

Use of Pupils' Mother Tongue in Malaysia ESL Classroom: Teachers' Perspective

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Abstract

This study explores the perspectives of secondary school teachers in Bintulu, Malaysia, regarding the use of pupils' mother tongue in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. This research aims to understand when and why teachers incorporate their students' mother tongue or other languages in the teaching process, amidst the backdrop of Malaysia's emphasis on English proficiency through programs like the Dual Language Programme. This study explores how Malaysian ESL teachers perceive mother tongue use, crucial for effective, inclusive practices and policies in multilingual classrooms. A self-administered questionnaire was utilised to gather data from 47 English language teachers, focusing on their attitudes towards mother tongue use and the contexts in which it is employed. Findings reveal that a majority of teachers acknowledge the benefits of incorporating mother tongue, particularly for explaining complex concepts and enhancing student comprehension. However, a minority advocates for an English-only policy, emphasizing concerns related to language proficiency levels. This study underscores the importance of strategically utilising mother tongue to facilitate English learning while maintaining a focus on language development and classroom management. This research concludes with recommendations for broader participation across diverse educational settings and the inclusion of qualitative methods to deepen understanding of teacher perspectives.

Keywords: Mother Tongue, Secondary School, English Language, code switching, Malaysia

Introduction

English language is an important language for us to communicate with people around us or even people from other countries. According to British Study Centres (2019), English language is the most widely spoken language around the world. Even outside of countries like United States and United Kingdom, there are still many people can speak and understand English language.

English language is the language of science, of aviation, computers, diplomacy and tourism. Many multi-national companies in Malaysia who need Malaysian work force are on the outlook for those who are proficient in English, as they are going to deal on the international

level. Therefore, by mastering English, it will increase the chances of getting a good job in multi-national company within home country or of finding work abroad.

Not only that, the Dual Language Programme (DLP) or Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) was implemented in 2016 which it offers students a choice of learning Mathematics and Science in English. Through this programme, we can see that our country is placing English language as an important language in Malaysia except Malay language.

In term to achieve all these, students must master their English language during the school time. Therefore, teachers play an important role to help the students to achieve good English language proficiency level. How do the teachers help their students to learn English language in an easy way is very important.

This research holds significant importance in understanding the complexities of ESL education within Malaysia's multilingual context. By exploring teachers' perspectives on mother tongue usage, this research can reveal valuable insights into how linguistic diversity is perceived and utilised in classrooms. This understanding is crucial for informing pedagogical practices, shaping language policies, and ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of ESL instruction. The findings can help bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing practical guidance for teachers to create inclusive and supportive learning environments that leverage pupils' linguistic resources.

Literature Review

Teaching conditions, student needs, and teaching methods all have an impact on English language teacher opinions toward the use of the mother tongue in the classroom. While some teachers believe that mother tongue can hinder immersion and language learning, others see it as an invaluable tool for improving understanding, explaining difficult topics, and offering emotional support. This difference in viewpoints is a reflection of continuous discussions over the importance of mother tongue to successful English language acquisition. Gaining an understanding of different viewpoints is essential to creating adequate teaching methods that maximize mother tongue's advantages while promoting target language competency.

Definition of Mother Tongue

The term "mother tongue" has its roots in the Latin phrase "lingua materna," literally meaning "mother's language." This term first appeared in the 16th century and was used to describe the language a child acquires from their mother during early childhood (Fishman, 1991). This early understanding emphasized the role of the mother as the primary language caregiver, highlighting the intimate and nurturing aspects of language acquisition.

However, this early definition has evolved significantly over time. In the 19th and 20th centuries, with the rise of nationalism and nation-building, the mother tongue became associated with national identity and cultural heritage. It was seen as the language that binds a community together and embodies its shared history and traditions (Edwards, 1992). This perspective led to the promotion of mother tongue education as a means of preserving cultural identity and fostering national unity.

The term “mother tongue” harks back to the notion that linguistic skills of a child are honed by the mother and therefore the language spoken by the mother would be the primary language that the child would learn (Manoj, 2014). According to Cambridge Dictionary, mother tongue is the first language that someone learn when he or she is a baby, rather than a language learned at school or as an adult. The term “mother tongue” highlights the idea that language acquisition begins with the nurturing and intimate environment of the family, where the child first learns to communicate and understand the world around them.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the mother tongue is often defined as the language a person acquires first and most naturally (Crystal, 1997). This definition emphasizes the primacy of early language exposure and the unconscious nature of language acquisition. It recognizes that the mother tongue is not necessarily the language spoken by one's biological mother, but rather the language that is most readily available and used in the child's early environment.

From a psychological perspective, the mother tongue is often seen as the language that is most deeply ingrained in a person's cognitive and emotional development (Cummins, 2000). This perspective highlights the intimate connection between language and thought, arguing that the mother tongue shapes our perception of the world and influences our cognitive processes.

The definition of the mother tongue is a complex and multifaceted issue with significant implications for language education, cultural identity, and social policy. While the traditional understanding of the mother tongue as the language acquired from one's mother remains relevant, it is important to recognize the diverse and evolving nature of language use in contemporary societies.

