

## Perception of EFL Students on the Use of Indonesian Language in English Class

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### Abstract

It has long been contentious to use Indonesian as a teaching and learning language for English classes. This research tried to investigate how the lecturer uses Indonesian in the English-language classroom. A mixed method combining quantitative and qualitative methods was used. The participants were 24 first-year English Education majors from STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo, class 2020A. This was a survey research. Participants were given a questionnaire with 15 questions to collect primary data. The research found that students perceived the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class was beneficial. Indonesian was used by the lecturer to explain new vocabulary and English grammar. Related to the student's feelings, they felt more comfortable and had better understanding when the lecturer used Indonesian, especially when it was related to the material explanation. However, the advantages and disadvantages of the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the classroom were also acknowledged by the students. The findings of this research indicate that students majoring in English education still consider the use of Indonesian by lecturers having an important role in English classes.

### Key words

efl, english, indonesian, online class, students' perception.

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### Introduction

The use of Indonesian to learn English has long been a contentious issue. Numerous studies have been done both for and against the use of first languages in

English-language classrooms. Those who support a policy of only speaking English, or monolingualists, believe that English is best taught and learned in English. English usage in EFL classes should be maximized (Algazo, 2022; Tuyen & Phuong, 2022). Meanwhile, some researchers emphasize the importance of speaking in your native tongue and its beneficial role in teaching English as a foreign language (Al-Zayed, 2019; Zafiri & Kourdis, 2017).

The debate is also growing along with the development of technology that allows EFL students to learn English through online classroom. Researcher claims that online learning did not offer the sense of “learning community” created in the classroom (Fadhilah & Hamzah, 2022), while other researchers claim that online learning environments are now a promising platform because of the innovations in technology that offer special features like combining audio, visual, and animation effects (Pangemanan et al., 2023; Ulfah et al., 2021). In addition, the trend of using digital technology as a media of learning has its own challenges and obstacles. Although digital technology had many negative aspects, particularly those relating to internet connectivity and technology use, it also made remote learning, online communication and collaboration, and feedback possible (Ginusti, 2023). Teaching and learning in higher education settings have undergone a fundamental change as a result of the use of digital technologies, and they are now an essential component of daily activities in modern education (Nikou & Aavakare, 2021). Limited network connectivity, limited technical support, a lack of effective training, limited time, and ineffective teachers were found to be the main issues and challenges with using digital tools (Srivastava & Dey, 2018).

In Indonesian context where English is more of a foreign language than a second language, students do not get many opportunities to practice English informally outside of the class. This is mainly because English is so infrequently used in daily life outside the classroom. As a previous research conducted by Sibarani in 2019 who focuses on investigating The use of Indonesian in the intensive English classroom explains that it is very often found that lecturers teach English using their mother tongue because of the students' lack of understanding of English.

Inspired by the research done by Sibarani (2019) and Resmini (2019) concerned in The Students' Perception towards The Teacher's Bilingual Language use in an EFL Classroom, this research tries to explore how Indonesian is used by the lecturer in English classroom, especially first year students of STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo majoring in English Education class 2020A.

### **Literature Review**

Physical, psychological, and physiological perspectives can all be used to define perception. According to experts, perception is the method by which individuals give experiences meaning (Chan & Wong, 2021). Perception in this research will be restricted to the cognitive dimension. Other experts define perception as our judgments or assessments of others (Anil et al., 2021). Perception can be connected to the learning

process in which students pick up knowledge through practical application and incorporate it into their factual memory (Şen Akçay & Senemoğlu, 2021; Sutisna et al., 2019). Therefore, a student's academic performance can be significantly impacted by how they perceive the language that lecturers use in the classroom (Ebenezer et al., 2022; Lebeci et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian context, where English is foreign language (EFL), the use of Indonesian in English classroom is unavoidable. The proportion of Indonesian is sometimes higher than English, especially if most of the students are at elementary level. It is understandable because the potential of mother tongue as a class resources are so great that the role must be deserves attention for developing a communicative approach to TEFL (Saburlu, 2019; Saliu, 2017).

