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Bilingual Learning Implementation and English Language Mastery of Preschoolers in TK My Liberty

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research reviews the implementation of bilingualism in the teaching/learning activities and mastering English language in early childhood setting. It emphasizes the urgency of language in children's language and cognitive development. All data were collected from observations, documentations, and interviews with teachers and the school principal in TK My Liberty. Research findings indicate that the implementation of English curriculum is central to bilingual learning that can be integrated in planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. The present work also finds four basic English language learning aspects implemented in TK My Liberty Kids School: vocabulary, reading, writing, and speaking. On top of that, teachers' roles are central to the success of the English mastery. Using appropriate media is one of the best strategies in Bilingualism learning activity. It furthers the progress of preschoolers to master all of English skills in early age. In conclusion, the implementation of bilingual program has positive impact on children's language and cognitive development, encompassing aspects of the mastery the foreign language, namely vocabulary, reading, writing and speaking. Nevertheless, it should

be noted that the implementation requires improvement due to less optimum results in some aspects.

Keyword: Bilingual Learning, English Language, Preschoolers

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini akan meninjau implementasi pembelajaran *bilingual* dan penguasaan bahasa inggris di Taman Kanak-Kanak *My Liberty.* Tinjauan ini didasarkan pada urgensi peran bahasa dalam perkembangan bahasa dan kognitif anak. Dalam penelitian ini, Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan agar bisa memperoleh keterangan yang memadai dari informan. Metode pengambilan data dilakukan dengan observasi, dokumentasi, dan wawancara terhadap guru dan kepala sekolah. Hal tersebut dipilih karena kepala sekolah menjadi pengambil kebijakan pada setiap proses pembelajaran. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukan bahwa penggunaan kurikulum bahasa Inggris merupakan landasan penting dalam pembelajaran *bilingual* karena terintegrasi mulai dari perencanaan, pelaksanaan sampai dengan evaluasi. Program bilingual dilakukan meliputi 4 hal yakni perbendaharaan kata (vocabulary), membaca (reading), menulis (writing) dan berbicara (speaking). Selain itu, peran Guru dalam mengimplementasikan pembelajaran bahasa inggris demikian penting terutama pada setiap keadaan.Oleh karena itu, penggunaan media yang tepat oleh guru merupakan salah satu strategi terbaik dalam kegiatan pembelajaran Bilingualisme. Hal ini mempercepat kemajuan anak-anak prasekolah dalam menguasai semua keterampilan bahasa Inggris pada usia dini. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini yaitu penerapan program bilingual berdampak positif terhadap penguasaan bahasa asing pada anak, baik dalam hal vocabulary, reading, writing dan speaking meskipun belum maksimal.

Kata kunci: Pembelajaran Bilingual, Bahasa Inggris, Anak Usia Dini

Introduction

The 21st century has brought many changes in the world of education. Every person is required to be able to adapt and face various problems that will be increasingly challenging in the years ahead. One of the essential abilities that many people must master is the English language as the international language. In recent years, the English language become a lingua franca as a way to communicate between speakers with different first languages (Seidlhofer, 2005)**.** He also stated that most English as lingua franca interactions occur among 'non-native' speakers of English. It is simply clarified that a lot of people worldwide are trying to use English as a foreign language.

As English become an international language, Indonesia makes English one of the subjects in every step of education, starting from elementary school, junior high school, and senior high school. Moreover, many preschools have also been applying English as a foreign language. English as a foreign language in Indonesia starts from the early childhood education level (Gunadi Harry Sulistyo, 2009). Many institutions have started to teach English to young learners. Children tend to learn languages other than their mother tongue more easily, compared to adults (Santrock, 2004). In addition, bilingual children show differences in narratives and communication production in each of their two languages compared to monolingual children (Osman et al., 2024).

From the entire explanation above, it proves that children learn language very well. A predominant belief that 'young is better' in language learning. Every child is born with the natural potential to master complex language (Mohamad Muar et al., 2024)**.** Children who learn another language instead of their mother tongue will show a strong awareness of language style, tone, and show a better cognitive development. Another benefit can be shown in the phase of reading skills, where they can have an excellent literacy. Therefore, teaching English as a foreign language is more appropriate if it is done as early as possible because children have a sensitive period called the golden age. In line with the explanation from Dr. David Freeman and Dr. Yvonne Freeman, professor of bilingual education, who stated that the earlier children are exposed to more than one language, the faster they will master it.

