THE ROLE OF L1 IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO PRE-SCHOOL STUDENTS

Jumiarsih
Anita Kurniawati

Faculty of Language and Literature
Satya Wacana Christian University
Salatiga
INTRODUCTION

As “the world’s best language,” (Newmark, 2002 in Smith, 2005: 57), there is no doubt that the need to learn English is increasing. Nowadays, English is not only learned at high school or university levels, but also learned at pre-school. There is a significant progress on public interest in teaching English to those who are in the beginner level, i.e. in their early age of studying (Cole, 2008). The progress can be seen from the increasing number of regions all over the countries which offer English classes at the pre-school level (Musthafa, 2010: 120). This includes Indonesia. There is a growing tendency among Indonesian people to introduce English from early age. The mushrooming amount of bilingual schools in Indonesia, especially at the pre-school level, is the evidence that English has been learned from early age.

A question concerning which language to use as the medium of instructions might then be raised. Benson (2002: 2) claimed that “language is clearly the key to communication and understanding in the classroom. Johnson (1995 in Manara 2007: 158) also stated that teachers have to be more concerned on how the language should be used in the classroom because language is a vital aspect that will help the teaching and learning process. This means that a language plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. Teachers should use a language that is understandable to the students. In teaching English to young learners, the learners’ mother tongue is the language that will help them learning the target language because mother tongue is seen “as a classroom resource” (Atkinson, 1987: 241 in Mahmoudi & Amirkhiz, 2011). Manara (2007) stated that “the mother tongue is the learners’ linguistic schemata. The mother tongue is a resource for the learners to draw their existing knowledge from and perceive the new language.” In other words, L1 is a language to help the learners understand the target language. As English is something new for the learners and they still know nothing about it, the learners’ mother tongue will be the most useful language to be used as a medium of instructions at the beginning and low levels of the learners (Cole, 1998 in Nazary, 2008).
Jacobson (1990) stated that the teacher switches from one language to another on purpose. The teacher can use more than one language, which are the learners’ mother tongue and the target language, in the classroom. Valdes-Fallis (1977) said that code-switching or using of two languages simultaneously may be used for communicative purposes (Gysels, 1992 in Duran, 1994: 4). The teacher uses more than one language because they believe it will help them in teaching the target language. This means that the use of mother tongue in learning the target language is allowed because it gives benefit to the students.

Furthermore, the research done by Kim and Petraki (2009) supported the benefit of code-switching in EFL classroom. The finding showed that L1 played a supportive role in the language classroom, especially in the early stages of the learners. The research done by Cole (1998) also showed that “L1 may be used from introductory to upper-intermediate levels” (cited in Kim and Petraki, 2009). He pointed out that L1 supports EFL classroom, especially in the early age. The evidence showed that L1 can be useful, especially for beginner levels. An English-only instruction is more useful in upper levels where the students have acquired the language more than the students in the beginner levels, such as pre-school students. Butzkamm (1976) in Kahraman (2009) and Nation (2003) in Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2011) give support to the finding that L1 should be consciously used in the initial stages of language learning because L1 is an efficient tool to facilitate communication in EFL classroom.

Therefore, to describe the importance of using L1 in teaching English, this study tried to answer the following question: For what purposes did the teacher use L1 when teaching English to pre-school students? By conducting this research, it is hoped that the readers will gain more knowledge on the use of L1 in EFL classrooms, particularly in what situation L1 is used, to what extent L1 is used and how L1 is used when teaching English to pre-school students. It is also expected that pre-school teachers will not do complete deletion of L1 when teaching English to their students as L1 might give contributions to L2 learning.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Opponent on the Use of L1 in L2 Learning

Talking about learners’ mother tongue or L1 use in teaching English is actually challenging because the use of L1 in learning L2 is still a debatable issue in EFL classroom. Scholars like Kahraman (2009), Atkinson (1987) in Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2011), Meyer (2008) criticized the use of the mother tongue in the development of English Language Teaching. This challenging issue addresses whether or not to use L1 in the English classroom, especially where the learners and the teachers share the same L1. This is because there is a belief that English has to be taught monolingually. The maximum exposure to L2 and least exposure to L1 are very essential because interference from L1 destructs L2 learning process (Cook, 2001; Krashen, 1981 in Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz, 2011).

