The Impact of Using Language Games on Motivating High School Students to Learning English Speaking Skills

Ho Thi Thuy Dung 1*

1 Tra Vinh University, Tra Vinh City, Vietnam
* Corresponding author's email: tienganhumt@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The use of language games to increase high school pupils' motivation for learning English speaking abilities. This essay examines how language games are used at U Minh Thuong High School to teach students how to speak English. Eighty teenagers from two high school classrooms made up the participants. They were 36 boys and 44 girls in grade 11 at U Minh Thuong High School, and they ranged in age from 16 to 17. A questionnaire and an interview on participants' opinions on the usage of language games in English speaking lessons served as the study's primary data collection instruments. The goal of this study is to identify the most effective strategies for encouraging speaking in the classroom, as well as what language activities are most effective for enhancing academic achievement and generating interest in children who are learning English.

Keywords: Language games, speaking skills, motivation

Introduction

Because of its widespread use and role in fostering global connections, knowing English is now absolutely necessary. Good English also makes it simpler for students to find jobs and opportunities in life, especially in the context of contemporary global trade. "Students who can speak English fluently may have a stronger chance of further education, of getting a job, and of gaining advancement," wrote Baker and Westrup in 2003. (p. 5). Only reading comprehension and grammar are included when evaluating the efficacy of a teacher, particularly on the General Certificate of Secondary Education exam. "In Vietnam, there is a discrepancy between the testing and instruction of English. While testing appears to be centered on assessing students' lexicogrammatical knowledge, teaching uses the communicative approach (Van Van, 2010, p. 16). The educational system has not made the necessary investments to properly teach language abilities like speaking, listening, and writing. Teachers do not sufficiently teach other skills like speaking since they primarily focus on teaching pupils English to prepare them for exams. This issue also affects how well English teachers are able to develop their craft over time. There is no assistive technology, and classrooms are huge (over 40 pupils per classroom), making it challenging for teachers to impart good language skills. Students' primary motivation for learning English is to prepare for exams rather than to use it in real-world situations.
Regarding language instruction, teachers occasionally struggle to encourage students to express themselves during class activities. Even if students are already familiar with grammar, they are unable to communicate. Students find it extremely challenging to respond to queries from teachers in a second language, according to Baker and Westrup (2003). Even though they might have a vague concept of what to say, choosing the right words or using proper grammar can be difficult. Not being able to draw kids is another difficulty with teaching English language proficiency. Planning learning activities is always crucial for students' speaking practice and language development, according to Goh and Burns (2012).

The work must be challenging enough to help students of all age groups improve their language skills and grammatical and phonetic accuracy. The teacher may occasionally instruct the students to read the textbook dialogue aloud or act out the dialogue in front of the class. However, the majority of these strategies have a low response rate. As a result, the situation makes the pupils feel worn out and bored. Students may become less interested in learning how to speak as a result of these time-consuming classroom exercises, which prevents them from learning English as much as they can. Students may become discouraged and lose interest in learning if they have trouble speaking English. Additionally, some students experience issues with their presentations. First, since they lack a sufficient vocabulary, students struggle to choose the right words when they wish to speak. Additionally, they are quite bashful and lack the self-assurance to speak their minds. Therefore, they are occasionally reluctant to speak up. Although students are expected to talk during speaking class, many of them struggle with shyness or fear when doing so (Kaur & Aziz, 2020, p. 690). And last, some of them continue to use poor language when speaking.

I have a significant impact on encouraging oral language among pupils at U Minh Thuong High School. Allowing students to express themselves and investigate their ideas is important. The problem mentioned above relates to students' capacity to master oral ability. Students will be more engaged in practicing speaking English and learning English if the classroom is made enjoyable and appealing. One of the efficient teaching strategies that might encourage students to speak English more actively is the use of language games. According to Cameron (2001), teachers should use more teaching methods, such as games, to help students improve their language proficiency. All ages of pupils can benefit from language games, which inspire not only students but also teachers. Participating in games encourages students to speak English more frequently. As a result, shy pupils will feel less self-conscious while learning and will have more opportunities to express themselves. The goal of language games is to improve learners' attitudes. It is essential that students feel at ease with one another, confident in themselves, and focused on the language instruction rather than other side activities, according to Wright et al. (2006). Language games are a crucial tactic for encouraging pupils to feel at ease and gain confidence when speaking English.

