

# Teachers' Multilingualism Belief and Practice in Indonesian EFL Classroom

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## ABSTRACT

This narrative case study aimed to explore EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding multilingualism in Indonesia. The data for this study was collected through observations and interviews with three EFL teachers in a public junior high school in Indonesia who were chosen, based on purposive sampling, who have experience in EFL teaching and have graduated from the relevant study program. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This study revealed that teachers' beliefs and practices are in line. They used multilingualism in EFL teaching, namely Indonesian, the local language, and English as the language of instruction. They used those languages to make their students easier to understand. Moreover, multi-language is used because not all students have good English, and it also aims to maintain students' indigenous languages. Generally, this study concluded that EFL teachers' beliefs are a factor that influences their classroom language policy, and teachers' attitudes toward multilingualism have an impact on students' language practices. Hopefully, this research can improve the teacher's understanding and provide a reference for relevant future research. Further research could look at more than three EFL teachers and use the other technique for collecting data and analyzing documents from teachers and students to gain a better understanding.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Monolingualism has long been applied in education policies regarding foreign language, immersion, and bilingual classes (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011; Cummins, 2007). In monolingualism, the student's first language (L1) must be ignored in target language learning and bilingual programs where two languages must be separated (Cummins, 2007). However, many scholars have begun to debate and question the use of monolingualism in education, which is not supported by empirical evidence from applied linguistics or cognitive psychology (Cummins, 2007). Thus, the view of monolingualism in

education has shifted to multilingualism, which is believed to maximize students' language learning and content understanding (Baker, Jones & Lewis, 2012; Lin, 2015; McMillan & Rivers, 2011). Multilingualism is the ability of individuals, groups, institutions, or communities to use more than one language in everyday life (European Commission, 2017). In conclusion, the ideology of monolingualism must be shifted to multilingualism, especially in foreign language learning, which is believed to maximize content understanding and language learning where students' previous language can be used as a helpful resource in learning a new language.

The multilingualism issue can also be found in Indonesia, where the multilingual perspective requires a shift. It must be understood the importance of preserving heritage and indigenous languages. It is supported by Hamied (2012), who states that the variety of Indonesian languages is a mosaic decorated with hundreds of ethnic languages. Therefore, language policy in education in Indonesia must pay attention to global factors, such as English and local importance (Tsui, 2004). That is because Indonesia is a multilingual country with the second-largest language in the world, with as many as 707 spoken languages still alive in the linguistic ecology of Indonesia (Ethnologue., 2017; Zein, 2020). In conclusion, language policy in the education field in Indonesia must preserve local languages by shifting from a monolingualism to a multilingual perspective that sees the wealth of students' previous languages as a resource to maintain, not a problem.

Indonesia has more than 400 ethnic groups spread from Sabang to Merauke (Zein, 2018), namely, Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Minangkabau, Betawi, Bugis, Balinese, and many more. A few Indonesian ethnic groups may speak the same language, but others use different languages (Zein, 2018). In Indonesia, more than half of the population speaks indigenous languages, namely Batak, Balinese, Sundanese, Javanese, and Minangkabau (Zein, 2018). Thus, Indonesia is a multilingual country that started before it claimed independence. Despite those languages, Indonesia has an official language, Bahasa Indonesia, which has been used since 1945 as a language for communication. Bahasa Indonesia itself is a standardized form of the Malay language (Sneddon, 2003). The spread of the Indonesian language has been supported by education policies (Ewing, 2014). *Indonesian* is the official language used in schools, the government, and the media. Moreover, perspectives for multilingualism in the Indonesian context are also applied to the English language, which is a language that is widely known and used by people with different cultures, linguistic backgrounds, nationalities, and communication purposes. It is one of the most robust international languages, both socially and educationally, and is influential in many countries (Pennycook, 2008). English is positioned as a foreign language, not a second language in Indonesia.

