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Students' Perception On English Learning In A Bilingual Classroom (A Qualitative Study Of Tenth-Grade Students At Ma Nw Sukamulia)

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Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi siswa kelas X terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kelas bilingual di MA NW Sukamulia dan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi persepsi tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Partisipan terdiri dari satu guru bahasa Inggris dan siswa kelas X. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña (2014), termasuk kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Kredibilitas data ditetapkan melalui triangulasi sumber. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa menganggap bahasa Inggris sebagai mata pelajaran yang sulit; namun, mereka merasa lebih nyaman ketika guru menggabungkan bahasa Inggris dan bahasa Indonesia selama instruksi kelas. Pendekatan pembelajaran bilingual membantu siswa memahami pelajaran dengan lebih mudah, mendorong mereka untuk berpartisipasi dalam aktivitas kelas, dan meningkatkan rasa ingin tahu mereka tentang kosakata bahasa Inggris. Selanjutnya, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa persepsi siswa dipengaruhi oleh strategi pengajaran bilingual guru, kemampuan bahasa Inggris siswa, serta terjemahan dan penjelasan guru selama proses pembelajaran. Oleh karena itu, instruksi bilingual menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih mendukung dan berkontribusi pada persepsi positif pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di kalangan siswa Kelas X di MA NW Sukamulia.

This study aimed to explore Grade X students' perceptions of English language learning in a

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bilingual classroom at MA NW Sukamulia and to identify the factors influencing those perceptions. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The participants consisted of one English teacher and Grade X students. Data were collected through classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), including data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The credibility of the data was established through source triangulation. The findings revealed that most students perceived English as a difficult subject; however, they felt more comfortable when the teacher combined English and Indonesian during classroom instruction. The bilingual learning approach helped students understand the lesson more easily, encouraged them to participate in classroom activities, and increased their curiosity about English vocabulary. Furthermore, the study found that students' perceptions were influenced by the teacher's bilingual teaching strategy, students' English proficiency, and the teacher's translation and explanation during the learning process. Therefore, bilingual instruction created a more supportive learning environment and contributed to positive perceptions of English language learning among Grade X students at MA NW Sukamulia.

Kata Kunci : Persepsi Siswa, Pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, Kelas Bilingual, Studi Kualitatif
Keywords : Students' Perception, English Language Learning, Bilingual Classroom, Qualitative Study

Introduction

The instruction of English at the Madrasah Aliyah (MA) level plays a crucial role in equipping students to meet the demands of globalization, particularly in terms of international communication and access to knowledge. At MA NW Sukamulia, situated in East Lombok, the implementation of bilingual classes has been adopted as a strategic approach to enhance students' English proficiency. Within this educational context, examining students' perceptions is critical, as their views, opinions, and responses shape motivation, classroom participation,

and overall learning outcomes. Previous studies indicate that students' perceptions of language use in instruction vary considerably depending on their level of language proficiency, prior learning experiences, and the teaching methods employed (Fang & Liu, 2020).

The integration of two languages in the learning process is intended to facilitate comprehension and strengthen intercultural communication, yet it is often met with challenges such as limited language proficiency among both students and teachers. The practice of translanguaging—the flexible use of two languages within classroom interaction—has emerged as a relevant phenomenon in bilingual instruction (García & Wei, 2021). While empirical evidence shows translanguaging can support understanding, it may also generate differing perceptions among students, with some experiencing confusion in processing the instructional content (Rijamil, 2025). Previous studies demonstrate that employing two languages can enhance students' comfort and understanding, though it requires teachers to continuously adjust their strategies to ensure effectiveness across diverse student abilities (Setiorini et al., 2024a; Murtini, 2024).

Despite a growing body of research addressing students' perceptions of English Medium Instruction (EMI) and bilingual education, most existing studies focus on general educational levels, urban settings, or exclusive English instruction rather than flexible bilingual integration. Investigations specifically examining student perceptions at the Madrasah Aliyah level within localized, rural contexts such as MA NW Sukamulia remain limited, creating a significant research gap. Therefore, this study aims to describe how grade 10 students perceive English language learning in bilingual classrooms at MA NW Sukamulia and to investigate the specific internal and external factors that influence those perceptions.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative design, aiming to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon based on the perspectives and lived experiences of the research participants. The methodological orientation is phenomenology, which focuses on exploring how students interpret the use of English in bilingual classrooms, including their feelings, challenges, and subjective meanings.