Historical Overview of ELT Methods

The Grammar Translation Method, also known as the Classic Method, was a popular method of language instruction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Ali, 2019). Although it has also been used with current foreign languages, its main association is with the teaching of classical languages like Latin and Greek. The technique emphasizes translating sentences between the target language and the native language and explicitly teaches grammatical rules.

According to the Grammar Translation Method, grammar is the most important aspect of learning a language. Complex grammatical rules, sentence constructions, and vocabulary lists are taught to students. Instead of concentrating on conversational proficiency, the objective is to analyse and comprehend the language's structure. In addition, this strategy heavily relies on translation. Students convert texts and phrases between their native language and the target language. This is said to improve writing and reading abilities as well as grammatical comprehension.

The Grammar Translation Method has come under fire for placing too much focus on reading and writing while frequently ignoring the improvement of oral communication abilities. Students could find it difficult to use their knowledge in everyday interactions. The method's

substantial dependence on translation and detailed grammatical rules could make it more difficult for pupils to acquire fluency and utilize language naturally.

As a replacement for the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method for teaching languages first appeared in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It tries to explicitly teach language, focusing on oral communication and growing learners' capacity for thought and expression in the target language. Nadia et al. (2017) claim that the Direct Method, which is also known as the Natural Method and is very well-liked, gives students the opportunity to do a specific thing and communicate with others by sharing or exchanging information with them in the target language, which consists of a set of sounds or written symbols.

The Direct Method puts an early emphasis on oral communication abilities. The emphasis is on enhancing learners' capacity to comprehend and speak the target language in authentic contexts. The goal is for students to communicate and engage as much as possible in the target language. For learners, the Direct Method emphasizes precise pronunciation, intonation, and natural language patterns through comprehensive modelling and demonstration of language usage. To the greatest extent feasible, they avoid translation by communicating meaning through gestures, images, and realia (real items). In accordance with the Direct Method, only the target language should be spoken in the classroom. Teachers educate students in the target language without translating. This method develops a clear relationship between the language and its meaning and helps students to think in the target language.

The mid-20th century saw a rise in popularity for the audiolingual method of language instruction, especially in the 1950s and 1960s. It stresses the value of oral abilities and concentrates on improving students' capacity for speaking and listening in the target language. The goal of the audiolingual approach, according to Afraa', is to enable pupils to interact with others in the target language.

The Audiolingual Method's main goal is to help students improve their oral abilities, particularly their listening and speaking. Extensive practice is offered to increase accuracy and fluency in oral communication since these abilities are thought of as the basis for language learning. Students replicate or repeat model conversations or sentences that they hear from the teacher or from audio recordings. This aids students in improving their listening comprehension abilities as well as their pronunciation and intonation. The Audiolingual Method supports using as little of the students' original language as possible in the classroom, much like the Direct Method does. The only language utilized for instruction and communication is the target language.

Second Language Acquisition

The role of the mother tongue in second language acquisition has been a subject of ongoing debate in language pedagogy. While some approaches advocate for immersive second language environments with minimal mother tongue use, others argue that strategic integration of the mother tongue can be a valuable tool, particularly within Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This review explores the arguments for and against first language use, focusing on its potential as a scaffolding mechanism within the Zone of Proximal Development.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development posits that learners achieve deeper understanding and skill development when they receive appropriate scaffolding from more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers or friends. This scaffolding allows learners to bridge the gap between their current abilities and what they are capable of achieving with guidance. In the context of second language learning, mother tongue can serve as one such scaffolding tool, facilitating comprehension and internalisation of new concepts.

One key argument for first language use stems from its potential to enhance understanding. Using the mother tongue to explain complex grammatical rules or introduce new vocabulary can significantly improve learners' grasp of the target language (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). By connecting new second language elements to existing mother tongue knowledge, learners can more readily process and internalise the information. This is particularly relevant when dealing with abstract grammatical concepts or culturally bound vocabulary, where a direct second language explanation might be insufficient. For instance, explaining the nuances of verb tenses by using mother tongue equivalents can provide a concrete foundation for understanding the second language system.

Furthermore, the mother tongue can facilitate cognitive processing and support learner progress within the Zone of Proximal Development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). By using the mother tongue to connect new second language concepts with familiar mother tongue ones, teachers can leverage learners' existing cognitive frameworks. This allows learners to build upon their prior knowledge, making the learning process more meaningful and less daunting. For example, drawing parallels between mother tongue and second language sentence structures can help learners understand the underlying logic of the new language and avoid common errors. This connection to prior knowledge reduces cognitive load and allows learners to focus on the specific features of the second language.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential drawbacks of excessive mother tongue reliance. Cook (2008) argues that overuse of the mother tongue can hinder learners' ability to operate autonomously outside their Zone of Proximal Development. If learners become too accustomed to using their mother tongue as a crutch, they may struggle to engage with the second language independently, limiting their opportunities for authentic language use and hindering the development of fluency. This can lead to a dependence on translation and a reluctance to take risks with the second language, ultimately impeding progress. Learners need to develop the ability to think and communicate directly in the target language, and excessive mother tongue use can create a barrier to this development.

