



The English Language Teaching at Bilingual Class in An Indonesian EFL Classroom

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Abstract

This study explores the implementation of English teaching in a bilingual class at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar, identifying challenges faced by the teacher and the strategies used to address them. A qualitative approach was employed, The researcher used purposive sampling technique to select participants which consist of 20 students and an English teacher. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. Findings indicate that bilingual classes positively impact students' English proficiency, particularly in speaking and listening, while enhancing their confidence. However, challenges remain, including difficulties in understanding instructions and acquiring new vocabulary. The teacher employs various instructional strategies, such as visual media and direct speaking activities, to support learning. Despite these challenges, bilingual education offers significant benefits in language acquisition. This study provides insights for educators seeking to implement effective bilingual teaching methods.

Keywords: Bilingual, English teaching, challenges, strategies.

Introduction

Interaction plays a fundamental role in bilingual language teaching, particularly within the framework of communicative language instruction. In such settings, communication serves as a key element that drives the language learning process. Students are expected to engage in meaningful interactions, which enable them to develop and refine their speaking and comprehension skills in the target language (Patonah & Irawan, 2022). Through interaction, learners acquire the ability to effectively use and internalize language structures while making sense of classroom discourse.

The significance of interaction lies in its capacity to help learners deconstruct and comprehend linguistic structures while deriving meaning from real-time language use. Additionally, it facilitates the integration of new linguistic forms into students' active language production. Every classroom interaction holds pedagogical value, providing

learners with structured, meaningful input. When delivered at an appropriate frequency, such input becomes essential for second language acquisition, allowing students to make consistent progress (Satya & Durga, 2018).

Three key aspects of interaction are central to this study. First, verbal interaction (Khoiroh, 2024), which examines the quality and nature of students' language use and peer-group interactions. Second, cognitive processing, which focuses on how students approach and mentally engage with learning tasks during interactions. Finally, social processing, which explores the formation of social connections during group activities and underscores the role of peer relationships in the learning process (Putri, 2021).

Language serves as the primary medium of communication in human life, facilitating both individual expression and social interaction. According to Siahaan (2008) in Nursanti (2016), language is a fundamental human inheritance, essential for reasoning, conveying ideas, and establishing connections with others. English, as a global language, plays a pivotal role not only in international communication but also in scientific and technological advancements. For Indonesians, mastering English is crucial, as it provides access to global knowledge, scientific developments, and cross-cultural exchanges.

In the educational context, English language teaching is a fundamental process that equips students with the communication skills necessary for academic and professional success. The teaching and learning of English involve a collaborative effort between teachers and students, aiming to enable learners to use the language effectively for both communication and cognitive development. Rahim (2006:22) in (Baca,2024) highlights that effective English instruction requires the adoption of appropriate teaching methods to foster students' ability to think and communicate in English. A communicative approach, which emphasizes real-world language application, is particularly relevant in bilingual classrooms where instruction occurs in both English and the local language.

Bilingual education, as defined by Mohamed and Lobo (2019), involves the use of both English and the native language in instruction. This approach fosters proficiency in both languages, enabling students to communicate effectively across diverse contexts. Bilingual classes aim to create an immersive English-speaking environment that promotes natural language use, equipping students with the linguistic skills needed to navigate a globalized world. The bilingual teaching method integrates both languages in delivering curriculum content, thereby enhancing students' proficiency in the foreign language. By adopting this approach, students benefit in two key ways: they

attain mastery of academic content in both languages and develop stronger overall language competence (Dwika Herdiawan, 2017).

The implementation of bilingual education in Indonesia has gained widespread acceptance, with numerous schools establishing bilingual programs. This instructional model is regarded as highly beneficial, preparing students to meet future challenges by strengthening their language skills.

MAN 1 Polewali Mandar is one of the institutions that offers a bilingual class program for tenth-grade students. The implementation of bilingual education at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar has proven to be highly advantageous, given the increasing demand for English proficiency across various sectors. Students in bilingual classes demonstrate stronger reading and language skills and achieve higher academic performance compared to their peers in monolingual programs. Research indicates that bilingual students often outperform their monolingual counterparts in academic settings, as they develop superior planning, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.

