

## THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF L1 USE IN TEACHING ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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### ABSTRACT

As grammar or structure is part of English lesson, it is important to find out why the students seem difficult to understand about it. Some of them even do not like this grammar material. The use of L1 could be one of the solutions for this problem. This research is aimed to view the students' perceptions of L1 use in teaching grammar. The instruments used in the research were questionnaire and interview to senior high school students. The results show that 91.4% of the students had positive response to the use of L1 in teaching English grammar since it will help them to understand English grammar. Yet, the reason for those who gave negative response should also be considered before using L1 in teaching English grammar.

**Keywords:** English grammar, L1 use, teaching English grammar, students' perception

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Nowadays English has been taught since elementary school or even kindergarten in Indonesia. It means that English has been learnt since the very early age. Yet, many students get difficulties in understanding and using English. In the study that has been conducted by Yulia (2013), one of the findings showed that some students still felt that English was the most difficult subject to learn. Then, she added in the same study that some of the students who gave negative attitude towards English said that their English teacher seemed so strict in using rules for the grammar lesson.

Grammar or structure is one important element in English language. Wang (2010) noted that structure is always crucial in foreign language teaching and learning process. Yet, English grammar still becomes the thing that the students may avoid. Stardy (2011) wrote his experience in teaching grammar that students spend most of their times understanding grammar since they get more difficulty in mastering English grammar compared to the four English skills; reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Therefore, teachers should have an effective learning design of teaching grammar.

Based on the researcher's experience in teaching English, students seem feel difficult in understanding English grammar. One of the strategies that the researcher has done to overcome the problem is using L1 or Bahasa Indonesia in explaining English grammar. The result is some of the students show some significant improvement, moreover, they said that they can understand the grammar explanation that the researcher has given. Unfortunately, when these students move to the next level and get other teacher that does not apply the same way as the researcher does, they face the problem again. Usually, these students share their complaints to the researcher, even some of them ask the researcher to give explanation about the grammar material they have from their teacher. This condition pushes the researchers to do a study since it still happens until now.

### **1.2. Purpose and Research Questions**

Based on the information above, the purpose of this study in general is to describe the students' perceptions of L1 use in teaching English grammar. Specifically, the researcher is really eager to find out whether the use of L1 in teaching grammar will influence the students' understanding in English grammar. The writer also needs to know whether the students' lack of English grammar will affect the students' motivation in learning English. Here are the research questions for the study:

1. What are students' perceptions of L1 use in teaching English grammar?
2. What are the effects of L1 use in teaching English grammar?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Previous Studies**

In this part of this chapter, the researcher will show the previous studies which are similar to the types and theories of this research.

First study is conducted by Yusuf Uyar in 2012 titled *USING L1 TO ENHANCE THE GRAMMAR LEARNING AND HAVING ONLY ENGLISH POLICY IN EFL CLASSES*. In this study, Uyar presented two strategies in English grammar learning, using L1 and Only English. He had two classes of university students as the participants of his case study. One class was treated by using L1 while other had only English in learning grammar. Then he tested the two classes. The result shows that there is only little difference of grammar happened in two classes. Uyar concluded that the success of students in grammar is not related to the either the use of L1 or only English policy.

The study titled *Students' Perceptions of the teaching of Grammar* by Rex Stardy (2011) was the second one. The writer's objectives of the study are to find out the students' perceptions of teaching grammar since there are pros and cons about the necessity of teaching grammar. The participants are 127 students that were randomly selected from two universities. These students were asked to fill in a questionnaire as the instrument of the study. The results of the study show that the students agree that grammar is important and should be given deductively and intensively. The students also prefer to have both L1 and English in learning grammar in a short duration. The students reveal that their teachers often use many grammatical explanations and terminologies in teaching grammar and also like to do grammatical corrections to their students. The students suggest that grammar should be combined with other English skills and through a useful drilling method.

The last study is "*STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD THE USE OF BAHASA INDONESIA IN TEACHING ENGLISH*", conducted by Heriyanto Irawan in 2013. The aim of this study is to find out how the students obtain L1 in their English class. A questionnaire was given to 70 XII students of SMA Kristen Satya Wacana in Salatiga. The findings show that L1 really helps the students in understanding English better. However, the excessive use of L1 may bring other problems to the students in learning English.

Based on the three studies, the researcher realizes that there should be a study to find out the students' perceptions of L1 use in teaching English grammar.

