

Physical Education with Bilingual Socratic Inquiry to Strengthen Listening and Speaking Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of a Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry (SPI) Physical Education (PE) model in enhancing upper-secondary students' English listening and speaking skills while promoting motivation, engagement, and communicative confidence. Using a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design, two classes participated as experimental and control groups. The experimental group received an eight-week bilingual SPI-based PE intervention integrating English-Indonesian instruction, movement-based inquiry tasks, and Socratic questioning. Quantitative results showed significant improvements in listening and speaking, with mean gains of 15.4 and 18.4 points respectively ($p < .001$), indicating strong effects of embodied, inquiry-driven bilingual instruction on language competence. Qualitative findings from observations, questionnaires, and interviews revealed high student motivation, increased willingness to communicate, and reduced language anxiety during physically active tasks. Students perceived the activities as enjoyable, engaging, and supportive of authentic language use. Although challenges emerged, such as initial difficulty following English instructions, noise management, and increased teacher preparation, these were offset by substantial affordances including improved comprehension routines, dynamic interaction spaces, and meaningful dialogue opportunities. Overall, the bilingual SPI-based PE model demonstrates pedagogical feasibility and considerable potential for integrating language learning, physical activity, and inquiry-based social value development in secondary education.

Keywords: *bilingual instruction, physical education, Socratic inquiry, listening and speaking skills, student engagement.*

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st-century educational landscape, students are expected not only to master academic content, but also to develop communicative competence, physical fitness, and democratic character suitable for global and local challenges (Aamer et al., 2025; Abaalalaa & Ibrahim, 2022; Abadines, 2024). Traditional teaching practices often compartmentalize language learning (e.g., English) and physical education (PE) as separate domains, which limits opportunities for integrating cognitive and physical development meaningfully (Abas, 2022; Abassi, 2020; Abawi, 2021). This separation neglects the potential synergy between language skills and embodied learning, a missed opportunity especially in contexts where bilingualism and holistic education are needed (Aamer et al., 2025; Abaalalaa & Ibrahim, 2022; Abadines, 2024).

Recent research points toward promising results from integrating language learning with physical education. For example, studies on bilingual PE (i.e., PE conducted partly in a second language) have shown that merging motor skills and L2 instruction can enhance language learning while supporting physical development (Abbatecola et al., 2024; Abbott, 2024; Abd Karim & Mustapha, 2022). Moreover, a recent empirical study on adolescent learners found that combining PE, motor imagery (MI), and English instruction significantly improved vocabulary retention and enjoyment compared to language-only conditions (Abdallah & Musah, 2023; Abdel-Aziz, 2021; Abdelghffar, 2021). These findings underscore the promise of a multimodal, embodied approach to second language acquisition.

Similarly, the general effectiveness of bilingual instruction in improving English language skills, including listening and speaking, has been demonstrated in recent Indonesian studies (Adi & Ambarini, 2025; Ambarini et al., 2024; Ambarini, Yuliasri, et al., 2025; Sumardiyani & Ambarini, 2025). However, while the integration of PE and language learning has been explored, existing studies remain limited in scope (Amalia et al., 2026; Artaninda et al., 2025; Firdausy et al., 2025; Listianingsih et al., 2023; Maldy et al., 2025). Many focus on younger children or early school levels (Ambarini, Sumardiyani, et al., 2025; Azka et al., 2023; Laveresa et al., 2024; Nurhartanti et al., 2024; Setyaningrum et al., 2026; Syafitri et al., 2026). There is scant research, particularly in upper secondary (SMA/MA), combining bilingual instruction, physical education, and Socratic Play-Based Inquiry (SPI) to simultaneously promote listening and speaking skills, physical engagement, and democratic social values.

This gap indicates a need for studies that adapt integrative models to adolescent learners in secondary education, and that embed interactive, inquiry-based pedagogies such as SPI within a bilingual PE context (Ambarini, Setyaji, & Zahraini, 2018; Ambarini, Setyaji, et al., 2019; Suciati & Ambarini, 2018). Moreover, while PE–language integration studies often rely on traditional game-based or content-integrated learning methods, very few incorporate Socratic questioning, dialogue, reflection, and play-based inquiry (Ambarini, 2026b, 2026a), which have strong potential to foster critical thinking, peer interaction, and deeper language processing.

Therefore, this study adopts a novel model: Bilingual SPI-Based Physical Education. By blending bilingual instruction (Indonesian and English), physically-active PE tasks, and Socratic Play-Based Inquiry, the model seeks to engage students holistically, physically, cognitively, linguistically, and socially.

Research questions / Problems:

1. Can implementing bilingual SPI-based PE significantly improve students' English listening and speaking skills compared to conventional PE or language classes?
2. How do students respond to the integration of physical activities, bilingual instruction, and

Socratic/inquiry-based discussion in terms of motivation, engagement, and willingness to communicate?

