

A Case Study on Pre-Service Teachers' Implementation of Bilingual Teaching Strategies in Elementary Education

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Abstrak

Dalam konteks pendidikan yang semakin mengglobal dan sumber belajar yang semakin beragam, strategi pengajaran bilingual semakin menjadi perhatian sebagai upaya mendukung efektivitas pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar. Studi kasus kualitatif ini menyelidiki bagaimana mahasiswa calon guru sekolah dasar (PGSD) menerapkan strategi bilingual, khususnya translanguaging dan alih kode (code-switching), selama praktik mengajar. Data dikumpulkan melalui studi literatur sistematis (2020–2025) dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan mahasiswa calon guru. Literatur menunjukkan bahwa translanguaging dan alih kode membantu meningkatkan pemahaman, keterlibatan siswa di kelas, dan kepercayaan diri belajar. Data wawancara mengonfirmasi bahwa mahasiswa calon guru secara sadar menggunakan strategi bilingual untuk membuat pembelajaran lebih mudah diakses dan mendukung proses belajar. Namun demikian, ditemukan pula tantangan seperti keterbatasan bahan ajar bilingual dan ketidaknyamanan siswa menggunakan Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi bilingual, apabila diterapkan secara tepat dan kontekstual, dapat memberikan kontribusi positif terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris di sekolah dasar; oleh karena itu, program pendidikan guru perlu menyediakan pelatihan yang terstruktur terkait pedagogi bilingual.

Kata Kunci: *Strategi Bilingual, Translanguaging, Code-Switching, Mahasiswa Calon Guru, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris SD*

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Abstract

In the context of increasingly globalized education and diverse learning resources, bilingual teaching strategies have gained attention as a way to support effective English instruction in elementary schools. This qualitative case study investigates how pre-service primary school teachers (PGSD students) apply bilingual strategies particularly translanguaging and code-switching during teaching practices. Data were collected through a systematic literature review (2020–2025) and semi-structured interviews with pre-service teachers. The literature shows that translanguaging and code-switching help improve comprehension, classroom engagement, and learner confidence. Interview data confirms that pre-service teachers intentionally use bilingual strategies to make learning more accessible and supportive. However, challenges such as limited bilingual teaching materials and student discomfort with English were reported. The study concludes that bilingual strategies, when applied thoughtfully and contextually, can contribute positively to English teaching in elementary settings; therefore, teacher education programs should include structured training on bilingual pedagogy.

Keywords Bilingual Strategies, Translanguaging, Code-Switching, Pre-Service Teachers, Elementary English Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and the proliferation of international resources have transformed the landscape of education, making English not only a foreign language to be learned, but also a gateway to a vast array of learning materials from scientific articles to educational videos and interactive software (Dollah et al., 2024; Liando et al., 2023). In Indonesia, where many educational resources remain in English, the ability for teachers to operate bilingually (Indonesian–English) becomes increasingly important, especially at the elementary level, to ensure that young learners can access quality content and develop global literacy from early age.

Pre-service teachers (mahasiswa PGSD) play a critical role in this context: as future primary school educators, they must be proficient not only in pedagogical and content knowledge, but also in language competence and flexible teaching strategies. Bilingual strategies such as translanguaging and code-switching have been widely discussed in recent literature as effective means to support comprehension, lower learners' anxiety, and build inclusivity in multilingual classrooms. For instance, a study on translanguaging in Indonesian EFL classrooms found that using both Indonesian and English during instruction helped students understand complex material without sacrificing engagement or identity affirmation. Similarly, code-switching has been observed to serve pedagogical functions such as delivering

clearer instructions, managing classroom interactions, and scaffolding conceptual understanding (Efendi & Syafyadin, 2024; Witari, 2023).

Despite that, relatively few studies focus on how *pre-service* teachers not experienced in-service teachers adopt and adapt these bilingual strategies in real classroom or simulated teaching contexts. This gap is significant because pre-service teachers may face unique challenges: limited teaching experience, hesitancy to use English in early age learners, lack of bilingual teaching materials, and uncertainty about balancing language use and content mastery. Therefore, this study focuses on exploring the practices of pre-service teachers in applying bilingual strategies during English instruction at the elementary level, including the types of strategies employed, the rationale behind their use, and the challenges encountered throughout the teaching process.

Accordingly, this article presents findings derived from a recent literature review combined with interview data from pre-service elementary teacher education students, providing empirical insights and recommendations to strengthen bilingual pedagogical competencies within teacher education programs and to support the implementation of bilingual teaching in elementary schools.

METHOD

Design and Approach

This research uses a qualitative case study design, combining systematic literature review with semi-structured interviews with pre-service primary school teachers (PGSD students) who have engaged (or will engage) in teaching practices at elementary schools.

Literature Review

A comprehensive search was conducted in international and national open-access journals from 2020 to 2025, focusing on bilingual / translanguaging / code-switching pedagogies, especially in Indonesian EFL or primary school context (Karima et al., 2025; Liando et al., 2023). Selected studies discussed types of bilingual strategies, their pedagogical functions, benefits, and challenges. Data from these sources were synthesized thematically to provide theoretical and empirical background.

