STUDENTS’ AND TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES TOWARD THE USE OF L1 IN TRANSACTIONAL SPEAKING CLASSES SEMESTER II 2009/2010

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Abstract

The interference of first language in learning English is a common but still controversial issue up to now. In Indonesia where English is learnt as a foreign language, there are different perspectives or opinions on whether the use of L1 is useful or not between the students and teachers. The English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University Salatiga also faces the same problem related to the positive and negative effects of using L1, especially in Transactional Speaking classes. L1 is commonly used in kinds of paraphrasing or translation. Considering this never-ending issue, I conducted this study, which is aimed at finding out why both the students and the teachers still use their L1 in Transactional Speaking classes. Furthermore, this study also investigated the students’ and teachers’ perspectives toward the use of L1. This is whether they have more favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward the use of L1. This study was conducted in the English Department of Satya Wacana Christian University Salatiga which involved the students and teachers of Transactional Speaking classes in Semester II of the academic year 2009/2010. The result of this study shows that L1 was still used both for teaching and learning English. The teachers and students realized that the use of L1 in the classroom could not be avoided since it gave some benefits for both the teachers and students.

Keywords: L1 interference, positive/negative transfer, attitudes, Transactional Speaking, perspectives
INTRODUCTION

Talking about the process of learning a second language like English is similar to the process of learning our mother tongue. We need more as much practice as possible. Some people often consider that speaking skill is the most practical and important aspect to be improved continually, besides the other three skills - reading, listening, and writing - in the learning process. In fact, as English learners who are trying to improve speaking abilities, we often find some problems related to the influences or interference of our first language (L1) in the English process. Sometimes, when we lack English words as the sources in our mind, the interference of L1 is an inevitable. We will go back to use our L1 as the input existing knowledge. The interference of L1 here can be considered somewhat as communication strategies to solve our problems in communication.

Considering all the explanations above, the writer conducted this study in an attempt to investigate whether students and teachers in the English Department of SatyaWacana Christian University Salatiga often use their L1 in Transactional Speaking classes or not and what the students’ and teachers’ perspectives were toward the use of L1 by students in Transactional Speaking classes.

This study aims to answer the following questions:
1) Why do both students and teachers in Transactional Speaking classes in the English Department of SatyaWacana Christian University Salatiga still use their L1?
2) What are students’ and teachers’ perspectives toward the use of L1 by students in Transactional Speaking classes?

To be more specific, the objective of this study is to explore students’ and teachers’ perspectives toward the use of L1 by students in Transactional Speaking classes; whether it gives positive or negative effects throughout the English learning process.

It is hoped the research findings can give a significant and beneficial contribution to the English Department, especially for the teaching and learning process of Speaking courses in general. By knowing the situation and the reasons why the teachers and students still need their L1 in communicating, this research is
expected to enrich both the teachers and students’ knowledge on how to deal with the use of L1 in Speaking classes, so that teachers and students can effectively use it in a proper time and condition.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

There is a popular belief that the L1 has long been considered as a bad influence in the second or foreign language learning. In other words, L1 is the major cause of a learner’s problems with the new or second language. On the other hand, Dullay, Burt, and Krashen (1982) state that the use of the L1 has no longer caused problems. Indeed, it can be valuable additional knowledge for what the learner has already known in his or her mind. Despite the fact that there is a chance for L1 to cause problems in a foreign language learning process, it is useful to understand some theories for some analysis or research that underlies the controversy.

In general, the role of the learner’s L1 (first language) can only be in a form of interference or transfer. Some researchers also have their own definition on this condition. Take for example, Ellis (1986) considers L1 interference as a transfer which constitutes an influence in which the learners’ L1 exerts over the acquisition of the L2 (second language).

Ellis (1986) further states that the transfer is governed by learners’ perceptions and they construct their own short-term rules with the use of their L1 knowledge in learning target language (TL). In other words, he defines interference as a learner’s strategy in adding more knowledge from what has already been in mind and how to use it (Ellis, 1986). Dullay et al. (1982) also argue that most second language learners’ errors are not resulted from the differences between the first and second languages. They studied that the L1 had a far smaller effect on the learning the L2. The studies showed, only 5 percent of the grammatical errors that children made and at most 20 percent of the ones adults made could be traced to crossover from the L1. So, from this study they concluded that learners’ L1 is no longer believed to interfere with their attempts to acquire second language.

In contrast, Larson and Smalley (1984) have a different belief about the use of the L1. They consider that the L1 has to be
avoided since the habits of the L1 seriously interfere when the L2 is learnt and the learners cannot get enough exposure English as their TL (target language). Furthermore, Larson and Smalley (1984) argue that grammar, the other language levels or even L1 accents will influence speech of learners when they use the L2. The clearest support for this comes from foreign accents in the L2 speech of learners. When a Frenchman speaks English, his English sounds French or when an Indonesian speaks English, her English sounds Indonesian (Ellis, 1986).

