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The Implementation of Game-Based Learning to Enhance Students' Speaking Skills in Indonesian EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the application of non-digital Game-Based Learning (GBL) to improve speaking skills in an Indonesian EFL vocational classroom. The study utilized three interactive games—role play cards, board game speaking, and picture description—to provide an enjoyable and accessible alternative to conventional instruction, thereby enhancing students' oral communication skills. It employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) framework across three cycles with 26 tenth-grade students. Data were gathered through speaking performance assessments, classroom observations, and student surveys. The results demonstrated continuous improvement in five speaking components: fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence. The most significant gains were noted in vocabulary and confidence, indicating that frequent engagement in communicative, low-anxiety activities promoted student involvement and risk-taking. Observational data corroborated this trend, revealing heightened participation and interaction as students became more accustomed to the game formats. Furthermore, students' feedback reflected favorable attitudes toward GBL, highlighting its role in increasing the enjoyment and motivation of speaking practice. These findings indicated that non-digital game-based learning was a practical and pragmatic approach for enhancing speaking skills, particularly in resource-constrained educational settings. The study advocated for the integration of GBL into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking instruction to enhance student engagement, communication, and confidence, and suggested further research into combining digital and traditional games for broader pedagogical impact.

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1. Introduction

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in Indonesia, speaking constitutes one of the most formidable abilities for students to acquire. Numerous Indonesian learners encounter difficulties in oral communication in English owing to restricted vocabulary, diminished self-assurance, worry, and inadequate opportunities for genuine practice (Asih & Halisiana, 2022; Hwang et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2018). Conventional teacher-centered pedagogy frequently prioritizes grammar and written tasks, neglecting communicative ability and oral fluency. As a result, pupils infrequently participate in substantive verbal exchanges, resulting in passive classroom settings and inadequate oral proficiency results (Adipat et al., 2021; Anabel et al., 2024; Lai & Pharanat, 2024).

To resolve these ongoing difficulties, numerous novel techniques have been investigated. Game-Based Learning (GBL) has emerged as a viable method to engage learners and facilitate active language utilization. GBL denotes the incorporation of instructional material into gaming dynamics to facilitate significant, engaging, and objective-driven learning experiences (Al-Azawi et al., 2016). Games in the language classroom create low-anxiety environments that encourage students to use the target language spontaneously, foster social interaction, and practice speaking in authentic communicative contexts (Anabel et al., 2024; Asih & Halisiana, 2022). Several studies have documented the effectiveness of GBL in enhancing students' speaking fluency, vocabulary use, and overall (Adipat et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2022).

A review of the relevant literature indicates that both digital and non-digital game-based learning formats yield positive outcomes in English as a Foreign Language instruction. Digital platforms like Kahoot, Duolingo, and Quizlet have been extensively researched, demonstrating enhancements in learners' motivation, engagement, and educational outcomes (Ebrahimzadeh, 2017; Huang, 2023). However, these methods often require substantial technological infrastructure, internet access, and digital literacy, which are not always feasible in under-resourced educational settings, particularly in parts of Indonesia (Ahmed et al., 2022; Ismail et al., 2025). Non-digital games provide an inclusive, cost-effective, and interactive approach that can be tailored to different classroom environments. Research indicates that non-digital game-based learning strategies, including board games, role play, and vocabulary card games, effectively enhance communication, teamwork, and learner creativity (Ismail et al., 2025; Putri Utami & Bharati, 2020).

Game-based learning has also been linked with cognitive, affective, and social benefits in the language learning process. It can reduce learners' speaking anxiety and improve their willingness to communicate in English (Ahmed et al., 2022; Asih & Halisiana, 2022). GBL cultivates a learning environment centered on students, encouraging active collaboration, critical thinking, and autonomy in learners. The current study indicates that students exhibited increased engagement during group-based speaking games that necessitated collaborative decision-making and immediate interaction. These findings align with those of Al-Azawi et al. (2016) and Dimitra et al. (2020), who emphasize that the interactive nature of game-based learning supports not only language development but also social skills and learner responsibility.

