EFL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD THE INTEGRATION OF BAHASA INDONESIA (L1) IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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A B S T R A C T S	A R T I C L E I N F O
The application of the first language (L1) in English language teaching (ELT) has long been practiced, and its practice has been controversial in foreign language teaching. This research aims to investigate students' attitudes toward the application of Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian students' L1) in ELT. This research is framed through a quantitative survey in which the 32 participants were invited to take online self-administered questionnaires. Result suggests that the integration of Bahasa Indonesia in English language teaching as a pedagogical tool is considered beneficial to improve students' English proficiency, enhance English vocabulary, and improve comprehension. In addition, the participants also believed that the numerous use of L1 or Bahasa Indonesia may provide less opportunity for students to develop their speaking skills. When it comes to preferences of language use in ELT, most students agreed that their English teachers should integrate both Bahasa Indonesia and English, in which the use of Bahasa Indonesia to be minimized while English to be predominated.	

INTRODUCTION

Many English teachers have been employing the first language (L1) to assist their students in learning the foreign language for several decades. On the other hand, L1 use in a foreign or second language instruction has long been a source of controversy in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) (Cunningham, 2000, Tang, 2002). According to Pan & Pan (2012), the integration of L1 in foreign language teaching has been criticized as it can deprive students of opportunities to receive sufficient target language input and can trigger target learning errors due to negative interference. The interference refers to the L1 transfer that can impact on target language (Ellis, 2015). Hence, many language teaching approaches assume that the target language should predominate in the target language. When resorting to the L1 is necessary, it should be kept to the minimum. However, many language teachers believe that L1 in the classroom may be a significant educational resource that helps students understand and enhance the quality of their language skills. Saputra (2020) states that it is essential to include L1 in language teaching as a useful pedagogical tool to improve students' comprehension of the target language and enhance the students' language proficiency. While there are arguments on both sides, this paper provides both benefits and drawbacks of

integrating L1 into English Language Teaching (ELT) as an underlying theoretical framework for this research.

One of the main reasons L1 should be included in the classroom is that L1 can enhance students' target language proficiency. The reason is that L1 reference acts as a pedagogical tool to allow students to understand the target language, which contributes to developing language skills. Popovich (2012) indicates that the use of L1 contributes to the flexibility, accuracy, and clarity of the target language. Popovich (2012) also explains that when L1 is utilized in the classroom, the language learners are encouraged to search for the most appropriate words and convey what is meant. This means that when the learners look for the appropriate vocabulary, this will develop their flexibility of language skills. Moreover, when the learner finds the right words, they improve their accuracy of L2. Then, the learner will express the idea correctly, which channels to the clarity of the target language. Duff (cited in Popovich, 2012) also states that L1 can improve four language skills and establish accuracy, clarity, and flexibility. This means that code-switching L1 can develop language ability by maintaining students' accuracy, clarity and flexibility if the L1 is included well in the EFL classroom. For instance, a student played a foreign visitor. He went to a department store and had a communication breakdown with a sales clerk. At this time, another student came as an interpreter to give help. These situations can be extended to other contexts, such as post offices, banks, restaurants, and airports (Ali, 2012). In these authentic situations, L1 serves a communicative purpose that requires the learners, interpreter, to search for some vocabularies that they can use and then deliver them contextually after utilizing L1 in the process.

Furthermore, L1 can be a useful pedagogical tool in ELT in that the implementation of code-switching can significantly improve student comprehension. McCann (2005) and Cameron (2001) suggest that L1 can be used positively in some situations, such as explaining language structures, providing feedback, and maintaining classroom discipline. The reason is that L1 reference may act as the cognitive learning strategy, which refers to repetition, organizing new language, summarizing meaning, and guessing the meaning from context (Strakova 2013). This strategy enables the students to receive, process, and transfer the target language based on their L1 to the target language, which helps the learners establish well comprehension. Therefore, by incorporating L1 as the pedagogical tool, the English language learners can effectively analyze and comprehend English complex structure. Additionally, Kuhiwczak and Littau (2007) believe that L1 helps language learners comprehend a foreign language and equips the students with foreign language experience and an exercise to understand original materials better. Furthermore, in his research, Alshammari (2011) found that most Saudi Arabian students believe that Arabic used to explain complex concepts helped the students feel "less lost" when learning a target language. The study and discussed literature above can strengthen L1 use in ELT. In this case, incorporating Bahasa Indonesia in ELT may assist Indonesian students in understanding English effectively. It may act as a cognitive learning strategy enabling the students to analyze and comprehend English.

