THE EFFECT OF BILINGUAL INSTRUCTION ON STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

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Abstract

Bilingual instruction is a teaching approach that strategically combines students' first language (L1) and the target language (L2) to facilitate comprehension and improve language acquisition. The implementation of bilingual instruction in speaking classes is essential for supporting students' oral communication skills, especially in EFL contexts. In the realm of senior high school education, this approach was applied in the speaking classes of the eleventh-grade students at SMAN 3 Brebes. This paper aims to examine the effect of bilingual instruction on students' speaking skills. The study was conducted through a quasi-experimental research design involving two groups, with a total of 70 students: an experimental group taught using bilingual instruction (Indonesian and English) and a control group taught using conventional monolingual instruction (English only). Pre-tests and post-tests were employed to measure students' speaking performance. Following the conclusion of the study, several findings were identified as follows: 1) the post-test average score of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group; 2) bilingual instruction proved effective in helping students overcome language barriers; 3) the strategy enhanced students' motivation and created a more inclusive and supportive classroom environment.

Keywords: Bilingual Instruction, Speaking Skills, Quasi-Experimental.

1   INTRODUCTION

The growing globalization has increased the need for effective communication in multiple languages, particularly in English, which is widely recognized as the global lingua franca. In response, bilingual instruction has gained prominence as an effective teaching method to bridge language barriers and improve students' understanding, particularly in countries where English is taught as a foreign language (EFL). Bilingual instruction contemplates the purposeful use of learner's primary language (L1) and the target language (L2) throughout the learning process García & Lin, (2016). Rather than replacing English, this approach uses the native language to support comprehension, cognitive engagement, and gradual language proficiency in English Polanco & Luft de Baker, (2018). Research has shown that bilingual instruction can reduce anxiety, increase motivation, and promote deeper understanding, particularly in EFL contexts where students may struggle with content taught exclusively in English (Umansky & Dumont, 2019).

According to Sujarwati (2023), bilingual instruction has a substantial impact on students' speaking abilities. Among the various models of bilingual education, dual-language instruction programs result in the greatest improvement in students' English proficiency, followed by transitional bilingual models and English-only instruction. Similarly, Charoenphon (2023) revealed that bilingual education programs can greatly influence the academic success of minority students, particularly for individuals learning English as a second language. By incorporating instruction in both the students' native language and English, these programs enable learners to strengthen their basis in the original language while simultaneously improving their English proficiency.

In Indonesian public schools, including SMAN 3 Brebes in Central Java, low speaking competence remains an issue. Prihatin (2022) found that students view bilingual classroom interaction as beneficial for clarifying complex instructions, reducing misunderstanding, and supporting more active participation in lessons. This perception aligns with the notion that L1 can serve as a valuable cognitive tool, particularly in situations where L2 proficiency is still developing. Despite following the national curriculum that emphasizes communicative competence, many students still struggle to speak English fluently and confidently. Observations from teaching internships (PLP) reveal that students are reluctant to express their thoughts in English, often relying on memorized sentences without fully understanding their meaning. They avoid participation in discussions, presentations, and classroom interactions in English, limiting their overall communicative competence. This disconnect between curriculum goals and

students' experiences highlights the potential of bilingual instruction to bridge the gap, helping learners understand complex content in their primary language while gradually improving their English-speaking ability Irsani & Dollah, (2024). However, the extent of its impact on speaking skills in Indonesian public high schools remains under-researched. Consequently, the present study seeks to examine the effect of bilingual instruction on the speaking skills of eleventh-grade students at SMAN 3 Brebes.

2   METHODOLOGY

In this comprehensive study, the author employed a quasi-experimental research design as described by John W. Creswell, (2003) involving two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The participants were seventy eleventh-grade students of SMAN 3 Brebes, with 35 students assigned to the experimental group and 35 students to the control group. The experimental group was taught using bilingual instruction (Indonesian and English), while the control group received conventional monolingual instruction (English only). This design enabled a systematic comparison of the effects of bilingual instruction on students' speaking skills.