From those all points of view, I come to a conclusion that although some researchers argue that the L1 may burden learners’ acquisition in mastering the new language successfully, the learners absolutely cannot deny the use of their L1 that actually, it will help the learners to get a sufficient exposure to English. In other words, the use of the L1 will occur inevitably when the learners learn the new language and it can facilitate the learners to get better understanding about the L2. Furthermore, learning the L2 is not acquired just because it is heard in the individual’s environment, but because it is needed for communication and interaction, and to do this, the use of the L1 has a small but important role to play in communicating meaning and content (Mager, 1968).

Talking about learning L2, of course we cannot stand discussing about L1. Many behaviorist psychologists consider that sometimes the use of the L1 can have very positive effects on learning the second or foreign language (Nation, 2001). There are some behaviorists however, who argue the interaction of the L1 and L2 systems affect the success of second language acquisition. In other words, Nation (2001) argues that the use of the L1 is like interference in learning L2 that has to be avoided as it may bring negative effects to the learners.

Behaviorist psychologists, who first defined ‘transfer’ ethnically, used it to refer to a process described as the automatic, uncontrolled, and subconscious use of past learned behaviors in the attempts to produce new responses. In this sense, there are two kinds of transfer that occur in the process of learning L2, they are positive and negative transfers (Dullay et al., 1982).

Positive transfer results in correct performance if the forms of both L1 and L2 are similar. It means that the positive transfer occurs
since the learners know the rule of L1 and the L2, so as a result, there are no errors or mistakes they make in learning L2 (Bilodeau, 1966 cited in Van Els et al., 1984). Take for example, Dullay et al (1982) illustrate it as the process of driving a new and an old car. If one has regularly driven a car which he knows that the gear shift is on the floor, he will not get confused to drive a new car with different gear shift, since he recognizes the difference between the old and new car. From this point of view, Dullay et al (1982) draw a conclusion that positive transfer may bring positive effects when one learns the L2 in the formal second language classrooms.

Nation (2001) cites that in the classrooms where the learners all share the same L1 or national language, there is a tendency for tasks which should be done in the L2 such as conversation activities, or discussion of intensive reading to be done in the L1. Furthermore, he states that in some cases there are many reasons for the L1 to be used in the second language classrooms. Firstly, speaking with the learners who use the same L1 is easier. The use of L1 can provide a sense of security and help much for those with high anxiety in learning a new language. Secondly, it is easier and more communicatively effective to use the L2 using their L1. Students have a chance to say what they really want to say or what things come up in their own mind freely. Then, since using the L2 can be a source of embarrassment particularly for shy learners and those who feel not very proficient in L2, the use of L1 can help to reduce students’ nervousness and unwillingness to communicate and facilitate them to be more active. It must be better than not allowing L1 interference to occur, listen to others and let students be silent (Schweer, 1999).

Moreover, according to Atkinson (1987), the use of the L1 is very helpful for the sake of time. There are many ways that the L1 can be used. He mentions that the L1 can be valuable to learn in the second language classroom when used for 1) eliciting language, 2) checking comprehension, 3) giving instructions, 4) co-operation among learners, 5) discussions of classroom methodology, 6) presentation and reinforcement of language, 7) checking for sense, 8) testing, and 9) development of useful learning strategies (Atkinson, 1987). Thus, from those points of view, Ellis (1986)
stresses that L1 can be a resource of knowledge which learners will use to help them sift L2 data in the input and perform as best as they can in L2.

In contrast to positive transfer, negative transfer refers to those instances of transfer which result in errors because habitual behavior is different from the new behavior that is being learned. Take for example, the illustration of Dullay et al. (1982) above; if one is accustomed to driving a car where he knows the gear shift is on the floor, but one day, he drives a new car with different gear shifts; he will invariably reach on the floor as what he often does in the old car regardless the gear shift is on the steering column in a new car. In the simple way, negative transfer occurs since the forms of the L1 are different from the L2 that are used. Furthermore, James (1980) states that negative transfer may lead the interference of L1 which hinders the learning process of L2 successfully. It takes place as there are so many mistakes or errors that the learners produce in learning L2. James (1980) cites that negative transfer is likely to occur when L2 input is limited in quantity and scope. In other words, the negative transfer occurs mainly where L2 is learned in L1 environment, such as: school. In order to prove this idea, Guion et al. (2000) conducted a study that aimed at investigating the interaction of L1 and L2 systems in bilingual people by assessing the effect of L1 used on L1 and L2 production. They found the result in this study that the more L1 is used, the stronger the perceived foreign accent is in L2.

