Enhancing Speaking Skills of Senior High School Students Using Sims Freeplay

Eskananti Intan Oktari[1*], Basikin[2], Nasir Umar[3]

[1,2]Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia
[3]Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Bauchi, Nigeria

*Corresponding author: intanoktarieskananti.eio@gmail.com

Article Info	Abstract
	This study aimed to improve students' speaking skills using Sims Freeplay through action research based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which includes five steps: reconnaissance, planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 29 students from class XI-1 of a senior high school in Yogyakarta, consisting of 12 females and 17 males. Qualitative data were collected through observations and interviews, while quantitative data were gathered using pre-tests and post-tests. Data analysis involved five steps: assembling, coding, comparing, interpreting, and reporting the outcomes. The validity of the data was measured using democratic, outcomes, process, catalytic, and dialogic validity, while reliability was ensured through time triangulation. The results showed improvements in students' speaking skills, with mean scores increasing from the pre-test (12.28) to post-test cycle I (13.28) and post-test cycle II (14.31), reflecting an 8% increase in cycle I and 9% in cycle II. Reflection from cycle I revealed improvements in vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and sentence organization. Anxiety levels decreased from a mean score of 14.87 to 12.66, while motivation increased from 17.21 to 20.20. Sims Freeplay proved to be an effective and engaging tool for learning English, significantly enhancing students' speaking skills and creating a positive learning experience.

1. Introduction

Speaking is a skill that students must master in learning English. Improving mastery of speaking skills in class enhances students' speaking abilities (Bahadorvar et al., 2014). Speaking skills are necessary for English learning because they enable students to convey their thoughts effectively and serve as a communication tool. However, practicing speaking skills can be challenging.

The challenge in Indonesia lies in the difficulty of practicing English because students lack motivation and feel anxious about applying it in daily conversations. This statement is supported by (Bashori et al.,2020; Jaya et al., 2022), who discuss how students experience feelings of anxiety, lack of confidence, shyness, worry, and nervousness when

speaking is not emphasized in learning activities. Consequently, many students lose their motivation. Moreover, Indonesian culture stigmatizes making mistakes and fosters low motivation by underestimating others.

Motivation is one of the key factors influencing behavior and interest in learning (Lai, 2011). It also drives students to desire learning English, especially speaking skills. Motivation enables students to achieve their learning goals. Hayikaleng, Nair & Krishnasamy (2016) define motivation as essential for the success of students' learning goals. Motivated students are more likely to engage in learning activities and vice versa (Alizadeh, 2016). Increased motivation leads to students' interest, action, and volition. Therefore, teachers must understand how to enhance students' motivation in learning. English (Alizadeh, 2016)

The ideal of speaking skill is for students to be able to speak fluent English confidently. Increasing students' confidence, Gallego et al. (2022) state that speaking performance involves displaying their work or ideas to enhance competency. Students should practice gradually in the classroom. Process-oriented practice enhances speaking performance and ability by focusing on intonation, pronunciation, and body language (Shen and Chiu, 2019). Therefore, students must practice even if they make mistakes and errors. Another reason is that in countries where English is not the first language, there is a correlation between the two languages.

For addressing the gap, this research use the Sims application. The unique method of using this application aims to facilitate effective English learning. In this era, game is one of way to students gain the information or acknowledge especially in English. Furthermore, the goal of this research is to motivate students to desire speaking skills during the learning process in the classroom. Students will try to tackle their weakness of speaking in English.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Speaking

Speaking is a thinking and reasoning process in the learning of conversational activities, understood by both the speaker and listener (Yuliana, 2013; Budiarta and Krismayani, 2014). When learners receive information through speaking, they begin to interpret the speaker's message to understand it. Listeners receive this information and respond accordingly, enabling interaction between speakers and listeners. Additionally, speaking is the capability to verbally

communicate with others and can be honed into a structured series of speech (Hasibuan, 2019).

