



AN ANALYSIS OF BILINGUAL LEARNING ON LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AT TUNAS MELATI KINDERGARTEN

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of bilingual learning in the language development of early childhood students at Tunas Melati Kindergarten. The results of the study show that a bilingual program that is implemented consistently and innovatively, using additive methods and supported by interactive play activities, can improve children's linguistic abilities, such as vocabulary acquisition, understanding of instructions, and confidence in speaking English. Moreover, this approach also strengthens the holistic development of children through a fun, natural, and developmentally appropriate learning processes during the “golden age” phase. The concepts of scaffolding and social interaction principles also play a role in the success of this program, thereby supporting children's readiness to face the demands of the curriculum and globalization. Thus, the proper implementation of bilingual learning can provide long-term benefits in language proficiency and academic readiness for early childhood

Keywords: Bilingual learning, Language development, Early childhood

A. INTRODUCTION

Education is an essential need for human life that must be fulfilled in order to develop in line with the progress of the times. Without education, it is difficult for humans to adapt to rapid technological and social changes. Therefore, every individual must learn through formal education such as school or non-formal education such as courses and independent training. Education serves as a key indicator for measuring the progress and success of a country. A high level of education reflects a nation's ability to face global challenges and develop superior human resources. (Irafany, et al. 2025)



Early childhood education (PAUD) has long been a major focus for parents, education experts, and the government, as this period is known as the “golden age” when children show tremendous potential for absorbing knowledge, especially language development. (Rusma et al., 2025) The introduction of foreign languages, especially English in the context of PAUD, is carried out gradually to suit the cognitive and emotional development stages of early childhood, which is still in the “golden age” phase. This bilingual approach begins with the introduction of basic vocabulary through songs, illustrations, and fun games, then progresses to short expressions, light conversation, and complete sentences that are integrated into children's play routines.

This gradual method ensures that children absorb the second language naturally without pressure. Integration into daily activities makes the learning process enjoyable and effective. This gradual process ensures that children are not overwhelmed, but rather absorb the language naturally and enjoyably, thereby building a strong bilingual foundation without pressure. Based on various research results, learning English from an early age has been proven to support children in becoming bilingual, that is, able to use two languages effectively (Cummins, 2000). Meanwhile, bilingual learning is an educational approach that utilizes two languages as the medium of instruction, generally Indonesian and English, to optimally develop linguistic abilities through balanced exposure (Made, et al., 2024).

According to Christina (2010), children between the ages of 3 and 6 experience an optimal period for absorbing and understanding English naturally and quickly, especially when they are consistently accustomed to expressing simple words, short phrases, or everyday expressions in that language through routine activities such as singing, role-playing, or dialogue in the early childhood education environment. This approach capitalizes on the "golden age" where children not only imitate pronunciation well but also begin to understand the meaning of words within visual and emotional contexts, thus building a solid bilingual foundation without excessive cognitive pressure. In early childhood education practices, these habits can be integrated into the curriculum, through bilingual story-based games, nursery rhymes, or classroom instruction that alternates languages, ultimately increasing speaking confidence, expanding vocabulary, and preparing children for future global literacy challenges in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum.



Vygotsky (1986) asserts that language acquisition occurs through social interaction, namely through the use of language in real communication situations. In this process, communication participants actively exchange messages. This shows that language learners need to be involved in conversations in small groups so that they can share input with each other. Thus, it is impossible for someone to master a language if they study in isolation without interacting with other learners. Therefore, teachers need to create learning activities that encourage collaboration among students in the language learning process.

According to Made.R.et al (2021), playing is a natural and intuitive mechanism that young children prefer to explore the world, develop skills, and absorb new knowledge, including language mastery through interactive games that are full of joy and spontaneity. Through play activities such as role-playing, story-based puzzles, or group games with dolls and simple tools, children are unconsciously exposed to new vocabulary, everyday phrases, and sentence structures that are relevant to real-life contexts, so that the language learning process occurs organically without formal coercion that can cause boredom or anxiety. This approach is in line with the principles of child development in early childhood education, where play is not merely entertainment, but the main foundation for building neural connections in the brain that support bilingual literacy, verbal creativity, and confident self-expression skills.

Furthermore, during interactive play sessions, such as singing simple songs while dancing or taking turns telling stories with friends, children learn to imitate pronunciation, understand nuances of meaning through nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and body movements, and experiment freely with language without fear of making mistakes, which ultimately enriches their linguistic repertoire gradually and continuously. The long-term benefits of these habits include improved active listening, fluent speaking, and thinking in two languages, as recommended in the integrative, holistic early childhood education curriculum that emphasizes play-based learning to maximize children's "golden age." Thus, teachers or parents can design structured yet flexible bilingual games, such as matching pictures with names in Indonesian and English, to transform the language acquisition process into an enjoyable experience that equips children with the readiness to face an increasingly connected global world.

