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Bilingualism Concept and The Influence Towards Children English Learning: A Library Research

Theodora Evita Bella Lumbanraja^{1✉}, Bernieke Anggita Ristia Damanik²

Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar

Email: theodoralumbanraja@gmail.com[✉]

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan konsep bilingualisme dan bagaimana bilingualisme mempengaruhi penguasaan bahasa Inggris anak-anak. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, memanfaatkan penelitian kepustakaan. Penelitian ini mencakup proses komprehensif untuk mengidentifikasi teori-teori yang relevan, mencari sumber literatur yang relevan, dan menganalisis dokumen-dokumen yang memberikan informasi berharga terkait dengan topik penelitian. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan beberapa penelitian sebelumnya yang mengungkapkan pengaruh bilingualisme pada pembelajaran bahasa Inggris anak-anak, termasuk Hukama et al., (2024), Shofwati dan Susanti (2023), Pransiska (2018), Astuti (2017), Effendi et al., (2022), Nurhayati et al., (2024), Ninawati (2012), Una et al., (2024). Mereka menyatakan kesimpulan serupa bahwa manfaat bilingualisme jauh lebih besar daripada potensi kerugiannya. Karena penelitian ini juga menemukan beberapa pengaruh utama bilingualisme pada pembelajaran bahasa Inggris anak-anak, termasuk manfaat kognitif, transfer bahasa, kemahiran bahasa dalam bahasa Inggris, dan adaptasi budaya dan sosial. Kesimpulannya, bilingualisme secara umum memiliki pengaruh positif terhadap perkembangan kognitif anak secara keseluruhan dan dapat meningkatkan kemampuan mereka dalam belajar bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: *Bilingualisme, Anak-Anak, Bahasa Inggris, Pengaruh, Pembelajaran*

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explain the concept of bilingualism and how bilingualism affects children acquisition of English. This research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a library research. This research encompasses comprehensive process of identifying relevant theories, sourcing pertinent literature, and analyzing documents that provide valuable information related to research topic. Findings of research showed several previous research that revealed the influences of bilingualism on children English learning, including Hukama et al., (2024), Shofwati and Susanti (2023), Pransiska (2018), Astuti (2017), Effendi et al., (2022), Nurhayati et al., (2024), Ninawati (2012), Una et al., (2024). They stated similar conclusion that the benefits of bilingualism far outweigh any potential disadvantages. As this research also finds several key influences of bilingualism on children English learning, including cognitive benefits, language transfer, language proficiency in English, and cultural and social adaptation. In conclusion, bilingualism generally has positive influences on children's overall cognitive development and can enhance their ability to learn English.

Keywords: *Bilingualism, Children, English, Influence, Learning*

INTRODUCTION

Language is an intricate system of arbitrary sound symbols, employed by communities to collaborate, communicate, and assert their identities (Shofwati & Susanti, 2023: 249). In our interconnected world, the ability to share a common language fosters relationships that can enhance diplomatic ties among nations. English, as a prominent international language, serves as a vital conduit for this global dialogue. The strategic use of English and other foreign languages in various domains can significantly facilitate national progress and bolster the development of individual countries.

In globalized world, the mastery of multiple languages has become a hallmark of modern society, with bilingualism emerging as a prevalent and valued skill. According to Gheorghiu and Praisler (2022: 2), bilingualism is defined as the capacity of an individual to utilize two languages with equal proficiency. Tarigan (in Shofwati & Susanti, 2023: 249) further elaborates that it signifies the ability to fluently alternate between two or more languages. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in urban centers, where residents are often exposed to the international community and seek to enhance their quality of life through improved education, economic opportunities, and healthcare. Many international schools now mandate proficiency in a second language, thereby encouraging parents to enroll their children in such institutions from a young age. However, it is crucial for parents to recognize that the journey of bilingualism requires careful monitoring and guidance,

especially for young learners who need additional support to thrive in their developmental stages (Noviyanti, 2019: 76).