Students' competence in speaking skills refers to their ability to summarize and convey information to others. Speaking skill is considered a productive skill that reflects students' competence in speaking (Zyoud, 2016). Students need to improve their speaking skills to enhance their cooperative abilities. Therefore, they engage in practice to become fluent in speaking.

According by Brown, (1994, 141- 142) states there are five types of speaking such as; imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, extensive. Furthermore, Zhang (2009:93) explained that speaking is the most difficult skill

for English learners to master, and they often struggle to communicate fluently in English. However, it is crucial to develop a habit of speaking, especially in English. By expanding our vocabulary and applying it to construct sentences in conversations, we can improve our speaking skills over time

2.2. Problem Related Speaking Skill

2.2.1 Mental Problems

Students have issues about their capability consists motivation and anxiety. Motivation plays a crucial role in learning English, especially for speaking skills. Students who lack motivation often struggle with confidence in their speaking performance. Enhancing motivation allows students to transfer their learning into a desire to speak, encouraging them to actively pay attention (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Transfer learning is vital for students in the process of learning a new or second language. Learning from mistakes is an essential part of developing speaking skills, as it helps students accept criticism and suggestions from others.

Carlton (2003) in Putri (2016) devided some behavioral characteristics which are the indicators of high motivation. There are persistence, choice of challenge, the amount of dependency on adult, and emotion. These characteristics influence for their performance in English skill. Therefore, this motivation impact to another mental problems is anxiety.

Anxiety is a feeling that can hinder students' ability to improve. Students often feel anxious when starting something new, which can manifest as a combination of worry, tension, and physical symptoms like high blood pressure (Shaurya Bhatnagar et al., 2023). These feelings can discourage students from taking action, even though taking action is key to enhancing their abilities, especially in speaking performance. To achieve this goal, students need to understand how to address their anxiety.

According to Rajitha et al (2020), anxiety can be categorized into two types: trait anxiety and state anxiety. Trait anxiety is a personality trait where someone tends to feel anxious in various situations, while state anxiety is a temporary condition that can occur at specific moments. Students need to identify the reasons for their anxiety to find solutions and overcome their problems. Anxiety can be a significant obstacle for students' learning progress.

Speaking anxiety is particularly important as it can negatively impact students' oral performance in English (Melouah, 2013). This anxiety can range from mild nervousness to high levels of fear and can manifest in various physical symptoms such as shivering, sweating,

forgetfulness, blankness, hand shaking, dry mouth and throat, rapid heartbeat, and butterflies in the stomach

2.2.2 Linguistic Problems

According to Harris (1974) and Syakur (2007), speaking skill consist of five componentes: comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. The definition of comprehension is Oral communication is the ability to comprehend and respond effectively to a subject or conversation. It involves actively trying to understand something and then articulating a response clearly and appropriately. The other components, grammar is necessary to construct sentences correctly during a conversation. Grammar tools also help in learning correct oral and written language forms, leading to expertise in communication. Components need to master in vocabulary that learner knows meaning of utterances. In English, we must proficient of pronunciation and fluency for understanding in speaking. These components influence how people to fluent in conversation

2.3. Conversation

Conversation serves as the primary means of interacting with others, as argued by Horton (2017). Through conversation, people can share information, solve problems, build relationships, and achieve daily goals. People often spend time conversing daily to convey their thoughts and ideas, whether in person, over the phone, through applications, or online media on smartphones.

The lexical features of conversation encompass a rich array of information, including the length of utterances, choice of words, and sentiment (Spitzley et al., 2022). Students often repeat many words in patterns during conversations, and their semantic networks help interpret multiple meanings of a single word. Understanding conversation patterns aids students in practicing their speaking skills with others, improving their ability to remember and apply words in conversations.