Nowadays, most parents have implemented bilingual communication since their children were toddlers. The toddler period is calculated from birth to 59 months of age, which includes:



newborns (0-28 days old), infants aged 0-11 months, and toddlers (12-59 months old). Khair Anwar, et al. (2021). Through language, children can process information effectively and absorb knowledge optimally. This is the main foundation for cognitive development from an early age. This process is in line with the bilingual approach discussed earlier. The results of research by Panjaitan et al., 2023, show that children who use two languages (bilingual) due to mixed marriages or learning a second language as an additional language tend to have a higher level of intelligence than children who only use one language (monolingual). Children who are bilingual from an early age are usually able to understand and communicate fluently in two or more languages. They demonstrate richer and more flexible language skills, such as the ability to switch between languages easily and a more contextual understanding of vocabulary (Lutfi et al., 2024).

Bilingual children learn that the same idea can be expressed with different words in different languages, for example, “air” in Indonesian and “water” in English represent identical concepts. This process trains the brain to think abstractly. Bilingual skills provide great advantages for children in the future, especially

B. METHOD

This study applied a qualitative descriptive approach. Sugiyono (2019) defines the qualitative descriptive method as a research strategy that aims to explore and understand in depth phenomena or events that occur naturally in the field. In this method, the researcher functions as a key instrument that is active in the data collection and analysis process.

This research was conducted at Tunas Melati Kindergarten. The research subjects included class B, which consisted of 17 children. The research was carried out according to the regular learning activity schedule, by observing the conditions of teachers and students, especially those related to the research object. The data collection techniques in this study used several methods, including:

Observation

According to Sugiyono (2019), observation is a data collection technique that has distinctive characteristics compared to other methods. Through observation, researchers can study the behavior of subjects and the meaning behind that behavior. In conducting observations,



researchers use writing instruments and recording devices such as cameras to document and record data directly in the field. The main targets of this observation are teachers and students at Tunas Melati Kindergarten.

Interviews

Interviews are a data collection technique that involves two-way communication to obtain in-depth information from respondents (Sugiyono, 2018). The main respondents in this interview were homeroom teachers and the principal of Tunas Melati Kindergarten, with the hope that the data collected would reflect the varying perspectives of both parties. The interviews were conducted in the form of casual interviews or unstructured interviews, which are interviews without detailed preparation that allow for natural and flexible conversation (Sugiyono, 2018).

Documentation

The documentation technique is a method of data collection through the examination of documents or materials created by the research subjects or related parties (Sugiyono, 2018). In this study, data was collected in the form of photos of the learning process, the use of interactive murals on school walls, and the results of interviews with teachers and the principal.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Through the researcher's observation of the bilingual program at Tunas Melati Kindergarten, it was revealed that the program ran very smoothly and effectively. The following are the main findings of the observation:

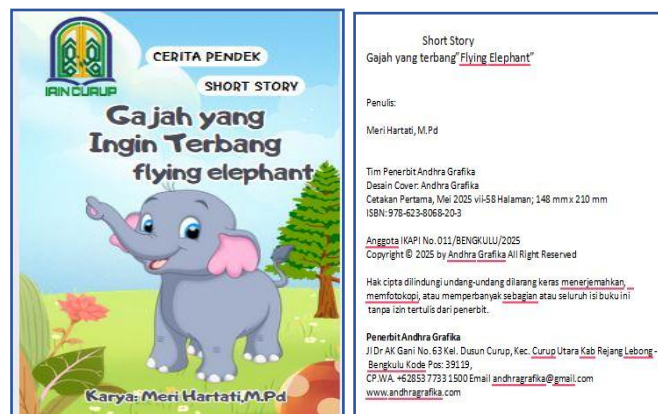
Implementation of the Bilingual Program

English has been fully integrated into the students' daily routine since their first day of school, from saying “*good morning*” to “*goodbye*” at the end of the day. This language is also used naturally in various daily activities, such as giving instructions, counting, praying, and singing together. The bilingual program is implemented consistently to train children to communicate in English, for example, when asking for permission or expressing a desire to drink. This regular use of English gradually enriches the students' vocabulary. If any child has difficulty

understanding the instructions, additional explanations are provided in Indonesian to ensure optimal understanding.

Learning Support

The textbooks are specially designed in English and tailored to the ability level of 5-6 year old kindergarteners at Tunas Melati. The supporting books used in learning can be seen in the image below:



Picture 1. Books used at Tunas Melati Kindergarten

In addition, English posters displayed on the school walls help boost students' motivation and creativity when learning the language.