Phillipson (1992: 185) pointed out that the more English is used, the better the results will be. If other languages are used much more than English, the standards of English will drop (in Mouhanna (2009: 1). Kim and Petraki (2009) added that the use of L1 wastes too much valuable time in the classroom. It would be better to spend much time on the target language. It shows that scholars still believe the idea that “second languages are best learned and taught through the language itself” (Howatt 1984; Richards and Rodgers 2001 in Song 2009). L2 has to be taught with L2 and L1 is not appropriate to be used when teaching L2.

Support on the Use of L1 in L2 Learning

Although the use of L1 in EFL classroom creates pros and cons among practitioners, a number of scholars such as Auerbach (1993), Weschler (1997), Cook (2001), Turnbull (2001) and Juarez and Oxbrow (2008) support the use of L1 in EFL classroom. They stated that the use of mother tongue will give advantages to the L2 classroom (cited in Kahraman, 2009). Schweers (1999); Larsen-Freeman (2000); Nation, (2003); Butzkamm (2003) in Nazary (2008) point out that it is common for EFL teachers to use the students’ L1 in teaching English. The students’ L1 helps the teacher in conveying meaning as a mean of communication in the classroom. The research done by those scholars showed that “complete deletion
of L1 in L2 situation is not appropriate” because L1 is useful to be used at the beginning, in the early age of the learners (Cole, 1998). Nazary (2008) stated similar thing that L1 has a necessary and facilitating role in language instructions. L1 is also seen as a learning tool and a facilitating factor for efficient communication in learning the target language.

Buckmaster (2000) stated that the L1 should be welcomed into EFL classroom with open arms and not allowing the use of L1 in the foreign language classroom is a fallacy. Hitotizi (2006) claims that “learners’ L1 is a tool that neither the teacher nor the learner can afford to dispense with.” It is possible that teachers may ban the use of L1 in EFL classroom but they are not able to stop the learners to use it during their language learning. It is because the learner’s mother tongue and its language learning knowledge cannot be deleted by teachers during the L2 learning process.

The Role of L1 in L2 Learning

The study conducted by Swan (1985: 85) showed that “When we set out to learn a new language, we automatically assume that meanings and structures are going to be broadly similar to those in our own language” (cited in Kim & Petraki, 2009). L2 learners may use their L1 to help them in learning the target language as they assume the way learning L2 is similar to the way learning their L1. Therefore, Schweers (1999: 7) in Nazary (2008) encourages teachers to use L1 in the classroom and suggests that starting with L1 will provide a sense of security for the learners and allow them to express themselves using their native language. Although Krashen (1982, 1985) provides an overview that target language should be taught in the target language, not in the learners’ L1, Ellis (2001) and Sharwood-Smith (1985) argue that English-only policy in EFL classroom does not guarantee a better result (cited in Kahraman, 2009). It does not guarantee that the learners will easily acquire the target language when L1 is not used in EFL classroom because L1 can be useful in EFL learning (Cook, 2001: 234 cited in Mouhanna, 2009).
These are some roles proposed by different scholars which show that L1 gives benefits in L2 learning process:

1. Introducing new vocabularies

Reineman (2001) stated that “the use of L1 should be allowed conditionally,” for example, when introducing new vocabularies (cited in Stapa & Majid, 2006). Furthermore, Yu-Cheng Sieh explains that L1 contributes to foreign language vocabulary learning. For example, the teacher will use translation method in introducing the new vocabulary by saying the name of the picture in the learners’ mother tongue and then give the name in English. Cook (2001) and Liu, Ahn, Baek & Han (2004) in Song (2009) also proposed similar idea. L1 can be used when the teacher wants to explain the difficult vocabulary and check the meaning of certain words. It means that in introducing new words or vocabulary, L1 is still useful because it will make the students understand the meaning of certain new words easily.

2. Explaining grammar

Besides explaining new vocabularies, Cook (2001) & Liu et al (2004) in Song (2009) explains that L1 can be used in explaining grammar. Investigation about the attitudes of 290 students and 73 teachers at five universities which was done by Burden (2001), showed that both teachers and students believe that L1 is important in the development of EFL classroom, such as in explaining about grammar (in Nazary, 2008).

3. Classroom organization purposes

Another benefit of using L1 in L2 learning which is shown by Cook (2001) in Song (2009) is for classroom organization purposes, like organizing tasks or interacting with the students. It will overcome the learners’ communicative difficulties and save5 time (Liu et al, 2004 in Song, 2009).

4. Check students understanding about the lesson

Atkinson (1987) and Burden (2001) in Nazary (2008) stated that in EFL classroom, L1 can be used to check the students’
understanding about the lesson. By doing so, the teacher will know whether the students understand about the lesson or not.

