

Enhancing Junior High School Students' Speaking Skills through Monopoly-Based Edutainment

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Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of using the Monopoly game as an edutainment tool to improve the speaking skills of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Pasekan, Indonesia. Employing a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, the study involved 35 students through two cycles of intervention. Data were collected through speaking tests, observations, field notes, and a questionnaire. The speaking tests assessed pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. The findings showed an improvement in students' speaking performance, with the mean score increasing from 54.46 in the pre-test to 74.64 in the post-test. Classroom observations indicated increased student participation, confidence, and use of English during the learning activities. In addition, 91.2% of students reported positive perceptions of using the Monopoly game as a learning tool. These findings suggest that the Monopoly game can provide an interactive context for spontaneous communication and support students' motivation and engagement in speaking activities. However, its use should be combined with varied instructional strategies to prevent monotony and accommodate different learning needs. The findings imply that edutainment-based board games can serve as an alternative instructional medium for creating more engaging speaking activities in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: *classroom action research; edutainment; monopoly game; speaking skills*

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as a core component of communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as it enables learners to convey meaning in real-time interaction. Despite its importance, recent empirical studies indicate that many EFL learners continue to struggle with oral communication, particularly in terms of fluency, confidence, and spontaneous language production. These difficulties are closely associated with limited vocabulary, pronunciation challenges, and high levels of speaking anxiety, which significantly hinder learners' ability to communicate effectively. Research conducted by Cahya and Churnia (2026) consistently shows that speaking anxiety remains a major affective barrier that negatively impacts fluency, coherence, and willingness to communicate. In addition, classroom-based studies reveal that although instructional interventions may improve motivation, reducing speaking anxiety remains a persistent challenge in EFL contexts (Latifah et al., 2025).

Furthermore in Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject at the secondary school level, with the curriculum emphasizing communicative competence. However, classroom practices are still frequently dominated by teacher-centered and form-focused approaches, such as memorization of scripted dialogues. These approaches often fail to develop learners' ability to engage in spontaneous communication. Empirical evidence shows that students commonly experience anxiety due to fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and negative evaluation, all of which reduce participation in speaking activities (Adawiyah et al., 2025). Consequently, students may possess knowledge of language forms but lack the ability to use English effectively in real-life situations, highlighting a gap between instructional goals and classroom practice.

To address these issues, recent studies have emphasized the importance of interactive and student-centered approaches, particularly game-based learning within an edutainment framework. Game-based learning has been shown to enhance motivation, engagement, and speaking performance by providing meaningful and contextualized language practice (Gunawan, 2025). Furthermore, research demonstrates that game-based activities can create a supportive and low-anxiety environment, helping learners feel more confident and willing to communicate (Kamal & Khaidzir, 2025). A broader review of gamification in EFL contexts also confirms its positive impact on reducing anxiety, increasing engagement, and improving learning outcomes, although its effectiveness may vary depending on implementation and context (Chan & Lo, 2024).

However, despite the growing body of research on game-based learning, several important research gaps remain to be addressed. First, existing studies predominantly focus on digital games or general gamification strategies, with limited attention to the pedagogical potential of non-digital, board-based games in EFL classrooms. Second, previous research tends to emphasize outcomes (e.g., improved speaking scores) rather than explaining the underlying mechanisms through which games facilitate language acquisition. In particular, there is limited discussion on how specific game interactions promote negotiation of meaning, encourage language production, and reduce affective barriers. Moreover, few studies have simultaneously examined non-digital board games and their underlying interactional mechanisms in fostering spontaneous speaking in EFL contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, the use of games in language learning can be explained through several complementary frameworks. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes meaningful interaction as the foundation of language acquisition. The Interaction Hypothesis suggests that language development occurs through negotiation of meaning during communication, while the Output Hypothesis highlights the importance of producing language for developing linguistic competence. Additionally, the Affective Filter Hypothesis explains how reduced anxiety and increased motivation facilitate language acquisition. These perspectives are supported by sociocultural theory, particularly Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which emphasizes the role of peer interaction and scaffolding in learning. Nevertheless, prior studies rarely integrate these theoretical perspectives to explain how specific instructional tools operationalize these processes in classroom practice.