To obtain the necessary data, the researcher administered pre-tests and post-tests to both groups. These tests were designed to measure various aspects of speaking skills, including fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, interaction and pronunciation. The pre-test was conducted before the treatment to determine the students' initial speaking abilities, while the post-test was administered after the treatment to assess improvement.

The analysis of the collected data was carried out using statistical methods to compare the mean scores between the two groups. The independent samples t-test was applied to determine whether the difference in post-test scores was statistically significant. This approach provided clear evidence regarding the effectiveness of bilingual instruction in enhancing speaking skills, contributing valuable empirical data to the broader discussion on bilingual pedagogy in EFL contexts.

3   RESULTS

This section presents the research findings based on descriptive statistics, tests of normality and homogeneity, and hypothesis testing using both paired samples t-test and independent samples t-test.

The significance of this study is primarily determined by the analysis of the collected data. The researcher collected findings from both the control and experimental classes in the eleventh grade of SMAN 3 Brebes. To obtain the research data, a pre-test was administered to both groups before the treatment, followed by a series of bilingual instruction sessions for the experimental group. After the treatment phase, a post-test was conducted for both groups. The results were analyzed to determine whether there was a significant difference in the students' speaking skills after the use of bilingual instruction.

Before the treatment, the experimental group had a higher average pre-test score (59.94) compared to the control group (50.57). After the treatment, the experimental group's average score increased significantly to 79.74, while the control group also improved but to a lesser extent, with a post-test average of 66.43. These results suggest that the use of bilingual instruction had a stronger and more positive effect on improving students' speaking skills.

The administration of the pre-test and post-test was carefully planned and conducted during regular English class hours to maintain a natural learning environment. The pre-test was conducted before any instructional intervention to establish a baseline of students' speaking abilities. Following the treatment period, which consisted of three structured bilingual instruction sessions spread across two weeks, the post-test was given to evaluate students' progress. Both tests required students to deliver a short individual speaking performance lasting two to three minutes.

The classroom settings for the tests were familiar to the students, aiming to reduce anxiety and maintain comfort. Instructions were delivered in both English and Bahasa Indonesia to ensure full understanding of the task. However, the data collection process was not without its challenges. Several students experienced nervousness, especially during the pre-test, which may have affected their performance. Additionally, background noise in the classroom occasionally interfered with the clarity of students' speech. Time management also proved critical, as each student needed sufficient time to complete their task within the allocated class period.

To maintain fairness and consistency in assessment, a standardized speaking rubric was used, and in some cases, two raters were involved to minimize scoring bias. These steps helped ensure that the test results accurately reflected students' actual speaking abilities and the impact of bilingual instruction on their performance.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of pre-test and post-test scores for both the experimental and control groups.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Group	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Control	35	40.00	60.00	50.57	5.425
Pre-test Experimental	35	43.00	76.00	59.94	8.080
Post-test Control	35	53.00	80.00	66.43	7.122
Post-test Experimental	35	63.00	96.00	79.74	8.089

Based on the descriptive statistical data table, the study involved a total of 35 students in the experimental group samples (N). This research began with a pre-test administered to both groups to assess their initial speaking abilities prior to receiving any instructional treatment. According to the descriptive statistics output from SPSS version 26, the control group's pre-test scores ranged from a minimum of 40.00 to a maximum of 60.00, with a mean score of 50.57 and a standard deviation of 5.425. Meanwhile, the experimental group scored a minimum of 43.00 and a maximum of 76.00, with a mean score of 59.94 and a standard deviation of 8.080. These results indicate that the experimental group had slightly higher initial speaking performance compared to the control group.

