



## Students' Perception of Teacher's -Bilingual Language Use in an English Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, English is a subject taught start from primary school to university. However, in learning English students have difficulty in understanding the teachers' instructions. Bilingual language is used by the teachers in delivering material because they believed the students' get advantages. As a result, this study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of the use of English and Indonesian by teachers in teaching and learning in English classroom and to find out the benefits for students in learning English. The design of this research was descriptive in the form of qualitative. The number of subjects in this study were 33 students of 9th grade students SMP Pelangi Dharma Nusantara. The data used in this study were obtained through questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that students gave positive perceptions of the teacher's bilingual language (English and Indonesian) in the English classroom and it provided benefits for students such as easily understood the material, made the situation more comfortable, understood the instructions that were given by the teacher and increased confidence in participate in learning English.

**Keywords:** students' perception, bilingual language, teacher's language use, English classroom

### INTRODUCTION

English as one of the most popular international languages that is used communicatively and massively in almost all parts of the world, among in business, technology, and education in the 21st century. In Indonesia, according to Government Regulation No. 19 of 2005 concern National Education Standards, English is used as a subject for national examination at the junior high and high school levels. In addition, several universities require that students who will complete their studies at the bachelor, graduate, and postgraduate degree are required to submit a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) certificate with a certain minimum score limit. It is in accordance with policies set by the department and study program. Sri Andayani (2022) also report that several universities in Jakarta stated that studying English is necessary in higher education institutions because students must be able to comprehend and be able to communicate effectively in the academic field they are studying because the majority of their academic sources are obtained from academic sources that use English. Therefore, students are required to be proficient in English.

However, in learning English students have difficulty in comprehending the language even understanding the instructions which were given by the teacher. The need for understandable language teaching is critical in learning a new language. If students do not feel clear enough about what the teacher is explaining or asking to them about the target language, they would not get any information from the teacher during the lesson. Therefore, they may fail in the learning process, especially the students' in beginning level. The students do not have prior knowledge. Therefore, teachers must consider how to facilitate students in learning English.

In Indonesia there are no regulations or educational institution policies for the use of language teaching in learning English. Language teaching in English classes is

only determined by teachers who teach English as a subject. The teachers may use bilingual approach or English as a second language (L2). Bilingual approach means two languages as medium of instruction used by the teacher, such as the students' native language in this case is Indonesian (L1) in learning English classes (Dujmović et al., 2007). There has been discussion about whether the use of only English as a second language or bilingual. Some research by Dafouz and Smit (2020); Fang and Liu (2020); Graham and Eslami (2020) found that the use of L2 was effective in language learning. On the contrary, teaching English is beneficial by using bilingual language (Azimov, 2020; Satriah et al., 2019). It is effective to assist the students in comprehending teachers' instructions, easier to communicate, build a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom, and gain new vocabularies.

Based on observation at SMP Pelangi Dharma Nusantara, the English teachers used bilingual language in English classrooms. They used bilingual language to give instructions, explain, and clarify the meaning of the materials. It was because they believed the use of first language (L1) in English classroom gave advantages to students. To better understand L1's function in L2 learning, more research is needed. Furthermore, previous research was conducted by Pratiwi et al. (2022). Their research was emphasized on university students' perception. This study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of teacher use of bilingualism in English classes and its benefits at the junior high school level. Therefore, the research problem was formulated as follows: "How is the students' perceptions of the use of bilingualism by teachers in English classes and the benefits in grade 9 of SMP Pelangi Dharma Nusantara?"

## **METHODS**

This research was a descriptive study that used qualitative methods to determine students' perceptions about the use of Indonesian and English in English classes. Participants in this study were 33 students of 9th grade students in SMP Pelangi Dharma. Research instruments are all tools used to collect, examine, investigate a problem, or collect, process, analyse and present data systematically to solve a problem. Two instruments were used in this study. The first instrument was a questionnaire. Questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions or other types of confirmation. In this study, the questionnaire was developed to capture data about students' perceptions on the use of the teacher's bilingual language (English and Indonesian) in the English classroom. The type of questionnaire used in this study was a closed questionnaire. According to (Nunan (1992) ), a closed questionnaire is a questionnaire in which the range of possible responses is determined by researchers, this questionnaire uses checklists in facilitating students to provide their response. In this study, the questionnaire contained eight closed questions. All questions and explanations were in Indonesian to create a relaxed atmosphere and to enable students to understand instruction. In this study, the closed questionnaire was adapted from Nursanti (2016) which included four answers such as strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, and disagree. Before giving the questionnaire, the researcher also observed 80 minutes or two hours of learning activities in the English class to see the emergence of Indonesian.

