

Teaching Standard English through Guyanese Creole: Evidence from a Secondary School Intervention in Guyana

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Abstract:

➤ *Background:*

Persistent underachievement in English language examinations remains a major educational concern in Guyana. Although Standard Guyanese English (SGE) is the official language of instruction and assessment, Guyanese Creole (GC) is the primary language of communication for most students. This linguistic disconnect between home and school has contributed to long-standing concerns regarding literacy development, classroom participation, and English language proficiency.

➤ *Purpose:*

This study investigated whether strategically integrating Guyanese Creole into English language instruction improves secondary school students' proficiency in Standard Guyanese English, classroom engagement, and confidence in learning English.

➤ *Method:*

An action research study employing a mixed-methods design was conducted with sixteen Grade 10 students attending a secondary school in Guyana. Students were assigned to either an English-only instructional group or a bilingual instructional group that incorporated planned code-switching between Guyanese Creole and Standard Guyanese English. Data were collected through pre- and post-intervention English assessments, systematic classroom observations, and teacher reflective journals.

➤ *Results:*

Students receiving bilingual instruction demonstrated substantially greater improvement in English language achievement than those receiving English-only instruction. The bilingual classroom also recorded higher levels of voluntary participation, stronger metacognitive engagement, fewer conceptual misunderstandings, and greater learner confidence. The findings indicate that Guyanese Creole functioned as a cognitive scaffold supporting students' transition to Standard English rather than competing with it.

➤ *Conclusion:*

The study provides empirical evidence that bilingual pedagogy can enhance English language learning within Caribbean classrooms where creole languages predominate. The findings challenge monolingual assumptions underpinning English language instruction in Guyana and suggest that recognising students' first language as a pedagogical resource may contribute to more equitable and effective educational practice.

Keywords: *Bilingual Education; Guyanese Creole; Standard Guyanese English; Code-Switching; English as a Second Language; Translanguaging; Language Policy; Caribbean Education.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language remains one of the most influential determinants of educational success. Across multilingual societies, the language used in classrooms shapes not only students' academic achievement but also their confidence, identity, and participation in learning. Where the language of schooling differs from the language spoken within students' homes and communities, educational systems frequently encounter persistent disparities in literacy development and academic performance. This challenge is especially pronounced in postcolonial contexts, where colonial languages continue to dominate formal education despite the widespread use of local languages and creoles in everyday communication.

Guyana exemplifies this linguistic reality. Standard Guyanese English (SGE) functions as the official language of government, education, and national assessment, while Guyanese Creole (GC) remains the principal language of communication for most citizens. Although these language varieties exist along a linguistic continuum rather than as completely distinct systems, educational practice has traditionally privileged Standard English as the sole legitimate medium of instruction. Consequently, many students begin formal schooling expected to acquire literacy and academic knowledge through a language variety that differs from the one through which they have developed their earliest communicative competence.

This disconnect between students' linguistic backgrounds and classroom practice has important educational consequences. National concerns regarding English language achievement have persisted despite repeated curriculum reforms and increased attention to literacy development. Performance in high-stakes examinations such as the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) English examination continues to influence students' access to higher education and employment, making English proficiency both an educational priority and a social imperative. Yet instructional approaches frequently assume that learners are native speakers of Standard English, overlooking the linguistic realities that characterise most Guyanese classrooms.

International research increasingly challenges monolingual approaches to second-language instruction. Contemporary theories of bilingual education argue that learners' first languages constitute valuable cognitive resources rather than obstacles to academic success. Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis proposes that literacy and conceptual knowledge developed in a learner's first language facilitate second-language acquisition through a shared underlying proficiency. Similarly, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory positions language as the principal mediating tool through which learners construct knowledge, suggesting that instruction should build upon students' existing linguistic experiences rather than attempt to replace them. More recently, translanguaging scholarship has demonstrated that multilingual learners naturally draw upon their complete linguistic repertoire when processing

information, challenging traditional assumptions that languages should remain rigidly separated within educational settings.

Empirical evidence supports these theoretical perspectives. Studies conducted in Nigeria, Colombia, Singapore, and the United States consistently demonstrate that strategic use of learners' first languages enhances comprehension, participation, and second-language development. Code-switching, once regarded as evidence of linguistic deficiency, is now recognised as an effective pedagogical strategy that enables teachers to clarify complex concepts while reducing learner anxiety. Collectively, these studies suggest that bilingual instructional approaches can strengthen academic performance without diminishing proficiency in the target language.

Despite this growing body of international scholarship, relatively little empirical research has examined bilingual English instruction within Guyana. Existing language policies continue to emphasise English-only instruction, and classroom-based investigations into the educational role of Guyanese Creole remain limited. Consequently, there is insufficient evidence regarding whether structured bilingual pedagogy can improve English language achievement within the unique linguistic environment of Guyanese secondary schools.

This study addresses that gap by examining the impact of integrating Guyanese Creole into English language instruction through a structured classroom intervention. Rather than viewing Guyanese Creole as an impediment to learning, the intervention positions students' first language as a pedagogical scaffold that supports the acquisition of Standard Guyanese English. The study compares the experiences and outcomes of students receiving conventional English-only instruction with those participating in bilingual instruction that strategically incorporates planned code-switching and scaffolded explanations.

Unlike previous investigations conducted in multilingual settings outside the Caribbean, this study explores bilingual pedagogy within a Creole–Standard English continuum, where learners move fluidly between closely related language varieties in everyday communication. By focusing on this distinctive sociolinguistic context, the study extends current understandings of bilingual education beyond conventional first-language/second-language relationships and contributes new evidence from an underrepresented region.