Language-learning games can also improve the caliber of speaking classes. The use of games in the classroom, according to Vyas and Patel (2015), "opens doors for new possibilities in teaching and learning. Games may be a useful tool for groups to collaborate if they are used properly (p. 250). All players in effective learning games should feel equal and at ease, even the weaker players who might not have been adequately prepared. Students learn to identify
their errors more easily by playing games and using English; as a result, they can benefit from the class and increase their motivation, enthusiasm, and confidence. According to Whitton (2014), games act as motivational aids by examining how they are constructed and are intended to improve players' desire to play them as well as their involvement, interest, and persistence. Particularly in English speaking sessions, games can assist students in learning new words to memorize, pronunciation techniques, and even grammar structures. Games also give teachers a way to guide students past the point of structural mastery and into the realm of meaningful communication in context (Taman, 2020, p. 3).

In conclusion, this research aims to determine the best way to build students' oral communication skills in the classroom. It also intends to determine which linguistic activities scare kids away from academic performance and the classroom environment.

**Literature review**

**Definition of speaking**

One of the four language abilities is speaking (reading, writing, listening, and speaking). It is a way for students to interact with others in order to accomplish certain objectives or to convey their thoughts, intentions, hopes, and viewpoints (Torky, 2006, p. 13). Speaking is an essential skill for thinking, communicating, and learning. Speaking is the process of converting conversational skills, including how to articulate ideas, desires, and readiness, into clear, everyday speech that others can understand. Speaking of speech also refers to any process by which individuals exchange thoughts, sentiments, and information while utilizing a variety of body language idioms.

Speaking is a skill that deserves literary proficiency, both in the first language and the second, according to Bygate (2003). It is a fantastic approach to increasing social cohesion, social standing, career success, and business. Accordingly, "Speaking is the presence of a communication purpose that must be accomplished, for example, the speakers want to express wish and desire to do something; negotiate and solve a specific problem; or develop and sustain social relationships with others" (Dewi et al., 2016, p. 65). Speaking also entails creating orderly linguistic statements that communicate meaning (Bailey, 2003, p. 48). According to ElNaggar (2020), speaking requires that learners not only be able to generate certain language features like grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary.

Speaking is also a conscious activity. "Talking is a deliberate action and a mode of being. An effective utterance allows the speaker's communication intended to be understood by a speaking partner (Levellt, 1995, p. 15). Speech is the systematic production of speech to transmit meaning, as opposed to the simple application, which is what people say. According to Cameron (2001), speaking is the active use of language to express meaning so that others can understand it. Speaking is defined as "expressing or transmitting ideas, sentiments, ideas, etc." in the Oxford Advanced Dictionary. Speaking is one of the ways to put an idea, thinking, or feeling into words, according to another expert, Andriyani (2015, p. 22). Speaking is equally about conveying an idea to someone who is thinking.
Definition of motivation

The ability to be motivated is seen to be crucial to achieving any goal. This is an important matter that affects all academic study methods, especially while learning a second language, and has a high quality. Finding motivation is challenging, though, and different researchers take different approaches.

"Motivation is something different, and it cannot be seen, but there is a psychological construct; conduct or effort, attitudes, interest, and values or want," writes Ihsan (2016, p. 32). Language learning motivation and classroom motivation are the two components of motivation in studying second languages. 2010 (Gardner). Additionally, "One of the most crucial aspects that determine the rate and success of second language achievement is motivation" (Doan, 2011, p. 1). Gardner (2001) asserts that three factors—effort, desire, and influence—all affect how people perceive motivation. The effort is the amount of time and motivation put into learning the language. The motivation to demonstrate a learner's proficiency in the language and the factors that influence them include the learner's emotional reactions to language acquisition. Motivation is described as "an inner device that stimulates learners toward better execution of their learning task" in another description provided by Safdarian(2013, p. 8). Motivation is described as an internal drive that activates behavior and provides its direction, according to Singh(2011, p. 1). Wimolmas (2013) stated on page 1 that "Motivation is regarded significant in its impact on language learning performance." To achieve something, both learning and motivation are equally important.

