



Exploring Self-Learning Strategies for Bilingual Proficiency Among EFL Students at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik: Insights into Frequency and Effectiveness

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Abstract

This study investigates the self-learning strategies employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik to acquire proficiency in both English and Indonesian, thereby becoming bilingual. The research aims to explore the frequency and effectiveness of these strategies in facilitating language acquisition among foreign students in Indonesia. Through qualitative analysis, the study examines the utilization of self-learning strategies such as group work, content-based language instruction, maintaining positive relationships with peers, and setting clear expectations about language usage. Data collected from four participants reveal variations in the coverage and discussion of these strategies, highlighting individual differences in learning preferences and experiences. Findings indicate that group work emerges as a prominent strategy for promoting linguistic cross-pollination, with participants recognizing its benefits in facilitating language practice and interaction. Content-based language instruction also shows promise in enhancing language learning experiences, though participants differ in their preferences for integrating language learning with subject-specific content. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of maintaining positive relationships with peers and establishing clear expectations about language usage for effective language learning. Fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment is identified as crucial for promoting collaboration and peer interaction, while providing students with clear guidance on language usage helps create a structured learning environment conducive to language proficiency and fluency. Overall, this research contributes valuable insights into the self-learning strategies employed by bilingual foreign students, emphasizing the significance of considering these strategies in language education settings. The findings provide implications for educators and policymakers in designing more effective language education programs tailored to the diverse needs of bilingual learners. Future research could explore additional factors influencing language acquisition and evaluate the effectiveness of different instructional approaches in promoting language learning outcomes.

Keywords: *self-learning strategies, bilingual, content-based language instruction.*



INTRODUCTION

Foreign students at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik in Indonesia face the challenge of learning two essential languages for daily life: English and Indonesian. While some possess basic English skills, communication can still be a struggle due to the diverse linguistic environment. The university environment requires proficiency in Indonesian, yet English is also used for both academic and practical purposes.

In this context, understanding the strategies used by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students to master these two languages becomes an essential aspect of their journey as foreign learners in Indonesia. Hasan(2019), Sanjaya(2021)

Self-learning, also known as self-directed learning, is the ability to take responsibility for one's learning. It involves setting learning goals driven by individual needs, demonstrating the capacity to acquire knowledge independently without relying on external reinforcement. Self-learners can diagnose their learning needs, formulate objectives, identify resources, choose effective learning strategies, and evaluate their progress (Bacque(2019); Chomchaiya et al.,(2021); Candy, 1991). This intrinsic desire for knowledge is essential for successful self-learning.

Knowles' learning theory emphasizes the self-initiated role of learners and posits that self-learners outperform those who passively await knowledge transfer from instructors. It aligns with natural learning processes, where individuals progressively become independent, capable of self-guidance, and responsible for initiating their learning Wilcox,(1996). A strategy is an uncertain plan aimed at achieving one or more goals. For language learners, employing strategies can significantly enhance language proficiency and skills. Strategies are associated with language achievement and skill development. Language learning strategies are techniques employed by learners to maximize language learning outcomes. These include direct strategies that facilitate learning (e.g., memory, cognitive, and compensatory strategies) and indirect strategies used to manage and control the learning process (e.g., metacognitive, affective, and social strategies).

Learning is a process of change in human behavior that leads to increased skills, knowledge, attitudes, habits, understanding, and other abilities. It



encompasses significant changes in an individual's personality and behavior as a result of training and experiences (Anni, James Patrick Chaplin, Hintzman, Douglas L). (Omon & Radif, (2015), Womack, (2017))

Strategies to promote linguistic cross-pollination in bilingual language classrooms include using group work strategically, adopting a content-based language instruction approach, maintaining positive relationships with students, and setting clear expectations about when to use each language. (Khudair,(2018), Oktaviani,(2018), Zakaria et al., (2019), Wijirahayu & Dorand, (2018), Suliman et al.,(2017), Khairunnisa & Ibrahim,(2018), Hashim & Yunus,(2019), Wadovski & Almeida, (2021), MCKEOWN,(2019), De-Souza, (2022))

Foreign students are individuals admitted to a country for the specific purpose of pursuing education in an accredited institution of that country, despite not holding citizenship there. This term applies to students who do not have citizenship in the country where they are studying. Inconsistent reporting may arise due to varying policies on immigrant naturalization and identifying non-resident foreign students. (Saddhono,(2018), Marian,(2021), Şule Kavak PhD,(2020), Sebastian-Galles & Santolin, (2020), Grosjean,(2021), Birdsong,(2018))

