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Bilingual Communicative Competence Development of the Students in Indonesian Higher Education

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Abstract

This research examines the lecturers' perceptions on the development of the students' bilingual communication in Indonesian Higher Education context. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches undertaken in collecting data on the differences in the way lecturers perceive students' bilingual communicative competence development and the extent to which

the approaches they adopt in relation to the student's bilingual communicative competence development impact on their student's responses to their classroom. Research result demonstrates that the Indonesian higher education students in the process of becoming bilingual demonstrate some marked individual differences toward their bilingual communicative competence development in Indonesian Higher Education context. These differences appear to relate to the types of bilingual portions, experience and teaching models the students get in the classroom and these are impacted on by the attitudes towards the use of bilingual in academic setting. In conclusion, the more creative and involved the lecturers were in the process of supporting students' bilingual communicative competence development and providing opportunities for bilingual engagement and learning, the better the immediate results in terms of the student's outcomes both in L1 (Indonesian) and L2 (English) bilingual.

Keywords: Bilingual communication, development, higher education

Introduction

Bilingualism gets to be indistinguishable from humans' presence in the globalisation era. Baker (2011b:66) explains that the bilingual population of the world is developing as internationalism is spreading out in trade and travel, communications and mass media, immigration and interlinked worldwide economy. Additionally, bilingualism occurs because of the interaction of diverse linguistic groups; the ease of the political and financial conditions in many countries; and the fast changes of technology and telecommunication (Javier, 2007:1). Equally important, most bilinguals understand English since it is a global language, which can function as an official language or as a priority in a foreign-language teaching in many countries (Crystal, 2003:4-5).

The development of bilingualism is not only due to the cultural and linguistic diversity within the countries, but moreover the growing number of the global versatlity of the people to be bilinguals at all levels of society to alter the global setting. The improvement of bilingualism taking English language as one of the target languages, particularly English has become the most concern of extending English speaking countries counting Indonesia on the grounds that English serves as the global language which is broadly utilized as a means of communication practices both spoken and written in different areas such as technology, education, commerce, economy, tourism, social issues, and the like. This statement is supported by Bialystock et al.

(2009:89) who state that it is increasingly clear that the improvement of bilingualism is the rule and not the exception.

The development of bilingualism along with English as one of the targeted languages is rationalized by the nature of English which serves as a main language that is dominantly used as a tool to document and communicate the development of the issues of information and technology, commerce, tourism, and education in particular, which drive people in the world to be eager in mastering English in order that they could be actively involved in the global context competition. This triggers every country in the world including Indonesia to be seriously concerned about the development of the bilingualism for its citizens in order that Indonesian people are able to cope with global communication distractions due to their inadequate English language proficiency which directly or indirectly retards the attainment of the development of the issues of information and technology, commerce, tourism, and education which grow unexpectedly.

The development of English-Indonesian bilinguals also relies on the theory that it confers some convincing benefits for bilinguals to deal with the development of the academic skills and concepts in both languages (Cummins, 1993, 2000, 2009). This means that the English-Indonesian bilinguals are believed to perform better academic skills than monolinguals on the grounds they are acquainted with the systemic and schematic knowledge of the two languages which are used to deal with any tasks that they encounter in the academic contexts (Margana, 2013). In support of this, Kang (2008) strongly urges that using bilingual may assist students in decreasing affective barriers and growing their confidence in their ability to successfully comprehend the target language (Kang, 2008).

In reference to the above issue, developing English-Indonesian bilinguals in Indonesia is of great importance for generating qualified and competitive Indonesian citizens who are prevalent in terms of dealing with the global communication practices, having intercultural awareness, and holding global viewpoints as the properties to engage in the global setting. Also, being English-Indonesian bilinguals is believed to strongly mind the link of symbols, concepts, and referents across languages on the grounds that the concepts and the realization of the mental lexicons of the two languages are assumed to be stored in separated folders of mind on the part of the bilinguals (Weinreich in de Bot et al., 2005:43) so that they could succeed in the meaning making of English texts and in the English language attainment (Margana, 2013). In shorts, the use of source language gives a beneficial scaffolding that assists students in target language classroom activities (Pan and Pan, 2010).