5. Giving instructions

Atkinson (1987), Liu et al (2004), and Burden (2001) in Nazary (2008) stated that L1 can be used to give instructions to the learners. L1 will give an overview about the background information of the instructions so that the students will understand more about what they are going to do.

Knowing that L1 gives some benefits in L2 learning, it means that L1 “can be a facilitating factor and not just an interfering factor” (Brown 2000: 68, in Nazary 2008). Although English should be the primary mean of communication (Schweer, 1999), L1 can have a supportive and facilitating role in the EFL classroom (Tang, 2002: 41 cited in Kim & Petraki, 2009). Levine (2003: 356) in Nazary (2008) also reveals the same thing. In EFL classroom, both the target language and the L1 serve important functions in L2 development.

THE STUDY

Context of the study

The study was conducted at Satya Wacana Children Centre (SWCC). It is located in a small town of Salatiga, Central Java, Indonesia. It is a bilingual school which uses the learners’ L1 (Bahasa Indonesian) and English as the medium of instructions. The school has the vision and mission to make the students get accustomed to English. The students are hoped to be able to use English in everyday life. The school uses home-like learning curriculum in which the teachers teach the students in a fun and non-threatening way so that they can enjoy the teaching and learning process. The school also provides a playground where the students can play with their friends there and do the activities related to the teaching and learning process so that the students can feel like they are in their own house. The school uses a weekly schedule, which informs about the material that the students will learn in a week, as its school system. The class is divided into three groups. The first stage is Twigs, age 2-3. The second stage is Buds, age 3-4 and the third stage is Blossom, age 4-5.
The focus of the study was the Buds group. It belongs to the pre-school class. The Buds group meets on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The lessons provided by the school are Music, Mathematics, Art and Craft, Coloring, Pre-Writing and Parents time. There is no English lesson as the subject matter in the classroom because basically the lessons provided by the school are related to English. In Mathematic lessons, the students learn about number in English. In Coloring lessons, the students learn about color in English. In Art and Craft lessons, the students learn about how to make something and learn about things in English. In Music lesson, the students sing songs in English in which the students can add their English vocabulary. The school believes that using English as the medium of instructions can help the students learn English. It can be achieved through the subjects provided by the school because the subjects provided are actually meant to teach English to the students. Although there is no English lesson and English is only used as the medium of instructions, the lessons provided by the school have represented the English lesson that will be used to teach beginners.

Participants

There was one participant in this study. She was the teacher in SWCC. She was selected using purposive sampling or “criterian-based” selection. She was chosen because she was graduated from the English Department and she had taught pre-school students for about 5 years. It means that she had experienced in teaching pre-school students of a bilingual school which served English and Indonesian as the medium of instructions.

Instrument of Data Collection

In this study, classroom observation was used to get the data from the participant. The teaching and learning process in the classroom was recorded using a camera. The observation took for about thirty minutes for each section. The observation was conducted seven times. Besides recording, an observation protocol was also used to classify the data.
Data Collection Procedure

Before doing the observation, the high-inference categories were made in the form of observation protocol as the organizational categories to help me focus on what I wanted to observe. When doing the observation, I recorded the teaching and learning process in pre-school class. Then, I transcribed the recording and then classified the teacher’s talk based on the observation protocol provided.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed qualitatively because the data had no relation with number or statistic. The descriptive analysis was used in analyzing the data in which themes or focuses of the analysis were found in the observation protocol so that the data got could be explored more. After transcribing the recording and classifying the teacher’s talks, the data would be interpreted further to know the certain situations when the teacher of pre-school used L1 in the teaching and learning process. The discussion would also be combined and related to some theories to support the analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After doing seven times of observations, the data showed that L1 had important roles when teaching English in the classroom, especially in the early age of the learners. The data showed that although the learners learned English, the teacher still used L1 for several purposes.