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that teaching English to young children has extraordinary benefits. Children are able to produce language when they have enough vocabulary. Thus, their vocabulary comes from sentences or words that they hear from the people around them. A 5-year-old child can collect approximately 3000 words. This was conveyed by (Hurlock,1978) that preschool children know how to use nouns correctly, although they are still confused by the word repetition and affixes. Therefore, teaching bilingual language to children takes

a lot of work. There are still some obstacles that need to be addressed. One of the hardest things kindergarten teachers face in teaching English is introducing vocabulary to children in the learning activities. English language learning is based on the language acquisition process starting with command sentences such as "Be nice!" and continuing with the concept of language such as "Long-short, big-small, loud-quiet", followed by body language. Teachers can also help students improve their vocabularies by encouraging them to use the new vocabulary in small discussions and questioning each student in the small group (Tsitouras et al., 2014). In doing so, the children can understand the meaning and start practising the words they have caught.

Learning activities that involve two languages are often called bilingual education. Some schools not only implement English as a subject but also require the students to use the English language in the school environment. Recent research on bilingual education has suggested flexible language strategies to support children's second language learning (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Therefore, in this research, the researcher used TK My Liberty as one of the preschools implementing bilingual learning for children. Speaking English in the school environment is a policy that contain in TK My Liberty Curriculum. However, in the process of implementing this program, the teacher has to consider whether the children are ready to study or not. This means that the teacher needs to prepare suitable materials, particularly the methods, which must be oriented to the child's emotional and psychological condition.

The implementation of bilingual learning for mastering foreign languages in early childhood at My Liberty Kindergarten is conducted through planning, process and evaluation. English language is taught with games, songs, storytelling, and roleplaying. Those things are an effective way to introduce them to English vocabulary. The researcher could see that using English in My Liberty Kindergarten seems more natural (adjust to the child's condition) owing to the fact that children learn through direct physical experience. Therefore, it will attract student's interest and increase their English vocabulary. Apart from all of the advantages of the implementation of the English language in My Liberty kindergarten, there are still several problems were faced by the teacher. For instance, only some of the children can follow the lessons delivered.

All children are different and unique in their own way. Not all children can learn bilingual quickly. A special technique and method should be applied by the teacher, such as play while learning. Therefore, TK My Liberty that has implemented bilingual learning make the researcher want to explore more deeply. This research aims to determine the bilingual learning in introducing vocabulary, reading, writing and speaking to the children. In addition, this research also figure

out how do the school curriculum run two curriculums in the same time.

Literature Review

Bilingual learning is learning in which two languages are combined (Wardani et al., 2013). Meanwhile, Anderson and Boyer in Romaine (1995) stated that bilingual learning programs refer to using two languages as the language of instruction in the learning process. Bilingual learners, in this case, use Indonesian and English simultaneously during the learning process. Generally, this bilingual learning method aims to introduce two or more languages to children in one combined learning model, for example, Indonesian, English, Javanese, which are introduced or studied simultaneously. Every school applies this bilingual learning aims to provide children with the advantages of bilingualism in a global society. Students will learn by listening, talking, reading, singing, writing, and participating in experiences inside and outside the classroom (Morrison, George., 2014). The teacher can use many ways to make the students speak two languages. They need to be creative to make the students interested in each lesson delivered by the teacher. Bilingual learning will be successfully applied to the school, if the school has provided and prepared the curriculum. A definition belongs to Squires (1990) described the curriculum as "what is taught". Dealing with the curriculum as opportunities, Saylor and Alexander (1974) defined the curriculum as a structure encompassing all learning opportunities provided by the school.

Methodology

This present study adopted a qualitative descriptive method. The researcher used a qualitative method to describe the facts in the field, namely My Liberty Kids School Kindergarten. Bodgan and Biklen (1982) state that the qualitative method is a descriptive method. In this qualitative research, the researcher made an accurate explanation to analyze the data. The result of descriptive qualitative does not show with statistic procedures in analyzing the data, but the results present data in the form of description. Narrative data were collected, including the observation, interview, and documentation. The researcher was conducted the observations in classroom activities as well as the pictures and video recordings. Meanwhile, the interviews that used in this research was semi-structured interviews that make the interview more enjoyable. The researcher also prepares the questionnaire which is the list of the question as the guideline during the interview. To clarify the data, the researcher also used documentation during learning process in TK My Liberty. The data will be analyzed by collecting open-ended data based on asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information by participant (Creswell, 2009).

