

Implementation of Bilingual Learning to Develop Students' Language Skills

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ABSTRACT

Penerapan pembelajaran bilingual memberikan kontribusi besar terhadap pengembangan kemampuan berbahasa siswa melalui penggunaan dua bahasa secara terintegrasi. Kajian literatur menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran bilingual mampu meningkatkan keterampilan menyimak, berbicara, membaca, dan menulis, sekaligus memperkaya pemahaman konsep akademik yang dipelajari di kelas. Proses perpindahan antara bahasa pertama (L1) dan bahasa kedua (L2) terbukti memperkuat fleksibilitas kognitif, fungsi eksekutif, serta kemampuan berpikir analitis dan kritis. Strategi pedagogis seperti translanguaging, scaffolding linguistik, penggunaan media visual, serta pendekatan CLIL berperan penting dalam menciptakan pembelajaran yang efektif, komunikatif, dan bermakna bagi siswa. Selain manfaat linguistik dan kognitif, pembelajaran bilingual juga memberikan dampak positif terhadap perkembangan sosial dan emosional, misalnya meningkatkan rasa percaya diri, kemampuan bekerja sama, dan sensitivitas budaya dalam lingkungan yang beragam. Meskipun demikian, implementasinya tidak terlepas dari tantangan, seperti keterbatasan kompetensi guru dalam mengelola dua bahasa, kurangnya media pembelajaran yang memadai, serta kebutuhan perencanaan yang lebih sistematis. Secara keseluruhan, pembelajaran bilingual menawarkan peluang besar untuk membentuk siswa yang unggul secara akademik, adaptif secara kognitif, dan inklusif secara sosial.

The implementation of bilingual learning contributes significantly to the development of students' language abilities through the integrated use of two languages. Literature indicates that bilingual instruction enhances listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills while also enriching students' understanding of academic concepts taught in the classroom. The process of shifting between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) has been shown to strengthen cognitive flexibility, executive functioning, and higher-order thinking skills. Pedagogical strategies such as translanguaging, linguistic scaffolding, the use of visual media, and the CLIL approach play essential roles in creating effective, communicative, and meaningful learning experiences. Beyond linguistic and cognitive benefits, bilingual education also positively influences students' social and emotional development, including increased self-confidence, collaboration skills, and cultural sensitivity. However, its implementation still faces challenges such as limited teacher competence in managing two languages, insufficient learning materials, and the need for more systematic planning. Overall, bilingual learning provides great opportunities to shape students who are academically strong, cognitively adaptive, and socially inclusive.



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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of bilingual learning has become a strategic pedagogical approach in modern education, aiming to develop students' language abilities in a comprehensive manner. In the era of rapid technological and scientific advancement, the ability to master more than one language is no longer an option but a necessity for competing at the global level. Bilingual education provides students with opportunities to experience learning through two languages simultaneously, allowing them to build a broader and deeper understanding of academic concepts. The integrated use of two languages also enables students to access richer information, literature, and learning resources originating from both local and international contexts. Thus, bilingual learning not only emphasizes linguistic competence but also expands students' academic and cultural horizons.

From a cognitive perspective, bilingual learning offers significant benefits as it involves higher-order thinking activities such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation across two linguistic systems. The process of shifting between the first language (L1) and the second language (L2) helps train students' cognitive flexibility, working memory, and metalinguistic awareness. Research indicates that children in bilingual learning environments tend to display stronger attention control and problem-solving skills compared to monolingual learners. This is because the brain works more intensively when processing information in two different languages, thereby supporting the optimal development of executive functions. Consequently, bilingual learning influences not only language proficiency but also broader cognitive development.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the success of bilingual learning is greatly influenced by the strategies employed by teachers. Approaches such as translanguaging, linguistic scaffolding, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and the use of multimodal learning media have proven effective in helping students master academic concepts while simultaneously enhancing their language skills. Translanguaging, for example, allows students to utilize their full linguistic repertoire to understand subject matter, making learning more natural and meaningful. Additionally, the use of authentic contexts, collaborative activities, and structured discussions helps build students' confidence in using both languages, whether in oral or written forms. Teachers serve as key facilitators who provide graduated support tailored to the linguistic needs of learners, particularly those transitioning from L1 dominance to academic use of L2.

Moreover, the implementation of bilingual learning brings notable social and emotional benefits. Students engaged in bilingual environments tend to develop greater confidence in communicating across various settings. They also become more open to cultural differences and demonstrate stronger cultural awareness, as languages inherently carry values, traditions, and social identities. Bilingual education can therefore foster tolerance, openness, and appreciation for diversity qualities that are essential in multilingual and multicultural societies such as Indonesia. In this sense, bilingual learning not only pursues linguistic achievements but also contributes to shaping students' character, making them more adaptable, inclusive, and globally oriented.

