

Creating Full English Atmosphere in Teaching English to Young Learners: Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

This research has two objectives; 1) to explore teachers' belief about the use of full English during learning activities, and 2) to determine the factors that affected the use of full English in teaching English to teach English to young learners. Embedded mixed method was used in this study. The quantitative data were collected by distributing 1 set of closed-response questionnaire item to 38 teachers of English who teach English at elementary schools in Palembang, the capital city of South Sumatera Province, Indonesia. Meanwhile, the qualitative data were collected from one-to-one in-depth interviews with 15 teachers of English who were willing to be interviewed. Students' responses to each questionnaire item were analyzed using descriptive statistics analysis by SPSS program. Meanwhile, the qualitative data retrieved from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. The use of full English for teaching young learners by employing mixed method research has become the novelty of the research. It was revealed from the study that first, teachers shared positive beliefs about the use of full English while teaching English in the class. Second, there are five factors that affected the use of full English during learning activities; 1) The English Proficiency of the teachers; 2) School Policy; 3) The homogeneous level of students' language performance 4) Teacher's classroom management skills and 5) Students' attitude toward English.

Keywords: full English; teachers' perspective; teaching English to young learners

INTRODUCTION

Since English is an international language used as the tool to communicate among people in the world, it has become the compulsory subject that must be taught for students at junior and senior high schools in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the Indonesian government does not require English to be taught at elementary schools; it depends on the school policy since the government gives the authority to the decision makers at elementary schools to decide to have English as the required subject to teach as the local content of their school curriculum. However, the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, has signaled that English will be the required subject to teach to all students of elementary schools in Indonesia.

In terms of language theories, as a second language, English should be taught starting at a young age. From the age of 8 till their critical age (12 years old), it is the most appropriate time to introduce children to learn second or foreign language. Even with that, it is believed that children will acquire a new language better than those who learn the language in the age of puberty (Hu, 2016). In order to maximize the input of the language, the teacher must be optimal to expose the English language to the students. In order to maximize the input of the language, the teacher must be optimal to expose the English language to the students (Syafryadin, 2020; Martina, Syafryadin, Saputra & Rakhmanina, 2020). Since the principle of language acquisition stated that “acquiring a language is ‘picking it up,’ i.e., developing ability in language by using it in natural, communicative situations” (Mani, 2016)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is not a new thing in second language acquisition (SLA). CLT can be seen as one of the best teaching approaches as it has a clearly characterized set of classroom activities (Renukadevi, 2016). According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), the five features of CLT are: 1) Interaction in the target language is emphasized through oral communication, 2) Learning situations are converted from authentic texts, 3) Learners are given chances to focus more on the learning process, 4) Learners’ own personal experiences become crucial elements to classroom

learning, and 5) Classroom language learning is linked with language activities outside the classroom. Therefore, the main focus of CLT is the use of the proper target language in communication by focusing on learners' personal experiences and the use of the language outside the classroom.

In some situations, the use of L1 in teaching the target language, in this case English, cannot be avoided, especially in the case where English serves as a foreign language. Studies on the use of L1 in the teaching of English as a foreign language have been around for almost 30 years (Madrinan, 2014; Levine, 2014; Aktekin & Uysal, 2015; Du, 2016; Hasrina, Aziz, & Fitriani, 2018; Mayo, 2019). From the studies, there are some benefits of utilizing sufficient L1 in English teaching: first, students can learn new vocabulary. Second, contrastive analysis could happen. Next, teachers can correct and clarify mistakes and errors made by the students. Then, students can have a lower anxiety level. Last, students can develop autonomy when they do the tasks. A study conducted by Donoso (2020) also showed that teachers used L1 in L2 classroom in order they could preserve the relationship with their students. Prohibiting the use of mother tongue in EFL class is unrealistic even could violate human right (Galali & Cinkara, 2017). However, there are also disadvantages of the use of L1 in English teaching as suggested by Bozorgian and Fallahpour (2015) and Yildiz and Yeşilyurt (2016). Their studies mentioned that one disadvantage of the use of L1 in English learning is that students cannot get enough exposure to the target language. As a consequence of insufficient exposure, students' fluency will be weakened (Yadav, 2014; Lew, 2016; Brevik & Rindal, 2020). This situation can happen especially if there is excessive exposure of L1 in English learning as suggested by Pablo, Lengeling, Zenil, Crawford, and Goodwin's (2011) study which mentioned that students would exclusively use L1 and they would not have the chance to practice English if L1 was allowed in English teaching. Considering the benefit and disadvantages of the use of L1 in English teaching, it can be concluded that teachers can sufficiently use L1 in teaching the L2.