Among various game-based strategies, the Monopoly board game offers unique pedagogical potential due to its interactive and negotiation-based mechanics. The game requires players to engage in transactional communication, such as bargaining, decision-making, and strategic interaction, thereby creating opportunities for meaningful language use. These features support the development of speaking fluency, encourage spontaneous language production, and foster collaborative learning. However, empirical research examining the effectiveness of Monopoly as a structured pedagogical tool for speaking development in EFL contexts remains limited.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the Monopoly game as an edutainment-based instructional strategy to enhance speaking skills among eighth-grade students in an Indonesian junior high school. Specifically, it addresses the following research questions: (1) To what extent can the Monopoly game improve students' speaking skills? and (2) How does the use of the Monopoly game facilitate spontaneous speaking in classroom interaction? By addressing the identified research gap, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on game-based language learning by providing both empirical evidence and theoretical insights into how board games can support communicative competence in EFL contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Skills in EFL Contexts

Speaking involves producing, receiving, and processing information interactively (Brown, 1994). It is a dynamic process where meaning is constructed through spontaneous interaction (Halliday, 1985). In EFL settings, students often face challenges such as limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and low confidence, which hinder effective communication (Mack, 2012; Alabsi, 2020). Communicative competence, encompassing linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic skills, is a key goal in language education (Celce-Murcia et al., 2018). Effective teaching strategies must therefore focus on creating opportunities for authentic and interactive language use.

Edutainment in Language Learning.

Edutainment combines education and entertainment to create engaging learning experiences (Sutrisno, as cited in Hamid, 2011). Recent studies highlight its efficacy in promoting motivation and reducing anxiety in language classrooms (Wright et al., 2016; Alabsi, 2020). Games, as a form of edutainment, facilitate active learning by encouraging collaboration, problem-solving, and creative expression (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). For instance, Yuni Anawati (2011) found that riddle games significantly improved students' speaking skills and motivation, suggesting that interactive games can enhance communicative outcomes.

Monopoly as an Edutainment Tool.

Monopoly, a board game simulating economic transaction, promotes social interaction through activities like buying properties, paying rent, and negotiating (Harmer, 2001). Its structured yet dynamic nature makes it suitable for fostering spontaneous communication in EFL settings (Johnson, 2010). Recent studies on game-based learning confirm that board games like Monopoly enhance language skills by creating authentic communicative contexts (Smith & Jones, 2019; Lee, 2022). By integrating Monopoly into speaking lessons, teachers can encourage students to practice vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency in a low-pressure environment.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in communicative language teaching (CLT), which emphasizes interaction as the means and goal of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The Monopoly game aligns with CLT by providing an information gap activity, where students must communicate to achieve game objectives (Harmer, 2007). Additionally, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory supports the use of collaborative games, as peer interaction facilitates language development through scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978; Lee, 2022).

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design to systematically improve students' speaking skills within an authentic classroom context. CAR was selected because it enables iterative refinement of instructional practices through cyclical processes of planning, action, observation, and reflection, making it particularly suitable for addressing context-specific pedagogical problems rather than establishing broad causal generalizations (Wallace, 1998).

The study consisted of two action cycles, each designed to evaluate and refine the implementation of the Monopoly game as an instructional strategy. Each cycle included four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Findings from Cycle I informed modifications in Cycle II to enhance the effectiveness of the intervention.

In addition, this study adopted a convergent mixed-methods approach, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and integrated during analysis. Quantitative data (students' speaking scores) were used to measure improvement, while qualitative data (observations, field notes, and questionnaires) provided contextual insights into student engagement, interaction patterns, and perceptions of the learning process. This integration allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention's effectiveness.

Participants and setting.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Pasekan, Indramayu, Indonesia, involving 35 eighth-grade students (Class VIIIA). The participants were selected using purposive sampling, as the study focused on a naturally occurring classroom in which the identified speaking difficulties were observed. All students in the class were included to ensure ecological validity and comprehensive representation of classroom dynamics.

