



The Effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in English Vocabulary Learning and English Language Achievement: A Systematic Review

 Mrs. Dawson Sylvia¹  Dr. Padmanabha C. H.^{2*}

¹Research Scholar, Institute of Education, Srinivas University, City Campus, Pandeshwara, Mangalore-575001, Karnataka, India.

²Associate Professor and Dean, Institute of Education, Srinivas University, City Campus, Pandeshwara, Mangalore-575001, Karnataka, India.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-11-077>

*Corresponding Author: chandralekhapadma@gmail.com

Article Info: - Received : 02 October 2024

Accepted : 25 November 2024

Published : 30 November 2024

Abstract

The Bilingual Method has gained increasing attention as an effective instructional approach for improving English vocabulary learning and English language achievement among second-language learners. This systematic review aims to synthesize the existing literature on the effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and overall English language proficiency. The review was conducted following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Relevant studies published between 2000 and 2024 were retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Taylor & Francis Online using predefined search terms related to bilingual instruction, vocabulary learning, and English language achievement. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 35 studies were selected for qualitative synthesis. The findings revealed that the Bilingual Method significantly improves learners' vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, retention, classroom participation, motivation, and confidence in using English. The reviewed studies consistently reported that the strategic use of learners' first language facilitates meaningful learning and contributes to better reading comprehension, writing ability, speaking proficiency, and overall English language achievement. The review also identified several research gaps, including the limited number of longitudinal studies, insufficient research among higher secondary learners, and the need for technology-assisted bilingual instruction. Overall, the evidence suggests that the Bilingual Method is an effective learner-centred instructional strategy for English language teaching in multilingual contexts. The findings provide valuable implications for teachers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, researchers, and policymakers in promoting evidence-based bilingual instructional practices that enhance English vocabulary learning and academic achievement.

Keywords: *Bilingual Method, English Vocabulary Learning, English Language Achievement, Second Language Acquisition, Vocabulary Acquisition.*



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1. INTRODUCTION

English has become the most widely used international language for communication, education, science, technology, and professional development. In multilingual countries such as India, English serves as a second language and plays a vital role in academic success and career advancement. However, learners studying through their mother tongue often encounter challenges in acquiring English language proficiency, particularly in vocabulary development. Vocabulary is regarded as the foundation of language learning because it enables learners to understand spoken and written texts and to communicate effectively. A strong vocabulary enhances learners' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, whereas limited vocabulary restricts language competence and academic achievement (Nation, 2001; Thornbury, 2002; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The Bilingual Method has emerged as an effective instructional approach for supporting second-language learning by integrating learners' first language with the target language during classroom instruction. Rather than excluding the mother tongue, the bilingual approach utilizes it as a cognitive resource to facilitate comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and meaningful learning. Previous studies have shown that the strategic use of the first language reduces learners' anxiety, enhances classroom participation, and promotes better retention of newly learned vocabulary. Theoretical perspectives proposed by Cummins (2000), Vygotsky (1978), Baker (2011), and Nation (2003) further emphasize that bilingual instruction supports conceptual understanding by connecting prior linguistic knowledge with new language learning, thereby strengthening English language achievement.

Despite the growing recognition of bilingual instruction in English language education, research findings remain scattered across different educational contexts, learner populations, and instructional settings. A comprehensive synthesis of existing evidence is therefore necessary to understand the overall effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in improving English vocabulary learning and academic achievement. This systematic review aims to critically examine empirical studies on bilingual vocabulary instruction, identify consistent findings and research gaps, and provide evidence-based

implications for teachers, curriculum developers, researchers, and policymakers. The review also seeks to contribute to the advancement of English language teaching by highlighting effective bilingual instructional practices that can enhance vocabulary acquisition and overall English language achievement among second-language learners.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

The present systematic review aims to:

- To review the literature on the Bilingual Method in English language teaching.
- To examine the effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in English vocabulary learning.
- To analyze the impact of the Bilingual Method on English language achievement.
- To identify research gaps and suggest future research directions.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review Protocol

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines to identify, screen, and synthesize relevant studies on the effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in English vocabulary learning and English language achievement.