In addition, Atkinson (1987) also points out several weaknesses of the use of L1. He claims that the overuse of L1 in second language classrooms may result in students speaking to their teachers in L1, even when actually they are actually able to express themselves in using L2. Moreover, he argues that by using L1 in the classroom activities, the learners or even teachers will depend on it very much and finally, both teachers and students feel that they have not understood any item of L2 until it has been translated.

To sum up, even though the use of L1 becomes a controversy among the behaviorists, L1 has a lot of advantages. Additionally, Chambers (1992) observes that in teaching L2 in the second language classrooms, students or even the most motivated
students someway become tired of listening to L2 in the whole class period. He declares that it will become unfruitful to continue work in the TL (Chamber, 1992). He states that L1 is very helpful when the students try to get across complex vocabulary and structures, so that they can understand the rules well. Furthermore, Chamber (1992) argues that addressing class behavior issues using the L2 is not as effective as doing it using L1. He claims that there is someway in under certain circumstances such as tiredness, availability of time, and complexity of language and grammar that the teachers should revert to use L1 in the second language classrooms. Hence, Chamber (1992) infers that the role of L1 in helping the learners gain better knowledge is needed to reach a higher level of L2 performance.

Learning strategies are procedures that employed by the learners, in order to make their own language learning successful. While language learning strategies are specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. Some learners’ strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language (Rubin, 1987). Although some behaviorists consider that learners use communication strategies as they lack or cannot gain access to the linguistic resources required to express an intended meaning, conversely, a learner who emphasizes the importance of using a new language will often utilize communication strategies appropriately to get success. Abraham and Vann’s (1981, as cited in Rubin and Wenden, 1987) studies show that the secret of the successful language learners is the learner’s ability to choose strategies that are appropriate to the acquisition of the language skills necessary to function in college. Hence, learners’ strategies can be some ways for learners to use in coping with the situation to get across the meaning or when learners have faced difficulties to deliver their intentions in communication (Ellis, 1986).

Nation (2001) points out that the use of second language in the foreign language classrooms needs to be maximized wherever possible, by encouraging its use. If the use of English in second language classroom is done in a planned and consistent way, then it can be a very effective opportunity for learning through meaning-focused input. In this way, the role of L1 in second language
classrooms can be minimized and the role of L2 can be increased. Besides these relevant issues in second language acquisition (SLA), such as whether children are better L2 learners than adults or not, the use of L1 also becomes a controversy between some behaviorists. Nevertheless, there are other crucial factors influencing success that are largely beyond the control of the learners. These factors can be broadly categorized as intrinsic and extrinsic factors which can determine the speed in which the new language is learned.

Dullay et al., (1982) further argue that in a limited new language environment, L1 can influence the learners’ performances while they are practicing the English in the classroom situations. Richard (1974) then gives one example from the condition which L1 can influence the learners’ performances. It can be from the situation of learning English in Indonesia and Japan. Different from Japanese who consider English as their L2, so that English is used in their daily interactions in the social contexts; it is not only in the formal settings (such as the school). Still according to Richard (1974), he finds that English in Indonesia is considered as a foreign language by Indonesian so that for the consequence the Indonesian learners can only get practice using the new language inside the classroom or in a very limited situation. Yet, in this limited opportunity, the process of learning English may still be influenced by their L1, since there is no the same need and support to use English as much as possible like when the learners in the ESL environment.

Another extrinsic factor is the condition that results in premature use of the L1. A new learner who has just been ready with a few hundred vocabulary words and structures will likely to fall back on his or her L1 when he or she finds difficulties in conveying a message or what he or she wants to say in a new language (Dullay et al., 1982). Nevertheless, Newmark (1966, cited in Dullay et al., 1982) points out that as the English learners, the pressure to produce the new language can come from the activities in classroom situation, such as: writing compositions, oral classroom exchanges or taking tests. Newmark (1966) argues that this condition will automatically encourage the learners to use their
L1 as an aid in doing those tasks, especially when they have not been ready to produce in English forms.

To summarize, I come to a conclusion that the use of L1 in foreign language classroom resulted from one of the most long standing controversies in the history of language pedagogy that is the role of L1 and L2 in teaching and learning. All the same, this issue is still discussed in current applications of modern language teaching and learning today. Even though most of the language teachers and learners are completely against the use of L1 in language classrooms, there are many ways and benefits to activate L1 in foreign language classrooms. Take for example: using L1 can be a way or a means for L2 learners to convey their intended meaning. Nation (2001) argues that L1 needs to be seen as a useful tool that like other tools should be used whenever needed but it should not be over-used, so that learners can achieve the goal to have more practice in learning L2.

