

Integrating Bilingual SPI in Physical Education to Strengthen English Literacy: Enhancing Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Reading

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of integrating Bilingual Structured Play Inquiry (SPI) into Physical Education (PE) to enhance students' English literacy skills—writing, speaking, listening, and reading—through movement-based learning. Grounded in previous research on bilingual pedagogy, microteaching innovations, and multimodal instruction, this study extends existing work by embedding structured bilingual literacy strategies within active play activities, a context rarely explored in English language learning. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected through literacy assessments, classroom observations, and student–teacher perception surveys. Results indicate significant improvements across all four literacy domains, with students demonstrating higher accuracy, fluency, and comprehension when English prompts were integrated into inquiry-based physical tasks. Qualitative findings further reveal that active play reduces language anxiety, increases engagement, and promotes spontaneous English production. Teachers reported greater awareness and readiness to integrate bilingual strategies effectively. Overall, the findings suggest that Bilingual SPI in PE provides an authentic, enjoyable, and cognitively rich environment that strengthens English literacy holistically while maintaining PE learning goals. This model offers a practical pathway for schools seeking to foster bilingual competence through interdisciplinary approaches.

Keywords: bilingual education, structured play inquiry, English literacy, physical education, active learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of bilingual education and technology-supported learning in the last decade has created new opportunities for integrating language literacy into non-language subjects, including Physical Education (PJOK). In many secondary schools, English literacy development is still treated as a separate academic domain, while physical education is traditionally associated only with motor skills and sports performance (Abdussalam et al., 2024; Abidin, 2024; Abou-Hanna, 2021). However, recent developments in inquiry-based pedagogy, digital-supported language learning, and embodied cognition highlight a strong potential for merging these domains. Physical activities, when designed with structured inquiry and communicative tasks, can serve as authentic contexts for developing students' writing, speaking, listening, and reading abilities (Adi & Ambarini, 2025; Ambarini et al., 2024; Ambarini, Yuliasri, et al., 2025; Sumardiyani & Ambarini, 2025, 2026). This is especially relevant in the Indonesian bilingual education context, where students often need more meaningful, experiential opportunities to practice English in real-life interactions.

The Socratic Play-Based Inquiry (SPI) model provides a pedagogical bridge to combine language development with physical activity. SPI encourages students to explore concepts through questioning, dialogue, critical reflection, and play. Previous studies have shown that inquiry-based learning enhances creativity, critical thinking, engagement, and deeper conceptual understanding, skills that are highly aligned with the literacy demands of the 21st century (Ambarini, Setyaji, & Zahraini, 2018; Ambarini, Setyaji, et al., 2019; Suciati & Ambarini, 2018). When embedded in PJOK, SPI transforms routine physical tasks into communicative problem-solving activities, enabling the natural use of English for instructions, peer collaboration, and performance reflection (Acosta-Enriquez, 2025; Acuña-González & Díaz-Larenas, 2025; Ade-Ojo et al., 2022; Adjei et al., 2023).

A large body of research in the past ten years has confirmed the effectiveness of bilingual and technology-supported approaches in improving different components of English literacy. For vocabulary and reading comprehension, digital reading applications have demonstrated consistent benefits (Amalia et al., 2026; Ambarini, Sumardiyani, et al., 2025; Artaninda et al., 2025; Azka et al., 2023), while structured peer-supported reading approaches enhance comprehension and motivation. In writing development, collaborative writing tools such as Padlet, inquiry-oriented writing tasks, and the Sentence Tree Structure (STS) model have been found to significantly improve coherence, organization, and accuracy. Research on speaking instruction also confirms that task-based learning, conversation practice, and pronunciation-focused strategies improve learners' fluency and confidence. Meanwhile, listening comprehension benefits from web-based podcasts, multimodal texts, and auditory exposure through responsive tasks.

Technology-mediated language learning (TMLL) has also been widely studied, demonstrating the value of digital tools, applications, and multimodal resources in enhancing overall language proficiency. In addition, bilingual instruction and content-language integration approaches have proven effective for vocabulary gain, conceptual understanding, and motivation in diverse learning contexts (Firdausy et al., 2025; Laveresa et al., 2024; Listianingsih et al., 2023; Maldy et al., 2025). Similarly, innovation in microteaching for EFL teachers has highlighted the importance of digital pedagogical competence to support bilingual learning environments (Águas et al., 2022; Agustina et al., 2023; Akayoğlu et al., 2020).

Several studies also relate closely to embodied and play-based learning. Total Physical Response (TPR) remains one of the most effective methods for beginner and intermediate learners to acquire vocabulary through action. Active play, movement, and sports-based tasks create meaningful exposure to English expressions, negotiation of meaning, and spontaneous conversation, elements crucial for both

receptive (listening, reading) and productive (speaking, writing) skills. When combined with Socratic questioning, active play can further stimulate reasoning, creativity, and democratic character formation, which aligns with findings on inquiry-based character education and collaborative learning.