The researchers conducted informal interviews by asking several questions about the implementation of the bilingual program to improve English language skills, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation at Tunas Melati Kindergarten. In informal interviews with Ms. Sri, the homeroom teacher for Class B, and the principal, they stated: *"This bilingual program has had a truly remarkable impact, ma'am. The children can now fluently say 'good morning', 'may I go to the toilet?', and even ask for a drink using 'I want water'. Their English skills have developed rapidly because they are accustomed to using it every day, even though initially they needed guidance in Indonesian."*

The principal said, *"Yes, it's true that the bilingual program has had a significant impact on the children's English development. They have become more confident, and their vocabulary has increased without feeling pressured."*



The principal of Tunas Melati Kindergarten also expressed a similar view with confidence, saying, *“This bilingual program is specifically designed to optimally improve students' English skills, especially at an early age, when children are in their golden age of linguistic development.”* She emphasized that through regular exposure to English in daily activities such as morning greetings, classroom instructions, and interactive games, this program not only enriches children's vocabulary and sentence structure naturally, but also builds their confidence in communicating bilingually without pressure. According to her, this approach has proven effective in integrating Indonesian as a supporting language, making the learning process enjoyable and sustainable, in line with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes holistic learning through play and social interaction.

Discussion

Based on direct observation corroborated by visual documentation, including photographs and activity recordings, Tunas Melati Kindergarten implements an innovative additive-type bilingual program. In this model, the learning process simultaneously employs English and Indonesian as complementary languages without diminishing either. The approach is purposefully designed to provide children with balanced exposure to both languages, allowing language acquisition to occur in a natural and effective manner during their “golden age” of development. Specifically, teachers employ English as the primary medium of instruction for classroom directives, such as *“Let's count the colors!”* or *“Open your book, please!”*, thereby facilitating the children's familiarity with foreign vocabulary and authentic sentence structures within meaningful contexts.

Nevertheless, to ensure optimal comprehension, Indonesian is immediately utilized as a supportive scaffold when students encounter difficulties for instance, by repeating the instruction *“Let's count the colors!”* when a child appears uncertain. This flexible strategy not only minimizes cognitive barriers but also fosters learners' confidence in code-switching, in line with Vygotsky's scaffolding theory, which emphasizes gradual pedagogical guidance. Ultimately, the additive bilingual model employed by Tunas Melati Kindergarten contributes to the holistic development of early childhood learners, enhancing their linguistic competencies while maintaining their mother tongue foundation. Consequently, the program aligns with the



principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum* and equips children to navigate the growing demands of globalization.

The findings are further substantiated by interviews with the homeroom teacher and the principal, who affirmed that the bilingual program has been implemented effectively and consistently. The program aims to improve children's English proficiency through the integrated use of English and Indonesian in daily academic and play-based activities, thus enabling children to become more accustomed to, and confident in, communicating in English.

The positive impact of the bilingual program on students' language development manifests in several important dimensions. Firstly, in terms of vocabulary acquisition, children successfully expand their lexical repertoire through interactive classroom activities. Secondly, their comprehension of simple instructions, narratives, and contextual English expressions demonstrates significant improvement. Thirdly, their oral communication skills develop substantially through opportunities for conversational practice and pronunciation drills, fostering greater confidence in using English in daily interactions.

Several key factors underpin the success of the bilingual program and its favorable influence on student development. These include the application of innovative and contextual teaching methodologies such as interactive, play-based approaches tailored to early childhood learning contexts at Tunas Melati Kindergarten. Furthermore, the availability of supporting resources, including specialized bilingual books, interactive classroom murals, and audiovisual instructional materials, plays an essential role in enhancing natural English exposure without inducing pressure. The active participation of teachers as primary facilitators through daily instruction and scaffolding, complemented by parental involvement at home in reinforcing bilingual routines, further strengthens the effectiveness of the program. As a result, learners not only broaden their vocabulary but also develop comprehensive communicative competence consistent with the objectives of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of bilingual implementation at Tunas Melati Kindergarten, it can be concluded that the consistent and progressive application of the bilingual instructional method



is effective in enhancing early childhood English proficiency. The additive approach characterized by play-based activities, role-playing, and the incorporation of English into daily routines contributes significantly to vocabulary enrichment, improved comprehension of classroom instructions, and increased self-confidence in bilingual communication. Beyond linguistic development, the program fosters holistic child growth by integrating scaffolding principles and early childhood education theories, thereby optimizing learners' readiness to meet curricular expectations and the broader challenges of the global era.

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