One of the on-going debates among behaviorist psychologist is whether or not to use the L1 in foreign language or L2 classrooms (Stanley, 2002). There are some opinions from behaviorists who argue that the primary language of instruction should be in L1 because it may bring positive effects to the learners. However, others argue that the use of the L1 is like interference in learning L2 that has to be avoided as it may bring negative effects to the learners (Nation, 2001). Furthermore, the interference in learning L2 is proven by the studies conducted by Larson and Smalley (1984) which showed that grammar, the other language levels or even L1 accents influence speech of learners when they used the L2. The clearest support for this comes from foreign accents in the L2 speech of learners. When a Frenchman speaks English, his English sounds French or when an Indonesian speaks English, her English sounds Indonesian (Ellis, 1986).

However, there may be other crucial factors that influence the success of learners in acquiring L2, which is largely beyond the control of the learners. These factors can be broadly categorized as intrinsic factors, such as: learners’ motivation, learners’ self confidence and anxiety which can influence the learners’ success in learning a second language and extrinsic factors, such as: ESL, EFL, and the condition that results in premature the use of L1 which can determine the
speed in which the new language is learnt. Rubin and Wenden (1987)
state that there are some ways which can help learners deal with
learning L2. Communication strategies, such as: code mixing, code
switching, paraphrasing, translation, and borrowing, are assumed as
a key of success that can be attributed to particular sets of cognitive
and meta-cognitive behaviors which learners engage in.

THE STUDY

This study was qualitative research, because it emphasized
on the importance of the participants’ perceptions and experiences
(as cited in Rossman and Rallis, 1998). So, in this research, I involved
students who took Transactional Speaking classes in Semester II
2009/2010 and the teachers who taught Transactional Speaking
classes at the English Department of Satya Wacana Christian
University Salatiga as the participants. I collected and analyzed the
data questionnaires, interviews, and observations. This study deals with
words, not numbers and participants were needed in doing this
research (Rossman and Rallis, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to find out whether both the
students and teachers in Transactional Speaking classes used their
L1 and why they were still using their L1 in expressing their ideas. In
addition, this study was also aimed at describing the students’ and
teachers’ perspectives toward the use of L1 in their Transactional
Speaking classes. Here, this study revealed whether the students
and teachers were favorable or unfavorable toward the use of L1.

In the English Department of Satya Wacana Christian
University Salatiga, there are four speaking courses that the students
have to take, they are Speaking 1 which now it is known as
Interpersonal Speaking, Speaking 2 which is known as Transactional
Speaking, Speaking 3 and Speaking 4 which are now combined and
changed into Public Speaking.

Transactional Speaking is the continuation from Interpersonal
Speaking. In Transactional Speaking classes, 3 different teachers
teach 3 times a week and each class lasts for an hour. Transactional
Speaking classes, which have 3 credit hours, focusing on the exchange
of information (message) to others. Take for example: the teachers
give problem solving activities or ask the students to give direction or
describe a place. Throughout the course in this course, students will learn to apply the language functions and develop communication strategies to get things done. Activities and projects in this course is designed to put attention on the process of using the language in day to day communication. (Transactional Speaking syllabus in English Department of SatyaWacana Christian University Salatiga, 2009).

In order to conduct a valid research, I collected the data by distributing questionnaires. The questionnaire for the students consisted of 7 questions. Here, all of the questions for both the students and the teachers were written in Indonesian, so that it could convey the clear meaning to the respondents. In order to find out why the students and teachers still used their L1 and what the students’ and teachers’ perspectives toward the use of L1 in their Transactional Speaking class, data were gathered from the questionnaire which were distributed for the students and the interviews with two teachers.

To strengthen the findings from the questionnaires, interviews with two teachers from Transactional Speaking classes were carried out. Done with interviewing, I then went to the next step. I tried to classify the students’ answers in the questionnaires and transcribed the interviews that I conducted with the two teachers. The last step, I interpreted the data to answer the two research questions from this study.

### DISCUSSION

This part presents the analysis of the data that I collected from the questionnaires which I distributed to the first year students on March 12, 2010. I also related the results of the questionnaire to the interviews that I conducted on March 17, 2010 and April 14, 2010 with two teachers in Transactional Speaking classes. This study is focused on finding out the answers for two research questions that are, why both the students and teachers of Transactional Speaking classes still use their L1 and what the students’ and teachers’ perspectives toward the use of L1 are.

