

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF MOTHER TONGUE BY THE ENGLISH TEACHER IN THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract. Language is an important component in learning activities since it plays crucial role to build the communication between teacher and students. One language that is frequently used was mother tongue, especially in English classrooms. Due to this phenomenon, several studies about the use of mother tongue in English classroom and students' perception about it have been done, however studies that focus on perception by the junior high school students' especially class VII have not been conducted yet. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study to describe the use of mother tongue by the English teacher in the classroom and to investigate students' perceptions towards it. The research was conducted at SMPN 189 Jakarta, with 36 students of grade VII D and their English teachers as participants in the study. Observation and Questionnaire are used as qualitative methods to collect data. The results of the study show that English teachers use the mother tongue quite often during learning activities. The use of Mother Language is carried out on every interaction between teachers and students, including questions and answers, commands, and feedback. In addition, the results of the study also show that students prefer to use their mother tongue during English language class.

Keywords: Students' Perception, Mother Tongue, Teacher-Students Interaction

Abstrak. Bahasa merupakan salah satu komponen penting dalam kegiatan pembelajaran. Bahasa memainkan peran penting dalam membangun komunikasi antara guru dan murid. Salah satu Bahasa yang sering digunakan adalah Bahasa Ibu, terutama di kelas Bahasa Inggris. Dikarenakan hal ini, banyak penelitian yang sudah dilakukan terkait penggunaan Bahasa Ibu di kelas Bahasa Inggris dan persepsi murid akan hal tersebut, akan tetapi penelitian yang berfokus pada persepsi murid SMP terlebih lagi kelas VII belum dilakukan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan penggunaan Bahasa ibu oleh guru Bahasa Inggris di kelas dan untuk menginvestigasi bagaimana persepsi murid akan hal itu. Penelitian dilakukan di SMPN 189 Jakarta, dengan subjek 36 siswa kelas VII D dan guru Bahasa Inggris mereka sebagai peserta dalam penelitian. Observasi dan Kuesioner digunakan sebagai metode kualitatif untuk mengumpulkan data. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Guru Bahasa Inggris menggunakan Bahasa Ibu cukup sering selama kegiatan pembelajaran. Penggunaan Bahasa Ibu dilakukan pada setiap interaksi antara Guru-murid, termasuk tanya jawab, perintah dan umpan balik. Selain itu, hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa murid lebih memilih penggunaan Bahasa Ibu selama di kelas Bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: Persepsi Murid, Bahasa Ibu, Interaksi Guru-Murid

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of using mother tongue in the classroom is not something new. We frequently come across the use of mother tongue especially in English classrooms. This is because English is a foreign language in Indonesia. Furthermore, the curriculum and other changes in educational system influence the learning activities that take place in the classroom. The new curriculum called Merdeka Curriculum is implemented in English learning by integrating its principles into learning design. Activities prioritize student participation, group discussions, collaborative projects, and problem-based learning. Materials are chosen based on contemporary issues and students' needs for everyday communication. The Merdeka Curriculum results in active engagement, improved critical thinking skills, and enhanced English language skills. The inclusive and collaborative learning environment allows students to discuss relevant English issues. Integration between subjects enhances learning, such as environmental topics, enhancing language skills and understanding of environmental impacts and social responsibility. The Merdeka curriculum also fosters critical thinking, creativity, and independence (Naka, 2014).

However, with the implementation of Merdeka curriculum English is not a required course especially in Elementary schools. As a result, many junior high school students do not even have a basic comprehension of English language because it was not taught in elementary school. Thus, there was a tendency where English teachers would teach English subjects using a combination of English and Indonesian. Due to this phenomenon, opinions about the use of mother tongue in English classes emerge among the students.