Cook (2008) further suggests that a balanced approach is necessary. While acknowledging the potential benefits of mother tongue use within the Zone of Proximal Development, it is essential to gradually reduce reliance on the mother tongue as learners progress. The goal should be to equip learners with the skills and confidence to use the second language independently. This involves creating opportunities for learners to engage with the second language in meaningful contexts, encouraging them to use the target language for communication, and providing them with strategies for dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary or grammatical structures.

In conclusion, mother tongue can be a valuable scaffolding tool in second language acquisition when strategically employed within the Zone of Proximal Development. It can enhance understanding, facilitate cognitive processing, and bridge the gap between learners' current abilities and their potential. However, it is essential to avoid excessive reliance on the mother tongue, as this can hinder the development of learner autonomy and limit opportunities for authentic language use. A balanced approach, where the mother tongue is used judiciously to support learning within the Zone of Proximal Development and gradually phased out as learners progress, is likely to be the most effective strategy for promoting successful second language acquisition.

Functions of Mother Tongue in English Language Classroom

The role of the mother tongue in second language acquisition has been a subject of ongoing debate. While some approaches advocate for minimising mother tongue use in second language classrooms, a growing body of research highlights the multifaceted functions of the mother tongue and its potential to facilitate second language learning.

One of the most significant contributions to understanding the mother tongue's role is Cummins' (2000) concept of the "Common Underlying Proficiency" (CUP). CUP posits that skills and knowledge acquired in the mother tongue are not isolated but rather form a foundation upon which second language learning is built. This shared cognitive and linguistic reservoir allows learners to leverage existing mother tongue resources to facilitate second language acquisition. For example, understanding grammatical concepts in the mother tongue can aid in comprehending similar structures in the second language. Similarly, a rich vocabulary in the mother tongue can provide a conceptual framework for understanding new second language words, even if the specific forms are different. This transfer of skills and knowledge from mother tongue to second language underscores the importance of developing strong literacy skills in the mother tongue as a basis for successful second language learning.

Beyond cognitive transfer, the mother tongue also plays a crucial role in facilitating comprehension and internalization of new information. Cook (2008) argues that using the mother tongue to explain complex concepts or instructions can significantly enhance understanding. When learners encounter challenging second language material, resorting to the mother tongue can provide a bridge to comprehension, making the information more accessible and digestible. This is particularly relevant when dealing with abstract concepts or culturally specific references that may be difficult to grasp solely through the second language. By clarifying these concepts in the mother tongue, teachers can ensure that learners have a solid foundation upon which to build their second language knowledge.

Furthermore, the mother tongue can be a valuable tool in collaborative learning environments. Swain and Lapkin (2000) found that using the mother tongue in collaborative tasks allows students to negotiate meaning and achieve a better understanding of the target language. When working together, learners can use their mother tongue to discuss complex grammatical points, brainstorm ideas, or clarify misunderstandings. This collaborative use of the mother tongue not only facilitates comprehension but also promotes deeper engagement with the second language material. By verbalizing their thoughts and ideas in their mother

tongue, learners can process the information more effectively and develop a more nuanced understanding of the second language.

In addition to cognitive and pedagogical benefits, the mother tongue also plays an important affective role in second language learning. Baker (2006) suggests that using the mother tongue can reduce anxiety and create a more comfortable learning environment. Learning a new language can be a stressful experience, and the pressure to communicate solely in the second language can be overwhelming for some learners. Allowing learners to use their mother tongue, even occasionally, can create a sense of security and reduce anxiety, fostering a more positive attitude towards second language learning. This, in turn, can lead to increased motivation and greater willingness to participate in second language activities.

It is important to note that the strategic use of the mother tongue does not imply a complete abandonment of second language immersion. Rather, it advocates for a balanced approach where the mother tongue is used judiciously to support learning, clarify complex concepts, and foster a positive learning environment. The goal is not to create mother tongue-dependent learners but rather to empower them with the tools and strategies they need to navigate the second language effectively.

In conclusion, the mother tongue plays a multifaceted role in second language acquisition. From facilitating cognitive transfer through CUP to enhancing comprehension, promoting collaborative learning, and reducing anxiety, the mother tongue can be a valuable resource for both learners and teachers. By recognizing and leveraging the functions of the mother tongue, teachers can create more effective and supportive second language learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of their students.

Arguments towards the Use of Mother Tongue in English Language Classroom

Some approaches advocate for strict adherence to second language-only environments, a growing body of research emphasizes the strategic use of the mother tongue as a valuable tool for enhancing learning and creating a more supportive classroom atmosphere.

