

THE USE OF L1 IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study is expected to give useful information about The Use of L1 in Teaching English to Young Learners at Elementary School. From the information given, the English teacher can evaluate whether the use of L1 in Teaching English to Young Learners at Elementary School. In addition, the result of this research can be used as a reference for further researcher who is interested in conducting similar study. The research design of this study was qualitative research. The research method used a qualitative approach to describe English classroom management, application and response used by the teacher. Data collection techniques are: observation and interview. Analytical techniques are: data reduction, data display, and conclusion. The subjects of this study was English teacher. Based on the result of the research, the teacher had some roles of L1 in Teaching English to Young Learners at Elementary School. Then, the roles helped the English teacher in Teaching English to Young Learners at Elementary School.

Key words: First Language (L1), Roles of L1.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan informasi yang berguna tentang Penggunaan L1 dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris kepada Pembelajar Muda di Sekolah Dasar. Dari informasi yang diberikan, guru Bahasa Inggris dapat mengevaluasi apakah penggunaan L1 dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris kepada Pembelajar Muda di Sekolah Dasar. Selain itu, hasil penelitian ini dapat dijadikan referensi bagi peneliti selanjutnya yang berminat untuk melakukan penelitian serupa. Desain penelitian penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk mendeskripsikan manajemen kelas bahasa Inggris, penerapan dan respon yang digunakan oleh guru. Teknik pengumpulan datanya adalah: observasi dan wawancara. Teknik analisisnya adalah: reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Subyek penelitian ini adalah guru bahasa Inggris. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, guru mempunyai beberapa peran L1 dalam Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris kepada Pembelajar Muda di Sekolah Dasar. Kemudian, peran tersebut membantu guru Bahasa Inggris dalam Mengajar Bahasa Inggris kepada Pembelajar Muda di Sekolah Dasar.

Kata kunci: Bahasa Pertama (L1), Peran L1.

INTRODUCTION

This background of the research explains the use of L1 in teaching English to young learners. Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) is a rapidly growing field around the world, and English education is increasingly found at the primary levels". However, starting earlier is not necessarily the solution for producing better English speakers. Therefore, EFL teachers of young learners do to take advantage of the flexibility of young minds and the malleability of young tongues to grow better speakers of English (Shin, 2010).

According to Schneiderová (2013) Teaching to young learners may be challenging, rewarding, and even surprising. Since young learners tend to have boundless physical energy, poor discipline, awareness and short attention spans, a challenging part of teaching was copying with many unexpected events that occur in the classroom each day. Many teachers feel deflated after their lessons since it was demanding to teach and control the learners' behavior at the same time.

The use of students L1 in teaching English as a foreign language has been debated for many years. The debate is triggered by two different perspectives on the benefit and interference

of L1 in foreign language classroom. Proponents of monolingual approach argued that the use of L1 should be minimized in English classroom, so that learners can acquire English as well as their L1. Sharma (2006) stated that "the more students are exposed to English, the more quickly they will learn; as they hear and use English, they will internalize it to begin to think in English. She stated further that "the only way they will learn it is if they are forced to use it.

However, some research have provide the benefits of using L1 in EFL classrooms. L1 help the lower level English learners to understand the English material, to provide instructions or explanation, manage or discipline a class, motivate students to learn L2, and comment on students work and progress.

For example, Harmer (2001) adds the use of L1 in explaining things could help the lower level English learners to understand the English material. Jones (2010) identifies the benefits of L1 in order to provide instructions or explanation, manage or discipline a class, motivate students to learn L2, and comment on students work and progress. Furthermore, teachers need to show respect for the learners L1 and need to avoid doing things that make their L1 seem inferior to English (Nation,2001). It is advisable that teachers use L1 and target language in balance. Tang (2002) as cited by Morahan (2005) points out that L1 serves a supportive and facilitating role in the classroom, but not the primary language of communication. The use of L1 is an arguable issue in English language education. Whether or not to use L1 has been argued since the implementation of the Direct Method of teaching English in the 20th century. This approach has had an effect on the way English is taught until today.

Talking about the use of L1 to teach English cannot be separated from the learners level. L2 learners can be anyone, ranging from young learners to adults. Children of one to three grade in an EFL context can be the beginner English learners. As they are still in the process of acquiring their L1, their teachers may not be able to avoid using L1 when teaching English. Based on my six month experience teaching English to the third graders, I had to use Indonesian to make the students understand my explanation and instructions. Based on that teaching experience, the research is interested to describe the use of L1 in teaching English at elementary school.