### **2.2. Literature related to the topic**

#### **2.2.1. Student's Perception and its importance**

What is student's perception? Why is it important for teacher to know his or her students' perception? Perception is the way people recognize and understand an object, event, and stimulus using their hearing, sight and touch (Richard and Schmidt as cited in Stardy, 2011). In addition,

Stardy (2011) also wrote the definition of perception from Kotler (1997: 185), it is said that perception is selection, organization and interpretation process of information done by a person to get a valid concept of the world. Thus, student's perception is the way a student will understand and get the valid concept of knowledge through the process of selection, organization and interpretation.

Teachers should know their students' perceptions because the perceptions will influence the way how the students will get their knowledge. The students' perceptions play important role in the teaching learning process and may take part of the students' academic success. Sibarani (2019) noted that the students' perception in language learning will influence the language that the students learnt and the academic performance. Stardy (2011) hoped that by knowing the students' perceptions, the teachers not only can find and fulfill their students' need but they also can apply the teaching methods or strategies that are suitable for their students. Morelli (2003: 33-34) as cited in Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam (2011) stated that students' perceptions should be considered by teachers in the process of making decision.

### **2.2.2. Teaching English Grammar**

Grammar or structure is known as the rules of constructing words into larger parts like phrases or sentences (Aniuranti, Faiza, & Wulandari: 2021). In the same article, Harmer (2003) pointed out that grammar plays important role in having a good communication. Therefore it becomes necessary for the students to understand the grammar material well.

Because of its importance, the teacher should create a well design in teaching grammar. Morelli (2003: 33-34) as cited in Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam (2011) observed that teachers can teach grammar traditionally and contextually. Aniuranti, Faiza, & Wulandari (2021) stated that every teacher should master grammar concepts and provide themselves with the most effective teaching method. Widiati and Cahyono (2006) wrote that the teaching of grammar will work best when it is given harmoniously with communication competence. Harmer (2001) as cited in Stardy (2011) stated that the combination of grammar and other skills is better than teaching it exclusively. In addition, Finnochiaro (1974) and Rivers (1963) as cited in Larsen-Freeman (1979) and Stardy (2011) argued that the careful use of native language is acceptable in explaining the difficult grammar materials.

### **2.2.3. L1 use in English class**

The use of L1 in English class still becomes controversy. In Kamawamangalu (2010), those who disagree of the use of L1 claimed English should be taught best in one language which is through English. They added that the use of L1 will hamper the process of students' English thinking development and will drop the standard for English. In their opinion, the more English being used, the better the result is.

Against to those opinions, McKay (2010) urged to encourage the use of L1 since it will allow the use of L1 as a means to develop English proficiency. Nation (2003), the students' first language

should not completely be avoided from Second Language or Foreign Language classes because a thoughtful and well-planned use of the students' first language can give positive result. Moreover, Atkinson, in Miles (2004) said that most practitioners believe L1 can help students to use the class limited time efficiently with productive or communicative activities. Cook in Sibarani (2019) said that when bilingualism is allowed in the classroom, a new language can be taught best due to the unavoidable occurrence of L1 in English language teaching. Moreover, Cook in Almohaimmeed & Almurshed (2018) believed that teachers can use L1 in explaining difficult grammar, teaching new vocabulary and managing the class.

The use of Bahasa Indonesia, as the first language, in teaching English in classroom could become one of the challenges in teaching English in Indonesia. As Sibarani (2019) wrote in her study that the use of the first language seems quite common in the process of teaching English in all non-English speaking countries, especially in which the teacher and the students use the same first language. Although the use of first language has been a debatable issue, Pardede in Sibarani (2019) found out that 79% of secondary school students in Jabodebek "agreed" and "strongly agreed" to use both English and Bahasa Indonesia and 46% disliked the idea of using English only.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To answer the research questions in this study, the researcher will use qualitative research.

### **3.1. Setting and participants**

The study will be conducted online since the pandemic still happens. The participants of the research are Senior High School students in East Jakarta. They belong to grade 10 and 11.

### **3.2. Data Collection Method**

The study will use qualitative research. While for collecting the data, the researcher will use questionnaire and interview methods. The questionnaire will be conducted to find the general information about the use of L1 in teaching English class especially in teaching grammar. Then, for obtaining more accurate information about the students' perceptions of L1 use in teaching grammar, the researcher will use the interview to selected participants. These methods are in accordance with what Kamwangamalu (2010) wrote dealing with the use of L1 in English classes. First, the researcher will share a questionnaire consist of 15 questions in the form of open ended and close ended questions. Then, from the results of the questionnaire, the researcher will classify the students into two groups, those who like and those who do not like English lesson. Next, the researcher will choose 3 students of each group randomly to have the interview part. Yet, the interview will be done when the students agree to be interviewed. All the questionnaire and interview will use Bahasa Indonesia to avoid misperceptions of the topic.

