

Learning English for Bilingual Primary Students in Indonesia: The Use of Own-language

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Abstract. As a world phenomenon, bilingualism is nothing new, particularly in countries where more than one language is spoken. Indonesia is one of the countries where citizens incorporate national and traditional languages into their daily life. As an international language, English is a bridge between nations to exchange many aspects of life. Due to that, many countries incorporate English as one of the compulsory subjects at schools. How should Indonesian primary students' bilingualism help them learn English? by using a library search, this paper tries to answer the question by suggesting different notions from scholarly works to enhance primary school students' English learning with their bilingual background. This paper argues that students' language should be addressed due to its potential to strengthen new language learning.

Keywords: English foreign language, own language, native language

1 Introduction

Bilingualism is a worldwide occurrence. The world's population is multilingual in half [1]. Bilingualism is stated as the ability to control two languages fluently and naturally [2]. Given the criteria, Indonesia fits the description to be included as a bilingual community, as most of its citizens can speak more than one language. For Indonesians, being multilingual primarily excludes speaking any foreign languages. Their bilingualism is generally limited to their ability to speak Bahasa Indonesia and their native tongue.

English is undoubtedly one of the most widely used languages in the world. English has become the most extensively studied and spoken second or foreign language worldwide due to its application in various international contexts [3]. The Indonesian government required English instruction in schools to provide pupils with a sufficient level of English proficiency. The government encourages the study of English in elementary schools, in particular by mandating the teaching of three languages, including English as a foreign language. In a 40-week academic year, English is taught for up to 2 hours and 35 minutes (or 70 minutes) every week [4].

The role of students' L1 or original language is crucial when discussing English learning in non-English speaking nations. Students residing in non-English speaking countries probably learn English in their native tongue. The assumption that a new language is best known and taught without utilizing the students' native tongues for explaining, translating, testing, classroom management, or even teacher-student contact, according to [5], has been widespread since the eighteenth century. This is also present in Indonesia, where students' bilingualism needs to be better accommodated into their English instruction. The usage of the

new language is maximized while the vernacular and native tongue is suppressed. As a result, it is typical in Indonesia to observe pupils being prevented from speaking their native tongue during English lessons. Therefore, in this paper, we shed light on the effect of utilizing own language in learning English for bilingual primary students in the Indonesian context.

The findings of this investigation are hoped to be helpful to Indonesian primary English instructors by providing them with information on the advantages of having their pupils learn English in their native language. Additionally, it will be helpful for policymakers to consider including own-language instruction in the English subject curriculum. This article will look at three supporting points to show why bilingual primary pupils in Indonesia may learn English more effectively when they utilize their native language.

2 Method

To find out what own language has to do with English language learning, we employed library search as the methodology of this study. With this idea, [6] defines the library research method as a method that involves finding sources that offer factual data or an expert's or personal opinion on a research question. We focused our library search on own-language usage in English language learning. The primary source of reference is the ERIC database. Several keywords related to our aim were used to find literature that looks at the use of own language in English language learning. To ensure that the references are current, the search was also restricted to articles within the last 15 years. Additionally, certain references from sources other than the database were also analyzed critically. Based on our search and critical readings, we can claim that using own language in the classroom might help bilingual primary students in Indonesia to learn English more effectively because it can facilitate the learning environment for students, foster positive classroom interaction, and give them a foundation for learning a new language.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Own-language use and convenient learning environment for learners

Students who feel at ease in their surroundings may study more effectively. It is hoped that this will occur in language learning classes as well. Ensuring that the students do not experience intimidation in the classroom due to competence disparities is one technique to ensure they feel at ease. Moreover, [7] underlines the significance of not separating pupils based on their proficiency in a foreign language. In order to refer to all bilingual language learners by the same phrase, she suggested the term 'emergent bilingualism'. The phrase "emerging bilinguals" unites all the various proficiencies, and using it implies that all pupils, regardless of their degrees of English proficiency, must get the same treatment. By not categorizing the pupils, it is believed that a pleasant learning atmosphere would be created for them. According to [7], the foundation of emerging bilingualism might include the student's strengths, home language, and cultural practice. Therefore, it should be considered that using the student's native language, regardless of whether it is their national language or vernacular, can optimize their success in learning English.

