

Educational Instructions: Adapting Classroom Language for Young Learners

Aulia Nur Fatonah

Universitas Terbuka, Tangerang Selatan, Banten, Indonesia

E-mail: nurfathonahaulia@gmail.com

Abstract

This study reviewed the introductory adaptation of the class to effectively convey instruction to elementary school students, especially in the bilingual context where the primary language is English. Given that children at an early school stage need clear, easy-to-understand, and engaging communication, In bilingual primary schools, the language of instruction is essential for enhancing understanding, engagement, and language acquisition in young learners. This study focuses on a translation strategy to help understand and support language development. Analyzing sample class instructions translated from English into Indonesian, the study discusses the application of sandwich techniques, code-switching, simplification, and context adjustments in conveying class instructions. Analysis shows that the effectiveness of language adaptation is primarily determined by the teacher's skill in balancing clarity and the purpose of learning. The study benefited from education translation because it showed the importance of choosing an appropriate language in two-language classes. The research discusses how teachers instinctively modify their language practices, enhancing the comprehension of effective instructional delivery for young bilingual learners. Additive bilingualism supports academic success; subtractive bilingualism affects it (Cummins, 2000).

Keywords: Bilingual education, classroom language, code-switching, instructional adaptation, sandwich technique, young learners

INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the key elements in education, especially for elementary school children. In the early days of development, children depended heavily on interaction and communication to learn and understand the world around them. Good communication between educators and children and between children and parents can significantly positively affect a child's cognitive, emotional, and social development. This need becomes more complex in bilingual classroom settings as teachers must navigate between two languages to ensure students understand instructions while supporting their language development. Translation encourages cultural exchange in an educational environment. Translation allows the sharing of literature, art, history, and traditions from different cultures. Students can explore the wealth of the world's culture through translated texts and cultivate empathy, intercultural understanding, and global citizenship. Classroom management and learning processes. However, the translation of classroom instructions from English to Indonesian. Young learners, who are still growing linguistically and cognitively, are particularly sensitive to how instructions are delivered. The child's current knowledge level should guide the instruction structure (Bruner & Haste, 2010).

The study discussed how English class instructions were adapted to English using a particular translation strategy. The analysis focuses on strategies such as sandwich techniques instead of codes, simplification, and context adjustments and how the strategies help improve student understanding and support the purposes of learning in the bilingual class. This research highlights the importance of choosing appropriate language strategies that support clarity and learning objectives. The interaction between instructor-led teaching and children's active participation is essential for successful language

acquisition (KCJ *et al.*, 2023). Hopefully, the result of this research will be helpful for English teaching-learning, both theoretically and practically. Educators who use translanguaging techniques can build more fair learning settings that respect and use students' linguistic backgrounds (Wang *et al.*, 2024).

Recent research on educational teaching in multilingual contexts has focused on how teachers control classroom language to facilitate comprehension, particularly among young learners. According to Ollerhead and Pennington (2024), translanguaging, or the strategic use of students' native languages, can boost engagement and literacy among bilingual children aged 6-7. Similarly, Butzkamm and Caldwell (2009) endorse the sandwich strategy, which places brief L1 use between L2 input and repetition to help learners absorb new concepts more successfully. However, the field remains divided. Some researchers, such as Cummins (2000), promote using L1 as a cognitive and cultural tool, but others advocate for strict L2 immersion, claiming that excessive L1 use can impede second language acquisition. According to Hall (2017), classroom language must be adaptable and suited to learners' developmental stages. However, there has been little discussion about how teachers may modify instruction across different age groups in early elementary levels.