Result

1. Bilingual Learning Curriculum in My Liberty Kindergarten

My Liberty Kindergarten combines the national curriculum and the school's development curriculum. The curriculum development created by My Liberty Kindergarten combines the national and bilingual curriculum based on the school's program that focuses on learning English for young learners. My Liberty Kindergarten applied two curriculums to make a difference between their school and another. The national curriculum and school curriculum implementation are applied to all subjects according to the themes provided by the national curriculum. My Liberty kindergarten used the theme and sub-theme as the primary material while teaching two languages. The government provided the following themes and sub-themes over two semesters.

Table 1. Material from national curriculum

No	Theme	Sub-theme
1.	Diriku (Myself)	Myself Senses My Favorite Review
2.	Keluargaku (My Environment)	My Family Function, type, and characteristic of house Objects around my house School environment Objects around my school
3.	Kebutuhanku (My needs)	Foods and drinks Clothes Clean and health Safety
4.	Animal (Binatang)	Types and characteristics of animals Animal living and breeding place
5.	Tanaman (Plants)	Types and characteristics of plants Parts of plant How to plant and care for plant
6.	Rekreasi (Recreation)	Recreation areas Recreation equipment and regulations Transportation

7.	Pekerjaan (Occupation)	Types and duties of jobs Work place Working tools
8.	Air, api, dan udara (water, fire, and air)	Water and air fire
9.	Alat komunikasi (Communication Tools)	Types and uses of communication tools Forms and how to use communication tools
10.	Tanah airku (My homeland)	My country Indonesia Life in the city, in the village
11.	Alam semesta (My universe)	Sun, moon, and star Earth and sky Kind of disaster

The table demonstrates the material provided by the national curriculum and adapted by My Liberty kindergarten by using English and Indonesian in accordance with the implementation of bilingual learning in school. Although they use this material as the primary material in the school, they also use their material. My Liberty Kindergarten also has an English learning curriculum to help children become more accustomed to using English in their daily communication. Each group, which is a playgroup and kindergarten, has its own level of study in the English language. The contents of the English learning curriculum are as follows:

Table 2. English learning material of My Liberty Kindergarten

Class	Material
Playgroup A	Language Concept (Yes, no, good, bad…) Size Concept (Big, small, long, short, full, empty) Emotions (Sad, happy, cry, shy, strong, weak) Expression (Please, thank you, sorry..)
Playgroup B	Number (1-100) Direction concept (Stop, go, in, out..) Fruits and Vegetables Clothes Transportation Occupation
Kindergarten A	Alphabets Parts of body Color and shape

	Animal (Insects, bird, mammal) Family Rooms & things in the house Transportation
Kindergarten B	Phonics Days Months Times of the day My birthday Things in birthday party

From the table above, it is clearly seen that playgroups A, B, Kindergarten A, and B have their own material. A playgroup of 3- to 4-year-old students only learns a concept of language. This is because their speaking ability is still in the development phase. Meanwhile, learning English in kindergartens A and B focuses more on vocabulary acquisition due to the age of the children between 5 and 6 years old, who start making new sentences and phrases daily. In addition, the teacher also begins to teach alphabets and phonics to prepare them to know how to write and read.

2. The implementation of bilingual learning in My Liberty Kindergarten

The researcher conducted observations during the school's activities. The researcher observed all of the activities from the start of school until the end. The observations lasted 4 hours for 4 weeks. The researcher did the observation only 4 weeks due to the similar activities every day. Here is the daily schedule of My Liberty Kindergarten in one month.

Table 3. Daily schedule for the English class

No	Time	Session
1.	7:30-7:55	Playing in the playground
	7:55-8:15	Make a line
	8:15-8:30	Story and song
	8:30-9:10	Learning activity
	9:10-9:40	Eating time
	9:40-10.00	Tidy up
	10:00-10.15	Prepare to go out from the class
	10-15.10.30	Outdoor activity
	10.30-11.00	Individual activities

During the observation, the researcher discussed the topic with the teacher after class. The next day, the researcher had another conversation with another teacher and the school's principal. The researcher asked the following questions;

1. Is there a specific approach to use during this teaching learning activities?
2. Are there any extracurricular activities in this school?
3. Does using two languages to young learner will make them confused?
4. How do the teacher teach the children to consistently speak English?
5. Is there any obstacle that occur while using this curriculum?
6. How does the teacher overcome these obstacles?