This paper aims to explore the self-learning strategies employed by these students in acquiring proficiency in both languages efficiently and enjoyably. The ability to communicate effectively in English and Indonesian is not only practical but also crucial for personal and academic success in Indonesia, providing access to education and cultural experiences while fostering cross-cultural understanding. Wong & Benson,(2019), Saddhono,(2018)

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the most frequent self-learning strategies used by bilingual foreign students at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik. The qualitative approach allows for a deep exploration of the experiences and perspectives of participants in their language learning journey. By using interviews as the primary data collection method, the



researcher aims to gather rich, detailed insights into the self-learning strategies employed by the participants. Min Tang,(2022), Alhaison,(2012)

Participants and Setting

The participants in this study consist of four English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students enrolled at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik. The study focuses on this specific group to gain a comprehensive understanding of their experiences with self-learning strategies in a bilingual environment.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study involves conducting interviews with the participants. The interviews serve as a primary instrument for gathering in-depth information about the participants' self-learning strategies. The researcher formulates questions designed to elicit detailed responses about the frequency and effectiveness of various self-learning strategies used by the participants in their bilingual language learning journey.

The interviews are conducted in a one-on-one setting to encourage open and honest communication between the researcher and participants. All interviews are recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy in capturing the participants' perspectives. The transcripts are then transferred into narrative form using Microsoft Word for subsequent analysis.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study employs a qualitative content analysis approach. Content analysis is a systematic method used to identify recurring themes, patterns, and frequencies within textual data. In this specific analysis, the data source consists of the responses provided by the research subjects during the interviews.

The researcher begins the analysis process by transcribing and narrating the interview data. This involves organizing the data into meaningful units and identifying common themes and patterns related to self-learning strategies. By



systematically analyzing the data, the researcher aims to gain insights into the most frequent self-learning strategies employed by the participants and their perceived effectiveness in a bilingual learning environment.

FINDING

The investigation delved into the frequency of self-learning strategies aimed at fostering linguistic cross-pollination among bilingual foreign students enrolled at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik. Examination of the data unveiled noticeable disparities in both the coverage and discussion of these strategies among the participants.

Participant 1, when discussing the strategic utilization of group work, stated, "I find group work incredibly beneficial for language learning. It allows us to practice speaking and listening skills in a supportive environment." This participant exhibited a high level of engagement and offered comprehensive insights into the benefits and obstacles of group work in language acquisition.

Participant 2 contributed, "I've found group work to be helpful, especially when we're tasked with discussing complex topics in both English and Indonesian. It helps reinforce vocabulary and grammar in a practical setting." Participant 2 demonstrated a moderate level of engagement with this strategy.

Participant 3 added, "Group work is useful, but I prefer more individualized study methods. However, I do see the value in practicing with peers." This participant, like Participant 2, demonstrated a moderate level of engagement with discussions on group work.

In contrast, Participant 4 expressed, "I haven't had much experience with group work in my language classes. I mostly study independently." This participant exhibited limited exposure and discourse regarding group work, resulting in a relatively low frequency of related content.

Regarding the adoption of a content-based language instruction approach, Participant 2 shared, "Many of my classes integrate language learning with subject-specific content. It's challenging but helps me learn the language in context." Participant 2 showcased a moderate level of involvement with this strategy.



Participant 3 contributed, "I appreciate when our language classes incorporate topics related to our majors. It makes learning the language more relevant and interesting." This participant also demonstrated a moderate level of engagement with discussions on content-based language instruction.

Participant 1 reflected, "My language classes mostly focus on language skills rather than specific content. It would be helpful to have more integration with my other courses." This participant, along with Participant 4, displayed lower frequencies in their dialogue concerning content-based language instruction.

In terms of maintaining positive relationships with all students, Participant 1 expressed, "I enjoy studying with my classmates. We support each other and often practice speaking together outside of class." This participant offered insights indicating a medium level of engagement on this topic.

Participant 2 shared, "I get along well with my classmates, but I mostly focus on my studies during class time." This participant, like Participant 1, contributed content reflecting a medium level of engagement with discussions on maintaining positive relationships.

Participant 4 mentioned, "I'm friendly with my classmates, but I mostly keep to myself during class." This participant exhibited a lower frequency of content regarding positive relationships with peers.

In contrast, Participant 3 contributed relatively brief responses, stating, "I have good relationships with my classmates, but we mostly interact during group projects." This participant's contributions resulted in a lower frequency of content on this particular topic.

Concerning the establishment of clear expectations about when to use each language, Participant 1 emphasized, "Our instructors always clarify when we should use English or Indonesian in different contexts. It helps us practice both languages effectively." This participant provided a high frequency of detailed content.