Despite these talks, the literature lacks discussion of the practical implementation of adapted teaching strategies such as the sandwich technique, code-switching, or streamlined repetition in Indonesian bilingual classrooms from grades 1 to 4. Most previous research focuses on either older learners or generalized classroom procedures, with little attention paid to how everyday instructional language evolves across early grade levels and what teachers consider when modifying their communication. This study investigates how bilingual teachers change their classroom instructions in a real-world teaching situation based on classroom experience and teacher interviews. By relating theoretical instruction strategies to practical classroom adjustments in early bilingual education, this study contributes to the current database of research.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Its main focus is on describing the use of teacher language strategies in delivering instruction in the bilingual class and analyzing the translation strategies used. Educators' strategic employment of students' native languages can enhance comprehension and involvement in English language development (Mahadika & Nuraini, 2025). This pedagogical approach, courtesy of translanguaging principles, enhanced the students' engagement with favor (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024), suggesting that multi-language-based approaches to practice were practical in bilingual elementary classes.

In addition, the study adopted the translation portfolio approach, analyzing the teacher's instructions from English to Indonesian and annotating the strategy used, as suggested in the project's end in English literature. These methods are significantly based on the capacity of teachers to effectively use the cultural and linguistic resources of young learners and adopt strategies that address the full spectrum of their language skills. (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024) Practical adaptations of many linguistic backgrounds in early childhood classrooms depend on multilingual instructional strategies (Jegade, 2024). Using code-switching methodically can be a great instructional tool (Hall, 2017).

In my own classroom, I served as the main researcher, acting both as an observer and a participant. Drawing on my background as a bilingual teacher in a primary school, I gathered information through field notes, self-observation, and analysis of instructional strategies. Based on real-world classroom interactions with pupils aged 6–10, this insider viewpoint made real and contextually rich data collection possible.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with four other bilingual teachers covering Grades 1 through 4 to gain a general understanding. Depending on availability, each interview took about fifteen minutes and was done online or in person. The questions centered on their English instruction delivery, frequency of switching to Bahasa Indonesia, and utilization of techniques or challenges to assist in student understanding of directions. Apart from interviews, I also conducted informal classroom observations (two other instructors and my own) to observe how multilingual approaches frame, repeat, or clarify instructions. Additionally gathered and examined were short phrases often used in teaching to pinpoint translation techniques.

Using the thematic analysis, that is, coding repeating patterns and classifying them under themes including “instructional repetition,” “use of native language support,” and “language mixing strategies,” the gathered data were examined. Particularly focused on how and when teachers used the sandwich approach, code-switching, or code-transfer and for what instructional purposes, e.g., providing directions, controlling behavior, elucidating content was the. Additionally annotated and examined for translation techniques based on theories from Bland (2015), Bruner & Haste (2010), Butzkamm & Caldwell (2009), Copland & Yonetsugi (2016), Cummins (2000), G. Hall (2017), Jegede (2024), KCJ *et al.* (2023), Mahadika & Nuraini (2025), Ollerhead & Pennington (2024), (*10 Translation Techniques to Win Global Audiences*, 2024), and Wang *et al.* (2024). Were sample instructional utterances. The study sought to pinpoint the language’s instructional effects on early bilingual students and its pragmatic value.

Each teacher and participant gave informed permission to take part after being advised of the research aims. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed throughout the research. Not one actual student name or personal ID was noted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Teaching English to young learners requires methods responsive to children’s cognitive, social, and linguistic development (Bland, 2015). Adapting classroom language by expanding students’ linguistic collections creates tolerance and improves learning outcomes (Mahadika & Nuraini, 2025). Translanguaging practices in Indonesian primary classrooms have demonstrated the ability to connect the dots between the language of instruction and the home languages of students (Mahadika & Nuraini, 2025). Educators’ quality and quantity of linguistic input significantly impact children’s language development (KCJ *et al.*, 2023).

Translanguaging helps young students to use their whole language repertoire, thus promoting more profound knowledge and involvement (Wang *et al.*, 2024). Teachers who combine the target language with the native languages can help cognitive development by bridging understanding gaps (Jegede, 2024). Using translanguaging in classroom instruction helps bilingual students negotiate and master materials in both languages (Wang *et al.*, 2024).

