Bilingual Education Challenges and Strategies in an Indonesian Natural School

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Abstract. The aims of this research are to find out how the bilingual program is implemented in an Indonesian natural school, the challenges faced by the teachers, and how teachers overcome problems in their teaching. The paper provides the outcomes of observations and interviews using a qualitative research design on a selected case study at SMP Alam Al-Izzah, a natural school. The results demonstrate that this natural school has created its own bilingual program called LNP (Language Nurturing Program), which emphasizes habituation of the target language with audio vocabulary that is updated every day, where students must memorize it and perform language output by depositing vocabulary with teachers along with example sentences. This LNP program also has quite strict rules for the use of language every day, although the school only applies a reward system without implementing a punishment system. The LNP program, which is made in accordance with the needs and the natural and government curricula that have been used so far, is considered quite effective, as seen by how well students and teachers can adjust to the use of English at school. Although the teachers' different educational backgrounds, such as in mathematics, fine arts, or informatics, pose some difficulties, the school can overcome them through the LNP language program for teachers. This research further concluded that there is a need to enhance bilingual program development at SMP Alam Al-Izzah, including the development of student activities for the LNP program and adequate teacher training.

Keywords: bilingual program, natural school, language nurturing program

1 Introduction

The development of global competition involving many countries around the world has forced many countries to prepare their young generation to enter it. One way to prepare themselves to enter global competition is to learn English through bilingual education [1]. Bilingual education and programs themselves refer to educational activities that use two or sometimes more languages as the language of instruction and the medium of instruction in the school environment [2][3]. Around the world, bilingual education was originally designed to serve children from the international community whose parents work for international embassies, organizations, and businesses since these programs usually use English as a second language [4][5]. In Indonesia, students who study English in bilingual schools or programs are usually used to show prestige and social power because most people assume that if students can speak English fluently, they have a high status in society [6].

There are two dominant perceptions of bilingualism: First, language as a problem that focuses on students' first language changes and emphasizes the second language; Second, an additive model that focuses on using students' first language as a source for developing students' second language [7]. Bilingualism, on the other hand, is defined as the ability to use two languages, specifically the ability to speak certain skill abilities [8]. In general, bilingual skills in Indonesia are obtained from a planned strategy that is packaged in a program that is generally called planned bilingual [1]. Bilingual programs studied in Indonesia are typically complex program processes involving several factors, which not only involve cognitive approach such as context, learning achievement, intelligence, and age but also affective factors such as attitudes, motivation, and student anxiety [9].

Generally, the bilingual program is often recognized as a program that is known to cost a lot of money because it is designed only for certain classes or schools that are categorized as examples of international standard schools [1]. This is because teaching time in bilingual schools is different from normal schools because it requires more time, effort, and costs because the main objective of this program is to prepare students with good English skills as an international language that can be used to compete in the future [10][11]. Differences in bilingual program implementation can be seen in school that require teachers who are fluent in both the first and target languages, book with specific content suited to student needs, and system or programs that can improve students' language skills [1][10][12]. In addition, a research indicates that bilingual education refers to the use of two languages in the teaching and learning process which is used to enhance learning in students who are trying to learn a new language, which later, with the new language mastered by students can produce and interpret the social world and their academic[8][13].

Schools that have bilingual programs usually combine two curricula in their learning environment, which are the international or specific curriculum and the national curriculum [11]. This is done to maximize the language learning outcomes of students who use a bilingual program with an international curriculum [14]. The international bilingual education curriculum is chosen because it usually focuses on issues designing students to have social and academic skills in two languages [5]. In this research, however, the researchers focused on the specific curriculum used to implement the bilingual program. However, rather than adopting a curriculum from abroad, some schools choose to load their own bilingual education curriculum to fill gaps and deficiencies in the program by developing materials or language learning activities to be taught [15]. This means that when implementing bilingual programs, both teacher and students experience several challenges [11][16].

