STUDENTS' ATTITUDES IN EXPERIENCING BILINGUAL ENVIRONMENT IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study aimed to describe students' attitudes in experiencing a bilingual (English-Arabic) environment placed in their Islamic boarding school. This research employed a survey design. The data was obtained from a five-point scale questionnaire, which consisted of 15 statements, administered to 88 junior high school students of the 2021-2022 academic year. Then, the data was descriptive statistically analyzed The finding showed that students had positive attitudes towards the English-Arabic environment. The students believed that the bilingual environment could assist them to acquire the two languages easily by being used to having the languages with their friends and teachers around their daily lives. Furthermore, the research finding also reveals that the bilingual environment increased students' vocabulary items, made students have better bilingual communication among their friends, and provided circumstances of language learning that influenced bilingual learners.

Keywords : *Bilingualism, bilingual environment, students' attitude*

Sari

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan perilaku siswa terhadap lingkungan berbahasa Inggris dan Arab yang terdapat di pondok pesantren mereka. Data dari penelitian ini diperoleh dari kuesioner yang berisi 15 peryataan dengan 5 skala Likert yang diberikan kepada 88 siswa SMP tahun ajaran 2021-2022. Data dianalisa Dengan statistic deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para siswa menunjukkan perilaku positif tentang keberadaan lingkungan berbahasa Inggris dan Arab di pondok pesantren. Mereka meyakini bahwa lingkungan tersebut dapat membantu mereka dalam mnguasai kedua bahasa tersebut dengan membiasakan diri untuk menggunakan kedua bahasa tersebut dalam berkomunikasi dengan teman dan guru di dalam kehidupan mereka sehari-hari. Selain itu, hasil penelitian juga mengungkapkan bahwa lingkungan dwibahasa tersebut dapat meningkatkan jumlah kosa kata baru, meningkatkan kemampuan komunikasi dwibahasa antar teman, dan menciptakan suasana pembelajaran bahasa bagi siswa dwibahasa.

Kata Kunci : *Bilingualisme, lingkungan dwibahasa, perilaku siswa*

Introduction

Acquiring two languages almost at the same time cannot come easily and it needs a process for the students. Therefore, the schools create a bilingual environment to support the students to be accustomed to the languages. Hoff & Elledge (2005) reveal in their research finding that a bilingual environment influences children's language development. In their research study, conducted in a Spanish-English environment, also explain that the environment can help children to achieve a high level of language proficiency especially in the domain of vocabulary. It means that the environment provides students to have exposure by hearing more words of two languages obtained from the interaction among students and teachers. Still, a research study conducted by Mokhtar et al. (2010) in a Malaysian-English environment reveal that there is a low range of vocabulary size among third-year Diploma students who study in a public university. Their vocabulary size especially in English does not show good enough results. According to Rahman et al. (2018), this finding is caused by a negative attitude and lack of exposure to both or one of the two languages. If students obtain many exposures to both languages through a bilingual environment, they will use them as access to enhance their vocabulary of both languages. The exposures play an important role in word recognition in bilinguals (Grosjean & Byers-Heinlein, 2018). Language activities such as conversations and a role play held in the bilingual environment can be the exposures that elevate students' comprehension of both languages. A role play can assist students to get interested in learning languages since they are playing a role while at the same time they are learning (Ramadhani & Poedjiastutie, 2020).

Apart from the vocabulary size, Putri (2010), who conducts her study in a bilingual environment of a formal school, disagree that the environment can be able to assist students in acquiring the two languages since they have doubts and confusion about one of the languages placed in the bilingual environment when they do not master the language. Yet, Calderón Jurado & Morilla García (2018) perceive that students of their research study still show their interest to learn foreign languages although they have

problems in understanding them. Moreover, they are also pleased using the languages among themselves in the environment. In addition, Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams (2013) perceive that a bilingual environment is more conducive to the students' language learning. In other words, the environment is a good strategy to make the students experience both languages that lead to the better acquisition of the languages.

The bilingual environment that takes place in formal educations such as formal schools have been a place for students to enrich their bilingual ability and their students also seem really into the environment. However, the implementation of a bilingual environment in informal schools such as Islamic boarding schools is rarely reported although the existence of the environment in the boarding school has existed for a couple of years. To fill this gap, the present study would like to investigate the implementation of a bilingual environment that takes place in an Islamic boarding school. This study focuses on students' attitudes in experiencing the environment that needs to be measured to know whether they feel enlightened or they face obstacles in having the environment. The findings of this present study are expected to help teachers get appropriate learning methods for their students in acquiring the two languages and to provide information for the stakeholders of the Islamic boarding school whether the bilingual environment has helped the students in acquiring the languages or the environment needs to be improved.

