Language Choice Used by EFL Teachers in Classroom Language during the Online Learning

Faiz Rizaldi1
1 Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Singaraja, Indonesia

ABSTRACT


This is an open-access article under the CC BY-SA license. Copyright © 2021 by Author. Published by Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has been recognized as the most vital foreign language that is learned among other language speakers around the world (Basri, 2018; Escobar Fandiño et al., 2019; Mokshein et al., 2019). It is relevant to the recent phenomenon which shows that English placed as the fourth rank of foreign language mostly spoken by people as an international communication (Cao & Wei, 2019; Hien, 2021; Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2016). States the global use of English appears as a phenomenon since it impacts all the sectors of humans’ life, such as; social and cultural sectors, business, and education (Bećirović, 2017; Smith et al., 2018; Zein et al., 2018). Despite, its influences on humans’ life, English is also perceived as a requirement for being a successful individual in the globalization era. It demands stakeholders and the government to input English as one of the compulsory subjects
required to be learnt by the students (Ho, 2020; Liu & Song, 2021; Tanihardjo, 2016). Students are supposed to learn and master English as a means of communication considering that English can increase students’ competencies both in academic and social life (Prastyo et al., 2021; Swanson, 2020). It is stated that learning English is referred to the process of updating information and required material that influences citizens’ ability that reflects their literacy and open-mindedness. Therefore, the importance of English has been realized by a lot of people including Indonesian people which is reflected through the Indonesian educational curricula that attach English to government policy (Frianty & Martina, 2018; Hery, 2017; Rosmiati, 2019).

However, English language teaching and learning has faced a rapid change due to the Covid-19 pandemic that almost occurs in all the countries including Indonesia (Agung et al., 2020; Ambarita, 2021; Hidayati & Husna, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the education system where institutions are closed for the prevention of the Covid-19 virus (Huang, 2020; Hussem et al., 2020; Oyedotun, 2020). The new learning system is adapted where the conventional learning is changed into online learning which means that a direct formal knowledge cannot be conducted instead virtual classrooms are taken as the solution (Khatoon & Nezhadmehr, 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Yunita & Maisarah, 2020). Online learning is an advance of technology that is perceived as innovation in education where it supports the learning process to be more efficient and flexible (Meşe & Sevilen, 2021; Mutohhar et al., 2021; Sukendro et al., 2020). The interaction between teachers and students occurs asynchronously and synchronously where the teachers can communicate and interact with their students synchronously by using virtual media, such as; Zoom, Google Meet, WebEx, and others meanwhile asynchronous learning is conducted through the use of WhatsApp, YouTube, Google Classroom, Schoology, and other learning platforms (Lapitan et al., 2021; Rachmat & Krisnadi, 2020; Susilowati, 2020).

The transmission of the conventional classrooms into online classroom tends to emerge as a new challenge for the English teachers, particularly in the EFL context as what has been found by the researchers through a preliminary observation conducted in SMP N 2 Gerokgak. It is one of the junior high schools in Buleleng regency which adapts online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is found that the English teachers use monotonous media, such as; WhatsApp and Google Classroom. The lack of facilities owned by students does not support the learning process to be conducted through the virtual live meeting. Indirectly, it also impacts the class language that cannot be running optimally. Most of the teachers use a mixture of languages between Bahasa and English. The teachers tend to switch languages. It occurs to the teachers who are not ready enough in facing the new learning system and overcoming students’ characteristics considering that students still have difficulty in understanding the learning process if the language used is fully in English. It is noticed that teachers mostly interact with students by only giving assignments as an exercise for students, that conditions are contradictory to the purpose of classroom language which is for familiarizing students with the target language. There is less interaction and communication conducted by teachers by using the language target.

A recent study about classroom language has been conducted in which it is more focused on investigating the perceptions of senior high school students towards the classroom language used in learning English as a foreign language (Effendi M., 2016; Megawati, 2016; Sibarani, 2019). The students’ perceptions towards the use of Indonesian and English in the learning process. It shows that students mostly prefer the use of Indonesian in English language learning which indicates a negative side for the English learning process considering that English is required as the primary language in EFL classrooms. The language choice used between university students and their lecturers in the classroom interaction in which it is found that English is less used than Bahasa during the English course (Julianti et al., 2016; Liyana & Kurniawan, 2019; Ratminingsih, 2018). English is used by the lecturers for asking students’ thoughts and feelings, asking the question, and praising meanwhile students use English only for responding to a specific category. Bahasa is mostly used by students to give their ideas and information, bring a joke, and criticize other students’ behavior. The language choice is used by English teachers in EFL classrooms in their talks and interactions with students (Pratiwi, 2019). It is also found that Bahasa is commonly used by teachers for translating difficult words found in English and explaining grammar. Inserting mother tongue is viewed as a limitation for students to expose their target language. Therefore, the language choice used by the teachers in that study shows a negative response.