➤ *The Study Therefore Seeks to Answer the Following Overarching Research Question:*

How does the strategic integration of Guyanese Creole into English language instruction influence secondary school students' proficiency in Standard Guyanese English, classroom participation, and engagement?

Addressing this question contributes not only to debates surrounding English language pedagogy in Guyana but also to wider discussions concerning bilingual education,

educational equity, and language policy in multilingual postcolonial societies.

➤ *Contribution of the Study*

This study makes three important contributions to the field.

First, it provides one of the first classroom-based empirical investigations of bilingual English instruction in Guyana, addressing a significant gap in Caribbean educational research.

Second, it extends bilingual education theory by demonstrating how linguistic interdependence and translanguaging operate within a Creole–Standard English continuum, rather than between entirely separate languages.

Third, it offers evidence with direct implications for curriculum development, teacher education, and language policy, suggesting that recognising students' linguistic resources may provide a more effective pathway to English language proficiency than monolingual instructional models.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

➤ *Language, Learning, and Multilingual Education*

Language is central to learning, serving not only as a means of communication but also as the primary tool through which learners construct knowledge, develop reasoning skills, and participate in academic communities. Consequently, educational success is closely linked to students' ability to understand and use the language of instruction. In multilingual societies, however, this relationship becomes more complex when the language used in formal education differs from the language students speak in their homes and communities. Such linguistic discontinuities frequently contribute to reduced academic performance, lower classroom participation, and inequitable educational outcomes.

Across many postcolonial societies, the continued use of colonial languages as the exclusive medium of instruction has generated sustained debate regarding educational effectiveness and linguistic justice. While these languages often provide access to higher education, government, and international communication, they may simultaneously create barriers for learners whose first language is a local or indigenous variety. This tension has prompted increasing interest in bilingual educational approaches that acknowledge students' existing linguistic resources while promoting proficiency in the language of formal schooling.

Within this broader context, bilingual education has evolved from being viewed as a compensatory strategy for minority-language learners to being recognised as a pedagogical approach capable of enhancing learning, improving educational equity, and supporting cognitive development.

➤ *Theoretical Foundations of Bilingual Learning*

The present study is informed by three complementary theoretical perspectives: sociocultural learning theory, linguistic interdependence, and translanguaging.

➤ *Sociocultural Theory*

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory provides an important explanation for the relationship between language and learning. According to Vygotsky (1978), cognitive development occurs through socially mediated interaction in which language functions as the principal cultural tool for constructing meaning. Learning is most effective when new knowledge is connected to learners' existing experiences through appropriate instructional support within the Zone of Proximal Development.

Applied to bilingual education, this perspective suggests that students' home language should be viewed as a resource that enables them to interpret unfamiliar concepts before gradually transferring that understanding into the language of instruction. Rather than requiring learners to abandon their first language, sociocultural theory supports instructional practices that build upon students' linguistic identities as foundations for new learning.

➤ *Linguistic Interdependence*

Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis further strengthens this argument by proposing that proficiency in one language contributes to the acquisition of another through a common underlying cognitive system. Conceptual understanding developed in a learner's first language is therefore transferable to subsequent language learning, particularly when instruction explicitly connects existing knowledge to new linguistic forms.

This perspective challenges deficit views that portray home languages as impediments to academic achievement. Instead, it suggests that educational systems should capitalise on learners' first-language competence to facilitate second-language acquisition. Within the Guyanese context, where many students possess considerable fluency in Guyanese Creole prior to entering secondary school, this theory provides a compelling rationale for bilingual instructional approaches.

➤ *Translanguaging*

Recent scholarship has expanded traditional understandings of bilingualism through the concept of translanguaging. García and Wei argue that multilingual speakers do not operate within separate linguistic systems but instead draw flexibly upon their complete linguistic repertoire when making meaning. Translanguaging therefore recognises the dynamic and integrated nature of multilingual communication rather than viewing movement between languages as evidence of linguistic interference.

Educationally, translanguaging supports classroom practices that permit students to utilise all available linguistic resources while learning. Rather than enforcing rigid language boundaries, teachers strategically guide learners toward academic proficiency by recognising the cognitive

value of their existing language practices. This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant within Guyana, where movement between Guyanese Creole and Standard Guyanese English forms part of everyday communication.

Together, these three perspectives provide the conceptual framework underpinning the present investigation.

➤ *Code-Switching as Pedagogical Practice*

Among bilingual instructional strategies, code-switching has emerged as one of the most widely researched and frequently implemented approaches. Historically criticised as evidence of incomplete language proficiency, code-switching is now recognised as a purposeful instructional practice that enables teachers to clarify concepts, negotiate meaning, and facilitate learner participation.

Research consistently demonstrates that strategic code-switching improves classroom communication by reducing the cognitive demands associated with learning through an unfamiliar language. When teachers introduce complex concepts using learners' familiar language before transitioning to the target language, students demonstrate improved comprehension, greater confidence, and increased willingness to participate.

Studies conducted across multilingual educational contexts illustrate these benefits. Gresham (2014) found that acknowledging students' home language promoted literacy development and strengthened Standard English acquisition. Similarly, Madriñan (2014) reported improved classroom interaction and learner confidence when bilingual instructional strategies were incorporated into English language teaching. Duran and Palmer (2019) likewise argued that prohibiting learners from drawing upon their first language often restricts conceptual understanding rather than promoting language development.