The data were collected during the first semester of the 2013–2014 academic year (August 22 to September 5, 2013). Although the dataset is not recent, this study is positioned as a contextual replication, aiming to re-examine the effectiveness of game-based learning strategies in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where challenges related to speaking anxiety and limited communicative practice remain relevant.

Intervention

The intervention consisted of two cycles, each comprising three instructional meetings (approximately 80 minutes per session). Students were divided into seven groups of five. To facilitate peer interaction and scaffolding, higher-performing students, identified based on pre-test scores, were assigned as group leaders. This strategy was intended to support collaborative learning within students' Zone of Proximal Development; however, it may also introduce interactional imbalance, which is acknowledged as a limitation.

The instructional procedures were as follows:

1. **Pre-test:**
A baseline speaking test was administered to assess students' initial performance in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar.
2. **Cycle I:**
Students engaged in Monopoly-based activities requiring them to use English in transactional interactions, such as negotiating property ownership, making decisions, and responding to peers. The teacher provided model expressions, vocabulary support, and guided practice. At the end of the cycle, a speaking test was conducted to evaluate progress.
3. **Cycle II:**
Based on reflections from Cycle I, instructional adjustments were implemented, including more explicit vocabulary enrichment and increased emphasis on spontaneous communication. Students were encouraged to produce more extended and unscripted utterances during gameplay.
4. **Post-test:**
A final speaking assessment required students to perform a monologue recounting their game experience, followed by peer interaction. This aimed to measure overall improvement in speaking performance.
5. **Language Use:**
Students were encouraged to use English during all game interactions. However, the use of the

first language (Bahasa Indonesia) was not strictly controlled, which may have influenced the amount of target language production.

6. **Questionnaire:**

A post-intervention questionnaire was administered to gather students' perceptions of the effectiveness and engagement level of the Monopoly-based learning activities.

Data Collection Instruments

Multiple instruments were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data, i.e.

1. **Speaking Tests:**

Pre-test, cycle tests, and post-test assessed four components: pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. Each component was scored on a scale of 0–25, resulting in a total score of 100 to enhance scoring consistency, clear rating criteria were applied throughout the assessment process.

2. **Observation Forms:**

Used to document students' participation, interaction patterns, and engagement during the learning process.

3. **Field Notes:**

Recorded classroom events, student responses, and instructional adjustments during each cycle.

4. **Questionnaire:**

A five-item questionnaire was administered to capture students' perceptions of their motivation, engagement, and the perceived effectiveness of the Monopoly game. As the questionnaire had not undergone formal validation, the responses were interpreted as students' reported perceptions rather than as independently validated measures of the game's effectiveness.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data from speaking tests were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to examine students' progress across the pre-test, Cycle I, Cycle II, and post-test.

To determine whether the improvement was statistically significant, a paired-sample t-test was conducted comparing pre-test and post-test scores. Prior to analysis, assumptions of normality were assessed. In addition, effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to evaluate the practical significance of the observed improvement.

It should be noted that, due to the absence of a control group, improvements cannot be attributed solely to the intervention, as factors such as practice effects or maturation may also contribute.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data from observations, field notes, and questionnaires were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved data reduction, coding, categorization, and interpretation to identify recurring patterns related to student engagement, interaction, and perceptions. The integration of qualitative findings with quantitative results enabled triangulation and strengthened the overall interpretation of the data.

RESULTS

Pre-Test

The pre-test, conducted on August 22, 2013, revealed an average speaking score of 54.46 (SD = 8.72). Most students struggled with vocabulary and fluency, with scores ranging from 45 to 75. These results indicated a need for intervention to address speaking difficulties.

Cycle I

Cycle I, implemented on August 26, 2013, involved Monopoly gameplay with guided English conversations. The average score increased to 58.57 (SD = 7.91), with a highest score of 80 and a lowest of 50. Observations noted initial confusion among some students due to unfamiliarity with the game in a learning context. Five students scored lower than their pre-test, likely due to adaptation challenges. However, group leaders facilitated peer interaction, enhancing vocabulary use.

