

PARENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN MAINTAINING CHILDREN'S BILINGUALISM

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find out: (1) parents' attitude towards bilingualism, (2) strategy used by parents for maintaining children's bilingualism, (3) challenges in raising bilingual children. This research employed qualitative case study. The participants of this research were parents who had lived in English speaking country with their children which were taken through purposive sampling technique. The data of this research were collected by interviewing the parents and employing observation to get richer data. The obtained data was analyzed in three major phases namely data condensation, data display and draw conclusion. The researcher concluded that the parents had a positive attitude towards the importance of English and the essential of maintaining language which influence the education and future prospects of children, however, they showed neutral attitude towards the bilingualism by expressing the advantages and disadvantages of it. Moreover, the parents utilized 3 forms of involvements as the strategy, they were oral communication (mixed-strategy and OPOL-ML), provision of facilities, and virtual assistance. However, there were some obstacles faced by the parents in preserving their children's language, such as the embarrassment, lack of vocabulary, and the lost of the children's language gradually.

Key words: *Bilingualism, Bilingual, Language Maintenance, Language Attitude*

INTRODUCTION

People begin to learn a language once they are born to the world. Some people don't master just one language, but two languages or more. It is influenced by some factors, such as migrating to another places or countries, economic factor, or education factor. People with two languages or more are called bilingual or multilingual (Grosjean, 2008).

In Indonesia, thousands of Indonesian migrated to another country temporarily for some reasons, such as for working, studying, etc. Not only adult, but also some families bring their children together to migrate to another country. It is one of the reasons people shift the language from their language or native language to the majority language used in their new community (Canagarajah, 2008). In a period of time, immigrants who live in another country temporarily return to their homeland. After returning, the situation is reversed. Their first language will be turned to be the majority language, while their second language as a minority language. It is very challenging and needs some strategies for maintaining their second language to avoid the language loss.

Cummins (2000) stated that the children easily lose their language skill if the parents have a negative attitude towards their language. It shows that the parents' attitude plays a substantial role in preserving their children's language. In consequence, there are some children still use their second language frequently in their everyday life, but some of them are not. The lack of parents' awareness about maintaining a language is a big problem for the bilingual children, especially for their minority language. It will influence their children bilingualism in the future. Thus, the parents should be involved to give more attention to preserve the languages of their children as bilinguals, especially for their English language as a minority language.

By exploring the involvement of the parents about their attitude, strategies and the obstacles in raising bilingual children, the other parents were expected to be able to be more aware towards the importance of language maintenance and also the proper strategies to be applied at their home environment to avoid the language loss.

LITERATURE REVIEW

All bilinguals acquire the language with different language competence in their both languages, L1 and L2. According to Beardmore (1986), early bilingualism is the acquisition of more than one language in the pre-adolescent phase of life. Late bilingualism has been defined as the acquisition of one language before and the other language after the age of 8 years (Moradi, 2014). However, Peal & Lambert (1962) distinguished the bilinguals into two categories, balanced and dominant bilinguals. It is decided based on the relationship between the fluency and proficiencies of the receptive languages. Furthermore, Lambert (1974) views bilingualism as having two types of additive and subtractive. Additive bilingual is who can improve their L2 without losing their L1 proficiency. Lambert (1974) views bilingualism as having two types of additive and subtractive. Additive bilingual is who can improve their L2 without losing their L1 proficiency. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1981), there are three types of bilinguals that have been created, such as natural bilinguals, school bilinguals, and cultural bilinguals.

For bilinguals, to keep the language alive, they should maintain their language well. Crystal (2008) states that language maintenance refers to the extent to which people continue to use language once they are part of a community in which another language has a dominant position. For children who already master English language have some reason to keep the language alive. According to (Sneddon, 2003), as a global language, it is obvious that English plays an important role in the international interaction which is include economic relationship among countries, international business relationship, global trading, and the others. Therefore, Barron-Hauwaert (2004) provides seven strategies that could be utilized by the parents due to

the success of bilingualism, they are OPOL-ML, OPOL-mL, minority-language at home, trilingual or multilingual strategy, mixed strategy, time and Place strategy, and artificial or 'non-native' strategy.