Importantly, the literature distinguishes between spontaneous code-switching and pedagogically planned code-switching. While multilingual speakers naturally alternate between language varieties during everyday communication, effective bilingual instruction employs code-switching intentionally to scaffold learning. Teachers gradually reduce reliance on the first language as students gain proficiency in the target language, thereby ensuring that bilingual instruction functions as a bridge rather than a substitute for Standard English.

➤ *Bilingual Education and Academic Achievement*

An expanding body of international research demonstrates positive relationships between bilingual education and academic performance. Longitudinal studies consistently report that students educated through bilingual programmes frequently perform as well as, and often better than, peers educated through monolingual approaches.

Collier and Thomas (2017), drawing upon extensive longitudinal evidence, concluded that bilingual education

supports sustained academic achievement across multiple subject areas while strengthening literacy development in the language of schooling. Similar findings have been reported in multilingual education systems throughout Asia, Europe, Africa, and Latin America, where bilingual approaches have contributed to improved reading comprehension, writing ability, and classroom engagement.

Beyond language learning itself, bilingual education has also been associated with broader cognitive advantages, including enhanced metalinguistic awareness, greater problem-solving ability, and increased cognitive flexibility. Learners who regularly compare language systems often develop deeper understanding of grammatical structures and become more reflective about language use, contributing to improved performance in academic contexts.

These findings challenge assumptions that exclusive use of the dominant instructional language necessarily produces superior educational outcomes. Instead, they suggest that carefully structured bilingual instruction may provide a more effective pathway toward mastery of the target language.

➤ *Bilingual Education in Caribbean Contexts*

Despite growing international evidence supporting bilingual pedagogy, comparatively little research has focused on English-lexifier creole-speaking societies within the Caribbean. Educational systems throughout the region continue to negotiate tensions between maintaining Standard English as the language of academic instruction and recognising the linguistic realities of students who communicate primarily through creole varieties.

Research conducted in Jamaica, Belize, Trinidad and Tobago, and other Caribbean territories suggests that negative attitudes toward creole languages continue to influence educational practice despite increasing recognition of their linguistic legitimacy. Many classrooms continue to discourage students from using their home language, often reflecting broader societal perceptions that associate Standard English with educational achievement and social mobility.

At the same time, emerging Caribbean scholarship argues that creole languages possess significant pedagogical value. Rather than undermining English acquisition, these language varieties may facilitate conceptual understanding and strengthen classroom interaction when used strategically during instruction. Nevertheless, empirical classroom-based studies remain limited, particularly within Guyana.

➤ *The Guyanese Context*

Guyana occupies a distinctive position within Caribbean bilingual education research. While Standard Guyanese English remains the official language of schooling, Guyanese Creole functions as the primary language of communication for much of the population. The relationship between these language varieties is characterised by a linguistic continuum in which speakers naturally shift between more creole-like and more standard forms depending upon social context.

Despite this linguistic reality, educational practice continues to privilege Standard English as the exclusive medium of classroom instruction. Consequently, many students are expected to acquire literacy and academic language without systematic acknowledgement of the linguistic resources they bring to school.

Although concerns regarding English language achievement have featured prominently within Guyanese education policy, relatively few empirical investigations have examined whether bilingual instructional approaches might improve learning outcomes. Existing scholarship has largely focused on language attitudes, curriculum policy, or linguistic description rather than classroom intervention.

This absence of classroom-based evidence limits opportunities for policymakers and educators to evaluate whether bilingual pedagogies can strengthen English language acquisition while simultaneously affirming students' linguistic identities.

➤ *Research Gap*

The literature demonstrates broad international support for bilingual educational practices and increasing recognition of code-switching and translanguaging as effective pedagogical strategies. However, three significant gaps remain.

First, few empirical studies have examined bilingual English instruction within English-lexifier creole-speaking Caribbean societies.

Second, research investigating the educational role of Guyanese Creole remains limited despite its widespread use among school-aged learners.

Third, little classroom-based evidence exists regarding whether strategically integrating Guyanese Creole into English instruction improves academic achievement, participation, confidence, and classroom engagement.

The present study addresses these gaps through a mixed-methods classroom intervention examining the educational impact of planned bilingual instruction within a Guyanese secondary school. By doing so, it contributes new empirical evidence to bilingual education scholarship while informing debates concerning language policy, teacher education, and equitable English language instruction in multilingual postcolonial societies.

III. METHODOLOGY

➤ *Research Design*

This study employed a mixed-methods action research design to investigate the effects of integrating Guyanese Creole (GC) into the teaching of Standard Guyanese English (SGE) at the secondary school level. Action research was selected because it enables educators to examine instructional practices within authentic classroom settings while simultaneously implementing and evaluating pedagogical interventions aimed at improving student learning. The

mixed-methods approach combined quantitative measures of academic achievement with qualitative evidence of classroom interaction and learner engagement, providing a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's educational impact.

The study was guided by a pragmatic research paradigm, recognising that understanding educational phenomena requires the integration of numerical evidence with participants' lived classroom experiences. Quantitative data measured changes in English language achievement, while qualitative data explained how and why those changes occurred during instruction.

➤ *Research Setting*

The research was conducted at King's College, a secondary school in Georgetown, Guyana. The school follows the national curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education and prepares students for the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) examinations. English Language is taught as a compulsory subject using Standard Guyanese English as the official medium of instruction.

