

Bilingualism in Early Education: A Case Study at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids

Eka Dwi Putra

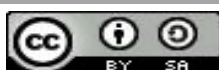
STKIP Agama Hindu Amlapura, Indonesia

Email: depe0254@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the implementation of bilingualism in early education at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids, focusing on the forms of bilingualism, dominant language use, and influencing factors. Bilingualism, crucial for global communication, is increasingly integrated into education to enhance students' linguistic and cognitive skills. However, challenges such as limited teacher proficiency and inadequate resources hinder its effectiveness. The research aims to analyze bilingual practices, identify the dominant language, and explore factors affecting its application. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observations, interviews with teachers, and document analysis. Participants included five teachers and 25 students aged 4–6 years. Findings revealed that code-switching and code-mixing were prevalent, with Indonesian as the dominant language and English used sparingly. Key influencing factors included teachers' limited English proficiency, insufficient resources, and minimal parental support for English use at home. The study highlights the need for structured bilingual programs, enhanced teacher training, and improved resources to optimize bilingual education. These findings contribute to understanding bilingualism in early education settings, particularly in Indonesia, and offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to foster effective bilingual learning environments.

Keywords: Bilingualism, Early Education, Code-Switching, Language Proficiency, Qualitative Study



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International

INTRODUCTION

Bilingualism, the ability to use two languages proficiently, has gained significant attention worldwide, particularly in education, as it facilitates communication in a globalized era (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2018; Amor dkk., 2023; de Jong dkk., 2023; Madrid, 2021). English, as one of the most widely spoken international languages, is crucial for global communication and dominates fields like education, technology, and business (Fauziah, 2021; Rao, 2019). In Indonesia, bilingual education programs are implemented to improve foreign language proficiency, enabling students to compete globally (Ahmad & Khan, 2023; Nishanthi, 2018; Parupalli, 2019; Pratiwi, 2021; Shrishthy, 2022).

Bilingual education involves teaching in two languages, with subjects like chemistry and biology often delivered in both English and Indonesian. This approach

introduces children to dual-language communication, enriching their academic, cultural, and social skills. Methods include separating instruction by days or weeks and utilizing engaging activities like songs, games, and stories (Dikilitaş dkk., 2023; Graham & Yeh, 2023; Krausneker dkk., 2022; Palacios-Hidalgo dkk., 2023; Scherzinger & Brahm, 2023). Despite its benefits, bilingual education faces challenges, such as the lack of qualified educators fluent in English, as observed in Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids.

Preliminary observations at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids reveal that while bilingual programs aim to develop students' proficiency and align with international standards, there are obstacles like insufficient educator skills and deviations from bilingual implementation criteria. The study aims to assess the effectiveness of bilingualism at the school, determine its adherence to established bilingual education practices, and evaluate whether it serves as a genuine educational tool or merely a prestige enhancer.

Bilingualism, the ability to use two languages, is becoming increasingly common and holds significant benefits for individuals and societies. It enhances communication, cultural understanding, and cognitive development. Bilingual programs, which integrate two languages in education, aim to improve linguistic skills while fostering multicultural awareness. In Indonesia, bilingual education has gained attention as a means to enhance English proficiency, vital for global competitiveness.

There are different types of bilingualism, including dominant, passive, semi-lingual, and balanced bilingualism, which vary in the level of proficiency and usage. Bilingual education often uses methods like content and language-integrated learning (CLIL) to teach subjects in both the native and target languages. However, effective implementation faces challenges such as unavailability of qualified teachers, lack of classrooms, and insufficient funding. Despite these hurdles, bilingual programs provide academic, cultural, and economic advantages, contributing to students' holistic development.

In Indonesia, the bilingual curriculum integrates the national and international curricula, aiming to create globally competitive students. However, issues like social inequality have caused criticism, as bilingual education often benefits upper-class students more than others. Addressing these challenges requires resources, teacher training, and equitable access to ensure the benefits of bilingualism are shared across all socio-economic groups.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims to study the dominant language use by students at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids Amlapura, employing a descriptive qualitative design. The approach involves observing and describing real-life phenomena systematically without adding interpretations. The goal is to provide a comprehensive summary of the bilingual experiences and dominant language use.

The research utilizes a qualitative descriptive method to systematically investigate real facts, their properties, and relationships. This method aligns with the nature of studying bilingualism, as it seeks to document events as they occur in their natural state.

The study's informants include teachers and students at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids (SACK). Teachers from bilingual classes and kindergarten students were selected using simple random sampling from a population of 50 students. This ensures each individual had an equal chance of being part of the sample.