## FINDINGS

The questionnaire and interview have been given to 318 senior high school students. Unfortunately, only 152 questionnaires had been submitted. From this result, the researcher classified the answers into two classes, the students who like English and the students who do not like. After that, the researcher chose randomly three students of each group. The general result of the study is most of the students (91.4%) show positive perceptions of L1 use in teaching English grammar. Here are the results and findings that researchers got in detail.

### 3.3. The results of the questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of fifteen questions of open ended and close ended items. From the questionnaire the results are:

a. 135 of 152 students (88.8%) said that they like English (figure 1). The reasons varied from their likeness of English until the benefit they will get by studying English. While the reason for those who do not like English because they do not understand English grammar and they get difficulties in saying English words.



(figure 1)

b. The beginning for these students studying English are since early childhood (11.84%), kindergarten (15.13%), elementary school (59.21%), junior high school (10,53%) and senior high school (3.29 %). It means that more than 86% of them had studied English for 10-12 years.

c. 77.6% of the students agree that teachers make them like English. Yet, 22.4% of them said that they like English because they have seen English programs on TV or game, others said that teachers do not have contribution of their likeness of English.



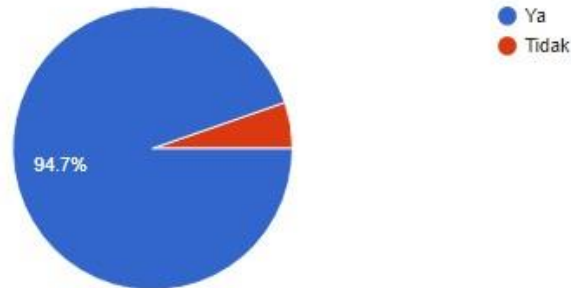
d. 38.8% of the students said that their teachers like to use L1 or Bahasa Indonesia in their English class. 59.9% found that their teachers sometimes use L1 or Bahasa Indonesia in English class. Only 1.3% said that the teachers use English only in the class. The frequency of L1 use in their English class is 7.9% said their teacher always use L1, 30.3% told the teachers often using L1 in the class, 55.3% said their teacher sometimes use L1 while for the rest 5.9% and 0.7% told that their teachers seldom and never use L1 in the class.

Yet, when it came to the questions whether the students like or not their teachers use L1, 94.7% of the students have positive response. Most of the students said that they can enjoy learning English when their teachers use L1 in the class. 90.1% of the students agreed that they can understand English more when their teachers use L1. However, the reason for those who gives negative response (5.3%) said that they feel annoyed when their teachers use L1 much because they cannot learn new vocabularies from the teacher.



APAKAH KAMU SUKA KETIKA GURU KAMU MENGAJAR BAHASA INGGRIS DENGAN MENGGUNAKAN BAHASA INDONESIA?

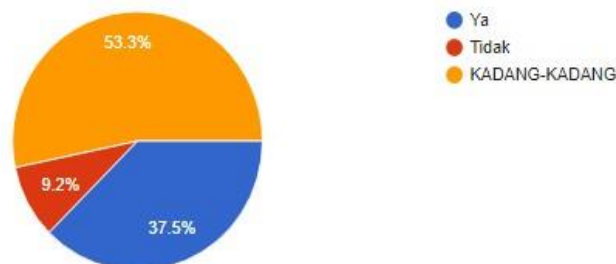
152 responses



e. From these students, 37.5% like English grammar, 53.3% feel sometimes they like English grammar and 9.2% dislike English grammar. In teaching grammar, 77.6% said that their English teachers use L1 when explaining grammar in the class with the intensity, only 6.6% said that the teacher always use L1, 25.7% of the students report that their teacher often use L1, 59.2% sometimes use L1, and the rest (7.9% and 0.7% of the teacher seldom and never use L1). 91.4% give positive attitude of this condition because it can help the students in understanding grammar more quickly. Meanwhile for the rest 8.6% of the students do not like the condition because the use of L1 will make them more confused in understanding grammar.

APAKAH KAMU SUKA MATERI GRAMMAR (SEPERTI TENSES, PASSIVE VOICE, DLL.)

