



## Students' Perception of the Use of Mother Tongue (L1) in EFL Classes at the Second Semester Student University of Mataram

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to identify and describe students' perception the use of the Mother tongue in EFL classes by students of the English department in a government university in West Nusa Tenggara. This study employed a survey research design. Questionnaires were used as instruments. Quantitative and qualitative analysis were used as the basis for data analysis. Thirty (30) students in their second semester in the academic year 2022/2023 were involved as the participants of the study. Students were given a questionnaire, which was then rated on a 1-4 Likert scale. Data analysis shows that most teachers speak English in class and only occasionally use Indonesian. Students agree with the teacher's use of mother tongue when necessary. Students also agree that they may speak Indonesian during learning. The students were more active when they were allowed to use Indonesian during learning. The inclusion of L1 helps students learn more motivated and enjoyable. It was found that there was an increase in students' English language skills when English was the language most widely used in class. The students agreed that the more they practice using English, the more their English skills will improve.

**Keywords:** *Perception; Mother tongue; English Foreign Language*

### **Introduction**

English is a foreign language that is very familiar in educational settings as it is one of the subjects or courses taught in primary school, in curriculum and even in college. The mother tongue (L1) is the native language that is acquired from birth or introduced in the family or social environment. English is now considered as a foreign language (EFL). Upon closer observation, the prevalence of foreign language use in English classrooms does not seem to be consistent with the background of students who use their mother tongue (L1) daily. However, the use of foreign languages in the classroom is a necessary condition for adapting the teaching process in English classrooms.

The issues still debate about the use of the mother tongue's role in understanding the material presented in the teaching and learning process. The role of the mother tongue (L1) in teaching and learning process of English as a foreign language (EFL) has become a concern in the world of education about English language learning. The general view that does not approve of the use of mother tongue is that in the teaching and learning process, teachers and students use English as much

as possible to minimize the role of the mother tongue in EFL classes (Krashen, 1981). The use of foreign languages must be more active to maximize the role of foreign language learning and then sterilize the classroom from the use of the mother tongue. Other researchers stated that contrary to the perception, avoiding mother tongue would require attention. Atkinson (1993) said that a natural classroom environment in which the mother tongue is used will increase teacher and student interaction, then the use of a foreign language will require adjustments for students to understand it.

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language (EFL) and Indonesian is a first language (L1). English is taught as a foreign language in Indonesian education from primary school to university. Using students' native language (L1) in teaching English may seem inappropriate, but it is a common phenomenon, especially in countries where English is a foreign language. Whether it is allowed or even encouraged to use students' native language in teaching English remains a controversial issue that requires further research by thoughtful teachers and researchers (Cook, 2001).

Teachers often use L1 in early and middle grades to provide instructions, explain the meaning of words, explain complex ideas, and explain complex grammatical points (Tang, 2002). Many teachers believe that the use of multiple L1 provides more time for L2 practice because understanding is achieved more quickly. Teachers use L1 for clarification purposes after efforts have been made to communicate ideas in L2 and students still look confused. Mart (2013) states that to make students truly understand what they have to do, giving instructions using L1 must be necessary. Using L1 has the advantage of conveying meaning and explaining grammar. Moreover, it is beneficial for students if they use L1 to achieve comprehension of L2.

Based on observations conducted by researchers at Mataram University in the second semester, the researchers found that each student has different ideas about the use of their mother tongue in English classes. Some students prefer a mixture of English and Indonesian (bilingual), whether it is the teacher's language or the student's language (Snorradotir, 2014). Because if the teacher only speaks English, students may be confused and even misunderstand what the teacher is saying. Finally, to make English easier to understand, teachers use their mother tongue in English classes (Tang, 2002). This phenomenon has attracted the attention of researchers, who want to know more and prove what students think about the use of their mother tongue in English teaching. The researcher is going to find out the students' perception of the use of L1 in English classrooms; whether or not the students were comfortable and what they found was useful or not useful in their teacher's choice of language.

## **Method**

Quantitative research is an approach to testing objective theories by examining the relationships between variables (Creswell, 2018). These variables, in turn, can be measured, usually on instruments, so that the numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures. The final written report has a fixed structure consisting of an introduction, literature and theory, methods, results, and the researcher's discussion. Participants in this survey research design were required to fill out a questionnaire and provide answers to questions rated on a Likert scale of 1-4. The researcher conducted a descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis is used to describe the "situation that exists" and learn more about the current state of a phenomenon when describing the variables or conditions in a situation. It targeted 30 students at the University of Mataram. Purposive sampling was used in this study to select the respondents. To collect quantitative data on language use in English courses and students' attitudes towards the use of mother tongue L1 and L2 (English), the researcher developed a questionnaire adapted from Snorradottir (2014). There were 18 questions in total, of which 3 questions were indicators listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Design of the Questionnaire

