

## Students' Perception of Using Mixed Languages in Teaching English at SMPN 4 Buton Tengah

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### ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at examining students' perception on the use of mixed languages in teaching English subject and to gain information in regards to the factors that cause the English teachers using mixed languages. This study applied a descriptive design. The participants of this study were drawn from the teachers who taught English at 8<sup>th</sup> grade and the students of 8<sup>th</sup> grade academic year 2019/2020 at SMPN 4 Buton Tengah, in which 34 of them were taken as the subject of this study. The data were collected using close-ended questionnaire and interview session. The finding of this study revealed that students' perception on the use of mixed languages in English subject was positive in general. They believed that the use of both English and Bahasa Indonesia by the teacher was really important in teaching and learning process, especially while explaining the learning material and communicating to the students. By following this result, there were some factors that causes teacher using mixed languages in teaching English, those were: the students' level of English proficiency that still low in relation to the student's poor English vocabulary mastery and the students' desire in learning English that also still low. Moreover, this study revealed that the students learn better when taught in English and Bahasa Indonesia.

### *Keywords:*

*Students' Perception, Mixed languages, English Subject.*

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## 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, English is rarely used by the people in their social life because it is considered as a Foreign Language (FL) so that English is only used in the academic and business sphere (Saville-Troike, 2006). Sasmita et al. (2022) also added that English is taught from kindergarten to higher education depending on the educational system and national curriculum used in a certain country. Especially for the students in the beginning level of English which is the students in this level do not know much in regards to anything that related to English subject or they do not even have prior knowledge of English itself, the students only learn English when it comes to English subject at school and they do not use it in their social life, such as they speak or interact with their friends in and outside of the classroom; they tend to use their native language as well as their local language to communicate. As a matter of fact, this condition influences the language used by the teacher in teaching and learning English at the classroom. Students at beginning level need a language instruction that they can easily understood, so that they can get the point of what the teacher explain to them about the target language that they will learn to. While as it is known that the English subject at junior high school level is targeted so that the students can reach the

functional level which is orally and in writing to solve every day problems. Related to this kind of condition, Brown (2001) mentioned that it is a challenge to teach beginner English learners. Due to the fact that at this level, the students only have little information or even do not have any prior information about the target language. The combination of students' first language and English as the target language in teaching and learning process in the classroom is commonly used by the teachers to teach English to students. This is something that is inevitable because it is a kind of things that could not be separated from students who do not speak English to interact to each other in their daily life. Thus, the use of teachers' language instruction is very important in teaching and learning English.

In the real condition of teaching and learning process, especially in junior high school level, there are some teachers that still tend to use Bahasa Indonesia in teaching English. It is simply because, Bahasa Indonesia is the students' first language (Safitri et al., 2022) and the students use it in social interaction in their daily life which means, it is easier for the teacher to explain the difficult learning material and to communicate to the students when using Bahasa Indonesia. Due to the fact that, if the teacher only use English during teaching and learning process, it will be hard for the students at lower level of English proficiency to get the point of what their teacher is explained to them and ended up making the students dislike to learn English since it is hard to understand. However, the use of English in teaching and learning process is very important so that it is also needed by the teacher in order to give the exposure to the language and to make the students more familiar with the language. Hence, the use of teachers' language instruction in learning target language becomes one of the important things to learn English, especially, for students at lower level of English proficiency. It is the reason why the use of both languages (Bahasa Indonesia and English) by the teacher should be balanced. So that the students can get the point of what their teacher's explained and get the role model of the English word or sentences production at the same time.

