

## **Adopting Bilingual Education in Singapore**

Over the decades many non-native English-speaking countries started to focus more on English education. Some countries zoom in on speaking while others keep their eyes on grammar. Singapore is one of the most outstanding English-speaking countries in the world. According to English education company EF Education First (2020), Singapore is ranked in the top 10 regarding to English skills. On the other hand, Indonesia ranked 74<sup>th</sup>. English acquisition rates vary by country because the way teachers teach English is different, but adopting Singapore's education system, "bilingual education" Indonesia can be the world's top English-speaking country.

Singapore has been an English-conscious society since becoming independent from the United Kingdom. English-conscious society is the society where people key on English education. The U.K. segregated people in Singapore by their ethnicity, which made people communicate in their own languages. (Igirisu no, 2020) After a reign that lasted over hundred years, the first Prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, however, led the Republic of Singapore to be one of the best English-speaking countries. Lee believed that widespread English proficiency would be crucial to building Singapore's economy and to developing its regional and global competitiveness. He thought that to improve the economic situation of Singapore and enhance the competitiveness regionally and internationally, English would hold a key. His plan was to conduct all classes in English including math, science, history, and so on, while the mother-tongues of the country's three major ethnic groups, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil, were taught as a second language. In the 1960s, Lee made this unique "bilingual education" mandatory (The PIE Blog, 2018). "Bilingual education" is still the way education is done in Singapore.

"Bilingual education system" had a huge influence in both personal and social aspects. According to a study, bilingual people have better concentration power, attention, and communication skills compared to monolingual people. (SCHOOL of EDUCATION, 2020). Also "Bilingual education" helps to establish their identity. In terms of social benefits, since citizens understand business words and knowledge in English, Singapore grew its industry and compete with other developed nations. Moreover, English connected the people of Singapore. Since there were four different languages spoken in each district, they were related distantly. Universal language united people and built Singapore up to be one of the best multinational countries (Nakata, 2015, p.2). Owing to its success, Singapore continues to use this system. From these benefits

mentioned above, it is easy to say that Indonesia could copy “Bilingual education”.

The method to keep their enthusiasm is Primary School Leaving Examination. Singapore adopted PSLE in order to manage students’ motivation. It is an annual national exam that is taken by candidates at the end of their final year of primary school education. There are four subjects; English, math, science, and second language. Students with good grades advance to the “Express class” in secondary school while others proceed to the “Normal class”. Unfortunately, if students couldn’t pass the exam, they repeat a year or they go on the “Special education course”. It is said that it is quite difficult to become an elite from the “Normal class” and the “Special education course”. PSLE will affect the rest of their life so students study hard while in elementary school years (Shichikai, 2021). On the other hand, Indonesia does not have a system like this. Indonesia is a multi-cultural country where 30 ethnic groups live together. Indonesian is considered as an official language, which is a burden to some minority groups (Mata log magazine, 2019). In elementary school, students learn both Indonesian and English, but English acquisition rate is still low (Nasu, 1977, p.45). The study shows that the tendency of students thinking they do not have to develop their academic skills is particularly strong in Indonesia (EF, 2020). There is a need to change its education system to “Bilingual education system”. By doing so, people can improve both English and Indonesian at the same time. Therefore, it will lead to its developments and connections between different ethnic groups.

Research has revealed the benefits of “Bilingual education” undoubtedly. “Bilingual education” has a positive effect on personal and social aspects, and it can be adopted in any country, especially multi-cultural countries like Indonesia. It will enable Indonesia to develop its power personally and socially. More people need to pay attention to education system. Today, as the population expands, the job competitions became very keen. School education systems directly affect children’s skills and their employment rates. I suggest other countries adopt “Bilingual education” to their education systems to ensure a bright future for children.

(753 words)

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