



Teachers' strategies in implementing bilingualism in early childhood education at aminhayati educares kindergarten

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Abstract: *This study aims to explore teachers' strategies in implementing bilingualism in early childhood education at Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten. Bilingual learning has been widely recognized as an effective approach to supporting children's language development when introduced appropriately at an early age. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The participants consisted of kindergarten teachers who actively implemented bilingual instruction in daily learning activities. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis, including lesson plans and learning media. The data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings reveal that teachers applied various strategies to implement bilingualism, such as gradual use of two languages, code-switching during classroom interactions, the use of bilingual songs, stories, and games, and daily vocabulary habituation in routine activities. However, several challenges were identified, including differences in children's language abilities, limited exposure to the second language outside school, and variations in teachers' language proficiency. To address these challenges, teachers employed repetitive language exposure, visual and concrete learning media, and collaboration with parents. In conclusion, the implementation of bilingualism at Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten demonstrates that appropriate teacher strategies play a crucial role in supporting young children's bilingual language development. The study suggests that continuous teacher training and parental involvement are essential to enhance the effectiveness of bilingual learning in early childhood education.*

Keywords: *Bilingualism, Teacher Strategies, Early Childhood Education, Kindergarten, Bilingual Learning*

Abstrack: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi strategi guru dalam menerapkan bilingualisme pada pendidikan anak usia dini di Taman Kanak-Kanak Aminhayati Educare. Pembelajaran bilingual telah banyak diakui sebagai pendekatan yang efektif dalam mendukung perkembangan bahasa anak apabila diperkenalkan secara tepat sejak usia dini. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Partisipan penelitian terdiri atas guru taman kanak-kanak yang secara aktif menerapkan pembelajaran bilingual dalam kegiatan pembelajaran sehari-hari. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara mendalam, serta analisis dokumentasi yang meliputi rencana pembelajaran dan media pembelajaran. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru menerapkan berbagai strategi dalam mengimplementasikan bilingualisme, antara lain penggunaan dua bahasa secara bertahap, alih kode (*code-switching*) dalam interaksi pembelajaran di kelas, penggunaan lagu, cerita, dan permainan bilingual, serta pembiasaan kosakata harian dalam kegiatan rutin. Namun demikian, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi beberapa kendala, seperti perbedaan kemampuan bahasa anak, keterbatasan paparan bahasa kedua di luar lingkungan sekolah, serta variasi kemampuan bahasa guru. Untuk mengatasi kendala tersebut, guru menerapkan paparan bahasa secara berulang, penggunaan media pembelajaran visual dan konkret, serta menjalin kerja sama dengan orang tua. Sebagai simpulan, penerapan bilingualisme di Taman Kanak-Kanak Aminhayati Educare menunjukkan bahwa strategi guru yang tepat memiliki peran yang sangat penting dalam mendukung perkembangan bahasa bilingual anak usia dini. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan perlunya pelatihan guru secara berkelanjutan serta keterlibatan orang tua guna meningkatkan efektivitas pembelajaran bilingual pada pendidikan anak usia dini.

Kata kunci: Bilingualisme, Strategi Guru, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Taman Kanak-Kanak, Pembelajaran Bilingual

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a critical period for language development, as children experience rapid cognitive and linguistic growth during this stage. Language plays a fundamental role in children's ability to communicate, socialize, and construct meaning from their environment. Therefore, providing appropriate language stimulation in early childhood education is

essential to support optimal development (Berk, 2013). In recent years, bilingualism has gained increasing attention in early childhood education due to its potential benefits in enhancing children's linguistic, cognitive, and social abilities, particularly as globalized communication becomes more prevalent in educational settings (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

Bilingualism in early childhood education refers to the use of two languages in the learning process, either simultaneously or sequentially. Bilingual learning programs typically integrate the first and second language to support comprehensive language development. Research has demonstrated that introducing bilingual language exposure early can support receptive and expressive language skills when embedded constructively into daily activities (Anugrahini et al., 2024). In practice, effective bilingual learning incorporates language use within playful, engaging, and natural interactions rather than formal instruction alone. Such approaches encourage children to acquire vocabulary and communicative routines organically (Sari, 2026).