In foreign language situations, teachers' input is very important. Due to the fact that, students' will pay attention on what teacher is explained. Therefore, the use of English in teaching and learning process also needs to get attention from the teacher. It is because while the process of teaching and learning in the classroom, the students also need the role model of the target language that they will learn about. The students need to know how the language produce and they can determine their attitudes about the target language as well. It is in line with the arguments of Brown (2001) which believes that teachers' model of language has a big influence for students at beginning level of English proficiency. Moreover, teacher using mixed languages while teaching and learning English at beginning level has some reasons. In the first instance is the students' ability in learning the target language. Students at this level only have little or even do not have prior knowledge about English. Thus, the teacher needs to consider the language instruction that they will use. And the use of mixed languages as the medium of instruction more or less helps the teacher to explain the learning material and to communicate to the students during teaching and learning process as well. Besides, the students' motivation to learn English also becomes the reason why teacher should use mixed languages. It is due to the fact that; student interest to learn English is still lack, especially for the students who live far from urban area. Some

students still think that English is not as important as another subject at school. Hence, the teacher needs to put more effort to make teaching and learning process more interesting for the students.

In order to deal with the condition, the use of mixed languages in teaching and learning English in beginning level of English proficiency is needed to be investigated. Baker & Matras (2003) explained that a mixed language is the combination of two languages in the situations of bilingualism and it can be considered as a type of connection language. Then, Antón et al. (2015) mentioned that in mixed languages context, the information should be given into two languages that use as the medium of instruction before it is combined at a common semantic level. Mixed languages in this research leads to the use of students' native language (Bahasa Indonesia) in learning target language (English). Furthermore, the term of mixed languages in this study can be defined as the use of two or more languages in teaching and learning English subject in the beginning level of English proficiency, which is the majority of population in the class is not English native speakers or the native language that used by the students is not English. Therefore, mixed languages that teachers used tend to the use of bilingual. It means that, the use of mixed languages in teaching and learning process could make the students more understandable about the language that taught by the teacher. Thus, the researcher wants to investigate the factors of teacher use mixed languages in teaching English and students' perception towards it at SMPN 4 Buton Tengah.

## **2. Methods**

The design of this study was a descriptive research. Descriptive research described and revealed a phenomenon to be studied (Sari et al., 2023). Then, McCombes (2019) explained that descriptive research was a research that tried to describe a population, situation and phenomenon accurately and systematically that occur at that time. This design was used to investigate the factors of teacher use mixed languages in teaching English and the students' perception toward it.

The population of this study was the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of SMPN 4 Buton Tengah in academic year 2019/2020 and the English teachers at 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The number of population was 144 students of SMPN 4 Buton Tengah and there were 2 teachers who taught English at grade 8<sup>th</sup>. The sample was taken using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling focuses on the homogeneity of particular characteristics of the population which will be interested to be analyzed. Therefore, there were 34 samples in this study. From 34 students that involved in answering the questionnaire, the sample taken was those in 5 classes of 8<sup>th</sup> grade at SMPN 4 Buton Tengah academic year 2019/2020. Besides, the English teacher at 8<sup>th</sup> grade also involved as sample to get in depth data about the factor that cause the teacher using mixed languages in teaching English Subject.

The instruments of the study were questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was used to know about the students' perception on the use of mixed languages by the teacher in English subject. The interview was conducted to know about the use of mixed languages and the factors that cause them using it while teaching and learning process. The data were collected through observation, questionnaire, and interview.

The data of questionnaire were analyzed by using SPSS 16 version to find out the validity and reliability of the item/statements of the questionnaire. This is the formula which was used:

$$\frac{\sum x}{\sum n} \times 100\%$$

Meanwhile the data of interview were analyzed using technique of data analysis by Miles & Huberman (1994), which consist of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Finally, the data of the result was presented in the form of description and made into the paragraph by reported the statistical result which followed by the conclusion.

### 3. Result

#### 3.1 Students' View towards the Use of Mixed languages

This section presents the result of students' view towards the use of mixed languages in English subject. There were 5 items that have been asked to students that are put in the questionnaire.