**Students’ Reasons for Using the First Language (L1) in Transactional Speaking classes**

There were 15 students from group I who became my subject in doing this research. From the students’ answers in the questionnaires,
I could also interpret why the students still used their L1 in Speaking classes and their perspectives toward the use of L1. Nation (2002) argued that although students were in the second language classrooms, L1 was still needed by the learners. It was true when I asked the students from group I in Transactional Speaking class semester II 2009/2010 whether they still used their L1 or not, it revealed that out of 15 students, six students stated that they still used L1 as much as 50 percent, three students mentioned 45 percent, four students said 30 percent, one student 20 percent, and the last one 5 percent. The reasons why they affirmed different percentage were various. It could not deny that there might be some factors that influenced the success of learners in acquiring L2. Take for example, in the question whether the students agreed or not the use of L1 could increase their motivation in learning English, Student C (Std C) agreed with it. She further said that using L1 could motivate her to learn English since there were some vocabulary which she did not master well. The following extract could give clearer description.

**Extract 1:** Students’ answer from the questionnaire dealing with students’ motivation in using Indonesian in Transactional Speaking classes

Interviewer (IR): *In your opinion, do you feel more motivated when you use Indonesian in Transactional Speaking class?*

Std C: *Yes, I feel motivated in learning English because I havenot really mastered the vocabulary well.*

However, 14 students disagreed with her statement. The reasons why they did not agree were almost the same because the class that they had was speaking class, therefore they had to speak English though sometimes they encountered difficulties in explaining what they wanted to say. According to Larson and Smalley (1984), L1 had to be avoided since students would not get enough English exposure as their target language. Their theory seemed to be true for 14 students when I asked them about their motivation in learning L2. Std E, Std F, and Std K explained that the use of L1 in Speaking class could hinder them to improve their speaking skill since the students’ assessment was graded from their daily performance in
using L2. Hence, they thought that L1 had to be avoided in any Speaking classes.

For the reason that the students’ assessment was graded from their daily performance in using L2, there were 11 students who also disagreed if the use of L1 could make them feel more secured and comfortable when they wanted to convey their ideas in the class. Again, their answers were also the same because it was Speaking class where they had to speak in English, not Indonesian.

Students C and E stated that although they often made mistakes, they believed that the teachers or other friends at least would help to correct the mistakes. According to Krashen (2005), ‘in certain circumstances, the learners will tend to go back to their L1 as often as possible when they encounter difficulties in conveying what they want to say’. So, from the questionnaire, I found that most students agreed with the idea that if they really did not have any ideas to say a word or phrase in English, they would directly switch their language into their L1. For example, Std B explained that there were some situations which students could not say in English, then in order to give clear explanation and save time, the use of L1 was needed. The following extract could give clearer description.

**Extract 2:** Student’s answer from the questionnaire dealing with explaining students’ ideas using Indonesian in Transactional Speaking classes

IR: Does the use of the L1 help you to explain your ideas? Moreover, when you really do not know how to say in English anymore? Take for example, you do not know the English of ‘kambinghitam’.

Std M: Yes, Indonesian really helps me when I’m stuck and donot know how to say again in English. Instead of making confusion to the interlocutor about what I want to say exactly, I prefer to use Indonesian.

Besides, there were four students who still preferred to paraphrase some terms which they did not know in their L2. They thought that paraphrasing was somehow useful as a means when they really did not know how to say it in English anymore. Therefore,
from this I agreed with Ellis (1986) who stressed that in certain situation, communication strategies could be a helpful tool for the learners to use in coping with the situation when they have faced difficulties to deliver their intention in communication. Ellis’s opinion was also supported by Abraham and Vann (1983) who stated that the strategies that the learners used had an essential role to the degree of success or even failure. Hedge (2000) acknowledged that learning L2 must be related to some problems. One of the problems was the use of L1 in the learners’ learning process or either internal or external factors that could hinder the learners gained better understanding in L2.

The students in group I also faced the same problems when I asked them whether the use of L1 could help them to use the time efficiently or not. I found the answers that there were some points of view from 10 students who regarded the use of L1 should not be used in Speaking class. Std E and Std J assumed that students had to have self-awareness to use English in Speaking class, no matter whether or not they have wasted their time to explain something in English. The same opinions with the former, Std A, Std O and Std N, added that if students used Indonesian, it turned out to waste the time for students to practice their speaking skills. They thought why there was Speaking class if the students did not use their L2 and learn it. Speaking classes were needed because the students could practice to use English correctly.

Different from the others, Std E, Std F, Std G, Std H, and Std L argued that although by using L1 could not make any improvements, they believed that it could give explanations or meaning what they wanted to say, so other students would not get the wrong idea what they were going to tell. Sparks et al., (1994) briefly defined that anxiety was the cause of poor performance in second language learning. Horwitz et al., (2000) further stated that the anxiety could affect the students’ speaking ability to convey what they wanted to say even though actually, they were able to deliver their meaning in using L2. Nevertheless, out of 15 students in group I, five students said that they had different points of view from the theory. They agreed that the use of L1 could also facilitate students’ relationship with the teachers. Std I explained that the use of L1 would be useful to make situation in the class become
relaxed. Furthermore, Std A said that the use of L1 actually should not be used when students were in the class, but he further gave reasons that sometimes the use of L1 was needed to reduce students and teachers’ anxiety and make the atmosphere in the class enjoyable.

