STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF BAHASA AND ENGLISH IN CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY IN ONE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN MEDAN

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Abstract: This research was aimed to explore students’ perceptions on the use of language in EFL classroom. Researcher conducted this study in One Senior High School Medan. There were four twelfth graders participated in this study. Case study qualitative research was used in this study. Researcher collected the data through semi-structured interview and used interview protocol as the guideline. There were three major findings which categorized into themes such as 1) Students’ preferences on the use of Bahasa and English in EFL classroom, 2) Students’ perceptions on the language used in EFL classroom, and 3) Students’ expectations for the language choices in EFL classroom. From the findings, researcher found students’ perceptions on the use of language in classroom including their point of view and their expectations from their EFL teachers. Students preferred to use English fully, some wanted to use Bahasa because the lesson could be more comprehensible if the language used was in their own native language, and some expected that their EFL teachers could mix the language between Bahasa and English in the class.

Keywords: Students’ perceptions, Language preferences, EFL Classroom.

I. INTRODUCTION

English foreign language classroom is where all the people inside demanded to utilize the language as well. Since English classroom is its place in using and practicing the language. English teachers, for instance, create an English environment for the students in their class. Due to English as foreign language in Indonesia, there is no more comfortable place to practice English unless in English environment like English class, English course and everywhere the zone is English. Therefore, teachers will create an environment for English used as well as possible. Additionally, teachers attempt to make studets in EFL class to reduce the use of their native language, Bahasa. According to Cook (2001), students who use their first language cannot be avoided. The use of Bahasa exists almost in every English class in Indonesia. They feel better to use Bahasa than to struggle with English as the target language. It is questionable point that the opportunity of students speaking their first language is much more than speaking in target language. They convince that the use of Bahasa is much better than English because they can convey and express their intention and meaning thoroughly.
Teachers, in this case, allow to decide a mixture of teaching methods that probably help the students to keep improving their language skills. Harmer (2001) adds that both students and teachers deserve to have a right in conveying the meaning of their speaking. Ellis (2005) then states oppositely with Harmer statement, the more exposure to English the faster students will use it. But the fact is many students love to use Bahasa in all situations including English class. This position let the establishment the use of language in EFL classroom. Meanwhile, a specific and accurate rule is never written in a blueprint document for the language preferences used in English foreign language classroom. There is no requirement about the language used itself, (Harmer, 2001).

To sum up, this research comes with the issue that needs to be explored more deeply on what students’ perceptions and preferences on the use of Bahasa and English in classroom, students’ understandings toward the importance of English used and many more. Looking at students’ perceptions on language used in EFL classroom will carry out the fruitful issue for English teachers to consider and decide choices made based on the perceptions of the students. In spite of this, teachers are of course taking the best solution to administer all the obstacles occurred during the process of teaching and learning. Since language choices determine the success of the learning of students especially for their language skills and proficiency.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Harmer (2001) mentions that choosing languages for various aims in certain context is already being a phenomenon on linguistics. Speakers, with their own reasons, are having right to utilize the language in different context. Therefore, many schools implement a bilingual classroom as the way to deal with this condition. Since teachers sometimes consider their students whose English is not very well or even just started their English. Teachers commonly use English and Bahasa in teaching English class. Thus, it is not deniable that the two of them are crucial but then a question comes. It will be a significant issue if students are mostly taught in one of them merely, Bahasa or English. This, of course, impact their ability. Besides, some teachers set bilingualism classroom as an environment for all students to express themselves in using English especially in communication. This kind of classroom allows all students to use two languages, which is in this context the students may use both Bahasa and English.

Teachers elect the language used in EFL class whether using Bahasa or English
only, or using the two of them. Teachers are the holder of every policy they made in their class. Hence, students are just as the receiver of that decision but students are the most considerable element in making decision because students are their object in teaching that language. By getting this, students merit a right to give their perceptions on the language used in the classroom. The reasons that students should learn English from the very beginning are that the position of English as a global language, the benefit of mastering English for career, education and many more. Even though, students do not want to pursue English education or English literature on the future, they still need to learn English because English unites people from around the world in terms of communication. This causes English as a compulsory subject in school.

