

## **The use of L1 in English as a foreign language classroom at SMA Taruna Jaya Sampit**

**Appriyadi Setiawan Simamora**

[appriyadi@gmail.com](mailto:appriyadi@gmail.com)

*University of Palangka Raya*

### **Abstract**

One of the most favorite approach in teaching and learning a foreign language is the use of L1 in the classroom. Debates have going for ages about the effectiveness of this approach. This approach could help the teacher to explain certain subjects to the students moreover if the students lack English comprehension. On the other hand, this approach could demotivate the students and only can be used in a certain level of comprehension of English. The purpose of this study is to find out: How frequent teachers and students use L1 in English Foreign Language Classroom, Perspective of the teacher on the use of L1 in EFL Classroom and Perspective of students on the use of L1 in EFL Classroom. The research type of this study was qualitative research. Data were taken by questionnaire, interview, and observation. The subject of this study is the first-class SMA Taruna Jaya Students and English teacher. The questionnaire was given to the teacher and students of the first class of SMA Taruna Jaya and the data of the interview were taken from the teacher and 5 students which chose randomly. The result showed that the teacher and students used L1 most of the time and the perspective of the teacher and students toward the use of L1 is mostly positive.

**Keyword:** English as a foreign language classroom, the use of L1, English

### **INTRODUCTION**

English as one of many languages which is mostly taught and used in every corner in the world is usually a foreign language in a certain country. People who learn English are mostly intended to gain a better job or education in this fast improving modern world. Also in this globalization era, many people know that English is one of the world languages to communicate with each other with other people around the world (Crystal, 2003: 4). As more people learn, the more English is used around the world. As many people know today, teaching English as a foreign language has been introduced and taught in the school in many countries in the world, including Indonesia (Harmer, 2011: 6). However, learning English as a foreign language is not as easy as it looks. Moreover, if the First Language (L1) is different from the target language, in this part is English. So, for this reason, many researchers tried to find a solution to teach English fast and effective. One of the old strategies is by using L1 in foreign language teaching process.

---

**Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Palangka Raya Indonesia, 14-16 November 2019**

<http://e-proceedings.iain-palangkaraya.ac.id/index.php/inacelt>

Copyright © 2019 by INACELT

Using L1 in the foreign language teaching process is already being used by so many teachers in the world. Cook (2001) mentioned the use of L1 in EFL is to facilitate the comprehension process when the use of L2 cannot be grasped by learners, to build a relationship between L1 and L2 in the minds of the students, to continue learning tasks without any misunderstandings, and to develop L2 activities for later real-life use. Macaro (1997) also mentioned the first language is helpful for giving instruction to perform activities in the classroom, translating some points and checking comprehension, giving feedback to students and to maintaining discipline in the classroom. Pinnock (2009: 50) argues that language use as a medium of instruction determine a success in education. Besides that, using own language will support the success in learning, including English skills. According to Cameron (2005: 210), there are some various patterns for combing both languages: (1) Exploring new language (2) Giving Instruction (3) Checking understanding (4) Talk about learning (5) Talk about Language (6) Feedback (7) Discipline

But saying this strategy is perfect-like is definitely wrong. Though this strategy offers a good solution it is still full of weaknesses. Turnbull (2001), responded to Cook's view and stated that the use of the mother tongue or L1 by the teacher is not beneficial to L2 learners. This was also the view of McDonald (1993) when he argued that the classroom is the only suitable context where learners can be exposed to L2 and if teachers use L1, learners will have no opportunity to experience the real use of L2. This is also premised on the assumption that learners of the L2 will be disinclined to practice the L2 in a classroom where teachers are inclined to use the L1 (Ellis, 2008). From many reasons stated above this strategy still become the controversy among the teachers and experts.

In Indonesia, this strategy also has a lot of problems. This strategy mostly used L1 as the strategy to teach a foreign language. But some of Indonesians does not master their first language yet, this reason exists because before they learn Bahasa Indonesia they already have dozen of languages before acquiring Bahasa Indonesia which definitely will ruin their learning-teaching process when forced to add another language that is clearly very different from their mother tongue and L1. Another problem besides the lack of the first language knowledge, the political issue seems to be the next problem in Indonesia because the English as a compulsory subject at school is still staying as foreign language not second language Johnston (2003) argued that 'Possibly the most significant development in the field of English language teaching (ELT) in the 1990s was the acceptance of the idea that ELT is and always has been a profoundly and unavoidably political undertaking'. In fact, the use of language should be supported by the environment of the target language so as they still have some problems in how to teach and make their students appropriately and fluently speak the language. For this reason, the researcher concludes that English still become a foreign language in Indonesia. When a language becomes foreign the learners tend to confuse why they should learn it while there are still of dozen languages that they need to focus, even if globalization asks differently. From this point, it is clear that political issues also play a big role in teaching language.