Participant 2 mentioned, "Sometimes it's unclear when we should use each language, but I try to follow the lead of my instructors and classmates." This



participant, along with Participant 3 and Participant 4, contributed content of medium frequency, with varying levels of detail evident in their responses.

The study underscores the importance of recognizing individual differences and preferences in the adoption of self-learning strategies among bilingual foreign students. The findings reveal variations in the engagement and utilization of these strategies, highlighting the need for tailored approaches in language education programs.

Group work emerged as a valuable strategy for promoting linguistic cross-pollination, with participants expressing varying degrees of involvement and appreciation for its benefits. Content-based language instruction also showed promise in enhancing language learning experiences, although participants differed in their preferences for integrating language learning with subject-specific content.

Maintaining positive relationships with peers was identified as an area for potential improvement, with some participants demonstrating limited engagement in discussions on this topic. Clear expectations about language usage proved to be essential for effective language learning, emphasizing the importance of establishing guidelines for language use in bilingual environments.

Overall, the study contributes valuable insights into the self-learning strategies employed by bilingual foreign students and underscores the significance of considering these strategies in language education settings. Future research could explore additional factors influencing language acquisition and evaluate the effectiveness of different instructional approaches in promoting linguistic proficiency and cultural competence among students.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study shed light on the diverse utilization of self-learning strategies among bilingual foreign students at the University of Muhammadiyah Gresik and offer insights into the implications for language education programs.

Group work emerged as a prominent strategy for promoting linguistic cross-pollination, with participants expressing varying degrees of engagement and



appreciation for its benefits. The high frequency of discussion among some participants underscores the effectiveness of collaborative learning activities in facilitating language acquisition. Educators could capitalize on this finding by integrating more group work opportunities into language education curricula, providing students with ample opportunities to practice language skills in a supportive and interactive environment.

Content-based language instruction also showed promise in enhancing language learning experiences, although participants differed in their preferences for integrating language learning with subject-specific content. This finding suggests the importance of offering a diverse range of instructional approaches to accommodate different learning styles and preferences among students. By incorporating content-related language learning opportunities into academic coursework, educators can help students contextualize language skills within their disciplinary interests, thereby enhancing motivation and engagement in language learning.

Maintaining positive relationships with peers emerged as an area for potential improvement, with some participants demonstrating limited engagement in discussions on this topic. Fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment is crucial for promoting collaboration and peer interaction, which are essential components of language acquisition. Educators should explore strategies for cultivating positive relationships among students, such as encouraging teamwork, facilitating peer feedback, and promoting cultural exchange.

Clear expectations about language usage proved to be essential for effective language learning, emphasizing the importance of establishing guidelines for language use in bilingual environments. By providing students with clear guidance on when and how to use each language, educators can help minimize confusion and create a structured learning environment that promotes language proficiency and fluency.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute valuable insights into the self-learning strategies employed by bilingual foreign students and highlight the importance of considering these strategies in language education settings. Future



research could explore additional factors influencing language acquisition and evaluate the effectiveness of different instructional approaches in promoting linguistic proficiency and cultural competence among students. Additionally, further investigation into the impact of socio-cultural factors on language learning experiences could provide valuable insights for designing more inclusive and culturally responsive language education programs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the self-learning strategies utilized by bilingual foreign students at the University of Muhammadiyah Gresik. The findings underscore the importance of considering individual differences and preferences in the adoption of self-learning strategies and highlight the implications for language education programs.

Group work emerged as a prominent strategy for promoting linguistic cross-pollination, with participants expressing varying degrees of engagement and appreciation for its benefits. Content-based language instruction also showed promise in enhancing language learning experiences, although participants differed in their preferences for integrating language learning with subject-specific content.

Maintaining positive relationships with peers and establishing clear expectations about language usage were identified as important considerations for effective language learning. Fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment is crucial for promoting collaboration and peer interaction, while providing students with clear guidance on language usage can help create a structured learning environment that facilitates language proficiency and fluency.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the self-learning strategies employed by bilingual foreign students and highlight the importance of considering these strategies in language education settings. By recognizing and supporting the diverse needs and preferences of students, educators can design more effective language education programs that promote linguistic proficiency, cultural competence, and overall academic success among bilingual learners.



Moving forward, further research could explore additional factors influencing language acquisition and evaluate the effectiveness of different instructional approaches in promoting language learning outcomes. Additionally, investigating the impact of socio-cultural factors on language learning experiences could provide valuable insights for designing more inclusive and culturally responsive language education programs tailored to the needs of diverse student populations.

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