The idea of emergent bilingualism put out by [7] provided a solid foundation for English language instructors. Prior to using any teaching strategy for learning English, it is crucial to treat all students fairly regardless of their competence levels. Students less skilled in English would feel more at ease and less intimidated by their more advanced classmates if they were

permitted to speak in their native tongue. If the instructors can accommodate different students' English competence, bilingual primary children in Indonesia would be able to learn in a pleasant setting.

As was said in the essay's beginning, Indonesian English teachers frequently try to employ as much English as possible in their classes. But according to [8], language-separated pedagogies continually push out conventional languages. In some ways, the Indonesian circumstances support this thesis. According to our observations as elementary school students in Indonesia, using Bahasa, let alone the native tongue was often prohibited during English lessons. Contrary to popular belief, more kids in our area speak their local dialect than Bahasa Indonesia. When students are 'forced' to learn and speak a new language they are unfamiliar with, this logically results in a feeling of discomfort on the students' part. Using the students' native language and cultural practices as the foundation for their development as emergent bilinguals is contrary to what occurs in Indonesia, according to [7] theory—in agreement with García, a different study discovered that when kids discuss new terminology in English while speaking in their native tongue [9] that it can help them learn more. As seen by this, pupils may utilize their language to verify that they comprehend a new word.

Nonetheless, several contradictions exist with employing L1 in English lessons. Limited exposure to a second language and the absence of interaction practice in class may impede L2's advancement [10]. This suggests that if English is used sparingly in English lessons, there is a potential that pupils' proficiency in the language will remain the same since they are only exposed to a restricted amount of the new language. This is something that the idea of translanguaging may assist with. According to [8], translanguaging is the process of imparting the fundamentals of a foreign language through the native tongue. This idea suggests that teachers might be able to communicate English principles to pupils in their first language or their native tongue. As a result, the exposure to L1 will be balanced, and the students' sense of comfort in English classrooms will be preserved. The literary backgrounds discussed in this article are primarily distinct from the Indonesian environment. However, given the standard features of the individuals in their studies—where they are multilingual young learners—the favourable results might apply to the Indonesian environment.

3.2 Using own-language supports in-class positive interaction

It is intolerable when students speak their native tongue in English lessons, especially when English is not their first language. Although English teachers may specify restrictions about L1 usage in class, it can be challenging to forbid L1 use in peer interactions or team activities, especially when students share the same first language [11]. However, multiple studies have demonstrated that using the students' native tongue when teaching bilingual pupils may also help to foster productive student engagement.

A study found that employing L1 enables peers to provide helpful feedback to one another during writing exercises in the classroom [12]. This idea suggests that by speaking in their native language in class, students might better grasp the material and stay on task while learning it. Additionally, [13] note in their review of the literature that using L1 in a balanced manner has been demonstrated by research to be helpful in interactions between learners since it aids in maintaining their interest because using L1 makes challenging tasks easier to manage.

In addition to ensuring that the students have a comfortable English learning experience, [11] concurs that when the necessary English abilities are lacking, it is inevitable for students to speak their native tongue while answering queries and providing peer support. The students

can validate their comprehension by using L1 in this situation. According to [14], code-switching served as translanguaging, integrating the two languages for improved communication and participation in the learning process. This idea has a positive impact on students' engagement. According to this study, students gain from blending the two languages in their academic content and social interactions.

According to the research mentioned above, using students' native language helps improve their interactions. The usage of L1 is beneficial for students' comprehension confirmation and help, as was previously demonstrated. Unquestionably, students may become disinterested in English class, particularly if the contents could be more precise or the course could be more varied in certain respects. Therefore, the usage of peers' own language is advantageous for preserving their attention. It is interesting to mention a few research weaknesses, however. The sample size is the first factor. Most of the research mentioned above was based on very few participants; for instance, [12] utilized only four students as the study's subject. Studies with larger sample sizes may yield different results when various numbers of people are involved. The multiple circumstances could have various outcomes. For instance, [11] utilized adults as the subject; for elementary school pupils, the results can change. Despite these concerns, bilingual primary school pupils in Indonesia might observe the favourable benefits mentioned above.

