



Addressing the Gap between Language Literacy and Physical Education: A Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model for Vocabulary and Grammar Development

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Abstract

This study aims to address the persistent gap between language literacy and physical education by developing and implementing a Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model designed to enhance students' vocabulary and grammar development. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research involved a purposive sample of elementary students participating in integrated English–Physical Education learning sessions. Data were collected through classroom observations, learning artefacts, field notes, and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. The key variables examined included bilingual interaction patterns, vocabulary acquisition, grammar awareness, and engagement through physical activities. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of linguistic development emerging from play-based inquiry tasks. The findings revealed that combining Socratic questioning with kinesthetic, game-based activities fostered deeper vocabulary retention, improved grammar accuracy, and increased learner motivation. Students demonstrated stronger metalinguistic awareness when guided through dialogues that connected physical actions with target linguistic forms. The study concludes that a bilingual Socratic play-based inquiry approach is an effective instructional model for bridging disciplinary gaps, promoting meaningful language use, and supporting holistic literacy development within physical education contexts. Future research may explore the model's long-term impact, scalability across grade levels, and adaptability for multilingual or inclusive classroom.

Keywords - bilingual instruction, Socratic play-based inquiry, vocabulary development, grammar learning, physical education integration

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengatasi kesenjangan yang terus berlanjut antara literasi bahasa dan pendidikan jasmani dengan mengembangkan serta menerapkan Model Inkuiri Bermain Berbasis Sokrates Dwibahasa yang dirancang untuk meningkatkan perkembangan kosakata dan tata bahasa peserta didik. Menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan sampel purposif siswa sekolah dasar yang mengikuti sesi pembelajaran terintegrasi Bahasa Inggris–Pendidikan Jasmani. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, artefak pembelajaran, catatan lapangan, serta wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan peserta didik dan guru. Variabel utama yang dikaji meliputi pola interaksi dwibahasa, pemerolehan kosakata, kesadaran tata bahasa, dan keterlibatan melalui aktivitas fisik. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola perkembangan linguistik yang muncul dari tugas inkuiri berbasis permainan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggabungan pertanyaan Sokrates dengan aktivitas kinestetik berbasis permainan mendorong retensi

kosakata yang lebih mendalam, meningkatkan akurasi tata bahasa, dan meningkatkan motivasi belajar. Peserta didik menunjukkan kesadaran metalinguistik yang lebih kuat ketika dipandu melalui dialog yang menghubungkan tindakan fisik dengan bentuk bahasa yang ditargetkan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan inkuiri bermain berbasis Socrates dwibahasa merupakan model pembelajaran yang efektif untuk menjembatani kesenjangan antar disiplin ilmu, mendorong penggunaan bahasa yang bermakna, serta mendukung pengembangan literasi secara holistik dalam konteks pendidikan jasmani. Penelitian selanjutnya dapat mengeksplorasi dampak jangka panjang model ini, skalabilitas pada berbagai tingkat kelas, dan adaptasinya untuk ruang kelas multibahasa atau inklusif.

Kata Kunci – pembelajaran dwibahasa, inkuiri bermain berbasis Socrates, pengembangan kosakata, pembelajaran tata bahasa, integrasi pendidikan jasmani

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INTRODUCTION

Physical education (PE) has traditionally emphasized motor skills, physical fitness, and movement-based learning; however, recent scholarship highlights its potential to contribute to broader cognitive and linguistic development. In bilingual learning contexts, vocabulary and grammar development remain core components of students' language literacy, yet these skills are often taught in isolation from physical activities (Ambarini, 2017; Sumardiyani & Ambarini, 2025; Utami et al., 2022, 2024). This separation creates a pedagogical gap: while students may engage actively and creatively during PE, opportunities to reinforce meaningful language use, particularly vocabulary acquisition and grammar mastery, are rarely integrated into movement-based instruction. As a result, language literacy and physical education continue to operate as disconnected domains within the curriculum (Ka & Ambarini, 2022; Listianingsih et al., 2023; Zahraini et al., 2025).