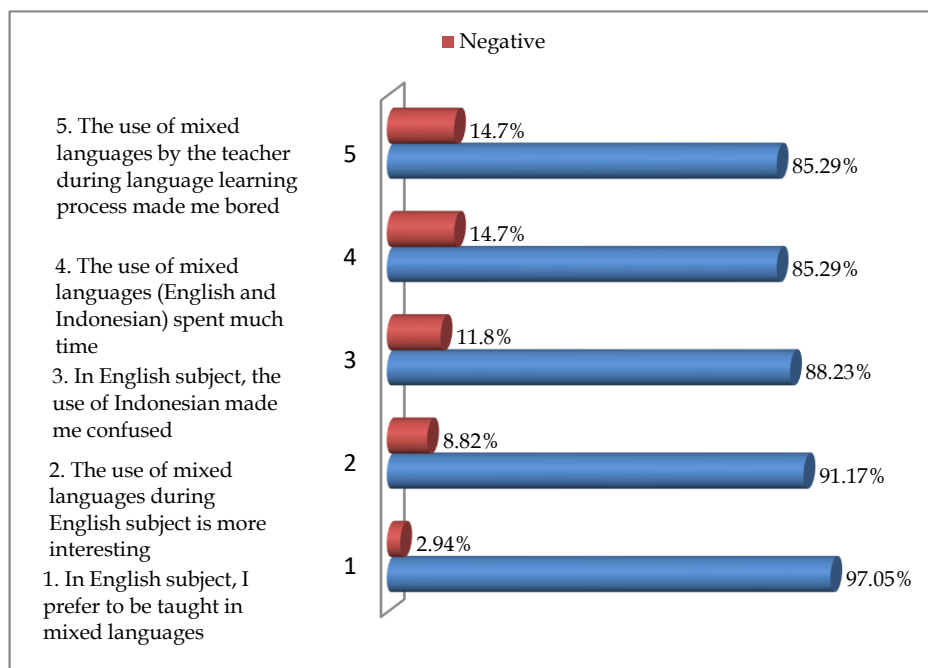


Figure 1. Students' View towards the Use of Mixed languages

The chart above, showed which items had a high level of positive responds. From these results, it is very clear that the majority of students prefer to be taught using mixed languages (item 1). In addition, the use of mixed languages during teaching and learning process is more interesting (item 2). Moreover, the result also showed that the use of Bahasa Indonesia in English subject is necessary especially in explaining the learning material (item 3). Furthermore, the result showed that the students disagreed that the use of mixed languages spent much time (item 4). Also, the students didn't feel bored when the teacher use mixed languages during learning process (item 5).

### 3.2 Students' View on the Use of Mixed languages and Its Effect on Their Emotional State.

This section presents the result of students' view towards the use of mixed languages and its effect on their emotional state. There were 3 items that have been asked to students that are put in questionnaire.