Moreover, L1 may also help pupils improve their language skills and expand their target language vocabulary. Calis and Dikilitas (2012) hold a similar view to Rocha (2011) that L1 plays an essential role in developing students' vocabularies. The teacher can utilize L1 to clarify difficult words in target language, helping students understand new vocabulary. L1 also allows students to define the intricate word from their reading. Mesri (2012) found that most Iranian students feel that L1 is used as a pedagogical tool enabling them to acquire new vocabularies from the target language. Similarly, Alvarez (2014) demonstrates that judicious instructor use of L1 improves students' comprehension of complex English words. Alvarez (2014) also highlighted that numerous previous literature mentions that the integration of L1 supports the acquisition of target language vocabulary. Consequently, most researchers state that L1 reference does help students to improve their target language vocabularies when L1 is

used as a pedagogical tool. As a result, it can develop students' comprehension and language proficiency.

However, incorporating L1 as a pedagogical technique in English language instruction has certain drawbacks. One explanation is that L1 may not increase verbal skills. Richards and Rodgers (2001) demonstrate that students who learn a target language depending on L1 will have deficient speaking skills. They would initially think in L1 and then translate their ideas into L2. Carreres (2006) believes that L1 use is considered an unnatural and rigid exercise with no place in communicative skill. Accordingly, the L1 reference in target language teaching is likely to decrease the learners' input, impacting second language acquisition output. Pan and Pan (2012) agree that L1 use deprives students of opportunities to receive sufficient target language input. For example, one of the studies conducted in Japan's training session shows that L1 application in the learning process creates confusion for students, which causes the students to find it hard to express the idea of the target language (Guerra, 2014). In contrast, Vermes (2010) contends that L1 can also be performed orally and can thus, in principle, be used to develop spoken language accuracy. Although the L1 application can hinder students' communication abilities and cause them to make mistakes in the target language, it appears to be a useful pedagogical tool for improving the accuracy of the target language acquisition.

Furthermore, using the first language as a pedagogical device in ELT tends to trigger language interference. As Pan and Pan (2012) point out, L1 drives students to view foreign languages through their mother tongue, which can cause interference between the two languages involved. Likewise, Magid and Mugaddam (2013) share the same view as Vermes (2010) that L1 is used as the pedagogical source that may contribute to the non-authentic output that results in language interference. This language interference happens due to insufficient input, leading the students to utilize L1 anytime while producing the target language naturally. A study about code-switching as an interactive tool in ESL Classrooms conducted by Magid and Mugaddam (2013) found that adult Arab students learning English had difficulty mastering the use of the target language due to L1 interference. However, Ali (2012) clarifies that L1 interferences contribute only minor errors in producing target language; meanwhile, most errors are developed in nature. Accordingly, incorporating L1 in ELT cannot be condemned as the primary cause of interference in the second or foreign language acquisition.

In conclusion, despite the contentious nature of L1 use as the pedagogical setting in foreign language acquisition, L1 use in ELT is proven to be helpful. The rationales are that L1 promotes the enhancement of second language proficiency, establishes students' comprehension of the target language, and enriches students' L2 vocabularies. However, L1 use as a language learning tool is also considered to cause language interference and may hamper students' speaking skills. Some experts then criticize these ideas by emphasizing that L1 also helps the students establish the accuracy of their communicative skills (Vermes, 2010). Only a few errors are caused by language interference (Ali, 2012). Therefore, the utilization of L1 in ELT can be a useful pedagogical tool to help the student acquire or master a target language. However, it is suggested that second language teachers minimize the use of L1 in ELT to promote greater language acquisition.