King's College was selected because it reflects the linguistic realities found in many Guyanese secondary schools, where students routinely communicate in Guyanese Creole outside formal instructional settings while being expected to demonstrate proficiency in Standard English during classroom activities and national examinations.

➤ *Participants*

The study involved sixteen Grade 10 students who were purposively selected because they were preparing for the CSEC English Language examination and demonstrated similar levels of English language proficiency at the commencement of the study.

• *Participants were Divided into Two Instructional Groups of Eight Students Each:*

- ✓ *Comparison Group (n = 8):* Received conventional English language instruction conducted exclusively in Standard Guyanese English.
- ✓ *Intervention Group (n = 8):* Received bilingual instruction in which Guyanese Creole was strategically incorporated through planned pedagogical code-switching.

Both groups were taught the same curriculum content, learning objectives, classroom activities, and assessment tasks. The principal difference between the groups was the instructional language employed during teaching and learning.

➤ *Instructional Intervention*

The intervention was designed to determine whether the strategic use of Guyanese Creole could facilitate students' acquisition of Standard English without reducing academic expectations.

Instruction followed a scaffolded bilingual model in which students were initially encouraged to explore

unfamiliar concepts using Guyanese Creole before progressively reconstructing those ideas in Standard English. Planned code-switching was employed selectively to:

- Explain complex grammatical structures;
- Clarify unfamiliar vocabulary;
- Connect abstract concepts to students' everyday linguistic experiences;
- Encourage collaborative discussion;
- Reduce communication anxiety during classroom interaction.

Rather than replacing Standard English, Guyanese Creole functioned as an instructional bridge that enabled students to develop conceptual understanding before expressing ideas using formal academic English.

As learners demonstrated increasing confidence and proficiency, the frequency of teacher code-switching was intentionally reduced, encouraging greater independent use of Standard English during oral and written classroom activities.

➤ *Data Collection*

Three complementary sources of evidence were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional intervention.

➤ *English Language Assessments*

Students completed equivalent English language assessments before and after the intervention. The assessments measured reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, and written expression.

The pre-test established baseline levels of English proficiency, while the post-test measured learning gains following the instructional intervention.

➤ *Classroom Observations*

Structured classroom observations were conducted throughout the intervention to document patterns of learner participation, classroom interaction, language use, confidence, and engagement.

• *Observation Notes Focused Particularly on:*

- ✓ Voluntary participation;
- ✓ Student–teacher interaction;
- ✓ Peer collaboration;
- ✓ Language choice during discussion;
- ✓ Evidence of conceptual understanding;
- ✓ Learner confidence.

Field notes were recorded immediately following each lesson to preserve accuracy and minimise recall bias.

➤ *Reflective Journal*

A reflective teaching journal was maintained throughout the intervention to document instructional decisions, classroom dynamics, unexpected events, learner responses, and emerging patterns observed during teaching.

The journal provided contextual evidence that complemented classroom observations and assisted in interpreting changes observed within both instructional groups.

➤ *Data Analysis*

Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately before being integrated during interpretation.

➤ *Quantitative Analysis*

Assessment scores from the pre-test and post-test were analysed descriptively using measures of central tendency and percentage-point gains.

Mean scores were calculated for each instructional group to determine overall improvement following the intervention. Comparative analyses examined differences between the bilingual and English-only groups to identify the relative effectiveness of each instructional approach.

➤ *Qualitative Analysis*

Qualitative data obtained from classroom observations and reflective journals were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase thematic analysis framework.

• *The Analytical Process Involved:*

- ✓ Familiarisation with the data;
- ✓ Initial coding;
- ✓ Identification of recurring patterns;
- ✓ Development of candidate themes;
- ✓ Refinement of themes;
- ✓ Interpretation and reporting.

Themes emerging from one data source were compared with evidence from the remaining sources to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

➤ *Trustworthiness*

Several strategies were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

➤ *Credibility*

Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation using three independent sources of evidence: classroom observations, English language assessments, and reflective journals.

➤ *Dependability*

Consistent instructional procedures, systematic data collection, and detailed documentation of the intervention promoted the dependability of the research process.

➤ *Confirmability*

Reflective journaling and transparent documentation of instructional decisions helped minimise researcher bias by maintaining an explicit audit trail throughout the study.

➤ *Transferability*

Although conducted within a single secondary school, detailed descriptions of the educational context, participants,

and instructional intervention enable readers to determine the potential applicability of the findings to similar multilingual educational settings.

➤ *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical approval for the study was obtained through the appropriate institutional processes prior to data collection. Permission to conduct the research was granted by the administration of King's College. Informed consent was obtained from participating students and their parents or guardians. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. Participant confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure storage of research data.

Given the historical marginalisation of Guyanese Creole within formal education, particular attention was paid to ensuring that the intervention respected students' linguistic identities. The bilingual instructional approach was designed not to privilege one language over another but to recognise Guyanese Creole as a legitimate educational resource that supports the acquisition of Standard Guyanese English.

➤ *Methodological Summary*

The methodological design was intended to examine both the measurable academic outcomes and the classroom processes associated with bilingual English instruction. By combining quantitative measures of achievement with qualitative evidence of learner engagement, participation, and language use, the study provides a comprehensive account of how strategically integrating Guyanese Creole influenced English language learning among secondary school students.