This research problem are formulated as follows: (1) What are the roles of L1 used by the teacher in teaching English to young learners at elementary school? (2) How is L1 used in teaching English to young learners at elementary school?. The objective of the research related to problem of the research, whether bahasa Indonesia is used in teaching English young learners, what are the roles of L1 and how it is used by the teacher to speak Indonesian in teaching English to young learners.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

This part would discusses of the definition of L1. First Language, mother tongue and native tongue are common terms for the language which a person acquires first in his childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the country where he is living. It means, first language, mother tongue, and native language can be defined as the language in which people acquire it first in their childhood because it is their family language or the language of their country where they are living (Pokharel, B. R. as quoted by Raj, 2011: 42).

Giving Instruction Exploring the purpose of L1 in English language teaching classroom, Cook (2001) as cited by Zacharias (2002) argued that the purpose of using L1 is useful to give instruction about classroom activities. Tang (2002) adds teacher uses L1 in beginning and intermediate classes to give instructions. In the primary level of English language teaching, L1 takes an important part in giving instruction to the students.

Classroom Management

This part would discusses of classroom management. As Fahmida (2007) states classroom management is concerned with maintenance of discipline by keeping friendly

relationship with the class. The use of L1 also takes essential part in managing the classroom. A study of investigating the purpose of using L1 (Arabic) in the elementary English language classroom in an Oman context conducted by Al-Hinai (2005) showed that Arabic was also widely used for class management and control. Furthermore, Arabic was also more effective for dealing with discipline problems than English. In his study, the discipline problem is when he should control his students to stop making noisy in the classroom.

Reduce Students' Language Anxiety

This part would discusses of reduce students' language anxiety. Meyer (2008) points out that the use of first language can reduce the students' language anxiety. Language anxiety can be divided into three components; those are (1) communication apprehension, (2) fear of negative social evaluation, and (3) test anxiety. Allowing the use of L1 in the classroom will decrease those three components. Communication apprehension can be reduced because the students' L1 allows them to express their thought and ideas. Fear of negative social evaluation can be mitigated because the students can communicate directly with each other.

Explaining New Words

This part would discusses of explaining new words. In teaching English to young learners, the learners' L1 gives benefits to explain new words. Besides, L1 help the teacher to explain the meaning of words or new vocabularies for the young learners. According to Zacharias (2002) L1 can provide a quick and accurate translation and explanation of English words. If the new word is explained in target language, there will be no guarantee whether the students can grasp the explanation correctly or not. Indeed, the use of L1 in English classroom involves saving class time. Instead of going through long explanations in the target language, the explanation in L1 would sometimes be easier and more efficient to give a translation of a vocabulary item or new words for the young learners.

Giving Feedback to Students

This part would discusses of giving feedback to students. Allowing the use of L1 in the classroom will help teacher to give feedback to students. Manara (2007) highlights L1 is used to give feedback to students. Giving feedback in L1 is necessary as it could help the students follow the lesson. In this case, the kinds of feedback are (1) feedback about the task; includes information about error whether something is correct or incorrect, (2) feedback about the self as a person; show the students' achievement and effort in learning process (Hattie and Timperley, 2007 in Brookhart, 2008).

Conveying Meaning

This part would discusses of conveying meaning. Cook (2001) adds the use of L1 for conveying meaning maybe efficient to help the learning and teaching process of L2. Hassan and Jadallah (2011) demonstrate that L1 is useful to convey meaning through giving the L1 equivalence of FL item and sentence.

Checking comprehension.

This part would discusses of checking comprehension. Checking students' comprehension is very important in teaching learning process. Checking comprehension is one of ways to check students' understanding about the material. As Sasson (2012) views that checking comprehension is one of the hardest areas for a teacher to master but by breaking down teachers' expectations. Throughout lessons, teachers have to ensure that students are paying attention and understanding the material. Conducting comprehension checks will highlight what students are struggling with and what needs to be covered more thoroughly before completing additional activities or moving on to the next topic. The use of L1 is helpful in checking comprehension (Sharma, 2006).

Supporting Theories towards the Use of L1

This part would discuss of the supporting theories towards the use of L1 in teaching English to young learners at elementary school. The use of L1 at English elementary classroom still raises some arguments both supporting and opposing. Some theories state that the use of L1 in teaching English to young learners at elementary school is helpful. The other theories, however, state that the use of L1 is baneful in English at elementary classroom.

According to Mart (2013: 10) states, "It is impossible to prohibit the use of L1 especially at lower levels." It is obvious that to exclude their first language in the classroom is impossible since the use of L1 gives the benefit for the students especially the lower level students in acquiring and learning the target language. Learning the target language such as learning a second or foreign language is quite difficult for the lower level students. They will get the difficulties in acquiring and learning the target language. They need a tool to comprehend the materials of the target language. Finally, they will use their first language as a tool helping them in comprehending the materials of the target language. First language gives the benefit for English young learners in acquiring and learning the target language. First language is a tool to comprehend the materials of the target language. First language helping English young learners in comprehending the materials of the target language. This part would discuss of the opposing theories towards the use of L1 in teaching English to young learners at elementary school. Some theories believe that the use of L1 is baneful, and it should be excluded in English at elementary classroom. The students have to practice by using target language if they want to be able to communicate in the target language. It means that if they want to communicate by using English, they have to practice by using English itself. It is as claimed by Harmer (2007: 53), "We learn to do something by doing it, and if the goal of language is communication, then communicating as we learn is the best way to go about it." In other words, using English in the classroom is the best way for the students to learn a foreign language.

