Optimizing Bilingual Teaching in Developing Students' English Language Skills

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Abstract

Bilingual teaching in Indonesia has great potential in improving students' English skills. However, its implementation faces limited resources, teacher readiness, and support from the school environment and family. By overcoming these challenges, bilingual teaching can have a significant positive impact. This study aims to evaluate the impact of bilingual teaching on the development of students' English skills in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative approach, collecting data from various relevant sources including research results and previous studies, and analyzing the data systematically. Bilingual teaching significantly improves students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. In addition, this method also increases students' self-confidence and motivation, which ultimately supports their academic success. Government policy support, parental and community participation, and innovation in teaching materials and methods are key factors in the success of bilingual teaching. With commitment from all related parties and continuous efforts, bilingual teaching can be implemented effectively. This is expected to prepare Indonesian students to face global demands in the future.

***Keywords**: Bilingual Teaching, English Proficiency, Optimization.*

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A. INTRODUCTION

English language skills have become a very important need in today's era of globalization. English is not only a tool for international communication, but also a language of instruction in various fields of science, technology, business, and culture. Therefore, mastery of English is one of the skills that is very necessary for students to face global challenges and increase their competitiveness in the international job market (Sánchez-Hernández & Barón, 2022).

In Indonesia, English language teaching has started since elementary school, even in some schools since early childhood education. However, the results achieved are often still far from expectations. Many students who graduate from secondary education do not have adequate English skills to be used in academic or professional contexts. This is due to various factors, including ineffective teaching methods, limited learning time, and lack of use of English in students' daily lives (Harmanto et al., 2021).

One approach that is considered to be able to overcome this problem is bilingual teaching. Bilingual teaching is a teaching method in which two languages are used alternately in the teaching and learning process. In this context, Indonesian and English are used together as the languages of instruction in the classroom. This approach is believed to improve students' English language skills by giving them more exposure and opportunities to use the language in meaningful contexts (Escamilla et al., 2021).

Bilingual teaching in Indonesia is not a completely new concept. Several international and private schools have implemented this method with quite satisfactory results. However, the implementation of bilingual teaching in public schools is still limited. This may be due to various challenges, such as the lack of teachers who have bilingual skills, limited resources, and resistance from some people who still doubt the effectiveness of this method (Muniroh et al., 2022).

This study aims to explore how bilingual teaching can be optimized to develop students' English language skills. It is important to understand what factors can support or hinder the implementation of bilingual teaching in schools. In addition, this study will also evaluate the impact of bilingual teaching on students' English language skills, both in terms of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

The education system in Indonesia has undergone various reforms and innovations to improve the quality of education. Bilingual teaching is one innovation that has great potential to improve the quality of English teaching (Assegaf et al., 2022). However, the successful implementation of bilingual teaching requires commitment from various parties, including the government, schools, teachers, and parents of students. Strong policy support from the government, adequate training for teachers, and active participation from parents are some of the key factors that can support the implementation of effective bilingual teaching (Sia & Chern, 2023).

In addition, there is an urgent need for further research that can provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of bilingual teaching. In-depth and comprehensive research can help identify best practices in bilingual teaching and provide appropriate recommendations to improve the quality of English education in Indonesia. Thus, students are not only able to master English academically but also can use it confidently in various contexts of daily life.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Bilingual Teaching

Bilingualism is the ability of a person to use two languages when interacting. This bilingual ability is not only in speaking and writing but also the ability to understand what is communicated by others, both verbally and in writing. Children who have bilingual abilities can understand English as well as if they understand their mother tongue. Hurlock's opinion is that bilinguals can understand and communicate two languages, both through speaking, reading, and writing well and correctly (Cesaria et al., 2023).

According to Hurlock, bilingualism is the ability to use two languages and this ability is not only in speaking and writing but also the ability to understand what others communicate verbally and in writing. Children who have bilingual abilities understand English well as well as children understand their parents' language. Beker argues that bilingualism has an impact on the lives of children and their parents (Fitria & Farastiwi, 2021). Bilingual ability is not just about having two languages, but also has educational, social, economic, and cultural consequences. Children or adults who have bilingual abilities will have two or more experiences in the world because each

language goes with a different system of behavior, ancient proverbs, stories, history, traditions, ways of communicating, different literature, music, religious traditions, ideas, and beliefs, ways of thinking, and forms of caring (Chamorro & Janke, 2022).