Table 1. Teacher’s use of mother tongue when teaching English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conveying meaning</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving instructions</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving feedback to the students</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checking comprehension</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining new (unfamiliar) words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprimanding the students</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing assignments, tests, and quizzes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

231
From table 1, it could be seen that the use of L1 when teaching English had several purposes. This was in line to Nation (2003) in Nazary (2008) who introduced an approach called “Balanced Approach.” This approach “sees a role for the L1 but also recognizes the importance of maximizing L2 use in the classroom.” Teachers could use L1 “where feasible” (Finocchiano & Brumfit, 1983 in Kim and Petraki, 2009) and “the use of both L1 and L2 should be seen as complementary” (Stern, 1992 in Kahraman, 2009). Therefore, although the teachers should have much exposure in L2, L1 could still be used for certain goals. Here were some goals or purposes why L1 could still be used when teaching English:

1. Conveying meaning

From the seven times of observations, all showed that in conveying meaning, L1 was used. The teacher used translation to convey meaning. She did it to emphasize what she had said and to make her utterance even clearer to the students so that the students could understand what she had said. As I observed the way the pre-school teacher taught the students, she had to use L1 because the students seemed to get confused of what she had said when she only used English. Therefore, she had to mix the two languages, L1 and English, in order to make her students understand of what she actually talked about. The research done by Schweers (1999) in Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz (2011) proposed a similar thing that the use of L1 supported the teaching and learning process in the English classroom. He believed that L1 could lead to better understanding of the lesson and made the students feel comfortable. Here were the examples:

1. *Taruhi di atas meja ya. Harus sama temen-temen ya.* (Just put it on the table. You have to share it with your friends.)
2. *Iya semua lengket, lihat miss lengket banyak sekali, nanti bisa cuci tangan ya.* (Our hands are all sticky, see, miss’ hands are very sticky, later you can wash your hands.)
3. *Enngak, kali ini nggak pake kostum animal.* (No, this time you do not wear animal costume.)
4. *Sangat tajam ya? Ingat tajam. Hati-hati ya?* (It is so dangerous. It is really sharp. Remember, it is sharp. So, you have to be careful.)
5. Ada enam ya, yang Miss tunjukin ada enam. (There are six, there are six which miss shows to you.)
6. Kita mau bikin sate. (We are going to make satay.)
7. Bawa kado ya? kadonya inget harus barang bukan makanan ya. Hari rabu anak-anak semua bawa kado dibungkus kertas koran kemudian nanti ditukar sama teman ya. Kita mau ngadain pesta coklat. (You have to bring a present, ok? Remember, the present should be a thing, not food. On Wednesday, all of you have to bring presents. The present has to be wrapped with newspaper. Then, we are going to have across present. We are also going to have a chocolate party.)
8. Kita sudah belajar ya, kita sudah belajar nulis angka berapa, angka berapa, six, enam and berapa, seven, tujuh. (You have learned how to write, you have learned how to write number six and seven.)
9. Kemarin sudah gini ya, anak-anak sudah belajar menghubungkan garis-garisnya sama satu lagi kemudian seperti ini juga anak2 sudah belajar, dari bawah ke atas. (Yesterday, you had learned how to trace the line, from down to up.)

Although the teacher had to use translation when the students seemed confused, she did not translate her utterance all the time. It depended on certain situations which forced her to use translation to convey the meaning of what she had said. For example 1-3, the teacher translated her utterance into Indonesian when she responded to the students’ answers and questions. She used the students’ L1 to direct the students to do what they should actually do, so that they would do their works correctly. It really worked since the students could share the glue with their friends next to them and wanted to make the art and craft although it would make their hands dirty after the teacher responded using L1. It seemed that what Schweers (1999) found in his study that “the use of L1 led to positive attitudes” (in Mahmoudi and Amirkhiz, 2011) in the teaching and learning process was also applied in the examples. The students did so because they were able to access the meaning from their L1 (Swan, 1997 in Meyer, 2008). Thus, the students responded the teacher’s answers in a
positive way as shown by their attitudes in the classroom after the teacher emphasized what they should do in the activity given using L1.

Besides responding the students’ answers and questions, the teacher also used L1 when conveying the information or explanation she had just shared, as example number 4-7. Those examples showed that L1 was used to “convey information to learners and it is also one of the primary means of controlling learner behavior” (Allwright & Bailey, 1991, in Szendrli, 2010). In point (4), the teacher used L1 to give information about the stick and unconsciously warned the students to be careful. It was used to control their movements since the students were really active. In point (5), (6) and (7), the teacher wanted to give information about what they were going to do on that day and on the following meeting.

For number 8 and 9, the teacher used L1 to review the material. Cook (2001) in Song (2009) supported the finding that “teachers can use L1 to convey meaning” when reviewing or talking about the last material. She used L1 to convey the meaning of what she had said through the translation strategy. Using L1 in reviewing the material could also be “a highly beneficial resource for teachers and learners” (Kahraman, 2009) since reviewing had similar meaning for reminding the students about the material they had learned so far. By using L1, the students could understand what the teacher actually talked about and that the students could understand about what they would do.