The use of L1 will make the students get an obstacle to explore their ability in the target language, if the students use their L1 too often. They will be accustomed to use their L1, and it will become their obstacle in acquiring the target language. According to Harmer (2001) as quoted by Mart (2013: 12), "The overuse of L1 restricts the students" exposure to the target language." In other words, the students will get an obstacle in mastering the target language if the students use their L1 too often.

Briefly, the use of L1 should be excluded in EFL classroom. The students have to use English itself if they want to communicate in the target language. Beside of that, if the students use their L1 when they are learning a foreign language, they will get obstacle to explore their ability in the target language even though they are capable to explore it by using target language. It seems like the use of L1 makes the students keep silent in the target language.

Opposing Theories towards the Use of L1

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Research Methodology

This part would discusses of research methodology. The research methodology of this study was qualitative research. Qualitative research is a research which the data in the forms of written or oral words are analyzed descriptively. According to Kothari (2004: 3) qualitative research deals with data that are in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers and statistics. Moreover, as the data was in the form of words and documents, so the data was analysed qualitative. Place of the Research that was SDN 8 Langkai located in Central Kalimantan, Palangkaraya with the address Jl. Patih Rumbih. The subject of the research was teacher who teaches English at SDN 8 Langkai.

Data collection was one of the main duties in this study to answer the problem of the research. The data collected in natural setting without any manipulation of the setting. Data collection used in this study, namely: observation and note taking. Data for this research was collected from video recording at elementary first graders classroom at SDN 8 Langkai.

Instrument Development.

This part would discusses of the instrument development of the research. This research used observation and note-taking in collection. This part would discusses of the observation of the research. To record the use of teacher L1 during the learning process on English elementary classroom, the observation conducted through video taping as the important tool in this research to analyze the result and using the table. And the used of Note-taking, this part would discusses of the note – taking of the research. Note-taking was established as the technique to collected the data in order to capture the missing stages in the use of teacher L1 when interpretation of video taping began.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the result of the research, I conducted three step activities by the teacher. The first activity is *opening-activity*. The teacher opened the class by greeting to the students, ask the students' condition and checking their attendance by calling their names one by one and every one will raise their hand if they have present, then the teacher prepares the material. Before the teacher start her lesson, she asked the students about something which related with the material. She explored their background knowledge about material that they would learn. In other word we can call this warming up or brainstorming.

T: Good morning students.

S: Good morning.

T: How are you today?

S: I'm fine, and you?

T: I'm fine too, thank you. Ok. I will check your present list.

S: Yes mam.

(The teacher check present list)

T: Ok students, one of you come forward lead to pray please.

S: (student's come forward lead to pray). Ok class, before start our listen today let's pray together.

T: Thank you. Give applause for your friend. Now, we are going to the material about part of body. (The teacher explained about the material use L1).

The second activity is *core-activity*, the teacher explains the material first. Then, she asked the students to repeat some words and sentences that she said. The teacher says something, and the students will be repeating it later. The processes continue and repeat like that. There are some conversations, the teacher asked the students to go to in front of the class and do practice. To make sure that the students understand.

what the teacher have already taught, she asked some questions related the material one by one. And the students answered it. The teacher always appreciate everything that done by them. Usually she said "good job", "great", "excellent work", etc. The teacher always says these words because she wanted their students felt comfortable and much appreciated. So the students became more confident. But if during explanation some students made some mistakes gave wrong or not appropriate answer, for example, the teacher did not blame directly, but she gave opportunity to other students to answer the question. After other students answered the question, the teacher would re-explain and clarify it.

T: Ok students. we are going to the material about part of body.
(The teacher explained about the material use L1).

S: Yes mam.

T: (The teacher give pictures each part of body use L1). Please, look at the picture.

S: (students listened to the explanation).

T: Any question?

S: Nothing mam.

T: Please, read loudly about the pictures, and another student listen carefully.

The third activity is *close-activity*, the writer saw the activities that has done by teacher, before the class ended, the teacher asked students to remember the lesson that they have learnt before, the teacher asked them to close their books or modules, and asked the students about the material that they just have learnt, the students answered the questions from the teacher, she also read some words on the white board loudly and asked students to repeat after her.

Then, the teacher asked one students to conclude their lesson that they have learned. At the end of teaching and learning process, the teacher reviewed the lesson in brief, and gave the students opportunity to ask some questions, and then the teacher motivated them to learn English, after that the teacher closed the lesson by pray together.