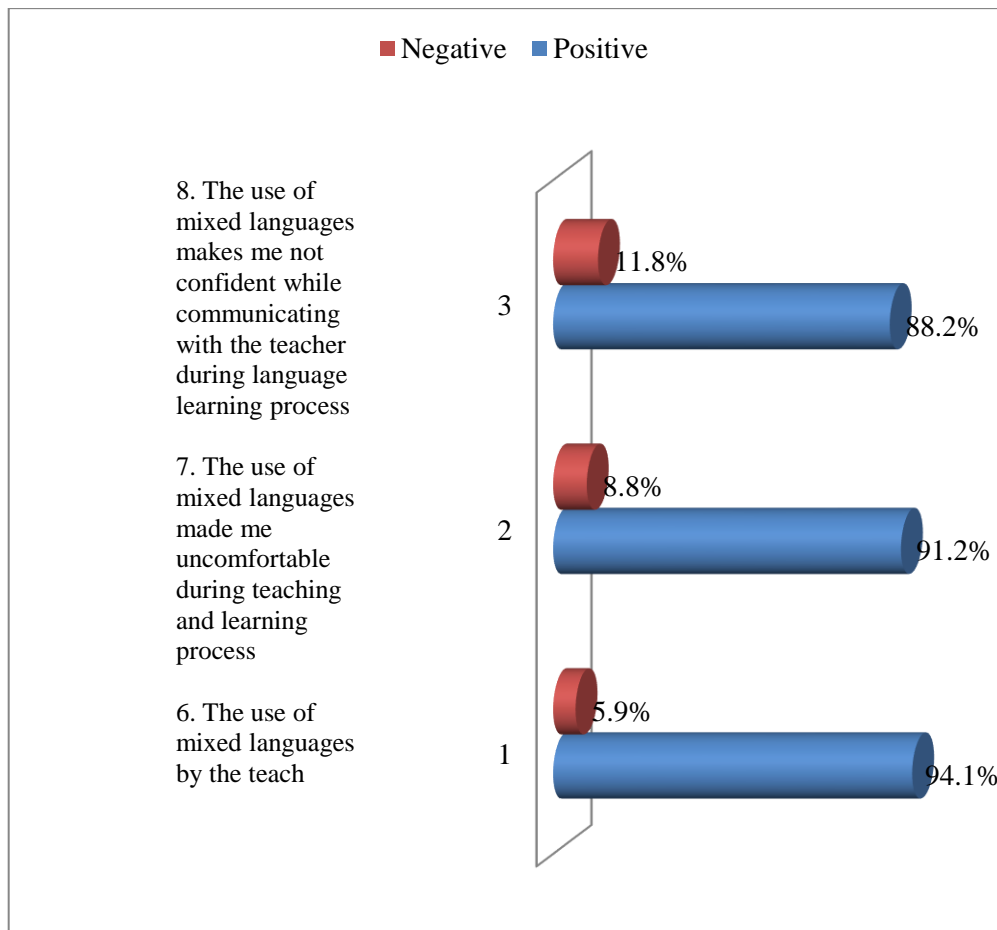


Figure 2. Students' View on the Use of Mixed languages and Its Effect on Their Emotional State

The chart above, showed which items had a high level of positive responds. From these results, it is very clear that the majority of students believe that the use of mixed languages by the teacher motivate them to learn English (item 6). Besides, the use of mixed languages during teaching and learning process did not make them feel uncomfortable (item 7). Moreover, the result also showed that they were confident while communicating using mixed languages to their teacher (item 8).

### 3.3 Students' View on the Use of Mixed languages and Its Impact on Language Learning.

This section presents the result of students view on the use of mixed languages and its impact on language learning. There were 7 items that have been asked to students that are put in the questionnaire.