The teacher's use of language in the classroom has significance for communicating and developing children's learning and emotional security. (Bland, 2015). Young learners gain from routines and predictable classroom language that support language development and classroom management (Bland, 2015). Classroom language choices influence learner confidence and identity (Hall, 2017). The L1 in the classroom should be an asset to be handled; it should not be something to dismiss (Hall, 2017).

Class Instruction

1. Entering the classroom

Act of learners arriving and walking into a classroom space to begin a lesson or school activity.

Table 1. Entering Classroom

L1	L2
Come in quietly!	<i>Masuklah dengan tenang!</i>
Put your bag in the box!	<i>Simpan tas kalian di dalam kotak!</i>
Don't forget to shake hands with the teacher!	<i>Jangan lupa berjabat tangan dengan guru!</i>
Walk nicely, Do not run!	<i>Berjalanlah dengan baik, jangan berlari!</i>
Fix your seat, please!	<i>Tolong rapikan tempat duduk kalian!</i>

2. Line Up

Act of students standing in a straight, orderly row, usually before entering the classroom.

Table 2. Line Up Text

L1	L2
Ok, let's line up!	<i>Baik, Mari kita berbaris!</i>
Make one row!	<i>Buat satu barisan!</i>
Make a straight line please!	<i>Tolong buat barisan yang rapi!</i>
Follow instructions from the leader!	<i>Ikuti aba-aba dari ketua kelas!</i>

3. When the lesson starts

Moment when a class or learning session officially begins, usually marked by the teacher's greeting, instructions, or introduction to the day's topic.

Table 3. Instructions during Prayer

L1	L2
Sit nicely please!	<i>Silahkan duduk dengan rapi!</i>
Are you ready for today?	<i>Apakah kalian siap hari ini!</i>
Lest we pray before learning!	<i>Ayo kita berdoa sebelum belajar!</i>
How are you today? Do you feel happy? Or do you feel sleepy?	<i>Bagaimana kabar kalian hari ini? Apakah kalian merasa bahagia? Atau apakah kalian merasa mengantuk?</i>
Let's put your right hand on your chest, then close your eyes, and repeat after me!	<i>Ayo kita letakkan tangan kanan di dada, lalu tutup mata, dan ulangi apa yang Ms katakan!</i>
Pray position please!	<i>Ayo kita posisi berdoa!</i>

When I call your name you have to raise your hand and say 'Present ms!'	<i>Ketika Ms memanggil namamu, kamu harus mengangkat tanganmu dan berkata, "Hadir, Ms!"</i>
Get your book and stationary!	<i>Silakan ambil buku dan alat tulis kalian!</i>
We have to respect each other!	<i>Kita harus saling menghargai satu sama lain!</i>
What day is it today?	<i>Hari apakah hari ini?</i>
Who can tell what day it was yesterday?	<i>Siapa yang bisa kasih tau! Hari apa kemarin?</i>

4. During transition between activities

Period when students shift from one task or part of a lesson to another, such as moving from group work to individual tasks or changing subjects.

Table 4. Instructions during studying

L1	L2
Get ready for the next lesson!	<i>Bersiaplah untuk pelajaran berikutnya!</i>
Everybody let's tidy up!	<i>Semuanya! Ayo kita bersih-bersih!</i>
Help your friend to clean up!	<i>Tolong temanmu untuk bersih-bersih!</i>
Put away your book and stationery!	<i>Simpan buku dan alat tulis kalian!</i>
Ok everyone, sorry times up. It's time for our snack time / lunch	<i>Baiklah semuanya, maaf waktu sudah habis. Saatnya untuk waktu camilan / makan siang kita.</i>

5. During summative / review.

Ongoing checks during learning to monitor progress and guide instruction, like quizzes, observations, or feedback. Or even an evaluation at the conclusion of a course to measure what students have learned, such as a final exam or project.

Table 5. During Review

L1	L2
Do it on your own!	<i>Kerjakan sendiri ya!</i>
No cheating please!	<i>Jangan menyontek ya!</i>
Five more minutes!	<i>Lima menit lagi!</i>

You can't ask your friends!