Cook (2008) argues that utilizing students' mother tongue to explain complex concepts, grammatical rules, or vocabulary can significantly reduce cognitive overload. By connecting new second language information to existing mother tongue knowledge, learners can process and internalise the material more effectively. This is particularly relevant when dealing with abstract concepts or culturally bound expressions that may be challenging to grasp solely through the second language. Grosjean (2010) further supports this notion, suggesting that the mother tongue can act as a cognitive tool, enabling students to leverage their linguistic resources more efficiently. Learners can utilize their mother tongue as a bridge to understanding, facilitating the acquisition of new second language knowledge.

This perspective aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Effective learning, according to Vygotsky, occurs when students receive appropriate support to bridge the gap between their current abilities and their potential level of proficiency. The mother tongue can serve as a scaffold within the Zone of Proximal Development, allowing teachers to provide immediate explanations and support (Swain & Lapkin, 2000). By using the mother tongue to clarify instructions, explain grammatical

nuances, or provide feedback, teachers can effectively guide learners towards greater understanding and proficiency.

Macaro (2001) found that strategic use of the mother tongue can facilitate classroom interaction and ensure that instructions and feedback are understood. When learners are clear about the task at hand, they can engage more meaningfully with the second language material. Similarly, Butler (2007) suggests that using the mother tongue for administrative purposes, such as giving instructions or managing behaviour, can streamline classroom processes and create a more efficient learning environment. This allows for more time dedicated to actual second language learning activities.

Beyond cognitive and pedagogical benefits, the mother tongue also plays a crucial role in creating a positive and supportive learning environment. Baker (2006) notes that allowing students to use their mother tongue can create a more relaxed atmosphere, reducing anxiety and fostering a sense of belonging. This is particularly important for learners who may feel intimidated or overwhelmed by the prospect of communicating solely in the second language. Garcia and Wei (2014) further emphasize the importance of respecting students' linguistic identities. Using students' mother tongue demonstrates respect for their languages and cultures, which can enhance their sense of belonging and motivation, contributing to a positive classroom atmosphere and encouraging active participation. When learners feel valued and respected, they are more likely to engage with the learning process.

Halim and Abu Bakar (2014) found that using the mother tongue supports language acquisition and improves classroom dynamics. By strategically integrating the mother tongue, teachers can create a more inclusive and engaging learning environment. This approach recognizes the value of learners' existing linguistic resources and empowers them to utilize those resources to facilitate second language acquisition.

It is crucial to emphasize that the strategic use of the mother tongue does not imply a complete abandonment of second language immersion. Rather, it advocates for a balanced approach where the mother tongue is used judiciously to support learning, clarify complex concepts, manage classroom procedures, and create a positive learning environment. The ultimate goal is to equip learners with the skills and confidence to communicate effectively in the second language.

In conclusion, the mother tongue can be a valuable tool in second language classrooms when used strategically. From reducing cognitive overload and facilitating understanding to fostering a supportive learning environment and promoting learner motivation, mother tongue offers a range of benefits. By recognizing and leveraging these benefits, educators can create more effective and engaging second language learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs of their students.

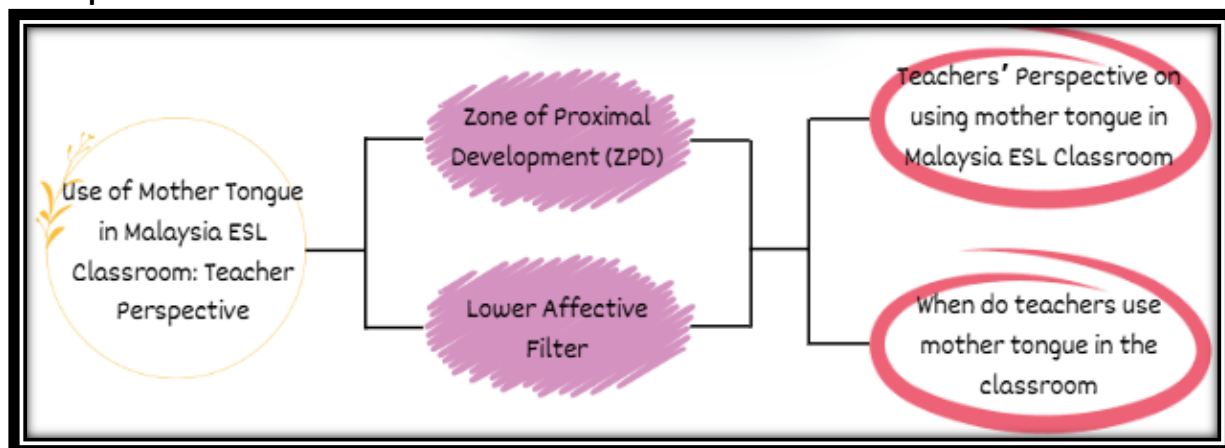
Research Questions

1. What are the perspectives of secondary school teachers in Bintulu towards the use of mother tongue or other languages in the ESL classrooms?
2. When do teachers use mother tongue or other languages in ESL classrooms?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the perspective of secondary school teachers in Bintulu towards the use of mother tongue and other languages in the ESL classrooms.
2. To explore when do the teachers use mother tongue or other languages in ESL classrooms.

Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

Introduction

This research methodology outlines the approach taken to investigate the use of mother tongues in Malaysia's ESL classrooms. Employing quantitative research design, the study uses questionnaires to gather comprehensive data on teachers' perspectives. Descriptive statistic method will be used for data analysis to assess survey results.

Research Design

Research design is the plan, structure and strategy and investigation concaved so as to obtain ensured to search question and control variance (Akhtar, 2016). A research design is simply a structural framework of various research methods as well as technique that are utilized by a researcher. Research design helps a researcher to pursue their journey into the unknown but at the same time there is a systematic approach with them.

There are two major types of research design which are quantitative and qualitative approach. In this research, quantitative approach will be used as the research design. According to University of Southern California (2023), quantitative approach focuses on numeric and unchanging data and detailed, convergent reasoning rather than divergent reasoning. In quantitative approach, the researcher needs to examine the various variables while including numbers as well as statistics to analyse the findings. In quantitative approach, graphics, figures and pie charts will be used to perform the data collection measurement. In this research, survey research which is one of the non-experimental research designs will be used. According to Chua (2012), survey research is used to present and elaborate views of the subject and also to predict the characteristics of the subjects in the study. Survey research will be used in this research because of its characteristics. It is easy to conduct and the data can be collected quickly. Besides, it can be used widely and large samples can be used. Therefore, researcher can get more opinions from teachers around Malaysia.

Research Population

Fuad Mohamed Berawi (2017) mentioned that a study population is a set of elements to be studied. In this research, the respondents of the research involve English Language teachers that are teaching in secondary school in Bintulu, Sarawak.

Research Instrument

The research instrument used in this research is a self-produced questionnaire adapted from the studies of Elmetwally (2012), Basel (2013), Joanna (2014) and Laura (2014). Adaptations were made towards the items in the questionnaire so that the data obtained would be able to help the researcher to answer the research questions stated earlier.

The constructed questionnaire consists of three sections. Section A require the respondents to fill up their demographic background such as gender, native language, languages used for code switching, name of school they teach in and how many years of teaching experience in English language. Section B consists of nine close-ended items about their perspective about the use of mother tongue or other languages in ESL classrooms. Section C includes twelve close-ended items regarding when do they use mother tongue in the English Language classrooms.

Questionnaire will be constructed using Google Forms. The questionnaire will then be given to the teachers in Bintulu secondary schools by sending the link through Whatsapp application. Data is obtained and collected using feedback in the Google Form application. Each item in the questionnaire has five answer choices based on the Likert Scale (1 – 5). Teachers will answer the questionnaire based on the Likert Scale (1 – 5) which indicate strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. The details of the scale are as in Table 1.

Table 1
Likert Scale

Scale	Indicator
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

Data Analysis

In order to analyse quantitative data, descriptive analysis method will be used. Descriptive analysis is a sort of data research that aids in describing, demonstrating, or helpfully summarising data points so those patterns may develop that satisfy all of the conditions of

the data. (Villegas, n.d.) Descriptive analysis method summarises large amounts of data into useful bits of information. It is used to identify characteristics of a single trait and is not used to analyse any relationships or causations. The data will be collected using the feedback from the Google Form application and categorised. Then, the data collected will be analysed using the descriptive analysis method.

Ethical Consideration

There are a few ethical considerations that researchers need to take into consideration when they carry out the research. One of the ethical considerations is informed consent. The researcher needs to provide participants with clear information about the study's purpose, procedure, potential risks and benefits of this research. Researcher needs to have clear communication with the participants about all the details about the research. Not only that, researcher needs to ensure that participants is volunteer to participate in this research and they can withdraw at any time without penalty.

Besides, confidentiality and anonymity is also another ethical consideration that researcher need to take into consideration. The researcher needs to ensure that participants' responses are kept confidential and securely stored. Codes or anonymised data should be used to protect the participants' identities. If feasible, researcher should allow participants to respond anonymously to further protect their privacy.

Findings

Introduction

After analysing the data collected using the Google Form, there are 47 responses collected. Within the 47 participants, predominantly female where 34 of them are females, 13 of them are males. Their linguistic backgrounds were diverse, with 4 of them use English, 10 of them use Malay, 23 of them use Chinese, and 10 of them uses Iban. Code-switching practices varied, with the most common combinations being Chinese and Malay with 18 participants and Malay and Iban with 13 participants. Other combinations included Chinese, Malay, and Iban, Chinese, Malay, and English, as well as single language code-switching: where 6 of them use Chinese, 7 of them uses Malay, and 1 participant uses Iban. In terms of teaching experience, the participants were distributed across several ranges where 15 of them have been teaching for 0-4 years, 17 of them had 5-10 years, 11 participants with 11-20 years' experience, and 4 of them have been teaching for 21 years or more.

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives of secondary school teachers in Bintulu towards the use of mother tongue or other languages in the ESL classrooms?