Furthermore, the second instrument was interview. Interview results were used to capture additional data to find out the benefits of using bilingual language by teachers in English classes. In addition, in this study, researchers conducted face-to-face interviews. Next, researchers began to analyze students' perceptions on teacher's bilingual language used in English classroom through calculation of the percentage of their responses to questionnaire items. Meanwhile, the benefits of using bilingual languages used by teachers in English classroom were obtained through interviews. After that, researchers interpreted the data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The following discussion showed an analysis of students' perceptions of Indonesian language use by teachers in classrooms based on observations and

questionnaires. The discussion was divided into three parts. First part exposed the observation result about the use of Indonesian by the teacher in English classroom. Second part discussed students' perceptions of the use of Indonesian by teachers in the English classroom through questionnaires. Last part was interviews about the use of Indonesian by the teacher in English classroom.

1. Observation Result

Based on observations in class, the teacher uses Indonesian for several purposes. Mostly, teacher used Indonesian to clarify explanations or to check students' understanding. The topic covered in class was recount text. The explanation included vocabulary and tenses. The use of Indonesian by the teacher was seen when he explains vocabulary. The teacher used Indonesian to explain the meaning of the vocabulary. Then, he translated it into English. The aim was to introduce the use of the words. It can be seen that the teacher uses the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in explaining Language. The statement is agreed by Prodromou (2002) that beginner level students in class L2 tend to accept the use of L1 because it can clarify vocabulary, examine understanding and explain the reasons for language learning activities. In addition, the use of Indonesian is also observed when the teacher checked the understanding of the material being explained. The expression used is "Apakah sudah mengerti anak-anak? " dan "Ada yang ingin ditanyakan? ". In addition, the use of Indonesian is found in observations when the teacher gave instructions to students. The expression is "Kerjakan halaman 45 dan buat dibuku latihan". The teacher used Indonesian in order to make the instructions easier to understand. Based on the finding above, it proved that the use of teacher's bilingual language to the 9 graders in learning English had occurred. The teacher used bilingual to the students in order to explain his instructions and clarify his lesson.

2. Questionnaire

Questionnaire was conducted to capture data on students' perceptions about teachers' bilingual language (English and Indonesian) use in English classroom. It consisted of eight questions in order to gather information from respondents. There were 33 students of 9th grade students in SMP Pelangi Dharma Nusantara participated in filling out the questionnaire that given by the researcher.

**TABLE 1 / Questionnaire**

| No | Statement  | Percentages |       |       |       |
|----|--|-------------|-------|-------|-------|
|    |  | SA          | A     | SDA   | D     |
| 1  | The use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom helps you in learning English.                                  | 48,5%       | 42,4% | 0%    | 9,1%  |
| 2  | The use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom makes you easy to understand the material given by the teacher. | 51,5%       | 30,3% | 6,1%  | 12,1% |
| 3  | The use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom makes you easy to understand new vocabularies in English.       | 45,5%       | 54,5% | 0%    | 0%    |
| 4  | The use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom helps you   | 24,2%       | 48,5% | 12,1% | 15,2% |

|       |  |        |       |       |       |
|-------|--|--------|-------|-------|-------|
|       | to be fluent and accurate on your English speaking skill.  |        |       |       |       |
| 5     | The use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom help you improve your writing skill easily.   | 24,2%  | 45,5% | 18,2% | 12,1% |
| 6     | The use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom makes you understand toward the meaning of every sentence which is explained by the teacher               | 30,3%  | 39,4% | 21,2% | 9,1%  |
| 7     | The use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom makes you understand something faster and it helps your teacher in managing the time in explaining thing. | 27,3 % | 60,6% | 0%    | 12,1% |
| 8     | The use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom makes you confused to learn English.  | 9,1%   | 21,2% | 39,4% | 30,3% |
| Total |  | 32,6%  | 42,8% | 12,1% | 12,5% |