Indigenous and inherited languages struggle to coexist with official and foreign languages, namely Indonesian and English. This is an example of adopting a subtractive perspective of multilingualism. Indonesian and English have a higher position and enjoy more privileges than local languages. It shows the application of a multilingual additive perspective (Zein, 2018). Multilingualism creates a dilemma in Indonesian education (Hamied, 2012). That is because the applied language policy may threaten language diversity and loss of language due to the dominant language factor in social life and education (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2017). Another issue faced by Indonesia is the dilemma of placing English as the primary curriculum, which has been going on for a long time (Zein, 2018) because it is related to the continuity of the native language and local languages.

Therefore, multilingualism in Indonesia requires a shift. Language policy in education in Indonesia must pay attention to global factors, such as English and local importance (Tsui, 2004). Then, the relationship between English and other languages will complement each other through an integrated curriculum. In order to make this happen, it is necessary to change the perspective from monolingual in language learning, which sees the wealth of other languages as separate entities in pedagogy, to a multilingual perspective, where other language resources are helpful in the classroom

(Zein, 2018). That is why, besides the policy, teacher beliefs play an essential role in this case because the teacher is a facilitator of learners' multilingualism.

Several previous studies focused on exploring teachers' beliefs toward multilingualism. The first study by Haukas (2015) examines the multilingual beliefs of language teachers in Norway and the pedagogical approach used in the third language class (L3). This research found that teachers believe multilingualism is a positive asset for students, whose collaboration can improve student learning. In learning L3, teachers often use English and Norwegian but rarely focus on strategy learning because they think learning L2 and L3 are different. The second study by Heyder and Schädlich (2014) examines secondary foreign language teachers' multilingualism beliefs in Germany. The study found that the teacher thinks comparing the language in the classroom is positive. Some teachers use a contrastive approach to foreign languages and German being taught, which is not in line with the subject matter. It reflects the high awareness of teachers' multilingualism. However, some teachers are hesitant to use another language in class unless they are familiar with it.

The subsequent study by Calafato (2020) examines the beliefs of English, Italian, German, French, and Spanish teachers in senior secondary schools in Norway and Russia. It focuses on the benefits of multilingualism and how family and country promote multilingual learning. This study showed a significant difference in the number of languages taught in the countries. These differences have pending implications for the teacher's promotion of multilingualism, which should be seen as a resource in language education. From the previous research, several previous studies look at teacher multilingualism beliefs. However, studies about Indonesian EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in multilingualism still need to be completed. Therefore, this study explored Indonesian teachers' beliefs and practices toward multilingualism in EFL classrooms to fill this gap. This research aims to explore the belief held by Indonesian EFL teachers of junior high school regarding multilingualism or the use of more than two languages in their EFL classroom and the reason for their decisions. The following questions guide this research:

1. What do teachers believe about multilingualism?
2. What languages do teachers use in EFL learning?
3. What are the teachers' reasons for using those languages in EFL learning?

## 2. METHODS

In this qualitative case study, the researcher analyzed Indonesian EFL teachers' junior high school beliefs and practices toward multilingualism. This research used a case study approach because it allows a clear and in-depth description of the case study. Besides, it is a case description in a real-life context (Yin, 2014) and a comprehensive approach to achieving a deep understanding of teachers' beliefs (Skott, 2015). The data for this study was collected through observations and in-depth interviews with three Indonesian EFL teachers in public junior high schools in November 2022, related to their multilingual beliefs and practice in the classroom. The semi-structured interview was in Bahasa Indonesia to make the participant easier to answer and minimize the language barrier. Then it was audio recorded and transcribed. In forming interview questions, the researcher adopted an instrument based on Mo (2020) theoretical framework of teachers' beliefs, including theoretical beliefs, action beliefs, context beliefs, and beliefs about the teacher's role. The researcher was also immersed in the classroom to see the language practice of the teachers and make notes of what happened in the classroom to enrich the research data.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. *Thematic analysis* is a method used in research to analyze, identify, and report themes in the data because the theme describes an essential part of the data related to the research question and can represent the level of patterned responses in a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis has six phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first

researcher familiarized himself with the data by hearing the interview recording several times and transcribing it. Then the researcher coded the data by using colouring pens. Coding in qualitative research is a process of reflection, interaction, and thinking with data (Savage, 2000) that helps the teacher to focus. Next, the researcher sorted and compiled all coded data extracts that may be relevant to the theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After that review, the themes from the data extracts that have been coded were reviewed and considered to see if they formed the same pattern. The next step was to define and name the theme. The last step was producing or writing the report, including quotes to show the various participants represented in the results.