Conversation not only supports vocabulary development but also helps expand students' semantic networks involving various words (S.Q. Cabell et al., 2015). Engaging in conversations allows students to become fluent speakers. They learn how to use vocabulary appropriately in statements and how to effectively communicate their ideas to others. By practicing conversations regularly, students become accustomed to speaking English fluently and confidently. Furthermore, conversation can be characterized by Pask's model conversation (1981) in Pangaro Paul (2017), as follows: context, language, exchange, agreement, and action

2.4. The Sims Freeplay Sims

Freeplay is a life simulation video game developed by Maxis and published by Electronic Arts. It is a freemium version of The Sims, which has been published in several series since 1989. Sims Freeplay was released in 2011 on iOS, 2012 on Android and BlackBerry, and 2013 on Windows Phone 8 (source: Wikipedia). In the game, players create virtual characters called Sims, build and design houses, customize their appearance, and create a town for the Sims to live in. Players can choose to use pre-constructed homes or build their own from scratch.

In Sims Freeplay, players are responsible for managing the Sims' moods, satisfying their needs and wishes, and guiding them to complete various actions to earn Simoleons, Lifestyle Points, and Social Points. The game progresses in real time, with quests that involve completing tasks within specified timeframes to solve each quest. Sims can form families and have babies once they become adults and find a partner. To track progress and manage activities, players can access the player information panel

3. Methods

The research conducted Classroom Action Research (CAR), which is a form of inquiry aimed at achieving goals and informing practice in the classroom situation (Mettetal, 2015). The aim of this research is to enhance students' speaking skills during the learning process. CAR is also designed to discover the best methods suited to the specific classroom environment. In this case, the researcher aims to improve students' speaking skills through games that are appropriate for the modern era. The research implemented the Sims Freeplay.

The research sample comprises students from SMA UII Yogyakarta, specifically focusing on speaking practice at the 11th class level, which aligns with the curriculum. Data collection occurred during the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year. The research aims to explore and enhance students' speaking skills through the use of Sims Freeplay as a fun learning tool, in line with contemporary educational methods. The focus of this study is on a specific group of students at the senior high school level. The participants were 29 students, 12 females and 17 males of class XI-1 of a senior high school in Yogyakarta. The research conducts two sessions as play games and conversation.

The researcher used the action research by S. Kemmis et al (2014), there are five steps; reconnaissance, planning, action, practice, and productive. Furthermore, the data collection included observation, questionnaire, interview, and speaking test. Researcher also used qualitative and quantitative analysis to gain the accurate data for this research

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

4.1.1 The Result of Pre and Post Questionnaire (Cycle I and II)

Classroom observations were crucial for assessing speaking skills, motivation levels, and addressing anxiety issues. These classroom experiences were reflected in the results of both the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire.

The questionnaire was administered on Tuesday, August 15th, 2023. The table showed that 66% were in the very high level range of 105-125, and 34% were in the high level range of 84-104. These results indicate that students have a basic speaking skill, but in reality, they had low motivation and felt anxious when speaking. Furthermore, the total score was 3107, with a mean of 107. This total was effective in improving students' speaking skills, motivation, and reducing anxiety. The result of the pre-activity showed that students had a high mastery of English before the activity started. However, students had limited ability to speak English

4.1.1. _Memory Performance Result_

Please submit your figures both in your Word file and in their original format (not embedded, as a supporting file during online submission). A vector format is preferred for printing purposes. In the case of photos, etc., a resolution of 300 dpi should be provided.

Ensure all text in the figures is readable with a font size of ≥ 8pt. Figures and captions should be numbered and centered. Experimental results are presented in Figure

Table 1 - The result of pre-activity questionnaire of Cycle I

Range	Frequency	Percent	Students' Master English, Motivation, and Anxiety
105 – 125	19	66%	Very High
84 – 104	10	34%	High
63 – 83	-	-	Moderate
42 – 62	-	-	Low
25 – 41	-	-	Very Low
Total	3107	100%	
Mean	107		

The questionnaire was administered on Tuesday, September 19th, 2023. The post-activity results indicate that students showed a slight significance in improving their speaking skills. The table showed that 66% were in the very high-level range of 105-125, and 34% were in the high level range of 84-104. Therefore, the total score was 3134, with a mean of 108. These results reflect the improvement in students' speaking skills, motivation, and anxiety reduction. This method was successful in improving speaking skills for students using Sims Freeplay.