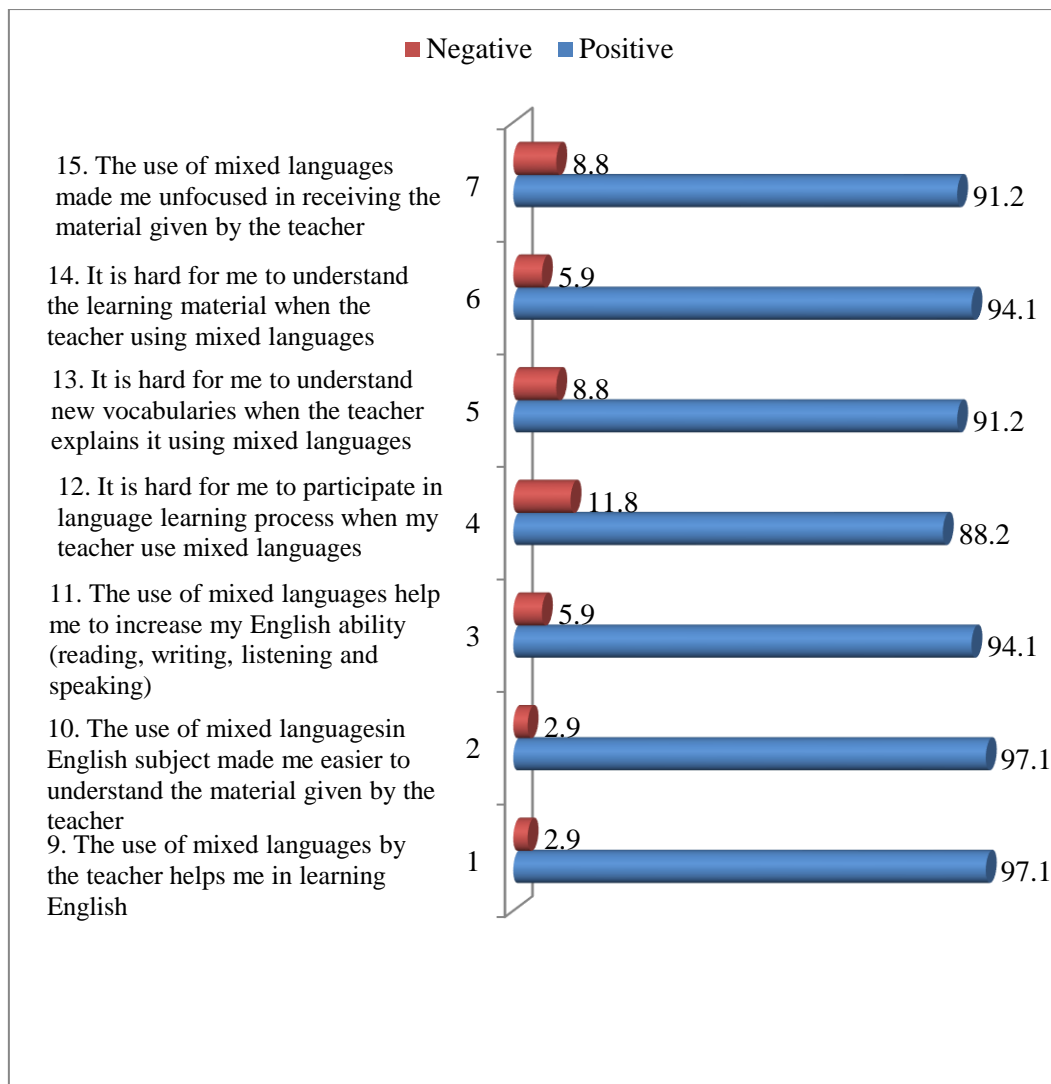


Figure 3. Students' View on the Use of Mixed languages and Its Impact on Language Learning

The chart above, showed which items had a high level of positive responds. The aim of those items from the questionnaire was to measure the students' perception on the use of mixed languages and its impact on language learning. From the result, it is very clear that the large number of students showed a positive respond in almost all of the statements. They were agreed that the use of mixed languages helps them in learning English (item 9). Moreover, the result also showed that the use of mixed languages makes them easier to understand the learning material given by the teacher (item 10). In addition, the use of mixed languages also helps them increase their English ability (reading, writing, listening and speaking) (item 11). They also tended to agree that they did not find it was hard to participate in languages learning process when their teacher using mixed languages (item 12). Moreover, it showed that they did not find it was hard to understand new vocabularies when their teacher explains it using mixed (item 13). Besides, it showed that it is easy to understand the learning material when the teacher using mixed languages (item 14). Interestingly, they also agree that the use of mixed languages by the teacher makes did not make them unfocused in receiving the learning material (item 15).

### **3.4 Factors of Teacher Using Mixed languages**

Based on the interview with the teachers it is known the reason why teacher's use of mixed languages during the learning process was due to the lack of vocabulary that the students mastered so that if the teacher used only English or used at least two balanced languages it would make students slower to understand the subject matter will be given by the teacher.

In addition, the use of mixed languages was used to explain the learning material, especially the learning objectives to be achieved on the material presented that day. At first the teacher will use Indonesian first and then translated it into English so that at least one or two English vocabulary can be obtained by students.

### **3.5 Observation**

Based on the observation, the teachers tend to use Bahasa Indonesia in teaching English. They mixed the languages using English while explaining the learning material such as practicing dialogue and pronunciation. The teacher mixed the languages while teaching how to pronounce the English words and sentences correctly while after that the students repeat of what their teacher said. While communicating to the students, the teacher tends to use Bahasa Indonesia, especially when the teacher asked and answered the questions about the learning material, checking students' comprehension, giving motivation and summarized the major point of the lesson. In general, the students in this class practicing English only when they read the learning material such as reading dialogue and practicing pronunciation and after that the teacher would help them to translate it into Indonesian. In addition, for asking questions to their teacher, the students commonly used Bahasa Indonesia. Besides, the teacher sometimes was using local language even if it was just one or two words. It was used to compare the example of the days' lesson to the daily life, so that the students understand more about the learning material.