IV. FINDINGS

This study examined whether the strategic integration of Guyanese Creole (GC) into English language instruction enhanced students' acquisition of Standard Guyanese English

(SGE). Findings are presented using evidence from three complementary data sources: pre- and post-intervention English language assessments, structured classroom observations, and the researcher's reflective journal. Across these data sources, four interrelated themes emerged: (1) improved English language achievement, (2) increased classroom participation and engagement, (3) enhanced metalinguistic awareness and cognitive engagement, and (4) reduced language anxiety and increased learner confidence.

➤ *Improved English Language Achievement*

The most significant outcome of the intervention was the substantial improvement in English language achievement among students receiving bilingual instruction.

Both instructional groups entered the study with comparable levels of English proficiency. Both instructional groups recorded the same mean pre-test score of 69.38%, indicating similar baseline mean performance on the assessment. Following instruction, however, students exposed to bilingual teaching demonstrated markedly greater improvement than those receiving conventional English-only instruction.

Table 1 Comparison of Mean Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Gain
English-only	69.38	74.71	+5.33
Bilingual Instruction	69.38	90.75	+21.37

The bilingual group achieved an average improvement approximately four times greater than that of the English-only group. These gains were evident across reading comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and written expression, suggesting that integrating Guyanese Creole supported multiple dimensions of English language development rather than isolated language skills.

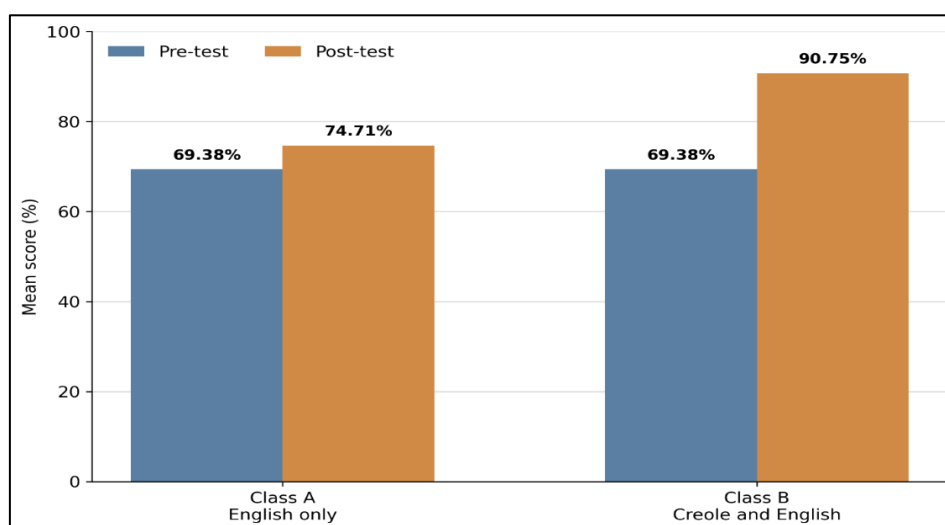


Fig 1 Average English Language Achievement Before and After the Intervention

Note. Class A received English-only instruction, while Class B received bilingual instruction incorporating Guyanese Creole and Standard Guyanese English. Class A recorded an increase of 5.33 percentage points, compared with 21.37 percentage points for Class B.

The consistency of these improvements suggests that bilingual instruction facilitated more effective conceptual learning than English-only instruction. Rather than impeding Standard English acquisition, strategic use of Guyanese Creole appeared to strengthen students' ability to understand and apply formal English language structures.

➤ *Increased Classroom Participation and Engagement*

Classroom observations revealed substantial differences in learner participation between the instructional groups.

Students receiving English-only instruction participated primarily when directly invited by the teacher. Responses

were generally brief, and students frequently demonstrated hesitation before volunteering answers. Peer discussion remained limited, with many learners relying heavily on teacher guidance throughout classroom activities.

In contrast, students in the bilingual classroom participated more actively throughout the intervention. Classroom discussions became increasingly collaborative as learners questioned one another, clarified ideas collectively, and voluntarily contributed responses during whole-class instruction.

Table 2 summarises key indicators of classroom participation.

Table 2 Observed Indicators of Classroom Participation and Language Use

Indicator	Class A: English only	Class B: Creole and English
Voluntary participation	12 instances	52 instances
Students demonstrating metacognitive engagement	4 students	7 students
Terminology misconceptions	32 instances	10 instances
Hypercorrection	9 instances	13 instances
Use of Creole forms when Standard English was expected	22 instances	0 instances
Use of Standard English forms during Creole discourse	19 instances	23 instances
Observed lessons involving humour	25%	90%

Frequencies represent instances documented through structured classroom observations conducted during the intervention. Metacognitive engagement represents the number of students who demonstrated evidence of reflecting on, explaining, or independently correcting their language use. Percentages for humour represent the proportion of observed lessons in which humour was recorded.

➤ *Enhanced Metalinguistic Awareness and Cognitive Engagement*

Beyond improvements in examination performance, the intervention influenced how students thought about language itself.

Students receiving bilingual instruction increasingly compared grammatical structures across Guyanese Creole and Standard English. During classroom discussions, learners frequently identified similarities and differences between the two language varieties while explaining why particular Standard English constructions were required in academic contexts.

This metalinguistic awareness became increasingly evident as the intervention progressed. Students moved beyond memorising grammatical rules and instead demonstrated conceptual understanding of language structure.

Reflective journal entries recorded multiple instances in which students independently corrected one another's language, justified grammatical choices, and explained their reasoning using examples drawn from everyday communication.

Such behaviours occurred far less frequently within the English-only classroom, where responses were more likely to focus on producing correct answers than on understanding the linguistic principles underlying those answers.