Table 2 - The Result of the Post-activity Questionnaire of Cycle I

Range	Frequency	Percent	Students' Master English, Motivation, and Anxiety
105 – 125	19	66%	Very High
84 – 104	10	34%	High
63 – 83	-	-	Moderate
42 – 62	-	-	Low
25 – 41	-	-	Very Low
Total	3134	100%	
Mean	108		

4.1.2. _The Result of Pre-test and Post-test Speaking Test_

The pre-test for speaking skills was conducted on Tuesday, August 15th, 2023, before Cycle 1 of the activity. This pre-test focused on linguistic features, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and sentence organization. The researcher scored the test to measure students' learning needs in the classroom. The table below displays the results of the pre-test for speaking skills.

Table 3 - The Result of Pre-test Speaking Skill of Cycle I

| Pre-test	Grammar	Vocab	Fluency	Pronunciation	Sentences Organization	Total Score
Mean	2.14	2.86	2.59	2.69	2.00	12.28

The results of the pre-test for speaking skills showed scores in the following linguistic features: grammar (2.14), vocabulary (2.86), fluency (2.59), pronunciation (2.69), and sentence organization (2.00), with a total score of 12.28. This indicates that the lowest scoring linguistic feature was sentence organization. To improve their speaking skills, students engaged in conversations on the topic of Sims Freeplay.

The post-test for speaking skills was conducted on Tuesday, August 29th, 2023, during the last meeting of Cycle II. This post-test also focused on linguistic features, including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and sentence organization. The researcher scored the test to measure students' improvement in speaking skills

Table 4 - The Result of Post-test Speaking Skill

Categories		Grammar	Vocab	Fluency	Pronunciation	Sentences Organization	TS
Post-test Cycle I	Mean	2.52	3.03	2.62	2.76	2.34	13.28
Post-test Cycle II	Mean	2.62	3.45	2.86	2.79	2.69	14.41

The results of the post-test for Cycle I speaking test scores were: grammar (2.52), vocabulary (3.03), fluency (2.62), pronunciation (2.76), and sentence organization (2.34), with a total score of 13.28. This indicates that all linguistic features improved for students' speaking skills. Meanwhile, the results of the post-test for Cycle II were: grammar (2.62), vocabulary (3.45), fluency (2.86), pronunciation (2.79), and sentence organization (2.69), with a total score of 14.41
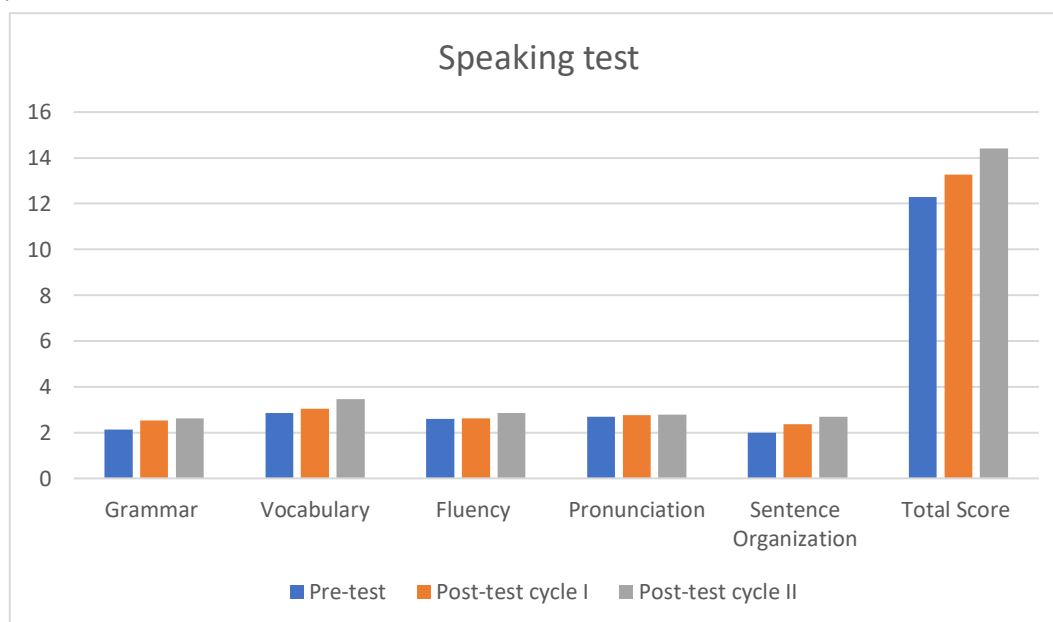
Figure 1 Comparing the Average Student Scores for Each Speaking Criterion Component