Furthermore, research by Liu et al. (2020), and Anabel et al. (2024) indicates that vocabulary and speaking structures are more likely to be retained when learners engage in repeated, meaningful language use facilitated by structured gameplay. The findings indicate that embedding learning in enjoyable and purposeful tasks enhances students' processing and internalization of linguistic patterns, leading to improved fluency and communicative competence. Despite the expanding literature on game-based learning (GBL), there exists a significant lack in studies explicitly addressing non-digital game-based treatments aimed at enhancing speaking skills in

Indonesian EFL vocational high school contexts. Previous research have offered significant insights into vocabulary acquisition and overall language development. (Anabel et al., 2024; Huang, 2023; Ismail et al., 2025). The contextual implementation of structured non-digital games for ongoing speaking enhancement-especially via classroom action research-remains insufficiently examined. While many existing studies have focused on digital games, vocabulary development, or motivation in general EFL contexts, very few have explored the sustained use of non-digital speaking games in vocational high schools using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) model. This study uniquely addresses that gap by providing empirical evidence of how three types of structured, low-tech game-based tasks can be systematically applied across learning cycles to improve multiple dimensions of speaking proficiency. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on non-digital, pedagogically-driven games, its iterative implementation through CAR, and its emphasis on learner engagement and confidence-building in an under-researched context: the Indonesian EFL vocational classroom.

This study examined the application of non-digital game-based learning activities to improve speaking abilities among vocational high school students in Indonesia. This study's selection of games role play cards, board game speaking, and picture description was based on the pedagogical conviction that experiential, collaborative, and imaginative activities can enhance oral language production in ways that are significant, engaging, and pertinent to students' real-life communication requirements (Dimitra et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020).

These non-digital games not only provide structured yet playful platforms for practicing speaking, but also address limitations in access to technology that may hinder the implementation of digital tools in many Indonesian classrooms (Dimitra et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020). Board game speaking involves turn-taking, problem-solving, and word recall, while role-play cards let students assume situational identities and practice communicative behaviours. The Picture Description game encourages students to collaborate on narratives using randomly generated prompts, improving creativity, sequencing, and spoken fluency (Dimitra et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020).

The intervention, based on a classroom action research (CAR) methodology, was executed in three cycles to systematically monitor, reflect, and enhance instructional implementation and learner outcomes. Each cycle utilized a distinct game format to enhance student engagement and to investigate the specific benefits of each format to speaking growth. Research substantiates that the iterative framework of CAR equips educators with practical insights regarding the immediate and enduring impacts of innovative teaching methodologies, including game-based learning (Dimitra et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020).

This study aims to enhance the existing literature on interactive and learner-cantered methodologies in EFL instruction by documenting the implementation process, classroom dynamics, and consequences of this intervention, specifically focusing on non-digital game-based tactics. This study explicitly seeks to address three research inquiries: (1) What specific speaking skill components have improved as a result of GBL implementation? (2) How did students demonstrate participation, engagement, and interaction during the game-based speaking activities? and (3) What are the students' perceptions about the use of Game-Based Learning (GBL) to improve speaking skills in the classroom? These questions serve to investigate both the linguistic outcomes and affective experiences of learners within a structured, game-supported learning environment.

The findings of this study are intended to assist EFL educators in utilizing practical, low-tech strategies to enhance students' speaking skills, particularly in resource-constrained settings. By integrating game-based activities with communicative learning objectives and promoting student

engagement, this research aims to make Indonesian EFL speaking instruction more dynamic, interactive, and effective.

2. Methods

This This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design consisting of three iterative cycles, based on the widely accepted model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). CAR is a collaborative; introspective process intended for educators seeking to enhance their teaching methodologies through evidence-informed reflection and ongoing advancement. It underscores collaborative efforts, rendering it suitable for practitioner-driven innovations like the incorporation of game-based learning methodologies in genuine classroom environments.