METHOD

A qualitative case study method was employed for the present study. As for the use of case study, (Creswell, 2014) states that case studies are studies where a researcher attempts to provide an in-depth analysis of the studied case such as an event or a process which is constrained with respect to time, place and activity. The participants of this research were parents of bilingual child(ren). The researcher recruited 2 parents as the participants, purposively. First, the participants or parents selected were required to have child(ren) under the age of 18. Second, the parents and their child(ren) had been temporarily living in English speaking country not less than two years and they had returned to Indonesia. Third, the family's return period was not more than 3 years to make sure that the parents still maintain their children's English language. And the last, the parents were able to communicate both in English and Bahasa Indonesia. In an attempt to collect the data, two kinds of instruments were used namely semi-structure interview and observation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Parental Attitude towards Bilingualism

The data delivered to the parents was about the attitude towards bilingualism. There were 2 parents from two families. The data was gathered by interviewing the parents. The questions covered the parents' view about English and also their attitude towards the bilingualism itself.

a. The Importance of English

The parents were interviewed and responded by connecting the answer and their experience, as well as their knowledge and opinion regarding to language, especially English. The result of the interview about the importance of English indicated that the both participants had positive view towards the importance of the English language itself. Every parent discussed mostly about the benefit of English language. Parent 1 viewed English language has a big value for easy access to knowledge. She thought that the books and internet access nowadays were using English to get wider sources of knowledge. While parent 2 valued English language as a future prospect for their children, which was related to the job that needed English as the requirement.

Reddy et al. (2016) stated that most of books on any subjects are written in English or quickly translated in English. It is very helpful for all people to gain knowledge through

internet as well as books. By knowing English, it eases people to access the world. Other than that, Eddy (2016), English is essential for getting a good job and better salaries. Multinational business organizations and many international corporations ask for people who have a good working knowledge of English. Thus, English is very essential in every aspect of this life, especially for gaining knowledge and for future prospect.

b. The Importance of Maintaining Language

The researcher sought the information about parents' attitude towards the importance of language maintenance for their children, in this case English language as the minority language in Indonesia after getting back from English-speaking country. parent 1 had positive attitude toward Bahasa Indonesia and English language, especially for the language maintenance. She stated that both Bahasa Indonesia and English language were important. English language stood as a second language in her home, so she agreed to keep maintaining the language rather than to lose it or build it up again. The same case was also applied for Bahasa Indonesia, it was maintained to avoid the language lose. Furthermore, the parent 2 also had the positive attitude toward the language maintenance. He did not only describe about the second language maintenance, but also how his family gave efforts to maintain their first language in English-speaking country. Avoiding spending much time for relearn about English was one of the reasons he kept maintaining his children's language, which also influenced their education at school, especially for language subject. Besides that, it prevented the children from the language loss.

The findings above was supported by Carol (2006) in his book stated that in many places, many people become bilingual in a language with more official support and/or more international prestige, but still maintain their L1, usually as their main language. However, Bahrick (1984) and Clark & Jordan (1984) demonstrated that the level of proficiency may influence long-term retention of second language knowledge. Thus, in maintaining children's language, the parents really play a big responsibility as Derks (2017) stated that the parent is responsible for the amount of exposure to a minority language within the home.

c. Attitude towards Bilingualism

Every parent has their own thought towards the bilingualism. The result of the interview, it indicated that both parents had neutral attitude towards the bilingualism. Parent 1 thought that bilingualism is a means of giving respect to other people who have different language and culture and also as a way to dig in more network and knowledge from other people inside or outside the country. Besides that, language confusion was one of the disadvantages stated by the respondent. While, parent 2 stated that bilingualism also as a way to improve the brain skill in thinking fast and higher occasion to find occupations. Besides that, the tip-of-tongue

moment and also the mispronunciation error by the respondent indicated that he actually felt uneasy to be a bilingual.

2. Strategies Used by Parents in Maintaining Children's Bilingualism

The data about the strategies was gathered by an observation using field notes. The researcher observed each family in 3 days and explored the language used as well as the strategy used at home environment.

