Bilingualism as A Milestone: Insights from Pre-Service Teachers' Experiences

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Abstract - Future teachers' attitudes and beliefs shape the way teaching and learning are conducted. The perception of bilingualism within themselves affects their behavior and motivation in fostering bilingual classrooms. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of pre-service teachers towards bilingualism and how these perceptions influence their aspirations, teaching strategies, and professional goals. This study implemented a qualitative research design, involving six purposively chosen participants from second-year English Education Department students. Data were collected through an online Focus Group Discussion (FGD), allowing participants to share insights on their experiences, beliefs, and aspirations regarding bilingualism. The findings revealed diverse perceptions of bilingualism, highlighting its practical benefits in professional and personal contexts, such as improving communication skills, gaining social recognition, and enhancing career opportunities. Participants emphasized the role of bilingualism in increasing self-value and the need to balance the use of English and Bahasa Indonesia in teaching. Strategies such as translation, storytelling, and situational adaptation were identified as key approaches to bilingual instruction. Additionally, participants' career aspirations varied, with some viewing international schools as opportunities for growth, while others prioritized readiness before taking on such challenges. These findings underscore the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward bilingualism and equipping pre-service teachers with the skills to navigate diverse and multilingual classrooms effectively.

Keywords: *bilingualism, pre-service teacher, motivation*

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1. INTRODUCTION

No one in the world speaks exclusively in their maternal language without incorporating elements from other languages. According to (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2006), every individual knows at least a few words in languages other than their native tongue and integrates these into their daily communication. This linguistic blending is a universal phenomenon, reflecting the interconnectedness of cultures and the influence of globalization. Whether

it is through borrowed words, phrases, or expressions, people naturally incorporate elements from other languages, enriching their vocabulary and fostering mutual understanding. Such practices demonstrate that multilingualism is an intrinsic part of human interaction, even in its simplest forms.

Mastering more than one language represents massive globalization. The people equip themselves with foreign languages voluntarily. It reveals that being bilinguals brings many goods to their lives: (1) People can interact with one another and integrate into their organic social milieu; (2) Through bilingual education, students from many cultural backgrounds may come together under one roof; and (3)Bilingual education increases students' chances of discovering suitable economic possibilities (Özşen et al., 2020).

Students from various languages and cultural backgrounds are brought together via bilingual education, which fosters intercultural communication and cooperation. Students may learn from one another in this stimulating setting, which expands their viewpoints on world concerns (Jawad, 2021). Bilingual education also lessens stereotypes and develops open-mindedness by encouraging a feeling of togetherness and common purpose, equipping pupils to prosper in a world that is becoming more interconnected by the day.

How people appreciate and use bilingualism in their personal and professional life is greatly influenced by their perceptions. Being multilingual alters a person's perception of both oneself and other people. This change in how one views oneself frequently results in increased receptivity to possibilities and new experiences. In a same vein, how society views bilingualism affects how it is used in both school and the workplace. People and organizations are encouraged to emphasize bilingual education because bilingualism is seen as a desirable skill that is increasingly linked to cognitive benefits, cultural understanding, and economic potential.

One of the developing countries in Asia, Indonesia, has experienced the phenomenon that being bilingual is mandatory in society. Local interaction with mother tongue is viewed as an ordinary contact. However, with globalization and technological advancements, the perception of society has shifted due to wide exposure to foreign cultures (Özşen et al., 2020). English, for instance, has influenced education, business, and even casual conversations. This exposure has created a growing need for bilingualism, as individuals recognize its importance in accessing better opportunities and staying connected in a globalized world (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2006; Jawad, 2021). Moreover, younger generations increasingly view bilingualism not only as a skill but as a symbol of modernity and progress.

This shift in societal perception has significant implications for pre-service teachers, especially in their role as facilitators of bilingual education. In Indonesia, pre-service

teachers are now expected to not only master bilingual teaching strategies but also navigate the complexities of linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom. They play a critical role in fostering future students' bilingual skills. To achieve this, pre-service teachers must develop a nuanced understanding of bilingualism, incorporating methods that balance the promotion of foreign languages, such as English, with the preservation of mother tongues. Furthermore, their attitudes and perceptions toward bilingualism greatly influence how they design and implement bilingual instruction, shaping students' language learning experiences and their perceptions of linguistic and cultural diversity. This highlights the importance of equipping pre-service teachers with the tools and knowledge necessary to create inclusive and effective bilingual classrooms.