After the treatment was implemented bilingual instruction for the experimental group and conventional instruction for the control group a post-test was administered to both groups to evaluate improvement in speaking skills. The control group's post-test scores ranged from a minimum of 53.00 to a maximum of 80.00, with a mean score of 66.43 and a standard deviation of 7.122. In contrast, the experimental group achieved scores between 63.00 and 96.00, with a mean score of 79.74 and a standard deviation of 8.089. This indicates a notable improvement in the experimental group's speaking performance following the application of bilingual instruction, as reflected in the higher mean score and broader range of achievement in the post-test compared to the control group.

3.1.1 Normality Test

Normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table 2. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test Results

Variable	Statistic	df	Sig.	Interpretation
Pre-test Control	0.947	35	0.094	Normal distribution
Post-test Control	0.962	35	0.271	Normal distribution
Pre-test Experimental	0.966	35	0.337	Normal distribution
Post-test Experimental	0.972	35	0.495	Normal distribution

Since all significance values are greater than 0.05, the data for all variables are normally distributed.

The results of the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk method showed that the significance value for the pre-test in the experimental class was 0.337, and in the control class it was 0.094. Since both values

are greater than 0.050, the pre-test scores from both groups can be considered normally distributed. Likewise, the post-test normality test results indicated a significance value of 0.495 for the experimental class and 0.271 for the control class. As these values are also above 0.050, it can be concluded that the post-test data in both the experimental and control groups also meet the assumption of normal distribution. These findings confirm that the data are suitable for further analysis using parametric tests, such as the independent samples t-test, to determine the effectiveness of bilingual instruction on students' speaking skills.

The normality test plays a crucial role in determining the appropriate statistical procedures for data analysis. In this study, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to evaluate whether the pre-test and post-test scores from both the experimental and control groups followed a normal distribution. According to Gliner, et al, (2011), if the data are normally distributed, researchers can use parametric tests (such as paired or independent samples t-tests), which are more powerful and reliable for comparing group means.

In the context of this research, the significance values for all groups in the Shapiro-Wilk test exceeded 0.05 (e.g., pre-test control = 0.094, post-test experimental = 0.495), indicating that the data were normally distributed. This confirmed the assumption necessary to proceed with parametric tests for hypothesis testing, ensuring the validity and reliability of the analysis outcomes.

3.1.2 Homogeneity Test

The Levene's Test was used to determine the equality of variances between groups.

Table 3. Homogeneity of Variance Test Results.

Test Based on Mean	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Nilai	0.492	-65.846	Homogeneous variances

The significance value of 0.486 (> 0.05) indicates that the variances between groups are homogeneous.

Based on the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance, the post-test data for the experimental and control classes show a significance value (Sig.) of 0.486 based on the mean, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the data from both groups have equal variance, meaning they are homogeneously distributed. The same conclusion can be drawn from the tests based on the median (Sig. = 0.477), adjusted degrees of freedom (Sig. = 0.477), and trimmed mean (Sig. = 0.481). Since all significance values exceed the 0.05 threshold, it can be concluded that the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups meet the assumption of homogeneity.

One of the essential assumptions underlying the use of the independent samples t-test is the homogeneity of variance. This refers to the condition where the two groups being compared exhibit similar variability in their data distribution. Homogeneity is important because the t-test assumes that both groups have equal variance to accurately assess whether any observed differences in means are statistically significant. When this assumption is violated, the results of the test can become unreliable, potentially leading to incorrect conclusions.

In this study, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was employed to assess the homogeneity of the pre-test and post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. The test results indicated that the significance values were greater than 0.05, suggesting that the data met the assumption of homogeneity. Therefore, the application of a parametric test such as the independent samples t-test was deemed appropriate for this research. This confirms that any differences observed in students' speaking performance can be attributed more confidently to the treatment rather than to differing levels of variability in the groups.

If the assumption of homogeneity had not been met, indicated by significance values below 0.05, it would have been necessary to consider alternative statistical approaches. In such cases, one option is to use Welch's t-test, which adjusts for unequal variances. Another option is to apply a non-parametric test such as the Mann-Whitney U test, which does not require the assumption of equal variances or normal distribution. These alternatives are crucial to ensure the validity and reliability of statistical findings when standard parametric assumptions are not satisfied.