Positive Perspectives

Table 1 shows the frequencies counts and percentages for teachers' positive perspectives towards use of mother tongue or other languages in ESL classrooms. Majority of the teachers (42.6%, n=20) agreed that "mother tongue or other languages should be used in English classes", while 17% (n=8) of them strongly agreed to this statement. Only 4.3% (n=2) and 10.6% (n=5) of them strongly disagreed and disagreed to the statement respectively. The remaining participants (25.5%, n=12) have neutral feeling towards the statement.

The second item, “teachers should know their pupils’ mother tongue” has the majority of the participants (44.7%, n=21) have neutral perspective to it and followed by 14 participants (29.8%) disagreed with it. 14.9% (n=7) and 6.4% (n=3) agreed and strongly agreed with the statement respectively while 4.3% (n=2) strongly disagreed with the statement.

Majority of the participants (31.9%, n=15) agreed with the third statement which is “teachers should use their pupils’ mother tongue in English language classroom” while 9 of participants (19.1%) strongly agreed with it. 14 participants (29.8%) have neutral perspective towards the statement while 14.9% (n=7) and 4.3% (n=2) disagreed and strongly disagree with the statement.

With respect to the last statement, which is, “I think mother tongue should always be used in the English Language classroom”, it was found that majority of them (51.1%, n=24) have neutral perspective towards the statement. 17% (n=8) of them agreed and disagreed with the statement while 8.5% (n=4) and 6.4% (n=3) strongly disagreed and strongly agreed with the statement.

Table 1

Teachers’ positive perspectives towards use of mother tongue or other languages in ESL classrooms

No.	Positive Perspective	Scale / Number of Teachers / Percentage (%)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Mother tongue / Other languages should be used in English classes.	2 (4.3%)	5 (10.6%)	12 (25.5%)	20 (42.6%)	8 (17%)
2.	Teachers should know their pupils’ mother tongue.	2 (4.3%)	14 (29.8%)	21 (44.7%)	7 (14.9%)	3 (6.4%)
3.	Teachers should use their pupils’ mother tongue in English Language Classroom.	2 (4.3%)	7 (14.9%)	14 (29.8%)	15 (31.9%)	9 (19.1%)
4.	I think mother tongue should always be used in the English Language Classroom.	4 (8.5%)	8 (17%)	24 (51.1%)	8 (17%)	3 (6.4%)

Scale 1: Strongly Disagree

Scale 2: Disagree

Scale 3: Neutral

Scale 4: Agree

Scale 5: Strongly Agree

Negative Perspectives

Table 2 shows the frequencies counts and percentages for teachers’ negative perspectives towards the use of mother tongue in English language classes. Most of the participants (44.7%, n=21) strongly disagreed that “teachers should follow an English-only policy in the classroom” while 17% (n=8) of them disagreed with it. Another 23.4% (n= 11) have neutral perspective about the statement. 10.6% (n=5) and 4.3% (n=2) of them strongly agreed and agreed with the statement respectively.

For another statement, which is, “I do not feel comfortable when my pupils use their mother tongue in my English language classrooms”, minority of them (2.1%, n=1) agreed and also strongly agreed with the statement. Another 34% (n=16) of them have neutral perspective towards it. Majority of them (38.3%, n=18) strongly disagreed while 23.4% (n=11) disagreed with the statement.

From the statistic, we can see that majority of the participants having positive perspectives towards the use of mother tongue in English language classes. However, there are also some numbers of participants which have negative perspectives towards the use of mother tongue.

Table 2

Teachers' negative perspectives towards the use of mother tongue in English language classes

No.	Negative Perspective	Scale / Number of Teachers / Percentage (%)				
		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Teachers should follow an English-only policy in the classroom.	21 (44.7%)	8 (17%)	11 (23.4%)	2 (4.3%)	5 (10.6%)
2.	I do not feel comfortable when my pupils use their mother tongue in my English Language Classrooms.	18 (38.3%)	11 (23.4%)	16 (34%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (2.1%)
Scale 1: Strongly Disagree		Scale 2: Disagree	Scale 3: Neutral	Scale 4: Agree	Scale 5: Strongly Agree	

Research Question 2: When do teachers use mother tongue or other languages in ESL classrooms?*Curricular Access*

Table 3 shows the frequencies counts and percentages for curricular access purpose in using mother tongue in English language classes. Majority of the participants (38.3%, n=18 & 34%, n=16) strongly agreed and agreed that they use mother tongue or other languages to introduce unfamiliar materials or topics. 12.8% (n=6) of them have neutral feeling and disagree with the statement while the leftover 2.1% (n=1) strongly disagreed with the statement.

42.6% (n=20) of the participants agreed that they used mother tongue to explain meaning of words and sentences. 27.7% (n=13) participants strongly agreed with the statement. 12.8% (n=6) and 2.1% (n=1) of them disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement while the leftover 14.9% (n=7) have neutral feeling about the statement.

19 (40.4%) and 18 (38.3%) out of the 47 participants agreed and strongly agreed that they use pupils' mother tongue to explain difficult concepts to the pupils respectively. 10.6% (n=5) of them disagreed with it while 2.1% (n=1) strongly disagreed with the statement. 8.5% (n=4) from the participants have neutral feeling towards the statement.

