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Implementation of Learning Models to Improve Students English Language Abilities

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Abstract: This study examines the implementation of bilingual learning models in improving elementary school students' English language abilities through a qualitative descriptive approach based on a literature review. The study analyzes 15 relevant journal articles published between 2014 and 2024, selected using criteria of relevance to bilingual learning, elementary education context, and empirical findings on language skill development. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, including data reduction, categorization, and synthesis of recurring patterns across studies. The results reveal several consistent findings. First, bilingual learning implemented through translanguaging, gradual language exposure, and the integration of Indonesian (L1) and English (L2) significantly improves students' listening and speaking skills. Second, interactive strategies such as games, songs, visual media, and guided speaking activities increase student participation, motivation, and confidence. Third, bilingual learning not only enhances linguistic competence but also contributes to cognitive development, including critical thinking, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. However, the effectiveness of implementation is influenced by teacher competence, availability of learning media, and variation in students' initial abilities. The novelty of this study lies in providing a synthesized conceptual model of bilingual learning implementation that integrates linguistic, cognitive, and pedagogical dimensions within elementary education contexts. The findings imply that bilingual learning should be designed systematically through structured language transition, interactive strategies, and continuous teacher development. This study contributes to the development of bilingual learning theory, particularly in translanguaging practices, and offers practical guidance for teachers and curriculum developers in designing effective English learning in elementary schools.
Keywords: bilingual learning, english language ability, translanguaging, elementary education, learning implementation

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji implementasi model pembelajaran bilingual dalam meningkatkan kemampuan bahasa Inggris siswa sekolah dasar melalui pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif berbasis studi literatur. Penelitian ini menganalisis 15 artikel jurnal ilmiah yang relevan dan dipublikasikan pada rentang tahun 2014–2024, dengan kriteria pemilihan berupa kesesuaian dengan topik pembelajaran bilingual, konteks pendidikan dasar, serta memiliki temuan empiris terkait peningkatan keterampilan bahasa. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan teknik analisis tematik melalui tahap reduksi data, kategorisasi, dan sintesis pola temuan dari berbagai penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan beberapa temuan utama. Pertama, implementasi pembelajaran bilingual melalui strategi translanguaging, paparan bahasa secara bertahap, serta integrasi bahasa Indonesia (L1) dan bahasa Inggris (L2) terbukti mampu meningkatkan keterampilan menyimak dan berbicara siswa. Kedua, penggunaan strategi interaktif seperti permainan, lagu, media visual, dan latihan berbicara terarah mampu meningkatkan partisipasi, motivasi, dan kepercayaan diri siswa. Ketiga, pembelajaran bilingual tidak hanya berdampak pada aspek linguistik, tetapi juga berkontribusi terhadap perkembangan kognitif siswa, seperti kemampuan berpikir kritis, memori kerja, dan fleksibilitas kognitif. Namun demikian, efektivitas implementasi dipengaruhi oleh kompetensi guru, ketersediaan media pembelajaran, serta variasi kemampuan awal siswa. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada penyusunan model konseptual implementasi pembelajaran bilingual yang mengintegrasikan aspek linguistik, kognitif, dan pedagogis dalam konteks sekolah dasar. Implikasi penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran bilingual perlu dirancang secara sistematis melalui transisi bahasa yang terstruktur, strategi pembelajaran interaktif, serta penguatan kompetensi guru secara berkelanjutan. Penelitian ini berkontribusi terhadap pengembangan teori pembelajaran bilingual, khususnya praktik translanguaging, serta memberikan panduan praktis bagi guru dan

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pengembang kurikulum dalam merancang pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang efektif di sekolah dasar.
Kata Kunci: pembelajaran bilingual, kemampuan bahasa inggris, translanguaging, sekolah dasar, implementasi pembelajaran

Introduction

English language proficiency has become a fundamental competency for students in the global era, as it functions as an international medium in education, technology, and professional communication. Despite its importance, many elementary school students still face difficulties in mastering English, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, understanding language structures, and applying the language in real communication contexts. This condition indicates that conventional learning approaches are often insufficient, thus requiring more innovative, interactive, and student-centered learning models to improve students' English language abilities effectively.