The study was conducted at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids, located in Karangasem, Bali, from April to June 2022. Researchers directly observed teaching and learning activities during this period.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

1. Observation: Researchers observed student interactions and language use without intervening. Techniques included listening, note-taking, and recording conversations to understand natural language use in different contexts.
2. Interviews: Researchers conducted face-to-face interviews with teachers and students using structured questions to clarify bilingualism forms, dominant language use, and influencing factors.
3. Documentation: Official documents, decision letters, notes, and personal writings were analyzed to support and validate data from observations and interviews.

Research Instrument

The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by tools such as voice recorders, laptops, and stationery to document field notes and interviews. Materials like books and library sources were used for additional insights. This methodological approach ensures an in-depth understanding of the forms and factors influencing bilingualism among students at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to explore bilingualism at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids. Participants included five teachers and 25 students aged 4-6 years. Data were analyzed thematically to identify key trends and relationships.

RESULTH AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the use of bilingualism at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids, focusing on the forms of bilingualism, the dominant language used, and factors influencing language usage. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation, providing a comprehensive understanding of the bilingual environment.

Forms of Bilingualism

The findings reveal that code-switching and code-mixing are prevalent. Examples include:

- Code-switching: Teachers often switch between Indonesian and English during class activities, such as instructions and greetings (e.g., “Sekarang kita pray together, duduk dengan rapi ya”).
- Code-mixing: English words like “Be careful” and “Stand up” are embedded in Indonesian sentences.
- Intrasentential and intersentential switching: Observed in yoga sessions and storytelling, where English phrases are integrated within or between Indonesian sentences.

Dominant Language

Indonesian is the primary language used in classroom interactions, while English serves as a secondary language introduced through translation and insertion. Key observations include:

- Teachers incorporate English in greetings, instructions, and simple activities.
- Students understand basic English commands but rarely use English actively in interactions.
- Learning materials include picture books, flashcards, and audio aids, though English usage is limited to specific sessions like the morning circle.

Factors Influencing Dominant Language Usage

- **Human Resources:** Only one teacher has an English educational background. Other teachers lack formal training in English, limiting the consistent use of the language in classroom activities.
- **Facilities and Infrastructure:** Resources like books, loudspeakers, and flashcards support English learning. However, visual aids like videos are unavailable, and English lessons are restricted to specific days.
- **Students' Economic and Family Background:** Most students come from upper-middle-class families with access to educational tools like smartphones. However, parents primarily use their native language at home, limiting students' English exposure and practice.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings on the forms of bilingualism, the dominant language used, and the factors influencing language use at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids (SACK).

Forms of Bilingualism

The study identified two primary forms of bilingualism: code-switching and code-mixing.

Code-Switching:

- Teachers frequently switched between Indonesian and English, often for clarity or emphasis.
- Types of code-switching observed included:
 - Tag-switching: Adding short phrases like "Good job" or "Okay" in English to Indonesian sentences.
 - Intersentential switching: Switching languages between clauses or sentences (e.g., "Jika sudah selesai, please check before submitting").
 - Intrasentential switching: Mixing languages within a single sentence (e.g., "Very good/ but still kurang lengkap").

Code-Mixing:

- Found in both insertion and alternation types:
 - Insertion: Embedding English words like "teacher" or "stand up" into Indonesian sentences for better understanding.
 - Alternation: Switching between languages within a single clause, such as "Ayo, sing a song bersama-sama."

Teachers used these strategies to make lessons accessible and maintain effective communication, though frequent switching may hinder students' English fluency.

Dominant Language Used

Indonesian was the dominant language used in most activities, while English was integrated in limited contexts such as:

- Morning activities (e.g., prayer, singing, greetings).
- Simple instructions and commands during lessons.

English usage was minimal in core learning activities, and materials like textbooks, lesson plans, and evaluations were primarily in Indonesian. This aligns with previous studies (Purwanti, 2020) that found bilingual implementation in similar schools was not fully optimized.

Factors Influencing Dominant Language Use

Three key factors contributed to the dominance of Indonesian:

1. Human Resources:
 - Only one teacher at SACK had a formal English education background.
 - Other teachers, despite their non-English backgrounds, used simple English phrases effectively, but their proficiency limited consistent English use.
2. Facilities and Infrastructure:
 - Learning resources like storybooks, flashcards, and loudspeakers supported bilingual activities.
 - However, visual aids (e.g., videos) and comprehensive English resources were lacking, limiting effective English integration.
3. Family Background:
 - Most students came from upper-middle-class families with access to learning tools (e.g., smartphones).
 - However, parents rarely used English at home, leading to limited exposure and practice outside the classroom.