The three cycles in this study comprised four essential stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. During the planning phase, specific goals were identified, suitable game-based strategies were chosen to align with the speaking competencies outlined in the curriculum, and lesson plans along with assessment tools were developed. In the implementation phase, the chosen non-digital games were introduced in the classroom, allowing students to participate in learning activities aimed at improving their speaking skills. The observation phase included meticulous recording of student behaviour, classroom interactions, and learning results using observation checklists, speaking rubrics, and field notes. The concluding phase concentrated on evaluating the intervention's effectiveness, pinpointing areas that require enhancement, and adjusting the instructional design for the next iteration.

The cyclical nature of this method allows for progressive refinement of instructional practices, ensuring that interventions are responsive to learners' needs and grounded in classroom realities. This approach is also supported by educational theorists such as McNiff & Whitehead, (2006), who argue that CAR empowers teachers to act as researchers in their own classrooms, fostering a more dynamic, context-sensitive, and learner-centered pedagogy.

This study involved 26 tenth-grade students from a vocational high school (SMK) in Indonesia. The class was chosen intentionally, guided by the teacher’s insights and the students’ requirements to enhance their English-Speaking abilities. The educational setting was a conventional classroom equipped with typical amenities and devoid of reliance on digital technology, thereby corresponding with the implementation of non-digital games.

The primary data sources were student questionnaires, observation notes, and speaking performance assessments. Curriculum documents, lesson plans, and records of prior speaking performances comprised secondary data. The study used three different non-digital games: Role Play Cards (Cycle 1), Board Game Speaking (Cycle 2), and Picture Description (Cycle 3). These games were chosen because of their practicality, low-resource requirements, and high interactivity, making them ideal for classrooms with limited access to technology but a strong need for communicative learning strategies (Lai & Pharanat, 2024; Liu et al., 2020).

2.1 Data Collection Techniques

This study used both quantitative and qualitative tools to get complete and balanced information on how well students learned, how they behaved in class, and how they felt about their experiences. The choice of these tools was made to make sure that both observed classroom interactions and learners' own experiences were recorded in a fair and organized way. The different types of data sources were also meant to make the results more valid and trustworthy, especially in a classroom where things change quickly and students' reactions to game-based activities can be very different at different times.

1. **Speaking Tests:** Administered at the beginning and end of each cycle to evaluate improvements across five criteria: fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence. The rubric was adapted from CEFR standards (Council of Europe, 2020).
2. **Observation Sheets:** Two observers (the teacher-researcher and a peer teacher) used a standardized format to record student participation, engagement, and interaction during the learning process.
3. **Student Questionnaires:** Distributed after each cycle to gather students' perceptions about the activities, enjoyment, and self-reported improvement.

By using several data gathering methods, the study ensured a comprehensive grasp of how game-based learning affected students' speaking skills. This triangulation not only increased the credibility of the research findings, but it also enabled cross-validation of results from other data sources. A rigorous data gathering approach is required in classroom-based action research, where the information gathered must reflect the learning environment's richness and complexity.

2.2 Data Analysis Techniques

The results were examined quantitatively and qualitatively. The students' speaking scores were tabulated and examined using descriptive statistics, which included the mean, minimum, maximum, and standard deviation for each cycle. The improvement in students' speaking ability was measured by comparing pre- and post-cycle 1, 2, and 3 performance scores. Qualitative data from observation notes and questionnaires were thematically analyzed to acquire insight into student opinions and classroom dynamics (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Table 1 presents the components of the speaking rubric used for assessment.

Table 1. Components of the Speaking Assessment Rubric

Component	Description	Score Range
Fluency	Flow, smoothness, and coherence of speech	1–5
Vocabulary	Range and appropriateness of lexical choices	1–5
Grammar	Accuracy and complexity of sentence structure	1–5
Pronunciation	Clarity and accuracy of English sounds and stress	1–5
Confidence	Willingness to speak and composure during communication	1–5

Table 1 delineates the principal elements evaluated throughout the speaking performance assessments across all three research cycles. Each element—fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence—was meticulously chosen to represent fundamental aspects of communicative skill in EFL contexts. The rubric was created to assess both linguistic precision and the learners' capacity to articulate themselves proficiently in spoken English. Scoring for each category varied from 1 (minimal) to 5 (very adept), allowing researchers to track subtle improvements and pinpoint specific areas for enhancement during the intervention. This detailed rubric guaranteed consistent evaluation of student achievement in accordance with established worldwide standards, particularly the CEFR descriptors.