All examples above showed that L1 was basically used to inform the students about something. The teacher used L1 to make the students understand more about what they should actually do. This finding supported what Juarez and Oxbrow (2008) claimed that the teacher decided to use translation strategy in his or her teaching because “translation activities as a teaching and learning resource can greatly facilitate second language learning or acquisition process and help learners understand and associate with the target language.” It means that in conveying meaning, L1 was advantageous because the teacher could use both L1 and the target language to convey information or share
explanation about certain things. L1 could make the students understand more about what the teacher asked them to do so that the students would not get wrong information.

2. Giving instructions

In the teaching and learning process, the teacher also used L1 for giving instructions. Here were some of the examples:

1. *Miss mau kasih adonan ini ya, nanti taruh sini ya, ambil dikit saja.* (Miss will give you this dough and you have to put it here. What you have to do, you have to take a bit.)

2. *Bikin satu lagi cupcake nya ya, disampingnya yg ini ya.* (Make one more cupcake, beside the first cake.)

3. *Adek boleh cuci tangan. Yaa siwon berdiri yaa terus cuci tangan ya cuci tangan.* (You can wash your hands. Siwon, please stand up then wash your hands.)

4. *Miss mau kasih PR, ada ular stripes nya hilang anak-anak nanti bantu tuliskan stripes nya ya? Nanti anak-anak bantu ya tulis stripesnya ya.* (Miss will give you a homework. There is a snake but the stripes are lost. Later, all of you should write the stripes, ok?)

5. *Nayaka, nggak di atas sini nayaka, di sebelah sini ya, kalau ditutup disini cupcake nya nggak kelihatan, Nayaka.* (Nayaka, not in here Nayaka, but in here. If you place the second cake here, the first cake cannot be seen.)

6. *Ayo Siwon, lagi Siwon, ini Siwon bikin. Ambil dikit ya ambil dikit taruh disini terus diputar, bisa? Wah baksonya jadi.* (Come on Siwon, more Siwon, please make it Siwon. Take a bit, place it here and then make it round, can you? Wow, your meatball is ready.)

Example 1-4 showed that the teacher used L1 when she explained about what the students should or should not do and their homework. The teacher used L1 in order to make her instructions clearer and to direct the students to do their works in a good way. Schweers (1999) in Nazary (2008) encouraged the teacher to keep using L1 in his or her lessons because “starting with L1 provides a sense of security and allow the students to express themselves.” It means that L1 could help the students
express themselves by responding to the instructions given by the teacher. So, when the teacher used L1 in giving instructions, it would help the students do the assignments well because the students could understand L1 better than L2 so that they would not experience miscommunication. L1 here was also used to avoid ambiguity so that the students could do what they were supposed to do.

Example 5 and 6 showed that the teacher explained the instructions using L1 when she saw the students were not able to follow her instructions. She used Indonesian because “the exclusive usage of English may result in complicated explanation” (Szendrli, 2010). As a consequence, the students would fail to do the task given by the teacher because they did not know what the teacher talked about. Atkinson (1987), Cook (2001), Lucas and Katz (1994), Macaro (1997) in Manara (2007) said that L1 was considered to be an effective tool in giving instructions to the students because it could help the students achieve the goal of the activities offered in the classroom. In other words, the use of L1 in giving instructions could direct the students to follow the teacher’s explanation.

The above findings really supported what Nazary (2008) said that “bilingual approach is gaining more support by incorporating the students L1 as a learning tool and also as a facilitator for an efficient communication.” He also said that L1 had a necessary and facilitating role in all aspect of language instructions. Therefore, using both L1 and English at the same time could make the teaching and learning process went smoothly since the students were still at pre-school. They still needed their L1 in receiving information about something. Levine (2003) in Nazary (2008) also concluded that “despite the prevailing monolingual principle in EFL classes, both the target language and the L1 appear to serve important functions.” Here, in giving instructions, both languages were important because the students could be familiar with the target language through the L1 used in the teaching and learning process.

3. Giving feedback to the students
The third purpose of using L1 in teaching English was to give feedback to the students. The study conducted by Macaro (1997) in Manara (2007) showed that L1 can be used to give feedback to the learners. The feedback often appeared in the form of appraising the students’ works and sometimes guiding the students to do their works. Here were the examples:

1. Waaah siwon pintar sekali. (Wow, Siwon, you are so smart.)
2. Bagus sekali hari ini mewarnainya, bagus sekali, waa penuh ya warnanya ya, bagus sekali. (Wow, today you did great everyone. Your colorings were good. You can color the whole picture, great.)
3. Ayo dirapiin lagi, sebelah sini belum yang rapi ayo. (Come on, make it nice, this one is not nice yet.)

