

Bilingual Instruction and Learner Motivation in English Language Teaching

*Amiritdinova Dilorom*¹

Abstract: Bilingual instruction, which integrates learners' first language (L1) with the target language (L2), has emerged as a powerful pedagogical strategy in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in multilingual contexts like Uzbekistan. This study investigates how bilingual approaches—such as code-switching and translation—affect learner motivation from cognitive, affective, and sociocultural perspectives. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 70 participants (50 students and 20 teachers) across two higher education institutions through surveys, classroom observations, interviews, and pre/post-assessments. The findings reveal that bilingual instruction significantly enhances both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, improves vocabulary acquisition and speaking fluency, and increases student engagement. A strong correlation was found between bilingual strategies and reduced learner anxiety, suggesting that the use of L1 supports comprehension and confidence. While challenges such as L1 over-reliance were reported, the overall results highlight the motivational benefits of bilingual instruction in ELT. The study recommends strategic use of L1 in teaching practices, professional development for educators, and curriculum design that integrates bilingual elements to optimize learner motivation and performance.

Keywords: bilingual instruction, learner motivation, English language teaching, code-switching, translation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, multilingual education.

Introduction. Bilingual instruction, which involves the use of learners' first language (L1) alongside the target language (L2), has gained attention as an effective strategy in English language teaching (ELT) (Cummins, 2000). In multilingual contexts like Uzbekistan, where students often speak Uzbek and Russian, bilingual instruction leverages L1 to facilitate English acquisition, enhance comprehension, and boost learner motivation (Baker, 2011). Motivation, a critical factor in language learning, encompasses intrinsic (personal interest) and extrinsic (external rewards) dimensions, both of which influence engagement and success (Dörnyei, 2001).

Bilingual strategies, such as code-switching (alternating between L1 and L2) and translation, create a supportive learning environment by reducing linguistic and psychological barriers (Cook, 2001). These approaches align with the L2 Motivational Self System, which emphasizes the role of learners' ideal L2 self and learning experience in sustaining motivation (Dörnyei, 2009). However, challenges, such as over-dependence on L1 or inconsistent application, may undermine fluency development (García & Wei, 2014). This study examines how bilingual instruction influences learner motivation in ELT, focusing on cognitive, affective, and sociocultural dimensions. The research questions are:

Literature review and methodology. The role of bilingual instruction in language education has been extensively explored through cognitive, pedagogical, and sociocultural lenses. Cummins (2000) introduced the interdependence hypothesis, proposing that proficiency in a learner's first language (L1) positively influences second language (L2) acquisition. This theory underpins the cognitive argument for bilingual education, suggesting that learners can transfer conceptual knowledge from L1 to L2, thereby enhancing comprehension and academic performance.

¹ Teacher of the Department of English Theory and Practice Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, amiritdinovadilorom@gmail.com



Baker (2011) emphasized that bilingual instruction can serve as a scaffold in multilingual settings, allowing learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoire. In contexts like Uzbekistan, where students commonly speak Uzbek and Russian, bilingual approaches provide essential support in grasping complex English structures. Cook (2001) similarly advocated for the judicious use of L1 in the classroom, noting that code-switching and translation reduce cognitive load and foster understanding.

From a motivational standpoint, Dörnyei (2001; 2009) introduced the L2 Motivational Self System, highlighting the importance of learners' ideal L2 self and positive learning experiences in sustaining motivation. Bilingual instruction contributes to this framework by creating an inclusive and supportive environment where learners feel confident and competent. The use of L1 for explaining difficult concepts or cultural references fosters intrinsic motivation by making learning more accessible and enjoyable.

The sociocultural benefits of bilingualism are addressed by García and Wei (2014), who proposed the translanguaging framework as a means to validate students' linguistic identities. By integrating L1 into English instruction, educators promote inclusivity and cultural relevance, which are essential in diverse classrooms. Translanguaging also empowers students by allowing them to leverage their full linguistic abilities in the learning process.

However, researchers also caution against the risks of excessive reliance on L1. While bilingual instruction enhances motivation and comprehension, it must be strategically balanced to ensure sufficient exposure to L2 and support fluency development. As Richards and Rodgers (2014) note, effective bilingual pedagogy requires thoughtful integration into curriculum and teaching practices to avoid hindering learners' L2 immersion.

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive analysis of bilingual instruction's impact on learner motivation.

Participants. The research was conducted at two higher education institutions in Uzbekistan, involving 70 participants: 50 students (25 at B1 level and 25 at B2 level, based on CEFR standards) and 20 English teachers with an average of 9 years of teaching experience. The student group comprised 55% female and 45% male participants, with an average age of 21 years.

Data Collection Methods. Survey: A 25-question survey was administered to students and teachers to evaluate perceptions of bilingual instruction's impact on motivation. The survey used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree), focusing on intrinsic motivation (e.g., enjoyment of learning) and extrinsic motivation (e.g., grades, career goals).