Those previous studies show that the language choices and classroom language in the EFL context have attracted many researchers in which most of the studies reveal that the use of Bahasa as students’ mother tongue is more dominant than English as their target language. Those studies are conducted when the learning process is conducted conventionally. There is no recent study that investigates the language choice used by English teachers for conducting classroom language in teaching English as a foreign language during online learning. Therefore, this study is conducted to analyze the language choice used by teachers in conducting classroom language during the online learning considering it is a sudden change in the Indonesian learning system and the importance of using English in implementing classroom language in which this study is underlined by the research question; what language choice of classroom language is used by EFL teachers in SMPN 2 Gerokgak.
2. METHOD

This study was conducted in the form of a qualitative study. Creswell (2008) states that qualitative research is a research method used to observe and understand the central phenomenon by involving the participants or volunteers and asking those general questions broadly. The setting of this study was SMPN 2 Gerokgak in which the English teachers were involved as the subject of this study. The language choice used by the English teachers in conducting classroom language during online learning became the object of this study. The data were gained through observation and interview by using a table checklist, interview guide, and classification table. Data analysis was carried out using Interactive Model Analysis which included three main processes, namely; data reduction, data display, and leverage (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The validity and reliability of this study were checked through data triangulation.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Observation of the English teaching and learning process in SMPN 2 Gerokgak by obtaining 10 EFL learning meetings for 8th-grade students. 8A1 is the selected class to be observed by the researcher through the use of a table checklist. In addition, the interview was also conducted involving one English teacher who taught English as a foreign language in that class. There were five scales of percentage used as references; 1) 0-20%, 2) 21-40%, 3) 41-60%, 4) 61-80%, 5) 81-100%. The table checklist consisted of three indicators based on the theory proposed by Kang (2008). The finding of this study was presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Distribution of Language Choice Used in Implementing Classroom Language during the Online Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Number of Phrases or Sentences Used</th>
<th>Frequency of Occurrences (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 7</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 (English) 7</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of L1 and L2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 5</td>
<td>13.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 (English) 31</td>
<td>83.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of L1 and L2</td>
<td>2.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 (English) 14</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of L1 and L2</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 7</td>
<td>31.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 (English) 13</td>
<td>59.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of L1 and L2</td>
<td>9.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 75</td>
<td>22.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 (English) 16</td>
<td>72.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of L1 and L2</td>
<td>4.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 9</td>
<td>47.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 (English) 9</td>
<td>47.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of L1 and L2</td>
<td>5.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 (English) 6</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of L1 and L2</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 13</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>L2 (English) 30</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of L1 and L2</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>L1 (Bahasa) 7</td>
<td>19.45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Considering that the use of L2 (English) mostly reached the percentage of 4 in each meeting which was around 60-80% meanwhile it was also presented that English was used on the percentage of 3 (41-60%) in the meeting 1, 4, 6, and 10. The most significant use of English was found in meeting 2 which reached the percentage of 5 (83.78%). Bahasa as students’ native language (L1) was also used by the teacher during the teaching and learning process but it was used less than L2 which showed that the use of Bahasa typically reached the percentage of 1 (0-20%) and 2 (21-40%) in each meeting. In addition, the mixture between L1 and L2 was the least frequent language used by the teacher in the learning activities considering that it was presented on the percentage of 1 (0-20%). The table checklist indicated that English was positioned as the dominant language used by the teacher while teaching English as a foreign language for 8th-grade students in SMPN 2 Gerokgak. English was often used for all the classroom activities, such as; greeting, giving instructions, discussions, and providing feedback to students. Teacher commonly used a simple phrase or sentence to make students understand the instructions easily, for instance; “hello students”, “how are you?”, “please fill the absent”, “read the dialogue, please!”. Meanwhile, complex English was used during discussion sessions and giving feedback.

Table 1 showed the language choice of classroom language used by the teachers in interacting with the students during the English class conducted through online learning. It was found that English was dominantly used by the teacher in those ten meetings considering that the use of L2 (English) mostly reached the percentage of 4 in each meeting which was around 60-80% meanwhile it was also presented that English was used on the percentage of 3 (41-60%) in the meeting 1, 4, 6, and 10. The most significant use of English was found in meeting 2 which reached the percentage of 5 (83.78%). Bahasa as students’ native language (L1) was also used by the teacher during the teaching and learning process but it was used less than L2 which showed that the use of Bahasa typically reached the percentage of 1 (0-20%) and 2 (21-40%) in each meeting. In addition, the mixture between L1 and L2 was the least frequent language used by the teacher in the learning activities considering that it was presented on the percentage of 1 (0-20%). The table checklist indicated that English was positioned as the dominant language used by the teacher while teaching English as a foreign language for 8th-grade students in SMPN 2 Gerokgak. English was often used for all the classroom activities, such as; greeting, giving instructions, discussions, and providing feedback to students. Teacher commonly used a simple phrase or sentence to make students understand the instructions easily, for instance; “hello students”, “how are you?”, “please fill the absent”, “read the dialogue, please!”. Meanwhile, complex English was used during discussion sessions and giving feedback.