In this study, the participants were selected by purposive sampling. The three teachers were chosen as participants because they matched the following requirements: having experience teaching and graduating from a linear study program with their field of study. In addition, comfort between participants and the researcher is part of the consideration. That is why several considerations are necessary to ensure participants' willingness. To sum up, the participants of this study were three English teachers in junior high school. The background of the participants is presented below:

**Table 1.** Participant's Background

No	Participant	Age	Gender
1.	Teacher 1	30	Female
2.	Teacher 2	26	Female
3.	Teacher 3	25	Female

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings found in the observations and interviews related to the teachers' beliefs towards multilingualism, the language used by the teacher in an EFL class, and the reasons that underlie their decision to use those languages.

#### 3.1. Teachers' Belief About Multilingualism

Teachers' beliefs are usually difficult to change and will affect their pedagogical decisions (Borg, 2003; Pajares, 1992). After conducting interviews and observations, the researcher found teachers' beliefs about multilingualism. The teachers believe that their students should be able to master several languages. That is related to their multilingual beliefs. This finding was explained by teacher 1, as presented below.

*"Yes, I think students need to master several languages because students who master many languages will gain a lot of knowledge, and it makes it easier for them to socialize and adapt to various environments."* (Teacher 1/ Interview 01)

Teachers believe that their students should be able to master several languages to help them communicate and socialize with other people. Moreover, multilingual students will easy to get knowledge related to their cognitive advantage. In line with that, the other teachers also had the same belief that their students must be able to master more than one language. This finding is explained by teachers 2 and 3 below.

*"In my opinion, students need to master more than one language because of the globalization era multilingual skills are needed."*(Teacher 2/ Interview 02)

*"Yes, students need to speak more than one language. This will make it them easier to communicate with people with different cultural backgrounds."*(Teacher 3/ Interview 03)

From the preceding excerpts above, teachers believe mastering various languages makes students easy to communicate and socialize with people from different cultural backgrounds. The teacher felt that the monolingual students needed more communication skills to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. This finding is in line with Stratilaki-Klein's (2019) study, which claims that multilingualism helps students interact with people from various cultural backgrounds. Besides that, teachers also believe that multilingualism gives the students a cognitive advantage, making it easier to gain more knowledge than monolingual students. It is supported by Greve, Koch, Rasche and Kersten (2021) that multilingualism boosts and increases not only language-related cognitive skills but also multipurpose cognitive functions, including working memory and information processing.

Teachers also mentioned several languages that need to be mastered by the student. The first is the national language related to the students' national identities. Based on the interview results, it was found that all the teachers want their students to master Bahasa Indonesia as their national language. This finding is explained by teachers 3 and 2, as presented below.

*"Students need to be able to speak Indonesian as the national language."*(Teacher 3/ Interview 06)

*"So far, I think students need to master Indonesian as their national identity."*(Teacher 2/ Interview 05)

As stated above, teachers believe that their students must master Indonesian as the national language. Besides that, Indonesia is a lingua franca to communicate with people in all regions of Indonesia. This finding was explained by teacher 1 as presented below.

*"Indonesian is the national language that is used in daily communication. It also makes student easy to communicate with friends/students from various regions."*(Teacher 1/ Interview 23)

According to the teachers, the second language the student must master is the regional language. It was related to the teachers' cultural or indigenous language identities and beliefs. This finding is explained by teachers 3 and 1 as follows:

*"Students need to master the regional language because it is part of the regional culture that must be preserved."*(Teacher 3/ Interview 09)

*"Students need to master the regional language in order to preserve that regional language."*(Teacher 1/ Interview 07)

The other teacher stated that students need to master local languages because the local language is cultural wealth that must be protected and preserved. This finding was explained by teacher 3 as presented below.