3.3 Using own-language offers a base for students to study a new language

Learning a new language is like building a home, and a structure requires a firm foundation to be sturdy. It may also be used in the relationship between learning a new language and using one's native tongue when doing so can serve as the foundation for pupils learning a foreign vocabulary. According to [15], [16], pupils who can read and write in one language will progress more quickly toward mastering the same abilities in a second language. She goes on to say that using the language the pupils are most comfortable with might increase their interest in their studies. Additionally, research in Chinese settings showed that encouraging Chinese language learning at home did not hinder pupils' development of their English literacy abilities [17].

Using the pupils' native tongue might make them more confident in learning English. According to [18], teachers can foster students' confidence development in both their first and second languages when they use the students' own language. They can also use the students' social language to help them develop their academic vocabulary, increase their sense of identity and self-worth, and motivate them using their language (p.37). Additionally, students can benefit from using L1 and L1-based approaches to aid in learning L2 [

that Indonesian primary English instructors were stuck in the old paradigm of celebrating the most extensive usage of the target language while teaching English to their students. In contrast, research has shown that using the students' native tongue has several benefits, one of which is laying the groundwork for their English language acquisition. In reality, as the study cited above has demonstrated, using the pupils' native tongue may help them learn English. Therefore, to offer Indonesian primary pupils effective English learning, the use of their language in English teaching should be considered.

Most Indonesians, including its elementary pupils, are already multilingual, as noted in this article. This must be viewed as a good foundation for children studying English since, according to [15], pupils who can read and write in one language pick up the following language more quickly. If the maximal usage of the new language wipes out this advantage of

the students, it is a waste of potential. Being multilingual is a strength for students learning a new language.

The role of a teacher in using own-language

First and for instructors, properly using their language can result in positive outcomes; thus, English teachers are crucial for their language in pedagogy. According to [20], [21], instructors can identify the children's emerging bilingualism by using the children's native tongue and cultural customs. Thus, instructors should consider using their own language to maximize the children's bilingualism in learning English.

However, using one's language is sometimes challenging. Teachers must be careful while using their native tongue since "the teacher's unplanned, spontaneous spoken use of L1 in the classroom greatly influences students' use of the L1" [10]. Therefore, in addition to the suggestion that students use their language when studying English, it is essential to consider that instructors' use of their language is appropriate by balancing the quantity [8] also stresses the need for educators to comprehend the substance, support, and application of students' vernacular by viewing multilingual behaviours as translanguaging. Teachers were aware of their language choice, regardless of whether they adhered to their pedagogical principles or the rules established by the school [9].

The involvement of the teachers must be connected to the envisioned achievement of the effective use of their language in Indonesian primary school English teaching. The literature above has illustrated one method for English instructors to employ own-language instruction as well as some of its harmful effects. To internalize the students' bilingualism as the foundation for their study of English, Indonesian primary school English instructors should be able to integrate the usage of their language deeply. Primary school administrators in Indonesia might encourage using native tongues by allowing students to speak English in English classrooms.

4 Conclusion

In this paper, we have looked at how bilingual students in Indonesia may learn English by using their native language. We have looked at how students' use of their language fosters a comfortable learning environment for them, encourages positive classroom engagement, and gives them a foundation for learning a new language. Due to own-benefit language in aiding the students in bettering their English learning, it has been demonstrated that using it helps to create a supportive learning environment for students. Positive relationships are also shown when students speak to their peers in their native tongue, either to confirm their knowledge or to provide assistance with learning English. As a foundation for learning a new language, the pupils' existing language supports their literacy abilities in a significant way. The students' bilingualism also should be maximized in learning English as it could be a strong base for new language learning. These benefits of including own-language instruction in Indonesian primary English lessons can only not be achieved if the English teacher does not effectively apply it.

Although the literature examined in this article has certain limitations, it has provided a deeper understanding of how bilingual primary school pupils in Indonesia might benefit from using their native language when studying English. It is hoped that primary English instructors in Indonesia develop their pedagogies by using the findings from this article, especially by focusing more on the use of their language. It is also hoped that policymakers would evaluate

the inclusion of own-language instruction in the English curriculum in light of its favourable results. Principals may let students speak their native tongue in English classrooms. Therefore, employing their language in Indonesian primary schools' English pedagogy will aid in the children's better new language learning. Educators, administrators, and a supportive curriculum and policy may bring about the transformation.

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