However, the rest of the students assumed that it would not always be right if students used their L1 to facilitate their relationship with the teachers. Their answers were almost the same that by using L2 or English, it would also facilitate their relationship with the teachers. Furthermore, Std E thought that because it was Faculty of Language and Literature and the teachers often kept on using L2 to communicate, so students also had to use it.

To summarize, I found that there were some students in Transactional Speaking classes still used their L1. The percentage of using L1 was also different. Out of 15 students, six students stated that they still used L1 as much as 50 percent, three students mentioned 45 percent, four students said 30 percent, one student 20 percent, and the last one 5 percent still used their L1. From this research, it is shown that there were pros and cons toward the use of L1. In other words, there were some students who considered that L1 should not be used in Speaking classes. However, there were some students who still relied on using L1 in Speaking classes. Furthermore, from the students’ answers, it was also revealed that every student had different types of motivation in learning L2. There were some students who thought that L1 was not needed since it gave negative effects and the use of L1 had to be avoided as it could burden the learners’ acquisition in mastering the new language successfully. In contrast, the other students argued that L1 gave positive effects since it could help them when they encountered difficulties in delivering their ideas.

**Teachers’ Reasons for Using the First Language (L1) in Transactional Speaking classes**

I conducted an interview with two teachers of Transactional Speaking classes which were carried out on March 17, 2010 and April 14, 2010. For the teachers, there were also 7 questions to be
interviewed. Number 2 up to 4 were about the positive effects of using L1 in Transactional Speaking classes, whereas the rest were about the negative effects of it. In this session, I would try to explore the result of the interviews.

The result of the interviews showed that Teacher A still used his L1 about 20 percent of his speeches in Transactional Speaking classes. The reasons he used his L1 was to make situation in the class become comfortable, such as telling jokes. Besides that, he could not deny that L1 was sometimes necessary to help him explain some materials which were very difficult or too abstract to be conveyed in English. In other words, instead of using English and making students wrong to catch the main ideas, he preferred to switch the language into Indonesian. The second reason was that L1 could help him to manage his time efficiently. Apparently, Atkinson (1987) supported his answer. Atkinson (1987) said that the use of L1 was very helpful for the sake of time. In line with Atkinson’s theory, Chamber (1992) also agreed that L1 was very helpful for the teachers to explain some complex vocabulary or even structures to students, so that the students could understand better. After all, the following extract was to clarify the teacher’s ideas dealing with his reasons that L1 could help him to manage his time efficiently. I have translated the conversation into English.

**Extract 3:** Teacher’s reasons for using Indonesian in Transactional Speaking classes

IR: Do you agree that L1 can help you to manage your time efficiently to teach in Speaking classes? Please, explain your reasons.

Teacher A: Yes. There were some difficult words which were difficult to be explained in English, so to tell the students the meaning directly in Indonesian will be more effective. Instead of asking students to guess or replacing the words to make students understand, I use Indonesian to make the lesson faster.

Nevertheless, Teacher B had different opinions. She said that in each meeting with the students, she had different percentage to use L1. She further argued that she often used L1 as much as 10 percent. However, if there were some materials which were difficult
to be explained she used L1 up to 20 percent. The reasons she used it was to give example to the students so that the students understood what she talked about. Teacher B also agreed that the use of L1 could be useful to explain difficult vocabulary. However, she often tried using L2 to explain difficult vocabulary. If the students still did not understand what she talked about, then she switched into L1. It is the same when she explained the students’ errors.

She clarified the students’ errors that the students made in L2. And if they did not get the main ideas, she directly used L1. It fitted Atkinson’s ideas that the L1 could be valuable to teach students in the second language classroom when it was used for testing students’ understanding (Atkinson, 1987).

In contrast, Teacher A did not totally agree with the idea that L1 could help teachers to explain students’ errors. He always tried to use English in the first option to correct the students’ mistakes or to instruct students to do something. According to Nation (2001), the use of L1 was still needed by both teachers and students. He further explained that in certain circumstances the use of L1 could help students to reduce students’ nervous so that students had a chance to say what they wanted to say freely. On the other hand, Teacher A seemed not to be in line with Nation’s opinion. He showed his disagreement with the idea that the use of L1 could help teachers and students feel relax and secure when they wanted to convey their ideas. He told that it was different from when he had to teach other subjects, such as the subject of Introduction of Literature which he could tolerate students to use Indonesian. However, he would not give tolerance if students used Indonesian in Speaking classes.

