

## STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES IN USING INTERACTIVE GAMES IN SPEAKING ACTIVITIES: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIES

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### Abstract

Speaking is one of the most important skills in learning English, yet many learners experience difficulties due to psychological barriers, limited vocabulary, and lack of confidence. To address these issues, interactive games are often used to create a more engaging and supportive learning environment. This study aims to explore students' experiences in using interactive games to support their speaking skills at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare. This research employed a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews involving university students from various academic backgrounds who joined speaking classes at Mr. Bob. The data were analyzed through coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis based on the components of speaking skills proposed by Haris (as cited in Juhana, 2012) including comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. The findings reveal that interactive games provide several benefits, such as increasing students' confidence, motivation, and active participation. However, students also faced challenges related to nervousness, vocabulary limitations, and fluency. To overcome these challenges, students applied various coping strategies, including pausing, asking for clarification, rephrasing ideas, and spontaneous speaking. Overall, interactive games were perceived as an effective medium that supports positive speaking experiences and encourages students to practice English more confidently.

**Keywords:** *Interactive Games, Speaking Skills, Students' Experiences*

### Sari

Berbicara merupakan salah satu keterampilan terpenting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, namun banyak pembelajar mengalami kesulitan akibat hambatan psikologis, keterbatasan kosakata, dan kurangnya kepercayaan diri. Untuk mengatasi permasalahan tersebut, interactive games sering digunakan guna menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih menarik dan suportif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pengalaman mahasiswa dalam menggunakan interactive games untuk mendukung keterampilan berbicara mereka di Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur yang melibatkan mahasiswa dari berbagai latar belakang program studi yang mengikuti kelas berbicara di Mr. Bob. Data dianalisis melalui proses pengodean, pengelompokan, dan analisis tematik berdasarkan komponen keterampilan berbicara yang dikemukakan oleh Haris (dalam Juhana, 2012), meliputi pemahaman, kelancaran, pelafalan, tata bahasa, dan kosakata. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa interactive games memberikan berbagai manfaat, seperti meningkatkan kepercayaan diri, motivasi, dan partisipasi aktif mahasiswa. Namun demikian, mahasiswa juga menghadapi beberapa tantangan, seperti rasa gugup, keterbatasan kosakata, dan masalah kelancaran berbicara. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, mahasiswa menerapkan berbagai strategi, antara lain berhenti sejenak, meminta klarifikasi, mengungkapkan ide dengan cara lain, dan berbicara secara spontan. Secara keseluruhan, interactive games dipersepsikan sebagai media pembelajaran yang efektif dalam mendukung pengalaman berbicara yang positif serta mendorong mahasiswa untuk berlatih bahasa Inggris dengan lebih percaya diri

**kata kunci:** *Permainan Interaktif, keterampilan berbicara, pengalaman mahasiswa*

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### Introduction

Speaking is one of the most essential skills in learning English because it enables learners to communicate ideas, express opinions, and interact effectively in various contexts. In today's globalized world, speaking skills are increasingly required for academic, social, and professional purposes. However, many English learners experience difficulties in speaking, particularly related to psychological barriers, limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and fear of making mistakes ((Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Syakur et al., 2020). These difficulties often result in students being reluctant to participate actively in speaking activities. Learners may hesitate to speak due to anxiety, limited linguistic resources, or concerns about making errors in front of others. As a result, developing

speaking skills becomes a challenging process that requires supportive learning environments and appropriate instructional strategies (Kuliahana, 2021)

One approach that has been widely used to address these issues is the use of interactive games in English language learning. Interactive games are believed to create a more engaging and relaxed classroom atmosphere, allowing students to practice speaking in a less threatening environment. Previous studies have reported that interactive games can provide several benefits, such as increasing students' motivation, confidence, and active participation in speaking activities (Solano et al., 2018; Khalilova, 2023). Despite these positive findings, the use of interactive games also presents certain challenges for learners. Students may still experience nervousness, difficulty understanding instructions, limited vocabulary, or problems maintaining fluency during spontaneous speaking tasks. These challenges can influence how students engage with game-based activities and how effectively they use English during the learning process.