Besides the issue of the use of L1 in English teaching using CLT, another issue, which has become important to notice, is the role of the teacher. The teacher plays an important role in CLT, who serves as a facilitator for the

students (Brown, 2015). Brown (2015) added that their task is to give the chance for the students to be able to participate in the process of collaborative and cooperative learning. In some cases, teachers sometimes face difficulties in applying the CLT in the classroom. As mentioned by Kelch (2011), the causes of the problems are due to the insufficiency of training or lack of favorable circumstances to practice the CLT techniques, fewer skills and/or less self-confidence in their own English abilities, and less time in their work programme to create communicative activities. Those statements are supported by Al-wassabi (2016) who mentioned that if the teacher failed to support students in their attempts to talk using the language they learn, this would eventually postpone present and future opportunities to speak the language. Shamsipour and Allami (2012) also added that teachers should be able to control their use of language because it would be as important as their ability to choose suitable teaching method they used to teach the students. Thus, it is the teacher's decision to use full English on their teaching.

Students also play a significant part in the teaching and learning process as it is a mutual process between the students and the teacher. One of the most important issues associated with students is their perception. Student perceptions have been frequently identified with two objectives in the literature: perceptions of themselves, and perceptions of the learning condition (Wesely, 2012). How students understand and make sense of themselves and their own learning is perceived as perceptions of themselves (Waddington, 2019; Resmini, 2019). Learner perceptions of the learning condition are comprised of how students undergo and comprehend aspects of the classroom, like teacher behaviors (Demiroz & Yeşilyurt, 2015). Students observe their teacher behaviors. They will know whether their teacher is confidence or not. Moreover, some problems might arise from students. Kelch (2011) mentioned that students might, in some circumstances, possess low English proficiency which make them unable to easily engage in communicative activities, and might also demonstrate little or even no motivation to learn English as a means of authentic communication, and might oppose to participate in classroom activities required by CLT.

Therefore, optimizing the use of English in the class then becomes the important issue in foreign language teaching, especially in the case of CLT involved. The same case also happened in Palembang. There were pros and cons related to the use of L1 in English classroom. These pros and cons made us interested in conducting this research which aimed at exploring teachers' belief in using full English while teaching English to young learners and finding out the factors that influence the use of full English in EFL young learners' classes in Palembang. Consequently, the use of full English for teaching young learners by employing mixed method research becomes the novelty of the research.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study was mixed method data collection. This method was utilized with two kinds of data collections; quantitative and qualitative were required to answer the research questions proposed in this study (Creswell, 2014; Kumar, 2015; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012). Meanwhile, the design of mixed method used in this study was embedded design. The design was chosen since this study needed secondary data to answer the secondary research question to support the primary data (Creswell, 2014; Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

In this research the primary data were collected through cross-sectional survey design. This type of survey was selected because the aim of the study is to assess current data about teachers' beliefs on the use of full English in the class during the activities of teaching English to young learners (Creswell, 2014; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012; Kumar, 2015). Meanwhile, the secondary data were obtained through one-to-one in-depth interviews with teachers who taught English to Elementary students in Palembang in order to explore their perceptions about the factors that influenced the use of full English in young learners' class.