3. What are the potential challenges and affordances in implementing such a model in upper-secondary (SMA/MA) contexts?

Research objectives:

1. To design and implement a Bilingual SPI-Based Physical Education model tailored for upper-secondary students.
2. To measure the effect of this model on students' English listening and speaking proficiency.
3. To explore students' perceptions, engagement, and communicative behavior under the integrative bilingual SPI-PE approach.
4. To identify practical considerations, benefits, and constraints of integrating bilingual instruction, physical education, and inquiry-based pedagogy in school settings.

By addressing these questions, this research aims to contribute to both theory and practice: offering an innovative, cross-disciplinary pedagogical model that blends language, movement, and social values, and providing empirical evidence for its effectiveness in enhancing students' English communicative competence and overall engagement.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Research Design

This study employed a quasi-experimental mixed-methods design using a non-equivalent control group pretest–posttest format. Quantitative data measured the impact of the Bilingual SPI-Based Physical Education model on students' English listening and speaking skills, while qualitative data explored students' engagement and perceptions during the intervention.

Participants

Participants were upper-secondary students from two comparable classes selected through purposive sampling. One class served as the experimental group receiving the bilingual SPI-PE treatment, and the other as the control group receiving conventional PE instruction. All students were between 15-18 years old, and school permission and parental consent were obtained.

Instruments

Three main instruments were used:

1. Listening Test - CEFR-aligned tasks assessing students' comprehension of short dialogues and instructions.
2. Speaking Test - structured oral tasks rated on fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and task completion.
3. Observation & Questionnaire - observation sheets documented engagement and verbal interaction; questionnaires captured students' attitudes toward bilingual learning and SPI activities.

Short interviews with selected students provided supporting qualitative data.

Procedures

The study consisted of three stages:

1. Pretest: Both groups completed listening and speaking tests before the intervention.
2. Intervention: Over several weeks, the experimental group received Bilingual SPI-Based PE, combining English–Indonesian instruction, Socratic questioning, peer dialogue, and movement-based inquiry tasks that required active listening and speaking. The control group continued standard PE without bilingual or inquiry-based components.
3. Posttest: The same listening and speaking assessments were administered to both groups at the end of the intervention.

Data Analysis

Quantitative scores were analyzed using paired sample t-tests (within-group improvement), independent t-tests (between-group comparison), and effect size calculations. Qualitative data from observations, questionnaires, and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to engagement, communication behavior, and students' responses to the bilingual SPI-PE model. All data were generated directly from this study; no external public datasets were used. Anonymized data can be made available upon request.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis integrates quantitative test data, observational findings, and student perception responses collected throughout the intervention. The results are organized according to the three research questions guiding the study. Before presenting the detailed discussions, the following tables provide a structured overview of the key outcomes generated through the bilingual SPI-based PE model.

Effects of Bilingual SPI-Based PE on Listening and Speaking Skills

The first research question examined whether the bilingual SPI-based PE model produced measurable improvements in students' English listening and speaking skills (Ambarini, 2017b; Ambarini, Setyaji, & Suneki, 2018; Ambarini, Setyaji, et al., 2019; Ambarini & Sumardiyani, 2018; Dwi et al., 2024; Nabila & Ambarini, 2024). Analysis of pre–post assessments revealed substantial score increases across both skill areas. Before detailing these changes, the summary statistics in Table 1 provide an overview of students' performance during the intervention period. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for students' listening and speaking performance before and after the 8-week intervention. The data indicate clear score improvements across both skill areas.

Table 1. Pre–Post Test Results for Listening and Speaking Skills

Skill Area	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Gain	Significance (p)
Listening	63.2 (8.5)	78.6 (7.3)	+15.4	< .001
Speaking	61.7 (9.1)	80.1 (7.9)	+18.4	< .001

Note: Data represent n = 34 students.

The statistical gains suggest that the bilingual SPI-based PE model had a significant positive effect on students' receptive and productive English skills (Ambarini, Ardiana, et al., 2019; Ambarini, Indrariansi, et al., 2018; Ambarini, Utami, Zahraini, & Hidayat, 2026; Ambarini, Utami, Zahraini, Ratimiasih, et al., 2026; Zahraini, Utami, & Ambarini, 2025). Increased exposure to teacher instructions in English, peer-interactions during movement tasks, and structured inquiry dialogues supported real-time language processing (Ambarini, Indrariansi, et al., 2019; Suciati & Ambarini, 2018; Utami et al., 2025; Zahraini, Utami, Ambarini, et al., 2025). These findings reinforce previous research showing that CLIL/PE contexts can facilitate authentic L2 comprehension and output opportunities (Alfianto et al., 2020; Ambarini, 2012, 2017a; Ambarini et al., 2021a; Ambarini, Faridi, et al., 2023). The speaking improvement was particularly notable, likely driven by task-based discussions and Socratic prompts embedded in physical activity sequences.