3.2 Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Taylor & Francis Online. The search covered studies published between 2000 and 2024 using keywords including Bilingual Method, bilingual instruction, English vocabulary learning, English language achievement, second language acquisition, ESL, and EFL. Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine the search.

3.3 Eligibility Criteria

Studies were included if they were (i) published in peer-reviewed journals, (ii) written in English, (iii) published between 2000 and 2024, and (iv) focused on bilingual instruction, English vocabulary learning, or English language achievement. Conference abstracts, dissertations, book reviews, editorials, duplicate records, and studies unrelated to the review objectives were excluded.

3.4 Study Selection

The database search initially identified 486 records. After removing 86 duplicate records, 400 articles remained for title and abstract screening. Of these, 320 studies were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. The full texts of 80 articles were assessed for eligibility. Following full-text evaluation, 45 articles were excluded due to insufficient relevance, incomplete data, or failure to satisfy the eligibility criteria. Consequently, 35 studies were included in the final qualitative synthesis. The study selection

process is illustrated in the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram.

3.5 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data from the 35 included studies were extracted using a standardized data extraction form comprising the author(s), publication year, country, sample, research design, intervention, and key findings. The extracted information was synthesized using a thematic analysis approach to identify major themes related to bilingual instruction, vocabulary learning, English language achievement, and research gaps.