It is clear from the aforementioned ideas that different researchers approach motivation in various ways. The driving force, which mixes effort and desire with benefits and occurs as a result of a mixture of internal and external influences, is the one thing that unites them all, though. There are two types of motivation: internal and external. Instrumental motivation and integrative motivation are the two principles that makeup motivation (Ali & Pathan, 2017).

Definition of language games

Language games test the preconceived concepts that have been built up in the language. It alludes to the linguistic conventions around word use, or pragmatics, which establishes a word's meaning in a given setting. They can foster beneficial interactions in the classroom that help pupils feel less anxious about learning a foreign language. In order to learn naturally, games can also assist students in improving their capacity for self-expression through interactive activities.

Wright et al. (2006) claim that the game is a fun and interesting activity that learners enjoy playing and frequently engage in social interaction. It is also frequently hard. Although there is no competition in the game, there is frequently a challenge. Some people find fear in competition, but it can also be damaging, making participants worry that losers would be labeled as "not good" and the winner as "very good" (Wright et al., 2006).

Additionally, playing games to learn a language implies elements like rules, competition, comfort, and, most importantly, learning. The main goal of employing games in English language classrooms is to make learning entertaining for the students (Valipour & Aidinlou, 2014). Learning through play is reportedly thought to be an excellent technique to combat
pupils' boredom with serious, rigid, and uninspiring studies in the classroom. Students are expected to maximize their learning opportunities through games without losing sight of the main goal of their studies (Amrullah, 2015). Additionally, language games can enhance the teaching-learning environment. Students can communicate with friends and practice speaking instead of just listening to the teacher explain things. Language games, in particular, can boost pupils' motivation and self-confidence when speaking (Maryam, 2020). The ability to communicate without using words is crucial, as is inspiring people to express their emotions and giving them a chance. The goal of language games is to improve learners' attitudes and tendencies while they are learning a new language game.

Similar to this, Wang (2010) claimed that playing games naturally produces pleasure, excitement, and enthusiasm. He added that when pupils like playing the game, they are also unknowingly picking up the language. Participating in language games with pupils helps them develop their ability to communicate without being asked. In addition, children will like studying because they interact with language activities that help them forget some emotional barriers to speaking while they are learning.

Research Questions

The survey was designed to provide information on the following research questions in order to achieve the study's objectives:

1. Why do high school students have difficulties speaking English?
2. What challenges do teachers cope with when using language games to motivate students' speaking skills?
3. What language games are suitable for high school students?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

Eighty-six participants are selected from two classes of high school students. They are the ages 16 to 17, including 41 males and 45 females who are in grade 11 at U Minh Thuong High School. Most of them come from different districts, and they have the same things, such as cultural, social, and economic contexts.

Design of the Study

To address the study topics, a qualitative-dominant exploratory sequential design is used in combination with other research methods (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, according to J. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), an exploratory sequential mixed technique integrates the procedures for gathering both qualitative and quantitative data and analyzing it in a series of steps. By using qualitative follow-up data to support a quantitative database, the combination tries to compare and comprehend additional specifics about the two datasets.

Students are interviewed to gather qualitative data on their opinions on the use of language games in the classroom. A questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data. Students' happiness with their teachers' usage of language games in the classroom is explored through
questions.

Data collection & analysis

The questionnaire and the interview are both used as data gathering methods in this study.

Questionnaire

Using Google Forms, questionnaires about the results of employing language games to inspire students' speaking abilities can be made. The replies of the students will be collected through five questions. The response options on the questionnaire are "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree."

Interview

Five questions will be prepared to interview 8 students from two classes to receive their opinions about language games through Google meet (2 good students, 3 average students, and 3 weak students).

Results/Findings and discussion

The result of the questionnaire

Based on the results of the students' survey responses. The following table includes the answer.