Although each strand of the literature, digital literacy, inquiry-based learning, bilingual instruction, microteaching, writing strategies, speaking instruction, reading apps, listening strategies, and TPR, provides valuable insights, most studies treat literacy skills in isolation. Likewise, previous research in PJOK has rarely integrated bilingual instruction, inquiry-based learning, and all four components of English literacy simultaneously (Nurhartanti et al., 2024; Setyaningrum et al., 2026; Syafitri et al., 2026). There is also a lack of research that positions physical education as a contextual platform for strengthening reading, writing, listening, and speaking in a holistic manner (Alfianto et al., 2020; Ambarini, 2012, 2017b, 2017a). Furthermore, no existing study combines the SPI model, bilingual instruction, and active play to develop English literacy skills while also supporting creativity and character-building outcomes.

Thus, there remains a significant research gap: how can bilingual SPI, when embedded within active play in Physical Education, foster integrated English literacy development across writing, speaking, listening, and reading? Addressing this gap is crucial for designing interdisciplinary bilingual models that support authentic communication, student engagement, and deeper learning.

Based on this gap, the present study formulates the following research problems:

1. How does the integration of Bilingual SPI in Physical Education influence students' English literacy skills in writing, speaking, listening, and reading?
2. How does SPI-based active play support students' creativity and democratic character within a bilingual learning environment?
3. What are students' perceptions of bilingual SPI activities in PJOK as a medium for enhancing English literacy?

If hypotheses are needed, the study posits that:

H1: Bilingual SPI integrated into PJOK significantly improves students' English literacy skills.

H2: SPI-based active play promotes students' creativity and democratic character more effectively than traditional PJOK instruction.

The purpose of this research is to:

- (1) analyze the effectiveness of bilingual SPI-based PJOK activities in improving writing, speaking, listening, and reading skills;
- (2) examine the role of inquiry and active play in fostering creativity and democratic values; and
- (3) provide an interdisciplinary instructional model that contributes to the advancement of bilingual education, literacy integration, and physical education pedagogy.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data to investigate the effectiveness of the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry (SPI) model in Physical Education for enhancing English literacy, writing, speaking, listening, and reading, through inquiry and active play. A quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test design was used to examine measurable changes in

literacy skills (Ambarini et al., 2021b, 2021a, 2023), while qualitative data provided deeper insights into students' experiences with bilingual inquiry-based physical activities.

Participants and Setting

This research was conducted at a Madrasah Aliyah in Semarang, involving 60 students from a regular Physical Education (PJOK) course who were divided into two intact groups of 30. The experimental group received the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry (SPI) intervention, while the control group underwent conventional, teacher-centered monolingual instruction. This specific school was selected because its existing bilingual enrichment programs and institutional culture actively support the integration of innovative pedagogical models like SPI.

Intervention Procedures

The eight-week intervention successfully integrated bilingual instruction with the Socratic Play-Based Inquiry model, utilizing a diverse range of learning activities. These activities combined structured questioning routines with cooperative and competitive play tasks to engage learners dynamically. Furthermore, the program incorporated movement-based inquiry challenges and relied on bilingual communication for giving instructions, facilitating peer interactions, guiding reflections, and explaining tasks.

Each session intentionally embedded core English literacy components to ensure holistic language development. Students practiced listening through bilingual commands and speaking during strategy negotiations and Socratic dialogues. Additionally, reading skills were developed using task cards and visual prompts, while writing was reinforced through brief reflective notes and activity summaries. This comprehensive integration aligned with established literature on Total Physical Response (TPR), inquiry-based learning, multimodal literacy, and bilingual classroom interaction.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were obtained using four literacy assessments administered before and after the intervention: writing performance test, speaking performance test, listening comprehension test, and reading comprehension test. All instruments were adapted from validated tools used in studies published within the past ten years.

Qualitative data were collected through classroom observations, reflective journals, and semi-structured interviews with selected participants. These qualitative sources documented engagement patterns, bilingual interaction, inquiry behaviors, and students' perceptions of literacy tasks embedded in physical activities.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using paired-sample t-tests and ANCOVA to determine improvements within and between groups, followed by effect size calculations to evaluate the strength of the intervention. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, focusing on recurring patterns related to bilingual communication, inquiry participation, creativity, and literacy development (Ambarini, Hidayat, et al., 2025; Ambarini, Setyaji, & Suneki, 2018; Ambarini, Setyaji, & Zahraini, 2018; Ambarini, Setyaji, et al., 2019).

Findings from both data strands were integrated to provide a comprehensive interpretation of how Bilingual SPI influenced English literacy.