From the reason stated above, some question raised. What are the perspective of the students and teacher about this strategy? So, in this study, the researcher focused on the perspective of the teacher and students toward the L1 use strategy in EFL Classroom. Frequencies of the use were also used to support the data of this study.

The subject in this study were SMA Taruna Jaya First Class Students and the teacher who is present during one teaching-learning process in EFL Classroom

## METHOD

The method of this research was descriptive qualitative data. The data were taken in SMA Taruna Jaya. Data were taken by using, questionnaire, interview, and observation. Observation data were taken during teaching and learning process. Next, questionnaire were given to 30 (16 Females, 14 Males) students in SMA Taruna Jaya first class. After the questionnaire finished, the interview will be given to random 10% of the students and the teacher in that classroom.

Observation was used to count the frequencies of the L1 Use in EFL classroom. The aspect that focused were presented below for both the students and the teacher. As for students, all students will count as whole unity.

Table 1. For the teacher

No	The Use of L1 in	Frequencies
1	Giving Instruction and Permission	
2	Disciplining	
3	Explaining difficult concepts, grammar, vocabulary, meaning or ideas	

Table 2. For the students

No	The Use of L1 in	Frequencies
1	Asking and Answering Question	
2	Explaining meaning of Words	
3	Titling the Lecturer	

The interview was taken by 10% of students in the class and also the teacher who gave the material. The interview was semi-structured. The interview was the main point in this study. The interview guideline are presented below

What is your point of view about using Bahasa in EFL Classroom?

Do you agree about the all English language in EFL Classroom? State your explanation!

Which language is supposed to be most used in EFL Classroom?

In what situation did you believe that Bahasa should be used?

The questionnaire was also given before the interview as the main data on this study. The questionnaire was given to students after the learning and teaching process finished. The questionnaire consist of 3 question and all the questionnaire are multiple-choice.

## FINDINGS

### Data Presentation

#### *Data from the observation*

Table 3. For the teacher

No	The Use of L1 in	Frequencies
1	Giving Instruction and Permission	10
2	Disciplining	9
3	Explaining difficult concepts, grammar, vocabulary, meaning or ideas	7

Table 4. For the students

No	The Use of L1 in	Frequencies
1	Asking and Answering Question	11
2	Asking permission	3
3	Titling the Lecturer	1

#### *Data from the interview*

The interview was done to gain more data to support this study. The interview was taken from 3 students (30 students total in the classroom) and the teacher who gave the lesson before.

*Data from the questionnaire*

For the students			
No	Question	Answer	Frequencies
1	Should L1 be used in the English classroom?	A. Yes	90%
		B. No	10%
2	Do you use L1 in the English classroom?	A. No	0%
		B. Few times	10%
		C. Sometimes	30%
		D. A lot	60%
3	Do you think the use of L1 in the English classroom helps you learn this language?	A. No	0%
		B. A little	5%
		C. Fairly much	45%
		D. A lot	50%

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Discussion from the Observation**

*Data from the teacher*

According to the data above, the frequencies of L1 use in EFL is unsurprisingly high. The teacher only uses English in few cases like reading from the book or passage. The reason behind this behavior was explained in the interview with the teacher.

*Data from the students*

According to the data above, the frequencies of L1 use in EFL for the students are pretty high. When answering and questioning happen the students mostly use Bahasa, only a few use mixed English. About asking permission the numbers are pretty low because most of the students know the basic of English for certain matter. For example, Mam can I go to the bathroom, Mam may I go to the Nurse Office, etc. About titling the lecturer, the students were pretty trained for how to titling the English teacher, most of them call her mam and only once in this matter call her "Ibu".

### **Discussion from the Interview**

*Data from the teacher*

According to the data that taken during the interview, four questions were given to the teacher so she may answer it accordingly.

The first question "What is your point of view about using Bahasa in EFL Classroom?" and she replied "Using Bahasa in EFL is surely appetizing, but it only can be implemented in a certain level of English comprehension. As for in this class, the use of L1 is surely necessary. The reason is that the students have a different kind of

comprehension in English”. From this answer, the researcher concluded that the teacher's point of view of the Use of L1 in EFL classroom is positive in this level of comprehension.