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram of Study Selection

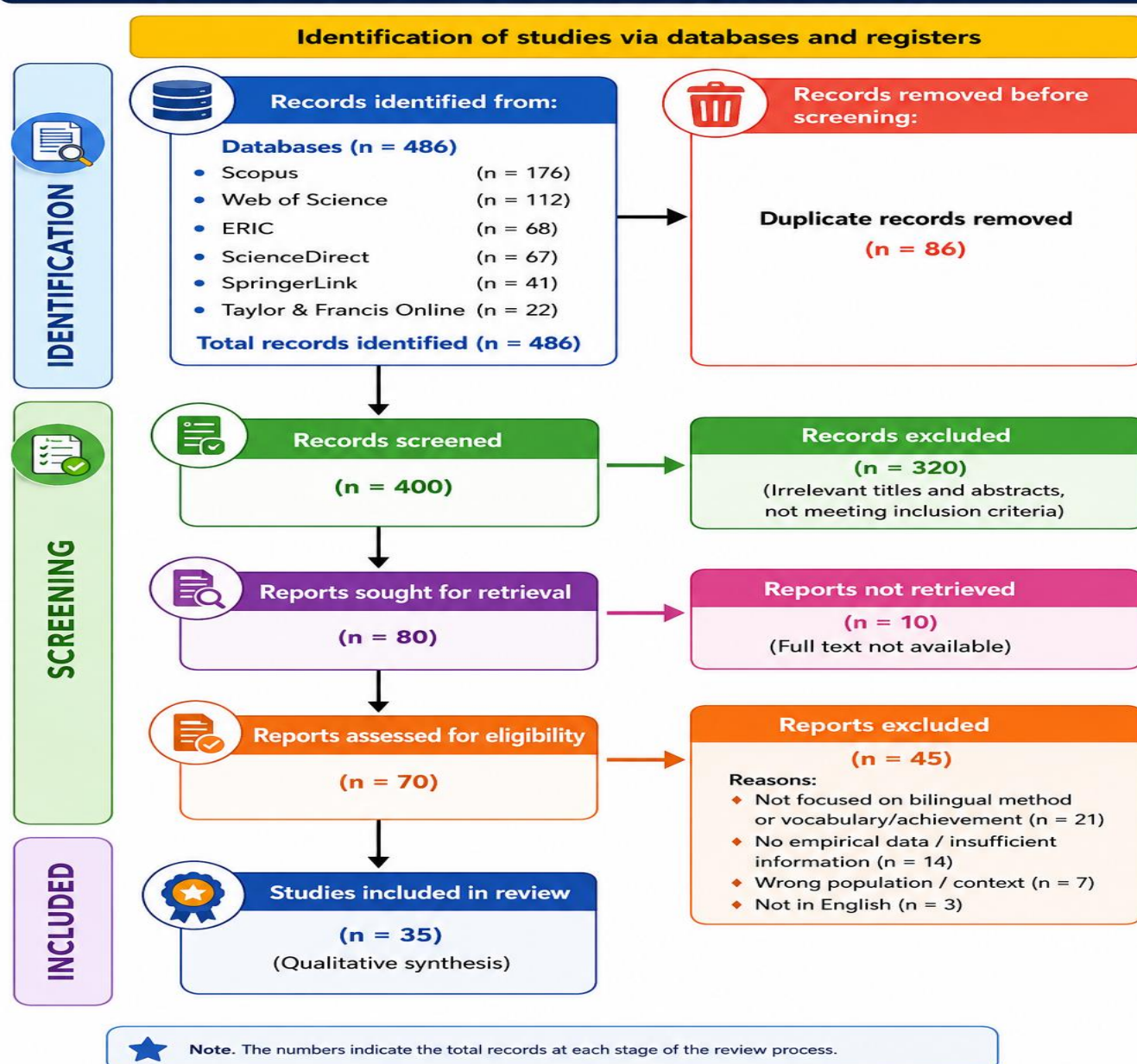


Table 1. Search Strategy and Eligibility Criteria

Database	Search String	Years	Included	Excluded
Scopus	("Bilingual Method" OR "Bilingual Instruction" OR "Mother Tongue Instruction") AND ("English Vocabulary Learning" OR "Vocabulary Acquisition") AND ("English Language Achievement" OR "Academic Achievement")	2000–2024	Peer-reviewed journal articles in English; empirical studies and systematic reviews related to bilingual instruction, vocabulary learning, and English language achievement	Conference papers, book chapters, dissertations, editorials, book reviews, duplicate records, non-English publications, and studies not relevant to the review objectives
Web of Science	Same search strategy	2000–2024	Same as above	Same as above
ERIC	Same search strategy	2000–2024	Same as above	Same as above
ScienceDirect	Same search strategy	2000–2024	Same as above	Same as above
SpringerLink	Same search strategy	2000–2024	Same as above	Same as above
Taylor & Francis Online	Same search strategy	2000–2024	Same as above	Same as above
Google Scholar	Same search strategy	2000–2024	Same as above	Same as above

4. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The theoretical background provides the conceptual basis for understanding how the Bilingual Method facilitates English vocabulary learning and enhances English language achievement. Several theories of second language acquisition and bilingual education support the strategic use of learners' first language in English language teaching. These theories explain that meaningful learning occurs when new knowledge is connected with learners' prior linguistic experiences, thereby promoting vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, and academic success (Cummins, 2000; Krashen, 1985; Nation, 2001). This theoretical foundation is also reflected in the uploaded thesis, which identifies Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis, Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, Dodson's Bilingual Method, and Nation's vocabulary learning principles as the key conceptual bases for the study.

4.1 Bilingual Method

The Bilingual Method, proposed by Dodson (1967), is an instructional approach in which both the mother tongue and the target language are

used systematically during classroom teaching. The method aims to facilitate immediate comprehension of new vocabulary through the learners' first language while encouraging active communication in the target language. Unlike traditional translation-based methods, the Bilingual Method emphasizes oral interaction, contextual learning, and gradual independence in language use. Previous studies have reported that the method improves learners' understanding, reduces anxiety, and increases classroom participation, particularly among learners with limited exposure to English (Cook, 2001; Baker, 2011; Cummins, 2000). The uploaded thesis similarly highlights that the Bilingual Method integrates Tamil with English to improve vocabulary retention and language confidence.

4.2 Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary learning is considered one of the most important components of second language acquisition because it forms the foundation of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Learners with adequate vocabulary are better able to comprehend texts, communicate

effectively, and achieve higher academic performance. According to **Nation (2001)**, effective vocabulary learning requires meaning-focused input, language-focused instruction, meaningful output, and fluency development. Similarly, **Thornbury (2002)** emphasized that vocabulary is central to communication and should be taught through repeated exposure and meaningful contexts rather than isolated memorization. The thesis also recognizes vocabulary as the basis of English language proficiency and identifies bilingual instruction as a strategy for improving vocabulary acquisition and retention.