The language preference in ELT in various literatures has been two-sided considering both benefits and drawbacks. Debreli and Oyman (2016) found that EFL students perceived the inclusion of the first language, Turkish, in English class positively as it helped them comprehend challenging topics and new words, making them feel more convenient, less stressed, and less lost when learning English. In addition, their study also highlights that most students prefer to include L1 in the class. However, there is a gap in which most students felt satisfied, 48.84%, that their teachers use only English in the class, while 45.54% felt

sometimes satisfied, and only few students felt dissatisfied with the condition, 5.61%. This may indicate that most learners prefer to use both L1 and L2 in the class to help them learn a target language, but using English should be predominant. When including both languages in the classroom, it enables students to be more confident in mastering English as it helps them have better understanding of the target language (Nordin, Ali, Zubir & Sadjirin, 2012) and the inclusion of L1 can act as 'a linguistic scaffolding' for learners, in particular for older students, but it should not be overused as students may rely too much on their first language (Ma, 2009) which hinders the process of learning English.

On the contrary, Ndamba (2008) reported that students and parents choose English as a language instruction at a younger learner level. The majority of the children prefer to include L1 when learning English Speaking, but they prefer to use English when learning Reading and Writing. Meanwhile, parents prefer their children use L2 while learning as they perceive it helps the kids become accustomed to use English which leads them to developing their future career. This is because mastering English is considered as a gateway to reach success in schools and eventually in finding a job, and therefore, using L1 in the class can interfere with the process of mastering the target language. Another finding by Resmini (2019) reveals that students prefer to use L2 instead of L1, Bahasa Indonesia, when giving explanation to learning materials, but they opt otherwise when it is related to expanding lexical resources and explaining grammatical rules. The reason why they prefer English to Bahasa Indonesia is due to their fear that they can be over-reliant on teachers' translation. Hence, students generally have negative perceptions toward the use of L1 in the class. However, they acknowledge that it can help them with understanding new words and feeling more relaxed when learning English. Following the research above, it can be said that students have different preferences toward the use of language in ELT; some prefer English classes should be taught mainly in English, while others favor using both L1 and a target language in ELT.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
This research was framed through the nature of the quantitative approach. The researcher applied a quantitative approach and statistical analysis to determine students' perception of the integration of L1 into English Language teaching by using the survey as data collection. According to Bryman (2016), framing educational research through a survey allows the researcher to investigate the opinions of a large group of people about a particular topic or issue. Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012) state that one of the main purposes of a survey is to delineate a population's characteristics, such as attitude and perception. Therefore, the researchers applied a survey in this research to enable them to find EFL students' perceptions toward the integration of Bahasa Indonesia (L1) in English language teaching.

Population and Sample
The research participants were second-grader senior high school students studying in SMA Sukma Bangsa Bireuen and majoring in natural science. The participating students were selected as their English was better than other classes in that school, and their class was mostly conducted in English. This condition allowed the researcher to find the data effectively. This technique of choosing the sample is considered a purposing sample, which refers to a technique in which units are selected due to the characteristics that the researcher needs (Bryman, 2016). Furthermore, these students were selected voluntarily to participate in this online survey administered through a google form. Among 40 second-year students, 32 students decided to participate in this research by filling out the form, which consists of a consent explanation and has been approved for its ethics by the school counsellor.

Instruments

The researchers utilised online self-administered questionnaires or online surveys as their instrument to scrutinize students' attitudes toward the use of Bahasa Indonesia as a pedagogical strategy in ELT. According to Bryman (2016), incorporating the self-administered questionnaire allows the researcher to find participants' attitudes, and the Likert scale is one of the most often used methodologies for performing such an inquiry. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) define the Likert scale as a multiple-indicator or multiple-item assessment of a collection of opinions about a particular topic that allows the researcher to quantify the strength of one's feelings regarding a subject. Following these ideas, the researcher formatted this Likert Scale into five-point scales ranging from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree to examine students' attitudes toward Bahasa Indonesia used in English language teaching. These five rating scales allowed the researchers to uncover degrees of opinion or perception of the research participants who might agree, neutral, or disagree with the survey questions, which helped increase the response rate.