One approach that has gained attention in addressing this issue is bilingual learning. Bilingual learning refers to the use of two languages Indonesian as the first language (L1) and English as the second language (L2) as a medium of instruction in the learning process. This approach not only facilitates language acquisition but also supports cognitive development, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and cross-cultural understanding (Cummins, 2000; García & Wei, 2014). Through strategies such as translanguaging and gradual language exposure, bilingual learning enables students to construct meaning more effectively by utilizing their full linguistic repertoire (Genesee, 2008).

Previous studies have shown that bilingual learning can significantly improve students' English vocabulary, speaking skills, and confidence in communication (Yuliana, 2020; Hapsari & Lestari, 2022). In addition, the integration of English into subject learning has been found to strengthen students' literacy skills and participation (Mariani & Safitri, 2019). However, other studies also highlight several challenges in its implementation, including limited teacher competence in bilingual instruction, inadequate learning resources, and the absence of standardized models, particularly in elementary education contexts in Indonesia (Setiawan & Nurlaksana, 2021).

Although many studies have examined bilingual learning, most of them focus on specific classroom implementations or isolated outcomes, such as vocabulary or speaking skills improvement. There is still limited research that synthesizes findings across studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of how bilingual learning models are implemented, what strategies are most effective, and how they simultaneously influence linguistic and cognitive development. This gap indicates the need for a literature-based study that integrates various research findings into a coherent conceptual framework.

Based on this gap, this study employs a literature review approach to analyze and synthesize previous research on the implementation of bilingual learning models in elementary schools. The focus is not on collecting primary field data, but on examining patterns, strategies, and outcomes reported in existing studies to generate a more comprehensive understanding.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of bilingual learning models in improving students' English language abilities at the elementary school level, identify effective instructional strategies, examine student responses and learning outcomes, and synthesize key factors that influence the success of bilingual learning. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of bilingual learning theory, particularly in the context of translanguaging and elementary education, and to provide practical guidance for teachers and curriculum developers in designing effective and contextual English learning models.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a systematic literature review design to examine the implementation of bilingual learning models in improving elementary school students' English language abilities. This design was selected to synthesize findings from previous empirical studies and identify consistent patterns, strategies, and outcomes related to bilingual learning.

The data sources consisted of 15 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2014 and 2024, selected based on predefined inclusion criteria: (1) studies focusing on bilingual learning or English language learning at the elementary school level, (2) articles reporting empirical findings on students' language skills or learning outcomes, and (3) publications indexed in reputable academic databases. Articles that were purely theoretical, not relevant to elementary education, or lacking clear findings were excluded.

The literature search was conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar and other indexed journal platforms using keywords including *bilingual learning*, *English language skills*, *elementary education*, and *translanguaging*. The selection process followed a screening procedure: initial identification based on titles and abstracts, followed by full-text review to ensure relevance and quality of the studies included.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved three main stages: (1) data extraction from selected articles, including research objectives, methods, instructional strategies, and findings; (2) categorization of recurring themes such as instructional strategies, student outcomes, and implementation challenges; and (3) synthesis of findings to identify relationships and patterns across studies.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, this study applied data triangulation across multiple sources, comparing results from different studies to identify consistent trends and minimize bias. Findings that appeared repeatedly across various studies were considered more robust, while context-specific findings were interpreted cautiously.

Through this systematic procedure, the study provides a comprehensive and reliable synthesis of bilingual learning implementation in elementary education contexts.

Results and Discussion

A. Mapping and Characteristics of Reviewed Studies

The analysis of selected literature indicates that studies on bilingual learning in elementary education generally focus on three main aspects: (1) improvement of English language skills, (2) student participation and motivation, and (3) challenges in implementation. Studies by Yuliana (2020) and Hapsari and Lestari (2022) emphasize improvements in vocabulary and speaking skills, while Mariani and Safitri (2019) highlight increased confidence in communication. On the other hand, Setiawan and Nurlaksana (2021) focus on structural challenges such as teacher competence and resource limitations, and Andriani (2025) examines classroom-level implementation and student engagement.