### Discussion

As an educator who has an important role in the teaching and learning process, English teachers have a responsibility in balancing the classroom interaction by using classroom language while teaching English as a foreign language (Hanifa, 2018; Luciana, 2020; Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020). Classroom language is a common way used by English teachers to motivate students to actively participate in the classroom where the teachers are supposed to use an appropriate language that enables students for being involved in the classrooms (Figuera-Daniel & Li, 2021; Meng & Wang, 2011; Moghadam et al., 2021). In the EFL context, the teachers must use English in conducting classroom language since English becomes a target language but it contrasts to students’ mother tongue (native language), particularly for the early students. It is stated that the contrast between the target language and students’ mother tongue leads the teachers to apply a good classroom language by habituating the use of target language for the students from an early age (Cekaite, 2017; Saito et al., 2018; Singh et al., 2020). English has been officially regulated to be taught in primary schools and secondary schools by the Indonesian government (Sibarani, 2019). English learning process in Indonesia has been stated through Government Regulation, No. 19, 2005, that demands the final goal of English learning process is students’ participation in discoursing or communicating their feelings, ideas thought, whether it is presented in verbal or non-verbal English inaccurate, fluent, and acceptable ways (Yulia, 2013).

The result indicated that the language choice used by the teacher in implementing classroom language for teaching EFL during the online learning consisted of three variant languages; exclusive of the target language (L2), exclusive of students’ native language (L1), and the mixture of L1 and L2. It was supported by the result of the interview elaborated as follows; First, exclusive of the target language (TL). English had been found as the dominant language used in EFL learning class in 8A1 at SMPN 2 Gerokgak. English was not used by the teacher but also by the students who were required to use English in the discussion sessions by the teacher (Bella & Zainil, 2020; Kamelia, 2019; Tovar Viera et al., 2020). It was underlined by a reason of the teacher who wanted to provoke students’ experience in using English as what had been stated through the teacher’s interview statement, as follows.

“The use of English and Indonesian in learning for junior high school students is 50 to 50. I do this because I want my students to get used to using English in my classroom. Therefore, I often ask students to answer my questions or argue in my class using English. I want them to learn English meaningfully.”

Second, Exclusive of the first language (L1). Bahasa was used by the teacher to re-explain what had been delivered in English by her in the previous sessions (Albashtawi et al., 2020; Alsheneeqet, 2018). It was conducted due to the inequality of students’ knowledge. Teachers commonly translated several English words into Bahasa to increase students’ understanding of the instructions and learning materials as what had been stated in the statement below;
“I also often use Indonesian in my English class. I do that because I want students to understand what I say besides I want students to use English in my class. Besides that, there is an inequality of knowledge in my class, so I want all students to understand what I am saying.”

Third, The Mixed-Use of L1 and L2. Teachers tend to use mixed language between Bahasa and English spontaneously for explaining or mentioning the words that only had popular meaning in Bahasa or English (Dwihartanti & Faizah, 2018; Trisnanti et al., 2018; Widyahening, 2018). The teacher used English first and it was followed by Bahasa. The mixed language was infrequently used by the teacher to make students have a better understanding.

“If we talk about mixed languages, it might happen. The language is more popular than English when I speak Indonesian and vice versa. I just did it spontaneously because it was intended to make students understand the learning in my class better.”

Based on those findings, it could be interpreted that there were three variations of language choice used for classroom language in the EFL learning process joined by 8th-grade students at SMPN 2 Gerokgak, such as; exclusive target language (L2), exclusive students’ first language (L1), and a mixture of L1 and L2. It was relevant to find that classroom language was implemented by using three variants of language choice during the English teaching and learning process, such as; English, Bahasa, and a mix of several languages. It was also found that English was the dominant language that should be used in classroom language (Saraswati et al., 2020; Sya & Helmanto, 2020; Yulia, 2013). It was in line with the result of this study where English was the most frequent language used by the teacher. The result of this study was in contrast to the previous studies in which those studies showed that Bahasa was frequently used in classroom language by the students to elaborate and present their ideas, thoughts, and feeling meanwhile this study pointed out that the students were obligated to use English in discussion sessions and teacher used English dominantly (Julianti et al., 2016; Pratiwi, 2019). A more complex study is suggested to be conducted which focuses on investigating the language choice used in classroom language during online learning by using the result of this study as reference. This result is feedback towards the undertaken of online learning as a new learning system for junior high school students in Buleleng in which it can be used as a reference for the English teachers in conducting classroom language for teaching English as a foreign language.

4. CONCLUSION

The classroom language was managed well by the EFL teacher at SMPN 2 Gerokgak in teaching English for 8th-grade students during the online learning where there were three variants of language choice used such as; English as the target language, Bahasa as students’ first language, and a mixed language between Bahasa and English. It was found that English was dominantly used by the teacher during the English online learning process in 10 meetings. It was shown on the percentage of 4 (60-180%) and 5 (81-100%). Meanwhile, the use of Bahasa was intermediate on the percentage of 3 (40-60%). The least use was the mixed language considering it reached the percentage of 1 (0-20%). It was also found that the teacher obligated the students to use English during the discussion sessions for exploring students’ experience in using English.

5. REFERENCES