Based on the data, family 1 had 2 children, male (16 y.o) and female (12 y.o) and they spoke two languages, Bahasa Indonesia and English. Furthermore, the parents were multilingual by speaking three languages, including vernaculars, Bahasa Indonesia, and English. The family had lived in Australia for 10 years. Furthermore, family 2 had 3 children with varying ages, two females (20 y.o and 16 y.o) and a male (16 y.o). All the children spoke 2 language, Bahasa Indonesia and English, while the parents spoke more than 2 languages. It indicated that all the children were bilingual and the parents were multilingual.

Table 1. Form of Involvement for Both Families

Form of Involvement	Strategies	Language Used	
		Family 1	Family 2
a. Oral Communication	Father – Mother Interaction	Bahasa Indonesia	Bahasa Indonesia
	Father – Children Interaction	English/Bahasa Indonesia	English (dominantly)
	Mother – Children Interaction	English/Bahasa Indonesia	Bahasa Indonesia
	Child – Child Interaction	English (dominantly)	English (dominantly)
	Certain Situation	English	Bahasa Indonesia
b. Provision Facilities by Parents	International TV channel	English/Bahasa Indonesia	English/Bahasa Indonesia
	Books/Novels	English/Bahasa Indonesia	English/Bahasa Indonesia
	Whatsapp application (group family)	English	English
	Notes	-	English
c. Virtual Assistance	Youtube	English	English
	Movies	English	English
	Skype	-	English

Based on the table above, it indicated that in both families, the father and mother used Bahasa Indonesia in interacting each other. In family 1, using Bahasa Indonesia was preferred to use because they had different vernaculars. There were some reasons why vernaculars ignored by the parents. First, because the parents L1 were different so they had to speak the national language to ease them communicate each other. The second, because the parents were not really master the vernaculars due to the length of staying in the area where the

vernaculars were not used. The third, both parents and educators often fear that the use of the vernacular language, at home and at school, will have negative educational consequences for children (Odo, 1987).

Furthermore, the language used between the father/mother and children was different in both families. In family 1, the father and the mother used both Bahasa Indonesia and English to their children to maintain both languages, while in family 2 the father spoke English dominantly at home while the mother communicated using Bahasa Indonesia to their children. Switching 2 languages or mixing them was what happened in the first family of this research. In preserving both language, Bahasa Indonesia and English, the parents chose to use the mixed strategy at their home environment. Barron-Hauwaert (2004) defines mixed strategy when languages involved are mixed together when used in daily communication. Mixed language use is widely used around the world as simply the most effective way of communicating (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004). The second family used another strategy in maintaining their children's bilingualism. The strategy used was called OPOL-ML. That was a strategy where the parents use the majority-language or country between themselves but use different language to the children (Barron-Hauwaert, 2004). OPOL strategy mostly used by the parents who have different native language and speak their native language to their children, but it also work for non-native parents who are fluent enough in another language and want to pass the language to their children (Lee, 2007).

The interesting finding from the research was also about the language used by the member of the respondents in different emotion, such as anger or in a hurry. In the first family, the children tended to use English in arguing or in a rush, while the second family tended to use Bahasa Indonesia in anger or in a hurry. The first family broke the myth about the use of first language in carrying the emotions. Grosjean (2010) proposes it is a myth that "bilingual express their emotions in their first language". Besides that, Pavlenko (2007) argued that people express their emotions better in their dominant language even though it may not be their first acquired language. In family 2, the father used Bahasa Indonesia when he got angry although he used English mostly everyday and also his child used Bahasa Indonesia when she was in a hurry. According to Pavlenko (2007) some bilinguals find their L1 more emotional, even though they have reached higher proficiency in some other language.