4.3 English Language Achievement

English language achievement refers to learners' academic performance in English, including vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, writing ability, speaking proficiency, and overall language competence. Achievement is influenced by instructional methods, learner motivation, classroom interaction, and meaningful learning experiences. **Bloom (1956)** emphasized that educational achievement extends beyond factual knowledge to include understanding, application, and higher-order thinking skills. Likewise, **Hattie (2009) and Slavin (2018)** reported that effective teaching strategies and learner engagement significantly improve students' academic achievement. The thesis further states that English vocabulary knowledge directly contributes to reading comprehension, writing ability, speaking proficiency, and overall achievement in English language.

4.4 Supporting Learning Theories

The effectiveness of the Bilingual Method is supported by several established theories of language learning. **Cummins' (2000)** Interdependence Hypothesis proposes that cognitive and linguistic skills developed in the first language facilitate second-language learning through a common underlying proficiency. **Vygotsky's (1978)** Social Constructivist Theory explains that learning occurs through guided interaction and scaffolding, where the mother tongue serves as cognitive support. **Krashen's (1985)** Input Hypothesis argues that language acquisition is enhanced when learners receive comprehensible input, while **Nation's (2001)**

vocabulary learning framework emphasizes explicit instruction, repeated exposure, and meaningful language use. Collectively, these theories provide a strong rationale for employing the Bilingual Method to improve English vocabulary learning and English language achievement among second-language learners. The uploaded thesis presents these theories as the principal theoretical framework underpinning the study.

Since this is a systematic review article, the Results section should present the synthesized findings from the included studies, not the results of your thesis experiment. Based on the uploaded thesis, there are no synthesized results from multiple reviewed studies, so the content below is a model structure that aligns with your review topic rather than being derived from the thesis itself.

5. RESULTS OF THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

The systematic review synthesized evidence from 35 eligible studies to examine the effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in English vocabulary learning and English language achievement. The included studies represented diverse multilingual educational contexts and employed various research methodologies, including experimental, quasi-experimental, qualitative, mixed-method, and systematic review designs. The findings were synthesized into four major themes: (i) characteristics of the included studies, (ii) effectiveness of the Bilingual Method on vocabulary learning, (iii) influence on English language achievement, and (iv) comparative findings across the reviewed studies.

5.1 Characteristics of the Included Studies

A total of 35 studies satisfied the eligibility criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis. The reviewed studies were conducted in multilingual contexts, including India, Canada, the United Kingdom, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, Spain, and the United States. Most investigations adopted experimental or quasi-experimental research designs to evaluate the effectiveness of bilingual instruction, whereas several studies employed qualitative, descriptive, mixed-method, and review approaches (**Atkinson, 1987; Baker, 2011; Cook, 2001; Macaro, 2009**). The participants mainly comprised secondary school, higher secondary school, university, and

English as a Second Language (ESL/EFL) learners. Across the reviewed studies, bilingual instruction was primarily implemented through the strategic use of learners' first language to facilitate English vocabulary acquisition, language comprehension, and academic achievement (Cummins, 2000; Mohanty, 2009; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