No	Indicators	Item numbers	Frequency
1	Frequency of language used during English lesson	1	1
2	Students' perception of the use of mother tongue in EFL Classes	3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18	15
3	Student understanding while communicating with teachers in EFL classes	2,5	2

### Result And Discussion

Table 2. Student Perception of language use in the EFL classroom

No	Language use in English Lesson	A	O	R	N
1	How often does the teacher speak in English during the lesson ?	40%	50%	10%	0%

The results of indicator 1 on the frequency of language use in English classes show that: Teachers often use English in English classes (50%). It can be seen that teachers also rarely use L1. Tang (2002) pointed out that teachers in English classes eventually use their native language to make English easier to understand. The second category includes the views on language use in English classrooms. There are 15 statements about how learners view language use. This score is used to represent the students' views on language use in English classes in English classrooms. The following are the percentages of each statement in this category:

Table 3. Student Perception The Use of Mother Tongue in Language Teaching

No	Student Perception of the Use of Mother Tongue In EFL Classes	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 the teacher should speak in both English and mother tongue so that all students can understand	30%	60%	10%	0%
6	I believe that assignment instruction should be provided in mother tongue (L1)	33%	60%	6,7%	0%
7	I think the teacher should use the mother tongue (L1) when explaining something challenging, like grammar and vocabulary	60%	40%	0%	0%
8	I think the teacher should always use English to discipline student	6,7%	36,7%	43,3%	13,3%
9	When the teacher speaks with the student on a topic unrelated to the class, I believe a teacher should only use English to discipline student	0%	3,3%	80%	16,7%
10	I believe the teacher should only provide homework in English	0%	6,7%	80%	16,3%
11	I believe the teacher should only ask questions of the class in				

	English	10,0%	60,%	30%	0%
12	I believe that the teacher should give compliments or feedback to students in Mother tongue (L1)	30%	63,3%	6,7%	0%
13	When the teacher teaches English, I feel confused about understanding the meaning	30%	50%	10%	10%
14	I often don't understand what the teacher asking to use English in the class	56,7%	43,3%	0%	0%
15	When learning process, I have a problem identifying the vocabulary meanings one by one	53,3%	43,3%	3,3%	0%
16	I uncomfortable when teacher only use English in teaching-learning process	46,7%	53,3%	0%	0%
17	I think my grammar has improved because mainly speak English because the teacher uses English	30,3%	53,3%	13%	3,3%
18	I think my vocabulary has improved because the teacher mostly uses the English	50%	50%	0%	0%

The findings from statements 3, 4, 6 and 7 reveal that while students lean towards incorporating L1 (their native language) alongside English during the course, it is equally essential for teachers to uphold English throughout. These findings align with those of Hidayati (2012). On the other hand, statements 9, 10 and 11 depict students' disapproval towards exclusive usage of English by teachers in assignments and class discussions implying an advocacy for teachers to adopt English always without limitations. Yet, discord emerges from statements 14, 15 and 16 where students express challenges in comprehending teacher instructions when they speak only English; this however contrasts sharply with revelations from statements 13, 17 and 18 on the positive impact of predominantly using English in class on students' language skills. Students feel that their vocabulary and grammar have improved, this happens because English is dominantly used during the teaching and learning process, so the proof is related to the direct influence on practice, which helps students understand English because the orientation of using English aims to students naturally become competent in understanding the target language (Ellis, 2005)

Table 4. Students understanding while communicating with the teacher in Learning English

No	Students' understanding while communicating with the teacher in English lesson	SA	A	D	SD
2	When the teacher speaks in English,I can comprehend what they are saying	6,7%	30%	63,3%	0%
3	Because The Teacher usually communicates 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%

Indicator 3 provides specific information about students' understanding of their interactions with their teachers in English classes. When the teacher speaks English, students are unsure whether they understand what is being said. Regarding indicator 1 on the frequency of language used by teachers, this will ultimately pose a serious challenge to students' understanding of the subject matter. Students neither agree nor disagree that it is difficult to communicate with them and get to know their teachers because they mostly speak English. Students do not seem to know that it is difficult to communicate with them and get to know their teachers because they have to speak English most of the time.

## Conclusion

Data analysis of the research data showed that both teachers and students frequently spoke English in class. This suggests that at least some teachers also used the first language in class. Despite this, students continued to use their native language at a rate comparable to that of English. There is evidence that students have a positive attitude towards teachers using their native language in English classes. You agree that the target language should use English more than the first language and that inclusion of the first language should be allowed. Students are likely to feel more comfortable and motivated to learn English when the first language is used in class. When teachers use only English to explain something, especially complex grammar or uncommon language, students find it difficult to understand. The first language becomes helpful in class when it is used frequently and exposure to English increases. Students' vocabulary, grammar, and English accent improve when the language of instruction is primarily 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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