Teachers play a central role in successfully implementing bilingualism in early childhood classrooms. Their strategies in selecting language use, managing classroom interactions, and designing learning activities significantly influence children's engagement and language acquisition. The quality of strategy implementation has been shown to affect not just language outcomes but also children's confidence and willingness to engage with a second language (Putri et al., 2025). For example, immersion techniques in everyday interactions, storytelling, and repeated structured language opportunities help deepen children's bilingual language use and comprehension.

Despite the increasing adoption of bilingual programs, teachers often encounter challenges such as varying language proficiency among children, differing exposure to the second language outside school, and limited teaching resources (Rahmaniar et al., 2025). Studies in diverse contexts also show that bilingual exposure affects expressive language performance differently depending on environmental input and the consistency of language support (Hia et al., 2025).

While multiple studies focus on the outcomes of bilingual learning in early childhood, research that examines **teachers' specific classroom strategies for implementing bilingualism is still limited**. Therefore, this study aims to explore how teachers at Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten apply bilingual strategies in practice, as well as how they navigate challenges during implementation. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights into effective classroom practices and contribute to broader frameworks of bilingual education in early childhood settings.

Bilingual language development in early childhood has been shown to positively influence linguistic and cognitive abilities when supported by appropriate educational strategies. Literature indicates that early bilingual exposure enhances children's language processing and vocabulary breadth, although outcomes are influenced by the quality and context of instruction (Koşkulu-Sancar et al., 2025).

Studies examining bilingual programs in PAUD settings emphasize the importance of teacher-led strategies in facilitating both receptive and expressive language skills. Pransiska (2024) found that structured bilingual programs which integrate language learning into daily activities and use methods such as *Total Physical Response* (TPR), songs, and storytelling can significantly enhance children's English and native language skills.

Additionally, descriptive research in bilingual classrooms reveals that strategic language use in instruction — including frequent switching between languages in meaningful contexts — supports natural acquisition of language structures in young learners (Rahmawati et al., 2025). Empirical evidence from bilingual classrooms highlights that learners benefit from both explicit language input and interactive contexts that connect language to real-world activities, corroborating the relevance of play-based, communicative pedagogies in early childhood settings (Zhafira & Mualifah, 2025).

In family contexts, studies show that children exposed to two languages at home demonstrate more robust bilingual development compared to peers in monolingual environments, suggesting that environmental support outside school influences bilingual outcomes (Hia et al., 2025). Overall, although these findings affirm the benefits of bilingual education for young children, gaps remain in research on **specific teacher strategies implemented in classroom settings**, especially in Indonesian PAUD contexts.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore teachers' strategies in implementing bilingualism in early childhood education at Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten. A qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of classroom practices, teacher experiences, and contextual factors that influence bilingual instruction, rather than to measure variables quantitatively. The descriptive design allowed the researcher to capture natural classroom interactions and pedagogical strategies as they occurred in real teaching–learning situations.

This approach is appropriate for examining bilingual practices in early childhood settings, where language use is embedded in daily routines, play-based activities, and spontaneous interactions between teachers and children. By using this design, the study was able to describe how bilingual strategies were planned, implemented, and adapted by teachers in response to children's language needs and classroom dynamics.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of four kindergarten teachers who were actively involved in implementing bilingual instruction at Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten. All participating teachers had teaching experience ranging from several years and were responsible for planning and conducting daily learning activities using two languages. In addition to teachers, children aged 4–6 years were included as research participants in the context of classroom observations. The children were not interviewed directly; however, their interactions, responses, and language use during bilingual activities were observed to provide contextual data on how teacher strategies influenced classroom practices.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their direct involvement in bilingual teaching practices. This sampling technique ensured that the data collected were relevant to the research objectives and reflected authentic bilingual instructional experiences in the selected institution.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using multiple techniques to obtain rich and comprehensive information regarding the implementation of bilingualism in the classroom.

1. Classroom Observation

Classroom observations were conducted to document bilingual instructional practices, teacher–child interactions, and children's responses during learning activities. Observations focused on how teachers used two languages in different classroom contexts, such as opening activities, core learning sessions, play-based activities, and daily routines. Field notes were taken to record language use patterns, teaching strategies, and classroom atmosphere.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participating teachers to explore their perceptions, experiences, and strategies related to bilingual instruction. The interview questions covered topics such as lesson planning, language choice, teaching methods, challenges encountered in bilingual teaching, and strategies used to address these challenges. This interview format allowed flexibility for teachers to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring that the discussion remained aligned with the research focus.