Based on previous research conducted in a Hungarian school that examined a bilingual program using the CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) approach, which focused on the use of additional languages to teach material as well as language with the aim of encouraging mastery of both material and language at a certain level. In this research, CLIL was used in several subjects, which showed the many challenges and problems faced by teachers related to CLIL implementation. The problems and challenges faced by teachers include those regarding the content, quality, and suitability of books used in programs that are considered lacking and not appropriate, and how teachers should give more time and effort to make preparations before teaching because some teachers on certain subjects lack English skills. Overcoming the problems experienced by teachers in implementing CLIL in bilingual schools in Hungary, teachers need pre-service and in-service training to improve materials, better language preparation, and CLIL training so that unsuitable situations can be corrected and the bilingual program can continue to develop [10].

However, the implementation of bilingual education in Indonesia is generally carried out through two things, namely, the implementation of bilingual programs in private schools and Islamic boarding schools [6][8]. The implementation of bilingual programs in private schools can be seen from research that mentions a school at the junior high school level implementing a bilingual program that was developed independently by the school called EVOLUSI (English Vocabulary Submission), where the program is more focused on enriching vocabulary to increase students' confidence in communication [17]. The implementation of this program begins with a quantity of 12 vocabulary words that students must memorize for a week and are contained in a pocket book made by the school, consisting of 350 vocabulary words that would be achieved over two semesters. The results show that 97.1% of school residents agree that EVOLUSI can increase a sense of confidence in communicating.

Moreover, in the implementation of the bilingual program in Islamic boarding schools, schools generally apply the rule that students must use the target language in the school and dormitory environment [8]. In the research, the researchers focused on the language attitudes shown by students towards the rules for using English that must be carried out by every member of the school. The results of the research showed that most students showed positive language attitudes and continued to try to use English even though they felt their abilities were not outstanding. The research also showed that sometimes students also show a negative attitude towards English by mixing other languages because of a lack of English skills or vocabulary [8].

Following the research that has been conducted by several experts, this research analyzes the implementation of the bilingual program in a nature-based junior high school located in Krian, Sidoarjo. The choice of a natural school as the research object was made because there was still not much research on the implementation of bilingual programs in natural schools, so this research was conducted to gain a new perspective from teachers regarding the implementation of bilingual programs in Indonesia. The natural school where the research was conducted is known to use two curricula, as do most bilingual schools in Indonesia, namely the national curriculum and the self-developed natural curriculum. The natural curriculum that is implemented encourages schools to prepare various facilities and programs that are in accordance with the curriculum that is carried out both in terms of learning and implementation of bilingual programs, such as book content, student activities, ways to enrich students' vocabulary, and cultural contextualization that adjusts the concept of a natural school so that the meaning of the target language is more effective for students [18]. The aspects that have been mentioned show significant differences in previous studies, especially in aspects of the natural curriculum that are included in the bilingual program.

In this research, to develop previous research that focused on teacher challenges, bilingual program implementation, and effects on students, three research questions were used. The first question is used to analyze the use of the natural curriculum in the bilingual program, which also includes the activities in the program. The second research question is about the challenges that arise for teachers, which would also explain who and what is affected by these challenges. The third research question is used to answer how teachers and schools overcome the challenges that arise in the bilingual program.

2 Research Methods

This research presents the results of observations and interviews conducted through a qualitative research design using a selected case study to deepen the analysis of a particular case more specifically. In this research, the implementation of the bilingual program in natural schools is more specifically the object of research as a phenomenon that occurs at SMP Alam Al-Izzah located in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. The school is under the auspices of the *Ummu Azizah* Foundation and has four different levels of education: playgroup, kindergarten, elementary school, and junior high school. However, this research was conducted at the junior high school level for two reasons: the school's recommendation and the fact that students at this level were considered more receptive to classroom research activities during the observation. In this research, the specified research object was studied in depth so as to uncover the reality behind the phenomenon and answer existing research questions. To obtain deeper findings regarding the implementation of the bilingual program in natural schools and the challenges faced by teachers, researchers involved several parties at school, such as teachers, students, and policy holders in the natural curriculum at SMP Alam Al-Izzah through data collection using observation and interviews, which would complement each other [19].

The research was conducted at SMP Alam Al-Izzah because this school implements an independent curriculum, namely the nature curriculum, which is applied as the main curriculum. The curriculum is also used to implement and develop a bilingual program, which is a differentiator in this research from previous studies that have been conducted. In this research, permission was obtained to conduct an analysis involving teachers and students, who are the main actors in the bilingual program at this natural school. This research also obtained permission to conduct non-participant observation with a teacher and students in the second grade of a junior high school, where the researchers observed the activities without interrupting the activities being carried out [20]. The selection of second-grade junior high school students was carried out not only because of the teacher's recommendation but also because students at this level are considered to be able to adapt to the school's program.