T: Do you understand about the material today?

S: yes mam.

T: Remember that part of body (The teacher include the material part of body use L1) and don't forget study at home.

S: Ok mam.

T: Let's close activity today by pray together. (The teacher and students pray together) see you next time.

S: See you.

From the observations, it can be concluded teacher planned the lesson, prepared materials, and achieved the learning goal and the students' condition well. The teacher can control the classroom activity well in teaching English to young learners in elementary school, although in the last observation, I found that the students look little bit bored, but the teacher

can solve it with some strategies. For overall, it can be concluded that the teacher has given her best shot. It can be seen from students' responses too, that were very interested and enthusiastic in teaching and learning process appropriate with teaching material and purpose of teaching and learning. The teacher always do drilling and then she will repeat her explanation if some students still did not clear about what she taught. It took a lot of time and it made the allocation time of learning became so long.

Discussion

This part would discussion of the research. The main problem of this research are " What are the roles of L1 used by the teacher in teaching English to young learners at elementary school " and " How is L1 used in teaching English to young learners in elementary school ". It is stated in previous chapter that it should asked to the teacher in order to find the real answer and respond. I has conducted the research to answer the question. In the first data focused on the use of L1 in teaching English to young learners in elementary school. I gained the data through observation and interview while teaching learning process continued.

The focus of the first data determines the roles of L1 used by the teacher in teaching English to young learners at elementary school. A bilingual school may often be better served if students try to use English as much as possible. When a student cannot understand a word or utterance, or cannot follow the teaching learning process, then he/she has the chance to interpret the meaning by looking at the situation. But in the school that English only seen as a supplementary subject, then the focus is only for introduction. Students practice in English with the vocabulary introduction only provided by the teacher. In general, when students can use their L1 to ask questions and confirm their misunderstanding or confusion, it often leads to a clearer realization of the form and meaning of the language.

Lower-grade level students may also need further explanation and clarification on some points of the new materials. It should be noted that the teacher can sometimes use the L1 to help students produce utterance beyond their ability. Students produce utterance in their L1 then the teacher translates and ask them to repeat after her/him. The teacher might also consider using the L1 in the English classroom to shortcut the time.

An explanation in L1 may be necessary with a class of where no one speaks English. A student may get stuck in a teaching learning process and find themselves unable to express their opinions, answers, or ask the questions. Therefore, the teacher can simply allow them to use their L1 but stimulate them to say it again English with the teacher's help.

The study indicates that the L1 was used by the majority of teachers investigated. They responded positively toward the use of L1 in the English classroom. The teachers that were investigated in this study indicated that do translation of some words, ideas, or even conduct disciplines in the classroom are good way to learn a foreign language. Based on the classroom observation I can assume that without switching the language, young learners would be likely to lose and fail to learn English. This study also finds that in the lower grade-level (in this case elementary classes) L1 has a valuable role to play in the English classroom. Teaching English for young learners requires teachers to teach efficiently and appropriately. It indicates that the L1 gains more benefits by incorporating the students' L1 as a learning tool and a facilitator for an efficient teaching.

At pre-activities the teacher greets the students used L2 for 5 minutes, before starting the topic, teacher cheecks the students present used L2 for 10 minutes. At core activities, the teacher explains the learning materials used L1 for 30 minutes and give the students a task used L1 for 15 minutes. At the last activities, the teacher give a homework for the students used L2 for 5 minutes.

After that the teacher reviewed the material with giving questions that would conclude their teaching learning used L2 for 5 minutes. Based on result about the use of L1 in teaching

English to young learners in elementary school 64% L1 used by the English teacher. As a result, it could be concluded that the use of L1 (explaining new words, checking comprehension and giving feedback) was used in teaching English to young learners in elementary school. As a conclusion, I gave an explanation that the roles of L1 (explaining new words, checking comprehension and giving feedback) used by the teacher in teaching English to young learners in elementary school practically. Then, teacher also believed that the roles of L1 (explaining new words, checking comprehension and giving feedback) could improve students' ability and skill of English.

Conclusions

Based on the conclusion about the use of L1 in teaching English to young learners in elementary school. There were some conclusions which could be shown below. *The first role* is explaining new words. The teacher used L1 when the teacher explained the new word. But before it, the students should look for the meaning first. If it was possible to use English, the teacher still used English.

The second role is checking comprehension. When the teacher explained the new word or the new material and the students did not give response, it shown that the students did not understand. It also based on the situation. The teacher used Indonesian to make the students more interactive and it shown that they understand about the material.

The third strategy is giving feedback. The teacher used L1 to give students feedback. The teacher tried to explain the material with English. If the students still did not understand, the teacher explained the material more slow, but when the students did not understand too, the teacher used Indonesia and helped them solving their problems.

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