The research was conducted at MA NW Sukamulia in East Lombok in July 2026. The population consisted of all tenth-grade students (X) enrolled in the bilingual program for the 2026/2027 academic year. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria: active participation in bilingual classes, prior experience in learning English within a bilingual context, and a willingness to provide open information. The sample included one English teacher and 6 Grade X students

Data collection integrated primary and secondary sources to achieve a comprehensive understanding. Primary data were gathered through passive participant classroom observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews with both the teacher and the students. Secondary data were collected through documentation, including school profiles, instructional materials, syllabi, and lesson plans. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), which consists of three continuous stages: data reduction (condensation), data display, and conclusion drawing. To

ensure data credibility and trustworthiness, the study applied source triangulation (comparing observation, interview, and documentation data) and member checking procedures.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on classroom observations and in-depth interviews, the findings revealed three major themes regarding students' perceptions, alongside specific factors that shaped these views.

First, the students initially perceived English as a difficult subject. Observations indicated that students experienced significant difficulty understanding the material when English was used continuously during the learning process. Students tended to respond briefly and preferred using Indonesian for classroom interactions. During interviews, students explicitly stated that English was "hard to understand if the teacher used full English". The teacher confirmed this, noting that a strictly monolingual approach left students confused and resulted in a silent, passive classroom.

Second, students felt significantly more comfortable with bilingual instruction. Observations showed that the teacher consistently combined English and Indonesian (translanguaging), translating difficult English expressions to bridge comprehension gaps. Students reported in interviews that they understood the lessons better when the teacher alternated between the two languages. This flexible strategy increased active participation and reduced learning anxiety.

Third, bilingual instruction actively stimulated students' curiosity toward English vocabulary. Observations and interviews revealed that students proactively paid attention to unfamiliar English vocabulary and frequently asked about meanings. For example, the teacher noted that upon hearing the word "help," students immediately asked for its translation and showed genuine interest in discovering the Indonesian equivalent. This demonstrates that the bilingual approach not only facilitated comprehension but also fostered a safe environment for lexical exploration.

The study found that these perceptions were influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. The primary internal factor was the students' English proficiency. Their limited baseline mastery made full English instruction intimidating, directly shaping their perception of the subject as difficult. The external factors included the teacher's bilingual teaching strategy and their method of translation and explanation. The teacher strategically used Indonesian to scaffold complex concepts before proceeding with English, providing essential support that accommodated the students' proficiency levels.

These findings align with the Theory of Perception by Walgito (2020) and Schunk (2020), which assert that cognitive factors, individual abilities, and prior learning experiences fundamentally shape how students interpret educational stimuli. Furthermore, the success of the bilingual approach supports Cummins' (2021) Bilingual Education concept and Translanguaging Theory (García & Wei, 2021), demonstrating that utilizing the first language as a cognitive bridge does not hinder second language acquisition, but rather facilitates understanding and builds confidence. These results are consistent with previous studies

(Setiorini et al., 2024b; Wang, 2022; Taner, 2022), confirming that strategic bilingual instruction improves comfort and comprehension for students with lower English proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that Grade X students at MA NW Sukamulia generally hold a positive perception of English language learning in their bilingual classroom. Although students initially perceived English as a difficult subject due to their limited baseline proficiency, the teacher's implementation of bilingual instruction—combining English and Indonesian—significantly alleviated these difficulties. This translanguaging approach helped students follow the learning process, created a more comfortable and supportive environment, and actively stimulated their curiosity toward discovering new English vocabulary. Students' perceptions were primarily influenced by three interacting factors: their own English proficiency, the teacher's bilingual teaching strategy, and the teacher's proactive translation and explanation during classroom instruction.

Suggestion

Based on these findings, it is suggested that English teachers continue implementing balanced bilingual instruction tailored to students' evolving needs, providing clear explanations while gradually increasing English exposure to build independence. Students are encouraged to actively participate and independently practice their vocabulary to build confidence. Schools should support this initiative by providing adequate learning resources and professional development focused on bilingual strategies. Future researchers are encouraged to expand on this study by involving participants from different educational levels or utilizing comparative methodologies to further enrich the literature on bilingual education in rural settings.

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