

The Contributive Roles of Bilingualism in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

This study is aimed to explore what the contributions of bilingualism to the English language teaching are as well as how the teachers employed it in their instructional processes. This also deals with how the students were engaged in the process. This study employed qualitative research which focused on using interpretative design involving the classroom observation and also semi-structured interview. The result of the study revealed that the roles of bilingualism were considered to be a prominent tools which fostered the students' communicative competence as well as the way the teachers taught the material. In conclusion, the implementation of bilingualism has significant roles in terms of teaching and learning the target language (L2) at junior high school level.

Keywords: Bilingualism, English Language Teaching, Communicative Competence

Introduction

There have been shifting paradigms in terms of language teaching nowadays. These affect a number of changes in using teaching techniques as well as aids especially for teaching the students English as a foreign language. However, there were significant problems that led to monotonous teaching and learning process in which the teachers tended to employ first language (L1) as the teaching aid. Moreover, the students found themselves big obstacles in terms of digesting the teachers' explanation as well as the materials using the target language (L2). Therefore, there must be relevant teaching aids or techniques that are significantly contributive to the English language teaching as well as build the students' schemata in relation to their understandings towards the

target language (L2). To anticipate or overcome the problems, Bilingualism need to be implemented by the teachers for the purpose of teaching English as a foreign language. In case of teaching aids or techniques, it can be a supportive tool which enhance the students' knowledge in learning English particularly, and enables the teacher to stimulate the students' understanding as well as assist them to digest the English materials well.

This study is aimed to explore the contributive roles of bilingualism in English language teaching in which the teachers employ the code switching to enable the students to learn the target language (English). Bilingualism can be discussed as an individual phenomenon or a societal phenomenon (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981), and also Hamers and Blanc (2000) use the term "bilinguality"

to denote an individual's use of two languages, and reserve "bilingualism" for the study of how two or more languages function in a given society. It is clear that it can be defined as 'how the two languages are learnt in certain society in order that the individuals or group are able to convey the meaning or make meaning in their own communication. In addition, it also develops the students' communicative competence in terms of mastering the second or foreign language. This is also in relation to Thomas and Collier (1996), who claim that in bilingual programs, language-minority students when receive academic instruction in the first language for at least six years tend to do best while receiving progressively more of the same kind of instruction in the second language. Meanwhile, Hakuta (1986) also clearly says that those who continue developing their first languages have certain cognitive advantages over their English-only counterparts. It is also stated by Cummins (2000), who points out that "bilingualism is associated with improved linguistic, cognitive, and academic development when both languages are encouraged to develop". From the statements, it can be concluded that bilingualism is a progressive aid that can be employed to improve the students' cognition as well as linguistic competence. It can also be the effective teaching which can be used by the teacher in terms of English language teaching particularly.

The theoretical framework used in this study is based on Krashen's (1994) claim that in bilingual programs subject matter should be taught in the

first language without translation, and literacy in the first language should be developed so that it can transfer naturally to the second language. He adds that comprehensible input in English should be provided directly in ESL and sheltered subject matter classes. This also deals with Cummin's theory about second language acquisition. In this case, the study focuses on how the learners or students acquire the second language through bilingualism.

Methodology

In line with the objective of the study, it closely deals with the qualitative research which employs interpretative research design involving classroom observation, and also semi-structured interviews. In case of classroom observation, the researcher conducted it to explore how the students were engaged in the instructional process through bilingualism done by the teachers. Meanwhile, a number of teachers were interviewed for the purpose of investigating what the contributive roles of bilingualism to English language teaching are. At least there were four English teachers from state junior high school of 1 Depok in Cirebon regency involved in this study. The data were gathered not only from the interview but also from the observation. And the data were analysed based on a number of instructional aspects such as giving instructions, defining a new vocabulary, explaining the grammatical rules and also genres materials, and creating fun in language class and also emphasized on the benefits of bilingualism. The researcher elaborated those aspects in order to

obtain the relevant discussion as well as conclusion on the contribution of bilingualism in English language teaching.