These observations suggest that bilingual instruction promoted deeper cognitive processing by encouraging learners to actively negotiate meaning across language varieties rather than relying solely on rote memorisation.

➤ *Reduced Language Anxiety and Increased Learner Confidence*

Perhaps the most noticeable qualitative change concerned students' confidence during classroom interaction.

Early observations indicated that many students were reluctant to participate when required to respond exclusively in Standard English. Several learners demonstrated visible hesitation before answering questions and frequently sought confirmation before contributing to classroom discussions.

Following the introduction of bilingual instruction, these behaviours declined substantially. Students demonstrated greater willingness to ask questions, attempt unfamiliar vocabulary, and participate in whole-class discussions without prompting.

The reflective journal further documented increased spontaneity within classroom interaction. Students frequently initiated discussions, assisted peers, and experimented with increasingly complex Standard English expressions after first exploring ideas through Guyanese Creole.

Importantly, confidence appeared to increase alongside academic achievement rather than independently of it. As

students developed stronger conceptual understanding, their reliance on Guyanese Creole gradually diminished, suggesting that bilingual instruction functioned as a temporary scaffold supporting progression toward independent Standard English use.

➤ *Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings*

The mixed-methods design enabled quantitative achievement data to be interpreted alongside qualitative evidence of classroom learning processes.

Assessment results demonstrated substantial improvements in English language achievement, while classroom observations and reflective journals explained the mechanisms through which these improvements occurred. Increased participation, collaborative dialogue, metalinguistic awareness, and learner confidence consistently accompanied higher levels of academic performance within the bilingual classroom.

The convergence of findings across multiple data sources strengthens confidence in the overall interpretation. Improvements observed in assessment scores were reflected consistently in classroom behaviour, suggesting that bilingual instruction influenced both educational outcomes and the processes through which learning occurred.

➤ *Summary of Findings*

Across all sources of evidence, four principal findings emerged:

- Students receiving bilingual instruction demonstrated substantially greater gains in Standard English achievement than students taught exclusively through Standard English.
- Strategic integration of Guyanese Creole increased classroom participation, collaboration, and learner engagement.
- Bilingual instruction promoted metalinguistic awareness, enabling students to understand rather than merely memorise English language structures.
- Recognition of students' home language reduced communication anxiety while increasing confidence in using Standard English.

Collectively, these findings indicate that Guyanese Creole functioned as a pedagogical scaffold that supported both cognitive and linguistic development, providing empirical evidence that bilingual instructional practices can strengthen English language learning within Guyanese secondary classrooms.

V. DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the strategic integration of Guyanese Creole (GC) into English language instruction could improve secondary school students' acquisition of Standard Guyanese English (SGE). The findings provide compelling evidence that bilingual pedagogy enhanced students' academic performance, increased classroom participation, strengthened

metalinguistic awareness, and reduced language-related anxiety. More importantly, the study demonstrates that recognising students' first language as a pedagogical resource can facilitate, rather than hinder, the development of academic English.

While previous studies have documented the benefits of bilingual education in multilingual contexts, this research extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that these benefits are also evident within the distinctive Creole–Standard English continuum that characterises Guyana. The discussion therefore considers the findings in relation to contemporary theories of bilingual learning, language policy, and educational equity.

➤ *Guyanese Creole as a Cognitive Scaffold for Learning*

Perhaps the most significant finding of this study is that Guyanese Creole functioned as a cognitive scaffold supporting students' acquisition of Standard English. Rather than interfering with learning, the use of Guyanese Creole enabled students to connect unfamiliar grammatical concepts with their existing linguistic knowledge before transferring that understanding into formal academic English.

This finding aligns closely with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which conceptualises language as the principal cultural tool through which learning occurs. According to this perspective, new knowledge is acquired most effectively when learners are able to connect unfamiliar concepts with existing cognitive structures through social interaction. Within the bilingual classroom, Guyanese Creole provided precisely this bridge. Students were not required to abandon their home language; instead, it served as the medium through which new linguistic concepts were initially explored and understood.

The intervention therefore illustrates that scaffolding in multilingual classrooms extends beyond teacher support alone. Learners' first language itself can function as a scaffold that facilitates conceptual development before gradually being withdrawn as proficiency in the target language increases. This finding contributes to sociocultural theory by demonstrating how linguistic scaffolding operates within a Creole-speaking Caribbean context.

➤ *Extending Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis*

The findings also provide empirical support for Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis. Cummins argues that conceptual knowledge acquired through one language contributes to learning in another because both languages draw upon a common underlying proficiency.

The present study extends this proposition in an important way. Much of the literature applying Cummins' framework has focused on clearly distinct languages, such as Spanish and English or French and English. By contrast, the present research examines two closely related language varieties situated along a linguistic continuum.

Students' improved performance suggests that linguistic interdependence operates effectively not only between separate languages but also between closely related varieties such as Guyanese Creole and Standard Guyanese English. This finding broadens current understandings of bilingual learning by demonstrating that educational transfer may occur across different points on a linguistic continuum rather than solely across discrete language systems.

This represents one of the study's most significant theoretical contributions.

➤ *Translanguaging and Dynamic Language Practices*

The classroom observations further support contemporary translanguaging theory. Rather than treating Guyanese Creole and Standard English as isolated linguistic systems, students naturally moved between the two varieties while constructing meaning, solving problems, and discussing classroom tasks.

Importantly, these shifts were neither random nor indicative of linguistic confusion. Instead, they reflected strategic cognitive processes through which learners utilised their complete linguistic repertoire to facilitate understanding.