Previous researchers had been conducted the research on bilingualism in several areas. For example, Mantasiah, Yusri & Jufri (2019) studied the role of bilingualism; Qi and Biase (2019) investigated the influence of environmental language in bilingual development; Basri, Abduh & Hudriati (2019) focused on the individual differences among Indonesian bilingual students; Yeh (2018) explored the differences brought by the L1 and L2 in writing English; and Basri, Garner & Akil (2018) concerned on the parental attitudes and approaches to support their children L1 and L2 literacy practices and bilingualism. Despite these previous studies, there is still limited research that focuses on the development of higher education students' bilingual communication. Therefore, this study aims at filling this gap. With regard to it, this study attempts to explore the framework of bilingual communication development of higher education students. In other words, this paper specifies on exploring the lecturers' perceptions on students' bilingual communication development and providing information about the students' development of bilingual communication over one semester in Indonesian higher education context.

Literature Review

Types of bilingualism

Scholars classify the types of bilingualism differently as each scholar utilizes different perspectives driving to different categories of bilingualism. For example, Weinreich in Romaine (1995:78-79) recognizes bilingualism into three different types, namely compound bilingualism (Type A) coordinate bilingualism (Type B), and sub-coordinate bilingualism (Type C). The distinction of those types depends on how bilinguals learn language.

Type A (compound bilingualism) is characterized as an individual who learns the two languages in the same context and activates them concurrently leading to an intertwined representation of the languages in his brain. This type is consisted of one unit of concept with two units of sound images (one for each language). Such bilingual speakers conceptualize one inserted set of meanings from the two languages, but have the capability of expressing themselves with the sound images (words) from both languages.

Type B (coordinate bilingualism) is characterized as an individual who learns languages in different environments which lead him/her to the lexical items of the two languages in different ways with each word holding its own particular meaning. In other words, the bilingual develops and maintains the different conceptual systems of the two languages which have been learned. It is consisted of separate signs (images of sounds and units of meanings) for each

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language. Type B bilingual speakers have two sets of units of concepts in their mind and two sets of corresponding sound images or words (one for each language).

Type C (sub-ordinate bilingualism) is concerned with the dominance of their first language to set up the meanings of the lexical items of the target language. It is consisted of the unit of the concept of the first language which corresponds with the sound image in the first language and it has an equivalent unit of an expression in the target language. The subordinate bilingual comprises only one set of units of concept in their meaning and two sets of sound images as it happens in the compound bilingual (Paradis, 1997, 2010).

In reference to the three types of bilingualism, Ervin and Osgood in Romaine (1995:79-80) propose two types of bilingualism, namely a compound and coordinate bilingualism as the sub-coordinate and coordinate bilingualism can be blended into one (coordinate bilingualism). This relies on the theory that a lexical item of the target language is typically associated with a meaning in her/his first language, resulting in the link between the first language and target language. In support of this, Hamers and Blanc (2000, 27-28) also categorize bilingualism into two, namely compound and coordinate bilingualism. This distinction is based on how language and thought are organized in the brain of bilinguals (see Goh and Silver, 2007: 52). Figure 1 presents a model of lexico-semantics of English-Indonesian bilinguals as the analogy of the theory proposed by Hamers and Blanc (2000) and Ervin and Osgood in Goh and Silver (2007:52) to clearly recognize between compound and coordinate bilingualism.
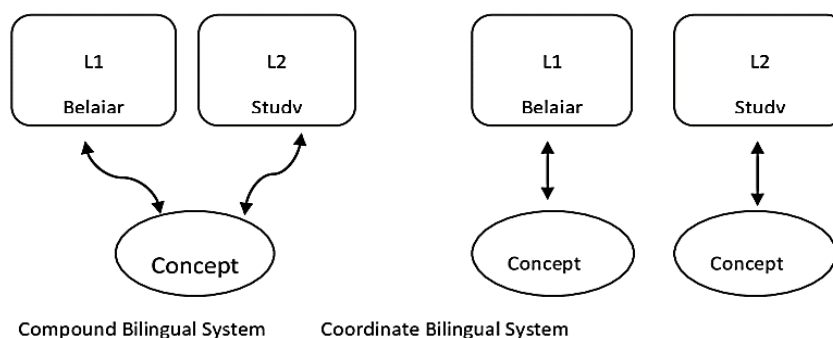
Figure 1. Compound and Coordinate Bilingual Systems proposed by Hamers and Blanc (2000) and Ervin and Osgood in Goh and Silver (2007:52)