The post-test scores for Cycle I and Cycle II showed an increase from the pre-test scores. There was an 8% increase in post-test scores for Cycle I and a 9% increase for Cycle II. The combined scores for the five speaking components and the students' gain scores are displayed in the following table

4.2 DISCUSSION

This study examines the effectiveness of Sims Freeplay in improving students' speaking skills using qualitative and quantitative methods within an action research framework. Data collection included interviews, reflection guides, questionnaires, and speaking tests, focusing on fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and confidence.

4.2.1 *Qualitative Findings*

Qualitative data were collected from interviews with five students and a teacher, as well as a Google Forms reflection guide. Students found Sims Freeplay engaging and enjoyable, which helped them practice English naturally. The interactive nature of the game allowed them to apply new vocabulary and improve grammar through habitual use. However, some students preferred learning through movies or music rather than gaming. The teacher viewed Sims Freeplay as an innovative and relevant tool for modern English learning, highlighting its alignment with students' technological habits.

The reflection guide results showed that students enjoyed learning through gaming and found it beneficial for their speaking fluency. Most students reported increased confidence in speaking and acknowledged the need for more practice to achieve greater fluency.

4.2.2 *Quantitative Findings*

Quantitative data were obtained from questionnaires and speaking tests to measure students' progress before and after implementing Sims Freeplay.

Pre-test results: Students displayed weaknesses in sentence structure, fluency, and confidence, with noticeable anxiety when speaking English. Post-test results (Cycle 1 & Cycle 2): (1) Cycle 1: Speaking skills improved by 8%, with enhancements in fluency and vocabulary, and (2) Cycle 2: An additional 9% increase, showing better sentence organization and pronunciation

Table 5 Speaking Test Scores:

Component	Pre-Test	Post-Test Cycle 1	Post-Test Cycle 2
Grammar	2.14	2.52	2.62
Vocabulary	2.86	3.03	3.45
Fluency	2.59	2.62	2.86
Pronunciation	2.69	2.76	2.79
Sentence Organization	2.00	2.34	2.69
Total Score	12.28	13.28 (+8%)	14.41 (+9%)

4.2.3 *Questionnaire* Results:

The pre-test questionnaire indicated that 66% of students were at a very high level (105-125), and 34% at a high level (84-104), with a mean score of 107. In the post-test, the mean score increased slightly to 108, suggesting steady progress in speaking skills.

The game provided students with habitual speaking practice, enabling them to engage in meaningful conversations based on in-game tasks. By managing Sims' daily activities (e.g., waking up, eating, working), students developed vocabulary, grammar, and strategic thinking in English Through this approach, students gradually overcame anxiety, gained confidence, and became more motivated to speak English. Although initial motivation was low, by the end of the research, students viewed Sims Freeplay as an effective learning tool that made English practice enjoyable.

This study confirms that Sims Freeplay is a valuable tool for improving students' speaking skills. The combination of qualitative insights and quantitative results demonstrates significant progress in fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence. Furthermore, students not only improved academically but also developed a more positive attitude toward English learning, indicating the success of this method.