Research Site and Participants

This research was conducted in Palembang, the capital city of South Sumatra Province in Indonesia. The target participants of our study were teachers of English of elementary schools in Palembang. We used convenient

research sampling since not all elementary schools decide to require English to be taught to students. Thus, we only chose the elementary English teachers who are available (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2012; Creswell, 2014; Panneerselvam, 2014). We have conducted a demographic survey to collect information about those English language teachers. Based on the survey, there were 21 elementary schools which possessed the policy to establish English as one of required subjects to be taught to the students. Most of the schools are private schools, which require even all teachers to use English as medium of instruction for all subjects. From those 21 elementary schools there were 38 teachers of English available and willing to be the participants of the survey. All of the teachers were considered young in the range of age around 21 to 44 years old. All of the teachers have acquired a bachelor degree in English Education and had training related to teaching English to young learners. After conducting the survey, there were 15 teachers who were willing to be interviewed in order to explore their perception on the factors influence the use of full English in the classroom. As the ethic of the research, the names are shortened to initials.

Data Collections

Two kinds of data were needed to answer each research problem. In order to find out teachers' beliefs on the use of full English in teaching English to young learner, the quantitative data were collected by distributing the questionnaire via email to the teachers. The questionnaire consisted of 15 closed responded items with Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Not Sure), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree) related to teachers' beliefs on the use of full English in teaching English to young learners. The teachers were asked to respond to each item of the questionnaire by choosing one scale among 5 scales provided.

The list of closed response questionnaire items are displayed in Table 1. Meanwhile in order to collect teachers' perceptions toward the factor that influences the use of full English in the class, the qualitative data were collected by having one-to-one in-depth interviews with the teachers of English who teach at Elementary schools in Palembang.

Table 1. List of Closed-response Questionnaire Items

Item	Statement
Item 1	Using full English in the class is important to implement for teaching English to young learners
Item 2	I use full English in teaching my students at elementary school
Item 3	It is not necessary to switch to Indonesian while teaching in my class
Item 4	I feel uncomfortable to speak English all the time in my class
Item 5	I condition my students to speak in English in the class
Item 6	It is necessary to establish rules to always speak English in the class
Item 7	Switching to Indonesian could reduce the input of English language as the form of language exposure in the class
Item 8	Students' English mastery will be decreasing if the teacher mixes the use of English and Indonesian while teaching English in the class
Item 9	It is unnecessary to enforce full English for teaching English to young learners
Item 10	Using full English in my class makes me frustrated
Item 11	I let my students to speak Indonesian anytime they want in my English class
Item 12	I set limits for my students to speak in Indonesian while learning English in the class
Item 13	I always try to make all my students understand what I am instructing without having to switch to Indonesian
Item 14	My students are more comfortable when I mix Indonesian and English when explaining the material
Item 15	Switching to Indonesian can bridge the communication between me and the students

Data Analysis

The quantitative data retrieved from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics to see the mean score of the teachers' responses toward each questionnaire item. Descriptive statistics analysis was performed using SPSS. The mean score of the range of Likert Scale was then classified based on the classification proposed by Joshi, Kale, and Chandel (2015). The classification is listed in Table 2.

Meanwhile the qualitative data were analyzed by using Thematic analysis proposed by Creswell (2012).

Table 2. Range of Scale

Respons	Range of Scale
Strongly Disagree	> 1 to 1,8
Disagree	> 1,8 to 2,6
Undecided	> 2,6 to 3,4
Agree	> 3,4 to 4,2
Strongly Agree	> 4,2 to 5

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this result section, we described the results of data analysis conducted to answer each research problem we proposed in this study. The description of the finding for each research question is as follows:

Teachers’ belief toward the use of full English in teaching English for young learners

Descriptive statistics analysis was conducted to find out the frequency of the scale for each item and mean score of the Likert scales and the mean score was converted into the scale based on categories proposed by Joshi, kale, Chandel (2015) for each item of the questionnaire responded by the teachers. The result of the analysis is listed in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. The Results of Descriptive Statistics Analysis

	N	Mean	Scale	Std. Deviation
item1	38	4,0526	Agree	1,01202
item2	38	3,2632	Undecided	,89092
item3	38	3,5526	Agree	1,13179
item4	38	2,4211	Disagree	1,40716
item5	38	3,6579	Agree	1,04691
item6	38	4,2105	Strongly Agree	1,06943
item7	38	3,5526	Agree	1,10765
item8	38	3,2368	Undecided	1,02494
item9	38	2,6316	Disagree	1,30324
item10	38	1,5526	Strongly Disagree	,95003
item11	38	2,0789	Disagree	1,07506
item12	38	3,6842	Agree	1,06809
item13	38	3,8158	Agree	1,08691
item14	38	3,7632	Agree	1,17253
item15	38	3,7368	Agree	1,05739
Valid N (listwise)	38			

