

# ALTAKLIM 1

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## Using Language Games to Enhance EFL Students' Speaking Skill in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** This research aims at enhancing EFL students' speaking skill through the use of language games. The research was designed in the form of Classroom Action Research. It was conducted in two cycles and six meetings. Each cycle consisted of plan, implementation, observation, and Reflection. The researchers employed an observation checklist, field notes, questionnaire, and test to collect the data. The main criterion of success of this research was that the students' scores on the speaking test should achieve a score of 70, and it must be achieved by 75% of the total number of students. The second criterion was that the lecturer's classroom performance should meet the "Success" category. The results of the first speaking test showed that from 24 students in the classroom, 15 students got scores of 70 or higher. It was equal to 62.5 %. In cycle 2, the total number of students who got scores of 70 or higher was 21. It was equal to 87.5 %. The result of this research indicated that the use of language games can develop the students' speaking skills.

**Keywords:** Classroom action research; EFL students; language games; speaking skill.

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## INTRODUCTION

Speaking is very important to learn and mastering a speaking skill is one of someone's dreams in learning English. It is one way of finding information through oral communication. One who knows English well can easily communicate with other people all over the world, apply for a job, spread news, work social relation, or transact business (Marzuki, 2016; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Sun et al., 2017; Marzuki, 2017; Sharma, 2018).

Speaking skill tends to be prioritized. All languages are spoken before they are written. The written language derives from the spoken one. So, language learners may focus on speaking skill especially in teaching

English at the university level. The lecturer has to consider and select appropriate techniques to be applied in the teaching to develop speaking skill (Altun, 2015; Hwang et al., 2016; Akdogan, 2017; Iman, 2017; Parmawati, 2018). Lecturers may apply as various strategies as possible to facilitate students to develop their speaking skill and sustain their interest and motivation such as, using language games in the classroom can encourage them to speak (Altun, 2015; Avila, 2015). In addition, language games such as Chain Spelling, Who am I, Juggling Ball Game, Find Your Partner, Alphabet Game, Hide and Seek Vocabulary, the Talent Show, Bingo, the Word in Order, Imitate the Picture, Gesture Game, and You Look Like a Monkey

Game can give more opportunities for shy students to participate in the classroom activities, also they can reduce their anxiety which prevents them to speak (Ang, 2006; Wright, 2014; Amrullah, 2015; Hwang et al., 2017; Solano et al., 2017; Dewi et al., 2017; Yukselturk et al., 2018; Schmidt & Strasser, 2018; Fithriani, 2018).

Based on the previous studies which were related to teaching speaking through games conducted by some researchers such as Altun (2015), Amrullah (2015), Avila (2015), and Dewi et al. (2017), the researchers applied language games in doing their research. The language games can always be used to practice specific language items in an enjoyable and motivating way. Therefore, the researchers were interested to research the use of language games to enhance EFL students' speaking skill. In enabling students to speak English well, a lecturer may apply techniques particularly language games.

This research focused on the problems that are usually faced by a lecturer in teaching speaking. Although methods and techniques of teaching English have been improved, some of the students' English skill especially speaking is still low. Based on the researchers' experiences in teaching English, speaking is sometimes ignored by a lecturer, as a result, students cannot speak English well; they cannot share their opinions, feelings, and desires with their friends or lecturer. It is difficult to invite students to speak; they just keep silent when their lecturer asks some questions. Lack of vocabulary and low motivation are their main constraints in learning English especially speaking skill. The objective of this research is directed to enhance EFL students' speaking skill through the use of language games and also to know how far the influence of games is in developing the students' English speaking skill.

## METHOD

The researchers conducted classroom action research which was done in two cycles and six meetings. Each cycle consisted of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting

(Bogdan, & Biklen, 2010; Fraenkel et al., 2011; Kemmis et al., 2013; McKernan, 2013).

This research was conducted in the third-semester students of the English Department in Islamic college in Indonesia. The class consists of 24 students with various abilities, gender, and learning style. Data collection is a process of gathering information in a disciplined and systematic way about a puzzle or a researchable question (Bogdan and Biklen, 2010; McNiff, 2013). To obtain accurate and reliable data, the researchers carried out field research by employing some instruments, i.e. observation checklist, field notes, questionnaire, and test. The data analysis is done through reflection where the researchers collected, selected, categorized, compared, synthesized, and interpreted the data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the first meeting, to begin the class, the researchers came into the classroom and the students spontaneously greeted them, both the researchers replied to the greeting. When the researchers entered the classroom, without firstly taking a seat, they re-greeted the students, and the students replied to the greeting chorally and directly stepped to the corner of the class and to look for an unoccupied chair to sit on.