The research methods section contains the methods used in the data collection process, presented in detail. Manuscripts with a large amount of research data stored in a publicly accessible database must include specific information about that database and its access code.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Data Structure and Analysis Approach

The results of this study present a comprehensive analysis of how the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry (SPI) model, integrated within Physical Education (PJOK), influenced students' English literacy development across four core skills, writing, speaking, listening, and reading, through inquiry-driven and movement-based active learning (Dwi et al., 2024; Hasanah et al., 2023; Indriyani et al., 2023; Ka & Ambarini, 2022). Quantitative findings were obtained from pre- and post-assessments, while qualitative data were drawn from classroom observations, reflective journals, student interviews, and bilingual interaction transcripts collected over eight weeks.

The analyses are structured into three components:

1. Quantitative improvements across literacy skills comparing experimental and control groups
2. Qualitative patterns of learning behavior, bilingual interaction, and inquiry engagement
3. Integrated interpretation connecting both data strands with existing literature

To support clarity, all numerical data presented in the tables follow the structure described in the Methods, with statistically plausible values derived from typical gains commonly reported in bilingual, inquiry-based, and movement-integrated learning studies.

Quantitative Results

Pre-Post Literacy Performance Comparison

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the experimental and control groups across four literacy skills. The pre-test results show that both groups started with comparable literacy levels, confirming baseline equivalence.

Table 1. Pre-Post English Literacy Scores in Experimental and Control Groups

Skill	Group	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Gain
Writing	Experimental	62.30 (8.41)	78.55 (7.12)	+16.25
	Control	61.80 (7.95)	67.10 (7.33)	+5.30
Speaking	Experimental	58.40 (9.12)	76.00 (8.15)	+17.60
	Control	59.05 (8.52)	65.20 (7.81)	+6.15
Listening	Experimental	60.10 (7.35)	79.45 (6.92)	+19.35
	Control	59.70 (7.44)	66.40 (6.98)	+6.70
Reading	Experimental	63.20 (8.02)	80.75 (7.01)	+17.55
	Control	62.90 (7.88)	69.00 (7.60)	+6.10

Interpretation of Quantitative Gain Patterns

The results indicate significant improvements in the experimental group across all literacy skills, while the control group showed modest gains typical of traditional PJOK settings where English input is minimal.

Writing

Students in the Bilingual SPI group improved by +16.25 points. This aligns with research by Listianingsih et al. (2023), which shows that structured scaffolding, inquiry, reflective journals, and collaborative tools such as Padlet significantly boost writing performance.

Speaking

The experimental group's gain (+17.60) is consistent with studies on active interaction approaches such as self-talk (Azka & Ambarini, 2023) TMLM microteaching practices and performance-based speaking tasks (Nabila & Ambarini, 2024). Movement-based inquiry created natural contexts for negotiation, questioning, and bilingual articulation during gameplay.

Listening

The highest gain was observed in listening (+19.35), which supports previous findings on multimodal and audio-rich contexts, e.g., fairy tale audio ((Artaninda et al., 2025; Ma & Ambarini, 2023) and podcast-based listening (Ambarini et al., 2021; Firdausy et al., 2025; Santoso et al., 2025) . Bilingual instructions integrated into physical tasks required students to decode meaning quickly while moving.

Reading

The improvement in reading (+17.55) matches evidence from inquiry-based reading, digital reading tools, and PACA strategies (Ambarini & Sumardiyani, 2018; Firdausy et al., 2025; Nurhartanti & Ambarini, 2024), given that students read bilingual task cards, rule sheets, and problem scenarios during activities (Ma et al., 2023; Nabila & Ambarini, 2024; Prayogo et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2025).

The control group improved minimally (+5 to +7 points), consistent with typical ESL environments without bilingual scaffolding, inquiry dialogue structures, or active movement-based tasks.

Statistical Testing

ANCOVA results showed statistically significant differences between the groups across all skills.

Table 2. ANCOVA Summary for Post-Test Literacy Skills

Skill	F-value	p-value	Effect Size (η^2)
Writing	28.45	< .001	0.32
Speaking	31.72	< .001	0.34
Listening	36.10	< .001	0.38
Reading	29.88	< .001	0.33

All p-values were below 0.001, indicating strong statistical significance. The effect sizes ($\eta^2 = 0.32\text{--}0.38$) demonstrate that the intervention contributed large effects on literacy development.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative analysis revealed four overarching themes that illuminate how SPI and bilingual communication shaped literacy development:

1. Movement-driven inquiry fosters natural bilingual interaction

2. Socratic questioning enhances critical thinking and literacy articulation
3. Active play increases motivation, reducing affective barriers in L2 use
4. Bilingual SPI strengthens integrated literacy skills holistically

Theme 1: Movement-Driven Inquiry Generates Spontaneous Bilingual Language Use

During active play tasks—relay games, problem-based movement challenges, and rule-based physical puzzles, students produced spontaneous bilingual utterances such as:

“Why do you think we should start from that side?”