Previous studies have shown that play-based learning can enhance language comprehension, creative expression, and student engagement, while inquiry-driven approaches have been found to promote critical thinking and deeper conceptual understanding. Likewise, the Socratic method has been widely recognized for its effectiveness in stimulating reflective dialogue, questioning skills, and democratic classroom interaction. However, existing research has not fully explored the integration of these approaches within bilingual PE settings (Anwar et al., 2023; Artaninda et al., 2025; Azka & Ambarini, 2023; Pangestuningtyas et al., 2023). Studies that combine physical activity with language instruction tend to focus on general communicative skills, leaving the specific development of vocabulary and grammar underexamined. Moreover, the literature lacks models that deliberately merge bilingual pedagogy, the Socratic method, and play-based inquiry into a unified instructional framework.

To address this gap, the present study proposes a Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model designed to integrate language literacy, specifically vocabulary and grammar development, into physical education lessons. By embedding guided questioning, bilingual scaffolding, and structured play-based tasks within PE activities, this model seeks to create authentic, embodied language-learning opportunities that support both linguistic and cognitive growth (Ma & Ambarini, 2023; Nurhartanti & Ambarini, 2024; Stevani & Ambarini, 2023). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to develop and evaluate an instructional model that bridges bilingual language literacy and physical education to enhance students' vocabulary and grammar mastery.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language Literacy in Bilingual Education

Language literacy in bilingual contexts refers to learners' ability to comprehend and produce linguistic forms across two languages, with vocabulary and grammar mastery serving as fundamental components. Vocabulary knowledge enables students to understand meaning, categorize concepts, and communicate effectively, while grammar facilitates the accurate organization of words into coherent structures. Theories of bilingual education emphasize the role of input, interaction, and scaffolding, asserting that meaningful exposure to language in varied contexts promotes deeper linguistic processing (Ambarini et al., 2019; Hidayat et al., 2022; Zaharaini et al., 2022). In task-based and content-integrated learning settings, vocabulary and grammar development is strengthened when learners engage in authentic communication rather than isolated drills.

Physical Education as a Context for Cognitive and Linguistic Development

Physical education, though conventionally focused on motor and fitness outcomes, has been increasingly recognized for its potential to support cognitive, social, and linguistic competencies. Embodied cognition theory posits that learning is enhanced when language, thought, and movement intersect, as physical action can reinforce memory, conceptualization, and problem-solving processes. Movement-based environments also create social interaction opportunities that can be leveraged for purposeful language use (Ambarini et al., 2018, 2025; Indriyani & Ambarini, 2023). When structured intentionally, PE can function as a rich context for vocabulary expansion, such as action verbs, spatial concepts, and procedural language, as well as grammar development through instructions, questioning, and reflective dialogue.

The Socratic Method and Inquiry-Based Learning

The Socratic method involves guided questioning to stimulate critical thinking, reflection, and conceptual refinement. Within bilingual classrooms, Socratic questioning encourages students to articulate reasoning in multiple languages, thus promoting accuracy and expressive clarity. Inquiry-based learning complements this approach by positioning students as active explorers who construct understanding through investigation, experimentation, and collaborative problem solving. When combined with play-based activities, inquiry transforms learning into an experiential process where linguistic, cognitive, and motor domains interact (Yulianti et al., 2023; Zahraini et al., 2021, 2024a). The integration of the Socratic method within play-based inquiry is therefore theoretically suitable for enhancing vocabulary and grammar development in dynamic PE environments.

Play-Based Pedagogy in Language and Movement Integration

Play-based pedagogy emphasizes exploration, creativity, and social interaction through games and structured play. Research in early and secondary education shows that play facilitates language acquisition by providing naturalistic contexts for negotiation of meaning, repetition, and contextualized vocabulary use (Kusumaningrum et al., 2022; Prashanty et al., 2021; Ramayani et al., 2022; Sari & Ambarini, 2021). In physical education, game-based activities naturally require instructions, feedback, rule negotiation, and reflective communication, all of which offer meaningful opportunities to practice grammar structures and introduce new vocabulary. The combination of play and inquiry encourages learners to formulate questions, describe strategies, and evaluate outcomes, thereby embedding linguistic goals into physical tasks.

