BILINGUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM AT SMAN 17 PALEMBANG: PERSPECTIVES AND PRACTICES OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

THESIS

by

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PALEMBANG

2021

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background of the study, the problems of the study, the objectives of the study, and the significance of the study

1.1 Background of the Study

Mastering more than one language has become a trend nowadays. In this globalization era, people are required to master more than one language in order to be able to communicate with other people from different countries. To communicate with people from other countries, someone cannot use their mother tongue or their national language. Therefore, mastering a foreign or an international language is essential. English is one of the widely used international languages spoken by people worldwide. English plays a vital role in international communication. Rao (2019) argued that English held an exclusive position because it was the most commonly used language. Moreover, it developed as a leading global language in all fields. Hence, the domination of English had been like a snowball, too large to resist. Therefore, mastering English in addition to mastering the mother tongue or the national language helps someone to communicate with people from different regions.

Someone who speaks two languages is known as bilingual. Baker (2001) defined bilingualism as the implementation of two languages in an individual. Bilingualism has become a concern of government from many countries for years. There has been much discussion about bilingualism and efforts made to make people bilingual. One of the popular programs implemented in many countries around the world concerning bilingualism is bilingual education. Bilingual education referred to utilize two languages in an educational environment. Bilingual education varied from other types of language education where content subject material and language acquisition were integrated, ensuring that two languages were used as teaching tools (Garcia & Wei, 2015; Wright et al., 2015). Bilingual education discussed in this study was defined as the use of two languages in two different curricula in the teaching and learning process. English,

math, and science subjects (chemistry, physics, and biology) were taught in English and Indonesian, while other subjects were taught in Indonesian. Baker (2001) pointed out that bilingual education had always been a contentious topic in the education field worldwide for many decades. No wonder there were many studies conducted in this area. Taheri and Heidar (2014) reported that bilingual education was one of the common and debatable initiatives to address the lack of understanding of foreign languages.

Governments in many countries try to boost their people's performance in mastering English by providing bilingual education program. Countries such as China, Spain, and Turkey had implemented bilingual education program to reach that goal. In the same concern, the Indonesian government also adopted this effort to improve Indonesian people's foreign language mastery to avoid being left behind in the global competition. Therefore, one way to improve Indonesian citizens' foreign language competence is by implementing bilingual education program in Indonesian schools. In Indonesia, bilingual education was initially formally designed in formal education through a program called Pioneering International Standard Schools [Rintisan Sekolah Bertaraf Internasional, *RSBI*]. The Indonesian government tried to develop schools encouraging the development of education through RSBI. This idea was based on the act of the Republic of Indonesia number 20, the year 2003-chapter 14 articles 50 section 3. It was written that the government and local state coordinated at least one education unit to establish international academic standards.

Unfortunately, since 2012, the act of the Republic of Indonesia number 20, the year 2003-chapter 14 articles 50 section 3 was officially terminated due to several reasons. The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Indonesia reevaluated the program of RSBI based on the petition submitted by the parents. The petition's granting was because it probably would erode and reduce pride in Indonesia's national language and culture. It potentially reduced the nation's identity that had to be inherent in every student, ignored state responsibility for education, and led to different treatments to access the quality of education. Besides, the payment for RSBI school was more expensive than the regular school.

However, the nature of bilingual education program with different forms and names remains. A few years ago, Cambridge International curriculum was introduced in Indonesia. The implementation of the Cambridge Curriculum requires students to learn content subjects in English as the language of instruction. The South Sumatra Provincial Government has initiated a new program a few years ago limited to one public senior high school in Palembang, SMAN SUMSEL, to implement the Cambridge curriculum combined with the national curriculum. In 2018, the South Sumatera governor appointed two other schools to take part in running the program, SMAN 1 SMAN 17.

Therefore, there were three public schools in Palembang, such as SMAN 1, SMAN 17, and SMAN SUMSEL, are appointed to adopt Cambridge curriculum in addition to 2013 curriculum (dual curriculum). English is used as one of the languages of instruction for teaching science and math subjects. In these schools, not all classes implement the Cambridge curriculum. There are some special classes designed to use the Cambridge curriculum and the 2013 curriculum. Since SMAN Sumsel was the first school that ran this program, therefore, it became the centre of the program. Unlike RSBI, bilingual education program of dual curriculum is the local government program to facilitate students who have good English ability and want to gain extra credentials from international institutions.

