THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE OF USING THE FIRST LANGUAGE (L1) IN TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TEFL) CLASS

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ABSTRACT

The research discussed the using of the first language in teaching a foreign language that had been a debate for language teaching practitioners for decades in language acquisition. The debate was about whether it was all right to use it in a foreign language class or not and how it affected the students' learning process and result. Because of the pro and cons of using the first language (L1) in teaching a foreign language, the research was conducted to find out the use of the first language in teaching English as a foreign language. The research aimed to discover to what extent and in which instances L1 was used by the teachers in their English teaching class in terms of the teaching stages, including pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, and post-teaching in the classroom. The research also searched teachers' perspectives and reasons for using L1 in their English class. Moreover, the research applied a qualitative method to gather information from the participants. The participants were four English teachers who taught English at senior high school in Bandung-West Java province, Majalengka-West Java province, Pangkal Pinang-Bangka Province, and Kuok-Riau Province. Data collkection was done by distributing questionnaires and doing interviews. The findings show that most teachers use Indonesian as L1 in the whilst-teaching stage when they deliver the materials. They use L1 to clarify the students' understanding of the materials given and explain English language concepts, grammatical concepts, and difficult words. They argue that using L1 helps both teachers and students in teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

Keywords: first language, teachers perspective, foreign language teaching

INTRODUCTION

The use of L1 in teaching foreign languages has become a discussion among education experts, practitioners, and teachers. Some of them argue that it becomes a controversy as mentioned by Rahmawati (2015), Al-Hariri (2015), Hanakova and Metruk (2017), Zulfikar (2018), Clancy (2018), Erk (2019), and Awad, Mubarak, and Saleh (2020), whether it is all right to use the first language in teaching foreign language, and how it affects students' learning process and their ability to acquire the materials taught. From the previous research, it is found that some of the teachers believe that the best way to help students to be able to learn a foreign language is by providing an environment that uses foreign language itself, so the students can exposure their foreign language. However, some argue that the use of L1 (First Language) in foreign language teaching can help the teacher explain

the materials (Tajgozari, 2017; Erk, 2019; Marsella, 2020). Moreover, the teacher should also consider students' L1 in teaching a foreign lanuage (Aguskin & Maryani, 2018; Marsella, 2020) to help students to understand the materials well.

There are several roles of using L1 in teaching English based on some experts. First, both the students and teachers feel helpful when the teachers use L1, especially for the low level of students (Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Hanáková & Metruk, 2017; Almoayidi, 2018; and Erk, 2019). It is more useful in the condition that the students have limited ability in their target language, especially in grammatical concepts. Second, the use of L1 in a foreign language class setting can increase students' understanding when the teacher teaches the language concept of the lesson in L1, as mentioned by Erk (2019) and Inal and Turhanli (2019). The teacher can teach the different concepts of grammar from both languages so that the students have

a better understanding of the grammar concept and can eliminate mistakes in formulating them (Budiman & Krisfani, 2020). In addition, L1 can also use to explain grammar material. Galali and Cinkara (2017); Kocaman and Aslan (2018); and Navidinia, Khoshhal, and Mobaraki (2020) have found that the use of L1 is very helpful in teaching grammar concepts. Their findings show that their participants are very confident when they understand the materials given by the teacher. When the students have background knowledge in the learning process, they will be confident to share their ideas rather than just accept new information from the teacher. This is very important that the teacher must be able to communicate well with the students by using understandable language. Then, Shabir (2017); Inal and Turhanli (2019); Marsella (2020); and Navidinia, Khoshhal, and Mobaraki (2020) have also highlighted that L1 can be used to explain the difficulty of the grammar concept, to re-emphasize important points, and to give feedback.

Third, using the foreign language (L2) has effectiveness in time-consuming. According to Zulfikar (2018); Surjowati and Siswahjudioko (2020), time availability also influences the use of L1 in teaching foreign language classrooms. Fewer the time available, the teacher must be hurried in explaining the materials. It means using L1 is more efficient in time rather than by using a foreign language in terms of giving materials (Setyaningrum, Sabgini, & Setiawan, 2020). The students can catch and understand the material quicker by using L1 rather than by using English. In addition, L1 is also used for comparison and clarification (Orland-Barak & Yinon, 2005). The comparison here is used to compare the grammar in L1 and foreign language to provide a clear distinction between these two languages, and in clarification, the teacher gives instructions and frames, and then organizes the activities in L1. Then, the use of L1 is for promoting communication and students' participation. It is useful for low-level students to understand what the teacher says and communicate freely as they participate in the learning process.

