

THE DIFFERENCES OF BILINGUAL AND MONOLINGUAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCES IN ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Communication competence is essential for teenagers' adaptation and affected by how teenagers used their language in daily communication. This research aimed to identify the difference of communication competency between bilingual teenagers and monolingual teenagers. The type of this research was quantitative with comparative purpose. The population of this research was the young teenagers in Medan. Research's samples were students of SMAIT Bunayya as monolingual teenagers and students of MA Taruna Qur'an as bilingual teenagers. The number of sample in this research was 20 students; 10 bilingual students and 10 monolingual selected using the method of simple random sampling. The measuring instruments used in the form of communication abilities' scale was based on the components of communicative competency proposed by Spitzberg and Cupach (in Greene & Burleson, 2003; Payne, 2005), namely knowledge, motivation, and skill. The result of data research using independent sample t-test showed that there was a difference of communication competency between bilingual and monolingual teenagers, especially on knowledge and motivation. As a matter of discussion, this research was conducted in the setting of a still monolingual society.

Keywords: Bilingual, *communication competency, monolingual, teenagers*

INTRODUCTION

Advances in science and technology are now increasingly supporting the development of all aspects of human life, including aspects of communication. Communication plays a very important role in human life. An individual will not be able to do any activity without communicating. This makes communication a very fundamental thing in human life (Ruben and Steward, 2005). In communicating itself, an ability or competence is needed so that communication can run effectively. Communication competence is defined as a person's ability to adapt in every communication situation with others display communication skills based on appropriate knowledge for each communication context and situation (Salleh, 2006).

Communication competence is undoubtedly a very important thing in adolescent development. This communication competence will be influenced by how teenagers use their language in daily communication. The use of two languages (bilingual) or only one language (monolingual) on a daily basis will affect the development of adolescent communication skills or competencies (Baker, 2001). Bilingualism has many positive benefits for the development of an individual. Baker (2001) states that bilingualism can develop a person's communication skills so that he can communicate using the two languages studied. Bilingual individuals have the opportunity to communicate in a wider and varied scope than monolingual individuals. By

learning bilingual, individuals can think sharper, flexible, creativity and have two or more words for each object and idea, also making them more careful in communicating with people of different languages.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Rickheit and Strohner (2008) define communication competence as the ability of an individual to adapt and communicate effectively in all social situations over time, where this ability leads to the ability to act (skills) that are influenced by motivation (motivation) and knowledge (knowledge) possessed by an individual. Communication skills and Effective social interaction is very important for a teenager, especially early teens. Teenager is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Havighurst (Monks, 2004) says that one of the developmental tasks that must be fulfilled in adolescence is to be able to expand interpersonal relationships and communicate more maturely with others. In childhood, an individual only uses communication to convey his desires and to start relationships with others, while in adolescence, especially early adolescence, communication skills are needed to expand and strengthen relationships with other people.

Raguenaud (2009) also mentions that bilingual individuals have a very big opportunity to have a wider knowledge because they have a background from two language literatures. Bilingual individuals are also said to have better self-esteem than monolingual individuals and can have better opportunities in competition in the world of work. However, besides having many positive benefits, bilingualism also has negative impacts. Research conducted by Meuter and Allport (1999) states that bilinguals are at risk for impaired language development and individual communication, especially in languages that are not dominant or whose abilities are weaker than other languages. The same thing was also expressed by Arias and Lakshmanan (2005) in their research which stated that bilingualism can be at risk for mixing language in its use as a communication tool. Reynolds (Saunders, 1988) argues that bilingualism leads to language mixing and confusion which can result in a lack of ability to think and behave appropriately, decreased intelligence, increased mental weakness and reduced self-discipline in children between the ages of seven and fourteen.

Eckert (Caldas, 2006) states that bilingual adolescents can experience pressure in their development, especially in trying to establish relationships with other people. Caldas (2006) also added that bilingual adolescents who live in a monolingual culture or society will experience additional pressure in the formation of their identity which can hinder the development of language and communication of these adolescents. The communication competence of bilingual adolescents can be different from monolingual adolescents.

Bilingual youth, especially those in big cities in Indonesia, often perceive the use of Indonesian as less prestigious (less prestige), less comfortable (comfort), less sophisticated, or less stylish (prestige motive). Bilingual teenagers also like to mix English elements when using Indonesian and also like to switch to that language, even though the context and communication situation do not demand it. This of course can affect the communication competence of the bilingual teenager (Luminatintang, 2009).

Bilingualism has been shown to have many benefits, one of which can improve adolescent communication skills. But in addition to its benefits, bilingualism can actually cause interference in language development and adolescent communication. Monolingual teenagers who only use one language everyday will not experience difficulties in communicating due to language differences. Based on the above background, through this study the researcher wanted to find out whether there are differences in communication competence between adolescents who use two languages (bilingual) and one language (monolingual).