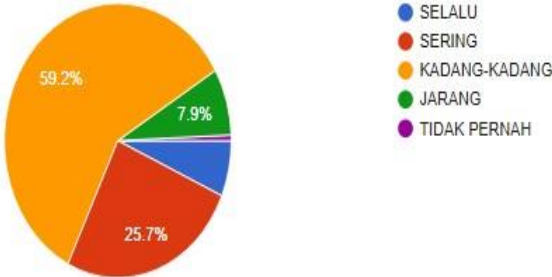
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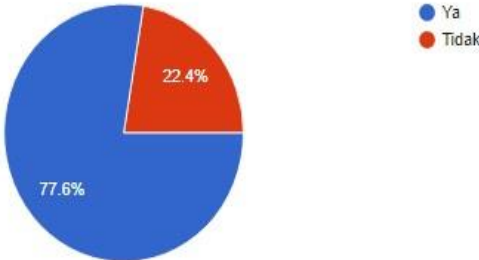
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152 responses



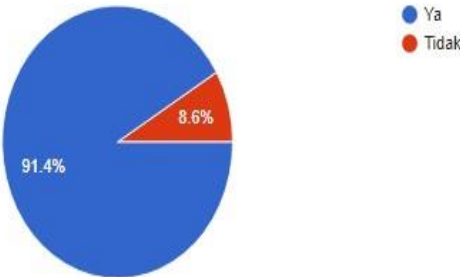
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152 responses



APAKAH KAMU SUKA JIKA GURU KAMU MENGGUNAKAN BAHASA INDONESIA SAAT MENJELASKAN MATERI GRAMMAR BAHASA INGGRIS?

152 responses



### **3.4. The results of the interview**

In the interview session, the researcher tried to get more detailed picture of the students' perceptions of L1 in teaching English grammar. These are the result of the interview part to the six students, three of them like English while the three others do not like English.

The researcher started the interview by asking the students' reason for their attitude to English lesson. Those who like English said that they like English because they often watch English program since they were child and they feel that English gives them many benefits in their future. While the rest said that they do not like English because they feel difficult in saying English words and they sometimes do not understand English.

The three of the students who like English started studying English since they were in kindergarten while those who do not like said that they have studied English since the first year of elementary school. All the students said that most of their English teacher use L1 in their class. Usually their teachers use L1 in explaining the material and the assignments in detail.

Then when the researcher asked the questions about grammar, all of them said that they were not really into grammar since grammar sometimes can be so difficult to be understood for them. Next question is whether they ever had English teacher who explain grammar in English only. All of them said that they ever experienced having English teacher that explain grammar in English and they did not like the condition. They added that they cannot understand the grammar material when it is given in English only. Then, the question is what they will do when they do not understand the grammar because of the English only teacher. Three of them said that they will ask their friends, two of them will search the additional material in Google and the last student will try to understand the material by himself.

The last but little bit important question in the interview is what their expectations for English teachers in Indonesia are. Two of them hoped that the teachers will use the combination of L1 and English in explaining grammar so that they can understand grammar easier. Still related with the grammar teaching, one of them also hopes that the teacher will give clear explanation to their students because grammar is not easy for them. In addition, one of the students hopes that the teachers will give not only clear explanation but also the examples of how to implement the material in the students' daily life. Other student hopes that the teachers will combine the teaching method so that the English class will be fun and enjoyable. The last student said that the teacher should realize and aware of the students' different condition so that the teacher will not force all students to have the same pace in understanding the material.

## **CONCLUSION**

As the conclusion, grammar is one of important elements in English since it is like the foundation of English language. Unfortunately grammar is the material that the students do not like because it is difficult to understand grammar material. Thus, the teachers should design the

right method in teaching English grammar so that the students will understand the grammar well and enjoy having grammar for their communication.

The use of L1 is one of alternative method that can be applied by the teacher since some of the experts have suggested it. Though the use of L1 is debatable, many studies have proved that the use of L1 in English class may help the students in understanding the material more, especially in explaining a difficult concept like English grammar. The researcher also has applied this in the class and it little bit works for some students.

Students' perceptions are essential since it will help the students to achieve their academic achievement. Not only for the students themselves, but students' perceptions are also important for the teachers before deciding the most suitable teaching strategies for their students. Thus, the students' perceptions in the use of L1 in teaching English grammar are necessary to be known by the teachers so that it can be a valuable insight for the teachers.

The findings of the study have shown that there are positive perceptions and some positive effects of L1 use in teaching English grammar. The students admitted that the use of L1 really helps them in understanding English grammar more. Most of them even suggested that their teachers can use the combination of L1 and English while teaching grammar. Yet, the other finding from the students who disagree of L1 use in teaching grammar should also be considered. They gave the reason that using L1 would make them get confused in learning grammar since they are not comfortable with the bilingualism in the study. The finding from the students who are against the use of L1 in teaching English grammar may lead to the future research.

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