In the educational landscape, Indonesian children typically engage with multiple languages. In addition to learning Indonesian as the official language of instruction in schools, they are also immersed in their regional languages or mother tongues within their communities. This dual exposure often results in children becoming bilingual, effortlessly navigating between their home language—often a regional dialect—and Indonesian in broader contexts. In Indonesia, a nation rich in cultural diversity and linguistic variety, the national language of Indonesian plays a crucial role and must be mastered by its multifaceted population. Hence, it is essential for Indonesians not only to be fluent in their regional languages but also to acquire proficiency in Indonesian as a second language. Mastery of Indonesian serves as a vital tool for fostering unity and facilitating communication among individuals who speak different mother tongues.

Language acquisition is an inherent and organic process through which children naturally develop their speaking abilities, encompassing both comprehension and expression. This evolution unfolds spontaneously within a context that holds personal significance for them. When children are raised in families and communities that communicate in a regional language, they are inclined to embrace that language as their primary means of expression. Moreover, children's linguistic development is not limited to their mother tongue; the introduction of a second language is a common phenomenon.

The introduction of a second language during children's formative years in school is significantly influenced by the instruction of English. This education serves not only as a means of fostering individual growth but also as a vital entry point into the global community. English language instruction has been integrated into the curriculum from a young age, particularly at the elementary level, establishing it as children's second language after Indonesian. Mastery of both languages can profoundly impact their overall linguistic development and acquisition. This dynamic creates a unique opportunity for children to become proficient bilinguals, adept in both their native tongue and a foreign language. Such bilingual individuals exhibit a strong command of fundamental skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—across both languages (Hurlock in Hukama, et al., 2024: 121). Through the teaching of English, children organically evolve into engaged bilinguals from an early stage in their education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a library research methodology. As defined by Sugiyono (2018: 291), library research involves a thorough examination of theoretical frameworks, references, and other scholarly literature pertinent to the cultural norms and values that shape the social context under investigation. This library research is intricately linked to the realm of scientific literature. Scholars embark on studies that delve into theories pertinent to their research topics, gathering insights from a diverse array of library resources (Hukama, et al., 2024: 123). In this investigation, the data were meticulously sourced from both books and scholarly articles that explore the phenomenon of bilingualism. Consequently, this research encompasses comprehensive process of identifying relevant theories, sourcing pertinent literature, and analyzing documents that provide valuable information related to research topic.

Before embarking on fieldwork to gather essential data, researchers conduct a library research after selecting research topic. This process allows for the accumulation of valuable insights from library resources that are directly related to the issues at hand. The sources that may be referenced in a literature study include books, academic journals, research reports, scholarly magazines, and other relevant materials that contribute to a deeper understanding of the subject being explored.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Concept of Bilingualism

The origins of bilingualism trace back to the 17th century amidst the wave of significant European immigration to America. Notably, in 1694, the establishment of a German-English bilingual school marked a pivotal moment as it became the first institution of its kind. For the immigrants of that era, bilingualism emerged as an essential skill, enabling them to preserve their native languages while adapting to life in America (Nurhayati et al., 2024: 485).

Bilingualism, at its core, is the proficient use of two languages. As articulated by Bloomfield (in Chaer and Agustina, 2014: 85), bilingualism encompasses the capacity of an individual to utilize both languages with equal proficiency. This perspective suggests that mastery of two languages allows a speaker to navigate both with ease and skill. Robert Lado (in Hukama et al., 2024: 123) further refined this concept, asserting that bilingualism is characterized by the ability to engage with two languages either equally or nearly equally well, highlighting that this proficiency can manifest at various levels of knowledge.