In conclusion, verifying the homogeneity of variance is a critical step in conducting valid inferential statistics. It allows for accurate interpretation of group differences and supports the methodological rigor

of the study. In this research, the confirmation of homogeneity provided a sound foundation for proceeding with the t-test to evaluate the effect of bilingual instruction on students' speaking skills.

3.1.3   The paired samples t-test

The paired samples t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group.

Table 4. Paired sample t-test Results.

Pair	Mean Difference	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
Pre-test – Post-test (Exp)	-19.800	-65.846	34	0.000	Significant improvement

The significance value (0.000 < 0.05) indicates a significant improvement in speaking skills for the experimental group after receiving bilingual instruction.

The results of the Paired Sample T-Test conducted on the experimental group revealed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, with a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that the treatment bilingual instruction had a statistically significant effect on students' speaking performance. The mean score increased from 59.94 to 79.74, with a mean difference of 19.80 points.

This outcome suggests that the application of bilingual instruction contributed substantially to the students' improvement in speaking skills. The high level of significance and strong correlation (r = 0.976) between the two sets of scores further supports the reliability of the results. Comparatively, although the control class also showed improvement, the increase was less substantial than in the experimental class. This confirms that while conventional instruction may still support learning progress, the bilingual teaching method yields greater gains in enhancing students' speaking fluency, vocabulary, and confidence.

These results reinforce the conclusion that bilingual instruction is an effective strategy in EFL classrooms for significantly improving students' speaking abilities, aligning with previous findings and supporting the theoretical framework of this study. To better understand the practical significance of the treatment beyond statistical results, the researcher calculated Cohen's d, which measures effect size. In this study, the result of Cohen's d was 2.45, indicating a very large effect. According to Cohen's conventional benchmarks (1988), an effect size of 0.2 is considered small, 0.5 is moderate, and 0.8 is large. Therefore, the value of 2.45 suggests that the improvement in students' speaking skills following bilingual instruction was not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. This large effect size reinforces the strong impact of bilingual instruction in enhancing speaking performance among students.

Furthermore, an in-depth analysis was conducted by examining each component of the speaking rubric: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, interaction and pronunciation. Among these, fluency showed the highest level of improvement. Students in the experimental class demonstrated more confident and continuous speech after the treatment. This result can be attributed to the reduced anxiety experienced during bilingual instruction, where using their native language helped students understand concepts better before expressing them in English.

Vocabulary also improved significantly. The ability to explain English words and expressions in students' first language (L1) appeared to enhance their retention and understanding of new terms. This bilingual support enabled students to expand their vocabulary in a way that felt accessible and less intimidating. Similarly, comprehension scores increased, reflecting students' improved ability to understand instructions and respond appropriately in conversation. Bilingual instruction allowed students to grasp the context and meaning of speaking tasks more clearly. In terms of pronunciation, moderate gains were observed. While some students continued to struggle with unfamiliar English sounds, the bilingual approach helped clarify phonological rules by linking them to familiar structures in the native language. Lastly, grammar also improved, though to a slightly lesser extent than fluency and vocabulary. Students were more capable of forming accurate sentences, although some still committed occasional syntactic errors.

In summary, the bilingual instruction used in this study was particularly effective in enhancing fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and interaction while also contributing positively to pronunciation and

grammar. These findings confirm that bilingual methods are not only beneficial for reducing student anxiety but also for facilitating deeper understanding and stronger speaking performance across multiple components.

3.1.4 The Independent samples t-test

The independent samples t-test compared the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups.

Table 5. Independent Samples t-test Results

T-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Interpretation
-7.309	68	0.000	-13.314	Significant improvement

The significance value (0.000 < 0.05) indicates a statistically significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups. The negative mean difference shows that the experimental group achieved higher scores than the control group. The Independent Samples T-Test was conducted to compare the post-test speaking scores between the experimental group (taught using bilingual instruction) and the control group (taught using conventional methods). According to the group statistics, the experimental class achieved a higher mean score of 79.74 with a standard deviation of 8.09, compared to the control class, which had a mean score of 66.43 and a standard deviation of 7.12. This suggests that students in the experimental group performed better after the treatment.

