

**THE FUNCTION OF FIRST LANGUAGE IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO  
THE ELEVENTH GRADE OF SOCIAL STUDENTS AT SMAN 1  
BANYUDONO IN 2015/2016 ACADEMIC YEAR**



**PUBLICATION ARTICLE**

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by

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**MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA**

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**APPROVAL**

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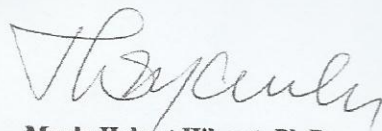
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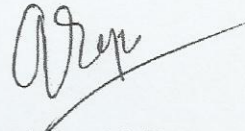
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**School of Teacher Training and Education**

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**on July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

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### TESTIMONY

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Grade of Social Students at SMAN 1 Banyudono in 2015/2016  
Academic Year

Herewith, the researcher states that in this research paper, there is no plagiarism of the previous studies which has been raised to obtain bachelor degree of university, except there are opinions or master pieces which have been written or publisher by the other, mentioned in the bibliography.

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Surakarta, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
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**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan fungsi bahasa Indonesia dan alasan guru menggunakan bahasa Indonesia dalam mengajar bahasa Inggris untuk kelas 11 IPS di SMAN 1 Banyudono pada tahun ajaran 2015/2016. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis data. Subjek dalam penelitian ini adalah seorang guru bahasa Inggris kelas 11 IPS di SMAN 1 Banyudono. Data dalam penelitian ini diperoleh dari wawancara dengan guru bahasa Inggris dan proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kelas 11 IPS di SMAN 1 Banyudono pada tahun ajaran 2015/2016. Ada 2 sumber data dalam penelitian ini, yaitu: peristiwa dan responden. Peristiwa yakni proses pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kelas 11 IPS di SMAN 1 Banyudono, sedangkan responden yakni guru bahasa Inggris kelas 11 IPS di SMAN 1 Banyudono. Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini adalah observasi dan penelitian. Terdapat 6 langkah dalam menganalisis data, yakni: a) menulis catatan; b) membaca kembali; c) pengelompokkan; d) pengkodean; e) membuat tabel, dan f) penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat 50 data yang diklasifikasi menjadi 9 fungsi bahasa Indonesia: a) menjelaskan tugas; b) memberikan perintah; c) mengatur kelas d) memberikan koreksi; e) mengecek pemahaman siswa; f) menerjemahkan kata dan kalimat; g) menjelaskan grammar; h) mengomentari pekerjaan siswa; i) berinteraksi kepada siswa. Terdapat 7 alasan mengapa guru menggunakan bahasa Indonesia dalam pelajaran bahasa Inggris: a) untuk memberikan perintah; b) untuk menerjemahkan bahasa asing; c) untuk mengomentari pekerjaan siswa; d) untuk memberikan feedback dan mengoreksi kesalahan; e) untuk menjaga kedisiplinan; f) untuk berinteraksi dengan siswa; and g) untuk mengecek pemahaman.

Kata kunci : alasan, fungsi, bahasa pertama, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris

## **Abstract**

This study aims to describe the function of first language in teaching English and the teacher reasons of using first language in teaching English to the eleventh grade of social students at SMAN 1 Banyudono in 2015/2016 academic year. This study used descriptive qualitative method in analysing the data. The subject of this study is an English teacher to the eleventh grade of social students at SMAN 1 Banyudono. The data in the study were got from interviewing the English teacher and the teaching learning process in which the teacher involved in the eleventh grade of social students at SMAN 1 Banyudono in 2015/2016 academic year. The data source were event and respondent. The event was the teaching learning process of English subject in the eleventh grade of social students at SMAN 1 Banyudono. The respondent in this study was an English teacher of eleventh grade of social students at SMAN 1 Banyudono. The techniques of collecting were interview and observation. There were 6 procedures in analysing the data: a) making a field note and transcribing; b) rereading; c) classifying; d) coding; e) tabulating; f) drawing conclusion. The result of this study showed 50 data and classified into 9 functions of first language: a) explaining exercise; b) giving instruction; c) managing classroom; d) giving feedback and error correction; e) checking understanding; f) translating words and sentences; g) giving comment on the students' work; h) making informal interaction to the students; i) explaining grammar rule. There were 7 reasons that influenced the teacher used first language in teaching English: a) to give instruction; b) to translate new language; c) to give individual comments to the students; d) to give feedback and error correction; e) to maintain discipline; f) to chat with learners; and g) to check comprehension.