3. Bilingual learning in mastering English language through vocabulary, reading, writing and speaking

Four main findings emerged from the data: (1) Learning vocabulary through repetition, (2) reading only for kindergarten B through learning by phonics, (3) learning to write the alphabet and write their name through repetition every day, (4) speaking through the habituation and repetition the same phrase every day. These four skills are the way the teachers make the students able to speak English. From the observation, the researcher found that all of these ways are worth it to the young learner.

Table 4. Bilingual learning to improve students ability in English

	Vocabulary	**Reading**	**Speaking (Conversation)**	**Writing**
Bilingual (English and Indonesian language)	English and Indonesian vocabulary regarding to the theme every month	Studying alphabet and phonics. Students start to read in kindergarten B	Daily conversation English mix Indonesia	Trace the line, trace the latter, and start to write their name. In kindergarten B, students must able to write alphabet.

Discussion

This study has examined bilingual learning in My Liberty kindergarten. It showed that the schools have perfectly implemented bilingual learning in preschoolers. Language teaching in bilingual contexts is a two-way dual language program (Gelir et al., 2024). It can be shown from how the curriculum allows the teachers and students to communicate in two languages. The school used two curriculums, a combination of the national and school curriculums. Curricular decisions offer essential clues affecting the entire teaching-learning process (Coşkun Yaşar & Aslan, 2021). Thus, by knowing the effect of the curriculum on the learning process, My Liberty Kindergarten developed its own curriculum. In the period of the curriculum development process, what knowledge is of most worth, and what should the school teach? (Spencer, 1884). The previous question aligns with how My Liberty Kindergarten develops its curriculum through bilingual learning as the main program. The principal and the teachers made the curriculum based on the characteristics of language acquisition for young learners. As stated by Hurlock (1978), early childhood language development is carried out systematically and develops with increasing age. Meanwhile, Beaty (1996) also noted that preschoolers are programmed to learn about language just as naturally as they learn their native tongue. Therefore, My Liberty Kindergarten applied the bilingual curriculum to make the students become fluent in English and Indonesian during their natural language acquisition.

Based on the interview with the teachers and the school principal, they combined two curriculums with a theme and sub-theme. The teacher used the material; however, the teacher explained it in two languages. With a combination of national and school curricula, students are given denser material. Apart from completing the national curriculum content, students must also understand the material based on the school curriculum, which tends to have a higher level of complexity. Meanwhile, teachers tend to exert more effort to make the material look funnier during the learning process. From the observation and the interview, the researcher found that the teacher prepares the media they will use in the class. The school principal also said the teacher must complete the lesson plan monthly. Bilingualism becomes challenging and effective in teaching; it requires teachers to multitask to develop their language skills and work harder to communicate with

students (Anggung et al., 2022). Before teaching, the teachers should understand the activity program, learning through play, prepare appropriate media, and how to assess children's development results. Therefore, based on the interview and observation results, the researcher found that My Liberty kindergarten teachers have successfully applied those strategies.

In response to the following research question regarding the implementation of bilingual learning in My Liberty kindergarten, it was found that the teacher did not use full English to those who have not spoken yet and to the freshman in the new academic year. This is because the students still need to adapt to the school environment. The researcher also found that all teachers must use English to help children become more accustomed to hearing English in school. The teacher starts by greeting the children, invites the children to sing, play fun games, circle time, and begin to study in the class.

Teachers also familiarize children with saying simple sentences in English, for example, greetings (Good morning, good afternoon, hello) and commands (Sit down, please sit on the chair, sit nice, quiet, please, tidy up your classroom, go to pee, go downstage, and so on). Apart from this, the teacher also used Indonesian to clarify the sentence if the students still did not give any response.

Here is an example of the implementation of bilingual learning before the students go to class.

