2002) stated that to make English more understandable, teachers eventually use first language in English class.

Learners' Perceptions towards Teachers Using Bahasa Indonesia in English Lessons

The second category included viewpoints on language usage in English lessons. There are 15 statements about how the learners feel about language use. The score was used to represent how the students felt about how language was used in English classes in the EFL classroom. Following are the percentages for each statement in this category:

Table 3. Learners' Perception toward Teachers Using Bahasa Indonesia in English Lessons

No.	Learners' Perceptions on Teachers' Use of Bahasa Indonesia in English Lessons	SA	A	D	SD
3	I believe that it is important for the teacher to only use English in class.	40%	50%	10%	0%
4	I think it is better for the teacher to speak in both English and Bahasa Indonesia so that all students can understand.				
6	I believe that assignment instructions should be provided in Bahasa Indonesia.	33 %	60%	6.7%	0%
7	I think the teacher should use Bahasa Indonesia when explaining something challenging, like grammar or vocabulary.	60%	40%	0%	0%
8	I think the teacher should always use English to discipline students.	6.7%	36.7%	43.3%	13.3%
9	When the teacher speaks with the students on topics unrelated to the class, I believe teacher should only use English.	0%	3.3%	80.0%	16.7%
10	I believe the teacher should only provide homework in English.	0%	6.7%	63,3%	30.0%
11	I believe the teacher should only ask questions of the class in English.	10.0%	60.0%	30.0%	0%
12	I believe that the teacher				
13	should give compliment or feedbacks for students in Bahasa Indonesia.	30.0%	63.3%	6.7%	0%
14	I often don't understand what the teacher is asking me to do when she only uses English to communicate.	56.7%	43.3%	0%	0%
15	When the teacher only speaks English, I have trouble understanding a lot of vocabulary.	53.3%	43.3%	3.3%	0%
16	If the teacher just speaks English, learning the language is more difficult.	46.7%	53.3%	0%	0%
17	I think my grammar has improved	30.0%	53.3%	13.3%	3.3%

	because the teacher mainly speaks English.				
18	I think my vocabulary has improved because the teacher mostly uses English.	50.0%	50.0%	0%	0%
Total		27.5%	42.6%	21.7%	4.2%

The results of statements 3, 4, 6, and 7 showed that although students prefer L1 inclusion, it is important for teachers to use English throughout English class. These results are in line with those of Hidayati (2012). The next three statements—numbers 9, 10, and 11—demonstrate that students don't agree with teachers who only use English when giving homework assignments and conducting class discussions. This suggests that teachers should always use English when teaching without any limitations. However, statements 14, 15, and 16 show how challenging it is for learners to comprehend what the teacher is saying when they only speak English. The statements 13, 17, and 18 indicate how the students' English proficiency increases when English is the language that is used most frequently in the classroom. The students believe that as more English is used in class, their vocabulary and grammar will improve. These results imply that English has to be exposed more than L1. To help students' English skills grow, it is necessary to expose them to English as the target language (Ellis, 2005).

Learners' Understanding while Communicating to Teacher in English Lessons

Table 4. Learners' Understanding while Communicating to Teacher in English Lessons

No.	Learners' Understanding while Communicating to Teacher in English Lessons	SA	A	D	SD
2	When a teacher speaks in English, I can comprehend what they are saying.	6.7%	30%	63.3%	0%
5	Because teachers usually communicate in English, it is challenging for me to get to know the teacher and have a conversation with him.	0%	46.7%	53.3%	0%
Total		3.35%	38.35%	58.3%	0%

Indicator 3 provides specific information about the students' understanding as they interact with teachers during English-language lessons. When the teacher speaks in English, the students disagree that they can understand what is being said. Referring to indicator 1 on the frequency of language used by the teachers, this would eventually pose a serious challenge to students' understanding of what they are studying. The students reportedly neither agree nor disagree that it is challenging to talk to and get to know their teacher because they mostly use English. Because they must speak English most of the time, the students do not appear to know whether it is challenging or not to communicate with and get to know their teachers.

Conclusions

A data analysis of the research's data reveals that both teachers and students frequently speak English in class. This indicates that at least some of the teachers also use L1 in class. Even so, students continue to use their first language in a proportion that is comparable to their use of English. It can be demonstrated

that students have a positive opinion of the teachers' use of L1 in English lessons. They agree that the target language should use English more than L1, and that inclusion of L1 should be allowed. When L1 is used in class, students may feel more comfortable and motivated to study English. When teachers simply use English to explain something, especially complicated grammar or uncommon language, students find it difficult to understand. If L1 was used frequently and there was more exposure to English, L1 became helpful in the classroom. The students' vocabulary, grammar, and English accent will all improve when the language of instruction is mostly English.

The findings of this research showed that both students felt positive about the use of their native tongue (Bahasa Indonesia) in EFL lessons. Data from the students indicated that the proper use of their L1 might be very beneficial in helping them acquire English as a foreign language. However, excessive L1 use may limit students' opportunities to use the target language (English) and by limiting their exposure to L1, the more proficient their English. The study discovered that using students' first languages in the classroom could help in their understanding of second languages.

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