Kalian tidak boleh bertanya kepada teman !

If you don't understand, you can't ask me!

Jika kalian tidak mengerti, kalian bisa tanya kepada Ms!

6. Classroom management and behavior

Teachers employ several strategies and tactics to keep their classrooms organized, productive, and respectful. How students act, including their conduct, attitudes, and interactions with the teacher and peers, which can affect the overall learning atmosphere.

Table 6. Instructions classroom

L1	L2
We'll start in three..two..one..	<i>Kita akan mulai dalam tiga..dua...satu..</i>
Be quiet, please!	<i>Harap tenang!</i>
Raise your hand, if you're done!	<i>Angkat tangan, jika kamu selesai!</i>
Be focused, please!	<i>Tolong fokus ya!</i>
Eyes on me!	<i>Lihat ms semuanya!</i>
Listen carefully!	<i>Dengarkan dengan baik!</i>
Are you ready for class?!	<i>Apakah kamu siap belajar?!</i>
Use an indoor voice please!	<i>Tolong pakai suara dalam ruangan!</i>
Do not scream please!	<i>Tolong jangan berteriak!</i>
Please put your hand up if you want to go to the toilet!	<i>Silakan angkat tanganmu jika kamu ingin pergi ke toilet.</i>
Respect each other please!	<i>Tolong saling menghargai satu sama lain!</i>

7. Positive instructions

Refers to clear, encouraging, and respectful directions given by a teacher to guide student behavior and learning, focusing on what students should do rather than what they shouldn't do.

Table 7. Positive Instruction

L1	L2
You're great, Try again!	<i>Kamu hebat, coba lagi ya!</i>
Thank you for listening!	<i>Terima kasih sudah mendengarkan!</i>
I'm proud of your effort!	<i>Ms bangga dengan usahamu!</i>
You're doing so well!	<i>Kamu melakukannya dengan baik!</i>
Good job everyone!	<i>Kerja bagus semuanya!</i>
Thank you for today!	<i>Terima kasih untuk hari ini!</i>

Don't forget to submit your homework!

Jangan lupa mengumpulkan PR!

Translation Techniques Applied

1. Literal Translation

The main goal of this approach is to translate the original language word for word. This method is typically employed when the translated languages are similar, particularly in culture. For example, the English translation of the French query “Please open your book” is “*Silakan buka bukumu.*” Since this technique has specific rules and can occasionally fail, the translator should use caution. In addition to being idiomatic, the translated text should preserve the original language’s word order, style, and meaning (*10 Translation Techniques to Win Global Audiences*, 2024).

2. Transposition

The transposition approach is used because grammatical structures differ among languages. The English command “You must listen carefully” becomes “*Kamu harus mendengarkannya dengan seksama*” in Indonesia when the translation changes specific parts of the text order (sentence structure) without changing the meaning of the original text. Considering the significant grammatical differences between English and Indonesia, Transposition is the preferred method for translators of both languages (*10 Translation Techniques to Win Global Audiences*, 2024).

3. Modulation

The main goal of modulation is to change the source language’s point of view. The translator employs a different phrase in the target text to express the same meaning as the source text without altering the text’s intent. It entails changing perspective and semantics while maintaining the text’s original meaning. A sense of nativeness should be conveyed through the translation, like in the case of the Instruction “*Kita harus menghormati satu sama lain!!*” which translates to “We have to respect each other!” in English (*10 Translation Techniques to Win Global Audiences*, 2024).

The findings of this study are primarily drawn from the researcher’s direct teaching experience in a bilingual elementary classroom and interviews conducted with fellow bilingual teachers. These sources provide qualitative insights into how instructional language is adapted for young learners. Classroom observations were conducted informally during daily lessons, where the researcher documented how English instructions were delivered and how students responded. In addition, semi-structured interviews were held with five elementary teachers who teach in bilingual settings.