| No | Questions                                                   | Total number of students | Strongly Agree | Agree  | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------|----------|-------------------|
| 1  | Language games boost students' enthusiasm for learning more. | 86                       | 34 (39.5%)     | 51 (59.3%) | 1 (1.2%)  | 0 (0%)           |
| 2  | Students are confident to speak after reflection using language games. | 86                       | 16 (18.6%)     | 65 (75.6%) | 5 (5.8%)  | 0 (0%)           |
| 3  | Students are interested in speaking after being taught using language games. | 86                       | 13 (15.1%)     | 70 (81.4%) | 2 (2.3%)  | 1 (1.2%)         |
| 4  | Students' ability to express themselves by giving and responding after considering the use of language games. | 86                       | 14 (16.3%)     | 64 (74.4%) | 5 (5.8%)  | 3 (3.5%)         |
| 5  | Students' motivation to be accustomed to speaking English and studying harder by using language games. | 86                       | 32 (37.2%)     | 49 (57%)   | 3 (3.5%)  | 2 (2.3%)         |
The Result of the Interview

The researcher interviewed eight students from two classrooms via Google Meet to get their thoughts on language games. The work's major goal is to provide additional information about the effects of using language learning games to improve the English speaking abilities of the students regarding the use of communication games utilized in English speaking exercises. The student's condition was better than in the past in terms of confidence, participation, and enthusiasm, according to the comments they gave during the interview. Language learning circumstances can be well-created through language games for students. It helps students feel at ease while they are learning and lowers their levels of tension and boredom. They believe that language games are really helpful and have a positive influence on English-language classroom activities.

Discussion

The first question was given to identify how language games boost students' enthusiasm for learning. Generally, using language games is very useful in classroom activities. A large number of students' enthusiasm for learning (85%) has been increasing. The majority of students (81%) claimed that they were confident to speak after reflection using language games. However, some of them did not frequently speak confidently with language games (5%) because the teacher might not choose suitable language games for their teaching in the lesson. More importantly, by the third question, the researcher received the answer that many students (83%) were interested in speaking after being taught using language games. Moreover, some students (78%) could express themselves by giving and responding after considering the use of language games.

The study was conducted at the beginning of the first semester. Additionally, learners felt confident when speaking in class and communicating with their friends. By using language games, students' motivation got used to speaking English and studying harder.

Conclusion

In order to enhance and stimulate high school students speaking abilities, language games are a valuable tool that teachers can utilize in their English speaking sessions. Additionally, using language games to improve kids' communication skills has a number of positive effects. In addition, games can encourage students' creativity, facilitate simple and effective learning, and promote enjoyment. The major objective of the games is to make speaking and displaying enjoyable, not the goal structure. Since games are the expression of the human spirit, they must be engaging, educational, competitive, and entertaining. The teacher can assess the pupils' English-speaking talents and challenges by using linguistic games. They benefit from the game, which increases their intelligence. It provides them with the physical power they require for activity. Without games, students frequently become weary and bored, which makes the lesson as boring as it is uninteresting.
Acknowledgments

This research would not have been possible without the assistance of special people who I encountered throughout my course. I want to thank everyone for their assistance sincerely.

I want to begin by warmly thanking Prof. Dr. Pham Vu Phi Ho, who supervised my course, for his enormous inspiration, steadfast support, priceless materials, and insightful recommendations. We genuinely appreciate your encouragement and support.

I would like to express my appreciation for the advice I received from all of my professors during my degree. They have helped me out with my writing, research proposal, and considerable knowledge.

I'm grateful to my colleagues and the students who contributed to my research. They gave a lot of time, were enthusiastic, and helped me a lot with my research.

Finally, I want to sincerely thank my family for their unwavering support, love, and care.

References

Ali, M. S., & Pathan, Z. H. (2017). Exploring Factors Causing Demotivation and Motivation in Learning the English Language Among College Students of Quetta, Pakistan. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(2), 81–89.

Amrullah, A. Z. (2015). Developing Language Games to Teach Speaking Skills for Indonesian Senior High School Learners. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 2(2).

Andriyani, N. (2015). Using the Direct Method in Teaching to Improve Students’ Speaking Skill at Purikids Language Course. *Yogyakarta: Yogyakarta State University*.

Bailey, K. M. (2003). Speaking. *Practical English Language Teaching*, 47–66.

Bailey, K. M., & Nunan, D. (2005). *Practical English Language Teaching: Speaking*.

Baker, J., & Westrup, H. (2003). *Essential Speaking Skills*. Bloomsbury Academic. https://books.google.com.vn/books?id=1ZHX_kgsW8C

Bygate, M. (2003). *Language Teaching, a Scheme for Teaching Education: Speaking*.

Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners*. Cambridge University Press. https://books.google.com.vn/books?id=RqEtek4el0D0C

Creswell, J., & Plano Clark, V. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research. Thousands Oaks*.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research*. SAGE Publications. https://books.google.com.sg/books?id=51UXBAAAQBAJ

Dewi, R., Kultsum, U., & Armadi, A. (2016). Using Communicative Games in Improving Students’ Speaking Skills. *English Language Teaching*, 10, 63. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v10n1p63
Doan, H. D. (2011). Motivation in the Development of English Speaking Skills by Second Year Tourism Major Students at Sao Do University. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 27*(3).

ElNaggar, A. I. M. (2020). Investigating Problems of Speaking Skill: A Case Study at Al-Baha University. *Available at SSRN 3521868*.

Gardner, R. C. (2001). Language Learning Motivation: The Student, the Teacher, and the Researcher. *Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education, 6*(1), 1–18.

Gardner, R. C. (2010). *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition: The Socio-educational Model*. Peter Lang. https://books.google.com.vn/books?id=Ky15oSCIfLwC

Goh, C. C. M., & Burns, A. (2012). *Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach*. Cambridge University Press. https://books.google.com.vn/books?id=BUmyAAAAQBAJ

Ihsan, M. (2016). Students’ motivation in Speaking English. *Journal of English Educators Society, 1*. https://doi.org/10.21070/jees.v1i1.147

Kaur, D., & Aziz, A. A. (2020). The Use of Language Game in Enhancing Students’ Speaking Skills. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 10*(12), 687–706.

Levelt, W. J. (1995). The Ability to Speak: From Intentions to Spoken Words. *European Review, 3*(1), 13–23.

Maryam, S. (2020). Utilizing Communicative Language Games to Improve Students’ Speaking Ability. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching, 8*(3), 251–263.

Safdarian, Z. (2013). The Effect of Stories on Young Learners’ Proficiency and Motivation in Foreign Language Learning. *2*(3), 49.

Singh, K. (2011). Study of Achievement Motivation in Relation to Academic Achievement of Students. *International Journal of Educational Planning & Administration, 1*(2), 161–171.

Taman, P. (2020). The Use of Communicative Language Games and Its Impact in Efl-Speaking Classroom in Tertiary Level. *PROCEEDINGS UNIVERSITAS PAMULANG, 1*(1).

Torky, S. A. E. (2006). The Effectiveness of a Task-Based Instruction Program in Developing the English Language Speaking Skills of Secondary Stage Students. *Online Submission*.

Valipour, V., & Aidinlou, N. A. (2014). The Effect of Language Games on Learning English Listening Speaking Skills of Iranian Pre-school Students. *Indian Journal of Fundamental and Applied Life Sciences, 4*(2), 647–650.

Van Van, H. (2010). The Current Situation and Issues of the Teaching of English in Vietnam. 立命館言語文化研究, 22(1), 7–18.

Vyas, M. A., & Patel, Y. L. (2015). *Teaching English as a Second Language, Second Edition: A New Pedagogy for a New Century*. Prentice Hall India Pvt., Limited. https://books.google.com.vn/books?id=SZCQCgAAQBAJ
Wang, Y.-H. (2010). Using Communicative Language Games in Teaching and Learning English in Taiwanese Primary Schools. 工程科技與教育學刊, 7(1), 126–142.

Whitton, N. (2014). *Digital Games and Learning: Research and Theory*. Taylor & Francis. https://books.google.com.vn/books?id=bUMsAwAAQBAJ

Wimolmas, R. (2013). *A Survey Study of Motivation in English Language Learning of First Year Undergraduate Students at Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology (SIIT), Thammasat University*. Language Institute, Thammasat University.

Wright, A., Betteridge, D., & Buckby, M. (2006). *Games for Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press. https://books.google.com.vn/books?id=U9Y_NeY0YMsc

**Biodata**

Ho Thi Thuy Dung is a graduate student at Tra Vinh University. For more than ten years, she has been a teacher of English at a high school in the province of Kien Giang. She was strongly motivated to work in her field. She faced several challenges due to her lack of teaching expertise, but over time she gained experience by participating in seminars and methodological courses. Now that Dung is comfortable and enthusiastic about teaching, she chose to enroll in a Master's course that would provide her with a thorough understanding of the teaching profession.