A visual representation of the Classroom Action Research model is shown in Figure 1 below.

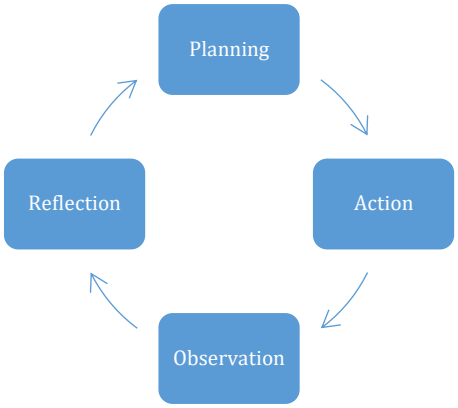

Fig. 1 Classroom Action Research (CAR) Cycle Model
(adapted from Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988)

This iterative approach allowed the researcher to continuously refine teaching strategies based on reflection and evidence from each cycle. This method aligns with the recommendations of Creswell (2014) for conducting classroom-based educational interventions.

The methodological framework of this research guaranteed that the results presented in the subsequent section were based on systematic classroom observation, repeated measurement, and ongoing educational reflection. The implementation of non-digital game-based learning aids was both pedagogically sound and contextually compatible with the existing classroom infrastructure and the requirements of the learners.

3. Result

The speaking performance outcomes in this study were derived from standardized pre-tests and post-tests administered at the commencement and conclusion of each cycle. These evaluations were created to objectively assess students' oral language progression during their engagement in game-based learning activities. The evaluation employed a speaking rubric modified from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020) to maintain uniformity and objectivity. This rubric provided explicit descriptors for five essential components deemed critical in assessing speaking performance in EFL contexts: fluency (the capacity to articulate smoothly and coherently), vocabulary (the breadth and suitability of word selections), grammar (the precision and complexity of sentence constructions), pronunciation (the clarity and accuracy of articulated sounds and intonation), and confidence (students' readiness and poise while speaking).

The speaking ability of each student was assessed individually, with scores recorded for each component on a 1–5 scale, where 1 represented very limited performance and 5 denoted high proficiency. The scores were subsequently averaged across the class to indicate collective progress. The intervention comprised three cycles, each incorporating distinct non-digital game-based activities with specific pedagogical objectives. During Cycle 1, students participated in role play activities using cards that simulated real-life scenarios, such as ordering food or requesting directions, with the objective of enhancing functional and interactive speaking skills. In Cycle 2, the board game speaking activity necessitated that students respond to prompts while navigating a game board, thereby promoting turn-taking, spontaneity, and extended responses. In Cycle 3,

students engaged in a picture description task, observing an image and articulating detailed descriptions using suitable vocabulary and sentence structures, thus enhancing their skills in descriptive language and monologic speaking.

Pre- and post-assessment scores gave a measurable and systematic account of students' speaking improvement over time, laying the groundwork for evaluating each game-based intervention in succeeding cycles. A rubric-based assessment harmonized with worldwide standards kept the study's evaluation legitimate and accurate.

Table 2 shows the average speaking scores across all five components at each step of the research, from the pre-cycle test to the post-tests after each game-based learning cycle. This table shows students' speaking performance improvement as they played each of the three non-digital gaming activities in the study.