*"Regional languages are cultural treasures that must be preserved, not to be lost."*(Teacher 3/ Interview 45)

The researcher discovered that the last language students must master is an international language related to teachers' global language identities and ideologies. Teachers stated that English needs to be mastered by the student because it is an international language used worldwide. This finding is explained by teachers 1 and 2, as presented below.

*"Because English has been used as an international language or used all over the world."*(Teacher 2/ Interview 08)

*"Students need to master English in order to interact, adapt and get more knowledge and information from the entire world."*(Teacher 1/ Interview 07)

*"English is very important because by mastering English, we can get more opportunities."*(Teacher 1/ Interview 43)

Based on the findings above, it was clear that teachers believe that their students need to master more than one language, including Indonesian as the national language and regional language. Moreover, teachers believe that their students also need to master English as an international language because it could help them adapt, interact, and gain knowledge and information more than others who do not master it. This finding can be a reflection of the high multilingual awareness of English teachers. It is in line with Heyder and Schädlich (2014), who states those language teachers are highly aware of multilingualism.

### 3.2. Teachers' Practicing Multilingualism in EFL Classroom

This study found that teachers used more than one language in teaching EFL. Based on the observation result, it can be inferred that the teacher used Bahasa Indonesia, English, and local languages in teaching EFL. There were a lot of interactions in the classroom that used multi-languages. For example, teacher 1 opened the class and stated the material for today's meeting. *"Assalamualaikum, good morning. How are you? Apa kabar hari ini? "Are you fine, Baik semuanya?"* The student answered, *"Walaikumsalam, bu."* *"Sekarang Ibu mau absen dulu, anyone absent today? Ado yang dak masuk?"* asked the teacher, and the student answered, *"No, Bu."* So it can be inferred that "English only" did not apply to their EFL class. The interview result also supports the teacher's state that they use Indonesian and regional languages besides English in the class. This finding is explained by teacher 1, as shown below.

*"In addition to using English, I use Indonesian in class as the language of instruction and the local language. If the child still does not understand English, then I will explain by using Indonesian."*(Teacher 1/ Interview 37)

In line with teacher 1, teacher 2 also stated that she also practised translanguaging in the classroom by translating the English language into Indonesian. So in EFL class, the teacher used Indonesian, English, and regional languages, as stated below.

*"In class, I use English first, then translate it using Indonesian and in the regional language."*(Teacher 2/ Interview 38)

The statement above is proven by observation results that showed all interactions between teacher 2 and the student in the classroom used multilingual. Teacher 2 explained the topic they were going to discuss by saying, *"Okay, hari ini kita akan belajar tentang names of animals. Jadi nama-nama hewan ya."* Then teacher 1 asked student are they still remember the names of animal by saing *"First, i want you to tell me one names of animal that you know, jadi kalian sebutkan nama hewan yang kalian tau, masih ingat dak? Cubo dari Randa."* In addition, the student named Randa answered, *"Elephant, rabbit, ant, chicken,*

cow, Sapi bu. Kalau rusa tu apo bu bahasa inggrisnyo?" The teacher answered the student's question by saying, "Rusa itu deer." These are some examples of interactions in an EFL classroom by teacher 2. Where both teacher and student are practising multilingual.

The same with teachers 1 and 2, teacher 3 also practiced multilingualism by translating and explaining in more than one language. For example, "For two minutes let's just observe the picture. Untuk dua menit kamu observasi gambarnya, jadi observasi tu kalian tengok gambar disitu tu." The teacher added the instruction by asking the student to describe one of the animals in the picture by saying, "Setelah melihat gambar you can describe the animals, jadi kalian bisa describe, deskripsikan gambar hewannyo tu, misal sapi. Apo bahasa inggrisnyo sapi tu?" "Cow bu." All the students answered. "Good, Sapi is cow. It has four legs. Jadi sapi punya empat kaki misalnyo macam itu, apo lagi-apo lagi tentang sapi dijelaskan. Jadi hubungannya dengan our today lesson, pembelajaran kita hari ini. We learn the descriptive text." The teacher explained descriptive text by saying, "What is descriptive text, jadi apa itu teks deskriptif? Descriptive text is a text that describes a thing. Jadi teks yang menjelaskan sesuatu."