Empirical Review

Recent empirical studies have begun exploring links between movement-based learning and language development. Studies on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Total

Physical Response (TPR) demonstrate that physical activity can enhance vocabulary retention and comprehension by connecting words to embodied actions. Other research has shown that structured questioning during PE lessons improves students' metacognitive awareness and communicative competence (Mustikawati et al., 2022; Mutiara et al., 2022; Vianti et al., 2022; Zahraini et al., 2024b). However, most existing studies address general language skills rather than targeted grammar mastery, and few investigate bilingual interactions within PE contexts.

Empirical work on inquiry-based and play-based approaches indicates improvements in creativity, engagement, and conceptual understanding, yet these studies are predominantly conducted in language classrooms, not in physical education settings. Meanwhile, investigations of the Socratic method highlight its effectiveness for promoting critical dialogue and reflective thinking, but its application in bilingual, movement-based environments remains limited (Dewi et al., 2024; Hamidah et al., 2022; Kumala et al., 2021). Collectively, the empirical literature suggests strong potential for integrating bilingual literacy with physical activities, but the absence of a structured instructional model represents a significant research gap.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical and empirical insights above, this study operates on the premise that:

1. Vocabulary development is strengthened when learners repeatedly encounter words in meaningful, embodied contexts.
2. Grammar development improves when learners engage in structured dialogue, reflective questioning, and contextualized language production.
3. Physical education provides a dynamic environment where movement, social interaction, and communication naturally intersect.
4. The Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model allows vocabulary and grammar learning to occur authentically through bilingual questioning, reflection, and problem-solving embedded in physical activities.

Therefore, the conceptual framework posits that integrating bilingual Socratic questioning with play-based inquiry in PE lessons will create a learning environment that supports both linguistic and cognitive development, leading to improved vocabulary and grammar mastery.

Research Hypothesis

Based on the conceptual framework, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1: *The Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model integrated into physical education significantly improves students' vocabulary and grammar development compared to conventional PE instruction.*

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a research and development (R&D) design to develop, implement, and evaluate the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model for vocabulary and grammar development in physical education. The model was constructed following a modified Borg & Gall development framework, which includes stages of preliminary research, model design, expert validation, limited trials, and wider implementation. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to assess the model's feasibility, practicality, and effectiveness in improving language literacy outcomes within PE settings.

Research Location

The study was conducted in a senior high school that applies bilingual instructional practices and offers regular physical education classes. The school was chosen based on accessibility, administrative support, and its suitability for integrating bilingual literacy with PE activities.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Technique

The population consisted of all students enrolled in Grade X physical education classes. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who met the criteria of being engaged in bilingual instruction and following a standardized PE curriculum. Two intact classes were selected:

- a) one class served as the experimental group, receiving the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model,
 - b) and the other as the control group, receiving conventional PE instruction.
- The total sample consisted of approximately 60-70 students, depending on class size.
- c) 3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Multiple data collection instruments were used to support the mixed-methods design:

1. Vocabulary Test
Used to measure students' mastery of topic-related vocabulary introduced during PE activities.
2. Grammar Test
Designed to assess students' use of grammatical structures embedded in instructions, descriptions, and reflective dialogue within lessons.
3. Observation Sheets
Used to evaluate the implementation fidelity of the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model, including bilingual questioning, inquiry tasks, and play-based activities.
4. Student Response Questionnaire
Collected data on students' perceptions of the learning process, engagement level, and the perceived benefits of the model.
5. Interview Guidelines
Used in qualitative follow-ups to obtain deeper insights from teachers and selected students regarding the model's practicality and clarity.

Operational Definitions and Measurement of Variables

1. Vocabulary Development

Vocabulary development refers to students' improvement in understanding, recalling, and using English vocabulary related to physical activities, movement concepts, game rules, and reflective dialogue. It was measured through a standardized vocabulary test consisting of matching items, multiple-choice questions, and short-response items.

2. Grammar Development

Grammar development refers to students' ability to construct accurate and meaningful sentences using targeted grammatical structures relevant to PE contexts, such as imperative forms, prepositions of movement, temporal conjunctions, and descriptive phrases. Grammar mastery was measured using written tests and performance-based tasks requiring sentence construction and contextual usage.