3. Documentation Analysis

Documentation was collected to support and triangulate observational and interview data. The documents analyzed included lesson plans, weekly and daily learning plans, bilingual learning media, worksheets, and records of classroom activities. These documents provided insight into how bilingual strategies were planned and integrated into the curriculum.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive and thematic analysis process.

1. Data Reduction

Data reduction involved organizing, selecting, and simplifying the raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Field notes and interview transcripts were carefully reviewed, and relevant information related to teacher strategies, language use, and classroom practices was identified and coded.

2. Data Presentation

The reduced data were then presented in the form of descriptive narratives and thematic categories. Data presentation included summaries of observed teaching strategies supported by selected verbatim excerpts from teacher interviews to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

Conclusions were drawn through a process of interpreting recurring patterns and themes related to bilingual teaching strategies. The findings were continuously compared with relevant theories and recent studies on bilingual education in early childhood (Koşukulu-Sancar et al., 2025; Rahmawati et al., 2025) to ensure analytical depth and theoretical relevance.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings, several strategies were applied:

- **Triangulation**
Data triangulation was conducted by cross-checking information obtained from classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. This process helped validate the consistency of findings across different data sources.
- **Member Checking**
Member checking was employed by sharing preliminary findings with the participating teachers. This allowed participants to confirm the accuracy of the interpretations and provide clarification when necessary.
- **Prolonged Engagement and Persistent Observation**
The researcher spent sufficient time in the research setting to develop a comprehensive understanding of classroom practices and minimize misinterpretation of observed behaviors.

RESULTS DAN DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study based on classroom observations, teacher interviews, and document analysis. The results are organized thematically to describe teachers' strategies in implementing bilingualism, the challenges encountered, and the supporting factors in bilingual classroom practices at Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten.

4.1 Teachers' Strategies in Implementing Bilingualism

Analysis of the data revealed that teachers employed several interrelated strategies to support bilingual learning in early childhood classrooms. These strategies were consistently observed across different learning activities and daily routines.

4.1.1 Gradual and Contextual Language Use

Teachers applied a gradual approach in using two languages by introducing the second language in familiar and meaningful contexts. The first language was used to ensure comprehension, while the second language was integrated during greetings, classroom instructions, and simple interactions. This strategy helped children associate the second language with everyday activities without feeling pressured.

Teachers reported that this gradual exposure enabled children to respond naturally and reduced confusion, particularly for children with limited prior exposure to the second language.

4.1.2 Code-Switching and Language Modeling

Code-switching was frequently used as a pedagogical strategy to support comprehension and reinforce vocabulary. Teachers alternated between the first and second languages within a single interaction, especially when explaining instructions or introducing new vocabulary. Language modeling was also observed, where teachers consistently demonstrated correct pronunciation and sentence structures.

This strategy allowed children to hear both languages in parallel, supporting receptive language development and encouraging imitation during classroom interactions.

4.1.3 Play-Based Bilingual Activities

Play-based learning emerged as a dominant strategy in implementing bilingualism. Teachers integrated bilingual language use into songs, games, storytelling, and role-play activities. These activities created a relaxed learning atmosphere and encouraged children to participate actively in using the second language. Observational data showed that children were more responsive and confident when bilingual language input was delivered through play rather than formal instruction.

4.1.4 Daily Vocabulary Habituation

Teachers implemented daily vocabulary habituation by repeatedly using simple bilingual expressions during routine activities such as lining up, snack time, and cleaning up. Vocabulary items were selected based on children's immediate environment and daily experiences.

This repetitive exposure helped children gradually recognize and use familiar words in both languages, particularly during routine classroom interactions.

Theme	Strategy	Classroom Implementation	Data Source
Language Use	Gradual and contextual language use	Introducing second language during daily routines	Observation, Interview
Language Support	Code-switching and modeling	Alternating languages to explain instructions	Observation
Learning Method	Play-based bilingual activities	Songs, storytelling, games, role-play	Observation, Documentation
Vocabulary	Daily vocabulary habituation	Repetition of simple words in routines	Observation

Table I. Teachers' Strategies in Implementing Bilingualism

4.2 Challenges in Implementing Bilingualism

Despite the effective strategies employed, teachers encountered several challenges during bilingual instruction.