The teacher stated that the reason for translanguaging practice is because it could help students understand English. This finding was explained by teacher 3 as presented below.

*"Translating and explaining in other languages is done because it makes it easier for students to understand English learning. For example, if something cannot be explained in English, then it can be explained and translated into Indonesian or other regional languages so that students understand it."*(Teacher 3/Interview 18).

The teacher believes that using multilingualism in English classes will help students learn a new language and maintain their previous language. This finding was explained by teacher 2 as presented below.

*"With the use of multilingualism in learning, teachers and students will not only maintain the existing language but also learn a new language."*(Teacher 2/Interview 16).

It can be concluded that teachers used various languages in EFL classrooms, namely Indonesian, local languages, and English. It aimed to make students easy to understand the lesson. Moreover, teachers believe multilingualism is beneficial to maintaining students' native language when learning a foreign language, namely, by using several languages in teaching English in class. It is also in line with Haukas (2015), also found that teachers were actively involved in helping improve and utilize previous linguistic abilities and awareness.

### **3.3. Reason Behind the Teachers' Decision to Use Multi-languages in The Classroom**

This section examined various reasons behind the teachers' decision to practice multilingualism in their EFL classrooms. As explained below, the teacher believes that multilingual teaching is more flexible and helps students maintain their national and regional languages, even though they are learning a foreign language. This finding is explained by teachers 2 and 3, as presented below.

*"My class uses Indonesian, regional languages, and English. I choose to use these languages to make them more flexible in teaching. It also makes students not confused when learning a new language and understand more quickly. In addition, it also helps them not to forget their national and regional languages when learning a new language"*(Teacher 3/ Interview 39)

*"English, Indonesian, and regional languages can complement and support each other. Whereas in learning a foreign language (English), students can use their daily language (Indonesian and*

*regional languages), so when studying a foreign language does not make students lose their national and regional languages.”(Teacher 2/ Interview 21)*

Some teachers stated that learning English with an "English only" policy was acceptable if the students' had good English. This finding is explained by teachers 1 and 2, as presented below.

*“In my opinion, it does not matter if the teacher uses full English if the students’ abilities are good enough and they can understand what the teacher is saying.”(Teacher 1/ Interview 25)*

*“Maybe for students who are already proficient in English, “full English” is not a problem.”(Teacher 2/ Interview 26)*

However, there was a teacher who believed that learning English with full English as the language of instruction was less effective because not all students have good English skills. Therefore, they used the mother tongue to help explain. This finding was explained by teacher 3 as presented below.

*“In my opinion, learning English by using English as the language of instruction is less effective. Because not all children have good English skills. That is why, to better understand, it is better to use Indonesian and regional languages as the language of instruction.”(Teacher 3/ Interview 27)*

In short, teachers, as agents of language planning and management, believe multilingualism benefits students. This finding is in line with Heyder and Schadlich's (2014) that teachers tend to use a multi-language approach in learning foreign languages, where these activities tend to be spontaneous and without the support of teaching materials.

In addition, teachers also want their students to be multilingual. Therefore, they used multilingualism in the classroom. The teacher had several reasons why the student should be multilingual. The first was career opportunities. The teachers said their students would have wider career opportunities if they were multilingual. This finding is explained by teachers 1 and 2, as presented below.

*“By becoming multilingual, students can get scholarships from the government to study at a higher level or work abroad.”(Teacher 2/ Interview 32)*

*“By mastering several languages, students are expected to have better career opportunities.”(Teacher 1/ Interview 31)*

*“Yes, when students master English, Indonesian and regional languages, students have good career opportunities abroad.”(Teacher 3/ Interview 33)*

Teachers highlighted the idea that multilingualism would be beneficial to student career opportunities. Moreover, the teachers' desire to make the students multilingual was very reasonable because the teacher mastered three languages, namely Javanese, Indonesian, and English. This finding is explained by teachers 1, 2, and 3 as presented below.