Table 4. The Result of Frequency of the Scale for each Item

Item	Frequency (Percentage)				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2,6	2,6	23,7	28,9	42,1
2	0	21,1	39,5	31,6	7,9
3	7,9	5,3	31,6	34,2	21,1
4	36,8	26,3	0	31,6	5,3
5	0	18,4	21,1	36,8	23,7
6	5,3	0	15,8	26,3	52,6
7	0	18,4	36,8	15,8	28,9
8	5,3	13,2	47,4	21,1	13,2
9	28,9	13,2	31,6	18,4	7,9
10	65,8	21,1	7,9	2,6	2,6
11	36,8	31,6	21,1	7,9	2,6
12	2,6	13,2	21,1	39,5	23,7
13	5,3	5,3	21,1	39,5	28,9
14	7,9	5,3	18,4	39,5	28,9
15	5,3	2,6	31,6	34,2	26,3

From the data listed in Table 4, it can be inferred that teachers of English who teach young learner students have positive perceptions about the use of full English in teaching English to young learners. It was proved that first, the teachers agreed that using full English in the class is important to implement for teaching English to young learners. Second, the teachers agreed that it is not necessary to switch to Indonesian while teaching. Third, they felt comfortable to speak English all the time in their class. Fourth, they conditioned their students to speak in English in the class. Fifth, the teachers had the same opinion that it is necessary to establish rules to always speak English in the class. Sixth, the teachers had the same belief that switching to Indonesian could reduce the input of English language as the form of language exposure in the class. Seventh, the teachers argued that it is necessary to enforce full English for teaching English to young learners. Eighth, the teachers strongly agreed that using full English in the class while teaching do not make them frustrated. Ninth, they disagreed to let their students to speak Indonesian anytime they want in the class. Tenth, they agreed to set limits to their students to speak in Indonesian while learning English in the class. Eleventh, the teachers agreed to always try to make all students understand what they were instructing without having to switch to Indonesian.

Even though most of the teachers shared the same opinion that they had a positive attitude toward the use of full English in teaching English to young learners, some of them felt unsure that they have spoken English all the time while teaching. However, from the data listed in Table 4, some other teachers (39.5 %) agreed that they have used English all the time during learning activities. From Table 4, it was revealed that most teachers (78,4%) still believed that their students would not feel comfortable if they needed to speak English all the time, but there were some teachers disagreed (13,2 %). Finally, some teachers believed that switching the language into Indonesian still needed to bridge the communication between the teachers and the students.

The factors that influence the use of full English in teaching English to young learners

Based on the results of thematic analysis from the results of the interviews with teachers of English, we have got 5 themes related to the factors that influence the use of full English in teaching English to their elementary school students. The themes are described as follows:

The English proficiency of the teachers

Based on the interviews conducted with the teachers, it was revealed that most of teachers argued that one of the factors that influence the use of full English in the class depends on the level of teachers' English proficiency. Teacher functions as the model especially in speaking. In modelling how to speak well to students automatically the teacher must have good mastery in English language. One of the teachers name R mentioned:

A good teacher must be a good example for their students in the class. They absolutely have to able to communicate English well to give much and good English language input to their students (personal communication, 2020).

Besides, most of the teachers shared similar comments that having good ability in communicating in English language will urge the teachers to try to keep speaking in English during the process of teaching in learning activities. From the interview to the teachers, we got the information that the teachers frequently felt desperate in speaking English all the time in the class. One of the teachers named UW clarified:

I frequently switched the language to Indonesian since I felt desperate in finding the way to communicate to my students especially when the students could not get the message that the teacher intended to deliver to them (personal communication, 2020).