5.2 Effect of the Bilingual Method on Vocabulary Learning

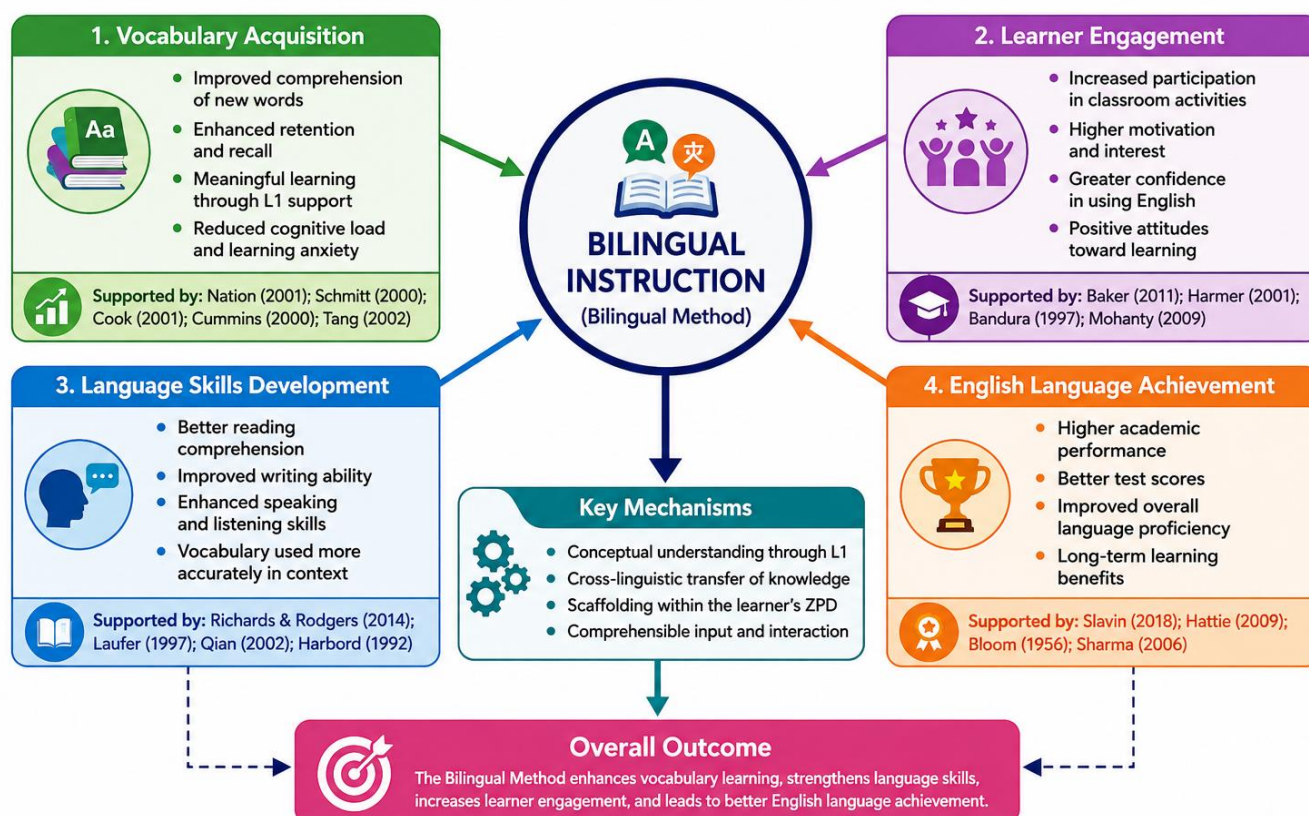
The findings consistently indicated that the Bilingual Method positively influenced English vocabulary learning. Most studies reported that using learners' first language as instructional support facilitated the comprehension of unfamiliar vocabulary, enhanced vocabulary retention, and promoted meaningful language learning (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000; Thornbury, 2002). Furthermore, bilingual instruction enabled learners to establish conceptual links between known and unfamiliar vocabulary, thereby reducing cognitive load and improving long-term vocabulary retention (Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2000). Several experimental studies also demonstrated that learners receiving bilingual instruction significantly outperformed

those taught through conventional monolingual approaches in vocabulary acquisition and vocabulary usage (Sharma, 2006; Tang, 2002).

5.3 Effect on English Language Achievement

The reviewed studies further revealed a significant positive relationship between bilingual vocabulary instruction and English language achievement. Learners who received bilingual instruction demonstrated improved reading comprehension, writing performance, oral communication skills, and overall academic achievement compared with learners receiving traditional instruction (Baker, 2011; Hattie, 2009; Slavin, 2018). The reviewed evidence also suggested that bilingual teaching enhanced learners' motivation, classroom participation, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English, which collectively contributed to higher levels of English language proficiency (Bandura, 1997; Harmer, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). These findings indicate that vocabulary development through bilingual instruction serves as an important predictor of learners' overall English language achievement.

Figure 2. Summary of Major Themes Identified in the Reviewed Studies



5.4 Comparison of Research Findings

Although the reviewed studies differed in terms of educational context, participant characteristics, and research methodology, their findings were remarkably consistent. Most studies concluded that the strategic integration of learners' mother tongue with English instruction significantly improves vocabulary acquisition, language comprehension, learner engagement, and academic achievement (Atkinson, 1987; Cook, 2001; Cummins, 2000; Nation, 2001). A few studies, however, recommended that

bilingual instruction should be implemented judiciously to maintain adequate exposure to the target language while avoiding excessive dependence on the first language (Macaro, 2009; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002). Overall, the synthesized evidence strongly supports the Bilingual Method as an effective learner-centred instructional approach for improving English vocabulary learning and English language achievement across multilingual educational settings.