METHOD

This research is quantitative research with a comparative objective. The research population

is early adolescents in the city of Blangkejeren with the characteristics: aged 14-16 years, currently undergoing education at a high school/equivalent that implements a bilingual program (Indonesian and English), or is currently undergoing education at a high school/equivalent that implements a bilingual program (Indonesian). The samples in this study were SMAIT Bunayya Blangkejeren students as monolingual teenagers and Taruna Qur'an high school students as bilingual teenagers. The number of samples in this study were 20 people, namely 10 bilingual students and 10 monolingual students who were selected using a simple random sampling method (simple random sampling).

This study uses a Likert model scaling based on three components of communication competence according to Spitzberg and Cupach (in Greene & Burleson, 2003; Payne, 2005), namely: knowledge (Knowledge), skills (Skills), and motivation (Motivation).

- a. Knowledge: is the knowledge that an individual has about what is needed so that communication can run effectively and precisely, such as knowing what to say, how other people will respond and behave, what kind of behavior should be taken in different situations.
- b. Motivation: is a person's desire or desire to communicate or avoid communicating with others. This desire can be caused by several possibilities, such as to establish a new relationship, to obtain desired information, to influence someone's behavior, to be involved in joint decision making, or to solve a problem.
- c. Skills: is a person's ability to process the behavior needed to communicate appropriately and effectively. This ability includes several things such as other orientation (showing interest and concern for others), social anxiety (able to overcome anxiety in interacting), expressiveness (showing variations in communication behavior), and interaction management (able to manage interactions in communicating).

The data analysis method that will be used for hypothesis testing in this study is statistical analysis using independent sample t-test with the help of SPSS version 16.0 for windows.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis using the independent sample t-test, obtained a value of $t = 3510$ with $p = 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$), which indicates that there are differences in communication competence between adolescents who use two languages (bilingual) and one language (monolingual). The results also showed that the mean value of monolingual youth communication competence ($X=151.22$) was higher than the mean bilingual adolescent ($X=145.19$). This proves that the communication competence of monolingual adolescents is better than the communication competence of bilingual adolescents.

Table 1. Categorization of Youth Communication Competency Score

| Criteria | Range of Scores | Monolingual | Bilingual | N | Percentage |
|--------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Low | $X < 93,4$ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Currently | $93,4 < X < 146,6$ | 3 | 6 | 9 | 45% |
| High | $146,6 < X$ | 7 | 4 | 11 | 55% |
| Total | | 10 | 10 | 20 | 100% |

Based on the information listed in Table 1, it can be seen that there are no teenagers, both monolingual and bilingual, who have low communication competence. There were 9 teenagers (45%) who had moderate communication competence, namely 11 monolingual teenagers, fewer than 20 bilingual teenagers. Meanwhile, in high categorization, there are 11 teenagers (55%) who have high communication competence, which are dominated by 9 monolingual teenagers and 11 bilingual teenagers.

After statistical testing for the main data in this study, it was found that there were differences in communication competence between adolescents who used two languages (bilingual) and one language (monolingual). Therefore, the researcher wishes to know the differences in communication competence between adolescents based on age, gender, components of communication competence, and based on behavioral indicators on each component of communication competence to obtain deeper results.

As a further additional result, it will be seen whether there are differences in communication competence in each of its components in research subjects, both monolingual and bilingual. The components in question are three components of communication competence according to Spitzberg and William (Greene & Burleson, 2003; Payne, 2005), namely: knowledge (knowledge), skills (skills), and motivation (motivation). The analysis used for each component is the t-test, with the help of SPSS version 16.0 for Windows.

There is a difference in communication competence between bilingual and monolingual adolescents in knowledge and motivation components, where the p value < 0.05 , namely $p = 0.031$ and $p = 0.000$. From the results of the analysis, it can also be seen that in the knowledge and motivation components, the average value of monolingual subjects is greater than that of bilingual subjects, which means that monolingual subjects have better communication competence in the knowledge and motivation components compared to bilingual subjects. While in the skill component there is no difference in competence between bilingual and monolingual adolescents, this can be seen from the p value > 0.05 , where $p = 0.188$.

The results of the analysis of research data show that there are differences in communication competence between adolescents who use two languages (bilingual) and one language (monolingual). This is in line with what was expressed by Spitzberg and Cupach (Greene & Burleson, 2003) that a person's knowledge and education will affect his ability to communicate, so that individuals who undergo education with a bilingual program will have different communication skills from individuals who attend education with a monolingual program.

The results showed that the mean value of monolingual adolescents' communication competence was higher than the mean of bilingual adolescents. This proves that the communication competence of monolingual adolescents is better than the communication competence of bilingual adolescents. This result contradicts the opinion of Baker (2001) which states that bilingual individuals have the opportunity to communicate in a wider and varied scope than monolingual individuals, making it possible for them to have better communication competence.