From the term, it can be understood what is meant by bilingual, namely the use of two languages or two language codes. In general sociolinguistics, bilingual is defined as the use of two languages by a speaker in his/her interactions with other people alternately. To be able to use two languages, of course, a person must master both languages (Rejeki et al., 2023). First, his/her mother tongue or first language abbreviated as (B1), and the second is another language that becomes his/her second language abbreviated as (B2). People who can use both languages are called bilingual people (in Indonesian it is also called bilingualism). In addition to the term bilingualism with all its descriptions, there is also the term multilingualism (in Indonesian it is also called keanekabahasaan) which is a condition where more than two languages are used by a person in his/her interactions with other people alternately (Quay & Nakamura, 2023).

According to Pranowo, the approach to language learning requires three approaches, including:

a. Behaviorism theory
   This theory includes all behaviors, especially in responses, where this response is caused by stimulus stimuli. This theory implies that teachers must prioritize the consequences, which are obtained from the teacher's stimulus that gives rewed to his students and the teacher must be careful in applying the rewed (Lamb & Etopio, 2020).
b. Nativism Theory
   This theory is produced from the basic statement that language learning is determined by talent. Humans have been equipped with talent since birth and language is a special behavior of humans by way of understanding and ability and other language abilities can also be through biological mechanisms (Tobon & Luna-Nemecio, 2021).
c. Humanism Theory
   In this theory, the teacher is a facilitator where the teacher directs the progress of learning. Then in language learning using memorization methods and support from the Model of several aspects such as attitudes, behavior, skills, abilities, reactions, and understanding of students. This theory tends toward activeness in the learning process (Sutaman & Febriani, 2021).

2. English Skills

According to Hasan Alwi, ability comes from the word capable, which means first the power (can, able) to do something and secondly to be. Ability itself means ability, skill, strength, and wealth. Ability according to language means a person's ability to use adequate language seen from the language system, including politeness, and understanding turns in conversation (Herjanto, 2022).

The ability to speak is possessed by all humans. However, the skill of speaking in front of a crowd is not necessarily possessed by everyone. Speakers must develop techniques for preparation, structure the speech, transmit energy and enthusiasm, and capture and respond to the interest of the audience. The basis of effective speech is competent preparation. Nowadays everyone is required to be skilled in speaking (Yulianti & Sulistyawati, 2021).

The ability to speak is the ability to express opinions thoughts and feelings to someone or a group verbally, either face-to-face or from a distance. Moris stated that speaking is a natural means of communication between members of society to express thoughts and as a form of social behavior (Bleakley et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Wilkin stated that the goal of teaching English today is to speak. Furthermore, Wilkin stated that speaking skills are the ability to construct sentences because communication occurs through sentences to display the varying behavioral differences of different societies (Heintz & Scott-Phillips, 2023).

According to the communicative and pragmatic schools, speaking skills and listening skills are strongly related. Speaking skills require a minimum understanding from the speaker in forming a sentence. In the context of communication, the speaker acts as the sender, while the receiver is the recipient of the news. The process of learning to speak will be easy if students are actively involved in communicating (Zhao & Lee, 2022). Evaluation of speaking skills is carried out differently at each level. For example, at the Elementary School level, the ability to tell stories, give speeches, and so on can be used as a form of evaluation. Based on the description above, it can be concluded that speaking skills are skills in expressing opinions, thoughts, and feelings to communicate with others about English (Masuram & Sripada, 2020).

C. METHOD

This research will be conducted using a qualitative approach to examine the impact of bilingual teaching on the development of students' English language skills in Indonesia. Through this approach, research data will be obtained from various relevant sources, including research results and previous studies related to this topic. Data will be collected comprehensively to gain an in-depth understanding of the challenges, supporting factors, and impacts of bilingual teaching. After the data is collected, the next step is processing and analyzing the data. Thus, this research is expected to provide a significant contribution to efforts to improve the quality of bilingual teaching in Indonesia and support the development of student's English language skills (Nartin et al., 2024).