This variation shows that although bilingual learning has been widely studied, most research is still fragmented, focusing on specific outcomes rather than providing an integrated understanding of how bilingual models operate holistically in classroom settings. Therefore, this study synthesizes these findings to identify recurring patterns and relationships across studies.

B. Patterns of Bilingual Learning Implementation

The synthesis reveals that the implementation of bilingual learning in elementary schools commonly follows a gradual and structured transition model, where Indonesian (L1) is used as the initial medium of instruction before introducing English (L2) progressively. This approach is consistently reported in studies such as Andriani (2025), which show that teachers tend to begin lessons using L1 to establish conceptual understanding and then gradually incorporate L2 in instructions and classroom interactions.

This implementation pattern aligns with Cummins' (2000) interdependence hypothesis, which posits that the development of L2 is strongly influenced by the mastery of L1. When students have a solid foundation in their first language, they are better able to transfer conceptual knowledge to the second language. Similarly, García and Wei (2014) explain that translanguaging allows learners to flexibly use both languages as cognitive resources, enabling deeper comprehension and meaning-making.

From the reviewed studies, translanguaging is not merely a linguistic strategy but functions as a pedagogical bridge that reduces cognitive load and supports comprehension. Students are not forced to operate exclusively in English but are allowed to rely on their existing linguistic knowledge, which gradually leads to increased exposure and confidence

Critical analysis

Although most studies support the effectiveness of gradual bilingual exposure, they tend to treat bilingual learning as a single approach without differentiating between models such as immersion, CLIL, or translanguaging. This indicates that the literature still lacks a more nuanced comparison of instructional models and their relative effectiveness in different learning contexts.

C. Impact on Students' Language Skills

1. Listening Skills Development

The reviewed studies consistently show that bilingual learning improves students' listening comprehension through repeated exposure to English in classroom routines. Yuliana (2020) reports that students gradually become more responsive to English instructions, while Hapsari and Lestari (2022) note improvements in students' ability to recognize and interpret vocabulary in context.

This finding is closely related to Krashen's (1985) concept of comprehensible input, which emphasizes that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to language slightly above their current level of competence. Harmer (2007) further supports this by arguing that consistent exposure to language in meaningful contexts accelerates listening development.

From a synthesis perspective, listening skills appear to be the first domain to develop in bilingual learning environments, as students are continuously exposed to spoken language before being required to produce it.

2. Speaking Skills Development

Studies such as Mariani and Safitri (2019) and Yuliana (2020) demonstrate that bilingual learning significantly enhances students' speaking fluency and confidence. Students are able to produce simple sentences and engage in basic communication, although grammatical accuracy remains limited.

This pattern aligns with Thornbury (2005), who argues that fluency should be prioritized in early language learning stages, with accuracy developing gradually over time. The use of guided speaking strategies, as reported in Andriani (2025), allows students to imitate sentence structures and build confidence in communication.

From a theoretical perspective, this process reflects Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding concept, where teacher support enables students to perform tasks beyond their independent ability.

Synthesis

Across studies, bilingual learning has a stronger impact on communicative competence (fluency and confidence) than on grammatical mastery. This suggests that bilingual learning is particularly effective for developing functional language use rather than formal linguistic accuracy.

D. Impact on Student Participation and Learning Motivation

The literature consistently indicates that bilingual learning increases student participation, particularly when combined with interactive strategies such as games, songs, and pair dialogues (Hapsari & Lestari, 2022; Andriani, 2025). These activities create a more engaging learning environment and encourage students to actively use English.

Krashen's (1985) affective filter theory provides a strong explanation for this phenomenon. When students feel comfortable and are not pressured to use English perfectly, their anxiety decreases, allowing them to participate more actively in the learning process.

Furthermore, the flexibility of language use in bilingual classrooms allows students to express themselves without fear of making mistakes, which contributes to increased motivation and engagement.

Critical analysis

Although increased participation is widely reported, most studies do not provide measurable indicators of long-term academic outcomes. This suggests that while engagement is clearly improved, its direct impact on sustained learning achievement remains underexplored.