One of the studies conducted by Debreli (2015) investigated the English as a Foreign Language students' perceptions toward using mother tongue in their English classrooms and the result revealed that students educational background and English language proficiency level affected their perceptions. The study found that most of the students preferred mother tongue to be used in their English classrooms. Furthermore (Debreli (2015) said that the reason why students prefer mother tongue because students experience more difficulties in comprehending the second language, and that they need more assistance through mother tongue. Similarly, Naka (2014) stating the use of mother tongue improves English language learning and raises awareness of similarities and differences between languages. Hence, it is important not to discard this technique too quickly (Naka, 2014).

On the other hand, opponents argue against using mother tongue in English classrooms, citing potential interference in second language learning and errors in speaking and translation (Nur, 2017). Therefore, teachers should focus on exposing students' abilities through full

English teaching. Dujmović (2014) also revealed that students often favor using English in the classroom more or exclusively. They believe that using mother tongue should only be done when necessary to help them learn English better. In addition, Sharma (2010) study on the use of mother tongue in English classrooms suggests teachers should be selective about when to use students' mother tongue.

Different perspectives also surfaced from the teacher's side, one of which was that lower level English language learners are better served by using their own language than are higher level pupils. Tonio & Ella (2019) revealed that teachers used the mother tongue as a tool to help students feel more confident in their courses. The teachers specifically highlighted the importance that mother tongue could have in helping students feel at ease and increasing their confidence and enthusiasm to study the language (Tonio & Ella, 2019). If the teacher can relate what students learn to the students' mother tongue, it will be easier for the students to understand. Therefore, the teachers believed that using mother tongue could enhance language comprehension and fluency (Tonio & Ella, 2019). Similarly, Belhiah & Elhami (2015) found that using mother tongue in the classroom could ensure that students have attained at least a minimal level of comprehension and knowledge. Meanwhile students with low English proficiency could find themselves wasting a lot of time in class and not getting much from their lectures (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).

The use of the mother tongue is very hard to separate with our daily life because the habit that makes someone preferred to use mother tongue when communicating (Darginavičienė & Navickienė, 2021). This is also including communication in the classroom and school environment. In the classroom itself the communication and interaction are crucial for effective learning, as it helps identify communication gaps between students and teachers, enhancing efficiency and highlighting the importance of effective teaching and learning. According to Nim (2015) there are four categories of interactions that occur in the classroom. (1) teacher-student interaction involves a teacher engaging with a single student, discussing course material, asking questions, etc. This interaction benefits both parties, (2) teacher-students interaction involves a teacher discussing course material, asking questions, incorporating students' thoughts, giving instructions, and feedback. The interaction is addressed to the whole class, rather than individual students, (3) student-teacher interactions involve student-initiated and student-response, and (4) student-student interactions involve students discussing topics that can be relevant or irrelevant with the learning activity. During the conversation, students engaged with one another by asking and commenting on questions regarding the subject matter.

Nim (2015) explained more about the type of interactions between teacher-students. There are three types including instruction, asking question, and feedback. As the one that give the interactions, the teacher will design lesson plans that have been modified to match the time allocated to ensure that learning proceeds as planned (Toriharan, 2020). When assigning time, teachers also consider the learning interests and information-absorption capacities of their students. Thus, for learning to occur effectively, teachers must figure out how to use their time wisely by giving clear instructions. Beside instruction there is question-and-answer session between teachers and students which also one of those teachers-students' interactions. Topics covered included the students' preliminary comprehension as well as previous content (Ayuwanti et al., 2021). The last part of the teacher - students interaction was feedback. Teacher's feedback was beneficial since it served as a foundation for the students' learning (Kim & Kim, 2020). Similarly, Vattoy & Gamlem (2020) stated that when teaching English for Foreign Language, one crucial aspect of teacher-student interactions appears to be the language of feedback. For students, the teacher's feedback is crucial since it ensures that they will take steps to enhance their work and produce better learning outcomes (Shatri, 2022). Furthermore, according to Shatri (2022) there are two types of feedback, which are written feedback and spoken feedback.