*“I can speak Javanese, Indonesian, and English.”(Teacher 1/ Interview 28)*

*“I am able to speak Javanese, Indonesian, Malay, and English.”(Teacher 2/ Interview 29)*

*“I mastered English, Indonesian, and regional languages.”(Teacher 3/ Interview 30)*

The researcher discovered the last reason to be the development of board relations. This element was discovered when teachers were asked why they wanted their students to learn a specific language. This finding is explained by teachers 1 and 2, as presented below.

*"Students need to master the local language in order to preserve the local language."* (Teacher 1/ Interview 07)

*"I think students need to maintain Indonesian as a national identity."* (Teacher 2/ Interview 05)

*"English is very important because, by mastering the language, we can get more opportunities than people who do not master it.."* (Teacher 1/ Interview 43)

Based on the quote above, it is clear that multilingual teachers also believe their students should be multilingual to have broader career and academic opportunities internationally. Teachers wanted their students to be successful in education and career and retain their identity. In addition, multilingualism also helps protect national and regional languages. That way, the teachers wanted their students to master several languages, namely Indonesian, English, and regional. That is why teacher multilingualism beliefs align with their language policy in the classroom, where they used multi-languages as the language of instruction. It is supported by Borg (2003) states that teachers are policymakers and make decisions based on their beliefs and knowledge.

### 3.4 Discussion

This research found several findings. The first is the teachers' belief in multilingualism. The teachers believed that their students should be able to master several languages, namely Indonesian, the local language, and English. Teachers believed mastering various languages made it easier for students to communicate and socialize with people from different cultural backgrounds. The teacher felt that the monolingual students needed more communication skills to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. This finding is in line with Stratilaki-Klein's (2019) claims that multilingualism helps students interact with people from various cultural backgrounds. Besides that, teachers also believe multilingual students will get a cognitive advantage and quickly gain more knowledge than monolingual students.

This research also found language policies that teachers implemented in the classroom. The teacher used multi-languages in EFL teaching, namely Indonesian, local languages, and English. It aimed to make the students easily understand and maintain their native language when learning a foreign language. The last finding is about the factors influencing teachers' decisions to use multilingualism in EFL teaching. Moreover, teachers also wanted their students to be multilingual because of several factors. The first is broader relations and career opportunities, where teachers said their students would have wider career opportunities and broader relations if they were multilingual. This finding is in line with Stratilaki-Klein's (2019) study claims that multilingualism helps students interact with people from various cultural backgrounds to build broader relations.

Finally, the teacher classroom language policy aligns with their belief that teachers believe in monolingualism and using multi-languages as the language of instruction. Moreover, this desire to protected and used students' multilingual abilities as resources in language learning makes sense because the teachers are multilingual. This finding is in line with Borg (2003), states that teachers make decisions based on their beliefs and knowledge. In short, teachers, as agents of language planning and management, believe multilingualism benefits students. Haukas (2015) also supported the idea that teachers were actively involved in helping improve and utilize previous linguistic abilities and awareness.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore public junior high school teachers' multilingualism beliefs and practices in Indonesia. The research participant was three Indonesian EFL teachers of junior high school. The data was taken from observation and interviews. The findings revealed teachers' belief in

multilingualism. Teachers want their students to master Bahasa Indonesia as their national, regional, and English language. The teacher's belief is essential because it affects their classroom language policy and management. Teachers believe multilingualism improves students' cognitive processes, intercultural competencies, opportunities, and careers. Then the multilingual language policy will benefit the continuity of national and regional languages.

This research also found that the teachers' beliefs and practices are in line. They used multilingualism in EFL teaching, namely using Indonesian, the local language, and English as the language of instruction. They used those languages to make their students easy to understand the lesson. Moreover, the multi-languages are used because not all students have good English, and it also aims to maintain students' indigenous languages. To sum up, this study revealed that EFL teachers' beliefs are a factor that influences their classroom language policy, and teachers' attitudes toward multilingualism have an impact on students' language practices. Hopefully, this research can contribute to relevant future research and provide a reference for further study. This study only discusses the teachers' multilingualism beliefs and practices with three EFL teachers. Further study could look at more than three EFL teachers and use the other technique for collecting data and analyzing teachers' and students' documents to have a deeper understanding.

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