The distinction of the types of bilingualism is also asserted by Lambert and Cummis in Mouw and Xie (2011). He separates bilingualism into two types, namely additive and subtractive. This division is based on the context of how the two languages are acquired. Additive bilingualism refers to learning the target language within the social context that accommodates second language learners to maintain the first language. This suggests that both languages are enacted within the process of establishing bilingualism.

Subtractive bilingualism is characterized as the way of learning the target language by substituting the first language. In this context, the target language is exclusively used in any communication practices to form advance bilinguals. Baker (2006) claims that the first type is good for constructing positive self-concept establishing greater cognitive flexibility, and holding better abstract thinking skills because the bilinguals are engaged in two codes. On the other hand, the second type of bilingualism may cause loss of assimilation across culture and local culture awareness which is likely potential to decrease the pride of their first language.

1. Threshold hypothesis and the development of bilingualism

Surface and cognitive linguistic competence (together with semilingualism and common underlying proficiency) play a critical part in Cummins' threshold hypothesis (Cummins, 1976, 1979b), which endeavors to explain the possible effects of early bilingualism. According to Cummins, bilingual competence is an intermediary variable between a bilingual situation and the quality of its effects on psychological development and on cognitive development in particular. He identified two threshold levels of bilingual competence, the lower and the higher level. As Cummins (1976) wrote, attainment beyond the lower threshold "would be sufficient to avoid retardation, but the attainment of a second, higher level of bilingual competence might be necessary to lead to accelerated cognitive growth" (p. 24). His ideas can be represented graphically as in Figure 2, like floors in a house.

In other words, Cummins holds that in an additive bilingual situation where the development of both languages is sufficiently motivated and leads to high competence in both, positive effects of bilingualism can be expected. Since a bilingual's relationship with two cultures and ethnic groups can be as intense as the monolingual's relationship with only one, certain cognitive potentialities will be realized more completely than in an exclusively monolingual setting. In dominant bilingualism, in which one language is used most frequently and at native level, bilingualism is not expected to substantially affect intellectual development. In a subtractive situation, in which bilingualism is unwelcome, unfavorable conditions for psychological development and functioning accumulate (cognitive linguistic competence is not achieved in either of the languages) and the effects of the environment that manifest through language diminish. In the event that the lower threshold of bilingual competence can be outperformed, these negative effects vanish; upon reaching the upper threshold, bilingual experience starts to stimulate intellectual development.

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Levels of bilingual competence	Types of bilingual situation (and individual bilingualism)	Cognitive effects	
	Additive bilingualism (High levels in both languages)	positive	
			Higher threshold level of
	Dominant bilingualism (Native-like level in one of the languages)	neither negative nor positive	bilingual competence
			Lower threshold level of
	Subtractive bilingualism (Low level in both languages)	negative	bilingual competence

H P L

H-high

P-partial

L-low

Figure 2. Threshold hypothesis in bilingualism

Method

Research Design and Procedures

Two research procedures employed in this research: online survey and interview. The first procedure contains several questions of the online survey sent via Google form in order to gather information from the participants of the study. The other procedure contains interview guidelines in the form of open-ended questions, which are related to the survey questions, to strengthen the characteristic of research subject. These procedures were made by the researcher and analyzed separately through descriptive and thematic approach. The thematic analysis is used to follow up the theme occurred in the online survey.