## **4. Discussion**

The use of mixed languages in general helps the students in learning English during teaching and learning process. In this case, most of the students said that they are preferred to be taught using mixed languages because it is more understandable than using English only. The use of mixed languages also helps the students in receiving the example of how to pronounce the English words properly and to know their meaning at the same time. Furthermore, the use of mixed languages during learning activity is more interesting for the students related to their comprehension about the learning material and the new vocabularies as well. Tsukamoto (2011) in his research mentioned that even though the use of L1 during teaching and learning English will make the target language acquisition slow, but for some reason it helps to maintain the classroom atmosphere, promote the student's comprehension and use the class-time efficiently. Cipriani in Pan & Pan (2010) observed that L1 is one of the strategies to stimulate verbal engagement between teachers and students. Teachers use L1 to explain vocabulary, communicate tasks, and encourage students to speak in English. In addition, the uses of target language by the teacher provide the example of how the English word is pronounced and learn how to use the word.

Furthermore, most of the students who taught by using mixed languages in English subject feel comfortable when their teacher use mixed languages during teaching and learning activity. Besides, the use of mixed languages also can build up student's self-confidence while teaching and learning process, so that the students feel motivated to learn English even more. However, Enama (2016) the use of mixed languages is very useful in teaching and learning process, especially to build up student's confidence, provide sense of security so that the students can participate comfortably during learning process and it will motivate the students in learning English.

Moreover, most of the students feel that the use mixed languages helped them in learning English. Especially, to improve their English such as writing, reading, speaking and listening. According to Nursanti (2016), the use of bilingual language helps the students in improving their English skills. Sipra (2013) explained that the teacher believes that the use of bilingual language is a bridge for the teacher and the students and it also, for sure, motivates and facilitates the students in learning the target language. Furthermore, the use of mixed languages also makes the students easy to participate in learning process, easy to understand the learning material and understand new vocabularies. The use of mixed languages by the teacher can help the students to understand the learning material better and learn new vocabularies as well.

Even though the use of mixed languages in English subject has positive respond from the students, but there are also some students who said that it is sometimes spent much times and they are easy to get bored. However, it depends on how do the teacher teaches and how do the teacher build up pleasant learning atmosphere so that the students will not easy to get bored and enjoy the learning activity. Furthermore, teacher languages instruction is really important for the students. Because, when the teacher only tends to use one of both of the languages that they are actually used, it will affect to the student's desire in learning English. According to Wijayanti (2018), the reason of teacher using both languages in balanced is because it is easier in communicating to the students, student's poor English competence and vocabulary mastery and student's level of English proficiency.

Therefore, it can be said that the use of both of the languages should be balanced, so that it can make comfortable atmosphere during teaching and learning process and the students also get the real example of how the target language is actually used.

## **5. Conclusion**

The findings and discussion of this study revealed that the majority of the students are having positive perception to the use of mixed languages in English subject. It is found 91% of students give positive response to the use of mixed languages by the teacher in English subject. They agree that the use of mixed languages by the teacher is really important in teaching and learning process, especially while explaining the learning material and communicating to the students. Factors of the teacher using mixed languages in teaching English because of the students' level of English proficiency that still low and it is related to the student's



poor English vocabulary mastery. Besides, the students' desire in learning English that also still low because to the students' still consider it as a hard subject to learn.

Therefore, the researcher would like to recommend that the teacher should not to use only Bahasa Indonesia continuously while teaching English in the classroom. At least, the teacher use mixed languages in balanced while explaining the learning material and communicating with the students occasionally. This will make the students accustomed to listen to their teacher English and to know what their teacher is explaining of the learning material. The teacher also needs to create the good atmosphere in teaching and learning process, so that the teaching and learning process will be more fun for the students. Especially while teaching the students at the beginning level. It will make the students more interested in learning English and to gain maximum output of the students while learning English. In addition, the researcher also would like to recommend to the future to investigate in order to look the comparison between the teacher who use mixed languages and Bahasa Indonesia only in teaching and learning English. It is important for the next researcher about mixed languages in the more specific classes such as speaking class or listening class.

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