To deal with these challenges, students often develop various strategies while participating in interactive games. These strategies may include pausing to regain fluency, asking for clarification, rephrasing ideas, using gestures, or speaking spontaneously without focusing too much on errors. Understanding these strategies is important because they reflect how learners actively cope with speaking difficulties in real classroom situations.

However, most previous studies have primarily focused on measuring the effectiveness of interactive games in improving speaking performance, rather than exploring students' lived experiences. There is limited research that simultaneously examines the benefits, challenges, and strategies experienced by students when using interactive games in speaking classes, particularly from a qualitative perspective. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' experiences in using interactive games in speaking classes at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare, focusing on the benefits, challenges, and strategies related to students' speaking skills. By investigating these aspects, this research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how interactive games shape students' speaking experiences in an immersive English learning environment.

## Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore students' experiences in using interactive games in speaking classes at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare. According to Creswell, (2013) qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meaning of experiences or perspectives of individuals or groups regarding social, Descriptive qualitative provides a comprehensive, detailed, and in-depth description of a research subject.

A qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of students' perspectives regarding the benefits, challenges, and strategies related to the use of interactive games in developing speaking skills. The participants of this study were university students from various academic backgrounds who had participated in speaking classes at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris. The participants were not limited to students from English Education programs, as learners at Mr. Bob come from different universities and study programs across Indonesia. Three participants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria, including being university students, having completed speaking classes at Mr. Bob, and having experience in interactive game-based speaking activities. For confidentiality purposes, the participants were identified as P1, P2, and P3.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted online. The interviews focused on exploring students' experiences in using interactive games, particularly related to perceived benefits, challenges, and strategies in speaking activities. During the interview process, both English and Bahasa Indonesia were used to ensure clear communication. Although some questions were delivered in English, several participants responded mostly in Bahasa Indonesia, as they felt more comfortable expressing their experiences in their first language. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The data in this study analyzed using the thematic analysis approach developed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) This approach is chosen because of its ability to explore thematic patterns in qualitative data, as well as its flexibility in applying various types of analysis. After transcribing the interviews, the researcher conducted coding, categorization, and interpretation of the data to identify recurring patterns and themes. The analysis was guided by the components of speaking skills proposed by Haris (as cited in Juhana, 2012),

which include comprehension, fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. From this process, themes related to the benefits, challenges, and strategies in using interactive games for speaking skills emerged.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied a member-checking technique. The interview transcripts were returned to the participants for verification to ensure accuracy and credibility. All participants responded to the member-checking process within two weeks and confirmed that the transcripts accurately reflected their experiences. Minor clarifications provided by the participants were revised accordingly. Through this process, the study aimed to ensure that the findings genuinely represented the participants' perspectives on the use of interactive games in supporting their speaking skills.

## **Results and Discussion**

The findings of this study revealed several major themes related to students' experiences in using interactive games, including the benefits, challenges, and strategies applied to support their speaking skills at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare.

### **1. Benefits of Using Interactive Games in Speaking Classes**

The findings indicate that interactive games provided positive learning experiences for students during speaking classes at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare. One of the main benefits was increased confidence and willingness to speak English. Students felt more relaxed and motivated because the games created an enjoyable learning atmosphere. P1 explained that role play activities helped improve her speaking fluency, stating that "role play made my speaking smoother and encouraged me to speak directly in front of others" (P1). Similarly, P2 mentioned that game-based activities motivated her to participate actively in class. She explained that "the games made me want to volunteer and speak more because everyone was required to talk" (P2). These experiences suggest that interactive games reduced students' fear of making mistakes and encouraged active participation in speaking activities.