One very significant way to learn English is to use it. By being aware of the importance of learning English, students are expected to learn English severely. Harmer (2001) states that it is enough to prioritize the use of English in classroom as a strategy to expose English much stronger to the students. Students face some problems using English fully. Particularly in trying to convey the meaning from Bahasa to English, they get hard to translate it into English due to the grammar structure and adequate vocabulary. Therefore, they tend to use Bahasa when they want to talk because every information will be delivered well and the message on that information is clearly catched by others. Using Bahasa is considered as the best way they can use in speaking and also writing. In line with this, Harmer (2001) adds that other most frequently problem faced by students are they worry to use English incorrectly so they elude it. In English foreign language classroom, many students are still not well-behaved with people who are trying to use and practice English in daily life.

Moreover, those people will critize any error and laugh when their friends make mistake in their English usage. This factor is one of the greatest reason why students are afraid with English. Besides, they have nothing to express with English. Less motivation is also a reason why students are not keen to use it. Both students and teachers consider to use English as a solution to overwhelm the learning and teaching difficulties. They convince that using Bahasa is necessary in the classroom in case of it is not used too much. On the other hand, they are becoming comfortable to use it and making it as a habit. Therefore, it is being problem that is very difficult to be separated. Harmer (2001) adds that the students usually use their mother tongue because mother tongue eases them in to communicate their thought. They also not feel under-pressured when they use mother tongue.
III. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

Research site of this study is in One Senior High School in Medan. Case study qualitative research was utilized in this study. It aims to explore the students’ perceptions toward language preferences in EFL classroom. Creswell (2007) mentions that qualitative research sets in a natural way. It is not excused for the researcher to give assumptions and to manipulate the data information from the participants. Case study let the researcher use systems that are able to involve many information sources. There are three kinds of case studies such as exploratory case study, descriptive case study, or explanatory case study, (Creswell, 2007). Researcher can choose the most appropriate strategies that suit to the condition of the research. In details, the purpose of exploratory case study is to explore, then descriptive case study is to describe, and explanatory case study is to explain. Indeed, researcher focuses on exploratory case study because the needs of the research are to explore the students’ perceptions on the language utilization in EFL classroom, to find out the suitable solutions for such problems students faced to success the learning.

Data collection and participants

Primary data in this study was taken through interview of semi-structured. Interview protocol was used to guide the researcher in collecting the data information. Researcher did the interview with the participants personally. So the participants were interviewed on the different occasion. This was done in order to get the specific and deep information from the participants and also to make them feel comfortable. Face to face interview was done to each participant in more than one meeting, it depends on the data information needed to answer the research questions.

The interview was conducted until it saturated, so that prolonged interview was possible to be done as long as it is needed. The time for doing the interview was based on the participants’ willingness, researcher just follow their available time. Researcher recorded the interview. Researcher also allowed the participants to use the language they are comfortable with. Researcher might not force the participants. In-depth interview purposed to seek information from the research.
Technique of Data Analysis

After collecting the data information, researcher listened the recording carefully. Researcher transcribed all the interview and translate it into English. Besides, researcher asked each participant to listen the interview as a confirmation of the data recorded whether it suited with all information they mentioned during the interview or not. If it was all matched, researcher then asked member checking to value the translation which was done by the researcher. Next, researcher tried to collect the similarities and differences. Then, those similarities and differences found in the data interview were coded and categorized into themes and sub-themes, (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, researcher matched the data with the research questions. Those data would address the answer of the research questions. In this phase, all the data analysis was definitely done well.

Ethical considerations and Trustworthiness

Brown (2001) stated that researcher ought to keep the participants’ privacy by using a pseudonym. Researcher would not include participants’ real names and identities. This was done to protect participants for the things happened in the future. Participant’s human right is all important. An informed consent form was given to all participants. Furthermore, authenticity and credibility are two essential features of trustworthiness owned by qualitative research. Researcher then step some procedures as a form to authorize the trustworthiness. The procedures are 1) Time allocation for doing the interview depends on the participants’ willingness and condition, 2) The data from interview will be transcribed and researcher will ask supervisor to check the transcripts, and after making sure that the transcripts are all correct, 3) The data will be given to the participants to ensure its originality, this aims to avoid misinterpretation.