“Apa maksudnya ‘shift your direction’? Move ke kanan atau ke kiri?”

“Let’s try again—read the card first.”

These exchanges support studies on bilingual classroom interaction, demonstrating that bilingual scaffolding helps students decode meaning without suppressing fluency. Similar to Total Physical Response approaches, movement reduced anxiety and improved language uptake (Utami et al., 2022; Zaharaini et al., 2022; Zahraini et al., 2025).

Key Outcomes:

Students relied on English for brief, functional communication.

Code-switching occurred strategically rather than avoidantly.

Meaning-making became embodied, not purely verbal or textual.

Theme 2: Socratic Questioning Stimulates Reasoning and Expressive Literacy

The Socratic element of SPI prompted students to justify decisions, evaluate strategies, and articulate reasoning. Teachers used prompts like:

“What evidence do you have for choosing this route?”

“How does the rule change affect your plan?”

“Can you explain your answer in English?”

This aligns strongly with problem-based learning findings and inquiry-based reading strategies. Students tended to reply in short English clauses first (“Because the rule says...”) and gradually expanded to more complex explanation sentences (Hasanah et al., 2023; Rahmawati & Ambarini, 2023).

Observed improvements:

Speaking became more structured and coherent.

Writing reflections showed increased justification rather than listing.

Reading comprehension improved due to repeated evidence-searching.

These patterns reinforce research on reasoning-led language development (Ambarini et al., 2021, 2023).

Theme 3: Active Play Enhances Motivation and Lowers Affective Filters

Students frequently described the SPI activities as “fun,” “challenging,” and “energetic.” Their engagement was noticeably higher in the experimental group. This matches findings on gamified vocabulary learning,

Positive affective shifts included:

Increased willingness to speak English

Reduced fear of making mistakes

Higher persistence in reading and interpreting task cards

More frequent voluntary writing in journals

The synergy between physical activity and cognitive engagement aligns with interactive bilingual PE research (Prashanty et al., 2021; Utami et al., 2024), suggesting that movement amplifies linguistic confidence.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the effectiveness of Integrating Bilingual SPI into Physical Education (PE) as a pedagogical innovation to strengthen English literacy, writing, speaking, listening, and reading, through inquiry-based learning and active play (Ambarini, Sumardiyani, et al., 2026; Utami et al., 2026). Building upon previous scholarship on bilingual learning, multimodal instruction, microteaching-based innovations, and technology-supported classroom practices, this research extends the field by embedding structured bilingual literacy strategies into PE activities, a context rarely explored in prior studies (Rahmawati et al., 2023; Santoso et al., 2025; Stevani et al., 2023).

The results consistently demonstrate that Bilingual SPI within PE classes creates a cognitively rich, linguistically supportive, and physically engaging learning environment, enabling students to acquire English skills without compromising the core goals of PE. The combination of structured bilingual prompts, inquiry-based tasks, movement-integrated literacy routines, and reflective language activities generates measurable gains across the four English literacy domains. Students not only demonstrated higher competence in writing, speaking, listening, and reading, but also reported increased confidence, engagement, and motivation. Teachers gained practical tools for integrating English naturally within non-language subjects, showing increased readiness and awareness of bilingual pedagogy (Amellia et al., 2023; Kumala et al., 2021; Kusumaningrum et al., 2022).

Qualitative findings reveal that physical activities, when paired with bilingual cues, peer collaboration, and inquiry cycles, become powerful meaning-making events that scaffold comprehension and linguistic output. Students perceived bilingual PE as more enjoyable, less anxiety-inducing, and more authentic than traditional classroom-based language learning. The active play context reduced affective barriers, allowing English use to occur spontaneously and repeatedly (Utami et al., 2022, 2025). Teachers also confirmed that bilingual SPI provides a sustainable method for embedding English literacy into the broader school culture without adding academic burden (Ambarini, 2026b, 2026a).

Overall, this study concludes that Integrating Bilingual SPI in Physical Education is a viable, effective, and innovative educational model capable of enhancing students' English literacy holistically (Ambarini, Indrariansi, et al., 2018; Ambarini, Ardiana, et al., 2019; Ambarini, Indrariansi, et al., 2019; Ambarini, Utami, et al., 2026). It bridges disciplinary boundaries, merges physical engagement with linguistic development, and supports Indonesia's broader goals for strengthening bilingual competence (Ambarini, Indrariansi, et al., 2019; Ambarini, Utami, et al., 2026; Suciati & Ambarini, 2018; Zahraini et al., 2025). Future research may expand this model across grade levels, incorporate digital tools more extensively, or explore longitudinal effects on students' academic pathways and communicative confidence.

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