This study aims to explore and describe the implementation of English language teaching in bilingual classes at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar, identify the challenges faced by teacher, and examine the strategies they employ to address these challenges. The researcher hopes that this study will serve as a valuable reference for educators in bilingual classrooms and highlight the ways in which bilingual education can significantly enhance students' English proficiency.

Method

This study was conducted at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar, focusing on the implementation of English language teaching in bilingual classes for tenth-grade students. The research involved 20 students and one English teacher. The primary objective was to examine the implementation of bilingual education and the challenges encountered by teachers in this instructional setting. Additionally, the study sought to understand the impact of bilingual education on students' English proficiency, given the growing demand for English skills across various sectors (Sugiyono, 2020).

A qualitative research approach was adopted, with data collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. The participants included tenth-grade students at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar, who provided insights into their experiences within the bilingual classroom. Interviews were conducted with a selected group of students and the English teacher to explore the challenges faced and the strategies employed in bilingual English instruction.

To ensure data validity and reliability, triangulation techniques were applied, including data triangulation and method triangulation. These approaches enabled the cross-verification of findings from multiple sources, such as interviews and classroom observations, thereby enhancing the accuracy and credibility of the research outcomes. The collected data were systematically reduced and analyzed to present a clear depiction of the bilingual teaching process and its effectiveness in improving students' English language proficiency.

Through this qualitative inquiry, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the implementation of bilingual education and its role in language acquisition at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on bilingual pedagogy, offering practical implications for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance English language instruction in similar contexts.

Result and Discussion

1.1. The Implementation of English Teaching in Bilingual Class at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar

The implementation of English teaching in bilingual classes at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar has demonstrated a positive impact on students, despite several challenges. Most students perceive bilingual classes as an opportunity to practice their English skills directly. For instance, Student 1 stated, "I feel that bilingual classes are enjoyable because we can learn English directly," indicating that bilingual instruction provides a more practical learning experience. Similarly, Student 2 highlighted the benefits by stating, "The advantage is that we become accustomed to hearing and speaking English every day," suggesting that frequent exposure to English enhances their confidence in communication.

However, challenges persist, particularly concerning vocabulary acquisition and comprehension of materials presented in English. Student 3 expressed, "The challenge is that the vocabulary is quite extensive and difficult," reflecting the struggles some students face in keeping up with the lessons. Student 4 shared a similar sentiment, saying, "I feel somewhat less confident because I often make mistakes," indicating that despite progress, many students still experience hesitation when speaking English. These difficulties are often exacerbated by the pace of instruction and the use of complex vocabulary that may confuse students (Dos Santos, 2019).

Despite these challenges, students acknowledged the effectiveness of the teaching methods employed, which provided a rewarding learning experience. Student 5 noted, "The teaching method is highly effective because we are given numerous opportunities to speak," emphasizing that frequent speaking practice is a significant advantage of bilingual classes. Additionally, peer interaction contributes to the learning process, as Student 2 remarked, "Our interaction is quite good; my friends often assist me when I face difficulties," underscoring the role of a supportive classroom atmosphere in enhancing students' English proficiency.

Most students believe that bilingual classes offer an opportunity to immerse themselves in English and improve their language skills. Student 6 stated, "I enjoy bilingual classes; they are very engaging," reflecting the enthusiasm of many students for a dynamic and interactive English learning experience. Nevertheless, initial challenges remain, particularly when students struggle to follow materials presented in English. This is evident from Student 7's comment, "I found it somewhat difficult at first, but over time, I was able to keep up," indicating that students gradually adapt to this instructional method.

One of the primary challenges faced by students in bilingual classes is understanding the material presented by teachers in English. Student 2 explained, "The challenge is that sometimes I do not fully understand the teacher's explanation," highlighting the difficulty in comprehending instructions. Some students also feel overwhelmed by new vocabulary that is challenging to retain. As Student 7 expressed, "The challenge is learning new vocabulary that I have not encountered before." This difficulty can hinder students' ability to follow lessons smoothly, particularly when teachers speak rapidly or use unfamiliar vocabulary (Chibaka, 2018).