Participants

The participants in this research consisted of Indonesian EFL lecturers. All lecturers were working full time at a private higher education. The participants are chosen regarding their experiences in assisting students' bilingual communication. These participants had

experiences in teaching English for non English major. As shown in figure 3, the lecturers differed in level of education, teaching experience, and field of teaching.
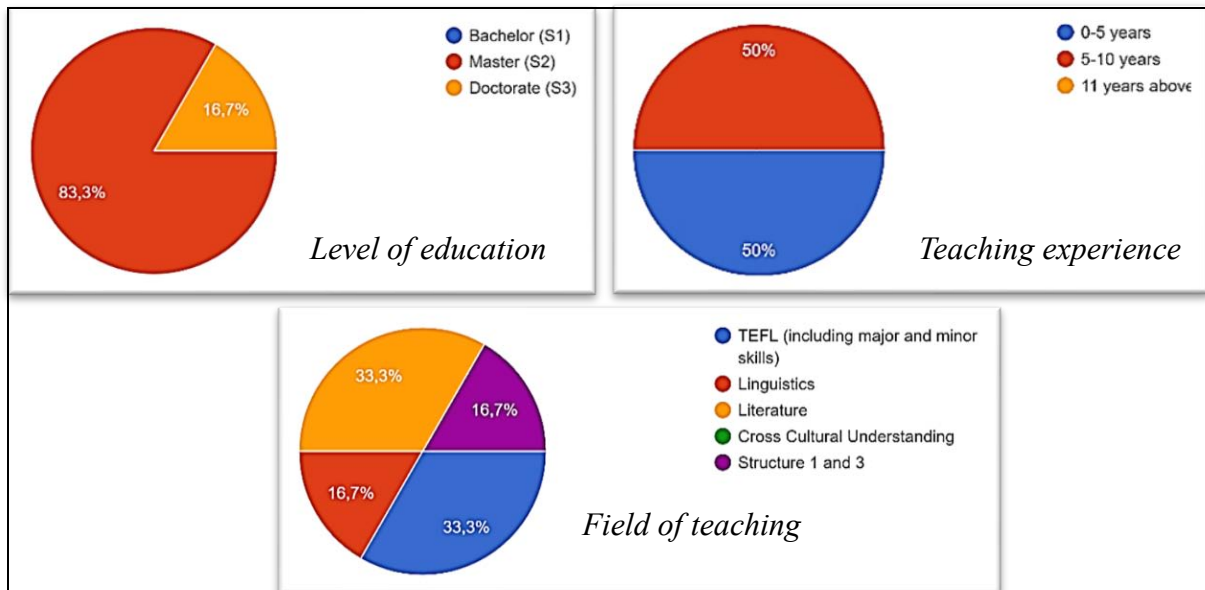
Figure 3. Participants' level of education, teaching experience, and field of teaching

Results

Lecturers bilingual instruction

This section provides the descriptive statistics of the lecturers' use of bilingual instruction in delivering EFL class to their students. Figure 4 shows that 66.7% used English 50% and Indonesian 50% while giving instruction. Only 33.3% performed 75% English and 25% Indonesian and none even practiced 75% Indonesian and 25% English. These results indicated that majority lecturers presented target language (TL) and source language (SL) equally in delivering class, whereas only few presented dominant target language (TL) and less source language (SL). The statistic also reveals that none of the lecturers practiced dominant SL and less TL.