By giving such kind of feedback, the students could follow the lesson well because the teacher gave them praise and guidance in doing the activity given. Therefore, as the teacher saw the students had finished with their works, the teacher always gave them praise although it was only “good job or bagus sekali.” It could be seen from the example 1 and 2. The teacher gave the students praise to appreciate their works and to show that what they did was good. Actually L1 was used to “increase involvement and class participation” (Atkinson, 1987 in Kahraman, 2009). When the teacher praised their works in Indonesian, the students smiled and seemed like they were eager to do their works. Sometimes, they called the teacher and asked about their works. When the teacher responded with “good job, bagus sekali or pintar sekali,” they would continue their works since the teacher’s responds meant that they did their works in good way.

Besides praising the students’ works, the teacher also provided guidance, like example no.3. The teacher used L1 when she saw the students were confused of what they should do. So, the teacher helped them in finishing their works. The word “ayo” indicated that the teacher gave them guidance to do their works. It could be a booster for the students to get involved in the classroom. Wigglesworth (2003) in Mouhanna (2009) also supported that L1 gave support to the students to “produce work
that is of higher standard.” From this, it could be seen that L1 was a necessary and facilitating tool in helping the teacher giving feedback to the students. The students could understand more about what they had to do when the teacher not only used English but also Indonesian as their L1 when explaining something.

4. Checking comprehension

The other purpose of using L1 in teaching English to preschool students was to check the students’ comprehension toward the material being discussed. Here were the examples:

1. *Yang mana yang seven? yang mana? Tunjuk aja. yang mana? Yang ada perutnya apa yang tongkat? Yang tongkat.* (Which one is number seven? Which one? Show to miss which one is number seven? The one which has a tummy or the one which has a stick? The one which has a stick.)

2. *Bisa? (Can you?)*

3. *Masih inget nggak gimana nulis nomer enam? Masih ingat caranya nulis angka tujuh?* (Do you still remember how to write number six? Do you still remember how to write number seven?)

Those examples showed that L1 was needed since it was used to check the students’ comprehension. In example 1 and 2, the teacher used L1 to check whether the students paid attention and understood about the explanation in English or not. The finding showed that when the teacher used Indonesian, the students could answer what the teacher asked. It means that the students understood the explanation when the teacher used L1. Auerbach (1993) in Manara (2007) stated that the L1 used when teaching English “allows for the language to be used as a meaning-making tool and for language learning to become a means of communicating ideas.” Thus, it was really necessary to check the students’ understanding in their L1 because by using L1 the students could follow the material given. L1 helped the students understand the meaning of what the teacher asked them to do and also became a tool to communicate with the students to check whether the students followed her or not. Based on the observations, L1 used in checking the students’ comprehension
was advantageous. The students could do what the teacher asked them to do.

Besides checking whether the students understand the material being discussed on that day, L1 was also used to help the teacher in checking the students’ understanding about the material they had learned before. Example 3 showed that the teacher asked about the last material in Indonesian to remind and to brainstorm whether they still remembered the last material or not because what they had to do on that meeting had relation with the last material.

Since comprehension was related to understanding, it might be advisable to teach the young learners not only with English because at the same time the children also learned their L1. Banning the use of L1 in L2 learning “removes important and powerful tool for learning” because L1 was seen “as a tool to mediate the learner’s thinking about the subject” (Manara, 2007). Therefore, using the combination of the two languages was allowed since it helped the teaching and learning process. L1 as the main language for the students would give benefit to them in understanding the topic being discussed. It was shown by the students’ attitudes in the classroom. When the teacher only used English, sometimes the students were confused and just kept silent and did nothing. Then, the teacher shifted the language into their L1. As a result, the students could do what the teacher asked to do. So, in checking the students’ comprehension, L1 was still needed to help the students understand the material better.

5. Explaining new (unfamiliar) words

Since English was something new for the students, there must be English words which were difficult for the young learners to understand. Therefore, the teacher needed to translate the meaning in their L1. Here were the examples:

1. **Meatball, apa itu meatball? Meatball itu apa? Siapa yang pernah makan meatball? Meatball tu apa sih? Bakso. Siapa pernah makan bakso?** (Meatball, what is meatball? Who have ever eaten meatball? What is meatball?)
2. Soybean cake tu apa sih? Soybean cake tu apa sih? Tempe. (What is soybean cake?)