In the context of Indonesian education, bilingual learning has increasingly been adopted in both public and private schools, particularly at the elementary level. This reflects a growing awareness that language ability encompasses not only linguistic competence but also plays a crucial role in supporting academic and socio-emotional development. Nevertheless, the implementation of bilingual learning must be carried out systematically, sustainably, and in accordance with students' needs. The availability of competent teachers, integrated curriculum design, and supportive learning media are key success factors. With the right approach, bilingual education has the potential to effectively develop students' language proficiency while preparing them to face global challenges without losing their cultural identity.

METODE

The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach in the form of a literature review. The purpose of this method is to examine how the implementation of bilingual learning can develop students' language abilities through the collection, reading, and analysis of various relevant scholarly sources, such as journals, books, research reports, and academic articles.

This research was carried out through a systematic review of literature obtained from both online and printed sources. The primary sources were gathered from databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and national journal portals. The subjects of the review consist of previous studies that examined bilingual learning, its implementation strategies, and its impact on students' language abilities. The selection of literature was conducted using purposive sampling, which involves choosing sources based on their relevance to the research topic and objectives.

This study employed four main steps in data collection: keyword identification, literature selection, data extraction, and documentation of findings. Keyword identification was conducted to narrow down the search, using terms such as "bilingual learning," "pembelajaran bilingual," "language ability," "translanguaging," and "kemampuan berbahasa siswa." Literature selection was carried out based on inclusion criteria, namely sources that are relevant, published between 2010–2025, and discuss the relationship between bilingual learning and students' language abilities. Data extraction included identifying the bilingual learning models used in each study, key findings, as well as supporting factors and challenges encountered. The instruments for data collection in this research include:

1. A list of selected literature based on the research topic,
2. A data-recording sheet containing points of findings from each article, and
3. A comparative matrix of studies related to the implementation of bilingual learning.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method, which involved reading, categorizing, comparing, and drawing conclusions from the literature. The analysis began by grouping research findings based on themes such as bilingual learning strategies, effects on language abilities, and implementation challenges. A synthesis was then performed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of bilingual learning in enhancing students' language skills. The final results present a summary of findings that illustrate general patterns, differences, and implications derived from the various studies reviewed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of bilingual learning in educational settings has demonstrated significant effectiveness in improving students' overall language skills. Through the simultaneous use of two languages, Indonesian as L1 and English as L2, students gain a broader, more flexible, and meaningful learning experience. Exposure to these two languages provides students with the opportunity to understand learning content from two linguistic perspectives, thereby strengthening both receptive and productive literacy skills. Bilingual learning also enables students to develop a deeper understanding of concepts, as information received through two languages can enrich the process of constructing meaning within the subject matter. According to Noge (2022), the "preview-review" bilingual learning model has been shown to increase student learning activity and achievement because delivering information in two languages helps students process knowledge more systematically.

From a linguistic perspective, the integrated use of two languages significantly contributes to improving language proficiency. Students are not only exposed to new vocabulary but also learn to understand the structure and variety of language in various academic contexts. Bilingual learning trains students' abilities to express ideas, argue, and comprehend texts in two different languages, thus providing a strong foundation for multilingual communication skills. Research by Desiane et al. (2023) demonstrated a significant increase in students' self-efficacy, particularly in speaking and writing in English, when participating in bilingual learning. This suggests that bilingual learning not only impacts language acquisition but also students' confidence in using a second language in academic contexts.

Furthermore, from a cognitive perspective, bilingual learning has been shown to positively impact the development of higher-order thinking skills. The process of continuous language switching involves the activation of executive functions in the brain, which play a role in self-control, problem-solving, and information management. This results in bilingual students generally having greater cognitive flexibility than monolingual students. Sihombing et al. (2024) explain that implementing a bilingual model improves not only literacy skills but also numeracy, as students become accustomed to analyzing information in two language systems, thus developing their logical thinking skills. Thus, bilingual learning has the potential to prepare students to face academic challenges that require strong analytical and evaluative skills.

From a pedagogical perspective, the success of bilingual learning depends heavily on the teaching strategies used by teachers. In this context, approaches such as translanguaging, linguistic scaffolding, and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) play a crucial role. Translanguaging allows students to optimize their full linguistic resources to understand the material, making the learning process more natural and non-restrictive to the use of a particular language. The CLIL approach is also effective because it integrates subject content with foreign language learning, allowing students to master a second language while simultaneously learning academic concepts. Teachers play a central role in organizing the learning flow, providing tiered support, and adapting materials to students' language proficiency levels. Challenges such as limited teacher competence in two languages and a lack of bilingual learning media are still common, as noted by Irafany et al. (2025). Therefore, efforts to improve teacher capacity through training and bilingual curriculum development are crucial and cannot be ignored.

