

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of The Study

Language is the most important part of human life. Language itself is seen as a medium for everyone to communicate with each other. Without language, humans will not be able to understand each other and understand the meaning between them. Goodwyn & Branson (2013) state that language is the main instrument for people in society because language determines the individual. Apart from being a means of communication, language is also understood as an identity of a society. In this world, there are many languages can be found, and each language has its own role and characteristics. For instance, English has a role as a foreign language for Indonesians and as a second language in some countries that is used in everyday life. As a foreign language, English is not only used in everyday communication. It is also used for some purposes, such as at school, in office, or certain events.

In this globalization era, English is known as an international language and has a large influence. It is used in almost all aspects in life. People mostly use it to communicate with other people from another country. Based on this, it is not only helping people to be able to maintain relations with foreigners, but more than that. Thus, it finally shows that learning English becomes very important.

Furthermore, it has been long emphasized that it is important to use the target language in classroom interaction and the use of first language may have negative effect on student's acquisition of the target language. However, student's first language (L1) use is still a common practice, especially in the EFL context where students have the same L1 background. Some researches may support the idea that L1 may allow to be used in the EFL classroom, while other suggested to minimizing the use of L1.

Several studies consider that the use of L1 as a student's needs in EFL classes will be helpful in making a useful contribution to the learning process,

meanwhile others not. Language learning will build on successful outcomes if students are allowed to acquire their first language as they need it in EFL classroom setting. A study uses the Common Underlying Proficiency Theory which is also known as Language Interdependency or bilingualism by Cummins (2009) as a theoretical background, supports the use of L1 in the EFL classroom. Cummins (2009) stated that the use of a first language is a cognitive basis for proficiency in a foreign language or a second language.

Moreover, those who supported the use of L1 in classroom argue that either teachers or students need to rely on their L1 for some purposes supporting learning process. L1 is used to facilitate the fluency in speech production as it allows the students take some time before speak. Meanwhile, some studies argue that using first language (L1) is widely avoided in EFL classroom. Although studies show different ideas, the employment of L1 is still inevitably practiced in L2 or EFL context. Learners may feel they need to use L1 during the learning process in the classroom. The tasks may be challenging enough with less language proficiency.

Studies have shown that the use of a balanced L1 can help students maintain interest in asking and serving a strategy to help students complete difficult tasks, thereby benefits learner's conversation. There is a possibility to become more comfortable to speak in English. It might appear silent pauses, due to lack of English competences in vocabularies to be conceptualized trigger nervousness. Whether or not and to what extent the first language may be allowed in English classrooms is still a debatable issue.

Several studies support the idea that L1 may be allowed to be used in L2 classroom (Moore, 2013b, Dicamilla & Antón, 2012), while other suggested that the use of L1 should be limited (Littlewood & Yu, 2011). Those who supported the use of L1 in classroom argue that either teachers or students need to rely on their L1 for some purposes supporting learning process in classroom (Alshehri & Arabia, 2017), for instance they need it to facilitate their communication process (Paker & Karaağaç, 2015). L1 is also used to facilitate the fluency in speech

production as it allows the students to have a thinking time before saying something in the target language

However, there are some experts who have contrasting opinion about the use of L1 in classroom. Littlewood & Yu (2011) argue that using first language (L1) is widely avoided in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. It is also in line with Cook (2001) that maximizing the use of target language (L2) and avoiding the use of first language (L1) in the classroom by teachers and students.

Although experts have differed opinions that the employment L1 is still inevitably practiced in L2 or foreign language classrooms (Paker & Karaağaç, 2015, Zulfikar, 2019). Learners may feel that they need to use L1 during speaking activities because they do not have sufficient L2 language skills. They may also find the task itself challenging enough without the additional hassle of having to complete it in a foreign language. Learners are also usually doing things which are normally done in the first language (L1).

Students may be embarrassed and reluctant to speak English. It might appear silent pauses (Zulfikar, 2019, Dicamilla & Antón, 2012, Kahng, 2014) due to lack of English competences in vocabularies to be conceptualized (Kahng, 2014) that make them feeling nervous (Pan & Pan, 2011). On the other hand, Mohammadi (2017) states that the use of first language may become an impediment in second language research. Therefore, translation can be identified as one of the cognitive and useful learning strategies.

In learning a language, learners need to master all skills, which are listening, speaking, reading and writing because they are related to one another. However, this study will focus on speaking skills. Learning a language without speaking means nothing, because a language is used to communicate. In particular, the current study will investigate the roles and functions of the students' first language in facilitating their conversation during a task-based communicative activity. The roles or functions of L1 in this study adopted from Vázquez & Ramos (2018) which classified the functions of first language (L1) as:

(1) asking for confirmation, (2) direct appeal for help, (3) sentence-internal code-switching, (4) confirmation, (6) repetition, (7) message abandonment, (8) translation, (9) calling attention, (10) giving instructions to classmates, (11) expressing emotions, (12) personal petitions, (13) asking for instructions, and (14) teachers' encouragement to use the L1.

Based on the case above, it considers students' understanding in English is still lacking and seeing that the role of the first language (L1) is needed in helping English language learners. Therefore, in the continuation of this study, the author will identify functions of the first language in language learning process under the title **The Role of First Language (L1) as A Resource in Facilitating Conversation amongst EFL Learners.**

### **1.2 Research Problem**

Based on the background, the writer is interested to conduct a study on The Role of First Language (L1) in facilitating conversation amongst EFL learners, with the following questions:

1. What are the L1 functions appear in the EFL learners' conversation?
2. What are the most common L1 functions used by the EFL learners in facilitating conversation?

### **1.3 Objectives of The Study**

In the accordance with the formulation of the problem stated, the objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the functions of first language (L1) in conversation amongst EFL learners.
2. To find out the most common L1 functions that used the most in facilitating conversation amongst EFL learners.

#### **1.4 Significance of The Study**

The writer hopes that this study would benefit the English teacher, lecturers or tutors, which the lecturers could adjust the students' needs in the use of the first language in the EFL learners. The lecturer perhaps would give the students the appropriate or suitable instruction towards the students' needs of using the first language (L1) for EFL learners.

For the students, this study enables students to be aware of the first language (L1) benefits in learning English. This study would also deliver the result of the EFL learners that could be the learners' guider and the basis in using the first language (L1) as the medium of learning.

For the writer itself, this study can enlarge the writer's knowledge about the implementation of the First language (L1) functions in EFL learners that would give the way of producing their needs in the EFL classroom.