Table 2. Average Scores in Speaking Performance Across Cycles

Component	Pre-Cycle 1	Post-Cycle 1	Post-Cycle 2	Post-Cycle 3
Fluency	2.1	2.8	3.3	3.8
Vocabulary	2.3	2.9	3.4	3.9
Grammar	2.0	2.7	3.2	3.6
Pronunciation	2.2	2.8	3.3	3.7
Confidence	2.1	2.9	3.5	3.9

Concerning the initial research question: “Which specific components of speaking skills have enhanced due to GBL implementation in the selected studies?”, the data in Table 2 unequivocally illustrate consistent and quantifiable advancements across all five evaluated speaking components—fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence—during the three intervention cycles. These findings underscore the diverse advantages of non-digital game-based learning methodologies in facilitating learners' spoken language acquisition in EFL classes.

The most notable enhancement was shown in students' confidence, which increased from an average of 2.1 in the pre-cycle phase to 3.9 by the conclusion of Cycle 3. The 1.8-point gain indicates that consistent engagement in game-based speaking challenges within a nurturing, non-threatening context significantly alleviated speaking anxiety. Students exhibited increased willingness to take chances, volunteer answers, and engage actively in speaking activities. The organized format of the activities, together with the lack of evaluative pressure, probably established a secure environment that promoted emotional solace and facilitated verbal articulation. This discovery corroborates earlier research highlighting the function of GBL in diminishing affective filters and augmenting students' readiness to communicate (Liu et al., 2020).

The second most notable improvement was found in vocabulary, which increased from 2.3 to 3.9 over the course of the study. This gain reflects the lexical enrichment that occurred as students encountered and reused relevant vocabulary repeatedly during gameplay. In the role-play and board game activities, learners were prompted to produce words within specific contexts, which encouraged deeper cognitive processing and retention. This supports findings by Anabel et al. (2024) Espiritu and Buaraphan (2023) , who note that task-based games enhance vocabulary acquisition by requiring learners to use words meaningfully and interactively.

Fluency, often considered the cornerstone of speaking proficiency, showed a 1.7-point increase (from 2.1 to 3.8). This suggests that the regular practice and natural flow embedded in the game-based activities enabled students to speak more smoothly, spontaneously, and with fewer pauses. The progressive nature of the tasks—ranging from structured dialogues to open-ended descriptions—allowed students to gradually develop their ability to maintain speech flow, a finding supported by Adipat et al. (2021) and Dimitra et al. (2020), who emphasize the importance of repeated, meaningful speaking practice in building fluency.

Grammar and pronunciation, though starting at slightly lower baselines, also showed steady improvement, rising from 2.0 to 3.6 and 2.2 to 3.7 respectively. These components, while less immediately responsive than confidence or vocabulary, benefitted from repeated exposure to structured patterns of language use embedded within the games. Grammar accuracy improved as learners became more attentive to sentence construction during role-plays and board game tasks, while pronunciation benefitted from constant listening and repetition, especially during turn-based spoken interactions. These outcomes are consistent with Ismail et al. (2025), who found that interactive language games promote the development of both form-focused and communicative elements of speaking.

In relation to the second research question "How did students demonstrate participation, engagement, and interaction during the game-based speaking activities implemented in the classroom?" The findings from the structured observation sheets indicated a consistent enhancement in students' behavioral and cognitive engagement throughout the three intervention cycles. Two observers, the teacher-researcher and a colleague, documented student answers according to three primary indicators: active participation, engagement level, and peer interaction during each game-based session.

In Cycle 1, during the role-play card activity, observers noted that approximately 65% of students participated actively, while the remaining students required repeated prompting or chose to speak minimally. Engagement levels were described as moderate; although many students appeared curious about the activity, some were hesitant due to unfamiliarity with the role-play format. Peer interaction was limited to scripted exchanges, and several students relied heavily on written cues.

By Cycle 2, with the introduction of the board game speaking task, the classroom dynamic shifted noticeably. Observation data showed that student participation rose to over 80%, with more spontaneous speech, laughter, and visible enjoyment. Students frequently asked questions, responded to one another's ideas, and took turns with minimal teacher intervention. Observers noted higher levels of social engagement, as students worked in small groups, encouraged each other, and collaborated to follow the game rules and complete the speaking prompts.

