

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language choice in the classroom has a significant impact on the learning process, particularly in countries with rich linguistic diversity such as Indonesia. With more than 700 regional languages spoken across the archipelago, the selection of the language of instruction in schools becomes a crucial issue that requires serious attention (Sneddon, 2003). Indonesian, as the national language, is widely used in formal education contexts, yet regional languages and foreign languages, especially English also play important roles in shaping students' learning experiences (Lauder, 2008). This multilingual reality creates unique challenges and opportunities in the field of education, influencing how teachers and students interact in the classroom.

The coexistence of Indonesian, regional languages, and English within the educational setting creates a complex learning environment that significantly shapes students' comprehension, participation, and confidence. In many cases, students feel more comfortable expressing themselves in their mother tongue, as it provides a sense of security and familiarity in the classroom. At the same time, they are required to develop strong proficiency in Indonesian, which functions as the national language and the primary medium of instruction for academic success. Alongside this, English is introduced as a foreign language and is considered essential for students' future opportunities in higher education, global communication, and career development (Krashen, 1985; Lauder, 2008). The interplay of these three languages demonstrates that the

classroom is not merely a space for knowledge transfer but also a site where issues of identity, culture, and global integration converge. For this reason, the strategic use of Indonesian, regional languages, and English can serve not only as a bridge to academic knowledge but also as a medium to foster cultural understanding, strengthen students' self-confidence, and prepare them to engage in broader social and international contexts.

At the classroom level, teachers' language choice is also shaped by the sociolinguistic realities of their community. In West Sumatra, particularly in Padang, the Minangkabau language serves as the mother tongue and an important marker of cultural identity (Sneddon, 2003). While the use of Minangkabau can foster emotional closeness and strengthen students' identity, Indonesian is essential as the national language and medium of academic success, and English functions as a key to global communication and opportunities (Lauder, 2008; Lie, 2007). These overlapping functions illustrate the complexity of classroom language choice, where teachers must balance cultural, national, and global needs.

Teachers' language choice is closely linked to the effectiveness of classroom instruction and students' comprehension of the material. Research indicates that selecting an appropriate language can enhance student engagement and support better understanding of lessons. Indonesian is often more effective for explaining abstract or conceptual topics, while greater use of English is necessary in language learning contexts to build students' communicative competence. At the same time, regional languages may serve as a tool to simplify explanations and create a more supportive classroom

atmosphere.

Moreover, teachers' decisions regarding language choice are often influenced by the students' profiles, including their linguistic background and their comprehension level of the languages used in school. Teachers must consider students' proficiency in Indonesian and their regional language, as well as their skills in English, to ensure that the subject matter is well understood by all students. This factor becomes even more crucial in areas with high linguistic diversity, such as Padang, where students may have varying levels of understanding of Indonesian, Minangkabau, and English.

Research on the language choice by teachers at Junior High School 41 Padang is important to provide insights into how teachers navigate this multilingual environment and how their language choices affect the learning process. Through this research, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to support classroom learning, considering students' linguistic diversity and learning needs. Consequently, the results of this research are also expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive and responsive educational policies that reflect Indonesia's linguistic realities.

Previous studies have shown that multilingualism in Indonesia creates unique challenges in education. For example, research by Arka and Ross (2005) emphasizes the importance of language policies that take into account the realities of multilingualism in Indonesia to ensure that students from various linguistic backgrounds have equal opportunities in education. Lauder (2008) also revealed that the use of English in Indonesia is increasing in educational contexts, but this needs to be balanced with policies that also support the

strengthening of Indonesian and regional languages.

Thus, this research will not only contribute to the understanding of language choice by teachers but will also serve as an important reference for the development of more effective and inclusive teaching strategies in multilingual schools in Indonesia. By considering sociolinguistic and pedagogical factors, this research is expected to produce recommendations that can be applied in the context of education in Indonesia, particularly in areas like Padang, which has a high level of linguistic diversity.

B. FOCUS OF THE STUDY

In English language teaching, teachers often use more than one language, such as English, Indonesian, and sometimes local languages. These language choices are influenced by several factors, such as students' proficiency, the complexity of the material, and the learning objectives. However, the variation in language use often raises debates regarding its effectiveness in improving students' English skills. Some teachers believe that using the mother tongue or Indonesian helps students understand the material better, while others feel that using English entirely is more effective in creating an authentic learning environment.

C. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Based on the description that has been explained in the background of the problem above, various problems can be identified, including:

1. What languages does the English teacher use in teaching English?

2. Why does the English teacher use different language choices in teaching English?
3. What are the benefits of language choice by the teacher when teaching English?

D. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify the languages used by teachers in English language teaching, explore the reasons behind teachers' language choices during instruction, and analyze the benefits of these language choices for students' English learning.

E. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The researcher hopes that this study will provide a deeper understanding of the language choices used by teachers in teaching English, the reasons behind these language choices, as well as the benefits perceived by both students and teachers. This study is expected to contribute to the improvement of the quality of English teaching in Indonesia.