Moreover, other sources about using L1 in the foreign language classroom are the personal beliefs from the practitioners from different institutions around the world. First, Shabir (2017); Aguskin and Maryani (2018); Hasrina, Aziz, and Fitriani (2018); Inal and Turhanli (2019); and Budiman and Krisfani (2020) have argued that L1 is useful in introducing new vocabularies that the meaning can be expressed by drawing, noises, and pantomimes. They also think that balancing proposing the use of L1 and foreign language can be very helpful for the students in giving new vocabularies. It is also in line with Kocaman and Aslan (2018); Taşçı and Ataç (2020); and Navidinia, Khoshhal, and Mobaraki (2020), who discover in their research that the students acquire the new words with translation method. The teacher needs to find out the same meaning of a new vocabulary given in their L1. It can also become a good strategy in teaching a foreign language, as found by Karimah (2020).

After that, the use of L1 in teaching foreign language happens in many classrooms all over the world because the students do not have background knowledge yet to communicate in a foreign language. They are also not convenient yet in using full foreign language because they are afraid to make mistakes, and some others even feel pressure because of the same reason. Because of that reason, using L1 in a foreign language class can also avoid students feeling afraid of making mistakes (Wong, 2020).

Furthermore, there are three stages of the teaching process in general. They are pre-teaching, while teaching and post-teaching that in every stage, the teacher provides several activities. First is the pre-teaching stage that has several activities. Inal and Turhanli (2019) have found that their research participants use L1 in the early learning stage to facilitate the function of the foreign language taught. After that, the activities are intended to construct background knowledge. The teacher becomes a bridge-builder between what students already know about language concepts what they need to know to understand materials, that is, the interaction between those materials and the input coming from the text. This stage aims to prepare the students for the first steps of the teaching and learning process to develop skills in anticipation and prediction for the materials given. Second, the whilst-teaching stage is to help students understand the specific content and perceive the materials' rhetorical structure. Teachers take the students through the skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with these activities. Finally, the post-teaching stage is intended to verify and expand the knowledge acquired in the material given. These last tasks also lead the students to discuss and analyze issues presented in the materials given. Post-activities are tasks in which students, after interacting with the materials, reflect, argue, and give their points of view that they can do both in the classroom at the end of the class and outside the class.

Because of the fierce and complex differences of opinion among experts regarding whether the use of the first language in foreign language learning is permissible, there is a need to find out the teachers' perspective regarding the use of the first language in their foreign language classroom. The purpose of the research is to find out the teachers' perspective in using the first language in teaching the foreign language. In addition, it also reveals in which stage of teaching the teachers use the first language in their classroom and how the use of the first language affects the students' acquisition in understanding materials taught. Regarding the background of the research, the following research question can be drawn as (1) in which stage of teaching do the teachers often use the first language in the class, whether it is in the pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, or post-teaching stages; (2) what the perspective of the foreign language teachers regarding the use of the first language in the teaching-learning process in the classroom is, and its effect to the students' leaning process.

Moreover, the L1 in the research is Indonesian, and the foreign language is English. The significance of the research is to provide the information for the English language teacher in the incorporate use of L1 in the foreign language classroom. Furthermore, it can be used as a consideration for other foreign language teachers when deciding to use the first language in their foreign language class. Besides, the findings are expected to give empirical evidence of the condition of teaching English in Indonesian regarding L1 usage and give an insight for the teachers to be more fully aware in incorporating L1 in their classrooms, adjusting the function of L1, and assisting students to improve their learning of the foreign language.

METHODS

The design of the research is a descriptive qualitative method. The research is theory-driven in that it concludes the theories of using L1 in teaching foreign language naturally (Holliday 2005; Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and figures out the teacher's opinion of using L1 in their class. Moreover, qualitative research studies are the experience of the teachers who use L1 in their English class deeply. It explores the teachers' experience using L1 in teaching English that includes their personal opinions about when they use L1 the most.

The participants in the research are four teachers who teach in senior high school. There are two reasons for choosing the participants. First, they teach in senior high school that the students are in pre-intermediate level. The students at the pre-intermediate level have already had background knowledge in English, and they are hoped to be able to communicate in English. So, the research reveals whether the teachers still need to use L1 to communicate in the classroom or not. The second reason is that they are accessible. All the participants teach in different areas, so they are not from the same school or institution. Each of them is teaching in Bandung city (West Java province, Indonesia), Majelengka (West Java province, Indonesia), Pangkal Pinang (Bangka province, Indonesia), and Kuok district (Riau province, Indonesia).