E. Cognitive Impact of Bilingual Learning

Beyond linguistic outcomes, bilingual learning also contributes to students' cognitive development. Bialystok (2011) states that bilingual individuals tend to have better cognitive control, including attention management, memory, and flexibility.

This is supported by Cummins' (2000) threshold hypothesis, which suggests that balanced bilingualism enhances higher-order thinking skills. Genesee (2008) further explains that bilingual learning facilitates conceptual transfer, allowing students to understand subject matter across languages.

The reviewed studies indicate that students are able to process information in two languages and connect concepts more effectively, which enhances their overall learning capacity.

Synthesis

The cognitive benefits identified across studies reinforce the idea that bilingual learning is not merely a language-learning strategy but a holistic educational approach that integrates linguistic and cognitive development.

F. Challenges in Implementation

Despite its advantages, the literature consistently highlights several challenges:

1. Teacher Competence

   Setiawan and Nurlaksana (2021) and Musthafa (2010) emphasize that limited teacher proficiency in English is a major barrier. Teachers often struggle to maintain consistency in bilingual instruction.

2. Variation in Student Ability

   Andriani (2025) notes that students with weaker literacy skills in L1 tend to experience greater difficulty in bilingual settings, indicating that L1 competence is a prerequisite for successful bilingual learning.

3. Limited Learning Resources

   The lack of teaching materials, such as visual aids and multimedia resources, reduces the effectiveness of bilingual instruction (Setiawan & Nurlaksana, 2021).

Critical analysis

Most studies identify these challenges descriptively but do not propose structured intervention models. This indicates a gap between identifying problems and developing practical solutions for implementation.

G. Role of Parental and Environmental Support

The literature also highlights the importance of external support in bilingual learning. Mariani and Safitri (2019) report that students who are exposed to English outside the classroom show faster progress. Genesee (2008) emphasizes that a supportive home environment enhances language acquisition.

This suggests that bilingual learning should be understood as part of a broader educational ecosystem, involving not only schools but also families and communities.

H. Integrated Discussion and Theoretical Implications

The synthesis of findings reveals that the effectiveness of bilingual learning is determined by the interaction of three key dimensions:

1. Linguistic dimension – gradual exposure and translanguaging support comprehension (Cummins, 2000; García & Wei, 2014)

2. Pedagogical dimension – interactive strategies enhance engagement and participation (Krashen, 1985)
3. Cognitive dimension – bilingualism strengthens higher-order thinking skills (Bialystok, 2011)

These dimensions are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Effective bilingual learning occurs when language use, instructional strategies, and cognitive development are integrated into a coherent learning design.

At the same time, the literature indicates that the success of bilingual learning is highly dependent on contextual factors, particularly teacher competence, resource availability, and student readiness.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the implementation of bilingual learning models at the elementary school level consistently contributes to the improvement of students' English language abilities, particularly in listening comprehension, speaking fluency, and vocabulary development. The findings indicate that the integration of Indonesian (L1) and English (L2) through translanguaging strategies, gradual instruction, and interactive learning activities creates a supportive learning environment that enhances students' confidence and participation. In addition to linguistic gains, bilingual learning also fosters cognitive development, including critical thinking, cognitive flexibility, and memory capacity. However, the effectiveness of this model is influenced by several factors, such as teacher competence, student readiness, and the availability of learning resources.

From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the conceptual link between bilingual learning, translanguaging practices, and second language acquisition by showing that L1 support plays a crucial role in facilitating L2 development. Practically, the findings imply that teachers should adopt structured bilingual strategies, utilize visual and interactive media, and apply gradual language transition to optimize learning outcomes. Schools are also encouraged to provide professional development for teachers and adequate learning resources to support bilingual instruction.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its reliance on secondary data through literature review, which may not fully capture contextual variations in classroom implementation. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ empirical and longitudinal designs to examine the effectiveness of bilingual learning models in diverse educational settings, as well as to explore measurable impacts on students' language proficiency and cognitive development more comprehensively.

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