Findings and Discussion

Discussion from classroom observation

In terms of classroom observation, there were a number of findings that were elaborated one by one. The findings revealed that most of the teachers employed bilingualism for a number of purposes in teaching the students English materials. They mostly employed it when giving the instructions to the students, explaining the grammatical rules, defining a new vocabulary, and also creating fun in language class. Moreover, they still employed L1 to do those activities in the teaching and learning process. L1 was considered to be more dominantly used than L2 in their teaching process. This indicated that the teachers were mostly L1-oriented in which they instructed as well as explained the students a number of English materials. Nevertheless, the way the teachers taught the students provided contributive inputs to develop the students' skills in learning the language. It is also line with Ellis, E.M. (2003), who claims bilinguality as expressed by these normal teachers is normal, remarkable, and achievable. It is described here as skills, as parts of one's identity, and as being an inevitable result of contact with other language speakers in the workplace.

Meanwhile, the finding from Asif, M. et.al (2014) also reveals that

In the class one the teacher employed mother tongue (L1) for delivering instructions to the students for once a time. It is certain that bilingualism is mostly used for instructional purposes when the teachers directed the students to engage in their activities during the lesson. In this case, one of the findings reveals that L1 instruction was more frequently used than L2, it can be said that at least the teachers implemented the code switching in terms of English language teaching. Ramokgopa, M. K. (2010) also states that the communicative and critical thinking skills that will empower these children can best be developed in the case of dominated majorities through the utilization of the child's first language. Based on the statement, it can said that bilingualism also can develop the students' communicative and also critical thinking skills through the implementation of L1 instruction.

Refer to the findings obtained, it can be summarized that bilingualism can be used as teaching techniques or aids which develop the students' communicative competence explicitly and also build their schemata in terms of learning English as a second or foreign language. Furthermore, it also contributes the important aspects in relation to English language teaching. This lead to the improvement of teachers' teaching style as well as the students' skills in digesting the English materials given.

Discussion from Interview

In this section, the researcher interviewed four English teachers about the significance or contributions of

bilingualism to the English language teaching. The questions asked focused on how they employed bilingualism in the instructional process. In addition, they were concerned with the teachers' responses towards the implementation of bilingualism. The findings from interview reveals that bilingualisms were considered as a prominent tool which expand the students' knowledge in learning second language material. This is also supported by Asif, E.M. (2014), who claims, bilingualism as a great source in teaching aids which makes possible in learning a second language in the classroom. Meanwhile Sipra's Present study (2013) shows that the use of bilingualism has an important role in teaching and learning L2 at intermediate level. The use of bilingualism has been employed as a teaching technique in EFL classes. The teachers who participated in the present research study indicated that the translation of abstract words, complex ideas and phrases in L1 is a facility to learn a foreign language. Regarding the statements, it seems that the roles of bilingualism are very affective and also contributive to the English language teaching. It can be employed as a teaching technique that foster the way the teachers teach as well as the way the students learn the target language. In addition, the use of bilingualism can also be an appropriate solution in terms of overcoming the teachers as well as students' problems in teaching and learning the target language. As a result, the use of bilingualism can motivate the students in terms of learning the target language (L2) more enthusiastically.

Conclusion

Current study reveals that the implementation of bilingualism has a significant role in teaching and learning the target language (L2) at junior high school level. The use of bilingualism has been used as a teaching technique in EFL classes. The teachers who involved in the present research study indicated that the translation of abstract words, complex ideas and phrases in L1 is a facility to learn a foreign language the use of bilingualism is appropriate for giving the instruction, explaining the grammatical rules, and also creating fun in language class. By implementing the aid of L1, the learners would have adequate guidance at an early stage of their learning experience. This study also reveals that in EFL classes, the bilingualism has played not only a supportive role but also contributive one. Thus, the teaching and learning process runs affectively and also efficiently. Moreover, the use of bilingualism increases the motivation level of students' learning English.

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