The other teacher named TF said:

By not being fluent, the teachers could feel desperate to speak English. The desperate feeling emerged because the teachers were not fluent enough to speak English. The teachers mostly think first what they have to utter to their students in English. This condition could make the teachers feel frustrated if they are required to speak English all the time to their students (personal communication, 2020).

Another teacher named SS said:

By having good ability in English, the teacher must have tried their best to speak English all the time and condition their students to do the same thing as well (personal communication, 2020).

It can be inferred that being fluent affected the use of full English in the class. By having good mastery in communicating in English, the teachers can always give so much language exposure to the students, which is expected to become good language input and output as well. Besides, a good capability in communicating in English makes the teacher easily try to find out strategy to get their students understand all of the things that the teachers intend to say.

School policy

Another factor that could affect the use of full English in the class gained from the interviews with the teachers was school policy. Some teachers commented that the proportion of English language to be used in the class would not be effective if it is only the personal decision of the teacher. Support from the school is a must. The most important support is from the headmaster of the school as the decision maker that becomes school policy. One of the teachers named DW argued:

The school must commit to the rules about how English should be used in the class. Whether English must be used fully during the process of teaching and learning activities or perhaps there could be possibility to switch the language. The rules must be legalized by the headmaster after discussion with the teachers (personal communication, 2020).

Besides, the policy is also needed to maximize the use of English language at school. Some teachers shared similar opinions that the use of English cannot be maximal if it is required only in the class. Some teachers agreed that the school environment should support the students to use English at school. It can be established through policy. One of the teachers named MK said:

The students basically are willing to speak English if the language exposure is enough. Besides in the class, there should be rules that English must be used outside the class. For example in the library or even when they have casual conversation among them outside the class (personal communication, 2020).

Another teacher named ZK clarified:

The rules must be clear that English must be used inside or outside the class. The rules must be established among the teachers, thus the decision to use full English is not based on personal decision (personal communication, 2020).

In conclusion, the use of full English is affected by the definite rules as the policy of the school. If the rules are established, there will be no permissive action to switch the English language into Indonesian in the learning processes. Either the teachers or the students will seriously regards the rules that make them aware about the obligation for always using English. Finally, to make the students to be exposed more to English and to make them more fluent to use English. The use of English should be habituated not only as requirement in the class but also outside the class.

The homogeneous level of students' language performance

We got the information from the interview that most of the teachers shared the same opinion that that the homogeneous level of students' language performance also affected the use of full English in teaching English to young learners. By having the same level of performance of the students in one class, it will be easier for the teacher to determine the language material and to select appropriate diction while teaching in the class. One of the teachers named UF clarified:

The weaknesses of the school system in Indonesia is that we do not determine the same level of proficiency of the students we teach in our class. Somehow with the heterogeneous level of our students' proficiency

made us quite confused on deciding what materials for teaching which suit to our students. Besides, we also a bit confuse on choosing the appropriate level of diction we need to use to give instruction to our students (personal communication, 2020).

Meanwhile the other teachers shared similar opinion related to this matter.

Teacher's classroom management skills

Another factor which influenced the use of full English while teaching English to young learners is teacher's classroom management skills. It was revealed that some teachers do not motivate their students to speak English in the class. They just let their students use Indonesian anytime they want. One of the teachers named STR confirmed,

Some teachers sometimes do not know how to motivate the students well to encourage them to always to speak English in the class. This condition make those teachers just to let their students to speak in Indonesian anytime they want (personal communication, 2020).

Some other teachers added that they had difficulties deciding an effective strategy that could prompt the students to speak English fully during the learning process. One of the teachers named M said

The teachers had lack of skills to manage the class especially in maintaining the activities that support the habituation of using English all the time in the class (personal communication, 2020).

Finally, teachers mostly felt it was complicated to make the students understand about the material explained in full English instruction. Most of them were not really patient and took a shortcut, which is switching the language into Indonesian when they found their students still could not get what they tried to say. One of the teachers named E clarified,

There were moments that made me desperate, when I have tried hard to explain everything in English but my students could not catch me, thus I mostly switch my code into Indonesian to make them understand (personal communication, 2020).