Furthermore, there are two data collection techniques used in the research. The first form of data collection is a questionnaire in the form of the systematic format of questions and often answers by reading the question and choosing the best answer or writing a short answer (Wallace, 1998). The questionnaire is adopted and elaborated from Orland-Barak and Yinon (2005). There are three contexts in the questionnaire: pre-teaching activity, whilst-teaching activity, and post-teaching activity with 17 questions. First, the participants are asked to choose one answer from four choices. Then, in the second part of the questionnaire, the participants answer five questions based on their opinion (See Appendix 1). The second technique of data collection is an interview. The interview is between the researcher and the participant, and it is a semi-structured interview. In this kind of interview, the questions are open, that the researcher has the guide question. Then the follow-up question is intended to allow the participants to interpret the question and encourage them to give detailed responses (Wallace, 1998).

Furthermore, the research data analysis uses the grounded theory method that the research departs from the debates from experts regarding the use of the first language in foreign language classes. There are five steps in analyzing the data found that are adopted from Creswell and Creswell (2018), as shown in Figure 1. The steps are organizing and preparing the data, looking at the data, coding, generating a description and themes, and representing the description and themes.
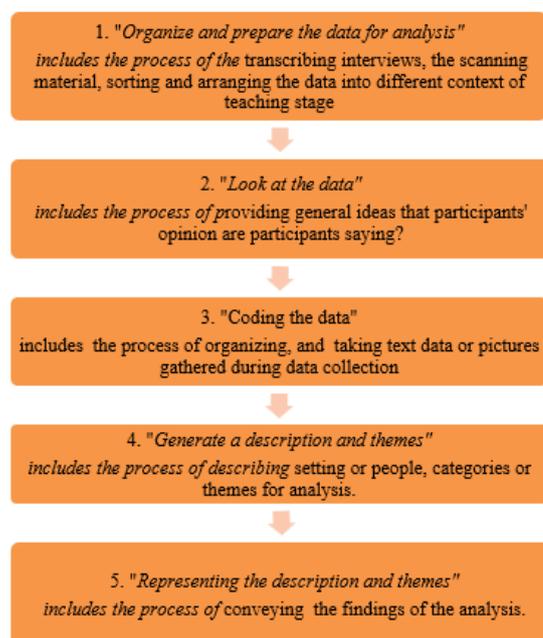
Figure 1 Steps in Data Analyzing

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion of the finding is based on the data found. The first part of the discussion is about which stage of teaching the teachers often use the first language in the class, whether it is in the pre-teaching, whilst-teaching, or post-teaching stages. The second part of the discussion is about the perspective of the foreign language teachers regarding the use of the first language in the teaching-learning process in the classroom and its effect on the students' learning process.

The first clarification is based on the questionnaire data divided into three contexts: pre-teaching activity, whilst teaching activity, and post-teaching activity. It is because the use of L1 in English class depends on the material, activity, task, and needs of the students and the goal of the class (Karatas, 2016; Al-Amir, 2017; Shabir, 2017). Moreover, the discussion continues with the teachers' perspectives

about their reason for using L1 in their English class.

The pre-teaching stage is the first activity in every meeting, and using L1 is very useful at the beginning of the lesson (Ostovar-Namaghi & Norouzi, 2015). There are two points for the pre-teaching stage context. First, it is about using L1 to greet the students (see Figure 2). Two teachers never greet the students by using L1, one of them rarely uses it, and the rest is usually using it. The greeting is the first activity in the teaching-learning process that the teacher and the students start the meeting. It is a simple communication that according to the two participants, the teachers can use English as a foreign language in greeting because the students understand it easily, especially for senior high school students who are in the pre-intermediate and intermediate level.