Another benefit identified was active participation and repeated speaking practice. Interactive games required students to speak continuously in pairs, groups, or individually, allowing them to practice speaking in various situations. Through repeated exposure, students became more accustomed to expressing ideas in English and focused

more on communication rather than grammatical accuracy. In addition, interactive games supported vocabulary development in a natural way. Spontaneous speaking activities, particularly role play, exposed students to new vocabulary and expressions. P3 stated that “role play was effective because it forced me to respond spontaneously, which helped me remember new words more easily” (P3). This finding shows that interactive games facilitated vocabulary learning through meaningful use in context.

## **2. Challenges in Using Interactive Games**

Despite the positive experiences, students also faced several challenges when participating in interactive games. One major challenge involved difficulties in understanding instructions, particularly when unfamiliar vocabulary was used. P3 explained that “sometimes I felt confused because my vocabulary was limited, so I had to ask the tutor directly” (P3). This difficulty affected students’ ability to follow the flow of the games smoothly and respond immediately.

Another challenge was related to vocabulary limitations during speaking activities. Students admitted that forgetting or not knowing certain words caused hesitation and disrupted communication. P2 explained that “when I forget a word, I try to describe it in another way” (P2). Similarly, P3 stated that “forgetting vocabulary happened very often and sometimes made me feel unsure while speaking” (P3). These findings indicate that limited vocabulary remained a recurring challenge during interactive speaking activities. In addition to linguistic challenges, nervousness emerged as a psychological barrier. Speaking spontaneously or in front of others caused anxiety for some students, which affected their fluency, especially at the beginning of the games.

## **3. Strategies to Overcome Speaking Challenges**

The findings also reveal that students applied various strategies to overcome challenges during interactive games. To cope with nervousness and maintain fluency, students developed personal coping strategies. P1 explained that “when I feel nervous, I avoid looking at people and focus straight ahead so I can speak more smoothly” (P1). Meanwhile, P2 described calming herself by pausing briefly before continuing her speech. She stated that “staying quiet for a few seconds helped me regain control before continuing my speech” (P2). In contrast, P3 mentioned that she did not apply a specific strategy and preferred to speak spontaneously, explaining that “after the activity ended, I realized that I was actually able to speak” (P3).

To overcome vocabulary difficulties, students used communicative strategies that allowed them to maintain interaction. Asking for clarification was a common strategy. P1 explained that “when I don’t know a word, I usually say ‘how do I say’ and ask the tutor directly” (P1). Similarly, P3 stated that she asked both tutors and peers for help. Another strategy involved rephrasing ideas using different expressions. P2 explained that “when I forget a vocabulary item, I try to explain the meaning in another way before asking for the correct word” (P2). Overall, these strategies helped students remain engaged in interactive games and maintain communication despite linguistic and psychological challenges.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study reveal that the use of interactive games plays a significant role in shaping students’ speaking experiences at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare. Interactive games do not only function as a medium for language practice, but also create a supportive learning environment that influences students’ confidence, motivation, and willingness to speak English. This supports the view that speaking development is closely related to both linguistic ability and psychological readiness during the learning process.

One important finding is that interactive games help reduce students’ anxiety and encourage them to participate more actively in speaking activities. The relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere created through games allowed students to speak without excessive fear of making mistakes. This finding is consistent with Leong and Ahmadi (2017), who emphasized that psychological barriers such as anxiety and lack of confidence are major obstacles in speaking. When students feel comfortable and supported, they are more willing to express their ideas orally. Through activities such as role play, storytelling, and game-based discussions, students were required to speak repeatedly, which gradually increased their confidence and fluency.

In addition, interactive games provided opportunities for authentic interaction among students. The collaborative nature of games encouraged peer interaction, group discussion, and shared problem-solving, which helped students practice speaking in a more natural and communicative way. This finding aligns with (Begmatov A. T., 2022) and (Mammadova, 2024) who stated that interactive games create meaningful contexts for language use and enhance students’ engagement. By participating in these activities,

students became more familiar with using English in various speaking situations, which contributed to their overall speaking development.