The use of the lecturer's native tongue by the class has both advantages and disadvantages for students learning English. The advantages of using Indonesian in the classroom are illustrated in the research that follows. While learn a foreign language, lecturers can assist students to make higher cognitive adjustments using Indonesian with caution (Sholeh, 2020; Yunus & Ubaidillah, 2021). Furthermore, the use of Indonesian in the classroom as a translation technique can also prevent being misleading because the language's translations are typically concise, clear, and well-known, making them excellent definition tools. The lecturer can teach foreign vocabulary and communicate grammatical points more clearly by using Indonesian (Hawa et al., 2021).

Some disadvantages of using Indonesian in English teaching learning process in the classroom is also shown by previous studies. Students' mastery and acquisition of the target language can be disrupted and hampered due to the use of Indonesian by the lecturer (Dezas Perdani, 2021; Saputra & Asirah, 2022). Overuse of mother tongue can cause some problems for students. The overuse of Indonesian in the classroom can result in students being lazy and not making the best use of English (Budiharto, 2019). The failure to use English to its full potential may result from this circumstance.

The development of technology and communication allows alternatives in learning, namely online learning. This is in line with researcher assertion that learning innovation is necessary for the advancement of the educational sector (Scull et al., 2020). WhatsApp Messenger is one of the platforms that can be used to support online learning. WhatsApp is an instant messaging system that works similarly to SMS but with the help of internet data and appealing auxiliary features (Singh, 2020). There are many features in WhatsApp Messenger that can be used for online communication. Whatsapp has a gallery for adding photos, a camera for taking photos and videos, an audio feature for sending voice messages, and even a document feature for incorporating documents into files. Members can share discussions and information online through this virtual space using WhatsApp Groups, a discussion group service with room for up to 256 users.

Furthermore, the researcher have two previous studies. The first is conducted by Clara Sibarani in 2019. The title of her research is "Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Use of Bahasa Indonesia in the English Classroom: A Case Study at SMA Fransiskus 2

Jakarta”. Explanatory sequential mixed methods design is the methodology of this research. Findings showed that most participants had positive perceptions of Bahasa Indonesia's use in English classes. The second research is conducted by Setya Resmini in 2019. The title of the research is “EFL Students’ Perception towards The Use of Bahasa Indonesia in An English Classroom”. This research was a combination of survey research and observational research designs to investigate and explore the relationship between the variable of the research. The results show that the teacher's use of Bahasa Indonesia affected students' perceptions, both positively and negatively.

The researcher identified similarities and differences between his research and those other two research projects. The first and second research studies were similar to the current one in that they both used students' perceptions as their primary research focus. Meanwhile, the subjects and the locus are different. First-year English Education majors were chosen by the researcher, whereas participants in the first previous research were high school students and participants in the second research were students in the Mathematics Department. This research locus was online English classrooms after the Covid-19 pandemic, while both previous of the research locus were offline English classrooms before pandemic. Moreover, there were slight differences in the data collection instruments. Both previous studies used a paper-based questionnaire, while this research used Google forms questionnaire.

### **Research Method**

To investigate EFL students' perceptions of the use of Indonesian in online English classrooms, this research combined qualitative and quantitative methods. In a qualitative research, phenomena are described in words rather than numbers (Sulistyaningsih & Sari, 2018). Meanwhile, quantitative data analysis is a research methods with objects in the form of data numeric form (Dhewy, 2022). Therefore, mixed methods research is a research method that combines and integrates qualitative and quantitative research methods into a single research study. The participants were 24 first year students of STKIP PGRI Sidoarjo majoring in English Education, class 2020A. This research's primary data came from a questionnaire. There were 15 closed-ended questions on the questionnaire. The following categories were used to group the questions: preferences, feelings, perceptions, and advantages and disadvantages of the lecturer using Indonesian in an online English classroom. 24 participants were then given the survey. To make the instructions simpler for students to comprehend, all of the questions and explanations were written in Indonesian. Analysis of the survey data was made possible by calculating the frequency as well as the percentage of student responses. The formula used was  $P = F / N \times 100\%$  (P = Percentage number, F = Number of respondents who gave the response, N = Number of samples)