Example 1 and 2 showed that the teacher used L1 when asking whether the students knew the meaning of certain words or the name of the thing she brought for their activities. Based on the classroom observation, the teacher showed the things related to the unfamiliar words first, asked them about the thing, and when nobody knew the answer, she directly translated it in their L1 because “the absence of the students’ first language when explaining the unfamiliar can raise the level of anxiety the students feel” (Meyer, 2008: 151). Hence, the teacher used L1 to avoid the students’ anxiety and to make the students understand and familiar with the meaning of English words. Here, L1 could be seen as an efficient tool “for achieving students’ comprehension of vocabulary and of difficult concepts” (Mouhanna, 2009: 3). Therefore, the teacher used L1 in explaining about the new words to make them understand and avoid misunderstanding of things they would use for the activity.

6. Reprimanding the students

The last purpose of using L1 in teaching English to preschool students was to reprimand the students. Reprimanding the students was like giving advice or suggestion and to remind the students that what they did was actually wrong and the students should not do that. Here were the examples when the teacher should use L1 in reprimanding the students:

1. **Kunci mulutnya. Tutup mulutnya.** (Zip your mouth. Zip your mouth.)
2. **Yang bisa duduk bagus dapat kertasnya.** (Only for those who can sit nicely will get the paper.)
3. **Nggak bisa dimakan ya?** (It cannot be eaten, ok?)
4. **Jangan digigit nanti kalau habis gimana?** (Do not bite your fingers.)
5. **O o Nayaka, nggak boleh bilang jelek-jelek gitu ya.** (Nayaka, you must not say those words.)
6. **Nggak teriak-teriak.** (No shouting.)
7. *O o Kalau cerita terus nanti salah satu duduk di belakang aja, nggak mau mana tangannya, hadapnya sini Angel, jangan hadap Hanadel.* (If both of you talk and do not pay attention to me, one of you should sit at the back. If you do not want to sit at the back, please face this way. Angel, face this way, face miss, not face Hanadel.)

8. *Glue nya sudah, Nayaka ndak mainan glue terus.* (Enough with the glue? Nayaka, do not play with the glue.)

9. *Aduh mainannya simpan dulu ya, Iya nanti Miss betulin ya.* (Please keep your toys. Do not play with the toys. Later Miss will fix your toys.)

10. *Hans td duduknya mana Ayo ayo ayo hans pinter, enggak, hans tadi duduknya mana, sini. Habis ini Hans dapet itu lho cupcake lho. Yaa, mau ok.* (Hans, where is your seat? Come on Hans. No, that is not your seat. Where is your seat Hans? Here is your seat Hans. After this, Hans will get the cupcake, but please sit at your chair.)

Example 1-4 showed that when the students were busy and did not pay attention to the teacher’s explanation, the teacher used L1 to ask them to keep silent. Similarly, Schweers (1999) in Nazary (2008) encouraged “teachers to use the native language in the lesson to influence the classroom dynamic.” It really helped since the teacher also warned them that if the students were still busy, they would not get the material to make their art and craft. As a result, the students could pay attention to the teacher after the teacher said those words in Indonesian. “When the native language is used” (Auerbach, 1993 in Nazary, 2008), the teacher would get positive results. It could be seen from the examples 1-4 that L1 could control the students’ behavior in the classroom.

Examples 5-7 showed that in reprimanding the students, especially when the students talked with their friends and did not pay attention to the teacher’s explanation, the teacher used L1 to get the students attention. It was a kind of classroom organization purpose where the teacher wanted to communicate to certain students and informed that what they did was actually not good. Cook (2001) in Song (2009) identified that the use of L1 in reprimanding the students or maintaining their discipline
could have positive result. It was effective because after the
teacher looked angry and said those words in examples 5-7, the
students were silent and paid attention to the teacher.

Besides being used when the students talked with their
friends, L1 was also used when the students played with their
toys or with the material used for the activity given, like example
8 and 9. The purpose was the same, to get the students’ attention.
As a result, the students could listen to the teacher’s explanations
and did not get busy with themselves.

Based on the example 10, L1 was used to reprimand a
student. The advice given told him that what he did was actually
not good and he should not do that. The result was also the
same. The students could do what the teacher asked them to do.