In Cycle 3, during the picture description activity, participation remained high—at around 85%—though the format shifted toward more individualized speaking rather than group-based interaction. Despite the more introspective nature of the task, most students remained engaged and showed increased confidence in describing details, elaborating on ideas, and speaking with less hesitation. Observers commented on the noticeable improvement in students' willingness to speak for longer durations without support, as well as their ability to describe and reflect using more structured language.

The observational data from all cycles demonstrated a favourable trend in student classroom conduct, especially with active participation, prolonged focus, and significant interaction. These findings indicate that non-digital game-based learning exercises are both linguistically advantageous and socially stimulating. The engaging and purpose-driven characteristics of the games alleviated classroom tension, promoted collaboration, and improved students' confidence

in utilizing English for authentic communication. These results validate the significance of GBL in fostering a more dynamic and participative learning environment where language use is both intentional and pleasurable.

In addressing the third research question "What are the students' perceptions about the use of Game-Based Learning (GBL) to improve speaking skills in the classroom?"—data were gathered from student questionnaires administered at the end of each research cycle. These questionnaires contained a combination of Likert-scale items and open-ended prompts designed to capture students' perceptions regarding the enjoyment, perceived benefits, and personal challenges experienced during the game-based speaking activities.

The findings suggested that the majority of students responded favourably to the implementation of GBL throughout the intervention. Approximately 73% of students agreed or firmly agreed that the role-play activity helped them speak more confidently in front of others after Cycle 1 (Role Play Cards). Nevertheless, a number of students expressed a lack of familiarity with role-playing and an initial sense of apprehension. Nevertheless, more than 65% of the participants reported that the task was "different" and "fun" in comparison to the typical classroom protocols, underscoring the novelty factor as a motivating factor.

After Cycle 2 (Board Game Speaking), people's positive views grew. Over 85% of the students said they were more interested in learning during the board game session. They said that the competitive parts and taking turns made the learning process more fun. A lot of students said that the unpredictable prompts helped them think on their feet, and 78% said that this lesson helped them improve their vocabulary and speaking speed. The majority of students said that this cycle was the most fun.

In Cycle 3 (Picture Description), students were more aware of how far they had come. Some students found this activity harder because they didn't have any peer support when it was their turn to speak, but 82% of students said that the job helped them organize their thoughts and speak in fuller sentences. A few of the students said they were "surprised" that they could talk nonstop for longer amounts of time, which was something they had never done before. Also, 76% of those who answered said they liked doing both individual and group tasks to improve different parts of their speaking.

The open-ended answers added to the evidence for these quantitative results. Some common themes were feeling more confident when speaking English, appreciating the idea of "learning through play," and having a sense of success when finishing speaking tasks that seemed hard at first. Some students asked for similar game-based activities to be included in future lessons, which shows that they are still interested in using interactive ways to learn.

To sum up, the questionnaire results show that students strongly believed that GBL was not only useful and fun, but also powerful because it helped them gain speaking confidence and language skills. The change in how students feel from one cycle to the next shows that GBL is becoming more and more accepted as a valid and preferred way to learn English in EFL classes, especially when used consistently and with careful planning.

4. Discussion

The results of this study add to and support previous research that shows how game-based learning (GBL) can help improve speaking skills in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. There was consistent progress in all areas that were tested, including fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence. This shows that non-digital GBL is an effective way to teach communication skills. This is in line with Plass et al. (2015), who emphasized that GBL supports deep learning by combining cognitive engagement with meaningful contexts. Similarly,

Ghazy et al. (2021) observed that game-based strategies increased students' enthusiasm and willingness to speak in English, particularly when games were designed to match learners' proficiency levels.

The improvements found in this study also reflect the patterns noted by Ding et al. (2017), who reported that GBL fosters active participation and builds confidence among Generation Z learners in higher education contexts. Moreover, Hartt et al. (2020) claimed that GBL environments produce the best balance of challenge and motivation, which improves learning outcomes. This effect is clearly visible in the fact that learners' confidence grew throughout the study.