Forms of Bilingualism

The study found that code-switching and code-mixing are the most prevalent forms of bilingualism at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids. Teachers often switch between Indonesian and English to facilitate understanding. Two types of code-switching were observed:

- Tag-switching: Adding English tags such as “okay” or “alright” at the end of Indonesian sentences.
- Insertion: Embedding English words or phrases into Indonesian sentences (e.g., “Let’s buka buku kita”).

Dominant Language

Indonesian is the dominant language used in the classroom, reflecting students’ stronger proficiency in their native language. English is introduced gradually through songs, games, and storytelling to build familiarity without overwhelming students.

Factors Influencing Bilingualism

Several factors affect the implementation of bilingualism at the school:

- Human Resources: Teachers’ proficiency in English varies, influencing their confidence in using the language.
- Facilities: Limited access to English-language materials and multimedia resources hinders consistent exposure.
- Family Background: Parental support plays a crucial role, as students from English-speaking households exhibit greater proficiency.

CONCLUSIONS

The study explored bilingualism at Sekolah Alam Cempaka Kids, examining its forms, dominant language use, and influencing factors. Findings revealed that teachers frequently used code-switching (mainly tag-switching) and code-mixing (primarily insertion) as effective strategies, while Indonesian dominated as the primary language due to limited resources, infrastructure, and minimal English exposure at home, with English used mainly during prayers and specific lessons. To enhance bilingual education, the study recommends teacher training to improve English proficiency, providing English-language resources, and encouraging parental involvement in fostering bilingualism at home. These measures aim to strengthen language development in early education settings.

REFERENCES

- Abduh, A., & Rosmaladewi, R. (2018). Promoting intercultural competence in bilingual programs in Indonesia. *SAGE Open*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018788616>
- Ahmad, I. S., & Khan, Z. J. Y. (2023). English language skills and becoming a global entrepreneur: Lessons for entrepreneurship education. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 22(6). <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.6.11>
- Amor, M. I., Tinedo-Rodríguez, A. J., & Osuna-Rodríguez, M. (2023). The interaction between language skills and cross-cultural competences in bilingual programs. *Languages*, 8(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages8030181>
- de Jong, E. J., Coulter, Z., & Tsai, M. C. (2023). Two-way bilingual education programs and sense of belonging: Perspectives from middle school students. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 26(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2020.1783635>
- Dikilitaş, K., Bahrami, V., & Erbakan, N. T. (2023). Bilingual education teachers and learners in a preschool context: Instructional and interactional translanguaging spaces. *Learning and Instruction*, 86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2023.101754>
- Fauziah, K. A. (2021). The importance of English as a global language. [Journal reference]
- Graham, K. M., & Yeh, Y. F. (2023). Teachers' implementation of bilingual education in Taiwan: Challenges and arrangements. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 24(3). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-022-09791-4>
- Krausneker, V., Becker, C., Audeoud, M., & Tarcsiová, D. (2022). Bilingual school education with spoken and signed languages in Europe. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 25(5). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2020.1799325>
- Madrid, D. (2021). Motivational potential of bilingual and non-bilingual programmes in secondary and tertiary education. *Porta Linguarum*, 2021(36). <https://doi.org/10.30827/PORTALIN.V0I36.16700>
- Nishanthi, R. (2018). The importance of learning English in today world. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.31142/ijtsrd19061>
- Palacios-Hidalgo, F. J., Gómez-Parra, M. E., Espejo-Mohedano, R., & Huertas-Abril, C. A. (2023). Employment, work abroad and bilingual education: Spanish bilingual graduates' self-perceived employability, mobility and intercultural competence. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 12(2). <https://doi.org/10.21153/jtlge2021vol12no2art1077>
- Parupalli, S. R. (2019). The role of English as a global language. *Research Journal of English (RJOE)*, 4(1).

- Pratiwi, A. (2021). Communication and international language: An overview on the importance of English international language (EIL) in global communication and broadcasting. *Journal of Islamic Communication & Broadcasting*, 1(1).
- Purwanti, K. A., Adiwijaya, P. A., & Dharma, I. P. S. (2020). The implementation of bilingual education in Indonesian schools. *[Journal reference]*
- Scherzinger, L., & Brahm, T. (2023). A systematic review of bilingual education teachers' competences. *Educational Research Review*, 39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2023.100531>
- Shrishthy. (2022). Importance of English language for global understanding and for global education. *International Journal for Research Trends and Innovation*, 7(7).