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The State of English Teaching in Indonesia

English language teaching in Indonesia has become an integral part of the national education system, especially since the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in junior and senior high schools. The English language education curriculum in Indonesia has undergone several revisions to adapt to the needs of the

times and the demands of globalization (Zein et al., 2020). The government through the Ministry of Education and Culture periodically reviews and updates the curriculum to improve the effectiveness of English language teaching. However, despite these efforts, there are still various challenges that need to be overcome to achieve the desired results.

The English language curriculum in Indonesia is designed to provide a strong foundation in four main skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It also emphasizes the importance of mastering grammar and vocabulary. In recent years, the curriculum has also begun to include cultural elements to help students understand the context of English use in various situations. However, the implementation of this curriculum in the field often faces obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the lack of skills and knowledge of teachers in implementing the curriculum effectively. Many teachers are still trapped in traditional teaching methods that are less interactive and do not emphasize communicative skills.

The English language teaching methods commonly used in schools in Indonesia are still dominated by direct teaching and grammar-based learning. These methods focus more on teaching sentence structures and grammar rules than on using the language in real contexts. Students are often asked to memorize vocabulary and grammar rules but are given little opportunity to practice speaking or listening to English in authentic situations (Sorohiti et al., 2024). The downside of this approach is that students may have good theoretical knowledge of English, but are less able to use it in everyday communication. On the other hand, more communicative teaching methods, such as task-based approaches or project-based learning, are still less widely implemented. These methods have great potential to improve student's communication skills by giving them more opportunities to use English in meaningful contexts.

The quality of English teachers in Indonesia is also a crucial factor in teaching English. Teachers are the spearheads in implementing the curriculum and teaching methods in the classroom. However, not all English teachers in Indonesia have adequate qualifications and competencies. Many teachers do not have a strong educational background in teaching English and still need to improve their teaching skills. One major challenge is the lack of ongoing professional training for English teachers. Many teachers do not have adequate access to the training and professional development needed to improve their skills, creating a gap between well-designed education policies and their implementation on the ground.

In addition, other challenges faced are infrastructure and resource issues. Many schools in Indonesia, especially in remote areas, still lack adequate facilities to support English language teaching. The lack of textbooks, learning materials, and other teaching aids is often a significant obstacle. Although the government has made efforts to provide better facilities and resources, there is still a significant gap between schools in urban and rural areas. This has an impact on the quality of English language teaching received by students in various regions.

Despite the challenges, there have also been some positive efforts made to improve English language teaching in Indonesia. Some schools have begun to adopt a more communicative and interactive teaching approach, as well as utilizing technology in learning. English teacher training and certification programs have also begun to be improved to help teachers improve their skills. In addition, cooperation with international educational institutions and scholarship programs have also provided opportunities for teachers and students to study and develop their English language skills abroad.

The condition of English language teaching in Indonesia still needs a lot of improvement. Although there have been efforts made to improve the curriculum, teaching methods, and teacher quality, there are still various challenges that need to be overcome. A strong commitment is needed from all related parties, including the government, schools, teachers, and the community, to jointly improve the quality of English teaching in Indonesia. Thus, it is hoped that Indonesian students can master English well and be ready to face global challenges in the future.

2. Challenges in Bilingual Teaching

Bilingual teaching, which involves the use of two languages as the medium of instruction, has great potential to improve students' English skills in Indonesia. However, the implementation of bilingual teaching in schools faces various complex challenges. One of the main challenges is limited resources (Qomariah et al., 2022). Textbooks, learning materials, and teaching aids that support bilingual teaching are often inadequate. Many schools, especially in remote areas, have difficulty obtaining teaching materials that follow the bilingual curriculum. The available textbooks are often only available in one language, making it difficult for teachers to deliver material in two languages in a balanced manner. In addition, teaching aids such as audio-visual and technological devices that can support bilingual teaching are also still limited. These shortcomings cause the learning process to be less than optimal and students do not get enough exposure to English in meaningful contexts.

Teacher readiness and competence are also major challenges in bilingual teaching. Teaching using two languages requires special skills that not all teachers have. Many teachers in Indonesia have not received adequate training to teach in a bilingual context. They may have good English skills but are not used to teaching using effective bilingual methods. The lack of ongoing professional training makes it difficult for teachers to develop their teaching skills following the demands of bilingual teaching. In addition, high workloads and time constraints also become obstacles for teachers to take additional training. These challenges often cause the implementation of bilingual teaching to not run well and the goal of improving students' English skills is not achieved optimally.

