

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, the formulation of the research problems, the objectives of the study, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background

In the field of language teaching, language learning is widely viewed as a process that requires adequate exposure to the target language (input) and sufficient opportunities for learners to use the language (output) to develop communicative competence. According to Lightbown and Spada (2020), successful language acquisition largely depends on how frequently learners interact using the language they are learning. However, in many EFL classroom contexts, a common phenomenon is that students tend to use their mother tongue (L1) rather than the target language (L2) when communicating whether asking questions, discussing tasks, or responding to instructions. Although the use of L1 may facilitate comprehension, excessive reliance on it can reduce learners' opportunities to practise English. Therefore, teacher strategies for managing the use of L1 have become increasingly crucial in contemporary language-teaching practices.

In Indonesia, English is taught in an EFL context, meaning that students have very limited exposure to English outside the classroom. As a result, the use of mother tongue either Indonesian or various local languages has become a common communication tool in English classrooms. Studies conducted in Indonesia over the past decade (Musthafa, 2021) show that teachers frequently use L1 to explain difficult concepts, save instructional time, and reduce

students' anxiety. Students likewise feel more comfortable interacting in L1 rather than L2. Consequently, learning objectives that aim to develop communicative competence in English cannot be achieved optimally. This situation strengthens the need for effective teacher strategies to minimise students' over-reliance on L1 while still allowing functional use of two languages through planned translanguaging that supports comprehension.

English teachers in Indonesia face several major challenges in reducing the use of the mother tongue. First, students often have mixed proficiency levels within a single classroom, making it difficult for teachers to provide equal opportunities for English use. Second, low student motivation to speak English has been consistently reported as a major obstacle in Indonesian EFL classrooms (Rahmawati, 2021). Third, many schools have limited access to modern learning resources and technological media, which reduces opportunities for creating rich L2 input. Fourth, teachers are burdened with administrative duties, which restrict their time to design creative and interactive teaching strategies. These challenges often encourage teachers to rely on L1 as a quick and practical solution, even though, from the perspective of Instructed SLA (Loewen, 2020), insufficient L2 exposure may hinder learners' interlanguage development. Therefore, teacher strategies play a central role in balancing students' comfort in using L1 with the pedagogical necessity of practicing L2.

In East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), the challenges of teaching English are even more complex due to the strong presence of local languages such as Dawan, Tetun, and Bunak. These local languages serve not only as everyday

communication tools but also as integral cultural identities, making them highly dominant in social interactions. Regional studies (Seran, 2022) show that students in NTT tend to use local languages more frequently than Indonesian, including inside classrooms. Limited exposure to English outside school further restricts students' ability to sustain L2 use for extended periods. Additionally, many schools in NTT face shortages in facilities, access to experienced teachers, and professional development opportunities. These conditions require teachers to employ adaptive and context-sensitive strategies to ensure that students receive optimal opportunities to use English.

SMA Negeri Kualin is in a rural area of Timor Tengah Selatan Regency, exhibits similar but more specific linguistic challenges. Most students use the Dawan language in their daily communication and feel more comfortable speaking in their mother tongue than in Indonesian, let alone English. During English lessons, students frequently switch to L1 when discussing tasks, asking questions, responding to teachers, or working in groups. Teachers find it difficult to increase students' L2 use because many learners feel shy, lack self-confidence, and making mistakes. Limited facilities such as English-rich environments, digital learning media, and opportunities for communicative practice further intensify the problem. Therefore, teachers at SMA Negeri Kualin need to apply specific strategies such as scaffolding, visual media, classroom language policies, and planned translanguaging to encourage more active use of English.

Teacher strategies in English language teaching aim to: (1) reduce students' dependence on the mother tongue, (2) increase exposure to and use

of English in the classroom, (3) build students' confidence to communicate in L2, and (4) create a supportive learning environment that promotes the development of linguistic competence. From the perspective of Communicative Language Teaching (Richards, 2015), teachers play a major role in designing meaningful interactions that encourage students to use English. Meanwhile, Sociocultural Learning Theory (Lantolf, 2017) emphasizes the importance of teacher scaffolding in helping students transition from their comfort zone in L1 toward more active use of L2. Thus, teacher strategies serve not only as pedagogical techniques but also as essential bridges that enable students' linguistic growth.

This study is of paramount importance as there has been limited research specifically examining how teachers at SMA Negeri Kualin address the dominance of the mother tongue in English learning, a phenomenon that significantly impacts the quality of classroom interaction. While established theories emphasize that adequate target language exposure and consistent opportunities for use are essential for second language acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2020), the reality in many Indonesian EFL contexts is that students frequently revert to their first language due to limited vocabulary, low confidence, and a lack of external linguistic support. Consequently, the findings of this research are expected to provide comprehensive insights into effective strategies for rural school settings, offering practical recommendations for teachers in similar environments and serving as an evaluation tool to improve instructional quality. By strengthening the understanding of these teacher strategies—which serve as the deciding factor

in whether students can overcome L1 dominance this study contributes to the development of more contextually relevant and effective EFL teaching practices, ensuring that the core objectives of English education are fully achieved.

Furthermore, teacher strategies must be studied because each school context presents unique challenges. In rural regions such as NTT, many students are more proficient in their local language than in Indonesian, making the challenge of reducing L1 dependence even greater. Teachers, therefore, need innovative and contextually appropriate approaches to balance the supportive role of the local language with the necessity of practicing English. Researching teacher strategies helps reveal how teachers respond to unique classroom conditions, which pedagogical tools they employ, and how effective these strategies are when implemented in real teaching situations.

1.2 Research Problem

Research problem is a research question that requires research to answer the problem. This research will be conducted to answer the following problem:

1. What strategies do teachers use to minimize the use of mother tongue in English learning at SMA N Kualin?

1.3 Aim of Study

Based on the research problem above, the aim of study to find out:

1. To identify the teacher strategies implemented by teachers to minimize the use of mother tongue in English learning at SMA N KUALIN.

1.4 Significance of Study

Significance of the study consist of both implication and application as below:

1.4.1 Implication

The findings show that teacher strategies to reduce mother tongue (L1) use in Indonesian English classrooms effectively increase students' exposure to and engagement with English (L2). Consistent scaffolding, comprehensible input, and English-based activities help students shift from relying on L1 to actively using English. This aligns with Turnbull and Dailey (2009), who argue that minimizing L1 expands students' opportunities to practice the target language. In Indonesia's limited-input EFL context, such strategies are essential for maximizing L2 exposure and developing communicative competence.

1.4.2 Application

a. English Teachers

This study provides practical insights for English teachers in applying effective strategies to reduce the use of the mother tongue and encourage students to use English more actively in the classroom.

b. Students

This study helps students become more aware of the importance of using English during the learning process, thereby improving their confidence, fluency, and communicative ability.

c. Schools

This study offers valuable input for schools in improving the quality of English teaching, particularly in creating programs that promote English use both inside and outside the classroom.

d. Future Researchers

This study serves as a reference for future researchers who are interested in exploring similar topics related to mother tongue use and teaching strategies in EFL contexts.