Majority of the participants use mother tongue to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items. There are a total of 68.1% (n=32) participants agreed and disagreed that they use mother tongue for this purpose. 40.4% (n=19) of them agreed with it and another 27.7% (n=13) of them strongly agreed. Only total of 14.9% (n=7) participants disagreed (12.8%, n=6) and strongly disagreed (2.1%, n=1) with it. The leftover 17% (n=8) of them have neutral feeling towards the purpose.

A total number of 26 (55.3%) participants agreed (36.2%, n=17) and strongly agreed (19.1%, n=9) that they used pupils' mother tongue to check for pupils' comprehension. 14.9% (n=7) and 6.4% (n=3) of the participants disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively with the mentioned purpose. 11 (23.4%) participants have neutral feeling towards the purpose of using mother tongue for checking comprehension.

23.4% (n=11) participants agreed and strongly agreed that they used mother tongue to correct their pupils' mistakes while a total number of 31.9% (n=15) disagreed (25.5%, n=12) and strongly disagreed (6.4%, n=3) that they used mother tongue for the mentioned purpose. 10 (21.3%) participants have neutral feeling towards the statement.

However, it can be seen that most of the teachers did not use mother tongue to introduce grammar rules to the pupils. There are 15 (31.9%) and 4 (8.5%) participants agreed and strongly agreed respectively that they use mother tongue to introduce new grammar rules while there are 17 (36.2%) and 4 (8.5%) participants disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively that they use mother tongue for teaching new grammar rules. Another 14.9% (n=7) of them have neutral feeling about this purpose.

Table 3

Curricular access purpose in using mother tongue in English language classes

No. I used pupils' mother tongue / other language:	Scale / Number of Teachers / Percentage (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. to introduce unfamiliar materials or topics.	1 (2.1%)	6 (12.8%)	6 (12.8%)	16 (34%)	18 (38.3%)
2. to explain meaning of words and sentences.	1 (2.1%)	6 (12.8%)	7 (14.9%)	20 (42.6%)	13 (27.7%)
3. to explain difficult concepts.	1 (2.1%)	5 (10.6%)	4 (8.5%)	19 (40.4%)	18 (38.3%)
4. to introduce new grammar rules.	4 (8.5%)	17 (36.2%)	7 (14.9%)	15 (31.9%)	4 (8.5%)
5. to explain new vocabulary especially abstract items.	1 (2.1%)	6 (12.8%)	8 (17%)	19 (40.4%)	13 (27.7%)
6. to check for comprehension.	3 (6.4%)	7 (14.9%)	11 (23.4%)	17 (36.2%)	9 (19.1%)
7. to correct my pupils' mistakes.	3 (6.4%)	12 (25.5%)	10 (21.3%)	11 (23.4%)	11 (23.4%)

Scale 1: Strongly Disagree

Scale 2: Disagree

Scale 3: Neutral

Scale 4: Agree

Scale 5: Strongly Agree

Interpersonal Relationships

Table 4 shows that majority of the participants agreed that they used pupils' mother tongue or other languages for interpersonal relationships. There are 61.7% (n=29) participants agreed (31.9%, n=15) and strongly agreed (29.8%, n=14) that they used pupils' mother tongue or other languages to encourage pupils to participate in classroom activities. 10 (21.3%) participants have neutral feeling towards this purpose. 14.9% (n=7) participants disagreed that they used pupils' mother tongue to encourage pupils' participation while 2.1% (n=1) participants strongly disagreed with it.

38.3% (n=18) participants strongly agreed and 29.8% (n=14) participants agreed that they used pupils' mother tongue or other languages to build up good rapport with their pupils. 12.8% (n=6) of the participants have neutral feeling with the statement. 17% (n=8) disagreed that they use pupils' mother tongue or other languages for building up good rapport with their pupils while only 2.1% (n=1) participants strongly disagreed with it.

Last but not least, the table shows that 31.9% (n=15) of the participants agreed and strongly agreed with the statement that they used pupils' mother tongue or other languages to provide praise or feedback about their pupils' performance. Only 4.3% (n=2) of the participants strongly disagreed and 17% (n=8) disagreed with it. While the leftover 14.9% (n=7) have neutral feeling towards the statement.

Table 3

Curricular access purpose in using mother tongue in English language classes

No. I used pupils' mother tongue / other language:	Scale / Number of Teachers / Percentage (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. to encourage pupils' participation in classroom activities.	1 (2.1%)	7 (14.9%)	10 (21.3%)	15 (31.9%)	14 (29.8%)
2. to build up good rapport with pupils.	1 (2.1%)	8 (17%)	6 (12.8%)	14 (29.8%)	18 (38.3%)
3. to provide praise or feedback about pupils' performance.	2 (4.3%)	8 (17%)	7 (14.9%)	15 (31.9%)	15 (31.9%)
Scale 1: Strongly Disagree	Scale 2: Disagree	Scale 3: Neutral	Scale 4: Agree	Scale 5: Strongly Agree	

Classroom Management

Table 5 shows that a large number of participants used pupils' mother tongue and other languages for classroom management. There are 44.7% (n=21) of the participants agreed and 36.2% (n=17) of the participants strongly agreed that they used pupils' mother tongue or other languages to facilitate complicated English classroom tasks. 6.4% (n=3) of the participants have neutral feeling about it while 10.6% (n=5) and 2.1% (n=1) of the participants disagreed and strongly disagreed with it respectively.