Furthermore, the parents also provided some facilities to help the children maintain their language, such as international TV channel, books and novels, whatsapp group chatting, and notes. Based on the data, it showed that both families provided international TV channel to the children to watch. Many advice literatures gave suggestion to use television, radio, and others

to keep the language for bilinguals, but Kuhl, Tsao, & Liu, 2003 have found that live interaction is more effective than exposure to recorded sound. book and novels were also offered by the parents in both families. Books provided were Indonesian book and English book. It also helped the children to keep seeing the words in both languages and used to the languages. Moreover, the application called Whatsapp was the famous used among the society nowadays. Parents in both families created the family group using Whatsapp and used English as a dominant language there. The last was by using notes to preserve the language. It was applied in the second family only. The notes was written in English and stuck in particular places at home. These notes could be seen by the children more often. Practicing all the aspects of the language was the only way in preserving language. Practice also consists of covert activity such as listening to the radio, watching television and reading' (Seliger, 1977).

Another supporting aspect that helped the parents in maintaining their children's language was the use of internet access. By virtual assistance, it diminished the parents' task to give more effort to help the children keeping the language. All parents provided the internet access at home to support their language. Ali & Mohideen (2008) suggested that minority language communities should develop strong internet medium as a way of sustaining their language. Without seeing the negative effect of the internet itself, Crystal (2002) advocates the use of technology to make the languages continually visible. Youtube, streaming movies, and Skype were used by the children in this research unconsciously to maintain their language, especially English language.

3. Challenges in Raising Bilingual Children

All the participants faced some obstacles in raising bilingual children. The challenges could come from many sources besides their home environment. It could not be denied that the obstacles would influence the children's language, especially for their minority language.

a. Lacking of Confidence

Lacking confidence was one of the obstacles encountered by the parent in maintaining her children's language, especially for the family 1. Based on the interview, parent 1 stated that her children felt ashamed to use English other than their home environment. In front of their friends, they chose not to use English, although the parents used English to converse with them, but they responded in Bahasa Indonesia.

Feeling ashamed or afraid usually happen to the children who understand two languages or more. The environments where the children raise force them to speak the majority language. Speaking another language makes them feeling different to others. They tend to feel to be a stranger if they use a language where not all people can understand.

b. Lacking of Vocabulary

Standard language is a language used in every school in every region in Indonesia. The use of standard Bahasa Indonesia became one of the challenges for the children who had returned from other countries, and there was no exception for all my respondents. Both parents expressed the challenge for the children when entering school in Indonesia. Standard Bahasa Indonesia used for the books as the source of the lesson, but it gave confusion for the children who were not adjust o the standard language itself. The parents took action to help their children to understand the lesson, so the children not feeling strange anymore with some words. All facilitates and media at school used Bahasa Indonesia and the children were not adjusted to it. They had to struggle again to learn their heritage language. It also need time to mingle to the new situation.

c. Losing Language Gradually

Losing a language gradually could not be avoided by all people after returning back to their homeland. For the parent 2, one of the reason was because the environment, such as school where the children spending their day mostly. The children spend most of the day at school, so it would be easier for them to avoid using the minority language. It becomes another challenge for the parents in maintaining their children language. Without practicing the language continuously, it would be easier for the children to lose the language. It should be avoided by the parents so that it would not happen to the children. Moreover, the skill of the children should also be preserved. While for the parent 1, the writing ability of her second child reduced. When she was still in Australia, the daughter was good at writing, but because of the teacher's way in teaching English was different, then the writing ability diminished. She stated that the current teacher didn't teach the children the writing method, and it became an obstacle for the parents to keep their children's skill. So, it is another challenge that needs more parents' attention and finds the way to solve this. It will take more efforts for the parents in maintaining the language but the children will get the result of the preserving their language in the future.

CONCLUSION

This present study has led us to conclude that the parents of bilingual children shows positive attitude in maintaining English but expresses neutral attitude towards the bilingualism due to the disadvantages that may occur in bilinguals. By having the good attitude towards bilingualism, the strategies are also applied by the parents at home to preserve their children's language. There are three form of involvement by parents, they are oral communication (the interaction among the family members, which family 1 uses mixed strategy and family 2 uses OPOL-ML strategy based on the theory of Barron-Hauwaert), provision of facilities by

parents (international TV channel, book/novel, whatsapp family group, and notes), and virtual assistance (Youtube, streaming movies, skype). However, there are some obstacles faced by the parents in raising bilingual children, such as the lack of confidence, lack of vocabulary, and lose the minority language gradually.

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