On the other hand, many students believe that the teaching methods employed effectively support their English learning. As Student 4 stated, "The teaching method is effective; the teacher provides numerous opportunities for speaking," indicating that bilingual classes encourage students to actively participate in conversations and discussions. This approach fosters greater engagement in language learning, particularly through interactive speaking exercises, which are a core component of bilingual education. Additionally, the integration of various media facilitates comprehension, as Student 2 noted, "The teaching method is quite effective, as the teacher frequently uses visual media."

However, despite the effectiveness of these teaching methods, challenges persist in terms of English interaction within the classroom. Student 8 observed, "We rarely speak English outside the classroom, but we always assist our peers when they

encounter difficulties," demonstrating that while students are provided with opportunities to speak in class, their use of English outside structured learning environments remains limited. This limitation can lead to a lack of confidence, particularly when speaking in public or with classmates. Student 7 added, "We help each other in learning, which helps me understand concepts more quickly," emphasizing the importance of peer support in the learning process.

The bilingual class at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar has had a positive impact on students' English proficiency, despite existing challenges. For example, Student 11 stated, "This bilingual class has been very helpful; I feel more confident in speaking English," reflecting an increase in students' self-confidence after frequent speaking practice. Although challenges such as difficulty in understanding new materials and vocabulary persist, bilingual education continues to make significant contributions to students' English language development, benefiting both their academic and everyday communication skills.

The implementation of bilingual classes at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar provides diverse learning experiences for students. Student 13 remarked, "I really enjoy the bilingual class because it is both challenging and beneficial." Although initially difficult, students gradually develop better comprehension skills over time. The most significant challenge reported was understanding rapid English conversations. "The challenge is keeping up with fast-paced English conversations," said Student 13. However, the primary advantage of this class is increased exposure to spoken and written English. The integration of multimedia resources, such as videos, has proven to be an effective instructional strategy. As Student 14 stated, "The teaching method is effective, as it often incorporates multimedia materials."

Similarly, Student 14 acknowledged that bilingual education has been instrumental in their English learning journey. "The bilingual class has greatly assisted me in learning English," they stated. While initially challenging, students gradually become more fluent over time. One of the key challenges faced was comprehending complex reading materials, requiring additional effort and attention. "The challenge is understanding complex reading passages," Student 14 explained. Nevertheless, regular practice has boosted their confidence in speaking English. "The advantage is that I feel more confident when speaking English," they proudly stated.

Likewise, Student 15 found the bilingual class engaging and beneficial. "I find the bilingual class both engaging and valuable," they commented. However, remembering new vocabulary remained a significant challenge. "The primary challenge is retaining newly introduced vocabulary," they noted. Nevertheless, frequent speaking practice

facilitated language acquisition. "Speaking exercises make learning easier," they remarked. The emphasis on direct speaking practice has significantly contributed to students' language proficiency. "The teaching method is effective as it prioritizes speaking practice," they added.

Many students, including Student 16, reported significant improvements in their English communication skills. "One major benefit is that I can speak English more frequently," they said. Despite challenges such as rapid instruction delivery, they felt they could better follow lessons with continued practice. "Understanding fast-paced explanations remains a challenge," they acknowledged. However, peer support played a crucial role in creating a comfortable learning environment. "We support each other in learning, which fosters a positive classroom atmosphere," they added.

Student 17 also recognized the benefits of bilingual education. "This bilingual class has greatly helped me improve my English comprehension," they stated. Although initially difficult, students gradually adjusted to the learning process. "It was challenging at first, but I became more comfortable over time," they said. Student 17 noted that understanding unfamiliar vocabulary remained a significant challenge. "The challenge lies in unfamiliar vocabulary," they remarked. However, increased exposure and practice facilitated their understanding and boosted confidence. "I now understand English more quickly," they added.

Overall, bilingual education at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar fosters an interactive and supportive learning environment. Student 18 expressed, "The bilingual class is engaging because it allows me to learn English interactively." While some challenges persist, students generally found the learning process more manageable over time. "Initially challenging, but it became easier with practice," they said. The primary challenge remained complex vocabulary, but continued engagement in classroom activities facilitated comprehension. "The main challenge is understanding advanced vocabulary," they explained. Ultimately, the bilingual class significantly enhanced students' communication skills, fostering confidence and proficiency in English.