4.2.1 Differences in Children's Language Proficiency

Teachers reported varying levels of language ability among children. Some children were more familiar with the second language, while others relied heavily on the first language. This disparity required teachers to continuously adjust their instructional strategies.

4.2.2 Limited Exposure Outside School

Another challenge identified was limited exposure to the second language in the home environment. Teachers noted that children who received minimal reinforcement at home tended to progress more slowly in using the second language.

4.2.3 Teacher Language Confidence

Some teachers expressed challenges related to their own confidence in using the second language consistently, particularly when explaining complex concepts.

Theme	Identified Challenge	Description	Data Source
Learner Factors	Language proficiency differences	Variation in children's second language skills	Interview
Environmental Factors	Limited home exposure	Lack of reinforcement outside school	Interview
Teacher Factors	Language confidence	Inconsistent use of second language	Interview

Table 2. Challenges in Bilingual Implementation

4.3 Supporting Factors in Bilingual Classroom Practices

Several supporting factors contributed to the successful implementation of bilingualism.

4.3.1 Availability of Bilingual Learning Media

Teachers utilized visual aids, flashcards, posters, and digital media to support bilingual instruction. These materials helped children connect words with concrete objects.

4.3.2 Teacher Collaboration

Collaboration among teachers enabled the sharing of strategies and materials, supporting consistency in bilingual practices across classes.

4.3.3 Parental Support

Teachers emphasized the importance of parental involvement, particularly in reinforcing simple bilingual expressions at home.

Theme	Supporting Factor	Role in Bilingual Learning	Data Source
Media	Bilingual learning media	Supports comprehension and vocabulary	Documentation
Professional	Teacher collaboration	Consistency in strategies	Interview
Home Environment	Parental support	Reinforces language exposure	Interview

Table 3. Supporting Factors for Bilingual Implementation

4.4 Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that bilingual implementation at Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten is characterized by gradual language exposure, interactive play-based strategies, and consistent vocabulary habituation. While challenges remain, particularly related to language exposure outside school and teacher confidence, supportive factors such as learning media and collaboration contribute positively to bilingual classroom practices.

This study was grounded in the premise outlined in the Introduction that early childhood is a critical period for language development and that bilingualism, when implemented appropriately, can support children's linguistic and cognitive growth. The findings of this study reinforce this premise by demonstrating that bilingual practices at Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten were implemented through developmentally appropriate, context-sensitive, and interaction-based strategies.

Consistent with the literature discussed in the Introduction, bilingualism in this study was not treated as formal language instruction but as a natural part of daily classroom life. Teachers' use of gradual language exposure confirms previous research emphasizing that early bilingual education should prioritize meaningful communication over linguistic accuracy (García & Kleifgen, 2020; Sun et al., 2021). By embedding the second language into familiar routines, teachers ensured that children remained emotionally secure while being exposed to new linguistic input, aligning with affective and sociocultural perspectives on early language learning.

The strategic use of code-switching observed in this study further supports the translanguaging framework introduced earlier. Rather than separating languages rigidly, teachers flexibly alternated between languages to scaffold understanding and maintain engagement. This finding aligns with recent studies highlighting that pedagogical code-switching enhances comprehension and supports bilingual children's metalinguistic awareness (Palmer et al., 2020; Kirsch & Duarte, 2022). Thus, the results strengthen the argument presented in the Introduction that bilingualism in early childhood should be viewed as a dynamic and integrated process.

Play-based bilingual activities, which emerged as a central strategy, directly reflect the theoretical foundation discussed earlier regarding the importance of play and social interaction in early childhood education. In line with sociocultural theory, the findings suggest that children acquired and practiced bilingual language more actively when it was embedded in songs, games, and storytelling. This supports recent empirical evidence indicating that play-based bilingual learning promotes confidence and spontaneous language use among young learners (Pinter, 2021; Hadley & Mendez, 2022).