Echoing this sentiment, Macnamara (in Hukama et al., 2024: 124; Ma'arif & Lailia, 2022: 215) stated that bilingualism pertains to a speaker's ability to communicate in both languages, B1 and B2, even if proficiency in the latter is minimal. This implies that one does not need to possess active and productive command of a second language to be considered bilingual; a fundamental understanding of that language suffices. Both viewpoints converge on the understanding that being bilingual does not necessitate equal mastery of both languages; rather, a basic comprehension of the second language is adequate for one to be classified as bilingual.

Bilingualism refers to the capacity of an individual to adeptly navigate and utilize two or more languages, often alternating between them with ease (Panjaitan et al., 2023: 3790). This concept extends to those who incorporate multiple languages into their daily lives. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is particularly prevalent, as the nation boasts diverse regional languages that complement the national language, Indonesian. Thus, bilingualism emerges as a natural outcome of Indonesia's rich linguistic tapestry.

Huda et al (2024: 162) further elaborates that bilingualism encompasses the capability to utilize two languages effectively, which includes not only speaking and writing skills but also the ability to comprehend messages conveyed by others in both oral and written forms. Additionally, Lado emphasizes that true bilingualism involves a nearly equal proficiency in both languages, reflecting a deep understanding of their respective rules and nuances (Panjaitan et al., 2023: 3790). In essence, bilingualism represents the art of mastering and applying the intricacies of two languages with equal competence.

Factors of Bilingualism

Language fluency is intricately tied to the purpose for which it is employed. It can be asserted that frequency of language use directly correlates with the proficiency of its speakers.

Two significant factors play a crucial role in shaping this linguistic engagement (Ma'arif & Lailia, 2022: 219) :

1. Internal factors encompass a variety of elements that significantly shape experiences and capabilities. Firstly, there are internal practices, which include activities such as counting, estimating, recording, praying, swearing, dreaming, diary writing, and note-taking. Secondly, aptitude, which pertains to one's inherent talent or intelligence. This aptitude is influenced by several factors, including gender, age, cognitive abilities, language attitudes, and levels of motivation.

2. External factors influencing bilingualism encompass a variety of elements. Firstly, consider the aspect of "Contact", which refers to the interactions a speaker has with different languages in various contexts—be it at home, in society, within educational institutions, through mass media, or in personal correspondence. The language in which these interactions occur is pivotal, as it significantly shapes the speaker's bilingual experience. Secondly, "Variable" aspect, which pertains to the nature of these contacts. This includes not only the duration and frequency of exposure but also the pressures exerted by diverse domains—such as economic, administrative, cultural, political, military, historical, religious, and demographic influences—all of which play a crucial role in determining language usage among speakers.

Nurjanah and Srihilmawati (2023: 112) also mentioned factors that affect bilingualism, including :

1. Internal factors encompass a range of activities, including counting, reasoning, praying, cursing, dreaming, diary writing, and note-taking. Regardless of whether these activities are conducted in Language A or Language B, they play a crucial role in shaping our cognitive processes. Furthermore, individual aptitude, talent, and intelligence are influenced by various elements such as gender, age, cognitive ability, memory, language attitudes, and motivation.
2. External factors exert a significant influence on language use, encompassing several key elements. First, "contact," which refers to the speaker's engagement with the language in various contexts—be it within the home environment, in societal interactions, during educational pursuits, through mass media, or in written correspondence. The language in which these interactions occur plays a crucial role in shaping the speaker's bilingualism. Secondly, "variables," which pertains to the nature of contact with the speaker. This is determined by the duration and frequency of exposure, as well as the prevailing pressures that may influence language use. These pressures can arise from a multitude of fields, including economic, administrative, cultural, political, military, historical, religious, and demographic factors.

The Influence of Bilingualism Towards Children English Learning

Several researchers have revealed the influence of Bilingualism towards Children English Learning, including. Below are the descriptions of outcomes of each researcher.

Table 1. Research Outcomes Related to The Influence of Bilingualism towards Children English Learning.