The observation was conducted using an observation sheet adapted from previous research, which was mostly used to obtain information and data related to the implementation of the bilingual program. However, the observation also addresses the challenges and solutions faced by the teachers in this natural school. This is done to make the necessary adjustments and modifications to the instrument according to the research. In addition, to strengthen the existing information and data, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews adapted from previous studies examining bilingual programs, which were conducted face-to-face with the teacher [15][21][22]. These interviews were used to obtain information about the challenges faced by the teachers and their solutions, as well as to complete the data about the implementation of the bilingual program in the natural school. The interview was conducted with a teacher at SMP Alam Al-Izzah who not only plays a teaching role but also prepares the natural curriculum as well as being involved in developing content for the student materials on the bilingual program used. The type of semi-structured interview that was conducted is used to gather information from the respondents, which allows the researchers to add new questions and explore the answers provided by the respondents [23]. As for conducting semi-structured interviews, this carried out based on the following aspects:

Table 1. Aspects as for conducting semi-structured interviews

Theory	Aspects
Mutlow (2021), Amanti (2019)	Teacher's personal information about the bilingual program
'Aini (2013)	Program Implementation
'Aini (2013)	Factors supporting and inhibiting program implementation
Mutlow (2021)	Attitudes and language attitudes of teachers in bilingual programs in nature-based schools
Wiyaja (2022)	Challenges faced by teachers in implementing bilingual programs in nature-based schools
Wiyaja (2022)	Problems faced by teachers in implementing bilingual programs in nature-based schools

Once all interview and observation data have been collected, there are four stages that are carried out: data analysis, data reduction, data presentation, and data verification and conclusion drawing [24]. Specifically, in accordance with the four stages mentioned, the semi-structured interview data obtained would be transcribed into a narrative data form, which would then be selected and simplified so that transformation can be carried out according to the purpose of the interview, which is to find out the implementation of the bilingual program in natural schools and the challenges that arise that are faced by teachers. After the interview data has been divided according to the research questions used in the research, the interview data is presented in the form of narrative text for the implementation of the bilingual program in natural schools and data on challenges faced by teachers.

Whereas the data that has been collected through observational data collection techniques that focus more on the implementation of bilingual programs in the classroom would be simplified. This is intended so that a selection can be made on what can be used so that the observation data and their descriptions can be combined with interview data to complement the researchers' findings about the implementation of the bilingual program in natural school, along with the challenges faced by teachers and how to overcome them. Following that, the interview and observation data were combined to answer all existing research questions, and conclusions were drawn as to whether there are differences in the implementation of the bilingual program and the challenges faced by teachers in school, with verification provided by existing data and theories to back up the research findings.

3   Findings and Discussion

3.1   Implementation of LNP in natural school

Based on the results of interviews that have been conducted with a teacher, it is found that the bilingual program implemented at SMP Alam Al-Izzah is the LNP (Language Nurturing Program). The program has two target languages, English and Arabic, with two weeks of English and two weeks of Arabic in one month. The goal of this language program is to improve

students' language skills without feeling overburdened. In classroom teaching, teachers try to be proportional in balancing the four abilities of children, namely reading, writing, listening, and speaking. However, in the LNP, the school prioritizes the output so that students can speak in English, which makes students' speaking and listening skills increase rapidly. As a further elaboration, there are several components in the LNP, namely the addition of student vocabulary, books as teaching materials, and assessment.