Figure 4. Lecturers' bilingual instruction

Students' bilingual communication development

In terms of the development of students' bilingual communication, the statistic in figure 5 shows that 50% communicated using 25% English and 75% Indonesian; 33.3% communicated using 50% English and Indonesian; and 16.7% communicated using 75% English and 25 % Indonesian. These results indicate that majority students in the classroom funct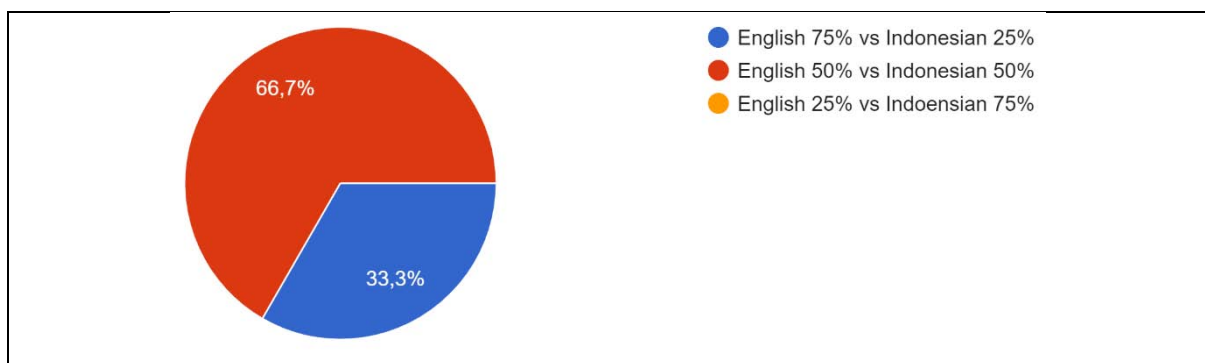ioned less target language than source language in learning interaction, followed by others who functioned these languages equally, and only few who functioned dominant target language.
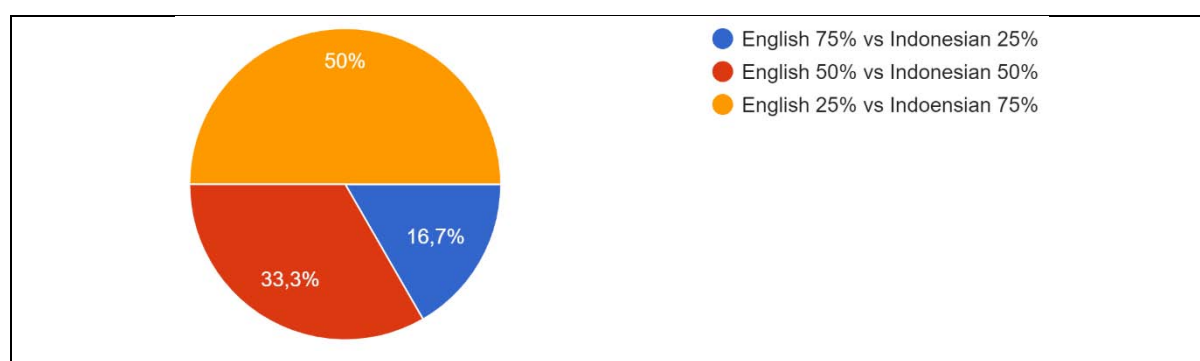

Figure 5. Students' bilingual communication

In table 1, the data shows that at the beginning of the semester, there are 66.7% students who were lack in English but fluent in Indonesian and 33.3% students who were lack in both languages. This data results two types of bilingual situation: dominant and subtractive bilingualism. Students who were in dominant situation practiced native-like level in one of the languages which resulting neither positive nor negative cognitive effect, whereas those who were in subtractive situation practiced low level in both languages which resulting negative cognitive effect. This result represents lower threshold level of bilingual communicative competence. In the other hand, the data shows that at the end of the semester, half of students functioned the target language as same as the source language regarding their fluency while the rest of the students were still lack of the target language. This data also results two types of bilingual situation: additive and dominant bilingualism, but eliminate subtractive bilingualism. Half students became practicing higher level in both languages which resulting positive cognitive effect, the others achieved native-like level in one of the languages which resulting neither positive nor negative cognitive effect, and no more students who were in subtractive situation. This result represents higher threshold level of bilingual communicative competence These results prove that the students' bilingual communication in one academic semester developed from subtractive and dominant situation to dominant and additive situation.