The second question “Do you agree about the all English language in EFL Classroom? State your explanation!” and she replied “I do agree about it for some certain of comprehension. But surely in this level of comprehension at SMA it is not appropriate to use all English Language in the classroom because the effect could be backward.” From this answer, the researcher believe that the teacher disagrees about using all English Language in a certain level.

The third question “Which language is supposed to be most used in EFL Classroom?” and she replied “This is an English classroom. So, naturally, we should speak English. But at this level, it is normal that English is not the most used language in the classroom because, but at certain level such as university students it is natural to expect differently”. So, in this matter, the researcher believes that the teacher does expect their class to speak English but the teacher does not mind if Bahasa was mostly used there, as long as the students understand it.

The fourth and last question “In what situation did you believe that Bahasa should be used?” and she replied “In my opinion is when the teacher has to explain a new concept, aspect and basic foundation in English. Because it is so important for the students to understand it”. So in this matter, the researcher believes that this teacher will use Bahasa to make sure the students understand concept, aspect, and foundation in English. For it is necessary for them to understand it before confronted with more advanced topic.

From the interview data above, the researcher believes that the teacher reacts positively toward the Use of L1 in EFL classroom.

#### *Data from the students*

The first question “What is your point of view about using Bahasa in EFL Classroom?” the first students replied “I believe that is good, it can help me to learn English better” the second students replied “I agree on this because I can understand English by using Bahasa” the third students replied “I agree on it because I can’t yet speak English so I need Bahasa to help me”. Form these answer we believe that the students want to keep using Indonesia when learning because it could help them to learn English”

The second question “Do you agree about the all English language in EFL Classroom? State your explanation!” the first students replied “No, because I don’t believe in my ability yet” the second students replied “ I want it but not now I still can’t speak English properly” the third students “No, I don’t want it what if I can’t understand it?”. Form the answer above the researcher believe that the students disagree

on this matter and one student somewhat disagree if this all English language class occur in his current skill but still open possibilities in the future.

The third question “Which language is supposed to be most used in EFL Classroom?” the first students replied “it should be English but what if I can’t use it?” the second students “English, but still it should be okay to use Bahasa” the third student answer “Bahasa, because we in Indonesia and we use Bahasa to learn English” form the answer given above the researcher believe that the most of the students believe English should be used and one of the students said the other way.

The fourth and last question “In what situation did you believe that Bahasa should be used?” and the first students replied “When there is a new thing in English that I don’t understand” the second students replied “A word or anything that I can’t understand” the third students replied “anything hard it should be explained in Indonesia”. According to the answer, the researcher believes that Bahasa is required when a difficult concept, word comes, to “guarantee” the understanding of the student.

From the data above the researcher believe that the students react positively about the use of L1 in EFL Classroom.

### **Discussion from the Questionnaire**

The result of this questionnaire is straight forward. The students react positively about the use of L1 in EFL Classroom. None of the students answered that they use 100% English in EFL classroom. Most of the students at least use Bahasa in certain matters in EFL Classroom.

### **CONCLUSION**

The use of L1 in EFL Classroom become one of the main controversy debated by the scholar and researcher. That is one of many reasons why this study happen. This study aims to find out the frequencies of L1 use in EFL Classroom and the teacher and students' perspective toward the use of L1 in EFL Classroom. The type of this study is descriptive qualitative research. Using, observation, questionnaire, and interview as the instrument to collect data.

The findings of this study are pretty straight forward. The teacher and the students frequently use L1 in the EFL Classroom for a specific reason. It helps the teacher to teach and explain better about certain topics and also helps students to understand more. This data was supported by the finding in an interview given to both students and teachers and questionnaires to the students.

## REFERENCES

- Cook, V.J. (2001), *'Using the first language in the classroom'*, Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language*. (2<sup>nd</sup>ed. First ed., 1997), Cambridge: Cambridge University
- Ellis, R. (2008). Chapter 15 - *Classroom interaction and second language acquisition*. In *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harmer, Jeremy. (2011). *The practice of English language teaching*. Harlow (England): Pearson Longman
- Johnston, Bill (2003) *Values in English Language Teaching*. Oklahoma State University at Tulsa. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Macaro, Ernesto. (1997). *Target Language, Collaborative Learning and Autonomy*, Great Britain, WBC Book Manufacturers LTD
- McDonald, C. (1993). *Using the target language*. Cheltenham, UK: Mary Glasgow
- Pinock, Helen (2009) *Language and Education: Missing Link*. CfBT and Save the Children Alliance copyright 2009
- Turnbull, M. (2001). *There is a role for the L1 in second and foreign language teaching, but ...* The Canadian Modern Language Review, 54(4), 531-540