Interviews

Participants: 5 pre-service PGSD students (purposive sampling) who reported using at least one bilingual strategy during teaching practice (or microteaching).

Instrument: semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions about their perceptions on bilingual ability, strategy use, integration of English in various subjects, and challenges encountered.

Procedure: interviews conducted individually (30–45 minutes), recorded with consent, transcribed, coded, and analyzed via thematic analysis. Findings from interviews were triangulated with literature review to ensure validity.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Literature Review

Bilingual Strategies: Translanguaging & Code-Switching

Recent Indonesian studies have documented that translanguaging the fluid use of multiple languages in instruction is common and beneficial in EFL and bilingual classrooms. In particular, Liando et al. (2023) identified three forms of translanguaging used by teachers: intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching, employed to clarify complex material, build rapport, and scaffold understanding.

Similarly, code-switching (switching between L1 and L2 deliberately) has been shown to serve important pedagogical functions: improving curriculum access, managing classroom dynamics, and facilitating interpersonal relationships between teacher and students in multilingual contexts (Hafid, 2022; Rukmi, 2020).

Pedagogical Functions and Benefits

Studies indicate that bilingual strategies can make learning more inclusive and cognitively accessible. Translanguaging and code-switching help learners grasp new concepts without the cognitive load of L2-only instruction, reduce anxiety, and encourage participation. In primary school settings — where English proficiency is often low such strategies can be especially helpful in making English instruction meaningful and comprehensible.

Challenges and Need for Structured Pedagogy

However, literature also warns that bilingual teaching requires careful planning: without structure, excessive L1 use may reduce exposure to L2, undermining language development goals. There is also a need for teaching materials suited for bilingual instruction, teacher training in bilingual pedagogy, and awareness of learners' sociolinguistic backgrounds.

Summary from literature: Translanguaging and code-switching are supported by recent research as effective bilingual strategies in Indonesian EFL/bilingual classrooms, offering pedagogical benefits when applied intentionally. However, thoughtful design, resources, and teacher readiness are essential to maximize benefits and avoid potential drawbacks.

Findings from Interviews with Pre-Service Teachers Several recurring themes emerged from interviews with PGSD students:

1. Importance of Bilingual Competence for Teachers

One participant stated: "I believe that bilingual competence is very important, not just an additional skill. A bilingual teacher will find it easier to access, filter, and adapt various learning resources to meet students' needs."

This reflects the view that bilingual competence is not optional but essential, given the abundance of English-language educational resources and the goal to prepare students for a

globalized world. This aligns with the literature advocating for multilingual pedagogy to leverage students' linguistic repertoires.

2. Contextual & Gradual Integration of English

Another participant described how she would integrate English words in non-language subjects: "In Science lessons, I can introduce key terms in English, such as 'gravity' or 'photosynthesis,' while still explaining the main concepts in Indonesian."

This approach resembles *scaffolding bilingual* and *contextual code-switching*, as suggested in translanguaging pedagogy. It helps students gradually get used to L2 vocabulary without overwhelming them a strategy that literature supports for young learners in primary settings.

3. Challenges: Student Comfort, Materials, Time

A concern from a participant: "The biggest challenge is ensuring that all students feel comfortable and do not feel left behind. I will use plenty of visual aids so that the language becomes easier to understand visually, not only through listening."

This highlights challenges of bilingual instruction: student anxiety, varying proficiency, and lack of appropriate bilingual teaching materials. These issues mirror those found in prior studies, which underline the need for structured bilingual pedagogy and resources.

4. Motivation and Pedagogical Commitment

All interviewed pre-service teachers expressed a motivation to implement bilingual teaching for educational quality and global readiness. Their initiative suggests that with support training and materials pre-service teachers are ready to adopt bilingual strategies.

Synthesis: Literature vs Empirical Findings

The combination of literature review and interview data shows that:

1. Bilingual strategies such as translanguaging and code-switching are not only theoretically valid but pragmatically feasible for pre-service teachers to adopt.
2. Pre-service teachers are aware of pedagogical needs and global demands, and willing to integrate bilingual instruction in thoughtful, context-sensitive ways.
3. The main barriers are resource-based (bilingual materials), student comfort and readiness, and lack of formal training.
4. There is a strong case for incorporating bilingual pedagogy modules into teacher training programs to equip future teachers with both linguistic and pedagogical competence.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that pre-service primary school teachers (PGSD students) are capable and willing to apply bilingual strategies particularly translanguaging and code-switching in teaching English (and other subjects) to elementary students. These strategies help make instruction more accessible, supportive, and contextually appropriate, especially for young learners with limited English proficiency. Despite resource and readiness challenges, the pedagogical benefits and the motivation of pre-service teachers underline the importance of integrating bilingual pedagogy into teacher education curricula.

Implication for practice: Teacher training programs should include structured bilingual education methodology (guidelines, lesson plan templates, bilingual teaching materials), mentoring during PPL, and assessment rubrics that reflect bilingual competencies. Such steps will better prepare future primary school teachers to deliver effective bilingual instruction.

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