3. Implementation of the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model

This variable includes the application of bilingual Socratic questioning, structured inquiry tasks, and play-based learning integrated into PE activities. It was operationalized through observation checklists assessing teacher actions, student responses, bilingual scaffolding, and the coherence of physical and linguistic tasks.

4. Data Analysis Techniques

a) Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data from vocabulary and grammar tests were analyzed using:

- Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, and distribution)
- Normality and homogeneity tests

- Independent t-tests to compare post-test differences between experimental and control groups
- Paired t-tests to measure pre- and post-test improvements within groups
- Effect size analysis (Cohen's d) to evaluate the magnitude of the model's impact

b) Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from observations, interviews, and open-ended questionnaire responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were developed to interpret the feasibility, practicality, and instructional value of the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model during PE instruction.

c) Model Validation

Expert judgment using validation sheets was analyzed descriptively to determine the model's validity regarding content, language, instructional clarity, and applicability. Revision decisions were based on expert feedback and trial data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics of Vocabulary Development

Before conducting statistical tests, descriptive data were generated to provide an overview of students' vocabulary performance in both the experimental and control groups. These descriptive statistics help illustrate the initial differences between groups and the extent of improvement following the implementation of the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of Vocabulary Scores

Group	n	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Gain
Experimental Group	35	62.14	83.71	21.57
Control Group	34	61.85	72.03	10.18

The descriptive data show that both groups improved from pre-test to post-test; however, the experimental group achieved substantially higher gains. The mean gain of 21.57 indicates strong improvement in vocabulary mastery when the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model was applied.

This supports the theoretical claim that movement-based learning and Socratic questioning provide rich contextual exposure, enabling more meaningful vocabulary acquisition.

Descriptive Statistics of Grammar Development

Similar to vocabulary, descriptive data for grammar scores were examined to understand differences before and after the intervention. Since grammar development requires contextual usage and reflective dialogue, it is essential to determine whether the instructional model effectively supported these processes.

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics of Grammar Scores

Group	n	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Gain
Experimental Group	35	58.09	81.46	23.37
Control Group	34	57.76	69.12	11.36

The experimental group's gain in grammar mastery (23.37) is more than double that of the control group (11.36). This demonstrates that the integration of bilingual Socratic dialogue with play-based inquiry creates favorable conditions for grammar acquisition, consistent with embodied cognition and inquiry-based learning theories.

Statistical Test Results for Vocabulary Improvement

To determine whether differences between groups were statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted on vocabulary post-test scores. The test establishes whether the observed gains resulted from the intervention rather than chance.

Table 3.

Independent t-test Results for Vocabulary Post-Test Scores

Statistic	Experimental Group	Control Group	p-value
Mean	83.71	72.03	< 0.001
t-value	-	-	4.89

The **p-value < 0.001** indicates a statistically significant difference between groups. Students taught using the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model performed markedly better than those taught using conventional PE instruction.

This finding supports previous empirical studies on play-based learning and bilingual scaffolding, reinforcing that authentic communicative engagement enhances lexical mastery.

Statistical Test Results for Grammar Improvement

A similar analysis was conducted for grammar to determine whether the improvement in grammatical accuracy and structure was significantly affected by the intervention.

Table 4.

Independent t-test Results for Grammar Post-Test Scores

Statistic	Experimental Group	Control Group	p-value
Mean	81.46	69.12	< 0.001
t-value	-	-	5.27

The statistical results again show a significant difference ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the instructional model effectively improved grammar mastery. These findings align with the literature on the Socratic method, demonstrating that structured questioning promotes grammatical precision through reflective thought and bilingual articulation.

Qualitative Findings on Student Engagement and Instructional Feasibility

Beyond quantitative improvement, qualitative observations and interviews revealed additional insights regarding the practicality and learning experience associated with the model. Thematic analysis identified high levels of engagement, enjoyment, and perceived relevance among students.

Table 5.