Table 1. The use of students' bilingual communication at beginning and end of semester

Bilingual characteristics	The beginning of semester		The end of semester	
	%	Threshold Hypothesis	%	Threshold Hypothesis
Fluent in L1 (Indonesian) and L2 (English)	0	High	50	High
Fluent in L1 (Indonesian), lack in L2 (English)	66.7	Higher	50	Higher
Lack in L1 (Indonesian), lack in L2 (English)	0	Lower	0	Lower
Lack of both L1 and L2	33.3	Low	0	Low

The application and benefit of using bilingual instruction for lecturers

Based on participants' responses, it is found that using bilingualism in EFL classroom seemed very useful. Lecturers interestingly and extensively use bilingual instruction in their teaching approach. Table 2 indicates the benefit of using bilingual instruction for lecturers. Lecturers find that using bilingual helps them to clarify lesson, transfer the meaning by translating, check students' comprehension, create relaxed classroom atmosphere, explain complex grammar, manage class effectively and save class time. Moreover, the lecturers find that using bilingual also good at correcting error and creating humor.

Table 2. Benefits of bilingual instruction for lecturers

Clarification of lesson	66.7%
Explaining complex grammar points	33.3%
Understanding the meaning by translating sentences	50%
Checking comprehension	50%
Saving class time	33.3%
Error correction	16.7%
Humor	16.7%
Relaxed classroom atmosphere	50%
Effective class management	33.3%

The application and benefit of using bilingual communication for students

When it comes to the benefit of using bilingual communication for students, table 3 shows that the students deliver bilingual communication to help them having more ideas and clear thinking. In addition, using bilingual encourage them to speak, build their self-confidence, have a better self-expression in interaction, eliminate errors, complete the task easier, and assist in defining unknown words more directly and successfully. It also functions to foster and maintain of interest in the task and also make difficult task more manageable.

Table 3. Benefits of bilingual communication for students

Encourage to speak in English	33.3%
Build self confidence	33.3%
Better self-expressions in interaction	33.3%
Eliminate errors	33.3%
Foster and maintain of interest in the task	16.7%
Make difficult tasks more manageable	16.7%
Complete the task easier	33.3%
Have more ides and clear thinking	50%
Assist in defining unknown words more directly and successfully	33.3%

Kinds of teaching element used in delivering bilingual instruction

In this study, the participants have implemented bilingual instruction in their teaching and learning process in a different stage. The detail of the stage of teaching can be seen in figure 6 below.
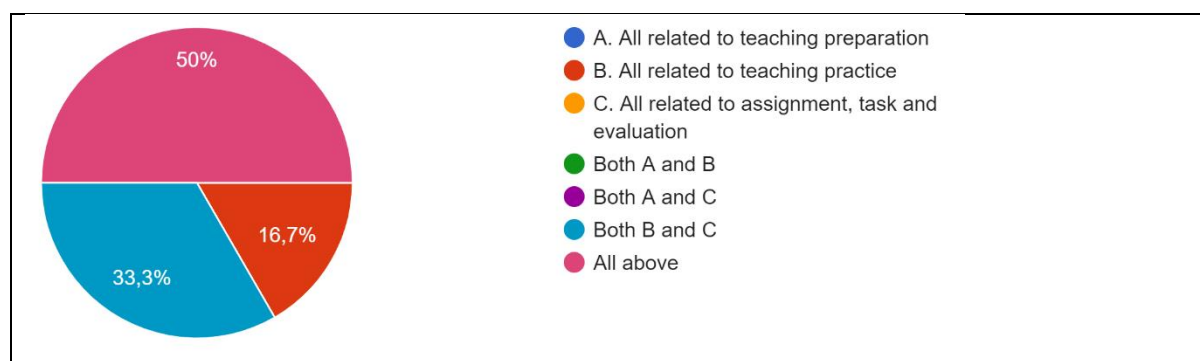

Figure 6. Stages of teaching in using bilingual communication

The data in figure 6 indicates that each lecturer used bilingual in three different stages: class orientation, presentation, and production. The statistic shows that most lecturers delivered bilingual specifically in class orientation. The class orientation includes explanation of course syllabi, agreement of class requirement, and preparation of teaching and learning model. On the other hand, some lecturers delivered bilingual in presentation stage of their teaching and learning process. This stage includes explanation of the material, lecturing model, and session of question and answer. The rest of the lecturers performed bilingual in the production stage. The production stage contains practice of task, evaluation, and announcement of assignment.