The following are the 15 statements raised in the questionnaire: (1) I prefer Lecturers to use Indonesian during online English lectures, (2) I understand better when the lecturer translates new words and reading texts into Indonesian, (3) I understand better what I am learning/ what should I do when the lecturer gives explanations in

Indonesian, (4) I feel more comfortable when the lecturer explains the material in Indonesian, (5) When the lecturer uses Indonesian, I feel motivated in learning English, (6) I feel more confident when using Indonesian to express ideas/ experiences/ answers in English online classes, (7) When studying the structure/pattern of English words (grammar), I understand better if the lecturer explains it using Indonesian, (8) With the lecturer using Indonesian, I can better understand the differences in Indonesian and English grammar, (9) I can maximize the time to study in online classes when the lecturer explains using Indonesian, (10) I will reduce participation in online class activities when the lecturer does not use Indonesian, (11) The lecturer's habit of using Indonesian makes me always depend on the lecturer to translate everything first, (12) The lecturer's habit of using Indonesian makes me underestimate the importance of English, (13) I have few opportunities to hear and use English when the lecturer explains using Indonesian, (14) When the lecturer explains using Indonesian, I don't want to study English more deeply, (15) Lecturer's habit of using Indonesian makes me afraid of making mistakes in using English.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The following discussion presents the analysis of student perceptions of lecturers' use of Indonesian in online EFL classes based on the questionnaire's results. Three sections made up the discussion. The first part focused on the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class. The feelings of the students toward the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class were discussed in the second section. The final section provided an explanation of the conclusions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class.

**Table 1. Results of the questionnaire**

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I prefer Lecturers to use Indonesian during online English lectures	-	25%	67%	8%
2	I understand better when the lecturer translates new words and reading texts into Indonesian	-	4%	75%	21%
3	I understand better what I am learning/ what should I do when the lecturer gives explanations in Indonesian	-	8%	79%	13%
4	I feel more comfortable when the lecturer explains the material in Indonesian	4%	21%	67%	8%

5	When the lecturer uses Indonesian, I feel motivated in learning English	13%	37%	42%	8%
6	I feel more confident when using Indonesian to express ideas/ experiences/ answers in English online classes	4%	17%	62%	17%
7	When studying the structure/ pattern of English words (grammar), I understand better if the lecturer explains it using Indonesian	-	17%	50%	33%
8	With the lecturer using Indonesian, I can better understand the differences in Indonesian and English grammar	-	13%	62%	25%
9	I can maximize the time to study in online classes when the lecturer explains using Indonesian	-	8%	84%	8%
10	I will reduce participation in online class activities when the lecturer does not use Indonesian	46%	46%	8%	-
11	The lecturer's habit of using Indonesian makes me always depend on the lecturer to translate everything first	8%	46%	29%	17%
12	The lecturer's habit of using Indonesian makes me underestimate the importance of English	46%	21%	25%	8%
13	I have few opportunities to hear and use English when the lecturer explains using Indonesian	8%	34%	50%	8%
14	When the lecturer explains using Indonesian, I don't want to study English more deeply	58%	25%	17%	-
15	Lecturer's habit of using	29%	25%	46%	-

Indonesian makes me afraid of making mistakes in using English

1. The Use of Indonesian by the Lecturer in the Online EFL Class

The first use of Indonesian discussed in this section was the lecturer used it to explain new vocabularies. This was in accordance with researchers which stated that the use of Indonesian in English class helped students clarified unfamiliar vocabularies (Isnaini & Aminatun, 2021). It could be seen from the students' responses to the statement number two on the table 2. There were 75% of the students who agree, and there were 21% who strongly agree. Only 4% of students who disagree with the statement. This finding agreed with those of earlier research.