As future educators, pre-service teachers' attitudes toward bilingualism especially in the classroom are probably going to affect how they behave. The teaching profession, which necessitates acting under pressure in a complex and dynamic context in the classroom, depends on beliefs since they operate as guides for actions (Fischer & Lahmann, 2020; Park-Johnson, 2020). Positive attitudes toward bilingualism increase the likelihood that pre-service teachers would use creative, inclusive teaching strategies that promote language acquisition and cultural awareness. On the other hand, unfavorable or uninterested attitudes could lead to lost chances to take full advantage of bilingual education's advantages. For pre-service teachers to be able to handle the difficulties of a varied and multilingual classroom, it is crucial to cultivate positive views about bilingualism in them.

A study from (Park-Johnson, 2020) about teachers' attitudes and belief about code mixing performed by bilingual students has been conducted and revealed that the teachers' attitude were positive and could be shifted into negative if it is related to the students' academic potentials or performance. However, before being a teacher, the pre-service teachers also have their own perspective. Thus, it is necessary to carry out a study examine how the pre-service teachers perceive bilingualism and find out their teaching forecasting.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method which is to analyze how pre-service teachers' perceptions might influence their future teaching practices. Reaching six pre-service teachers as the participants whom selected purposively through snowballing. They are studying English education in one of private universities in Bali. The data were collected by conducting an online Focus Group Discussion due to the time limitation through Google Meet after the participants finished classes and note taking. The researcher selected the participants for the reason that they were willing to voice their opinion without hesitation. It is important to obtain the natural occuring data specifically (Miles et al., 2014). The FGD was carried out to analyze the perception of pre-services

teachers that might shape the future classroom. The FGD was organized semi-structured to encourage the participants to convey genuine answers without thinking about construct counterfeit. The questions were formulated in table 1 below. The data were analyzed by three flows: (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Data condensation was done to select and simplify the data collected to focus on data needed, the voice of the students regarded on the perception, the challenge, and the preference. Data display was showed in a demography table to accommodate the detail of the participants. Conclusion drawing was set according to comparison and contrast.

Table 1. The question list in the Focus Group Discussion

No	Questions
1	What is your ultimate motivation to study English education at university?
2	What is the benefit of being bilingual?
3	Do you speak English on a daily basis?
4	Based on your experiences, what is the ratio of the teachers teaching in L1 and English?
5	In the future, what is your plan to teach with two languages?
6	When are you being bilinguals?
7	How do you see yourself in the future? If there is a vacancy for a teacher in an International school, would you be willing to apply?

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

The results of this study were collected from qualitative data in the form of the recording transcription of the Focus Group Discussion with participants and note taking. In the Focus Group Discussion, six participants kindly stated their thoughts of seven questions. The answers were clarified deeper to have clear view to unveil what the attitude and belief of the pre-service teachers toward bilingualism were and the forecasting of their teaching. The results revealed a range of responses to the open-ended questions. Before discussing the participants' voices, demography data of the participants are provided in the table below in pseudonyms to prevent the participants' identification from being revealed.

Table 2. Participants' demography

No	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Year of Study	Employment Status
1	PIY	Female	24	2	EER
2	PPY	Female	19	2	EOE
3	DSE	Female	19	2	EOE
4	PGL	Female	19	2	EOE

| 5 | NAD | Female | 19 | 2 | EER |
| 6 | MAA | Male | 19 | 2 | UNP |

*EER (Employed in Education-Related Work) - Participants working as teaching assistants, tutors, or in other educational roles.
*EOE (Employed Outside Education) - Participants working in non-educational sectors while pursuing their teacher education.
*UNP (Unemployed) - Participants are not currently engaged in any form of employment but are focusing on their studies.