Support from the school environment and family is also very important for the success of bilingual teaching. A supportive school environment can create a conducive learning atmosphere for students to use and develop their English language skills. However, not all schools have a culture that supports bilingual teaching. Some schools

may still be trapped in the conventional teaching paradigm and are less open to innovation in teaching methods. In addition, support from the principal and education administrators is also crucial. They need to provide adequate facilities, encourage collaboration between teachers, and create policies that support the implementation of bilingual teaching. On the other hand, the role of the family cannot be ignored. Support from parents is very important to create a holistic learning environment for students. However, some parents may feel worried or skeptical about bilingual teaching, especially if they do not have good English skills. A lack of understanding of the benefits of bilingual teaching and fear of its negative impacts can lead to resistance from parents, which ultimately hinders the implementation of bilingual teaching in schools.

In addition to the three main challenges above, there are also other more specific obstacles such as the gap between policy and practice in the field, as well as limitations in monitoring and evaluating bilingual teaching programs. Government policies supporting bilingual teaching may exist, but their implementation often falls short of expectations. This is due to the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation of bilingual teaching programs in schools. Without adequate evaluation, it is difficult to identify problems and find appropriate solutions. In addition, the uneven implementation of bilingual teaching between schools is also a challenge. Some schools may have sufficient facilities and resources, while others may not. This causes disparities in the quality of bilingual teaching received by students in different regions.

Bilingual teaching in Indonesia faces several challenges that need to be addressed to achieve the goal of improving students' English language skills. Limited resources, teacher readiness and competence, and support from the school and family environment are some of the key factors that need to be considered. By addressing these challenges through appropriate policies, adequate training, and strong support from all relevant parties, it is hoped that bilingual teaching can be implemented effectively and provide significant benefits for the development of student's English language skills in Indonesia.

3. Supporting Factors for the Success of Bilingual Teaching

The success of bilingual teaching in Indonesia is highly dependent on various supporting factors that work synergistically. One of the main factors is government policy and support. The government has a central role in creating a conducive environment for bilingual teaching through the implementation of appropriate policies. Policies that support bilingual teaching should include aspects such as the preparation of relevant curricula, the provision of adequate textbooks and learning materials, and adequate budget allocation to support various activities related to bilingual teaching (Mahapatra & Anderson, 2023). The government also needs to provide support in the form of training programs and professional development for teachers. Ongoing training is essential to ensure that teachers have the skills and knowledge needed to teach in a bilingual context. In addition, policies that support

cooperation between the government and international educational institutions can open up opportunities for the exchange of knowledge and experience that can enrich the practice of bilingual teaching in Indonesia.

Parental and community participation is also a crucial factor in supporting bilingual teaching. Parents have an important role in supporting their children's learning process at home. Support from parents can include providing a conducive learning environment, involvement in school activities, and encouragement and motivation for children to learn English. In addition, the community can also play an active role in supporting bilingual teaching through various initiatives such as organizing English learning programs outside school hours, providing adequate learning facilities, and forming study groups that can help students develop their English skills. To increase the participation of parents and the community, schools need to establish effective and transparent communication with them. Involving parents in the planning and implementation of bilingual teaching programs and providing them with a clear understanding of the benefits of bilingual teaching can increase their support and involvement.

Innovation in teaching materials and methods is also an important factor that can improve the effectiveness of bilingual teaching. The use of technology in learning has been shown to increase student interaction and engagement. For example, the use of language learning software, mobile applications, and e-learning platforms can provide a more interactive and engaging learning experience for students. In addition, creative approaches such as project-based learning, collaborative learning, and contextual learning can help students develop their English skills in meaningful situations. Innovation in learning materials also needs to be done to ensure that the materials used are relevant to students' needs and follow the local cultural context. The development of learning materials that involve elements of Indonesian and international culture can help students understand the use of English in various contexts.

In addition to the three main factors above, cooperation between various related parties is also very important to support the success of bilingual teaching. Cooperation between schools, government, parents, and communities can create a holistic educational ecosystem and support the development of students' English skills as a whole. Partnership programs between schools higher education institutions and international institutions can open up opportunities for students and teachers to gain broader and more varied learning experiences. In addition, support from the private sector in the form of sponsorship, provision of scholarships, and contributions to the development of learning materials can also have a positive impact on the implementation of bilingual teaching.