The results of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances showed a Sig. value of 0.486, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the assumption of equal variances is met, and the row for "Equal variances assumed" is used for interpretation. The t-test results show a Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, meaning that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups' post-test scores. The mean difference between the groups is -13.314, indicating that the experimental group outperformed the control group by an average of 13.31 points. The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference ranges from -16.949 to -9.679, which does not include zero, further confirming the significance of the result. These findings support the conclusion that the bilingual instruction implemented in the experimental class had a significant positive effect on students' speaking skills, as compared to the traditional teaching method used in the control class. This aligns with Siouffi, (2004) emphasis on using independent t-tests to validate treatment effects in educational research.

The findings of the Independent Sample T-Test revealed a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, indicating that the implementation of bilingual instruction positively influenced students' speaking skills. However, several external factors may have contributed to this outcome beyond the treatment itself. One such factor is student motivation. Students in the experimental group might have felt more engaged or excited by the bilingual instruction method, leading to increased participation and effort during learning activities. Motivation is a crucial determinant of language acquisition, and heightened interest in the lessons may have enhanced students' performance.

Additionally, the role of the teacher should be considered. In bilingual instruction, the teacher's fluency and flexibility in switching between the native language (L1) and English (L2) are essential to delivering effective instruction. A teacher who skillfully uses both languages can make students feel more comfortable, especially those who are still developing confidence in speaking English. Classroom dynamics, such as group collaboration and peer support, could have also influenced the learning environment. Students may have benefited from interacting in both languages, helping to reinforce vocabulary and communication strategies in a more supportive and inclusive context.

Despite the promising results, the study has several limitations that may affect the interpretation and generalizability of the findings. Firstly, the research was conducted only in SMAN 3 Brebes with a relatively small sample size of two classes. This narrow context limits the extent to which the results can be applied to other schools or student populations with different linguistic or socio-cultural backgrounds. Secondly, the treatment period was relatively short. A longer implementation phase might provide more reliable evidence of the long-term effects of bilingual instruction.

Another limitation lies in the assessment of speaking skills. Although a structured rubric was used, speaking evaluations can still be subjective, and variations in scoring between raters are possible. The study also employed a quasi-experimental design, meaning that participants were not randomly assigned to groups. This lack of randomization introduces the potential for selection bias, where pre-existing differences between students may have influenced the results.

Lastly, the study focused solely on students' speaking performance. While speaking is a critical component of language learning, other skills such as listening, reading, and writing were not assessed, limiting the scope of the conclusions. Future studies may consider integrating these additional skills to present a more holistic view of the impact of bilingual instruction on language acquisition. The finding that students demonstrated greater improvement in fluency compared to grammar following the bilingual instruction treatment is consistent with both theoretical perspectives and practical classroom dynamics observed in the study. Fluency, as one of the key indicators of speaking skill, refers to the ability to speak smoothly and confidently without excessive hesitation. In contrast, grammar requires accuracy in sentence structure, which often demands more conscious effort and formal instruction.

From a theoretical standpoint, García & Lin, (2016) highlight the role of translanguaging as a pedagogical approach that allows students to leverage their full linguistic including both L1 (Bahasa Indonesia) and L2 (English) to make meaning, express ideas, and engage more naturally in communication. In this study, bilingual instruction, which utilized both languages strategically, offered students opportunities to first conceptualize their responses in L1 and then express them in L2, reducing cognitive overload. This supported smoother delivery of speech and enhanced fluency. Students were encouraged to prepare keywords, rehearse their thoughts using familiar language, and then articulate those thoughts in English, which led to more fluid and confident speech.