Similar to Teacher A’s reasons, Teacher B also disagreed with the idea that L1 could help the students to feel secure and comfortable. She believed that either teachers or students in general, especially her students in Transactional Speaking classes had already self awareness to use L2 in Speaking classes. It could be proven by showing their positive attitudes to speak in L2. They even asked several questions to the teachers when they encountered difficulties in explaining some words in English. For that reason, she did not feel whether L1 could be useful for them to make them feel secure and comfortable. She stated that by using L2, it has already made them comfortable. From the interview that I conducted with the
two teachers, I came to a conclusion that both Teacher A and Teacher B still needed L1 to teach in Transactional Speaking classes, though the percentage of using L1 was not bigger, only 10 up to 20 percent. And the reasons why they kept using L1 were different.

**Students’ Perspectives toward the Use of First Language (L1) in Transactional Speaking classes**

Through the questionnaires that I gave to the students in Transactional Speaking classes, I discovered that the students had self-awareness to use L2 in Speaking class. They thought that Speaking class was the class to speak up using English. Therefore, they assumed that students had to use L1 in the proper time and condition. Furthermore, Std I stated that because she and her friends had already chosen Faculty of Language and Literature, as a consequence, they had to speak using English. The following extract was to clarify the teachers’ reasons.

**Extract 4:** Student’s answers dealing with the use of L1 that can make students become unaware of the essential use of English as the target language

IR: *Do you agree that allowing the use of L1 in Speaking class makes you become unaware of the essential use of English as the target language itself? Please, explain your reasons.*

Std I: *I don’t agree because we choose Faculty of Language and Literature in which using English is a must. So, as far as possible, we have to speak English.*

Additionally, Std D also agreed with Std I’s explanations above that students should differentiate between when students had to use Indonesian and English. He thought that using L2 to communicate with others in the class was the duty of every student and teacher to communicate with other people in the English Department. Although there were some situations when somehow students had to use L1, whether it could help students to explain the difficult words or vocabulary or students could manage the time efficiently by using L1, students should not forget what the purposes of studying in this Faculty.
To go over the main points, I consider that students in Transactional Speaking classes had big willingness to communicate using their L2. Although Std G agreed with the theory of Atkinson (1987) that the use of L1 was very helpful in terms of time, students needed to have commitment for what their choices in studying in English Department.

**Teachers’ Perspectives toward the Use of First Language (L1) in Transactional Speaking classes**

Considering the issue of the using L1 in Transactional Speaking classes which could be beneficial for helping the teachers in different ways, I could say that both of the teachers had self-awareness in using English or even asking students to be brave speak in discussion using L2. Asked about their response when they found some students spoke using Indonesian or L1, both of the teachers had the same response to ask the students to speak using L2.

From the interview with Teacher A and B, I found different percentages of using L1 in other classes. Teacher A explained that in other classes he could have bigger percentage to use Indonesian. Take, for example in Reading or Writing classes, he could use it around 30 percent at the most. He used it since what he wanted to explore was students’ reading or writing skills not students’ speaking skills. On the contrary, Teacher B used the same percentage of L1 when she had to teach other Speaking classes as much as 20 percent.

I could see that both teachers gave more tolerance to students to use Indonesian when they taught students in other classes. Yet, in the Speaking classes, both teachers and students had to use English as often as possible or at least 10 up to 20 percent for using L1. According to Nation (2001), there were many reasons for the using of L1 had to be used in the second language classrooms. One of the reasons was L1 could help to reduce the students’ nervous and unwillingness to communicate and facilitate students to be more active. Still, by using L1 students had a chance to say what they really wanted to say or what things that came up in their mind freely. Apparently, Teacher A and B agreed with Nation’s ideas.

Talking about teachers’ perspectives toward the use of L1, Teacher A stated that it depended on the purposes and the way
teachers used Indonesian in the class. He argued that if there was something which was difficult to explain in English, teachers had to switch the language into Indonesian. Therefore, he did not show his disagreement toward the use of L1 in Transactional Speaking classes. In line with Teacher A, Teacher B also agreed if L1 was used in Transactional Speaking classes. She argued that if teachers somehow compelled students to use their L1, it would make them afraid to speak in English.

Furthermore, Teacher B argued that if teachers tried to explain and explain harder in English but students seemed not to understand, it turned out to be useless for teachers to explain. Therefore she thought that the use of L1 was still needed, but the percentage of using L1 was not bigger than the use of L2.