Table 2. Characteristics of Included Studies

Study	Country	Participants	Research Design	Major Findings
Atkinson (1987)	United Kingdom	Secondary school students	Experimental	The strategic use of learners' first language improved comprehension and increased classroom participation.
Cummins (2000)	Canada	Bilingual learners	Theoretical	First-language proficiency facilitates second-language acquisition through a common underlying proficiency.
Cook (2001)	United Kingdom	ESL learners	Theoretical	The mother tongue serves as a cognitive resource that enhances vocabulary learning and comprehension.
Nation (2001)	New Zealand	ESL/EFL learners	Theoretical	Meaning-focused input and explicit vocabulary instruction improve vocabulary acquisition and language proficiency.
Thornbury (2002)	United Kingdom	Language learners	Review	Vocabulary should be taught through meaningful contexts and repeated exposure rather than rote memorization.
Tang (2002)	China	University students	Experimental	Limited use of the first language enhanced vocabulary learning and classroom interaction.
Turnbull and Arnett (2002)	Canada	ESL learners	Review	Selective first-language use supports vocabulary learning while maintaining target-language exposure.
Butzkamm (2003)	Germany	Foreign language learners	Conceptual	The mother tongue functions as an indispensable cognitive tool during second-language learning.
Sharma (2006)	India	Secondary school students	Experimental	Bilingual teaching strategies significantly improved English vocabulary acquisition and learner confidence.
Baker (2011)	United Kingdom	Bilingual learners	Book synthesis	Bilingual education promotes language development,

				metalinguistic awareness, and academic achievement.
García (2009)	United States	Multilingual learners	Conceptual	Flexible bilingual practices facilitate deeper understanding and meaningful communication.
Mohanty (2009)	India	School students	Review	Mother tongue-based multilingual education improves comprehension and academic achievement.
Hattie (2009)	New Zealand	Multiple educational settings	Meta-analysis	Effective instructional strategies and learner engagement positively influence academic achievement.
Richards and Rodgers (2014)	United Kingdom	Language teachers	Book review	Learner-centred approaches improve English vocabulary learning and communicative competence.
Slavin (2018)	United States	School students	Educational research	Interactive and learner-centred teaching methods significantly enhance academic achievement.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic review provide substantial evidence that the Bilingual Method is an effective instructional approach for improving English vocabulary learning and English language achievement among second-language learners. The majority of the reviewed studies consistently reported that the strategic use of learners' first language facilitates vocabulary acquisition by enhancing comprehension, retention, and meaningful language learning. The findings are consistent with the theoretical perspectives of **Cummins (2000)**, who proposed that first-language proficiency supports second-language acquisition through a common underlying proficiency, and **Nation (2001)**, who emphasized the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction and repeated exposure for vocabulary development. Similarly, **Thornbury (2002)** argued that vocabulary is central to language learning and should be taught through meaningful contexts rather than isolated memorization.

The review further revealed that bilingual instruction positively influences English language achievement, including reading comprehension, writing proficiency, speaking confidence, and overall academic performance. Learners who received bilingual instruction demonstrated greater classroom participation, higher motivation, and improved confidence in using English compared with learners taught through conventional monolingual approaches. These findings support previous research indicating that

learner-centred instructional practices enhance both language proficiency and academic achievement (**Baker, 2011; Hattie, 2009; Slavin, 2018**). Furthermore, the findings align with **Krashen's (1985)** Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes that language acquisition occurs when learners receive comprehensible input, and **Vygotsky's (1978)** Social Constructivist Theory, which highlights the importance of instructional scaffolding during language learning.

Although the reviewed studies were conducted in diverse educational contexts and employed different research designs, the overall evidence strongly supports the educational value of the Bilingual Method. Nevertheless, several studies recommended that bilingual instruction should be implemented strategically to complement, rather than replace, meaningful exposure to the target language (**Macaro, 2009; Turnbull & Arnett, 2002**). The review also identified a lack of rigorous experimental studies involving higher secondary learners, particularly in multilingual contexts such as Tamil Nadu. Future research should therefore focus on longitudinal investigations, technology-assisted bilingual instruction, and comparative studies across different educational settings to strengthen the empirical evidence base. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Bilingual Method is an effective learner-centred strategy that promotes English vocabulary acquisition and contributes significantly to improved English language achievement.