Note:

SA = Strongly Agree

A = Agree

SDA = Strongly Disagree

DA = Disagree

Based on the results of the questionnaire above about students' perceptions of the bilingual language used by teachers in English classroom, it indicated that students agreed or gave a positive perception of all statements in the questionnaire. Based on statement number 1, students gave a positive perception of 48.5% by answering strongly agree. It showed that students had a strong positive perception of the use of Indonesian by the teacher in the English class that can help them learn English. In addition, only 9.1% or 3 students answered disagree and no one answered strongly disagree. It proved that students gave positive responses to the first statement. It is in accordance with the findings of Pratiwi et al. (2022) which state that the use of L1 in the context of studying L2 can help the students learn the language more effectively, be more engaged in class, and develop their English language abilities.

In addition, the question number 2 is about the use of Indonesian by the teacher in the English class made it easy for students to understand the material provided by the teacher. It showed 51.5% of students answered strongly agree and agree 30.3%. Those percentages proved that students gave positive responses to the second question. Meanwhile, students' negative responses showed 6.1% strongly disagreed and 12% disagreed. Based on these results the negative response was less than the positive responses. Therefore, it can be said that students gave positive perceptions of the use Indonesian in understanding the material delivered by the teacher. It is in accordance with the statement by Cook (2001), L1 is useful in facilitating the process of understanding when the use of L2 cannot be understood by students. It certainly had an impact on students' understanding of the concepts

explained by the teacher. The use of two languages is effective in learning English.

Likewise question number 3 showed that 45.5% answered strongly agree and 54.5% agreed to the use of Indonesian by the teacher in the English class in making students easy to understand new vocabulary in English. The data proved that students give positive responses since none of the students who answered strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement. It is connected with (Sibarani, 2019) states that students the use L1 can be used in L2 classroom to explain difficult concepts and define new vocabulary items. Therefore, based on the results, the use of two languages by the teacher during English learning is needed for students. In addition, students also gave a positive response to the questions number 4. It was the use of Indonesian by the teacher in the English classroom in helping students to be fluent and accurate in English speaking skills. The percentages of strongly disagree at around 12.1% and 15.2% of disagree are indicated the less negative response. While the positive response is 24.2% strongly agree and 48.5% agree. It can be said the students agreed that the use of bilingual language gave benefit for them.

Furthermore, the question number 5 showed the percentage of students who strongly disagree was 18,2% and 12,1% disagreed with the statement of the use of Indonesian language by the teacher in English classroom made them easy in English writing skill. Because the results of students' negative responses were lower than positive responses, it proved that students agreed and had positive perceptions of the statement. The students' positive response was 24,2% strongly agreed and 45,5% agreed. Thus, bilingual language can impact in developing students' writing skill (Kerr, 2019). In addition, in the question number 6, students who stated strongly agreed were 30,3% and 39,4% agreed with the use of Indonesian language made them understood toward the meaning of every sentence which was explained by the teacher. While 21,2% of students strongly disagreed and 9.1% disagreed. Based on these answers, it showed students gave positive perception of statement number 6. It is supported by Fatsah and Purnama, (2022)), L1 must be used in conveying meaning the lesson so that the class is organized.

In a similar with question number 6, the result of question number 7 was students also gave a positive response to statement of the use of Indonesian by the teacher in English classroom made them understand things faster and it helped their teacher in managing time in explaining things. It can be proven from the answers 27.3% strongly agree students and 60.6% agree. Whereas none of the students gave responses strongly disagree and only 12.1% students disagree. It verified that students' view was positive toward bilingual language which could give advantages for them. That statement is in line with Azimov (2020) who found that the students faster grasp the concepts of the materials.