No	Researcher/s	Outcome/s
1	Hukama et al., (2024: 127-129)	Learning second language in childhood significantly contributes to cognitive development. Promoting bilingualism in educational environments enables students to succeed in a multilingual society and enhances their engagement in the global community. In places like Indonesia, English is often taught as a second language alongside Indonesian from a young age. Research shows that bilingual education has numerous benefits, including better language proficiency, greater cross-cultural awareness, and improved cognitive skills. A child's academic performance is closely tied to their cognitive abilities, with multilingual students usually achieving better academic results due to their enhanced focus, problem-solving capabilities, understanding of language structures, and multitasking skills. Furthermore, being bilingual can expand future job prospects. Early introduction of bilingual education is crucial for effective language learning and greatly improves children's communication skills in both languages while supporting cognitive growth. Additionally, mastering multiple languages can boost self-esteem, reinforce personal identity, and create a sense of belonging. When bilingual children engage in conversation, their two languages compete for activation in their brains, compelling them to choose one language, which challenges their cognitive abilities and enhances their skills in managing multiple tasks. This interaction strengthens their executive functions, improving skills such as planning, problem-solving, and critical thinking, as seen in organizing daily activities.
2	Shofwati and Susanti (2023: 251)	Bilingualism has become widely accepted in society, particularly with English being used as a second language alongside Bahasa Indonesia. The increasing number of schools that prioritize English as the primary language of instruction has significantly contributed to this trend. Research shows that children who are exposed to bilingualism both at home and in school demonstrate superior vocabulary skills compared to those who only experience bilingualism in an academic setting. Therefore, using bilingualism in both environments positively affects children's vocabulary

		development.
3	Pransiska (2018: 173-175)	Implementing bilingual concepts and programs in early childhood education yields more positive outcomes than negative ones. Bilingual children often outperform their monolingual peers, exhibiting greater flexibility, creativity, and advantages in nonverbal intelligence tasks that require rearranging visual instructions and mental adaptability. Early exposure to bilingual education in Kindergarten has proven effective in fostering bilingualism, enhancing academic skills, and preparing children to learn English language. While language development can occur naturally, it is significantly influenced by the involvement of parents, the surrounding environment, and educational settings, particularly in bilingual learning contexts.
4	Astuti (2017: 122)	Early bilingual education enhances children's cognitive abilities and exposes them to a variety of foreign cultures. Young children acquire a second language more effortlessly and fluently than adults. It is essential to approach bilingual teaching gradually and in an enjoyable manner, incorporating activities like singing and playing, rather than imposing it, to ensure better comprehension.
5	Effendi et al., (2022: 149-150)	The Global English Class Jepara Learning Community has a significant and positive impact on children's development, both academically and otherwise. Bilingual English learning programs lead to notable improvements in children's foreign language abilities. Elementary students involved in this community receive crucial support in becoming bilingual, particularly those in schools without bilingual offerings. This demonstrates that effective bilingual education doesn't require costly institutions; it can flourish within a small, well-structured community that resembles traditional bilingual programs but is customized to fit the specific needs of each school, attracting a broad audience. Moreover, the advantages of bilingual education in the Global English Class community include better academic performance in formal schooling, increased motivation to learn English at home, and enhanced fluency in daily conversations.
6	Nurhayati et al., (2024: 488)	Bilingualism offers a range of advantages, such as enhanced cognitive abilities, improved abstract reasoning, greater cognitive flexibility, strong metalinguistic skills, and better social interactions.

While there are some drawbacks associated with being bilingual—like initial language delays, slower verbal skills, verbal interference, potential identity challenges, and increased stress—these disadvantages are far outweighed by the cognitive benefits. Children who receive bilingual education often show higher intelligence levels than their monolingual peers, exhibiting advanced skills in abstract thinking, cognitive adaptability, and metalinguistic awareness, along with improved social capabilities like empathy and tolerance. Additionally, bilingualism provides children with vital skills necessary for thriving in today's competitive landscape, where multilingual communication is crucial for success in a globalized world.