7. RESEARCH GAPS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The systematic review identified several gaps in the existing literature on the effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in English vocabulary learning and English language achievement. Although previous studies consistently reported the positive impact of bilingual instruction on vocabulary acquisition and language proficiency, important methodological, contextual, and pedagogical gaps remain. Most studies were

conducted using small samples and short-term interventions, with limited emphasis on higher secondary learners and multilingual educational settings. Furthermore, few studies examined the long-term effects of bilingual vocabulary instruction or integrated technology-enhanced bilingual learning. Addressing these gaps would strengthen the evidence base and contribute to more effective English language teaching practices.

Table 3. Research Gaps and Recommendations for Future Research

Identified Gap	Evidence from Studies	Future Direction
Limited experimental studies among higher secondary students	Most studies focused on primary, secondary, or university learners (Baker, 2011 ; Sharma, 2006).	Conduct more experimental studies among higher secondary students.
Limited research in multilingual Indian classrooms	Few studies investigated bilingual instruction in regional language contexts such as Tamil Nadu (Mohanty, 2009).	Undertake context-specific studies in multilingual schools across different Indian states.
Short-term intervention studies	Most studies examined immediate learning outcomes rather than long-term retention (Nation, 2001 ; Thornbury, 2002).	Investigate the long-term impact of bilingual vocabulary instruction through longitudinal studies.
Limited integration of educational technology	Few studies explored digital or technology-assisted bilingual instruction.	Examine the effectiveness of technology-supported bilingual vocabulary learning using digital platforms and AI-assisted tools.
Lack of comparative instructional studies	Limited comparisons with other language teaching methods were reported (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).	Compare the Bilingual Method with Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Learning, Blended Learning, and other contemporary approaches.
Insufficient focus on individual learner differences	Variables such as gender, motivation, learning styles, and socioeconomic status received limited attention (Bandura, 1997 ; Hattie, 2009).	Investigate the influence of demographic and psychological variables on the effectiveness of bilingual instruction.
Limited evidence on productive language skills	Most studies emphasized vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension, with less attention to speaking and writing.	Explore the impact of the Bilingual Method on speaking, writing, listening, and communicative competence.
Scarcity of systematic reviews and meta-analyses	Few comprehensive evidence syntheses were identified in this area.	Conduct additional systematic reviews and meta-analyses using PRISMA guidelines to strengthen the evidence base.

8. CONCLUSION

This systematic review examined the effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in enhancing

English vocabulary learning and English language achievement among second-language learners. The synthesized evidence from the reviewed

studies indicates that bilingual instruction is an effective learner-centred approach that facilitates vocabulary acquisition, improves comprehension and retention, and enhances learners' confidence and classroom participation. The findings consistently demonstrate that the strategic use of learners' first language supports meaningful English language learning and contributes to improved reading, writing, speaking, and overall academic achievement.

The review also highlights that the Bilingual Method provides significant educational benefits in multilingual learning environments by reducing learning anxiety and strengthening conceptual understanding through the integration of learners' first language with English. However, the review identified several research gaps, including the limited number of longitudinal and experimental studies, particularly among higher secondary learners and in multilingual contexts. Future research should therefore focus on technology-supported bilingual instruction, comparative studies involving other instructional approaches, and large-scale investigations across diverse educational settings.

Overall, the findings of this systematic review support the Bilingual Method as an effective pedagogical approach for promoting English vocabulary learning and English language achievement. The review offers valuable implications for teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, researchers, and policymakers in designing evidence-based bilingual instructional practices that foster effective English language learning and academic success.

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Cite this article as: Mrs. Dawson Sylvia and Dr. Padmanabha C. H., (2024). The Effectiveness of the Bilingual Method in English Vocabulary Learning and English Language Achievement: A Systematic Review, *International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies*. 3(11), pp.992-1002. <https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-11-077>