The data collected reflect fundamental classroom dynamics and allow for analyzing specific instructional strategies such as the sandwich technique, code-switching, and code-transfer. These experiences and interview reply form the basis for finding common patterns and strategies for developing classroom language to the requirements of young learners.

CONCLUSION

The total of the data in this research was 48 Instructions. Three types of translation procedures were found in the data. Our results indicate that the student's engagement with literacy was greatly improved by this practical approach, which is based on translanguaging principles (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024). By supporting their native languages and cultural identities, the project significantly facilitated their verbal development, illustrating the benefits of integrating multilingual practices in early education (Ollerhead & Pennington, 2024). Language helps to build reality as well as to communicate (Bruner & Haste, 2010). Language learning in early childhood can be significantly improved through adaptive instructional strategies that adjust for individual learner differences (KCJ *et al.*, 2023). Integrating multiple languages in early education fosters a more inclusive environment and enhances literacy development among young learners (Jegede, 2024). Supporting minority students requires teachers to acknowledge and value their cultural and linguistic perspectives (Cummins, 2000). Children use language most in settings with significant social value and meaning (Bruner & Haste, 2010). Good foreign language instruction is not possible without the practical application of the learners' mother tongue (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009), and the mother tongue is the most significant benefit that people give to the task of foreign language learning and the most effective tool for beginning instruction (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). Monolingual education runs against the brain's natural ability for language relation and contrast (Butzkamm & Caldwell, 2009). This reality, we feel, reinforces the need for employing multilingual teachers wherever possible in the early learner classroom. (Copland & Yonetsugi, 2016).

REFERENCES

- Bland, J. (Ed.). (2015). *Teaching English to Young Learners: Critical Issues in Language Teaching with 3-12 Year Olds*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Bruner, J. S., & Haste, H. (Eds.). (2010). *Making Sense (Routledge Revivals): The Child's Construction of the World*. Taylor & Francis.
- Butzkamm, W., & Caldwell, J. A. W. (2009). *The Bilingual Reform: A Paradigm Shift in Foreign Language Teaching*. Narr.
- Copland, F., & Yonetsugi, E. (2016). *Teaching English to Young Learners: Supporting the Case for the Bilingual Native English Speaker Teacher*, 7(3), 221-238. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2016.1192050>.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power, and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*.
- KCJ, C., P, M., & M, M. (2023). *Adapting to children's individual language proficiency: An observational study of preschool teacher talk addressing monolinguals and children learning English as an additional language* (Vol. 50). *Journal of Child Language*. 10.1017/S0305000921000854.
- Hagan, E. C., Carlson, C. D., & Durodola, P. (2007). *The Cross-Linguistic Transfer of Early Literacy Skills: The Role of Initial L1 and L2 Skills and Language of Instruction*, 38(3), 249-259. [https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461\(2007/026\)](https://doi.org/10.1044/0161-1461(2007/026)).
- Hall, G. (2017). *Exploring English Language Teaching: Language in Action*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Jegede, O. O. (2024, 12 31). *Translanguaging practices in lower primary classrooms in Indonesia*, 4(1), 57-72. <https://doi.org/10.51574/judikdas.v4i1.2455>.
- Mahadika, M. P. W., & Nuraini, K. (2025). *Bilingualism Strategy Using Video in Teaching English for Young Learners*. 4(1). <https://doi.org/10.58518/d8zjf648>.
- Ollerhead, S., & Pennington, G. (2024). *Starting small: Engaging young learners with literacy through multilingual storytelling*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687984241303390>.
- 10 Translation Techniques to Win Global Audiences*. (2024, October 14). Translation and Localization Services. Retrieved May 31, 2025, from <https://asialocalize.com/blog/translation-techniques/>.

Wang, R., Saihong, P., & Sonsupap, K. (2024). *Understanding the Dynamics of Materials Adaptation in an English-Chinese Bilingual Storytelling Curriculum for First Graders* (Vol. 8).