Islamic bilingual boarding schools in Indonesia

Indonesian Islamic boarding schools have developed language learning that includes Arabic and English as their daily languages (Fitriyani & Rasyid, 2018). Since students can live and learn together in the boarding schools (Hasan, 2020) their chance to practice both languages can happen routinely. To facilitate the students in getting used to the languages, the boarding schools provide a bilingual environment that has various foreign language programs including the obligation to speak the languages for students' daily communication where the penalty is set in (Ratnadewi et al., 2020). A bilingual environment is perceived as the learning environment that can be one of variable access to be the input for students (Austin et al., 2015).

There are limited previous studies that discuss a bilingual environment explicitly. Related to bilingualism, most of the previous studies discuss language dominance, language attrition, and bilingual education. The example of a research study that conducted language dominance in late bilinguals was done by (Schmid & Yilmaz, 2018). They state that late bilinguals who spent their lives in an environment where languages other than the one they acquired in their childhood were spoken, typically experienced language development phenomena. It meant that the environment made them immersed in the languages that lead them to improve their new knowledge of the languages. The improvement can be in the form of acquisition of some levels of receptive or productive knowledge of the languages. To make a bilingual environment useful for students in acquiring two languages, language activities took place in a bilingual environment such as conversations among students should be strengthened in order to assist students to gain both proficiency of both languages (Bialystok, 2018). Another research study conducted by Poulin-Dubois et al. (2010) utter that children who raise in a bilingual environment from birth or nearly could provide benefits for bilinguals' cognitive skills.

Previous studies

Few previous studies explained a bilingual environment placed in an Islamic boarding school although the environment had already existed for a couple of years. A research study conducted by Zulfiqar & Tahir (2015) explained that the use of English-Arabic in the teaching and learning process and also in daily communication arose multilingualism in the boarding school where its students came from different ethnics and languages in Indonesia. Furthermore, he also stated that several traditional languages were still used as the media of instructions although the students were in an English-Arabic environment. His research study was about students' and ustadzs' attitudes towards multilingual education that took place in their Islamic boarding school. The research finding revealed that there were positive attitudes towards multilingual education in a boarding school. However, the result did not significantly affect students' and ustadzs' teaching and learning process due to a lack of knowledge, belief, and motivation to develop a multilingual education system in the teaching and learning process. In relating to the bilingual environment, this study did not completely

explain the function of the environment for the students in their language learning process.

On the other hand, the study done by (Hanafiah et al., 2018) perceived that the existence of an English-Arabic environment could create variation in communication among students. The variation was in the form of code-mixing. When students had difficulties in expressing their feelings or ideas in spoken words, they tend to mix them with English or Arabic sentences, words, phrases, or clauses. They did code-mixing to make students' communication with their interlocutors run smoothly and to avoid punishment from their teachers.

The next study comes from Ibrahim AlForidi, (2016) who uttered about the main factors that affected bilingualism. He stated that children who were brought up in a bilingual environment seemed to have difficulty in acquiring two languages. However, his study was library research which he merely reviewed some bilingual explanations from the books and online resources. The finding of his research had not been proven by examining through the real research study in a certain bilingual environment. In contrast, Fitriyani & Rasyid (2018) found that students enjoyed using English or Arabic interchangeably. Their research was examining the process of bilingualism language learning, the environment of language learning bilingualism, and the students' participation in bilingualism language learning. Their research findings obtained from interviews and observation also showed that many students participated actively in using English and Arabic in the bilingual environment and they could absorb many English-Arabic words during the learning process in the bilingual environment. Related to the process of bilingualism language learning, there were interactions between students and teachers during the language learning process since the teachers continuously guided their students to speak better in the environment that took place in their Islamic boarding school. These studies solely explained the existence of a bilingual environment in their boarding schools without trying to get information of students' attitude towards the environment. Due to this reason, the study regarding their attitudes is needed to be done to know whether the environment has helped them acquire the two languages or they feel confused in comprehending the languages placed in the

environment. Moreover, the study also includes the advantages and difficulties that students have in experiencing it.

Designs

This present study applied a survey research design (Latief, (2015). The populations of this study were 88 junior high school students of Sabilillah Sampang in the 2021-2022 academic year. It was from all-female second and third graders who stayed in the bilingual English-Arabic environment. They were chosen as the participants of this research study since they had experienced the bilingual environment for at least a year. By having the experience, they were expected that they could give their information about the environment. Related to the school, it was the first Islamic boarding school that applied bilingual environment in Sampang city so that the researcher of this study felt curious to know about its students' attitudes towards the environment.

This study used a questionnaire to collect the data from the students. The questionnaire was developed by Zulfiqar & Tahir (2015) and modified based on the context of the boarding school environment. It consisted of 15 statements which were put in a five-point Likert Scale with the criteria; 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= undecided, 2= disagree, 1= strongly disagree. The questionnaire was distributed to students in printed forms and the explanations of the questionnaire procedures were provided by the researchers before the students filled in it.