Furthermore, the use of daily vocabulary habituation aligns with usage-based language learning theories, emphasizing repetition and contextual exposure. As highlighted in the Introduction, early bilingual success depends on consistent and meaningful input. The findings of this study confirm that routine-based exposure provides young children with repeated opportunities to internalize vocabulary naturally (Unsworth et al., 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2025).

While the Introduction acknowledged potential challenges in implementing bilingual programs, this study provides empirical confirmation of those challenges, including differences in children's language proficiency, limited exposure outside school, and teachers' language confidence. These challenges mirror those reported in recent bilingual early childhood research

(Lee & Jeong, 2020; Koşkulu-Sancar et al., 2025), suggesting that such issues are systemic rather than context-specific. However, the presence of supporting factors—such as bilingual learning media, teacher collaboration, and parental involvement—demonstrates that these challenges can be mitigated through institutional and social support, reinforcing arguments presented in the Introduction regarding the importance of a holistic bilingual learning environment.

The findings suggest that early childhood bilingual education should emphasize flexible language use, play-based activities, and routine integration rather than rigid language separation. Teachers should be encouraged to use code-switching and translanguaging strategies intentionally to scaffold understanding and support children's confidence.

Early childhood institutions implementing bilingual programs should provide ongoing professional development focused on pedagogical bilingual strategies rather than language proficiency alone. Collaborative planning and the provision of bilingual learning media are essential to ensure consistency across classrooms.

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in reinforcing bilingual exposure. Schools may consider strengthening communication with parents by providing simple bilingual expressions or activities that can be practiced at home.

This study is limited by its small number of participants and its focus on a single kindergarten, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, data were primarily qualitative and relied on observations and teacher self-reports, which may be influenced by subjective interpretation.

Future studies could involve larger samples across multiple early childhood institutions to provide comparative insights into bilingual implementation. Longitudinal research is also recommended to examine the long-term impact of early bilingual strategies on children's language development. Further research may explore parents' perspectives or quantitatively measure children's bilingual language outcomes to complement qualitative findings.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the successful implementation of bilingualism in early childhood education depends largely on teachers' pedagogical strategies rather than on formal language instruction. At Aminhayati Educare Kindergarten, bilingualism was effectively implemented through gradual language exposure, strategic code-switching, play-based learning, and daily vocabulary habituation. These strategies created a supportive and meaningful bilingual environment aligned with children's developmental needs.

Despite challenges related to language proficiency differences and limited exposure outside school, supportive factors such as bilingual learning media, teacher collaboration, and parental involvement contributed positively to bilingual classroom practices. Overall, this study highlights that bilingual education in early childhood should be flexible, contextual, and child-centered, offering valuable insights for educators and institutions seeking to implement or strengthen bilingual programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study on teachers' strategies in implementing bilingualism in early childhood education, several recommendations are proposed for different stakeholders.

1. Recommendations for Teachers

Early childhood teachers are encouraged to continue using developmentally appropriate bilingual strategies, such as gradual language exposure, code-switching, and play-based learning. Teachers should view bilingualism as a natural communicative process rather than formal language instruction. Regular reflection and peer discussion are recommended to improve consistency and confidence in using the second language in daily classroom interactions.

2. Recommendations for Early Childhood Institutions

Schools implementing bilingual programs should provide ongoing professional development focusing on pedagogical bilingual strategies, including translanguaging and classroom language management. Institutions are also advised to support teachers by providing bilingual learning media, structured collaborative planning time, and clear guidelines that align bilingual practices with early childhood curricula.

3. Recommendations for Parents

Parents are encouraged to actively support bilingual development by reinforcing simple bilingual expressions at home. Schools may facilitate this by sharing weekly vocabulary lists, simple phrases, or bilingual storytelling activities that parents can practice with their children in informal and enjoyable ways.

4. Recommendations for Policy Makers

Educational policymakers should recognize that effective bilingual education in early childhood requires flexible and context-sensitive approaches. Policies should emphasize teacher capacity building, curriculum support, and family involvement rather than rigid language separation or early academic pressure.

5. Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should involve larger and more diverse samples across different early childhood institutions to enhance generalizability. Longitudinal research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of early bilingual strategies

on children's language and academic development. Further research could also integrate quantitative measures of language outcomes to complement qualitative findings.

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