**Keyword** : first language, functions, reasons, teaching English

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

English is means of communication for people in several countries, including Indonesia. In schools, English is taught as a foreign language subject in Indonesia. Using first language (L1) in teaching English is unavoidable. The mother tongue for students in Indonesia is Indonesian and regional languages. Recently, it is so important for

teacher to use mother tongue in teaching English for delivering materials in classroom.

According to Nation (2011: 1), second language use in the foreign language classroom should be maximised if it is possible, by encouraging its use and by using it for classroom. However, studies showed that the first language has important role to play in communicating meaning and content.

Teachers often used L1 in beginning and intermediate classes to give instructions, explain meanings of words, explain complex ideas, and explain complex grammar points (Tang, 2002). Many teachers believed that the use of some L1 provides more time to practice L2 because understanding was achieved faster. Teachers used L1 for clarification purposes, after an effort has been made to communicate ideas in L2 and students still look confused. Mart (2013) stated that in making the students really understood what they have to do, giving instructions by using L1 should be needed. Using L1 has advantages to deliver meaning and explain grammar. Moreover, it was beneficial for the students if they used L1 for achieving understanding of L2.

The use of L1 in English class is also reported in previous studies. Febrianingrum (2014) and Hidayati (2012) found that the functions of L1 were for helping define some new vocabulary items, and giving instruction. Both students and teachers found the advantages of using Indonesian in the classroom only when it was needed. Hoff (2013) and Jafari (2013) focused on exploring how the first language (L1) was used in EFL for giving instruction, giving translation, conveying meaning, and explaining English grammatical points.

Based on the previous studies above, it could be concluded that first language has an important role in teaching English. Most previous studies above showed that teacher and students responded positively in the use of L1 in teaching and learning English. Most of previous study focused on the students' perspectives of using L1 in EFL classrooms whereas the current study only focused on the function of L1 used by the teacher and the reasons that influenced the teacher used L1 in EFL classroom. The purposes of this study are: to describe the functions of first language in teaching English and the reasons that influenced the teacher used first language in teaching English to the eleventh grade of social students at SMAN 1 Banyudono in 2015/ 2016 academic year.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

For the purpose of this study, descriptive study was used to describe the functions and reasons of teacher using first language in teaching English to the eleventh grade of social students at SMAN

1 Banyudono. The subject of this study is a male English teacher of eleventh grade of social students at SMAN 1 Banyudono.

The data of this study were the result of interview with a male English teacher and field note of observation containing information about the teaching learning process in which the teacher involved.

The data were classified based on Tang (2002), Eldridge (1996), Butzkamm (2003), Boungeune (2009), and Nazary (2008) theories to identify the functions of first language. The data concerning the reasons of the use of L1 were classified based on Macaro (1997) and Sharma (2006) theories.

### **3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the three times observation, there were 9 functions of using first language in teaching English in which there were found 5 functions in the first observation and 4 functions were in the second observation. They were:

a. Explaining exercise

The teacher explained the exercise that would be done on that day. He explained the purpose of exercise by using L1 for the students to make them understand.

b. Giving instruction

Teacher asked the students to do something such as answering question, doing exercise or presenting the result of discussion in front of the class.

c. Managing classroom

The teacher called the student who made noise by using Javanese, the student's L1, in higher voice to tell him to be quiet, the student was too noisy when the teacher explained the exercise.

d. Giving correction

The teacher corrected the student's answer, his grammar in the answer was still wrong, so the teacher corrected it by using L1 to make the students understand.

e. Checking understanding

If the students were still unclear of what the teacher said, the teacher would explain the material again until the students understood.

f. Translating words and sentences

The students had limited vocabularies so they felt difficult to translate it without the dictionary so the teacher helped them to translate it into Bahasa Indonesia.

g. Explaining grammar rule

The teacher explained grammar rule after there was a student who wrote his answer on the whiteboard.

h. Commenting students' work

This category occurred when the students did the work on the whiteboard and the teacher gave comment on the students' answer.



i. Making informal interaction to the students

The teacher made interaction with the students by using L1 to make them understood and felt closer to their teacher.