Thus, besides the important thing to be considered, it is not only the proficiency of the teachers that allow them to speak English all the time while teaching but also the skills to manage to students to maximize them to speak English during learning activities.

Students' attitude toward English

From the results of the interview, it was revealed that students' attitude toward English influence the use of full English in the class. Most of the teachers admit that they are ready if they are required to maximize the input of English language to the students by encouraging them to speak English and by always delivering the materials using full English. However, the teachers clarified that they frequently found that some students were reluctant to speak English. They kept using their mother tongue. One of the teachers name DK said

I have tried to optimize myself to use English in my class, I also have tried hard but I frequently found that there were students that seemed uninterested to follow the lesson. I just wondered if they felt uncomfortable if I used English all the time during learning activities (personal communication, 2020).

Discussion

From the results of the questionnaire, it could be seen that most of teachers shared the same opinion on the use of full English on the teaching and learning activities. It could also be viewed that they also had the similar belief that using full English is a must in school so that students could use and understand English well. They also had an equal perspective that speaking the mother-tongue language, Indonesian in this case, could decrease the input of English received by the students. They also shared corresponding view that most of them felt comfortable in speaking English by conditioning the students to speak English all the time in the class, establishing rules to always speak English in teaching and learning time, and making the students understand the instruction without having to switch to Indonesian. They also mentioned that using English in the class while teaching did not make them feel frustrated.

However, the results of the interviews stated contrary impressions. From the very first category of English proficiency of the teachers, where the teachers shared their concern of not being able to speak English all the time in the class due to their lack of confidence in speaking 'good' English. They also stated that they felt desperate to speak English all the time in the class because they were afraid the students would not understand them. Thus, the condition made them switch to Indonesian whenever they felt the need to. Their concern then

continued in school policy where they insisted that the proportion of English used in the class must be supported by school policy which rules to maximize the use of English also outside the class. Then, they complained about the heterogeneity level of students' language performance, which was one of the problems faced by the teachers in using full English in the class. Next, the teachers also mentioned about their classroom management skills, which became the obstacle in their teaching. They brought this problem up by stating that they had no motivation to encourage student to speak English in the class due to the difficulty in deciding effective strategy that could maximize the students' ability to use full English during learning process and the inability to make students understand the instruction given fully in English. Finally, the teachers told about students' attitudes toward English as a barrier in allowing them to use full English in the classroom. They said that the students were reluctant to speak English and they kept coming back to Indonesian during the learning process. This condition led the students to feel uninterested to continue with the lesson.

From the results of the interview, we could see that the teachers pushed themselves to create a perfect situation reflected on CLT. They tried really hard to speak English all the time in the class even though they knew that the students' low English ability was a hurdle in their communication in class. They also raise the problem of class management and students' attitudes toward English, which became a barrier in creating the ideal class situation. The problems they faced were the same as revealed by Kelch (2011). If this situation worsens, it will create more issues for the teachers and the students alike. This situation will make the teachers' job harder. Therefore, the teachers should be able to cope with the situations. They should allow enough use of L1 in the class interaction so that they can maintain their relationship with their students as recommended by Donoso (2020).

Some recommendations were given to the teachers. To enhance their speaking ability, teachers have to spare time to practice their English outside the school. They can do that by engaging in professional training. They could try to do various teaching skills and methods in order to make the students interested in the lesson. They can incorporate some games and songs in their

lessons. As suggested by Brown (2015) that the role of teacher is as facilitator. Thus, they should be able to facilitate students to speak more. Otherwise, they would delay students' progress in speaking English as stated by Al-wassabi (2016). Besides, students learn from through their own personal experience (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Therefore, teachers should leave the students with good memories of learning English.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data analysis, it can be concluded that first, teachers shared positive beliefs about the use of full English while teaching English students at elementary schools. Second, there are five factors that affected the use of full English during learning activities; 1) The English proficiency of the teachers; 2) School policy; 3) The homogeneous level of students' language performance and 4) Teacher's classroom management skills and 5) Students' attitude toward English. Other researchers interested on this matter could explore more on the teaching strategies or students' point of view on learning English using CLT.[rgt]

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