Cycle II

Cycle II, conducted on September 2, 2013, addressed Cycle I's shortcomings by providing clearer instructions and additional vocabulary support. The average score rose to 65.00 (SD = 6.45), with a highest score of 80 and a lowest of 55. Observations indicated increased student confidence and participation, with fewer students combining English with Bahasa Indonesia. Only one student scored lower than in Cycle I.

Post-Test

The post-test, administered on September 5, 2013, yielded an average score of 74.64 (SD = 5.32), with a highest score of 85 and a lowest of 65. This represented a significant improvement from the pre-test ($t = 9.87$, $p < 0.01$, calculated post-hoc). The reduced score range (20 points) suggested more consistent speaking proficiency across students. Peer responses during the post-test enhanced interactive communication.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire revealed strong student approval of the Monopoly game:

1. 97.15% agreed it improved speaking skills through interactive gameplay.
2. 88.35% felt motivated by the game.
3. 85.50% found it engaging, though 65.55% acknowledged speaking as a difficult skill.
4. 91.20% supported its use as a teaching tool, though 8.80% found it less suitable, citing preference for more competitive games.

Table 1: Students' Speaking Scores Across Tests

Test	Mean Score	SD	Highest Score	Lowest Score
Pre-Test	54.46	8.72	75	45
Cycle I	58.57	7.91	80	50
Cycle II	65.00	6.45	80	55
Post-Test	74.64	5.32	85	65

DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that students' speaking performance improved significantly from the pre-test to the post-test. Students' mean speaking scores increased by 20.18 points, from 54.46 in the pre-test to 74.64 in the post-test. This aligns with prior research on game-based learning, which highlights the role of interactive activities in enhancing communicative competence (Yuni Anawati, 2011; Smith & Jones, 2019). The game's structure encouraged spontaneous dialogue, addressing the limitations of traditional memorization-based methods (Mack, 2012). Key aspects of improvement included fluency and vocabulary, as students practiced contextually relevant expressions during gameplay.

The iterative CAR design allowed for continuous refinement, with Cycle II addressing initial confusion through clearer instructions and enhanced vocabulary support. This reflects the importance of scaffolding in game-based learning (Vygotsky, 1978; Lee, 2022). The high student approval (91.2%) underscores the motivational impact of edutainment, consistent with Johnson (2010) and Alabsi (2020). However, the slight score decreases for some students suggest individual differences in engagement, possibly due to varying interest in board games or external factors like fatigue.

Limitations include the cost of Monopoly sets, which may restrict scalability, and the potential for monotony if used excessively. Additionally, the study's short duration (two weeks) and small sample size limit generalizability. Future research could explore Monopoly's impact on other language skills (e.g., listening, writing) or investigate its long-term effects with larger cohorts.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the use of the Monopoly game as an edutainment tool effectively improved the speaking skills of junior high school EFL students. The findings, reflected in the improvement of students' speaking scores and their positive perceptions of the learning activities, indicate that the Monopoly game promotes spontaneous communication, increases learning motivation, and encourages active classroom participation. These findings address the research objective by demonstrating that integrating an edutainment-based board game into English instruction can support the development of students' speaking skills.

Moreover, practically teachers are encouraged to provide clear instructions before gameplay, prepare attractive and well-designed game materials, manage classroom time effectively, and monitor group interactions to ensure that all students participate actively. In addition, incorporating appropriate rewards, such as recognizing high-performing groups, may further enhance students' motivation and engagement throughout the learning process.

For future research, scholars are encouraged to investigate the effectiveness of Monopoly-based learning in developing other English language skills, such as listening, reading, and writing, or to examine its potential contribution to teacher professional development. Future studies may also employ longer intervention periods, involve more diverse participant groups, and compare Monopoly with other edutainment games to provide a broader understanding of the relative effectiveness of different game-based learning approaches.

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