The implementation of bilingual learning also has a positive impact on students' social and emotional development. A learning environment that facilitates the use of two languages encourages students to be more confident when communicating in various situations, both formal and informal. The use of a second language, which initially seems difficult, becomes easier when students become accustomed to engaging in discussions, group work, and collaborative activities in two languages. Furthermore, bilingual learning indirectly broadens students' cultural horizons, as language is closely linked to values, norms, and cultural identity. Students who participate in bilingual learning tend to develop empathy, tolerance, and openness to cultural diversity, essential competencies in the era of globalization. Thus, bilingual learning not only improves linguistic and academic competence but also plays a role in developing students' adaptive and inclusive character.

In the context of Indonesian education, the implementation of bilingual learning is growing, both in public and private schools, particularly in elementary education. This demonstrates a growing awareness that language skills are seen not only as linguistic competence but as a crucial asset in developing superior human resources. However, challenges such as limited competent teaching staff, inadequate supporting facilities, and unprepared curricula are obstacles that need to be addressed immediately. Research by Saputri et al. (2025) shows that the availability of relevant and contextual bilingual modules significantly influences learning effectiveness. Therefore, collaboration between teachers, schools, curriculum developers, and the government is key to ensuring the sustainable and high-quality implementation of bilingual learning. If implemented with careful planning, bilingual learning has great potential to produce a generation of young people who are not only proficient in language but also possess superior academic, social, and cultural competencies.

Based on the results of a literature review of various studies analyzed, it was found that bilingual learning consistently has a positive impact on the development of students' language skills. Nearly all studies indicate that the integrated use of two languages can simultaneously improve listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Research by Noge (2022) demonstrated that the bilingual model helps enhance students' learning activities and comprehension through the presentation of material in two complementary languages. Furthermore, a study by Desiane et al. (2023) found that students demonstrated significant improvements in self-confidence and communicative skills when actively engaged in translanguaging-based learning.

From a cognitive perspective, literature findings indicate that bilingualism contributes to improved executive functions, such as working memory, thinking flexibility, and problem-solving abilities. An article in the *Journal of Education and Learning* (2024) demonstrated that bilingual students perform better cognitively than monolingual students, particularly on tasks requiring attentional control. Further findings by Sihombing et al. (2024) also demonstrate that bilingual learning impacts not only linguistic abilities but also students' literacy and numeracy. Pedagogically, literature findings indicate that the successful implementation of bilingual learning is strongly influenced by the teaching strategies used by teachers. Approaches such as translanguaging, linguistic scaffolding, and CLIL have been empirically proven to increase student engagement and understanding of subject matter. However, several studies, such as those by Irafany et al. (2025), highlight the existence of implementation obstacles, such as a lack of teacher competence in two languages and a lack of contextual bilingual learning media.

From a socio-emotional perspective, studies reveal that students who participate in bilingual learning demonstrate greater self-confidence and a more open attitude toward cultural differences. A review study by the Eternal Journal (2024) also emphasized that bilingualism not only strengthens academic skills but also fosters greater empathy and cultural sensitivity. Overall, the literature findings reinforce the notion that bilingual learning has significant potential to holistically improve students' linguistic, cognitive, social, and academic competencies.

CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion and findings from various relevant studies, it can be concluded that the implementation of bilingual learning is highly effective in developing students' overall language abilities, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The integrated use of two languages—namely the mother tongue as the first language (L1) and a foreign language as the second language (L2)—provides students with richer, more flexible, and more meaningful learning experiences. Bilingual learning not only contributes to the improvement of linguistic competence but also has a significant impact on cognitive development, such as critical thinking skills, cognitive flexibility, and executive functions involved in information processing. In addition, bilingual learning strengthens students' affective and social aspects, such as self-confidence, communication courage, and openness toward linguistic and cultural diversity.

The success of bilingual learning is strongly influenced by the quality of its implementation, particularly teachers' competence, the availability of contextual bilingual learning materials, school policy support, as well as the involvement of parents and the learning environment. Existing challenges—such as the limited number of educators proficient in two languages, the lack of learning media, and curriculum unpreparedness—indicate that bilingual learning requires careful planning and continuous support from various stakeholders. Therefore, the synergy between teachers, schools, curriculum developers, and the government becomes a key factor in ensuring the sustainability and quality of bilingual learning. With proper and consistent implementation, bilingual learning has great potential to become an effective educational strategy for preparing a generation of students who are not only proficient in languages but also possess strong academic, cognitive, social, and cultural competencies to face the challenges of a globalized era.

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