Through observations of the school environment and activities, the most prominent language input activity in the LNP is the addition of vocabulary for students, which is done every day on active school days. Every day, the school updates three new vocabularies that must be memorized so that in one month, students can memorize thirty vocabularies in English. Vocabulary updates for students are provided in audio form along with their meanings. The vocabulary given to students consists of one noun, one adjective, and one verb that is played three times. First, the audio is played for thirty minutes before the lesson starts, during the break, and during the second break to maximize the language input received by the students. In the audio playback, students listened to the audio for five to seven minutes. Then, as an interlude, the teacher would play English songs that had been selected with good meaning before returning to playing audio vocabulary. The vocabulary that had been given would later be written by students on a special board in each class. Second, after getting language input at school, students would make language output where the school involved parents in this LNP language program. Parents are asked to accompany students in language output by providing vocabulary memorization results and example sentences in the form of audio or video recordings, which are later sent to their respective teachers. The parental assistance is intended so that students feel supported in learning languages and their language skills in improving vocabulary memorization continue to improve [25]. This method is done so that students can enrich the vocabulary in the target language as much as possible because, basically, vocabulary plays an important role in mastering a language [26].

SMP Alam Al-Izzah also independently created a book called 'The Symphony: Learning A Holistic English,' in addition to focusing on improving students' vocabulary as the main activity. Based on the statements of the resource teacher, who is also the author of the book, and the language activator teacher, the book was compiled while still adhering to the government guideline curriculum with a customized theme. The author includes more content related to nature, such as animals, plants, the benefits of natural elements, and other general information that can provide insight.

However, unlike the vocabulary audio input, students learn English using the book only once a week for ninety minutes, so teachers should make the best use of the time available. The book is organized so that it is not too complicated for students to understand and has clear content. This is done so that both teachers and students can maximize time in English lessons, which are conducted only once a week. The preparation of books carried out by SMP Alam Al-Izzah is also very important considering the situation where English is a foreign language for them and at home they use Indonesian more often [4]. The ease of content is quite a contrast to the book content in Helen's research, which used books that had been written before the implementation of the program, which made it difficult for teachers and students [10]. Furthermore, it shows that bilingual programs must be structured appropriately according to the circumstances of the students, teachers, and school culture so that language development can consistently occur [11][27].

Based on the results of the interview, SMP Alam Al-Izzah also conducts an assessment that involves teachers and students directly. The first assessment is a form of assessment where students carry out language output in the form of depositing vocabulary along with sample

sentences every day. This deposit is collected by parents and given to the teacher, who submits it to the language activator team. In this assessment, the liveliness and consistency of students' vocabulary deposits every day are the most important things. The second is student-to-student assessment. In this case, in each class, the teacher would appoint spies or agents to make observations on their classmates. In this activity, other students would not know who in their class has been appointed as a spy. Then, every month, the appointed students would report on the abilities of their classmates for one month. This peer assessment activity was designed because teachers cannot always accompany students in class, so they need agents from students to observe the language development of other students. However, in this assessment, students are prone to providing very subjective observations and assessments, so the school has created other assessments to balance the assessment of student observations.

The third assessment is teacher observation of students, where teachers observe students' language skills directly both inside and outside the classroom and focus on how they practice. Later, based on the results of the assessment through student observations and teacher evaluations, as well as student activity in depositing vocabulary, the teacher would accumulate scores. Every month, the results of the accumulated scores would be displayed on the school's mading. In addition, to show how seriously the school takes this LNP language program, the accumulated scores from this program would be included in the student's report card. The combination of student and teacher observations is done because it can provide substantial information about student learning outcomes at all levels [28]. Based on the three types of assessment conducted, it can be found that vocabulary deposit, teacher observation, and student observation assessment are interrelated in this LNP, which is used to continue to develop student abilities [21]. The layered assessment carried out is somewhat different from the research on the bilingual evolusi program, which, although both use a program that focuses on increasing students' vocabulary, is very different in terms of assessment [17]. The LNP is very concerned about continuously evaluating students because it is not only to find out how far the students are progressing, but the school can also evaluate and revise the program so that it can develop either the book content or other policies in the LNP [29].

3.2   Challenges faced by teachers in LNP

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted, it shows that teachers face several challenges in implementing the LNP at SMP Alam Al-Izzah. The challenges faced by teachers come from the school environment, teachers, and students who influence each other in the continuity of the program. The first challenge that teachers must face is implementing the LNP with incomplete facilities. Based on the observations made for the announcement of new vocabulary, the school uses a large loudspeaker with maximum volume at each schedule. However, teachers have their own statements regarding this:

"I'm referring to the implementation of the bilingual program at the boarding school, which has audio speakers in every room, but here there are only speakers in front of the office. So, the sound must be maximized so that all classes are heard."