In this context, it is also important to conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of bilingual teaching programs implemented in schools. Comprehensive evaluation can help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as provide recommendations for further improvement and development. Through systematic evaluation, the various challenges faced in bilingual teaching can be

addressed more effectively, and best practices can be identified and applied more widely.

The success of bilingual teaching in Indonesia is highly dependent on various supporting factors that work synergistically. Government policies and support, parental and community participation, and innovation in teaching materials and methods are some of the key factors that need to be considered. With a strong commitment from all related parties and ongoing efforts to overcome various challenges, it is hoped that bilingual teaching can be implemented effectively and provide significant benefits for the development of students' English skills in Indonesia.

4. The Impact of Bilingual Teaching on the Development of Students' English Language Skills

Bilingual teaching has a significant impact on the development of students' English language skills. One of the most obvious aspects is the improvement of speaking and listening skills. With bilingual teaching, students are exposed to English more often in meaningful and everyday contexts. They not only learn grammar and vocabulary but also how to use the language in real conversations (Haim & Tannenbaum, 2022). The interactions that occur in a bilingual classroom allow students to listen to and imitate the use of English by their teachers and classmates. This helps them understand intonation, pronunciation, and proper language usage. Students are also more confident to speak in English because they feel supported by an environment that supports the use of the language. As a result, students' speaking and listening skills experience a significant improvement, which is also reflected in their ability to communicate more fluently and confidently in English.

Students' reading and writing skills also benefit greatly from bilingual teaching. In a bilingual teaching system, students are often given a variety of reading materials in English, ranging from textbooks, and articles, to fiction and non-fiction literature. Exposure to these different types of texts helps students develop better reading skills, including the ability to comprehend reading content, analyze texts, and expand their vocabulary. In addition, students are also encouraged to write in English, whether in the form of essays, reports, or other creative projects. Bilingual teaching provides opportunities for students to practice writing more intensively and in various formats. Teachers provide constructive feedback, which helps students correct their mistakes and develop a better writing style. Over time, students show significant improvements in their reading and writing skills, which are not only beneficial in academic contexts but also in their daily lives and professional futures.

In addition to its direct impact on language skills, bilingual teaching also has a positive effect on students' self-confidence and motivation. When students see the progress they are making in mastering English, they become more confident in using the language. This confidence is very important because it encourages them to continue learning and try harder. Bilingual teaching creates an environment where students feel safe to try and make mistakes because they know that mistakes are part

of the learning process. Students' motivation also increases because they see the relevance and direct benefits of learning English. They realize that English language skills open up many opportunities, both in education and career. Support from teachers and classmates also contributes to increased student motivation. When students feel supported and valued, they are more motivated to learn and actively participate in teaching and learning activities.

Students' academic success is also affected by bilingual teaching. Students who learn in a bilingual environment tend to have better cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills. Bilingual teaching encourages students to think in two languages, which increases their cognitive flexibility. This has a positive impact on their overall academic performance. In addition, students who are proficient in English have greater access to global educational resources, including English-language books, articles, and online learning materials. This access allows them to broaden their horizons and knowledge, which ultimately contributes to their academic success.

Bilingual teaching has a wide and positive impact on the development of students' English language skills. Improved speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, as well as increased student confidence and motivation, all contribute to their academic success. With the right support from the government, schools, parents, and communities, bilingual teaching can be implemented effectively and provide long-term benefits for the development of education in Indonesia.

E. CONCLUSION

Bilingual teaching in Indonesia presents both great opportunities and challenges in improving students' English language skills. Despite various obstacles such as limited resources, teacher readiness and competence, and support from the school and family environment, bilingual teaching still has the potential to provide significant positive impacts. Supporting factors such as government policies and support, parental and community participation, and innovation in teaching materials and methods are very important in determining the success of bilingual teaching implementation. The impact of bilingual teaching on the development of students' English language skills is very clear in the improvement of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. In addition, bilingual teaching also contributes to increasing students' self-confidence and motivation, which in turn supports their academic success. With a strong commitment from all parties involved and continued efforts to overcome existing challenges, bilingual teaching can be an effective strategy in preparing Indonesian students to face the global demands of the future.

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