Let's make a line ….
Ayok berbaris dulu yuk
Put your bag in the locker please.
Tas nya ditaruh di loker yaa
Alright, let's sing.
It's story time, let's make a circle
Ayok buat lingkaran yang bagus ayok
Who want to touch the animal in this book?
Coba koko tunjuk yang mana gambar sapi?

My Liberty Kindergarten has a special program that can support children's bilingual development through fun games and Circle Time activities. Fun games are usually held on Friday morning and continue with circle time, which is time for the teacher to read a story. At the start of the game and circle time, it is usually opened with a greeting, and the children are given the rules using two languages.

The material in My Liberty Kindergarten also was sequential. On Monday, the children will learn the material based on the theme and combine it with the English material from school. On Tuesday, the students will learn fun math using

the flashcard method and worksheets from the book. On Wednesday, the children will learn the Indonesian alphabet and begin to read in kindergarten B. continued with Thursday, focusing on art development by painting, drawing, colouring, making arts and crafts, and singing. On Friday, the students will focus on studying science, doing experiments, and studying religion. In implementing bilingual learning, teachers use simple activities children can understand, such as telling stories, inviting children to sing and dance, and playing outdoor or indoor games.

The media that teachers usually use is flashcard media. Meanwhile, for the methods, the teachers get used to questions and answers, telling stories, singing, and playing. Open-ended sensory questions are the most valuable for preschoolers (Beaty, 1996). She also stated that reading story books to the children is necessary to enhance their communication skills.

Move to another research found the way the students in My Liberty Kindergarten master the English language through collecting vocabulary, reading, writing, and speaking. Based on the results of interviews with the headmaster, it is known that the ability to read, speak, and write is influenced by teaching methods that are used by the teachers, which can attract the students. According to the theme, the vocabulary given to students is divided into several categories, such as animals, plants, colors, transportation, and body parts. Language development is a long-term process through which the child increases vocabulary, moves to sentence length, and becomes more complex, which they need to express ideas through words (Sami, 2024). The students with enough vocabulary will be able to communicate and express their feelings in English. The teacher makes the students use English in daily conversation by repeating the exact phrase every day.

In addition, the teacher also teaches the students to write and read, although it starts in kindergarten B. In kindergarten B, the students begin to learn phonics as an essential way before learning how to read. The researcher can see that phonics is the first phase of the children before starting to read. Phonics, systematic letter-sound knowledge, is taught when the children start to learn the alphabet (Sigmundsson et al., 2022). Then, the children receive training emphasizing improving vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Using English in My Liberty Kids School Kindergarten seems more natural (according to the child's condition) because children learn through direct physical experience to make the material look attractive to the children. Children need to touch, test, and pull things because they have their own world (Beaty, 1996). Therefore, creating unique material is necessary to increase students' vocabulary, motivate them to keep studying, and follow the teacher's instructions. Despite all these ways, the teachers also evaluated at the end of the month, which was the fourth week. The research result clearly shows that the teacher will deliver the sub-theme

from the first week to the third week. In the fourth week, the teacher reviews all the material that has been studied and tries to evaluate the teaching-learning process before moving to the next theme.

During the observations, the teacher's evaluation was usually carried out by asking the children about what was being studied, testing one person by sowing the flashcards they ever used, and playing a roleplay regarding the theme. Curriculum evaluation is not only interpreted as measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of learning but must also be placed as part of the public accountability process mechanism regarding the existence and meaning of the applicable curriculum in

preparing qualified human resources to respond to the demands of the times.

Conclusion

English language learning as early as preschool age significantly affects the development of the students in My Liberty kindergarten. Implementing bilingual learning and mastery of English languages at MY Liberty kindergarten can materialize well. The findings showed that the bilingual learning curriculum is by planning in general that integrates each indicator from the government curriculum. The teacher makes a lesson plan for one month and submitted to the school principal in the early month. The implementation of learning runs smoothly due to the preparation of their lesson plan every month. In addition, the teachers also make the children get used to the English language to help the students speak English.

This study also concludes that bilingual learning implemented in class includes four aspects: vocabulary, reading, writing, and speaking. These four programs are integrated into the entire learning process both in and outside the classroom. Bilingual learning in early childhood should not be forced and must be done with fun activities such as singing, playing, and habituation. Meanwhile, the evaluation of bilingual learning is held at the end of the month just to remind the students about the material that month.

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