Although the announcement of vocabulary can run well, the teacher considers that the absence of loudspeakers in each room is less than optimal because there are some rooms in SMP Alam Al-Izzah that cannot hear the audio clearly. As for other facilities, especially in classroom teaching, teachers do not experience significant challenges, even though the school does not provide LCD projectors and loudspeakers in each classroom. However, for vocabulary audio collection, the school still uses the WhatsApp application to send vocabulary memorization results, which is sometimes a problem because some students or parents do not always collect

every day. The lack of optimal facilities can make students less optimal in their learning, because after all, adequate learning facilities allow teachers to create more ways to make the learning process more enjoyable, which can maximize the expected learning outcomes [30].

The second challenge arose through interview questions regarding teachers' understanding of the LNP. Basically, teachers do not experience significant difficulties in understanding the language program implemented at SMP Alam Al-Izzah; teachers actually have difficulty adjusting to this program due to different backgrounds. Only a few teachers at SMP Alam Al-Izzah have a background in English language education, while the rest have various other educational backgrounds. The deficiency makes it difficult for teachers to provide good examples to students regarding the LNP because the school has not held special training for teachers on how to implement the bilingual program properly. Indeed, bilingual programs require special training to implement because schools with this kind of program have their own difficulties in implementation [6]. Therefore, training for teachers in bilingual programs is needed to make teachers more professional so that they can handle problems that may arise, especially those related to student abilities [1].

Another challenge faced by teachers in this program is the negative language attitude of students, which makes the use of language less than optimal. Students at SMP Alam Al-Izzah have a variety of English language levels, so students have a variety of reactions when LNP is held. Through interviews conducted, teachers realize that student development is also influenced by student seriousness:

"The students' language skills have definitely improved because every day three new vocabulary words are given. The nuances of language learning are also greatly improved. But it all depends on the students too, whether they feel helped and upgraded or not."

At the beginning of the implementation of LNP, some students had difficulty understanding what the teacher said, so the teacher had to translate it. As the program progressed, students' abilities developed rapidly, but there were also students who had slow development. The factor that makes students' development slow is their negative language attitudes. In LNP, it was found that there were several negative language attitudes shown by students, including students with closed personalities who deliberately did not speak to reduce language interaction with both teachers and students. In addition, teachers also face students who, from the beginning, label themselves as unable to speak English. This type of student usually uses Bahasa Indonesia if the teacher is not around and spends more time outside the junior high school area during free time or breaks.

The negative language attitude is further exacerbated because only the junior high school is the only school unit that implements LNP within the *Ummu Azizah* foundation, while some facilities, such as the canteen and mosque, are shared with elementary schools and kindergartens. This situation means that teachers of other school units do not have an obligation to use English, which makes the use of the language less optimal. Another negative attitude of students is their inconsistency in doing memorization deposits every day, which makes their abilities lag far behind others as well as hampering the implementation of the LNP. These negative language attitudes of students are influenced by their heterogeneous abilities; not all students learn English at the elementary school level. The reason for this is that English is not a compulsory subject to be taught at school, so when starting the LNP, there is a fairly clear gap in ability between students [31]. Students lack motivation to learn the language and do not understand the benefits of being bilingual [8][32]. In addition, LNP is designed as a language program that does not burden students because there is no punishment for breaking the rules of language use, which makes students less responsible [33].

3.3 Teacher solutions to overcome challenges in LNP

Through the challenges faced by teachers in the LNP carried out at SMP Alam Al-Izzah, solutions emerged from the results of the evaluation. Based on the results of interviews and observations made, teachers on the Language Activator team try to provide solutions that address the challenges that exist. The first problem is regarding facilities, especially regarding the implementation of daily vocabulary announcements, which only use one large loudspeaker. The school has not been able to provide loudspeakers in every classroom and room. Instead, the teacher continuously encourages students to speak English. Based on observations made in the classroom, the teacher does not necessarily only invite students to use the target language or give examples, the teacher also provides instructions if students find it difficult, including pausing, repeating, body language, and translating.