These observations reinforce García and Wei's conceptualisation of translanguaging as a dynamic meaning-making process. However, the present study extends this scholarship by demonstrating its applicability within English-lexifier Creole-speaking classrooms. While translanguaging research has expanded considerably over the past decade, relatively little empirical evidence originates from Caribbean educational settings.

The present findings therefore contribute important regional evidence demonstrating that translanguaging functions effectively within postcolonial educational contexts where Creole and Standard English coexist as interconnected linguistic resources.

➤ *Code-Switching as Deliberate Pedagogical Practice*

Another important contribution concerns the educational role of code-switching. The findings demonstrate that effective code-switching differs fundamentally from spontaneous language alternation commonly observed in informal conversation.

Throughout the intervention, movement between Guyanese Creole and Standard English was carefully planned and pedagogically purposeful. Teachers introduced new concepts using learners' familiar language before progressively increasing students' use of Standard English as conceptual understanding developed.

This structured approach differs from traditional perceptions that code-switching reflects inadequate language proficiency or poor instructional practice. Instead, the evidence suggests that deliberate code-switching constitutes an effective pedagogical strategy capable of reducing

cognitive load while maintaining high academic expectations.

Consequently, the findings support emerging international scholarship advocating strategic bilingual instruction rather than strict language separation within multilingual classrooms.

➤ *Language, Identity, and Educational Equity*

Beyond language learning itself, the findings reveal important relationships between language, identity, and educational participation.

Students receiving bilingual instruction demonstrated markedly greater confidence during classroom discussions, volunteered responses more frequently, and collaborated more actively with peers. These behavioural changes suggest that acknowledging students' home language positively influenced not only cognitive development but also learners' perceptions of belonging within the classroom.

Educational systems that implicitly devalue students' everyday language practices may inadvertently discourage participation by reinforcing linguistic insecurity. Conversely, recognising Guyanese Creole as a legitimate educational resource appeared to create a classroom environment in which students felt more comfortable exploring ideas, asking questions, and taking intellectual risks.

This finding is particularly significant within postcolonial societies where language frequently functions as both a marker of educational achievement and a symbol of social identity. Rather than requiring students to choose between linguistic identity and academic success, bilingual pedagogy demonstrated that these objectives can be mutually reinforcing.

➤ *Implications for English Language Teaching in Guyana*

The findings have important implications for English language teaching in Guyana.

Current instructional practice largely assumes that exclusive use of Standard English represents the most effective pathway to English language proficiency. However, the present findings challenge this assumption by demonstrating that strategic incorporation of Guyanese Creole enhances rather than diminishes students' acquisition of Standard English.

Importantly, the study does not advocate replacing Standard English with Guyanese Creole. Standard English remains essential for academic success, national assessment, and professional communication. Instead, the findings support a scaffolded bilingual approach in which Guyanese Creole functions as a temporary instructional resource that facilitates students' progression toward independent Standard English proficiency.

Such an approach has implications for curriculum development, teacher education, and classroom assessment. Teachers require professional preparation in bilingual

instructional strategies, curriculum designers should recognise the linguistic realities of Guyanese classrooms, and educational policy should move beyond binary distinctions that position Guyanese Creole and Standard English as competing languages.

➤ *Contribution to Bilingual Education Scholarship*

This study contributes to bilingual education research in three important respects.

First, it provides one of the few empirical classroom investigations examining bilingual English instruction within Guyana, addressing a notable gap in Caribbean educational research.

Second, it extends theories of linguistic interdependence and translanguaging by demonstrating that bilingual learning processes operate effectively within a Creole–Standard English continuum rather than solely between distinct languages.

Third, it demonstrates that bilingual pedagogy can simultaneously enhance academic achievement, strengthen learner confidence, and promote greater educational equity without compromising proficiency in the language of formal instruction.

Collectively, these contributions position the study within broader international debates concerning multilingual education while highlighting the importance of context-specific evidence from underrepresented regions.

➤ *Discussion Summary*

The findings indicate that integrating Guyanese Creole into English language instruction is not simply an alternative teaching strategy but a pedagogically and theoretically defensible approach to second-language learning within multilingual postcolonial societies. By positioning students' first language as a cognitive scaffold rather than an educational obstacle, bilingual instruction promoted deeper understanding, greater participation, and stronger academic achievement.

Ultimately, the study suggests that educational success in Guyana may depend less on restricting the use of Guyanese Creole than on employing it strategically to support students' transition toward confident and proficient use of Standard Guyanese English.

VI. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE, AND CONCLUSION

➤ *Educational Implications*

The findings of this study have important implications for English language teaching, teacher education, curriculum development, and language policy in Guyana and other multilingual postcolonial societies.

➤ *Implications for Classroom Practice*

The evidence indicates that bilingual pedagogy can improve students' acquisition of Standard Guyanese English while simultaneously increasing classroom participation, confidence, and conceptual understanding. These findings suggest that teachers should view Guyanese Creole not as an impediment to learning but as a strategic instructional resource that can scaffold the development of academic English.

Rather than enforcing exclusive use of Standard English throughout instruction, teachers should employ planned code-switching to introduce complex grammatical concepts, clarify vocabulary, and facilitate classroom discussion. Such practices should be purposeful, temporary, and directed toward increasing students' independent use of Standard English over time.