### Cycle 1

The researchers then continued asking some opening questions to the students. For example, how are you this morning students? and students answer chorally, fine. Ok. Students let me ask you some questions and guess what your researchers would provide you to do this morning. After the students could guess what the researchers asked them they would write the topic on the whiteboard. Then, they asked some preliminary questions to students to answer orally to direct them to the content of the lesson and explored students' prior knowledge about the topic that the class would be discussing. Then, the researchers instructed the students about what the class was going to have in the phase, such as, ok everybody, the next class activity was

that you were going to pay attention to what I was to do. Have your focus on my presentation; I was going to describe the material by using the game. You needed to remember the sequence and the way I describe how to use the game because the next turn was yours to speak in front of the classroom by using the game. What an essential finding through interaction between researchers and students was that most of the students were enthusiastically responding to the researcher's questions. They competed to get a turn to be pointed answering the questions. They required the researchers to continue questioning before coming to the core classroom activity; although this activity consumed much time. When the first researcher had simple oral interaction with students, the collaborator (second researcher) was seriously paid attention to class interaction between the researcher and students. He sometimes noted down on provided paper about the students' response to the researcher's questions. He also sometimes walked around the class and asked some less attentive students to join the class.

The researchers solicited students' attention by clapping her hand and asking students to be with her explanation. They informed the students about the next class activity in which the students should experience it. After providing students with a simple explanation about the class activity, they asked confirmation questions to know whether or not the students have understood what they were going to do. Moreover, since the students have asked clarification questions before completing classroom tasks, they got a clear explanation about what they were going to do; and this situation had put them into an enjoyable atmosphere without being interfered with by confusion on how to complete the given task. After administering instruction to the students and having some simple questions to the students, the researchers wrote down instructional objectives on the whiteboard in which the class should achieve through the meeting. The researchers explained each of the instructional objectives to direct the students to the end target of the lesson to be achieved. The

explanation was mostly given in English to accustomed students to this way of teaching. The students were attentively listening to the researcher's explanation. To check students' understanding, however, after explaining, the researchers asked confirmation questions. It was found that most of the students did not understand what they were going to achieve from the teaching-learning process of that day.

Before coming to whilst-activity, to direct students to the topic they were going to study at the first meeting, the researchers administered probing questions. Probing questions were intended to dig up students' prior knowledge about the topic and to lead the students to the more specific theme of that day to learn. Besides, the probing question was also valuable to warm up students' spirit to learn before they were involved in the more complicated classroom task in which they could not avoid it. It was also intended to be the trigger for students to recall what they have known about the topic that could help them to do classroom conversation. Whilst-activity is usually called core activity. In this phase, the researchers provided the students with a conversation format and they did a presentation related to the topic previously discussed in the probing questions phase. Before distributing the text and discussion format to the students, the researchers delivered some instructions related to the classroom task that the students were going to complete. The researchers asked students to choose one topic that they wanted to explain in front of the class. A student chose one topic related to a job, and then he/she described someone occupation after that other students guess what is the man/woman's job when other students had finished guess the game, the researchers allowed other students to act in front of the class same with the students before, but if no one of students did not guess the game the researcher try to support the other students to find other ways to guess what the speaker's puzzle or game.

To gain true data about students' discussion activity, the collaborator (the second researcher) controlled the students' discussion activity by using an observation

9 checklist to assess students' participation in the learning process. Meanwhile, the first researcher has seriously directed students on classroom tasks and jotted down important information from students' activity on provided paper (field notes). Post-Activity was the last teaching session conducted by the researchers and students in the classroom. In this phase, the researchers did three main activities. Those three activities were: (1) provided the students with reinforcement; (2) flashed back to the previous classroom activity; and (3) provided the students with homework.

In the second meeting, the theme of the lesson was still with the 22-vious meeting. It was aimed to make the students were interested and joyful to join English class, especially speaking skill. At the first meeting, the researchers delivered some questions to elevate students' understanding of the topic that we were going to talk about. The researchers should give many opportunities to the students to express their idea. After that, the researchers gave a model of how to practice speaking skill using the game. When the students have been getting the topic, the researchers asked students to comment on the topic by using their own words. After that, the researchers asked them to practice their speaking using games. After all, students have already presented their topic, the researchers gave instructions to the students to employ the individual presentation. While his or her friend was speaking, another one remained giving a chance to ask a question or guess to him or her under the guidance of the researchers. At the end of the class, the researchers reminded and encouraged the students to prepare their selves to study hard and do more practice by using games.