Furthermore, the last question had the highest percentage of strongly disagree answers. There were 39.4% students strongly disagree on the use of Indonesian by the teacher in the English class made them confused to learn English. It did not show the negative perception of students because the statement was actually in the negative form. The statement showed that students gave positive perceptions by showing that the use of Indonesian by the teacher in the English class did not make them confused to learn English. It is also supported by Ma (2016) who the use of L1 made the students were not confused in understanding the meaning of English vocabularies, teacher's explanation even provided peer support.

### 3. Interview

In this study, interview aimed to support the results of the questionnaire analysis and to strengthen data from students' perceptions of teacher's bilingual language used in English classroom. The questions in the interview were mentioned below.

- 1) Does bilingual language used by teacher in your English classroom help you learn English? Please give your reason!
- 2) Does bilingual language used by the teacher in your English classroom make it easy for you to understand the material provided by the teacher? Please give your reason!

- 3) Does bilingual language that the teacher used in your English classroom provide some benefits for you to learn English? Please give your reason!
- 4) Does the bilingual language that teacher used in your English classroom make you feel confused in learning English? Please give your reason!
- 5) Do you agree or disagree with the use of the teacher's bilingual language in your English classroom?

Based on the results of the interview, all students gave a positive perception of the use of the teacher's bilingual language in the English classroom. They stated that they agreed with the use of the teacher's bilingual language in their English classroom. In addition, they had varied reasons for agreeing to the questions based on what they felt, thought and experienced. Some reasons were:

- a) Bilingual language was better to understand the meaning of new and difficult vocabulary;
- b) The use of bilingual languages by teachers when teaching English could make the situation more comfortable. It is connected with Macaro (2000), L1 is more effective in developing a good classroom atmosphere and maintaining discipline;
- c) Bilingual language made the students understood the instructions given by the teacher in giving projects or assignments with in English classroom;
- d) The students understood the material with the use of teacher's bilingual language in English classroom;
- e) Bilingual language increased confidence in participating when the teacher used bilingual in the English classroom. For example, they were not afraid in asking and answering questions.

Based on data from interviews regarding the questions above, students gave positive responses of the use of bilingual language by teachers in their English classroom. The meaning of 'positive' here was the students believed that the use of English and Indonesian gave some benefits in learning English in class. The explanation of the interviews directly answered the second research question. It was to find out the benefits of teacher's bilingual language use for students in learning. Based on the data and findings showed that bilingual language gave some benefits to students. English. For instance, the students easily understand the instructions and the material that are given by the teacher. Besides that, the benefit is students actively contribute in teaching and learning process. In short, the use of L1 helped the students' burden. It is also supported by Azimov (2020) states that the use of L1 in teaching English is beneficial. It is effective to assist the students in comprehending teachers' instructions, build a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom, and gain new vocabularies. Satriah et al. (2019) also agreed that the use of bilingual languages was very useful in the process of learning English. It can make students understand the material and make it easy for teachers and students to communicate.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the teacher used a bilingual approach which was a combination of the first language (L1) and the target language (L2) in the English class. It was concluded, students gave positive perceptions of teachers' the bilingual language in English classroom. It is based on the results of data and interpretation of questionnaire and interview data. It can be proven from the eight answers of questionnaire that gave a positive response. It helped the students in learning English. In addition, they were easy to understand about the material provided by the teacher. Besides, it was easy to understand new vocabularies. Furthermore, it helped their speaking and writing skills. In addition, students can understand more quickly in managing time and it can also help teachers in terms of saving learning time. Moreover, the use of bilingual language can help students when they felt confused in learning English. In addition, there were several other benefits that students' got when teachers used bilingual languages in English classroom. Thus, their confused of words were no longer exist. In addition, bilingual language can more comfortable situations for them in increasing their confidence to participate in class. For example, they were not afraid to ask questions

about the material and answer questions given by the teacher. Therefore, in general, students' perceptions of the use of teacher's bilingual language gives positive perceptions and it provides some benefits for them. For further research, it can duplicate this research with a bigger number of subjects so that the outcome can be generalized. Furthermore, future research should concentrate on determining how to implement L1 in the most effective way to maximize learning while minimizing exposure to L2.

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