Many types of study on the use of mother tongue in English classroom and students' perceptions about it, but they have not included the perception from junior high school class VII. That is why this research will contribute to find out the use of mother tongue by the English teacher in the classroom and how students from grade VII react to it. This study is motivated by the fact that students' perception on the use of mother tongue by the English teacher in the classroom since it can improve the quality of learning to become better and more effective.

METHOD

This qualitative study aims at finding the use of mother tongue by the English teacher in the classroom and students' perception about it. Thirty six students from class VII D at SMPN 189 Jakarta and one English teacher are involved in this research. Observation and questionnaire were used to collect the data. The first step is conducting the observation in the classroom. The observations were carried out three times at class VII D. As a result, from the observation, the researcher was able to make list about the use of mother tongue by the English teacher in the classroom. Following that, the researcher was able to analyze the data by identified the type of teacher-students interaction that used mother tongue.

The next step is distributing the questionnaire to the students by google form to find out the students' perception towards the use of mother tongue by the English teacher. The items in the questionnaire cover the students' perception about the use of mother tongue in the classroom. There are total of fifteen statements in the questionnaire. The questionnaire used four level of scale for Multiple choice questions, the level is Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree. The last option which is neutral was not included because the purpose of this study was to find out students' perceptions on the use of mother tongue by the English teacher in the classroom. After students finishing their answer on the questionnaire items, the researcher collected and analyzed the data with percentage formula (Arikunto in Kristanto et al., 2019):

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Finally, the last step, the conclusions were drawn by looking at the percentage for each level of scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Observations were carried out three times in class of VII D. The first observation was on Tuesday, May 7, it was normal learning activity, starting with an opening and explanation by the teacher and then giving assignments to the students. The second observation was carried out the following week on Monday, the learning activity was a presentation of the previous assignments that were given to the students. The third observation was the final observation where learning activities changed to working on questions because the students' presentation did not go smoothly.

The result of the observation showed that teacher used mother tongue the most when she is teaching. She used mother tongue to give an instruction, feedback and asking questions. Here are the following results from the observation about the use of the mother tongue in the classroom by the English teacher.

Table 1. Observation sheet

Types Of Teacher-Students Interaction	The Sentence
Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kita akan membahasnya. - Ok, coba dibaca. - Terus, selanjutnya. - Sudah diselesaikan. - Buat grup ya, ga pakai suara ga pakai ribut. - Bikin enam grup, saya yang nunjuk. - Dengarkan instruksinya.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gambar, buatlah denah. - Kamu lihat, kamu catat, kamu ceritakan ada apa saja di setiap lantai. - Masing-masing buat, tapi satu yang diserahkan ke saya. - Kalau tidak ada yang maju kita ulangan - Kalau presentasinya asal-asalan kita ulangan - Ayo kelompok satu maju - Siapa yang mau bicara kedepan, nanti saya kasi waktu untuk bicara seperti itu - terangin kayak contoh kemarin - terangin aja satu orang - yang lain dengarkan, kalau tidak bisa saya tanya awas ya - ayo cepat - setiap grup saya kasi waktu ya maksimal 15 menit, setiap orang wajib menerangkan satu-satu - saya mau kamu presentasi bukan membaca teks - ok dengarkan. - jangan ngobrol - siapkan kertas selembor - kerjakan dengan teliti untuk nambah nilai
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yang terlambat share saya ga kasi apa-apa. - Sudah diselesaikan. - jangan begitu - jangan asal - kan itu ada dua ruangan jadi pakai apa - kan "between" diantara - kalau menerangkan yang jelas ya harus ada besides, between, dll - presentasi itu ngga perlu pakai teks tapi apa yang ada dipikiran kamu - kamu nerangin begitu aja. - misal ruang wakil, nah itu antara apa kamu terangkan - bukan baca teks ya. - kamu kan sekelompok berenam, kamu bagi-bagi, satu nerangin ini, satu nerangin ini, yang jelas - pronunciation nya dipelajari... - saya tau kamu gada dasar Bahasa Inggris tapi harus belajar. - belajar itu step by step... pelan-pelan - kita ulangan hari ini, kenapa saya ambil ulangan karena kalau ga ulangan hari ini, presentasi gagal, kamu ngga serius...
Asking questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Siapa yang ga masuk hari ini? - Bener sakit atau izin? - Bisa kita mulai? Kalau belum bisa, saya diam. - Ada sesuatu buat saya? - Mengapa? Karena apa?