Figure 2 The Use of L1 in Teaching Stages

The second point is about the use of L1 in review the last lesson learned (see Figure 2). Reviewing is important to recall the previous material as background knowledge to the students. Three of four teachers

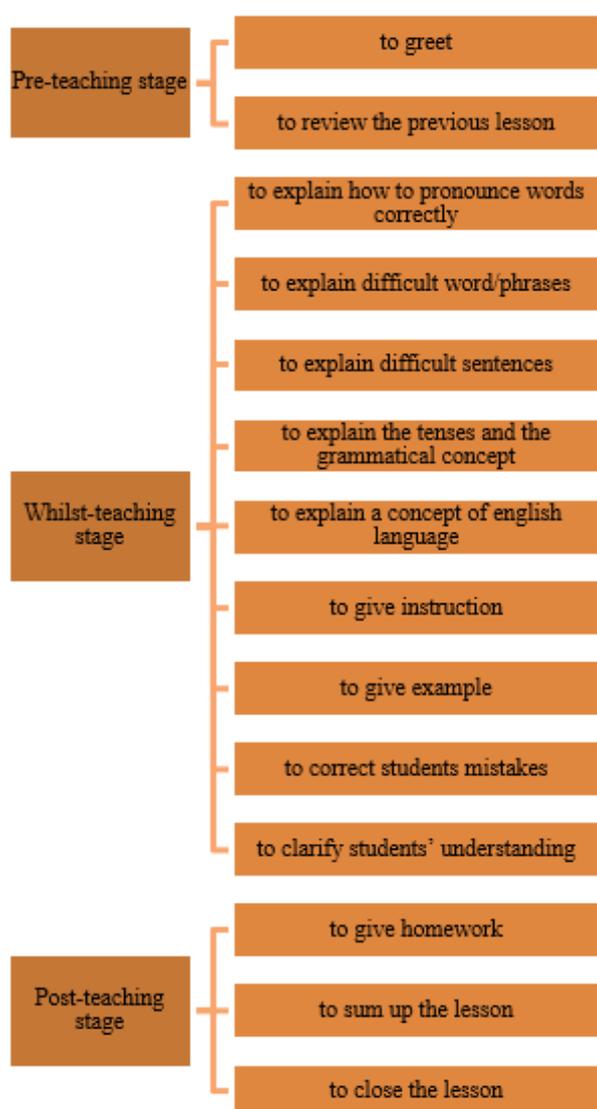rarely use L1 in reviewing the lesson. It is because the lesson has already been explained before so that the students have already had background knowledge about it. So, it is okay to use English in reviewing because they understand it well (Sukarni, Setianingsih, and Terasne, 2020). It is only one of them who usually uses L1 in reviewing the lesson. Therefore, in this first stage of teaching, the first language is used to greet and review the previous lesson. Based on the data found, using the first language in the pre-teaching stage is not used very often.

The second context is the whilst-teaching activity. There are nine points in this context. The questions are about the main activity of the teaching-learning process when the teacher explains and interacts most in the learning process (Ostovar-Namaghi & Norouzi, 2015).

The first point is about using L1 to explain how to pronounce words correctly (see Figure 2). There is one teacher who never uses L1 because the pronunciation of English does not need L1 to be explained. However, two teachers rarely use L1, and one of them usually uses it to explain how to pronounce the words. Second, the point is about using L1 to explain difficult words/ phrases (see Figure 2). Difficult words are the basic knowledge for the students to learn the main materials. Three teachers usually describe it by using L1, and one of them even always explains it in L1. It is because the difficult words are important to be known by the students as they input knowledge. In this context, it is explicit knowledge for them. It is in line with what Hasrina, Aziz, and Fitriani (2018) have found that L1 is used to introduce new and difficult vocabularies. Besides, Balabakgil and Mede (2016), and Wong (2020) have also found that using L1 in foreign language classes advantages students to comprehend ambiguous or even difficult vocabulary.

Moreover, the third point is about explaining difficult sentences of English in L1 (see Figure 2). Two teachers always use L1 in explaining difficult sentences in teaching-learning activities in the classroom. The fourth point is about explaining the tense and grammatical concept by using L1 (see Figure 2). It is in line with Ostovar-Namaghi and Norouzi's (2015) research. Teachers can use the first language in explaining the tense to help students comprehend it. Two teachers usually use L1, and two of them do the opposite. To a certain extent, the explanation about tense is difficult because it is the concept of language. The explanation depends on the students' level of ability that it will be better if it is possible to use English. Then, regarding the explanation of the grammatical concept, there is one teacher who always uses L1 in explaining the grammatical concepts; two of them usually use it, and one of them rarely uses it. According to Orland-Barak and Yinon (2005), using L1 can help to compare the grammar in L1 and foreign languages to provide a clear distinction between the languages. Furthermore, Sa'd and Qadermazi (2015), Karatas (2016), and Sukarni, Setianingsih, and Terasne (2020) have mentioned and found in their research

that the use of LI is to deliver the teaching instructions and grammatical items to help students to acquire it. Moreover, the use of L1 is very helpful in teaching grammar concepts because the students will be very confident when they understand the concept. Moreover, when the students have background knowledge in the learning process, they will be confident to share their ideas rather than just accept new information from the teacher.