IV. FINDINGS

The goal of this research was to explore the students’ perceptions on the use of Bahasa and English in EFL classroom. After collecting and analyzing the data information from the interview, researcher highlighted three main findings such as first, the students’ language preferences used in EFL classroom, the students’ perception of languages used in EFL classroom, and the solution of the language choices for EFL classroom.
Students’ language preferences in EFL classroom

According to Harmer (2001), it is with no worries that learners can select the language they can relate better with. In the context of English foreign language classroom, students pretend themselves to use Bahasa as a means of communication. They use Bahasa more frequently than using English. The preferences of language used are going to be found on the following information;

Student 1 stated that I prefer to use English especially in English class because I think that English class gives me a chance to practice my English ability. I prefer to use English fully during the class.

Student 2 said to be honest, I love to mix the language. I prefer to use both of them, Bahasa and English.

Student 3 mentioned contrastly from student 1, my language preference is my native language, Bahasa. I am sorry I prefer to not chose English at all.

Meanwhile, student 4 is in line with student 1. I, of course, chose to use English only.

Students’ perception of languages used in EFL classroom

After mentioning about the language preferences they would like to use in the class, those participants now explain their perceptions on why they prefer to select the language to use in the class, take a look in the following statement:

Student 1 said that I love English very much, I want to improve my English ability. Therefore, I am so glad whenever English schedule is coming, it is my favorite subject anyway. In this English class, I can use the language. I can practice my speaking ability with my teacher and also friends. I seldom use my English unless in the class because I do not study in English course. I learn English in school only. Therefore, if the teacher keeps using English in the class, I will use my English more often too. I fully utilize my chance to learn during that English class.

Students 2 acknowledged that my English ability is just enough. I sometimes do not understand what teacher’s explanation. I can understand partially and I will be annoyed when I cannot acquire the lesson. Besides, I have adequate vocabulary and
lack understanding of grammar so it is hard for me to comprehend the core of the information. Also I sometimes misinterpret the information because of having limited vocabulary, grammar, knowledge and all. Hence, I like when teacher combine the language, she explains in English and also translate it into Bahasa. By having mix language, it can be more understandable. If I do not know the English of the word, I will mix it with Bahasa. In short, I view that combining the two languages, Bahasa and English, is obviously the best way to learn the language itself.

**Students 3** argued that *I hate English because it is very difficult. I ever try to comprehend that language but I still cannot get it. First of all, I was formerly loving English but my English teacher in class is not really nice to me. She always comments negative things toward my English ability. Since that time, I am not confident with my self. I worry to make mistake. If I do mistakes, I will be critized negatively by my teacher and friends too. I also never learn English, I do not like English anymore. Therefore, according to me, using Bahasa is much better and easier than struggling with English. It is enough to read the English in the coursebook, teacher may give the explanation with Bahasa only. It can make us, all students, totally understand with the lesson if it is used Bahasa, our own language.*

**Student 4** mentioned that *practicing English in the right place is one of ways to improve my ability. EFL classroom is one and only environment to use English. One of my reasons to prefer using English in the class is that I have someone to talk to, English teacher for example. I also have friend to practice my English. I consider that English classroom is where the language learner can practice and use the language properly. We all know that English, in Indonesia, is as a foreign language. The answer why English is called as foreign language is that because people use it rarely, there is no actual place for people to use the language unless in a particular situation, EFL classroom for instance. Since it is English class so the students and teacher must use English in that class no matter what. If it is not in its place so where else. Besides, I determine that my English ability will never increase as long as I do not want to use it. By using English gradually, it can be a habit for us.*

**Students’ expectations for the language choices**

after knowing students’ preferences and perceptions on the use of Bahasa and
English in EFL classroom, students then express what they actually expect from their English teachers, they are;

**Student 1 and 4** have the same point of view. **Student 1** said that *I want the teacher create a fun learning class, explain the lesson more simply, use the English more often. All I want is that a class with a full English speaking zone, a real English environment. Teacher can ignore those students who keep talking with Bahasa. This way can make us all be aware of the use of English itself. Student 4* then added that teacher can provide interesting material so we can be more spiritful to follow the class, and implement teaching method that can take our interest and intention to use English.