Results and Discussion

Students' responses toward bilingual environment

Table: Students' Response towards Bilingual Environment

Number	Statements	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Bilingual Environment placed in Islamic boarding school is a postive influence for students to improve their bilingual ability.	84	15	1	0	0
2	Having communication in bilingual environment without strict rules is a negative thing for students' language learning development.	34	56	3	2	5
3	Bilingual environment can give positive effects for students' knowledge especially for knowledge about foreign language.	80	19	0	0	1

4	Having foreign language ability (English & Arabic) is part of students'pride that has to be maintained and improved.	74	25	1	0	0
5	Bilingual environment is very important for students to improve their communication among friends.	53	41	5	1	0
6	Bilingual environmnent is needed to improve students' English ability.	72	25	3	0	0
7	Bilingual environmnent is needed to improve students' Arabic ability.	60	32	7	0	1
8	Language activities around Islamic boarding school's environment has to be monitored by teachers and students.	57	36	7	0	0
9	Students and teachers have responsibility to keep continuity of bilingual environment activities in Islamic boarding school.	66	26	8	0	0
10	Islamic boarding school environment is suitable to be the place that runs bilingual environment.	46	43	10	0	1
11	Bilingual environment is the environment that gives disadvantages for students.	2	2	5	53	38
12	Bilingual environment makes students get forced to speak English.	1	11	33	33	22
13	Bilingual environment makes students get forced to speak Arabic.	1	15	33	28	23
14	Having communications in bilingual environment can increase students' vocabulary items.	83	17	0	0	0
15	Students' involvement is needed for the development and management of bilingual environment.	24	30	41	0	5

Most of the students (99%) showed their positive attitudes. Based on the results of number 2, it meant that the students did not mind having a bilingual environment with rules but not in a strict way. Rules or types of punishments should be made based on mutual agreement and decided together by having discussions (Habibi & Supriatno, 2020). the students (94%) strongly agreed that the environment was needed by the students to improve their communications among others. the environment had provided them a positive effect in improving their foreign language knowledge and creating circumstances of language learning. Circumstances of language learning were one of the factors that could influence bilingual learners (Sandhofer & Uchikoshi, 2013). However, the students still asked for the maintenance and improvement of the environment to keep it beneficial for their language ability especially for their communications among others.

Related to students' English and Arabic ability, 97% of students conveyed that the bilingual environment was needed to improve their English ability and there were no students who disagreed with it. On the other hand, 92% of students agreed that the environment could help them improve their Arabic skills. Although the result was lower than the students who believed that the environment could assist them to acquire English, the environment was still being a suitable strategy to help bilingual learners in acquiring languages. It was seen through the results which there were more than 90% of students that agreed that the environment improved their English and Arabic skill. It was in line with research findings done by Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams (2013) that explained that a bilingual environment was a good strategy to make the students experience both languages that lead to the better acquisition of the languages. The finding of the present study also stood in contrast to the statements conveyed by Ibrahim AlForidi (2016). He stated that children who lived in a bilingual environment seem to have difficulties in acquiring languages. These two statements seemed to have a similar condition in which the environment needed teachers' and students' participation to make the bilingual environment successfully help students in acquiring English and Arabic. Suardi et al. (2017) perceived that the participations could be teachers' guidance, students' awareness, and students' high motivation in learning the languages which could strengthen the existence and the function of the environment

Islamic boarding school environment was suitable to be the place that could run bilingual environment. It was because the Islamic boarding school obliged its students to stay in a dorm and set language programs that must be followed and applied in students' everyday life (Nurjaman, 2013). These results indicated that the students felt that having communications with two languages in a bilingual environment were their daily routines and they were accustomed to using them (Zainuddin, 2016). Yet, there were still 12% of students who were forced to speak English and 16% of students who were forced to speak Arabic. To handle this situation, teachers should create language activities in the environment that could attract their intention to willingly speak those languages such as role play and short conversations among friends. A role play could assist students to get interested in learning languages since they were playing a role while at the same time they were learning (Ramadhani & Poedjiastutie, 2020). Besides,

teachers taught and gave examples of short conversations among friends that were usually used in their daily lives. The conversations should be strengthened to assist students to gain proficiency in both languages (Bialystok, 2018).

In relating to the advantage of having communication in the bilingual environment stated in number 14, all of the students believed that the environment could increase their vocabulary items since they could ask questions and cooperate with others in the environment. Those interactions assisted students to learn new words (Z. M. Putri & Wahyuni, 2019). Furthermore, supported by Hoff & Elledge (2005) that conveyed that a bilingual environment helped children achieve a high level of language proficiency especially in the domain of vocabulary. It was found that 55% of students showed their agreement in involving in the development and management of the bilingual environment. Students' involvement was needed to create a better environment where language learning took place (Zulfiqar & Tahir, 2015).

Conclusion and recommendation

Bilingual environment can assist students to acquire languages. In experiencing the environment, students have some advantages. Meanwhile, the difficulty that students have is solely about the strict rules that the students have to obey. Related to the rules placed in the Islamic boarding school, teachers and students should have discussions about the rules that must be set in the environment and it should be agreed upon by two parties. It recommends more investigations of teachers' attitudes towards bilingual environment needs to be done to acknowledge their obstacles and achievements in keeping the environment beneficial for their students.

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Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest is reported.

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