The fifth point in this second context is about explaining the concept of English (see Figure 2). All the teachers agree to use L1 in explaining the concept of the materials. The concept is essential to the students as the input language to them, so it is crucial to make the students understand the concept that the entire teachers think in the same way. It is also in line with Rosyada, Widyastuti, and Ramadhianti (2018) that most of their participants think it is the most effective teaching factor. The sixth point is about using L1 to give instruction and command to the students (see Figure 2). Shabir (2017) and Tasçi and Ataç (2020) have also found that their research participants use L1 in instructing the class. Instructions here can be asking them to do some works or to command them to do something. All the teachers agree to use L1 rarely at this point. It is because using English can be understood by the students because it uses the simple word only such as 'open your book page'. For senior high school students, this kind of instruction is quite easy. Moreover, Setyaningrum, Sabgini, and Setiawan (2020) have also found that L1 is used to clarify the instruction given in a foreign language and can be used when the students do not understand the command in a foreign language.

The seventh point is about giving an example in the teaching process using L1 (see Figure 2). All the teachers agree not to use L1 often in giving examples. They rarely use L1 because they want to provide an English environment to their students. It is also challenging to provide the example in L1; that is why they provide English examples for their lesson. The eighth point is about using L1 in correcting students' mistakes (see Figure 2). Correcting here is the correction of understanding materials and gives feedback. Three of the teachers agree to rarely use L1 in correcting the students' mistakes. Furthermore, one of the teachers usually uses L1. It is also in line with Marsella's (2020) and Sukarni, Setianingsih, and Terasne's (2020) finding that L1 can be applied in giving response to their students, especially in evaluating students' work. It is done to make sure the students realize their mistakes and errors. The last one is the point about using L1 to clarify students' understanding (see Figure 2). All the teachers confess that they usually use L1 in this case that they do this when they are explaining the materials in the class. It is also found by Tasçi and Ataç (2020) that L1 can effectively use to check students' understanding and explain the error they make.

Thus, in the second context of teaching, the teachers use L1 for some proposes. The purposes are to explain how to pronounce words correctly, to explain difficult word/phrases, to explain difficult sentences, to explain the tenses and the grammatical concept, to explain a concept of English language, to give instruction, to give an example, to correct students' mistakes, to clarify students' understanding.

Furthermore, the last context in the research is the post-teaching activity. There are three points in the questionnaire. The first point is about the use of L1 by the teachers in terms of giving instruction to do the homework that should be done at home by the students (see Figure 2). Two teachers have stated that they never use L1 in instructing their homework is the right thing to do. One teacher rarely uses it, and another teacher usually uses it. As Shabir (2017) and Sukarni, Setianingsih, and Terasne (2020) have found in their research, the teacher uses the first language in giving homework to the class because of the low proficiency students taught. The second point is about using L1 to sum up the lesson (see Figure 2). This activity is done at the end of the meeting. There is one teacher who never uses L1 in this case; two of them rarely use L1, and only one of them usually uses it. According to Nilubol (2020), the participants have suggested using L1 in concluding the lesson to make sure the students have a clear comprehension of the lesson given. The last point is about the use of L1 to close the meeting (see Figure 2). It also includes a farewell expression. Three teachers never use L1 in this case; meanwhile, only one of them does not do so. It can be concluded that the teachers use L1 in the post-teaching stage to give homework, sum up the lesson and close the lesson. Some of the teachers usually use L1 in their post-teaching, and the rest of them consider that in the post-teaching stage, the students have the background knowledge of the materials so that English can be used in this stage.

The second part of the discussion continues with the teachers' perspective on using Indonesian as the L1. There are two perspectives found regarding the data. First, according to the data found, using L1 helps teachers in delivering materials. Some participants argue that using English in teaching can train the students' listening ability that is in line with what Ostovar-Namaghi and Norouzi (2015) have discovered in their research. Then, some participants think that using L1 can make the interaction between the teachers and the students easier because the students also feel comfortable that they can understand their teacher's explanation (Ostovar-Namaghi & Norouzi, 2015). It is also in line with Zulfikar (2018) and Erk (2019) that they find the use of L1 in the classroom makes the students more comfortable and can encourage them to take risks (Budiman & Krisfani, 2020) by trying to answer the questions both direct questions from the teacher and questions in their exercises and encourage them to use English more (Almoayidi, 2018). Using full English in the classroom can make the students frustrated that Ong and Tajuddin (2020) have argued that L1 should be used to assist the students in learning a foreign language.