Previous studies reported the implementation of bilingual education in some countries. It was found that students' English language background and exposure were likely influenced their participation in a bilingual education program. Those who had more exposure to English had more positive perceptions than those who did not. It was also found that students believed English they learned in the program might significantly affect their future and opportunities. Furthermore, the implementation of English as media of instructions in the bilingual program increased students' English proficiency, especially on the acquisition of vocabulary. Although sometimes, their mastery of content subject knowledge, the key aim of the bilingual course, was not achieved. It was also apparent that limited English proficiency was the critical challenge found in encouraging student achievement. Low levels of English skills hindered students from understanding essential English teaching affecting their mastery of content

subject knowledge. It hindered the teachers from explaining well, so the goal of teaching and learning could not be fulfilled. (Ernawati, et al., 2021; Fernandez-Costales, 2017; Fitriati, 2015; Jurado & Garcia, 2018; Lee, 2006; Li, 2018; Li & Wang, 2010; Ozfidan et al., 2016; Putri, 2010; Taheri & Heidar, 2014; Tina et al., 2013; Tong & Shi, 2012; Surdyanto, 2016).

Other previous studies in Indonesia context, such as in the former RSBI school program, showed some failures due to some factors. Fitriati (2015) discovered that English became a heavy burden that raised teachers' tension, reinforced a sense of uneasiness, and decreased confidence. Teachers admitted that it was hard to teach mathematics and science subjects in English without prior training in using English as a medium instruction context. Similarly, Putri (2010) found the benefits and drawbacks of bilingual education program. In the field of science subjects, bilingual education program enabled students to learn English. Compared to those who were in regular school, they had greater English mastery. Besides, bilingual education program enhanced the creativity of the teachers. Despite the positive impact on English language proficiency, bilingual education made some students felt unsure and confused about the lesson because of their lack of English mastery and the teacher's lack of English proficiency.

Findings from those previous studies played an essential role in this current study. There were some gaps that the writer found regarding the implementation of bilingual education program in a formal school. Among those studies, each focused on one problem to investigate. In China, the researcher merely investigated the effectiveness of bilingual education program at university. A study from Southern California discussed students' attitudes, perceptions, and views on bilingual education program (Lee, 2006; Li, 2018). Besides, there was not any research that discussed the implementation of the program, the perspective of the students and the teachers, and the language negotiation that occurred during teaching and learning time in bilingual education classes, especially in the language negotiation area.

Another difference is concerning the region where the research was conducted. Some studies were conducted beyond Indonesia. Moreover, studies conducted in Indonesia were conducted in different regions such as Centra Java,

West Sumatera, Pekanbaru, Denpasar, and Jakarta. There were hardly found any studies concerning bilingual education program of dual curriculum conducted in Palembang city. The newest research on bilingual education using English as the medium of instruction in Palembang city needs to be conducted. These things were vital considerations for the writer to research in a famous senior high school, SMAN 17 Palembang, South Sumatera, Indonesia. The writer would like to see how bilingual education program of dual curriculum occurred in the new bilingual education era in Indonesia. Therefore, a research entitled " Bilingual Education Program at SMAN 17 Palembang: Perspectives and Practices of the School Community" were conducted.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

The problems of the study were formulated into the following questions.

1. How was bilingual education program of dual curriculum enacted in SMAN 17 Palembang?
2. What were the students' and teachers' perspectives regarding the implementation of bilingual education program of dual curriculum in SMAN 17 Palembang?
3. What kinds of language negotiations occurred in learning content areas with bilingual education program of dual curriculum in SMAN 17 Palembang?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

Concerning the problems, the objectives of the study were to:

1. describe the ways SMAN 17 Palembang enacted bilingual education program of dual curriculum in teaching and learning activities.
2. find out the students' and teachers' perspectives regarding the implementation of bilingual education program of dual curriculum in SMAN 17 Palembang.
3. investigate kinds of language negotiations that occurred in learning content areas with bilingual education program of dual curriculum in SMAN 17 Palembang.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

This study is expected to be beneficial for the bilingual education field, English as the medium of instruction, and content area language learning, especially to fill out the gap in English as the medium of instruction in Indonesian context. Besides, it is also expected that teachers and students of bilingual education program of dual curriculum, parents, school principals, and other scholars will be benefited from the findings of this study. Teachers are expected to recognize the problems faced by the students and improve the teaching and learning process to adapt to the students' wishes. Moreover, the students are expected to realize the best things they should do to be successful learners in a bilingual program. As a result, the teaching and learning process will run better.

Not only teachers and students, but this study could also provide information to parents about the implementation of a bilingual education program conducted in SMA 17 as a reference for them before registering their children in this kind of program. They will get the information on what happened during the implementation and on teachers' and students' perspectives about the program. Besides, the schools' principals are expected to obtain more information about the implementation of bilingual education at his school so that he is supportive in managing the program well, anticipating the challenges or things that need further action, and thinking of a possible solution. Students and teachers do need the principal's concern to run the program well. Furthermore, this study is expected to provide valuable information for other scholars to conduct further studies concerning bilingual education.

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