7 Ninawati (2012: 27) Acquiring English during childhood offers distinct advantages, as humans possess a remarkable ability to learn languages at this formative stage, whether it be their native tongue or a foreign language. Children are particularly adept at language acquisition due to various neurological factors, making elementary school an ideal time for them to embark on learning English. There is nothing amiss with children being taught English as a second language in school; in fact, the benefits of bilingualism far outweigh any potential disadvantages. Embracing the opportunity for children to master multiple languages enriches their cognitive development and opens doors to a world of possibilities.

8 Una et al., (2024: 935) Bilingual education offers a wealth of advantages, including: 1) the enhancement of cognitive abilities, 2) the refinement of social skills, and 3) the promotion of better health, particularly in safeguarding against memory decline. An analysis conducted at SDI Rutosoro reveals that the implementation of bilingual learning significantly benefits children's proficiency in the English language. To realize these optimal outcomes, it is essential to foster an effective learning environment, which is a shared responsibility among educators, students, and the broader school community. Furthermore, the school's capacity to provide adequate facilities and resources plays a crucial role in facilitating successful learning experiences.

Based on the outcomes above, they support that bilingualism has significant influences on children learning English, influencing both their cognitive development and

their language acquisition process. Below are some key influences of bilingualism on children English learning:

1. Cognitive Benefits

Several cognitive benefits of bilingualism on children English learning are including:

1) Bilingual children often develop stronger cognitive abilities, such as better problem-solving skills, multitasking, and enhanced attention control. The mental practice of switching between two languages can strengthen the brain's executive functions, leading to improved focus and adaptability; 2) Bilingual children have a heightened understanding of how language works. This awareness helps them more easily grasp grammar and language structure, which can benefit their learning of English; 3) Bilingual children tend to have better working memory, which aids in learning new words and concepts in English.

2. Language Transfer

Two types of language transfer affected by bilingualism on children English learning are including: 1) Positive Transfer: Bilingual children may transfer knowledge from their first language to English, helping them with vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and sentence construction. For example, similarities between their first language and English (such as cognates) can make learning easier; 2) Negative Transfer: In some cases, bilingual children may make mistakes when their first language interferes with English grammar or pronunciation. This is especially common when there are significant structural differences between the two languages.

3. Language Proficiency in English

The influences of bilingualism on children English learning are including: 1) Slower Initial Development: Some bilingual children may initially appear to have a slower start in learning English compared to monolingual children. This is because they are dividing their language learning time between two languages. However, with consistent exposure and practice, bilingual children can catch up and eventually excel in English; 2) Vocabulary Development: Bilingual children may have a smaller vocabulary in each individual language compared to their monolingual peers, but their overall vocabulary across both languages may be comparable. If they are exposed to English consistently, they can expand their English vocabulary over time.

4. Cultural and Social Adaptation

Bilingual children often develop a greater appreciation for different cultures, which can support their ability to navigate different social environments, including those

where English is spoken. In multilingual environments, bilingual children often learn to navigate between different linguistic and cultural contexts, improving their social adaptability. This can enhance their interactions in English-speaking settings.

CONCLUSION

Bilingualism encompasses the capability to utilize two languages effectively, which includes not only speaking and writing skills but also the ability to comprehend messages conveyed by others in both oral and written forms. Two factors that affect bilingualism are internal factors (counting, reasoning, praying, cursing, dreaming, diary-writing, note-taking, and aptitude) and external factors (contact or social interactions and variables or nature of contact). Bilingualism generally has positive influences on children's overall cognitive development and can enhance their ability to learn English. However, the process of learning English may take longer for bilingual children as they balance two languages. Over time, with the right exposure and support, bilingual children can develop high proficiency in English and other languages, benefiting from the cognitive, social, and academic advantages that bilingualism offers.

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