In the third meeting, the researchers continued the activity to assign the students to present their task, one of the students came in front of the class, and describe something related to occupation and the other students guess whatever the speaker said. It was because the time allocation in the second meeting was not enough to accommodate all students' game presentations individually.

7 In the pre-activity, the researchers greeted the class and checked their attendance list. They reminded the students that some students have not presented yet their game in the last meeting (the second meeting). So, their turn to present the game based on the topic that they have got from the researcher. In the whilst-activity, the researcher's activity was focused on evaluating students' learning progress after being treated through the implementation of the game in the first and the second meeting. The researchers continued assessing individual speaking performance. She asked the students to prepare their game as they did in the second meeting.

All students finally could present their game presentation in this meeting. In the post-activity, the researchers expressed their surprise that most of the students have made much progress in speaking skills when presenting the game in English although some of them were still low in fluency and accuracy. The researchers also discussed the factors causing their low achievement in the aspects of fluency and accuracy with class. They also told the students that their speaking progress indicator was based on the minimal standard of mastery that is 70,00. The researchers finally ended the meeting that day and left the class.

Based on the observation, the students in this meeting appeared well-prepared than it was in meeting 2. It means they have prepared and trained themselves at home to present their games based on their own words. However, the researcher still reminded students to present their games by using appropriate opening expressions, answering friends' questions if any, and closing the presentation properly. The students were also asked to use eye contact and gestures to support the expression of meanings.

The learning achievement that was referred to in action research was students' progress in presenting games orally based on the topic. Researchers assessed the students' speaking performance when presenting games individually. The researchers recorded the

students' oral performance to maintain the authentic data from the field.

Based on the data, there are 15 or 62.5% of students whose achievement in speaking skills has met the criteria of success 70.00. The mean score of their obtained scores was  $\geq 70.00$  (based on the Minimum Mastery Standard). This mean score in three aspects namely accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility are equal to "good". On the other hand, the percentage of the students who obtain scores of  $\leq 70.00$  is bigger. It is 37.5% or 9 students. According to the scoring system, the mean score of  $\leq 70.00$  is equal to "poor".

<sup>27</sup> Based on the data, it can be seen that eight students obtained scores higher than the minimum predetermined criteria 70.00 (71.33, and 72). According to the observation, those always pay serious attention to the lecturer's explanation. They bravely tried to present their speaking tasks. In other words, they have higher self-confidence in presenting the games especially quiz than other students.

Based on the students' learning achievement in cycle 1 and the data obtained from observation sheets and field notes, the researchers made a reflection. The result of reflection is presented in the following: 1) Most students found it difficult to construct sentences based on the topic because the researchers did not show them an appropriate model. 2) Most students could not create sentences to present the games well because the researchers gave the instruction too fast and unclearly. Therefore, the students very often asked the researchers to repeat the instructions and it should be in Bahasa Indonesia. 3) The students got difficulty to start saying something about the games because there were not any words that make them easy to make or arrange the sentences.

## Cycle 2

<sup>7</sup> Based on the reflection above the researchers revised their teaching plan as the following. The researchers kept assigning students to work in pairs but they did not assign them to provide games from home.

The researchers provided the games and prepared some keywords to make the students easy to arrange the sentences. The researchers trained students to construct the words the students compiled into sentences. They also changed the pairing procedure where a smarter student was paired with the lower one if the game was presented in pairs. The researchers gave the instruction both in English and Bahasa Indonesia. The researchers also gave a model of how to present the games orally in each meeting. They also asked one or two talkative students to become the model presenting the games based on the topic. They gave oral drills to train students to pronounce some expressions that are commonly used as the opening expression. They assessed the students' speaking performance when presenting games individually. The researchers recorded the students' oral performance to maintain the authentic data from the field.

According to the data, there were 21 students or 87.5% of the total students whose learning achievement met the criterion of success. The mean score of their obtained scores in the assessed speaking skill is  $\geq 70.00$ . It means that the 21 students (87.5%) have made development in the aspects of accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility when presenting the games. Nevertheless, there were also some students whose mean scores of their obtained scores did not meet the minimal mastery standard  $\leq 70.00$ . The number of these students was 3 or 12.5%. The mean score of their obtained scores in the three aspects of oral assessed speaking skills was  $\leq 70.00$ . According to the scoring system, this means the score is classified as "poor".

The six questions or statements that <sup>25</sup>re requested students to give responses to. The students were asked to fill the questionnaire right after meeting 3 of cycle 2 was ended. The analyses deal with the result of student's responses toward questionnaires indicating the improvement in students' participation in classroom activities and students' mastery of particular language components. By confronting the students' response and students' speaking skill

improvement, it can be interpreted that there was a significant relationship among them.