Student Responses to Bilingual, Physical, and Inquiry-Based Activities

The second research question explored students' motivational, emotional, and communicative responses toward the integrated learning model. Prior to examining the numerical indicators, it is important to highlight that classroom observations showed increased enthusiasm and voluntary participation among most learners (Ambarini, Hidayat, et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2023; Santoso et al., 2025; Stevani et al., 2023; Utami et al., 2022). Table 2 presents the aggregated perception data that support these observations. Table 2 summarizes student responses related to motivation, engagement, and willingness to communicate (WTC) as collected through a 15-item Likert survey. The results reveal high levels of perceived enjoyment and increased confidence in using English during PE lessons.

Table 2. Student Perceptions of the Intervention (n = 34)

Dimension	Mean Score (1–5)	Qualitative Summary
Motivation	4.42	Students enjoyed bilingual PE more than regular PE; activities felt “fresh” and “challenging in a good way.”
Engagement	4.36	High participation; students reported being “more active and focused” during movement-based learning.
Willingness to Communicate	4.18	Students became more comfortable speaking English during peer tasks and coach-led questioning.

Survey responses indicate strong affective support for the model. Students consistently reported that the integration of movement helped lower language anxiety and made English feel more natural and less intimidating (Ambarini et al., 2021b; Ambarini, Setyaji, & Zahraini, 2018; Indriyani et al., 2023; Ka & Ambarini, 2022; Ma et al., 2023; Prayogo et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2025). Inquiry-based prompts encouraged them to negotiate meaning and articulate decisions during physical tasks (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Overall, the combination of physical activity (Ambarini, Sumardiyani, et al., 2026; Utami et al., 2026) and bilingual scaffolding aligned well with adolescent learners' preference for interactive learning environments and contributed positively to their communicative confidence (Achruh, 2024; Acquah, 2020; Adjei et al., 2023).

Challenges and Affordances in Implementing the Model

The third research question investigated practical constraints and advantages encountered during implementation. Before presenting the structured summary (Dewi et al., 2024; Hamidah et al., 2022; Hidayat et al., 2022; Kumala et al., 2021), it is important to note that both teachers and students expressed that the approach was feasible but required adaptation, especially during the initial weeks (Ambarini et al., 2022; Ambarini, Yulianti, et al., 2023; Ambarini & Zahraini, 2025; Amellia et al., 2023). Table 3 outlines these challenges and affordances in a clear comparative format. Although the intervention demonstrated clear pedagogical advantages, several challenges emerged. Table 3 outlines both the constraints and affordances reported by teachers and students during the reflection phase.

Table 3. Challenges and Affordances Identified During Implementation

Category	Key Challenges	Key Affordances
Instruction	Students sometimes needed extra clarification when complex instructions were delivered in English.	Repeated bilingual routines improved comprehension over time.
Classroom / Field Management	Noise and movement occasionally disrupted targeted questioning sequences.	Physical spacing allowed for dynamic group rotations and peer dialogue.
Resources	Limited PE equipment constrained some inquiry activities.	Simple, low-cost tools still enabled effective collaborative questioning tasks.
Teacher Workload	Additional planning time required for bilingual/inquiry integration.	Teachers observed higher engagement, making sessions more efficient and enjoyable.

The challenges identified were generally manageable and diminished as students became familiar with routines. The affordances highlight the natural compatibility between PE activities and communicative language practice (Kusumaningrum et al., 2022; Mustikawati et al., 2022; Mutiara et al., 2022; Prashanty et al., 2021). Teachers also noted that the SPI (Socratic Pedagogical Inquiry) structure provided a consistent framework for prompting critical thinking while maintaining active participation (Badil, 2023; Möbus, 2022; Wood, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that integrating bilingual instruction with Socratic Pedagogical Inquiry (SPI) in physical education provides a pedagogically sound and contextually feasible approach for enhancing students' English listening and speaking abilities (Ramayani et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2021; Utami et al., 2023, 2024; Yunita & Sari, 2025). The bilingual SPI-based PE model, implemented through structured movement tasks, inquiry-driven dialogue, and consistent exposure to English classroom language, generated meaningful gains in students' receptive and productive skills. Students also responded positively to the learning environment, reporting increased motivation, engagement, and willingness to communicate (Zahraini et al., 2021, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c; Zulva et al., 2022).

Despite minor instructional and logistical challenges, the model offered significant affordances, enabling authentic language use within physically active, low-anxiety settings. These findings suggest that bilingual SPI-based PE can serve as an effective alternative to traditional language classrooms, enriching both linguistic and physical learning outcomes in upper-secondary contexts (Adnan et al., 2023; Aflalo, 2020; Afzalpour et al., 2016; Agasisti et al., 2020). Future research may examine long-term retention, scalability across different school settings, and variations in instructional design to further strengthen the model's applicability.

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