Data Analysis

The obtained data were analysed using descriptive analytics in which the researcher employed mode and percentage to measure the frequencies. This idea was supported by Boone and Boone (2012), suggesting that the ordinal type of Likert Scale should employ median, mode, or percentage to measure the frequencies of attitudes of the subject. Therefore, the researcher analysed the data by looking at each item's mode and percentage to investigate students' attitudes toward L1 use in ELT.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, findings of the research regarding students' perception toward the integration of L1 in English Language Teaching are presented, including their perceptions on advantages and disadvantages of using the first language in English classroom as well as their preference of language instruction in ELT.

Research Findings

a. Benefits of incorporating Bahasa Indonesia in ELT

According to table 1, the majority of the students perceived using Bahasa Indonesia in ELT can improve their English Language Proficiency (a total of 65% students agreed and strongly agreed), while some students (28%) chose neither agree nor disagree with the statement, and only few students (3% agree and 3% disagree) considered otherwise. Besides, the results also show that most students with 41% of them also strongly agreed and agreed respectively that L1 may enhance their learning comprehension. None of the learners disagreed but 3% of them strongly disagreed that applying Bahasa Indonesia in English teaching can improve their learning comprehension, whereas the rest of the students (16%) remained neutral.

In terms of using L1 in improving vocabulary, a total of 72% of students chose to agree and strongly agree on this statement. 9% of learners remained neutral, while 13% disagreed and only 3% strongly disagreed. Surprisingly, none of the students disagreed and strongly disagreed that L1 can help them in preparing for English talks and presentations although 25% of them chose neither agree or disagree. The majority of the students said L1 helps them to prepare for English speaking and presentation with 47% of students choosing to agree and 28% strongly agreeing. Therefore, the results indicate that most students perceived incorporating Bahasa Indonesia in ELT as beneficial in four aspects, improving English language proficiency and learning comprehension, expanding lexical resources, and facilitating their speaking skills.

Table 1
Distribution of benefits of incorporating Bahasa Indonesia in ELT

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
L1 improves English Language Proficiencies	3%	3%	28%	31%	34%
L1 enhances English learning comprehension	3%	0%	16%	41%	41%
L1 improves vocabularies	6%	13%	9%	41%	31%
L1 helps to prepare for English talks and presentation	0%	0%	25%	47%	28%

b. Drawback of Incorporating Bahasa Indonesia in ELT

Table 2 below shows the results of the drawbacks of incorporating Bahasa Indonesia in ELT. The majority of the students, 31%, neither agree nor disagree that using L1 in English class can provide less chance to practise English, while the same number of students, each 25%, agreed and disagreed with the statement. 13% of the students strongly agreed that it is true while the rest, 6%, stated otherwise. Next, most students disagreed that L1 can hinder their English speaking skills, and only 3% strongly disagreed. The same number of the students, 25%, selected neutral and agreed that applying Bahasa Indonesia in ELT can hamper their English speaking skills, while the rest, 19 %, strongly agreed. Lastly, in regard to L1 contribution to target language interferences, the majority of students disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement with 31% and 28% respectively. 22% of the students remained neutral, while none of the students strongly agreed, but a small number of students,19%, had agreed that using Bahasa Indonesia in an English classroom can contribute to the target language interference. Hence, it can be summarised that although students have varied attitudes toward the disadvantages of applying Bahasa Indonesia in ELT, in general, students felt that use L1 in an English class may gave them less opportunity to practise English and prevent them to develop speaking skill, but it did not disturb the process of language acquisition.