To sum up, I could conclude out that both of the teachers were favorable toward the use of L1 in Transactional Speaking classes. Both teachers said that they only used L1 20 percent at the most and 80 percent for using English. They assumed that L1 in some way would be beneficial for the teachers to explain some difficult words or terms to the students. Although James (1980) stated that using L1 could hinder the learning process of the L2 successfully and errors, such as the language levels might occur because there were different rules between L2 and L1 or L1 accents would influence speech of learners when they used L2 (Ellis, 1986), I had different perspectives toward the use of L1. I agree with the idea of L1 could also be used in the L2 classroom, though the class that students had was Speaking.

It could not be denied that in the process of learning L2, the use of L1 seem to be inevitably. Teachers as well as students would use their L1 in certain circumstances. When teachers or students did not know anymore how to explain difficult words or terms, the L1 could also be seen as a tool that helped them clarify. For that reason, I agreed with Atkinson (1987) who stated that L1 could be a resource of knowledge which learners would use to help them sift the L2 data in the input and perform as best as they could in the L2. In other words, I assumed that the use of L1 in the L2 classroom should not be seen as something to be avoided, but as a tool to facilitate the learning of the target language.
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After I analyzed and interpreted the data from interviews and questionnaire, several conclusions of the use of first language or L1 were drawn. There were different perspectives from the students and the teachers toward the use of L1. Almost the students in group I answered that the use of L1 somehow should be avoided or at least L1 had to be used in the minor things. They argued that the class that they had was Speaking class in which their ability in speaking the target language or L2 was explored and marked by the teachers. Hence, they considered that it would be better if the students used L2.

There were some reasons the students still used their L1:
- L1 helped them to explain difficult words or vocabulary
- L1 helped them to manage the time efficiently, because they did not know the meaning of certain words, by using L1, it could accelerate their time to speak.
- L1 facilitated students’ relationship with the teachers.
- L1 helped them to feel secure and comfortable when they wanted to convey their ideas.
- L1 helped them to increase their motivation in learning English.

From the questionnaires, I also found that students had self awareness in using L2. Therefore, they preferred to use English either in discussing with friends or doing their presentation in the class. These following were the reasons why the students preferred to use L2:
- The students wanted to improve their Speaking skills.
- The students wanted to be more exposed to English.
- Speaking classes influenced the students to be better (so that they would not depend too much on their L1).

Then, through the interview that I conducted with the two teachers, I also found out that both of the teachers supported the use of L1 in teaching L2. The teachers thought that sometimes the use of L1 was still needed to teach though they taught in Speaking classes. The reasons why the teachers still used their L1 were:
• L1 helped them to manage their time efficiently.
• L1 helped them to explain some materials or difficult vocabulary rather than trying to use L2 and finally it made the students misinterpret what the teachers explained.
• Sometimes, using L1 made the situation in the class become comfortable, such as to make jokes with the students.
• L1 helped them to give example to the students, so that the students could achieve better understanding.
• Using L1 helped to clarify the students’ mistakes.

Both of the teachers had the same idea that either teachers or students had to use the target language, no matter whether they were in the Speaking classes or other classes. However, there were some conditions which teachers and students had to use L1 seeing as they encountered some difficulties in explaining difficult words. Even so, the use of L1 surely should be minimized in the L2 classroom (20 percent for using L1 and 80 percent for using L2).

To sum up, although the students and teachers in Transactional Speaking classes used L2 in teaching and learning English, there were certain circumstances in which the use of L1 was needed. Therefore, both of the teachers were still favorable toward the use of L1, they still used L1 20 percent at the most, whereas for the students, they had self-awareness to use L2 as best as they could and use L1 in the smallest things. In addition, I agreed with what Mager (1968) explained that the use of L1 would occur unavoidably when the learners learnt the new language and in order to help the learners to deliver their intended meaning, the use of L1 was still needed. So, I assumed that L1 had a small but important role to help the learners acquire second language acquisition.

In my understanding, it is better for teachers to use Indonesian to explain some complex words, so that the explanation would be easier to be understood, whereas, for the students, it was better not to force their selves to use the L2 when they really encounter difficulties in clarifying their opinions about something, so that the other students or the teachers would not get the wrong ideas. After all, like what is stressed by Nation (2001), L1 should not be over-used, so that students could also achieve the goal to have more practice in learning L2.
Throughout this study, I realize that there is still a need to develop a further study and research related to the use of the first language in learning English. Therefore, in the future, it is strongly recommended for those who want to conduct a similar research can do a study with the broader subjects, since this study was limited only in the students’ and teachers’ reasons and their perspectives toward the use of L1 in Transactional Speaking classes. A further study can also be done by comparing the use of L1 in different level, like students and teachers in Interpersonal Speaking and Public Speaking classes. Here, it can be done to find out whether the use of L1 is still needed in the different level or not.

I hope that the finding on this study can be useful and enrich the teachers and the students’ knowledge on how to deal with the use of L1 so that both teachers and students can effectively use it in a proper time and condition.

REFERENCES