The gains in vocabulary and fluency echo findings by Huang (2023), Anabel et al. (2024), and Ahmed et al. (2022), who found that students remember words better when they are presented in engaging, context-rich ways. The role play and board games used in this study backed this point of view by encouraging students to use situational and thematic vocabulary in real-life situations.

Increased student engagement and participation during the games support the conclusions of Putri and Bharati (2020), who discovered that game features, especially those that involve luck and competition, get students to talk to each other more often. The results from the observation sheets in this study show that participation slowly increased across cycles. Speaking about board games was the best way to get people to work together.

The students' positive perceptions, as gathered from questionnaires, resonate with those reported in studies by Al-Azawi et al. (2016), Liu et al., (2020), and Dimitra et al. (2020), who highlight learner satisfaction as a key driver for sustained oral participation. Students in this study appreciated the novelty, clarity, and freedom provided by the games, leading to higher motivation and better performance.

The findings of this study theoretically align with socio-constructivist learning principles, which regard language acquisition as a social process enhanced by interaction, collaboration, and collective meaning-making. In this context, game-based learning (GBL) provides a systematic, interactive setting in which learners collaboratively generate knowledge through intentional communication and cooperative activities. This view is supported by Bado and Franklin (2014), who emphasized that cooperative games in the EFL classroom promote peer scaffolding, negotiation of meaning, and collective responsibility for language use. Additionally, Reinders and Wattana (2015) found that game-based tasks enhanced learners' willingness to communicate by lowering affective filters and creating risk-free speaking opportunities.

This study validates the feasibility and efficacy of low-tech, non-digital game-based learning in resource-constrained educational settings. The avoidance of technology not only mitigated contextual limitations such restricted internet access or device availability, but also rendered game-based instruction more adaptable and easily repeatable across many educational environments. This reinforces the findings of Sriyota et al. (2024), who reported that simple, well-designed GBL strategies significantly improved English-speaking skills among young learners in rural schools.

Similarly, Pogrebnyi et al. (2016) emphasized that game-based instruction, even without digital tools, can foster motivation, participation, and learning gains when tailored to learners' linguistic and cognitive levels. These insights collectively highlight the practical potential of GBL as a scalable and context-sensitive method for improving oral communication in EFL contexts.

In comparison with digital GBL studies (Anabel et al., 2024; Ebrahimzadeh, 2017; Liu et al., 2020), the results of this study suggest that non-digital methods can yield comparable learning outcomes when designed with pedagogical intent. While digital games offer multimedia stimulation and automated feedback, non-digital games provide tactile, social, and student-driven experiences that build confidence and autonomy.

Dual implications arise from this research. In theory, it promotes game-based frameworks in communicative language education paradigms. It gives EFL educators—especially in impoverished countries—a proven way to augment speaking training without internet infrastructure. Future studies should examine hybrid models of digital and non-digital GBL to determine how different modalities affect language development across learner profiles.

5. Conclusion

This study found that non-digital game-based learning (GBL) tactics improve Indonesian EFL vocational students' speaking skills. Students improved fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and confidence across three intervention cycles utilizing role play cards, board game speaking, and image description. Students' confidence and language use improved most, demonstrating that task-oriented games might generate low-anxiety conditions that foster meaningful oral communication.

Throughout the trial, observation data showed increased student participation, engagement, and peer connection. As they learned the game formats, kids were more inclined to contribute, interact, and have conversations in pairs and groups. These behavioural changes show that GBL promotes social engagement and communicative autonomy as well as language.

Post-cycle questionnaires showed student excitement and agreement for using games in speaking courses. Students reported improved motivation, enjoyment, and self-perceived English development. This positive response suggests using interactive, game-based tactics instead of teacher-centred ones.

In conclusion, well-designed, non-digital GBL interventions can improve speaking competency in EFL classrooms, especially in resource-limited educational situations, by being effective, accessible, and context-appropriate. The study shows GBL's pedagogical value and encourages low-tech language education advances.

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