Looking at the examples 1-10, it could be said that L1 was
effective in reprimanding the students because not all the pre-
school students there could understand English. So, in dealing
with the students’ attitudes, L1 was suitable. The students would
understand what the teacher said and the teacher did not need to
do the translation because she had used the language that was
understandable to the students in the classroom. It would also
save the time (Liu et al, 2004 in Song, 2009) because if in
reprimanding the students the teacher used both L1 and English,
it would waste time since the time allocation for one lesson was
only 30 minutes.

CONCLUSION

Since the use of L1 in EFL classroom becomes a debatable
issue and creates pros and cons among the scholars, this study was
aimed to find out the teacher’s purposes of using Indonesian when
teaching English to pre-school students. One research question had
been raised: For what purposes did the teacher use L1 when teaching
English to pre-school students in Satya Wacana Children Centre?
To answer the question, this study used classroom observation. The
data was transcribed and classified based on the theme provided.

Butzkamm (2003) in Szendrli (2010: 41) said that “the
general guidelines in many countries recommend that lessons be
planned to be as monolingual as possible, drawing on the mother
tongue only when difficulties arise.” I wanted to know the proportion of the use of L1 and English because it seemed difficult to determine the appropriate proportion since the language used should also depend on the level of the learners. Therefore, this study would only focus on the L1 used in the classroom. As I observed the class, I found some functions or rules of L1 in teaching English to pre-school students. Those functions actually appeared because of some situations which forced the teacher to use L1 in her teaching and learning process.

The data showed that the teacher used L1 to convey meaning when she responded to the students’ answers and questions and when she wanted to convey information or explanation she had just shared, like for example the information about the stick used in art and craft lesson was sharp, information about how many fingers shown by the teacher and also information about what they were going to do on the meeting and on the next meeting. The second purpose of using L1 was to give instructions, for example when the teacher explained about the steps to make their art and craft, when the teacher saw students had finished their works, when the teacher explained to the students about what they should do and should not do, when the teacher explained about the students’ homework and when the teacher saw the students did their works in wrong way. The next purpose was to give feedback to the students. The feedback could be in the form of appraising and guiding when the teacher saw the students’ works, whether the students had finished their works or not. The next was to check the students’ comprehension about the material being discussed on that meeting or about the material they had learned before. The other purpose was to explain new or unfamiliar words. The teacher used L1 since L1 was the students’ main language. The last purpose found in the data was to reprimand the students. It could be in the form of advice or suggestion, for example when the students were talking with their friends and did not pay attention to the teacher or when the students played with their toys. The last purpose proposed in the observation protocol, that was discussing the test or assignments, was not found in the data collection because there was no test or assignment in the classroom. All the assignments were done by the teacher’s help and guidance so that the teacher would come to the students and guide them to do their works in the form of feedback.
Based on the finding above, it could be concluded that complete deletion of L1 in teaching English, especially in the early age of the learners, is not suitable because “teacher talk is the major source of comprehensible target language input” (Nunan, 1991 in Szendrli, 2010) and the use of L1 “can assist in the teaching and learning process” (Tang, 2002 in Kim and Petraki, 2009). So, the language used by the teacher affects the students’ understanding of the lessons. Therefore, the teacher should use the language that is understandable to the students to help them understand what the teacher talked about. Although the primary mean of communication should be English, the learners’ L1 can be a mean of instructions since the findings showed that L1 can be used in certain situations. Mattioli (2004) in Nazary (2008) also gave similar functions of L1 in an EFL classroom toward the finding. They are: explaining vocabulary, giving instructions, reprimanding students, and talking to individual students or giving feedback to the students. Brown (2001) in Nazary (2008) confirmed that “this is when students feel that the task is too hard, or that the directions are not clear, or that the task is not interesting, or that they are not sure of the purpose of the task, then teachers may invite students to take shortcuts via their native language.” So, for certain situations, L1 can still be used.

The pre-school teachers basically should pay attention to the language they use in the classroom. Regarding the importance of using L1 in certain areas, the teachers are expected not to ignore the learners’ L1. They have to have in mind that both target language and L1 serve important functions in teaching the target language. Perhaps, the teachers cannot say that this language is better than another language because in teaching the new language, the level and also the ability or the mastery of the new language have to be considered in choosing what language or languages used in teaching English. Therefore, further research on the use of L1 in upper level like senior or junior high school need to be done to know to what extent L1 is used. The findings can also be compared and perhaps it can be thorough discussion since the use of L1 is debatable. Therefore, if in upper level L1 is still used, it may create an interesting discussion between the use of L1 in low and upper level.
REFERENCES