Moreover, the use of object-based topics and personal storytelling (as employed in Bilingual Instruction activities) naturally encouraged spontaneous, expressive speaking, which prioritizes fluency over grammatical precision. As supported by Brown and Yule's (1983) functional view of speaking, fluency often develops when learners are focused on conveying meaning rather than form. The environment created by bilingual instruction, with reduced anxiety and clearer comprehension through L1 scaffolding, gave students the psychological safety to experiment and speak more freely.

On the other hand, grammar improvement tends to occur more gradually because it involves mastering abstract rules and applying them accurately during speech production. Even with L1 support, grammar requires more explicit instruction and correction, which was not the central focus of the bilingual sessions. While students became more comfortable speaking, occasional errors in verb tense, subject-verb agreement, or sentence structure persisted a common phenomenon in second language acquisition, particularly in fluency-based activities.

In essence, the greater improvement in fluency over grammar can be explained by the nature of bilingual instruction, which fosters meaning-making and confidence in communication rather than focusing on accuracy. This aligns with García & Lin, (2016) assertion that translanguaging enhances communicative competence, especially in oral tasks, by reducing linguistic barriers and allowing for more authentic use of language. Grammar, while not neglected, benefits more from sustained, focused practice over time, often requiring more traditional form focused instruction alongside communicative approaches.

Therefore, the results of this study reinforce the idea that bilingual instruction is particularly effective for enhancing fluency, and that combining it with targeted grammar instruction in future interventions may help balance both accuracy and fluency in students' spoken English.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the effect of bilingual instruction on the speaking skills of eleventh-grade students at SMAN 3 Brebes. Using a quasi-experimental design, the experimental group was taught through bilingual instruction (Indonesian and English), while the control group received monolingual instruction (English only). The findings revealed that both groups showed improvement from pre-test to post-test; however, the improvement in the experimental group was significantly greater. The paired samples t-test indicated a substantial gain in the experimental group's speaking performance after the treatment, while the independent samples t-test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the two groups' post-test scores.

The results demonstrate that bilingual instruction positively and significantly enhances students' speaking skills in an EFL context. The strategic use of students' first language as a scaffold facilitated better comprehension, reduced anxiety, and increased participation in speaking activities. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the benefits of bilingual instruction for improving communicative competence in non-native English learners.

The aim of this research was to examine the effectiveness of bilingual instruction in improving speaking skills among eleventh-grade students at SMAN 3 Brebes. Based on pre-test and post-test scores, statistical analyses, and classroom observations, it can be concluded that bilingual instruction had a

significant and positive impact on students' speaking performance. The integration of Bahasa Indonesia (L1) and English (L2) enabled students to engage more effectively with the learning materials and speaking tasks, leading to improved participation, reduced anxiety, and more confident oral communication.

Statistical evidence supported this conclusion. The Independent Samples T-Test revealed a significant difference in post-test scores between the experimental and control groups (Sig. = 0.000), while the Paired Samples T-Test demonstrated substantial improvement within the experimental group from pre- to post-test. Notably, the effect size measured by Cohen's d was 1.74, indicating a very large effect. This suggests that bilingual instruction was not only statistically effective but also carried practical significance in improving learners' speaking skills in real classroom settings.

The component analysis further revealed that the greatest improvements occurred in fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation, while grammar and comprehension also showed moderate gains. This trend supports García & Lin, (2016) translanguaging theory, which argues that bilingual scaffolding enhances L2 fluency by reducing cognitive load and anxiety, allowing learners to access prior knowledge in their first language to support second language production. As students were able to understand complex instructions or vocabulary in Bahasa Indonesia before attempting to express them in English, their confidence and communicative performance improved noticeably.

It can be concluded that integrating bilingual instruction into EFL classrooms, particularly in Indonesian public schools, is an effective approach to developing speaking skills. Teachers are encouraged to apply bilingual strategies judiciously, using the first language to support rather than replace English practice, in order to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that empowers students to communicate more confidently and competently in English.

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