The 9 functions found in observation at SMAN 1 Banyudono may be caused by poor students' mastery in English. Similar results were also found in previous studies conducted by Febrianingrum (2014) and Hidayati (2012). In two previous studies, the function of L1 in teaching English were for explaining the material, giving correction, explaining grammar, giving instruction, giving comment to the students' work, joking, and translating difficult vocabulary items.

Since Febrianingrum's study (2014) was located in the same area where the current study was conducted, it is possible that the participants in her study and this current study share similar characteristics, that is students' poor English mastery. Thus, the teacher frequently used L1 to accommodate his students' poor English mastery.

However, compared to previous studies, there were 2 categories that were only found in this current study, these being: checking understanding and making interaction with students. There were 2 possible reasons for this. First, the teacher had 32 years teaching experience, therefore it is possible that he knew exactly what the students need. Since he acknowledged that poor English mastery is his students' weakness he frequently checked understanding through his students L1. Second, it is possible that the teacher personalities also influence the way he taught in the classroom. Based on the observation, the teacher in this study is a typical of serious person. Therefore, in his classroom he rarely tried to engage with the students by making interaction using his students L1.

The functions found in the current study resonate with theoretical perspective proposed by Tang (2002); Eldridge (1996); Butzkamm (2003), Boungeune (2009); and Nazary (2008) regarding the functions of L1 in teaching English.

Based on analysis of data, there were 7 reasons that influenced the teacher used first language in teaching English: a) to give instruction; b) to translate new language; c) to give individual comments to the students; d) to give feedback and error correction; e) to maintain discipline; f) to chat with learners; g) to check comprehension.

Those reasons are similar to the previous study conducted by Febrianingrum (2014). She found the reasons of the teacher using L1 in EFL were to correct students' answer, to facilitate interaction to the students, to comment students' work, to manage classroom, to check the students' comprehension, to explain the meaning of difficult words and sentences, and to make the students relax. So, it is possible that two English teachers at SMKN 1 and SMAN 1 Banyudono had similar opinions in teaching English using L1. This was possibly

inspired by the students' background at two schools which was much not different. They need to be taught using L1 because of their poor mastery in English.

Several reasons above were also in line with the theory of Macaro (1997) and Sharma (2006). Macaro (1997) stated the reasons of using L1 are to: 1) give instruction about activities; 2) check comprehension; 3) give individual comments to the students; 4) give feedback to the students; 5) maintain discipline. Sharma (2006) identifies the reasons of using L1 are to: 1) translate new language; 2) chat with learners; and 3) give error correction.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The results of analysis led to several conclusions. First, there were 9 functions of first language in three times of observation in English classroom, these being: a) explaining exercise; b) giving instruction; c) classroom management; d) giving correction; e) checking understanding; f) translating words and sentences; g) explaining grammar rule; h) giving comment on students' work; and i) making informal interaction with the students. Second, there were 7 reasons that influenced the teacher used L1 in teaching English, these being: a) to give instruction; b) to translate new language; c) to give individual comments to the students; e) to give feedback and error correction; f) to maintain discipline; g) to chat with learners; h) to check comprehension. Third, the frequent L1 used by the teacher possibly due to the students poor English mastery.

The results of the study bring several implications. First, the use of L1 could facilitate the students in comprehending the lesson. Second, on the other hand, if the use of L1 is dominant in English class interaction in the long run, it would endanger the students' English fluency since they were rarely exposed to English. Therefore, the teacher needed to make the right decision to shuttle between English and L1 to give a chance for the students to practice their English.

Based on the result of analysis, this study makes several recommendations. First, the next study could include participants from various level of education to get the complete picture whether each level of education has particular pattern of the function and reason of L1 in the classroom. Second, alternatively, it was interesting to find out the students' responses regarding the use of L1 by the teacher in his/her classroom. Another area that was interesting to explore is whether there was similarity or differences in the way the teachers in the school located in city and in the suburb where in using L1. Finally, since Indonesia has more than 700 regional languages, it was interesting to investigate whether teachers in other provinces/regions also used L1 the same way as the teacher in the current study.

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