Bilingualism on the one hand has indeed been proven to improve a person's abilities, both in communication, the ability to recognize culture, cognitive development, and the ability to develop personality (Baker, 2001). But on the other hand, being bilingual does not necessarily guarantee that individuals have better communication competence than monolingual individuals. As stated by Meuter and Allport (1999) that bilingualism can cause disturbances in one's language development and communication.

Eckert (Caldas, 2006) states that bilingual individuals who are in their teens can experience pressure during their development, especially in trying to establish relationships with other people. Self-identity as a bilingual can make it difficult for adolescents to adjust to other people, especially with their monolingual peer group, so that it can interfere with the development of the adolescent's language and communication skills.

Caldas (2006) states that bilingual adolescents who live in a monolingual culture or society will experience additional pressure in the formation of their identity in society. As stated by Lumintang (2009), bilingual adolescents will feel happy and proud to show others their bilingual identity. However, it is not necessarily that other people around them like their bilingual self-identity. This will be an obstacle in the development of language and communication of a bilingual teenager.

Phinney (Caldas, 2006) also mentions that bilingual adolescents have an additional task to understand and be able to accept their identity as bilinguals in a monolingual society. People who are monolingual or speak only one language can have difficulty accepting a bilingual who has a bilingual background. As it is known that most Indonesian people are monolingual people, so that bilingual teenagers can have difficulty communicating because the people around them have different languages. Likewise, the surrounding community may become less interested in communicating with bilingual youth whose language is different from theirs.

Soler and Jorda (2007) reveal the same thing that an individual's communication skills can also be influenced by the place or setting of language use. A supportive environment for an individual to be able to communicate freely can improve his communication competence. Bilingual adolescents who are in a monolingual environment can have low communication competence because they cannot communicate freely. Differences in language in the environment can limit the scope of adolescent communication so that it can hinder the communication development of a bilingual teenager.

The results of the analysis of communication competence on the knowledge component show that the communication competence of bilingual adolescents in the knowledge component is lower than that of monolingual adolescents. By being bilingual, teenagers will have a lot of knowledge about the two languages they have. However, if the teenager is not able to keep up with the amount of knowledge he has gained, then the teenager will experience chaos and language mixing due to knowledge or information overload. The same thing was also expressed by Bialystok (2003) which stated that adolescents have limited abilities in overcoming and correctly applying their knowledge of two languages.

The results of the analysis on the knowledge component also show that bilingual adolescents have a lower ability to understand the content of the message conveyed compared to monolingual adolescents. This can be caused because bilinguals have an extra task in distinguishing the two languages they use, namely code switching and translation which can make it more difficult for teenagers to understand the messages conveyed in communication. Monolingual adolescents who only use one language will not have difficulty understanding the content of the message because they do not need to do the extra task (Esch and Riley, 2003).

In the motivation component, the results of the analysis show that bilingual adolescents have higher communication competence low on the motivation component compared to monolingual adolescents. As previously stated by Esch and Riley (2003) that the development of bilingual and monolingual adolescents is actually very similar, the only difference is that bilingual adolescents have extra tasks that can cause difficulties when communicating with others. These difficulties can cause bilingual adolescents to be reluctant to communicate, thereby reducing their motivation to communicate with others.

The results of the analysis on each behavioral indicator of the motivation component show that bilingual adolescents have a lower desire to initiate communication and a desire to engage in communication than monolingual adolescents, have a greater fear of unwanted responses from others, and are less likely to try to always leave an impression who are good at communicating compared to monolingual adolescents. Raguenaud (2009) reveals that adolescents do not like things that are troublesome, like to do things according to their wishes and will prefer to avoid things that can cause difficulties for themselves.

The difficulties experienced when bilingual adolescents communicate can cause adolescents to prefer to avoid communication situations so that it can reduce their motivation to communicate. The results of the analysis of communication competence on the skill component show that in communicating, bilingual adolescents have the same abilities as monolingual adolescents. This result is in line with the opinion expressed by Haugen (Saunders, 1988), that the use of two languages does not affect an individual's communication skills, both verbal and non-verbal, so that the ability to communicate with a bilingual individual will not be different from that of a monolingual individual.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of research data shows that there are differences in communication competence between adolescents who use two languages (bilingual) and one language (monolingual). Specifically, it is known that the communication competence of monolingual adolescents is better than the communication competence of bilingual adolescents. Bilingualism on the one hand has indeed been proven to improve a person's abilities, both in communication, the ability to recognize culture, cognitive development, and the ability to develop personality. But on the other hand, being bilingual does not necessarily guarantee that individuals have better communication competence than monolingual individuals.

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