The challenges of using bilingual communication

Even though lecturers perceived that bilingual brings positive impact on students' mastery subject, there are still challenges that occur in implementing and performing bilingual during teaching and learning process. Table 3 indicates that majority of the participants had to deal with students' lack of language skill. The statistic shows that half of lecturers (50%) found that the obstacle of bilingualism in the classroom related to students' ability. Another obstacle faced by lecturers is the absence of bilingual community. 33.3% lecturers believe that availability of bilingual community is urgent for the optimization of bilingualism. The data also revealed that lack of curriculum support and limited access could cause the challenges of bilingual communication in EFL setting.

Table 4. Challenges of using bilingual communication in EFL setting

Lack of students' language skill	50%
Have no bilingual community	33.3%
Lack of curriculum support	16.7%
Limited access to explore bilingual communication	16.7%

Discussion

Six issues are considered in relation to the development of students' bilingual communication. First, the lecturers commonly used equal portions of bilingual communication in teaching EFL students. In line with this, Pan and Pan (2010) stated that the use of source language provides a beneficial scaffolding that assists students in target language classroom activities. Second, the development of students' bilingual communication in one academic semester lead from subtractive and dominant situation (lower threshold) to dominant and

additive attainment (higher threshold). Cummins (1979) stated that attainment beyond the lower threshold would be sufficient to avoid retardation, but the attainment of a second, higher level of bilingual competence might be necessary to lead to accelerated cognitive growth. Third, the benefits of using bilingual for lecturers covers clarification of lesson, translation of meaning, comprehension check, relaxed classroom atmosphere, complexity of grammar concept, effective class management, efficient class time, correction of error, and humor. Van Lier (1995) pointed out that using bilingual provides an enhanced form of input that is more salient for students, more easily processed, and consequently promotes their learning. Forth, using bilingual for students helps them to create more ideas, think clearly, speak more, build self-confidence, have a better self-expression in interaction, eliminate errors, complete the task easier, assist in defining unknown words more directly and successfully, foster and maintain of interest in the task, and make difficult task more manageable. The use of bilingual may assist students in reducing affective barriers and increasing their confidence in their ability to successfully comprehend the target language (Kang, 2008). Fifth, each lecturer used different teaching approach in practicing bilingual in EFL classroom. Last, some obstacles that may challenge the implementation and performance of bilingual during teaching and learning process are lack of language skill of students, absence of bilingual community, lack of curriculum support and limited access of bilingual communication setting.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that the Indonesian higher education students in the process of becoming bilingual demonstrate some marked individual differences toward their bilingual communicative development. These differences appear to relate to the types of portions in performing both L1 (Indonesian) and L2 (English) languages in EFL setting, experience of class activities in resulting beneficial development of students' bilingual communication, and support of the teaching models used by the lecturers in promoting bilingual to the students. In conclusion, the more creative and involved the lecturers were in the process of supporting bilingual communicative development and providing opportunities for bilingual engagement and learning are impacted on the attitudes towards the use of bilingual for which resulting the better immediate progress in terms of the student's outcomes both in L1 and L2 bilingual at Indonesian higher education context.

Pedagogical Implication

      Present study shows that the use of bilingualism has an important role in EFL teaching and learning. The use of bilingual instruction has been employed as a teaching approach in EFL classroom. The lecturers who participated in the present research study indicated that the use of L1 is a facility to learn a foreign language. Without the aid of L1, learners would be left unguided at an early stage of their learning experience. This study also reveals that in EFL classroom, use of bilingualism has played only a supportive role hence the medium of instruction remains English only. Moreover, the use of bilingualism does not decrease the motivation level of students' learning English. Use of bilingualism in EFL classes does not reduce students' exposure and capacity to communicate well in target language rather it substantiates English language learning and it is an immense source of motivation for the EFL learners. It has no adverse impact on learning as long as it is used with proper control.

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