**Table 2. The use of Indonesian by the lecturer in the online efl class**

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
2.	I understand better when the lecturer translates new vocabularies or texts into Indonesian.	-	4%	75%	21%
7.	When learning English grammar, I have better understanding if the lecturer explains it using Indonesian.	-	17%	50%	33%

The lecturer also explains English grammar in Indonesian. The percentage of students who agreed with statement number seven on table 2 was 50%. They said they understood English grammar better when the lecturer used Indonesian. Additionally, 33% of the students overwhelmingly concur with the statement. This was in line with the objective of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which enabled students to learn a foreign language by outlining and converting the grammatical rules from the target language to the mother tongue. Although there were no students who strongly disagreed, there were 17% of the students who disagree with the statement. This finding was slightly different from the findings of previous studies where there were students who strongly disagreed. Based on these, they lead us to the assumption that the use of Indonesian in online EFL class was used by the lecturer to explain new vocabularies and English grammar.

2. The Students Feeling towards the Use of Indonesian by the Lecturer in the Online EFL Class

**Table 3. The students feeling towards the use of Indonesian by the lecturer in the online efl class**

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	I prefer the lecturer to use Indonesian in the online EFL class.	-	25%	67%	8%
3.	I understand lessons and instructions better when the lecturer gives explanations in Indonesian.	-	8%	79%	13%
4.	I feel more comfortable when the lecturer explains the material in Indonesian.	4%	21%	67%	8%

Table 3 displayed the students' feelings regarding the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL course. According to statement number one, 67% of students preferred that the lecturer speak Indonesian during the online EFL class, 8% of students strongly agreed with the statement, and 25% of students disagreed. When the lecturer explained things in Indonesian, 79% of the students had a better understanding, and only 8% of the students disagreed with statement number 3. In addition, the survey found that 67% of students felt more at ease when the lecturer spoke Indonesian while presenting the material. Results from a previous research were similar to those in statements 3 and 4. The results for statement number 1 were different, with the majority of students disagreeing with it and expecting the lecturer to use English in the classroom.

It can be inferred from the findings above that the majority of the students preferred the lecturer to use Indonesian in the online EFL classroom. The students felt more at ease and had a better understanding of the material, especially when it was related to the explanation of the material.

3. Students' Perception about Advantages and Disadvantages of the Use of Indonesian by the Lecturer in the Online EFL Class

The first advantage mentioned in this section was that students felt more at ease using Indonesian to communicate in English classes. Sixth statement on Table 4 revealed that 62% of students agreed with the statement, with 17% of students strongly agreeing. Only 4% of the students strongly disagree with the statement, while 17% of the class disagrees. This was consistent with earlier research and the findings of researchers, who claimed that using students' native languages in EFL classes helped them feel more comfortable expressing their ideas (Nazilah et al., 2021).



**Table 4. Students' perception about the advantages of the use of Indonesian by the lecturer in the online efl class**

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6.	I feel more confident when I use Indonesian to express ideas in the online EFL class.	4%	17%	62%	17%
9.	I can maximize the time to learn in the online EFL class when the lecturer explains the material using Indonesian.	-	8%	84%	8%

The students could make the most of their learning time, which brings us to the following advantages. Nearly all of the students agree, as shown in table 4, statement number nine, that they could use the time to learn effectively if the lecturer used Indonesian to explain the material. Only 8% of the students disagree with this assertion, the majority (83%) agree, and 8% strongly agree. The previous research found that teaching students English through English was ineffective (Sibarani, 2019), also supported this finding. Based on the aforementioned findings, it is possible to draw the conclusion that using Indonesian as the language of instruction by the lecturer in the online EFL class helped the students feel more at ease and increased the efficiency of their study time.