Classroom Observations: Fifteen English lessons (eight at one institution, seven at the other) were observed to document the use of bilingual strategies (code-switching, translation) and their effect on student engagement. Observations followed a structured protocol. **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 teachers to explore their experiences, challenges, and strategies in using bilingual instruction to enhance motivation.

Pre/Post-Assessments: Students completed vocabulary and speaking tasks before and after a 10-week intervention using bilingual instruction to measure changes in performance and motivation.

Data Analysis. Quantitative data from surveys and assessments were analyzed using SPSS software, calculating means, standard deviations, and Pearson's correlation coefficients to assess relationships between bilingual instruction and motivation. Qualitative data from observations and interviews were coded thematically, focusing on cognitive, affective, and sociocultural themes. The analysis was guided by Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System and García's (2014) translanguaging framework.

Results and Discussion. The study provided significant insights into the role of bilingual instruction in fostering learner motivation, as summarized below:

Impact of Bilingual Instruction on Motivation and Performance

Metric | Bilingual Group (%) | Monolingual Group (%)



Intrinsic Motivation | 85 | 68

Extrinsic Motivation | 80 | 65

Engagement Level | 87 | 70

Vocabulary Acquisition | 83 | 66

Speaking Fluency | 78 | 62

Impact on Motivation: The bilingual group reported higher intrinsic motivation (mean = 4.4/5) and extrinsic motivation (mean = 4.2/5) compared to the monolingual group (mean = 3.7/5 and 3.5/5, respectively). A strong positive correlation ($r = 0.82$, $p < 0.01$) was found between bilingual instruction and intrinsic motivation, particularly due to reduced anxiety when L1 (Uzbek) was used to explain complex English concepts (e.g., conditionals).

Pedagogical Benefits: Observations revealed that code-switching was used in 75% of lessons to clarify grammar and vocabulary, while translation was employed in 65% of lessons to teach idiomatic expressions. Students rated bilingual instruction as highly motivating (mean = 4.5/5), citing increased confidence and participation. Teachers noted that bilingual strategies fostered a positive classroom atmosphere, enhancing students' "ideal L2 self" (Dörnyei, 2009).

Challenges: Interviews indicated that 35% of teachers faced challenges, including students' over-reliance on L1, which reduced English exposure in some cases. Additionally, 20% of students expressed concerns about balancing L1 and L2 use to avoid hindering fluency.

Performance Outcomes: The bilingual group outperformed the monolingual group in vocabulary acquisition (83% vs. 66%) and speaking fluency (78% vs. 62%), as measured by pre/post-assessments. These improvements were attributed to the supportive role of L1 in scaffolding learning.

The findings underscore the significant role of bilingual instruction in enhancing learner motivation in ELT. From a cognitive perspective, bilingual strategies leverage students' L1 to facilitate comprehension, aligning with Cummins' (2000) interdependence hypothesis, which suggests that L1 proficiency supports L2 acquisition. For example, using Uzbek to explain English phrasal verbs (e.g., "pick up") improved students' retention and confidence, as evidenced by assessment results.

Affectively, bilingual instruction reduces anxiety and fosters a positive learning experience, a key component of Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System. Students reported higher intrinsic motivation when teachers used code-switching to clarify challenging topics, such as reported speech, creating a sense of achievement. Extrinsic motivation was also enhanced, as students linked English proficiency to career goals, supported by culturally relevant explanations in L1.

Socioculturally, bilingual instruction validates learners' linguistic identities, promoting inclusivity in multilingual classrooms (García & Wei, 2014). In Uzbekistan, where Uzbek and Russian are prevalent, using L1 to discuss English cultural concepts (e.g., proverbs like "a penny saved is a penny earned") bridged cultural gaps, increasing engagement (87% in bilingual group vs. 70% in monolingual group). However, challenges like L1 over-reliance highlight the need for strategic implementation to ensure sufficient L2 exposure.

The study offers the following recommendations:

Strategic Code-Switching: Train teachers to use code-switching purposefully to scaffold complex concepts while gradually increasing L2 use.

Curriculum Integration: Incorporate bilingual strategies into ELT curricula, particularly for beginner and intermediate learners, to enhance motivation and engagement.

Balanced Approach: Implement a phased approach, reducing L1 use as students' proficiency improves to promote fluency.

Professional Development: Provide workshops on translanguaging and motivational strategies to equip teachers with effective bilingual teaching techniques.



Conclusion. Bilingual instruction significantly enhances learner motivation in English language teaching by fostering intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, reducing anxiety, and promoting sociocultural inclusivity. The study demonstrates that code-switching and translation are effective strategies in multilingual contexts like Uzbekistan, improving vocabulary acquisition, speaking fluency, and engagement. Future research could explore the long-term effects of bilingual instruction across diverse proficiency levels and cultural settings.

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