In the first item, there were twenty-one (87.5%) students who were interested in studying English; particularly in speaking skill. There were three (12.5%) students who responded that they were less interested in. In the second item, there were twenty-two (91.6%) students who state that studying speaking through games with their friends is easier rather than studying with his/her self. Conversely, there were two (8.3%) students who state that they did not study speaking through games with their friends. The third item; the number of students who state that their English lecturer usually employs games in teaching speaking was eighteen (75%); the rest of the students or six students (25%) state that the lecturer rarely employed games to teach speaking. In the fourth item, there were ten (41.6%) students who respond that it is easy for them to express ideas and opinions. Meanwhile, there were five students (20.8%) who suppose that it is difficult for them to express ideas and opinions and there were nine students (37.5%) who state that it is very difficult for them to express ideas and opinions. In the fifth item, the students variously state their responses to the questions. There were thirteen (54.2%) students who state that it is easy for them to respond to the message or idea suggested by their friends. There were four (16.6%) students who considered that it is difficult, and there were seven (21.2%) students who view that it is really difficult for them to respond to the message or idea suggested by their friends. In the sixth item, there were ten (41.6%) students who find it is difficult to speak English since they have a problem with vocabulary stock. The rest of the students; six (25%) students stated that they are in difficulty speaking English because of the structure and there were eight (33.4%) students who state that pronunciation was a big problem for them to speak English.

Having gained information from the resulting questionnaire, and based on reflection done in the first and second meeting, the researchers decided to change the planning and to introduce new material

related to students' vocabulary improvement. So, the third meeting that was firstly emphasized introducing new material that was aimed at improving students' vocabulary to support them in speaking class. The new material was expected to enrich the students with sufficient stock of vocabulary to enable them to interact orally in speaking class.

<sup>24</sup> Based on the findings of this research, it was found that the appropriate strategy of using games required a particular procedure. First, the researchers must show a model before commanding the students to present the task by using games. The researchers must also encourage the students to brainstorm their ideas related to the topic. It is aimed at helping students to gather many of their ideas about the topic. This activity is called brainstorming in which the topic is introduced by the researchers and the students call out ideas associated with the topic. According to data obtained in the field, the students felt confident to answer the questions based on the topic, because there is no wrong or right judgment in this activity. The researchers should accept all students' answers and write them on the board. Then they explain what they want the students to do. Second, the researchers ask the students to sit in pairs. The researchers should provide the model of producing a game before assigning them to take their turn. Third, the instructions about how to do the speaking task must be clear to avoid misunderstanding. Even the instruction should be also given in the Indonesian language if the students still seem to be confused or do not get the ideas. The questions are related to the topic and aim to help students in constructing their sentences into a game.

<sup>14</sup> During the teaching and learning process, the students are sitting in pairs to work together. The pairs learning enable them to help each other, share their ideas and it is easier for the researchers to manage the class and control their activities. While they are working in pairs, the students are always controlled and guided by the researchers in constructing their sentences into a game. At the last meeting of each cycle, the students present their games individually because the

researchers want to assess and evaluate their progress and development in speaking, especially in presenting their task based on the topic in front of the class.

In the implementation of the games in cycle 1, the students paid attention to the instruction given by the researchers, but some of them did not give a quick response and only keep silent. That is caused by the lack of vocabulary and they do not have enough self-confidence to express their ideas in spoken language. They know to guess the story but they do not know how to construct the words into sentences. In cycle 2, the students paid more attention to the researchers; most of them give a quick response and ask the researchers some questions if they do not understand when the researchers explained the topic. The students are brave to speak or guess their friend's explanation because they have more vocabulary and also they have known to construct simple sentences. When they faced some difficulties to construct sentences, they asked the researchers orally.

The use of language games as a teaching technique is effective to develop the students' speaking skills. The language games are helpful to develop students' skills in presenting the language game orally. The number of students who have made progress in speaking skill in terms of their accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility when presenting the language games increased from cycle to cycle.

Following the preliminary study that the students got difficulties in expressing their ideas in spoken language, but the application of language games as the teaching technique could develop the students' disability in speaking skill. The difficulties that were caused by their low-level mastery in grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation could be gradually minimized. Consequently, their oral performance in the three aspects of accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility was also gradually developed.