Also, in the classroom, L1 mostly use when the participants explain difficult terms and grammatical concepts that become the teacher's strategy in teaching. It is in line with Balabakgil and Mede (2016), who discovers that the use of L1 is one of the teaching strategies which support the teaching-learning process in the classroom. The use of L1 also helps the teacher deliver the materials because it can strengthen the teachers' explanation and helps the students understand the material better (Marsella, 2020; Budiman & Krisfani, 2020), making them more confident (Cambridge Papers in ELT, 2019). However, for some teachers, the use of L1 cannot be too often because the students are not stimulated to use English that is also in line with Tajgozari (2017), who finds that most of his participants also have the same thought.

Second, according to the data found, using L1 helps the students in acquiring the materials taught. It is taken from the data of questionnaire and interview that are the teachers' arguments about the advantages of using L1 for the students. It is found from the data that using L1 helps students understanding the material. It is in line with Debreli and Oyman (2016), Tajgozari (2017), and Inal and Turhanli (2019), Surjowati and Siswahjudioko (2020), who find in their research that the application of the first language in the classroom has helped the lower level of L2 proficiency students to be able to understand the material taught (Tasçi & Ataç, 2020). Then, the data also show that the use of L1 in English class helps the students understand the material better.

According to the interview data, it is also found that the students also feel more convenient to ask about the materials taught by using L1. It happens because they are afraid to make mistakes in asking and explaining the question in the wrong way (Galali & Cinkara, 2017; Tajgozari, 2017; Hasrina, Aziz, & Fitriani, 2018; Zulfikar, 2018). Furthermore, a participant thinks that the use of L1 in teaching English is allowed in teaching English when it is needed (Almoayidi, 2018) to give a comfortable atmosphere to the students (Kocaman & Aslan, 2018). It is because students learn English in the classroom only that they do not have any exposure outside the class (Dewi & Setiadi, 2018).

To sum up, from the data found, L1 is used by the teachers in all stages of teaching, but the most frequent use is in the whilst-teaching stage. Moreover, using the first language in teaching a foreign language does help both teachers and students in the teaching-learning process.

CONCLUSIONS

Using the first language in a foreign language has become a debate among education experts and practitioners. The questions about their perspective on using L1 in the foreign language class, its effect on students' learning process, and in which stage of teaching they use L1 the most are the focus of the research. Moreover, the opinion and viewpoints of the teachers as doers in the class, who meet and teach the students, should also be asked and discovered.

According to the findings of the research, some conclusions can be taken. First, the teachers do use L1 in teaching English in foreign language classes. Second, from the data found, they use L1 because it makes some of them easy to interact with the students. It also makes the students comfortable in learning the foreign language since the communication uses the language they have already known. The teachers get easier to explain the lesson when they use L1. Third, from the data obtained, the participants use L1 in teaching English subjects in the three stages that then be said as contexts of teaching; pre-teaching, whilst teaching, and post-teaching. Each of them has a different frequency in using it. In every stage of teaching, there are several activities. They use L1 to explain the lesson and communicate with the students comfortably, and they use L1 in the whilst-teaching stage the most.

Moreover, the research contributes to discovering the teachers' perspective on using L1 in their foreign language class, how it affects the students' learning process and the whilst-teaching stage as the most stage that the teacher uses L1 in their class. This is important because teachers are the ones who face the students directly in the classroom and once that teach and deliver the materials. Moreover, because of the research contributions, the findings can be used by other teachers who teach foreign languages and consider using the first language in their classes. Those other teachers can also consider when they need to use L1 in their foreign language class the most.

However, there are two limitations of the research. First, the research only provides information from the teacher's point of view about the use of L1 in English class. It would be better to add the data and information from the student's point of view also. Furthermore, the second limitation is from the data collection techniques, which are questionnaires and interviews only. It would be better to do observation in the class in the teaching-learning process to see what happens in the classroom. It can also reveal the interaction of the teacher and the students when they use L1 while learning English. Because of the research limitation, further research is needed to cover the limitation of the research.

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