The teacher would usually pause after speaking, and if the student still did not understand, the teacher would repeat the speech more slowly and with clearer pronunciation. If the teacher finds that the student still does not understand what is being said, the teacher would give instructions using body language or translate some or all of the words. This teacher action is usually done in class when the teacher makes more complex utterances than outside of class. For example, when the teacher gives a game called the description game, where students in groups have to describe something or a job. The teacher explains the rules of the game by pointing to a table to indicate the number of groups and showing how to describe them using speech and body language. The purpose of the teacher giving such stages of instruction to students is to train them in self-regulation so that they have a ready attitude and stay focused when spoken to in English [34].

The second challenge is the different educational backgrounds of teachers, which makes their English skills vary. The school overcomes this with the LNP that is applied to teachers. The LNP for teachers is the same as that for students, including the procedure for depositing vocabulary memorization. However, in the vocabulary deposit, teachers make daily deposits to the language activator teachers or principal with examples of sentences from each vocabulary. Based on the interviews conducted, it was found that teachers are already actively using English and Arabic because they even use the target language to chat with each other in the teachers' room. As an assessment that can later be used as a self-evaluation, the school conducts teacher assessments once a month, namely peer assessments and anonymous assessments.

The parties acting as raters on the anonymous assessment are students who fill out a survey without showing their identity and rate the teacher from one to ten. The ratings that had been obtained were then accumulated and shown to the teacher as evaluation material. The LNP conducted with the teacher had rapid development due to teachers having more awareness and a sense of responsibility than students [11]. In addition, teacher assessment contributes to the growth of teachers' language skills, which in turn improves the quality of teachers and programs [6].

Another solution is to overcome students' negative language behaviors that indirectly affect their performance in LNP. To overcome these negative student attitudes, the school tries to increase student motivation by implementing a reward system without applying punishment. This rewards system was devised based on monthly assessments to support and motivate pupils to practice foreign languages every day. The reward system used is that students who consistently use language in accordance with the language weeks and deposit vocabulary regularly would be rewarded with a language badge. These language badges are given to students once a month, and these badges can be exchanged for a sum of money. In addition to language badges, the school also rewards students by giving them gifts in the form of items that

can support their language learning, such as dictionaries. The school aims to implement this reward system to help students improve their academic ability, form good study habits, increase student motivation, and create a positive learning environment that can support LNP [35].

However, when students are not active in participating in school programs, including LNP, for a certain period of time, the school conducts home visits. The student's inactivity would be assessed by how long the student has not deposited vocabulary memorization and by their inactivity in speaking in the target language that has been determined by the school. This is done by the school in an effort to get students to return to actively participating in the program at school. Through home visits, the school tries to obtain additional information about student problems related to home or parental conditions, convey student problems to parents, and build commitment with parents to handling student problems [36] .

However, the school actually has a special program to deal with students who are too lazy to deposit vocabulary memorization every day. SMP Alam Al-Izzah has a special program that involves gathering students and holding activities where students stay at school on Saturdays and Sundays to focus on memorizing vocabulary. This activity is collected so that students are not too far behind other students. This method is quite effective, but if the same incident continues to recur, the school conducts a home visit so that the teacher knows the condition of students and parents that might affect the enthusiasm of students.

4   Conclusions

This research shows the implementation of the bilingual program LNP (Language Nurturing Program) in a natural school and finds out the challenges that arise and how teachers deal with them. On the implementation of LNP, it was found that the main activity was increasing students' vocabulary memorization. In addition to the implementation, the school also has books that support students' English learning and conducts three types of assessment: vocabulary deposit, student observation, and teacher observation. There are three challenges that appear in LNP: the lack of facilities, the teacher's educational background, and the students' negative language attitudes. Teachers helped students with the first issue by encouraging them and providing guidance on pausing, repeating, utilizing body language, and translating. Due to teachers' different educational backgrounds, the school overcomes it with LNP for teachers. While addressing students' negative language attitudes, the school first organized a reward system, weekend school stays, and home visits. However, the implementation of the LNP would be more effective if schools implemented not only a reward system but also a punishment system that could build student discipline and responsibility. Furthermore, for researchers who want to conduct further research, it would be better if they added students' perceptions of the implemented bilingual program or did it in schools that implement bilingual programs that are created independently.

Acknowledgments

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