➤ *Implications for Teacher Education*

Successful implementation of bilingual pedagogy depends upon teachers possessing both linguistic awareness and pedagogical competence. Consequently, teacher education programmes should include explicit preparation in bilingual instructional strategies, sociolinguistic awareness, translanguaging, and scaffolded language instruction.

Professional development programmes should equip teachers to recognise the educational value of Guyanese Creole while maintaining high expectations for Standard English proficiency. This represents a shift from correcting students' language to building upon their linguistic strengths.

➤ *Implications for Curriculum Development*

The findings suggest that current English language curricula should more explicitly acknowledge the linguistic realities of Guyanese classrooms. Curriculum frameworks should incorporate structured opportunities for bilingual instructional strategies that facilitate the transition from Guyanese Creole to Standard Guyanese English.

Rather than viewing bilingual pedagogy as a departure from curriculum expectations, policymakers should recognise it as a means of achieving those expectations more effectively.

➤ *Implications for Language Policy*

This study also contributes to ongoing debates surrounding language policy in Guyana. Existing educational policies largely reflect monolingual assumptions despite the multilingual realities of classroom practice. The findings suggest that language policy should move beyond viewing Guyanese Creole and Standard Guyanese English as competing linguistic systems.

Instead, policy should recognise that both language varieties can serve complementary educational functions. Guyanese Creole provides an accessible medium through which learners develop conceptual understanding, while Standard Guyanese English remains essential for academic, professional, and national communication. Recognising this complementary relationship may contribute to more equitable

educational outcomes without compromising national standards of English proficiency.

➤ *Limitations*

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this study.

First, the research was conducted within a single secondary school using a relatively small sample of sixteen Grade 10 students. While appropriate for classroom-based action research, the findings cannot be generalised to all Guyanese secondary schools without further empirical investigation.

Second, the intervention was implemented over a limited instructional period. Although measurable improvements were observed, the study did not examine the long-term retention of English language gains or whether the effects persisted beyond the intervention.

Third, the researcher served as both teacher and investigator. Although methodological triangulation, systematic observation, and reflective journaling were employed to strengthen credibility, the dual role may have influenced aspects of data interpretation. Future studies involving multiple researchers and independent classroom observations would provide additional opportunities to validate these findings.

Finally, the study focused exclusively on English language instruction. Future research may examine whether similar bilingual pedagogical approaches enhance learning in other curriculum areas where language demands significantly influence academic achievement.

These limitations do not diminish the value of the findings but instead identify important directions for continued investigation.

➤ *Future Research*

This study provides a foundation for a broader programme of research into bilingual education within Guyana and the wider Caribbean.

Future investigations should include larger samples drawn from multiple schools representing diverse geographic and socioeconomic contexts. Such studies would provide stronger evidence regarding the generalisability of bilingual instructional approaches across the Guyanese education system.

Longitudinal research is also needed to examine the sustainability of improvements in English language proficiency and to determine whether bilingual instruction influences students' performance in high-stakes examinations such as the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC).

Further research should explore teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and preparedness to implement bilingual

pedagogies, as these factors are likely to influence successful classroom implementation.

Comparative investigations involving other English-lexifier Creole-speaking Caribbean territories would also contribute to regional understandings of bilingual education and provide evidence to inform collaborative language policy development across the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

➤ *Contribution to Knowledge*

This study makes four significant contributions to bilingual education scholarship.

First, it provides one of the earliest empirical classroom investigations examining the educational use of Guyanese Creole as a scaffold for teaching Standard Guyanese English within a secondary school setting.

Second, it extends Cummins' Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis by demonstrating that linguistic transfer may operate effectively across a Creole–Standard English continuum rather than exclusively between distinct language systems.

Third, it contributes new empirical evidence supporting translanguaging and planned pedagogical code-switching within Caribbean classrooms, a context that remains comparatively underrepresented within international bilingual education research.

Finally, the study contributes to policy discussions concerning language, equity, and educational effectiveness by demonstrating that recognising students' home language as a pedagogical resource can simultaneously strengthen academic achievement and support inclusive educational practice.

Collectively, these contributions position the study as both a context-specific investigation of Guyanese education and a broader contribution to international scholarship on bilingual learning in multilingual postcolonial societies.

➤ *Conclusion*

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the strategic integration of Guyanese Creole into English language instruction could improve secondary school students' acquisition of Standard Guyanese English. The findings demonstrate that bilingual pedagogy produced substantial improvements in English language achievement while simultaneously enhancing classroom participation, metalinguistic awareness, learner confidence, and collaborative engagement.

More importantly, the study challenges long-standing assumptions that exclusive use of Standard English represents the most effective approach to English language instruction within Guyana. Instead, the evidence suggests that Guyanese Creole functions as a valuable cognitive and pedagogical resource that enables learners to construct meaning before progressively transferring that understanding into formal academic English.

The significance of these findings extends beyond the classroom. They contribute to international discussions concerning bilingual education, language policy, and educational equity by demonstrating that multilingual learners benefit when educational systems recognise, rather than suppress, their existing linguistic resources. Within the Guyanese context, this represents a shift from viewing Guyanese Creole as a linguistic obstacle to recognising it as an educational asset capable of strengthening English language acquisition.

Ultimately, improving English language education in Guyana may depend not upon reducing students' use of Guyanese Creole but upon employing it strategically to facilitate mastery of Standard Guyanese English. By embracing bilingual pedagogy as a means of achieving academic excellence rather than compromising it, educators and policymakers can create classrooms that are more inclusive, more equitable, and more effective in preparing students for success within both national and global contexts.

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