2.2. The Strategies to Overcome Challenges in Teaching English in Bilingual Classroom at MAN1 Polewali Mandar

Mrs. JT identifies the primary challenge in bilingual English classrooms as students' difficulty in comprehending instructional material. "Ensuring that all students understand the content in English, particularly those with limited exposure, is my biggest challenge. Many struggles with vocabulary and explanations given in English," she explained. This challenge is further exacerbated by the diverse proficiency levels

within the class, with most students at a basic level. Therefore, adapting instructional materials to match students' abilities is crucial to minimize stress and enhance learning engagement.

To support struggling students, Mrs. JT employs dynamic teaching methodologies. "I utilize multimedia-based instruction, such as videos and images, to facilitate comprehension. Additionally, I simplify explanations and encourage group discussions," she stated. This inclusive approach accommodates different learning styles, making the material more accessible and engaging. Visual media, in particular, enhances concept retention and fosters greater student involvement.

Vocabulary acquisition remains a significant hurdle in bilingual classrooms. To address this, Mrs. JT provides pre-lesson vocabulary lists and encourages students to incorporate new words into sentences. "I advise students to record unfamiliar vocabulary and discuss it in class," she explained. This strategy reinforces word retention and practical usage, boosting students' confidence in speaking English (Mulyani, 2017).

The communicative approach is the most effective method in bilingual classrooms, according to Mrs. JT. "Emphasizing direct spoken practice is essential. I also implement task-based learning, assigning tasks that require students to use English for communication and problem-solving," she noted. This strategy promotes active language use, shifting the focus from passive understanding to practical application. Through problem-solving tasks, students engage in real-world communication, making learning more relevant and effective.

Recognizing the role of visual media in enhancing comprehension, Mrs. JT incorporates images, videos, and infographics to explain abstract concepts. "Visual media significantly aids understanding, particularly for students who learn best through visual representation," she emphasized. This approach not only clarifies complex ideas but also makes lessons more engaging and memorable.

Creating a supportive classroom environment is another key aspect of effective bilingual education. "I strive to foster a stress-free atmosphere where students feel comfortable. I allow them time to adjust and encourage peer support," she explained. This nurturing environment reduces anxiety, enhances participation, and strengthens peer collaboration, fostering resilience in language learning.

Assessment plays a critical role in measuring students' comprehension and identifying areas for improvement. "Evaluation is essential for tracking progress and providing targeted support to students in need," Mrs. JT asserted. In addition to formal

examinations, she assesses students through classroom discussions and presentations, offering a comprehensive insight into their development (Khasanah, 2020).

Mrs. JT aspires for the bilingual program at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar to continue evolving and positively impact students' English proficiency. "I hope the bilingual class adopts more creative and engaging methods to enhance students' language skills. Ultimately, I want to prepare them to compete globally with strong English proficiency," she concluded. By continuously refining instructional strategies, the bilingual program can serve as a foundation for students to navigate global challenges in education and employment with confidence

Conclusion

The implementation of English teaching in bilingual classes at MAN 1 Polewali Mandar has positively impacted students' English proficiency, despite certain challenges. Students gain confidence and become accustomed to speaking and listening to English daily, providing them with direct practice opportunities. However, difficulties in comprehending new vocabulary and English-medium instruction remain significant challenges, often exacerbated by the pace of teaching and complex vocabulary. Nevertheless, effective instructional strategies, such as the integration of visual media and peer interaction, have mitigated these obstacles.

By employing a more inclusive and communicative approach, English instruction in bilingual classrooms has fostered a valuable learning experience, enhanced students' confidence, and better prepared them for academic and everyday English use. To further enhance the quality of English teaching, educators should prioritize students' comprehension of new vocabulary through additional explanations and varied visual aids. Additionally, a more structured teaching approach—incorporating slower material delivery and extended discussion time—can alleviate students' difficulties in grasping the material effectively.

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