In cycle 1, some of the students have made the development in speaking skill but the number or simply the classical percentage

did not yet meet the criteria of success 75%. Based on the result of reflection, there were three main activities did both researchers and students. The researchers, did not give students an appropriate reinforcement about the model of how to make a game based on the topic, the instructions given by the researchers were too fast and unclear, and the researchers should provide keywords. The students; found it difficult to construct sentences based on the topic because the researchers did not show them an appropriate model, most of the students could not create sentences to present the language games well because the researchers gave the instruction too fast and unclearly, and the students got difficulty to start saying something about the language games because there were not any words that make them easy to make or arrange the sentences. Therefore, the researchers continued her action into cycle 2 by learning from the obtained data in the reflection. They revised her teaching plan and implemented it in cycle 2.

In cycle 2, most of the students' speaking skill became better and were categorized as good. Their willingness to try presenting the language games was also better than it was in cycle 1. Therefore, they could present the language games based on the topic and be guided by the answers to a series of questions. They presented the language games with high self-confidence although they often make few mistakes in accuracy and fluency. They could construct the sentences became a language game more quickly and they competed to present them in front of the class without feeling nervous or be afraid of making mistakes anymore. As the result, most of the students obtained mean scores of 70.00 or greater than it, and the classical percentage was 87.5%. This finding was supported by previous findings (Amrullah, 2015) found that most responses which were seen in the questionnaire result of development testing showed that most of the students were interested in playing the games, enjoyed the whole activities, learned from each other, and expected to play the games again. It indicated that most of the students expressed their good responses towards the English instructional



games to teach speaking that the researcher was developing.

Furthermore, Avila (2015) found that a set of creative activities (games) was designed to improve the oral and written production of students in the English classroom, especially those who have shown a lack of interest or attention. It was observed that participants initially seemed careless about studying the language. Eventually, they responded to the proposed methods positively and were more willing and motivated to participate in chain games, creative writing, and screenwriting exercises. The activities helped develop the students' fluency in both oral and written production and improved their understanding of English grammar and structure.

In addition, Dewi et al. (2017) found that the result of the study showed the mean score's pretest improvement of 13.9% to 41.7% in posttest 1 and 83.33% in posttest 2. Therefore, the criteria of success had been determined. It is crucial to note that communicative games have contributed a positive reach of 60.42 to 69.02 and posttest's score reached up to 78.77. It is important to describe that there is a significant impact on the teaching-learning process. This also implies that communicative games are expected to enhance students' enthusiasm and motivation. It gives an improvement in students' active participation, confidence, and fluency in speaking skill. In short, it can be described that the strategy of teaching and learning creates good, enjoyable circumstances and reduces the boredom and stress of the learning process.

As a result, the development can also be recognized from the students' self-confidence. In this case, the researchers supported them to speak in front of their friends by giving them more chances and exercises to make them feel free to talk. Besides, they talked to students to pay attention more to their friends when he/she speaks in front of the class if any mistake no one laugh. Therefore, they have been already brave to present the language games in front of the class although there were still many mistakes in grammar and pronunciation. The mistakes made the

listeners fully concentrate to understand what he/she said. Before presenting their language games in front of the class they asked the students to collect their draft and make necessary corrections to minimize the mistakes. Then, they showed students the mistakes they made so that the students could learn more and improve their speaking skill with fewer mistakes anymore.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the data that have been presented, the researchers can draw some conclusions; firstly; the implementation of language games as the technique in teaching speaking skills is effective to help the third-year students of TBI-1 FTIK IAIN Palu to develop their speaking skills. The students would be able to present the language games orally in front of the class based on the topic. It was supported by the increasing number of students who obtain the mean score that meets the criteria of success  $\geq 70.00$ . In cycle 1, there were 15 students or 62.5% who obtained the mean score  $\geq$  of 70.00. In cycle 2, the number of students who obtained the mean score  $\geq$  of 70.00 is 21 students or 87.5%. The percentage of classical achievement is 87.5%. This is greater than the target of 75%. Secondly; the implementation of language games in teaching speaking skill to the grade seven students is also effective to develop students' self-confidence in presenting the oral story in front of the class. They presented the story with high self-confidence although they often made few mistakes in accuracy and fluency. They could construct the sentences more quickly and they competed to present them in front of the class without feeling nervous or being afraid of making mistakes anymore. It was because there was no judgment whose language games were right or wrong.

The judgment was only given to the aspects of accuracy, fluency, and comprehensibility. Thirdly; concerning the factors that caused students' disability to express their ideas orally, the implementation of language games can also be helpful to develop the students' speaking skill. Fourthly; language games would be effective to develop

speaking skills if they are followed by keywords/phrases and the instruction is in two languages (English and Indonesia).

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