**Table 5. Students' perception about the disadvantage of the use of Indonesian by the lecturer in the online efl class**

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
11.	The lecturer's habit of using Indonesian makes me always depend on lecturers to translate everything (the explanation).	8%	46%	29%	17%

The disadvantage of using Indonesian in the online EFL course was demonstrated in table 5 above. The statement that they relied on the lecturer's translation into Indonesian when explaining the material in class was accepted by 29% of the students, and 17% of the students strongly agreed. Nevertheless, the majority of them disagree (46%) and strongly disagree (8%) that they were dependent on the lecturer's translation. This result slightly differed from earlier studies, which found that excessive use of Indonesian might lead to linguistic transfer dependence (Resmini, 2019).

**Table 6. Students' motivation towards the use of Indonesian by the lecturer in the online efl class**

No.	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
10.	I am less motivated in online class activities when the lecturer does not use Indonesian.	46%	46%	8%	-
14.	When the lecturer explains using Indonesian, I feel demotivated to learn English.	58%	25%	17%	-

The questionnaire also provided information about the students' motivation for learning English. We could see in Table 6 that the students were still motivated to learn English from Questions 10 and 14, regardless of whether the lecturer spoke English or Indonesian in class. An earlier research that came to a comparable finding also supported this one. According to the results, it was not the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class that affected the students' motivation. The findings showed how the lecturer used Indonesian in the online EFL class and how the students felt about it. Also discussed are the advantages and disadvantages of the lecturer using Indonesian in the online EFL class.

Supported by the reasons above, it was shown that lots of insights about the role of Indonesian in EFL classes. Although most of the findings were similar to previous studies, there are two points that are different from previous studies. First, in this research it was found that subjects preferred lecturers to use Indonesian in online English classes. This was different from previous studies where the subject prefers lecturers to speak English. In this regard, researcher assumed that these preferences were related to the efficiency of study time which was very limited during the pandemic. Second, it was also found that the subjects considered that the use of Indonesian in English class did not lead to dependence on language transfer. Apart from those two, the position of this research was in line with the previous studies. The findings further confirm that the use of Indonesian was not related to the motivation to learn English, even in online classroom setting. The researcher assumed that this happens because the subject were English education department students who may have high motivation to learn English from the start. The findings of this research could be used to inform EFL educators on the benefits and drawbacks of using the Indonesian language in English class. The conclusion of this research is that students majoring in English education still consider the use of Indonesian having an important role in English classes. Additionally, this research could contribute to the development of EFL education in Indonesia by providing recommendations for practice and policy, especially in the English Education Department which is a higher level of education.

## Conclusion

It is clear from the discussion above that the students have different perceptions of the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL classroom. First, the lecturer uses it to explain new vocabulary and grammar in English. Students preferred when the lecturer used Indonesian to explain new vocabularies and English grammar, demonstrating a positive perception of the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class. Second, it has relation with the students' feeling. In the online EFL classroom, the majority of the students preferred that the lecturer speak Indonesian. They felt more at ease and had a better understanding of it, especially when it related to the material explanation. As a result of the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class, researcher also address the advantages and disadvantages that the students experienced. The lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class was advantageous to the students because it increased their sense of confidence and improved the efficiency of their study time. The advantage did not come without a disadvantage, though. Some students in the online EFL class had to rely on the lecturer's translation because he or she spoke Indonesian. The results also demonstrated that the lecturer's use of Indonesian in the online EFL class had no influence on the students' motivation. From all the findings, it can be concluded that the students majoring in English education still consider the use of Indonesian by the lecturer having an important role in English classes. Hopefully, this research can be used to inform EFL educators on the benefits and drawbacks of using the Indonesian language in English class and it can contribute to the development of EFL education in Indonesia by providing recommendations for practice and policy.

Finally, it is suggested that additional research be done to learn more, either involving more participants or different areas. Future researchers, for instance, might look into how final-year students perceive things so that the results can be interestingly compared to how first-year students perceive things. Regarding both the lecturers' and students' perceptions of the use of Indonesian in the online EFL classroom. Further research can also use the in-depth interview technique to collect more thorough data, particularly for extreme findings.

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