However, despite the benefits, the findings also indicate that students experienced several challenges during interactive games. Nervousness remained a common issue, especially when students were required to respond spontaneously or speak in front of others. This supports Syakur et al. (2020), who argued that speaking is often perceived as the most challenging language skill due to psychological pressure. Additionally, limited vocabulary was another challenge that affected students' ability to express ideas fluently. When students forgot or did not know certain words, they experienced hesitation and difficulty in maintaining the flow of conversation. This finding supports Leong and Ahmadi (2017), who identified vocabulary limitation as a key factor influencing speaking performance.

Nevertheless, these challenges did not completely hinder students' participation. Instead, the findings show that students developed various strategies to overcome their difficulties during interactive games. To manage nervousness, students applied coping strategies such as pausing briefly, avoiding eye contact, or speaking spontaneously without overthinking mistakes. These strategies helped them maintain fluency and continue speaking. This supports Juhana's (2012) explanation that fluency is influenced not only by language competence but also by emotional control during communication.

In overcoming vocabulary difficulties, students used communicative strategies such as asking for clarification as stated (Harmer, 2001) clarification strategies support learners in maintaining interaction and ensuring comprehension during communicative tasks, rephrasing ideas, and describing meanings using alternative expressions. The use of phrases like "how do I say" indicates that students actively sought help from tutors or peers to maintain interaction. This finding reflects the concept of communicative competence, which emphasizes that effective communication involves strategic use of language rather than perfect accuracy. Through these strategies, students were able to stay engaged in the activities and avoid communication breakdowns.

Overall, the discussion suggests that interactive games provide meaningful speaking experiences by integrating benefits, challenges, and coping strategies into the learning process. While students faced psychological and linguistic difficulties, interactive games helped them develop confidence, resilience, and strategic competence

in speaking English. Therefore, interactive games can be considered an effective approach that supports not only the development of speaking skills, but also students' positive attitudes and readiness to communicate in English.

### **Conclusion & recommendation**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that students experienced interactive games as a positive and supportive learning medium in developing their speaking skills at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare. The participants perceived that interactive games created an enjoyable learning atmosphere that encouraged them to speak more actively and confidently. Through game-based activities, students felt less pressured, more motivated, and more willing to participate in speaking tasks, even when they were required to respond spontaneously in English.

The findings also indicate that interactive games provided meaningful opportunities for repeated speaking practice and natural vocabulary development. Activities such as role play, storytelling, and group games allowed students to practice speaking in various communicative situations. These activities helped students focus more on expressing ideas rather than worrying excessively about grammatical accuracy, which contributed to the improvement of their fluency and confidence in speaking English.

Despite the positive experiences, the students also encountered several challenges when using interactive games. The main challenges were related to limited vocabulary, difficulties in understanding instructions, and nervousness when speaking in front of others. These challenges sometimes caused hesitation and affected students' fluency during speaking activities. However, the challenges did not prevent students from participating in the games. Instead, they became part of the learning process that pushed students to adapt and find ways to continue communicating.

Another important finding is that students developed various strategies to overcome these challenges. To maintain fluency, students applied coping strategies such as pausing briefly, avoiding eye contact, and speaking spontaneously without overthinking mistakes. To deal with vocabulary limitations, students asked for clarification from tutors or peers, rephrased ideas, and used descriptive expressions when

they forgot certain words. These strategies helped students remain engaged in interactive games and maintain communication despite linguistic and psychological difficulties.

In conclusion, interactive games play a significant role in supporting students' speaking experiences at Mr. Bob Kampung Inggris, Pare. The positive perceptions expressed by the participants suggest that interactive games are an effective and student-friendly learning medium for speaking practice. They not only enhance students' confidence and participation but also help them develop communicative strategies to manage challenges during speaking activities. Therefore, interactive games are best viewed as a valuable instructional approach that supports meaningful speaking practice and encourages students to use English more confidently in classroom interactions.

### **Declaration of AI Use**

During the writing of the current manuscript, the authors used AI for language editing, formatting, and revising the draft. During the literature search and screening, AI was used. The authors reviewed and verified all material that has been generated and revised from the original sources. The authors bear total responsibility for the accuracy of the content of this manuscript.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

No Potential conflict of interest was reported.

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