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- Seberapa luasnya?
 - Apa gedung pertama?
 - Apa fungsinya?
 - Fasilitasnya apa aja?
 - Siapa lagi?
 - Siapa yang berisik?
 - Siapa yang mau maju?
 - Siapa yang mau menerangkan?
-

In the questionnaire filling session, the questionnaire statement was adopted from study by Larasaty et al., (2021). Based on the results of questionnaire, there were fifteen questions in English and each question has four choices. Questionnaires were given to all class VII D students. Out of a total of thirty-six students, one student did not fill out the questionnaire. That student was someone with special needs, so the researcher took data from only thirty-five students. Filling out the questionnaire was carried out outside the school hours as not to interfere with student learning activities.

Based on the results of the questionnaire, more than 50% of total number of students showed positive perception about the use of mother tongue. Furthermore, majority of students chose to agree and strongly agree that mother tongue made them understand English better. On the other hand, more than 40% students chose strongly to disagree and disagree when they are asked if they want teacher to teach using English only. This shows that students still need interaction in classroom using their mother tongue which is Indonesian so that learning activities can be easily understood. As stated by Sharma's study, "Mother Tongue Influence on English Language Learning," using students' mother tongues in the classroom can improve their English language proficiency (2015). Furthermore, utilizing the mother tongue of the students can help them learn about similarities and differences between the two languages and help them find new ways to express themselves in the target language.

To sum up the result of the whole analysis, it is shown that majority students have a positive perspective on the use of their mother tongue in the classroom, whether in the form of interactions such as feedback, questions, or instructions. It means mother tongue was beneficial to the comprehension of the students. As the one that control the class, teachers should think carefully to use mother tongue since class VII is a transfer from elementary school to junior high school, and not all elementary schools teach English. Therefore, it is necessary to know more about what students thought about it so that future learning activities can be more effective, and the material can be well received by students.

CONCLUSION

It is clear from the findings of the questionnaires and observations that using the mother tongue in English classrooms is unavoidable. This is since English is not spoken in Indonesian, and students of class VII are transitioning from elementary to junior high school, where not all elementary schools taught English. Furthermore, based on observations, it was discovered that the English teacher for class VII D at SMPN 189 Jakarta spoke in the mother tongue when providing instructions, giving feedback, and asking questions. Naturally, this goes hand in hand with the use of English, which is the main subject of the learning exercises. English is used in interactions like presenting instructions more concisely and simply. Meanwhile, instructions in the mother tongue are delivered more detailed so that students can understand better. On the other hand, when giving feedback in English the teacher only repeats the students' wrong pronunciations. More detailed feedback explained in the mother tongue. Lastly, for interactions like giving questions, the teacher combines the two languages well, where she will ask questions in English before repeating the questions in the mother tongue. Before repeat the questions, the teacher usually pauses a little bit for students to respond. If the response seems passive, the teacher immediately asks questions in their mother tongue. After getting the wanted response, the teacher starts to speak in English again and this continues until the students have the courage to continue responding to each question.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research results, it is suggested that the use of mother tongue in English classes still needs to be implemented. This is because there is still a lot of basics English knowledge among class VII students that is not enough yet. Furthermore, it is important for teachers to ensure students understand the learning material so they should think about using their mother tongue when teaching. However, it must also be accompanied using English itself as the main subject so that students' English skills also develop.

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