In view of the fact that the participants were selected through snowballing, they were in the same year of study. There were five female and one male participant with the age range between 19-24 years old. Through an initial interview, all female participants were employed while the only male participant was unemployed. The table shows that three participants were employed outside the education field and two participants were employed in the education field.

3.2 Discussions

Motivation

The first question in FGD is discussing about motivation why the participants ended up studying English education. The motivation could be coming from internal and external factors that shaped the participants decision (Zhang et al., 2021). Positive motivations machine the willingness to improve the skills while negative motivation could affect the goal of being a future teacher fades away.

"I want to prove to my former teacher when I was in High School that I could be better than him." (MAA)
"Studying English education was my last option back then. My first dream was studying medical." (PGL)
"I was in gap year, my former workplace was in education industry. I can see the opportunity of getting employed in this industry." (PIY)
"My parents persuaded me to enroll to English Education. I am now expecting an easier way to get a job." (PPY)

Internal motivation is strongly related to positive behavior (Bardach & Klassen, 2021; Vermote et al., 2020). Finding autonomous motivation is associated with a helpful and enjoyable classroom and a passionate figure. Being a teacher in Indonesia is not a fancy thing anymore. Low income and lack of appreciation are some of the external factors. The responses that mostly focused on the future profession represent the fear of being unemployed after graduating. Studying English education was rarely the priority. However, would they be promising future teachers?

"As long as time goes by, being here (English education department) is not bad. I can go with the flow and finish the assignments very well. My score is pretty good." - (NAD)

The answer could be yes. Why? The journey of a pre-service teacher in college is not short, four years, could change everything. The direction of motivation could be shifted along the way. This positive attitude leads the pre-service teacher into an enthusiastic classroom with beneficial behavior.

Attitude and Belief

After every reason behind the motivation, learning English education means having a perspective of teaching bilinguals. The second question was the benefit of being bilingual in their viewpoint.

"I work in a fashion store where foreigners are most of the customers. Being bilingual benefits me in communication." (PPY)
"In my organization, only a few are willing to speak English. I think it makes me look cool."(MAA)
"I achieve the goal to be looked reliable. Parents whose kids study in the school I work often observe the teachers from outside the class. If I speak English, they know their kids are in the right hands" (NAD)

The participants perceived that the advantages of being bilingual are correlated with self-value. Being bilingual enhances their sense of self-worth in social and professional settings (Chibaka, 2018). Safira et al. (2023) tell that the majority perceive multilingualism is beneficial for teachers and their students in improving cognitive and communicative skills and ease of communication. It also implies that being bilingual is a sign of social standing and identity. Their feeling of self-worth is increased when they believe they are unique or well-liked by their peers. It is because need for achievement is a strong motivator among pre-service English teachers. They seek personal growth and impact through teaching (Ayuningtyas & Santosa, 2023). This viewpoint emphasizes how self-esteem and professional pride are reinforced by external reinforcement that is motivated by bilingual competence.

Being bilingual is also implemented daily. The needs of external factors such as speaking partners, regulations, and supportive circumstances are essential in fostering consistent practice and maintaining bilingual proficiency. These factors provide opportunities for meaningful interaction, encourage language use in diverse contexts, and create an environment where bilingual communication becomes a natural part of everyday life.

"My father works in hospitality; I speak English with him daily." (PGL)

"I join weekly training in my workplace about communicating in English. I interact with foreign parents" (NAD)

The participants' statements reflect how bilingualism is integrated into their daily lives through consistent exposure and practice, particularly in professional and familial contexts. A supportive environment for language use makes a natural bilingual speaker cherish the family connection which drive language learning and the use in daily life. On the other hand, professional settings also take a part in the demand of bilingual development through opportunities offered.

As pre-service teachers, the experiences from past learning at school have made the current viewpoint of how the teaching should be conducted. The shifting of education development has gradually changed due to technology evolution. The varying degrees of English usage and L1 in different educational settings, highlighting how institutional contexts influence bilingual practices and priorities.