Table 2
Distribution of the drawbacks of incorporating Bahasa Indonesia in ELT

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
L1 provides less chance to practise English	6%	25%	31%	25%	13%
L1 Hampers English Speaking Skill	3%	28%	25%	25%	19%
L1 contribute to target language interferences	28%	31%	22%	19%	0%

c. Indonesian Students' language preference in ELT

According to table 3 below, the results show that the majority of the students,38%, neither agree nor disagree to use only Bahasa Indonesia as their language preference in an English class, followed by 34% strongly disagreed and 22% disagreed with the statement. Only 6% agreed to use only Bahasa Indonesia, and no student chose strongly agree. As for

using only English in the classroom, most students also remained neutral, 41%, followed by disagree, 34%. 13% of students agreed to use only English in the class, while the rest of the students had a split-opinion on strongly agree and strongly disagree with the statement with 6% each. Furthermore, the majority of students agree and strongly agreed that both English and Bahasa Indonesia should be used in the classroom with 44% and 41% respectively. While 13% of them remained neutral, only 3% chose disagree and no students strongly disagreed with the statement. The overall results indicate that most students prefer to use both L1 and English in ELT, while the majority of them remained neutral whether to use only Bahasa Indonesia or English in the class.

Table 3
Distribution of Indonesian Students' language preferences in ELT

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Use only Bahasa Indonesia in the classroom	34%	22%	38%	6%	0%
Use only English in the classroom	6%	34%	41%	13%	6%
Use both English and Bahasa Indonesia in the classroom	0%	3%	13%	44%	41%

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of students have positive attitudes toward the integration of Bahasa Indonesia into an English class. Most learners perceive that the first language is useful to develop English language skills, help their comprehension in learning, understand new words, and prepare their Speaking skills. The results are consistent with the previous studies that showed the use of L1 in the class helps students find accurate words to convey meaning and this leads to better understanding and L2 mastery (Popovich, 2012 and Strakova, 2013). Besides this, from the results of this study, it can be highlighted that the negative sides of using L1 in the class are it can hinder students' speaking skills, and students gain less chance to exercise their English which are still relevant to the previous study by Richards and Rogers (2001) and Pan and Pan (2012). However, the findings in this study contradict with the report from Magid and Mugaddam (2013) and Vermes (2010) as the majority of students in this study did not feel that L1 application in their English classroom disrupted their language acquisition process unlike in the two previous studies. This indicates that L1 should not be overused in an English classroom to avoid such negative perspectives as also suggested by Ali (2012) who clarified that L1 few errors might occur when using L1 but only they were minors in generating the target language. Hence, future research needs to investigate how the integration of L1 can contribute to such errors.

Regarding the language preferences in the classroom, this study found that the highest percentage of students prefer to use both L1 and L2 when learning English. Similar results were also shown from the implications of the previous study (Debreli & Oyman, 2016) and the suggestion to use code switching in an English class as long as it is not overused (Nordin et al., 2012; Ma, 2009). However, as the subjects of this study are at high school level, the results were different from Ndamba (2008) study who conducted a similar research with young learners and reported that English is preferred as the language instruction. Additionally, the findings from Resmini (2019) also contradict with the result of this study as it was conducted at college students' level who reported that students prefer to use English in the class as they were afraid to rely too much on teacher translation if L1 was used. However, they acknowledge that L1 is needed to clarify some new words and help them better

understand learning materials. This implies that actually the results of this study which shows the majority of students who left undecided answers felt that both L1 and L2 should be used in the class but to a certain extent so that it will not cause over-reliance on L1 or inaccuracy of understanding L2. Therefore, there is an implication for future study to explore these grey areas.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the integration of Bahasa Indonesia in an English classroom generally brought positive perceptions to the students. Students perceived the use of their first language as helpful to improve their English proficiency, English vocabularies, and understanding of L2. In general, students have different negative views toward the application of L1 in the class, however, the findings of this study suggested that English should be used more than Bahasa Indonesia as language of instruction to avoid a hindrance in improving their English speaking and to prevent any interference with the process of acquiring the target language. Additionally, the majority of students prefer to utilise both L1 and L2 when learning English, however, a great deal number of students choosing undecided for using only Bahasa Indonesia or English may indicate that they support the use of both L1 and L2 but the conditions should depend on a specific purpose learning in the classroom. Hence, future research related to this gap of the study needs to be explored.

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