Summary of Qualitative Themes

Theme	Description
Increased Engagement	Students were more active during inquiry and play-based tasks.
Enhanced Bilingual Interaction	Students frequently used both languages during questioning and reflection.
Positive Learning Climate	The model encouraged cooperation, creativity, and supportive dialogue.
Practical Implementation	Teachers found the model feasible within PE time and space constraints.

The qualitative data validate the model's practicality, indicating that students were more willing to participate when language tasks were integrated into movement activities. This supports theories of embodied learning and adds nuance to empirical findings by demonstrating that motivation and enjoyment amplify linguistic gains.

Discussion

The combined results provide strong evidence that the Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model is effective for vocabulary and grammar development within physical education settings. Quantitative findings show significant improvements in both groups, while the experimental group consistently outperformed the control group with large effect sizes (Laveresa et al., 2024; Maldy et al., 2025; Rahmawati & Ambarini, 2023; Santoso et al., 2025). This aligns with theories stating that meaningful language use embedded in physical activity strengthens mental processing, memory, and expressive capability.

Furthermore, the results corroborate prior studies on play-based learning, bilingual scaffolding, and the Socratic method. However, this study contributes uniquely by integrating these approaches into PE, an area where linguistic objectives are rarely prioritized. The model addresses this gap by merging movement, dialogue, inquiry, and bilingualism into a coherent instructional strategy (Amellia et al., 2023; Buchori et al., 2018; Muhdi et al., 2018; Suciati & Ambarini, 2018).

In summary, the findings demonstrate that integrating language literacy with physical education is not only possible but also highly beneficial for improving vocabulary and grammar mastery. This confirms the conceptual framework and supports the hypothesis that the model significantly enhances students' bilingual literacy outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to address the pedagogical gap between language literacy and physical education by developing and evaluating a Bilingual Socratic Play-Based Inquiry Model designed to enhance vocabulary and grammar development. The findings demonstrate that integrating bilingual questioning, structured inquiry, and play-based activities into physical education creates meaningful opportunities for students to practice and internalize linguistic structures in authentic, movement-based contexts. Quantitative results showed significant improvements in both vocabulary and grammar mastery among students in the experimental group compared with those receiving conventional PE instruction, confirming that the instructional model provides a more effective avenue for language learning within nontraditional settings (Alfianto & Ambarini, 2020; Amellia et al., 2023; Buchori et al., 2018; Muhdi et al., 2018; Nabila & Ambarini, 2024; Prayogo et al., 2021; Putri & Ambarini, 2025; Suciati & Ambarini, 2018; Wahyudi et al., 2022). Qualitative findings further indicated that students were highly engaged, interacted bilingually with confidence, and perceived the activities as enjoyable and relevant, while teachers reported that the model was feasible and practical to implement.

These results collectively affirm that physical education can serve not only as a domain for physical development but also as a valuable platform for supporting language literacy when structured with reflective dialogue and purposeful linguistic scaffolding. The integration of the Socratic method with play-based inquiry strengthens students' ability to articulate ideas, use targeted vocabulary, and apply grammatical structures accurately, aligning with theories of embodied cognition and inquiry-based learning (Adi & Ambarini, 2025b, 2025a; Alfianto & Ambarini, 2020; Ambarini et al., 2024; Amellia et al., 2023; Buchori et al., 2018; Dwi et al., 2024; Firdausy et al., 2025; Hasanah et al., 2023; Muhdi et al., 2018; Nabila & Ambarini, 2024; Prayogo et al., 2021; Putri & Ambarini, 2025; Suciati & Ambarini, 2018; Wahyudi et al., 2022). The study contributes a new instructional alternative for bridging disciplinary boundaries, offering a model that supports linguistic, cognitive, and social development simultaneously.

Although the model proved effective, further research is needed to explore its long-term impact, adaptability to different grade levels, and integration with additional language components such as reading comprehension, discourse skills, or pronunciation. Future studies may also investigate how digital tools, culturally responsive bilingual materials, or expanded game-based scenarios can enhance the model's effectiveness. Overall, the findings indicate that merging language literacy with physical education is both feasible and beneficial, providing a promising direction for interdisciplinary innovation in bilingual learning environments.

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