"In public school, the teacher speak English around only 20% in the classroom." (DSE)
"In a private institution the English use is up to 70%." (PIY)
"In early education school they use 40% English and 60% Bahasa." (NAD)

The fact that English is only utilized in the classroom 20% of the time in public schools illustrates how little attention is placed on the language. Curriculum policies, teacher skill, or a greater emphasis on Bahasa Indonesia, the country's official language, might all be to blame for this. English is used far more often in private institutions up to 70%. This discrepancy suggests that private schools emphasize English as a critical competency for both academic and professional success since they may serve children from wealthier families or those seeking opportunities abroad. To encourage more English usage, these institutions probably have additional resources, such as bilingual teachers with training and curriculum that emphasize the language. A midway ground is demonstrated by early education institutions that balance 60% Bahasa and 40% English. Pre-service teachers often found that traditional language learning beliefs can reduce supportiveness (Dixon et al., 2016). An purposeful approach to bilingualism in early childhood education is shown in this balance, which aims to introduce English while preserving a solid foundation in the mother tongue. During the formative years, such a method probably promotes cultural identification and cognitive growth.

Future Implementation
"I will teach with 70% English and 30% Bahasa. My dream is teaching in International school where the students were a mix of expatriate and the locals" (PIY)
" I will teach based on the situation in the classroom. In Early education, English is promoted gradually by emphasizing simple instruction." (NAD)

The participant's goal for a multicultural classroom with both local and foreign kids is the pinnacle of a forward-thinking worldview. Pre-service teachers recognize the importance of english practices and the need to understand and implement teaching practices that reflect English's global role (Cahyadi & Fitriyah, 2024). This shows a preparedness to reach international standards in bilingual education in addition to a job objective. On the other hand, it is also appropriate to use a more situational and flexible approach, especially in early education settings. This method shows that the value of scaffolding in language learning is recognized, especially for younger pupils who are still developing their core language abilities. Both viewpoints emphasize how classroom atmosphere and instructors' objectives influence multilingual teaching methods.

How about the style the participants' teaching? – different perspective hasdifferent strategies and consideration. It is according to the demography, teaching context and the pedagogical approach.

"I think, if it is simple words or instruction, it needs no translation." (PGL)
"I will always translate the explanation in English I will be giving right away, because I think the students will be heterogeneous." (DSE)
"In early education, I will do storytelling many times. It does not need translation because I consider the gesture, movement, and facial expression." (NAD)

These interpretations demonstrate a variety of tactics, such as depending on visual and contextual cues to enhance comprehension, avoiding translation to preserve immersion, and employing it for inclusion. Lestari et al. (2022) view strategies like translation and storytelling as natural facilitative practices. Every strategy exhibits careful adaptability to the unique requirements of learners and instructional environments.

The last topic in the FGD was the participants opinion regarding to job opportunity to teach bilinguals in International school. The context was made in International school since English is the medium of instruction.

"It will be a good milestone in my career, I will take it and learn more to be better." (NAD)

"I think I will go for another vacancy. International school burdens me as I am still developing the skills once I graduate." (DSE)

When it comes to exploring chances in foreign schools, the statements show varying opinions on professional goals and self-assessment of preparedness. These viewpoints highlight two different approaches to job growth: one that is motivated by aspiration and a willingness to take on obstacles head-on, and the other that is influenced by cautious introspection and a desire for gradual advancement. Both strategies emphasize how

crucial it is to match professional choices with individual objectives, readiness, and room for advancement. (Indrawati, 2019) said that pre-service teachers' motivation and confidence in teaching with English are variable, suggesting that coursework needs revision to better support them.

4. CONCLUSION

The gathered statements highlight how personal objectives, educational environments, and outside influences influence attitudes and behaviors, reflecting a range of perspectives and methods about bilingualism, teaching, and career goals. The participants emphasized the useful advantages of bilingualism, including enhanced social worth, career opportunity, and communication. From immersive storytelling to the careful use of translation for inclusivity, they demonstrated a variety of teaching styles that balance the demands of students and classroom dynamics while utilizing both English and the home language.

These viewpoints show that bilingualism is a sign of professional identity, self-worth, and flexibility in addition to being a communication tool. This emphasizes on pre-service teachers the value of adaptability, cultural awareness, and a dedication to continuous personal development in meeting the demands of a bilingual and multicultural classroom.

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