Lastly, the statement that they used pupils' mother tongue or other languages has been agreed by 12 (25.5%) participants and strongly agreed by 10 (21.3%) participants. A total of 27.7% (n=13) of the participants disagreed (23.4%, n=11) and strongly disagreed (4.3%, n=2) with it while 12 (25.5%) participants have neutral feeling about it.

Table 5

Classroom management purpose in using mother tongue in English language classes

No. I used pupils' mother tongue / other language:	Scale / Number of Teachers / Percentage (%)				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. to facilitate complicate English classrooms tasks.	1 (2.1%)	5 (10.6%)	3 (6.4%)	21 (44.7%)	17 (36.2%)
2. to maintain classroom discipline and structure of the lesson.	2 (4.3%)	11 (23.4%)	12 (25.5%)	12 (25.5%)	10 (21.3%)
Scale 1: Strongly Disagree	Scale 2: Disagree	Scale 3: Neutral	Scale 4: Agree	Scale 5: Strongly Agree	

Discussion and Conclusion

Research Question 1: What are the perspectives of secondary school teachers in Bintulu towards the use of mother tongue or other languages in the ESL classrooms?

Majority of the respondents agree that mother tongue should be used in the ESL Classroom. In addition, most of them have positive perspectives on the use of mother tongue in ESL classroom as they believe that mother tongue is able to help the pupils to understand better. Besides, a large number of them believe that bilingual or multilingual dictionaries are able to help the pupils understand the vocabulary learnt during the lesson.

However, there is also a minority of respondents who agree that we should use English-only policy in ESL classroom. There is also respondent stating that the use of mother tongue should depend on the proficiency level of the pupils.

Research Question 2: When do teachers use mother tongue or other languages in ESL classrooms?

From the findings, we can clearly see that the purposes of the teachers use mother tongue or other languages can be divided into three categories. Most of the teachers use mother tongue or other languages to explain difficult concept to the pupils. Not only that, they also use mother tongue or other languages to introduce unfamiliar materials or topics and explain the meaning of the words and sentences to the pupils. It is easier for the pupils to understand what teachers are teaching in the class by translating the words or sentences to their mother tongue or other languages that they understand which enable them to link the mother tongue to the targeted language which is English language. However, there are the least number of teachers who use mother tongue or other languages to teach grammar.

Not only for curricular access, mother tongue or other languages is also used by teachers to build good relationship between teachers and pupils. More than half of the teachers agreed that using mother tongue are able to encourage pupils to participate more in the class. They use mother tongue to build a good rapport with their pupils in the class. Majority of the teachers also use mother tongue or other languages to praise or give feedback to the pupils about their performance in the class.

Lastly, mother tongue or other languages is also used to help the teachers to manage or control the class. Most of the teachers use mother tongue or other languages to facilitate complicated English tasks. This is aligned with Vygotsky's ZPD. Last but not least, they also use mother tongue or other languages to maintain the discipline and structure of the lesson.

Implication

From the findings, teachers should recognise the use of mother tongue or other languages in English language as second language classes as it helps the pupils to improve. However, teachers should use it only at appropriate situation. Teachers should still be aware that it is still an English language class, mother tongue or other languages should only be used to facilitate and act as a helping kit to assist the pupils from learning the targeted language. Otherwise, mother tongue or other languages will dominate the lesson.

Teachers should also design suitable teaching and learning resources which cater to pupils' proficiency level. By doing so, pupils are able to gradually reduce the dependency on using mother tongue or other languages when learning English.

Limitation and Recommendation

One of the limitations of this research is the scope of the research is limited. The participants of this research are only focus on the Bintulu Secondary School teachers only. Therefore, this research cannot represent the overall view of all the English teachers. The scope of this research should expand to teachers from other states and divisions also. By doing this, more views and opinions can be collected and analysed so that the data collected can be more accurate.

Not only that, the research instrument used to collect the data is limited to questionnaires only. All the questions are close-ended questions where teachers cannot express their views and opinions in depth. The research should also include interview with teachers in the schools or change some of the close-ended questions to open-ended questions. By doing so, the researchers should be able to get more precise and accurate data for the research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teaching English language by using mother tongue or other languages is a good method for pupils to learn English language in the class as it brings benefits to the pupils. However, teachers need to use mother tongue or other languages with an appropriate amount since it is still an English language lesson. If too much of mother tongue is used during the lesson, pupils will only depend on mother tongue or other languages from the teachers. It will hinder the pupils to learn the language.

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