**Student 2** said that *I think teacher can keep combining both Bahasa and English as the language instruction in the class. Teacher can mix the language particularly in explaining the material and in discussing the lesson. I also hope that the teacher can create a nice environment for us along the process of teaching and learning.*

**Student 3** stated that *I will try to use English if the teacher can be much nicer to students who do not have good ability in English. Teacher can encourage us by giving positive feedback. Teacher can provide interesting material, teaching method, and teaching aids. To motivate those students who have less interest like me, teacher can start to use English continously. The range of the use of the language is divided in percentages. For example, thirty percents use English and seventy percents use Bahasa. Teacher then can add the percentage like forty to sixty, next fifty to fifty, and so on and so forth.*

**V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

There are some primary findings that already meet the research questions in this study. The themes in this study are students’ preferences on the use of Bahasa and English in EFL classroom, students’ perceptions on the language used in EFL classroom, students’ expectations for the language choices in EFL classroom. The results reveal that mostly students love English as long as it is taught in nice way. From four students participated in this study, two of them love to learn English. They also desire to use English as much as
well. Then, one student is keen to learn English much harder and another student intend to learn English if the English teacher is nice, and able to encourage less motivation students to start loving and using English in EFL classroom.

On the other hand, the most frequently reason had by the students is that they consider English is very difficult to learn, so they do not want to use English in the class because of having lack of motivation. The students find many obstacles in learning English, they are 1) They have no enough vocabulary so they are hard to get the meaning conveyed by the teachers in the class, 2) They do not really understand about the grammar of a sentence. Therefore, they sometime misinterpret the meaning of information, 3) They do not feel comfortable with the learning environment created by the teacher, 4) They are not facilitated a clear direction by the teacher, 5) Teacher do not recognize the students very well. Teachers should know student’s potential learning so teacher can adjust the language teaching, including the language used to each of students in the class. Since each student in a class is of course having different capability in English skills. Some are able to use English greatly, some are enough, and some maybe just started to learn English or English beginner. By knowing this, teacher can use the language based on the needs in the class. For instance, if the students are at different skills completely, teacher can combine the language. Teacher can synchronize the percentage based on the students’ needs. Last, 6) Teacher may not make an interruption in the middle of student’s performance too often. This can cause student lose their self-esteem.

To respond all the obstacles faced by the students, researcher underline one essential thing, that is student’s readiness. Students should be ready with the language choices made by the teacher in the class. Also the point is both teacher and students ought to cooperate precisely. Teachers provide a better teaching classroom. Meanwhile, students sought the belief in themselves that they are able to nail it if they are keen with it. They also need to support the teacher so the success of teaching and learning ease to be reached. In line with this, researcher figure out a point that the use of Bahasa and English is vital in the context of foreign language classroom. Teacher can expose English more often than Bahasa but teacher ought to realize that Bahasa is still needed in certain situation. But, it depends on how the students’ skills look like. If they are students with different skills, then do that way. On the other hand, if the students are almost in a level of advanced, then teacher can expose English extremely.

Furthermore, based on students’ preferences and perceptions about the use of
Bahasa and English in EFL class. It can be accomplished that three of them chose English as the language used in the class even one from these three students think that use mix language is much better, she chose this because of having adequate ability. Then it can be said that the student is eager to use English only, it is all about time and progress. Besides, the students do not deny that the existence of Bahasa is understandable in EFL classroom just in case its usage is not too much.

To sum up, teacher can manage EFL classroom as well by providing interesting material and teaching method, considering students’ different skills, creating comfortable environment for the learner to use English. Then, teacher can provide clear explanation, direction, language, and guideline. Teacher can give more exposure to the students during the process of teaching and learning. Next, students are allowed to practice, use, express themselves. Teacher encourages and gives positive feedback that can develop the student’s progress. Last but not least, teacher and students are the root of all things in the classroom so they should attempt to sought the best way to success the learning and teaching. To maximize the success of the learning and teaching English is to use the language. It is all that matter.

REFERENCES