This research discusses about how the Sims Freeplay can improve students' speaking skill, motivation, and anxiety. The researcher divided about some parts of the topic, as follows:

4.1.3.1 *Sims Freeplay improve speaking skill*

The action research at SMA UII showed that students followed the learning process well and experienced improvements in their speaking skills. They also mastered linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and fluency, aligning with the findings of Jaya et al. (2022). During Sims Freeplay, students enriched their vocabulary by independently searching for new words. Vocabulary served as a foundation for other language skills, as students learned different meanings and pronunciations.Grammar remained a challenge, consistent with Al-Roud (2016), who found that students with low English proficiency struggle with grammar and fluency. Through Sims Freeplay texts, students became familiar with sentence structures and practiced arranging sentences in conversations, though regular practice was still necessary. Fluency was another key difficulty, as noted by Afshar & Asakereh (2016), who stated that students lack confidence and speaking practice. However, after playing Sims Freeplay, students engaged more in group discussions, making learning more interactive and enjoyable.

The results from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 indicated gradual improvement. In Cycle 1, students became familiar with Sims Freeplay and started using English in interactions. By Cycle 2, they gained confidence and structured sentences more effectively. Quantitative data supported these findings. Questionnaire results showed an increase from a total score of 3107 (pre-activity) to 3134 (post-activity), with score distribution remaining the same: 66% in the high range (105-125) and 34% in the moderate range (84-104). Speaking test results also showed improvement across all linguistic features. Pre-test scores were: grammar (2.14), vocabulary (2.86), fluency (2.59), pronunciation (2.69), and sentence organization (2.00), with a total of 12.28. Post-test scores improved to: grammar (2.52), vocabulary (3.03), fluency (2.62), pronunciation (2.76), and sentence organization (2.34), totaling 13.28. The success of Sims Freeplay in this study lies in its engaging nature, which motivated students to learn English

more effectively. Game-based learning proved to be a valuable tool for gradually enhancing speaking skills, aligning with modern technology's role in education.

4.1.3.2 *Motivation and Anxiety in English Learning*

Afshar & Asakereh (2016) emphasized motivation as a key mental challenge in language learning. Sims Freeplay effectively boosted students' motivation by engaging them in quest-solving while reinforcing English commands. The interactive nature of the game intrigued students, making learning immersive and enjoyable. As they progressed, their confidence and motivation grew, encouraging them to improve grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and overall language proficiency.

Motivation plays a crucial role in English learning, sparking curiosity and driving students to explore new concepts. It also fosters engagement, making it easier for teachers to introduce various learning methods. However, anxiety remains a significant barrier. Bekai & Harkouss (2018) and Alyan (2013) highlighted that low confidence leads to nervousness, fear, and hesitation in speaking. Sims Freeplay helped students gradually overcome this anxiety by building their confidence through interactive gameplay and peer discussions. Reducing anxiety is essential for unlocking students' full potential. A supportive learning environment encourages confidence and helps students recognize English as a valuable skill in their daily lives

5. Conclusions

The findings previously showed that using Sims Freeplay for students was effective in helping them learn English. There were 3 aspects that the researcher measured, consist of speaking skill, motivation, and anxiety. The first, speaking skill had linguistic features (vocabulary, grammar, and fluency). Speaking skill were handled by students when they played Sims Freeplay. Students gained many vocabularies that they applied in the sentences. Students could read grammar correctly in each task in Sims Freeplay until they understood grammar. Other, students had conversations with classmates about how to solve the quests or else. This made students fluent in their speaking skill. Second, students increased their motivation through the Sims. Students were motivated to learn English more because they were excited about it. The last, students could overcome their anxiety when they master English. Indirectly, students had progressed gradually in mastering English.

Furthermore, the results of the instruments consist of interviews and the questionnaire. In the interview displayed that students were fun to play Sims Freeplay while learning English. Sims Freeplay had a basic English that students understood to learn. Students' experiences using Sims Freeplay made 100 their speaking skill increase even a little bit. Others, the instrument was aquestionnaire conducted pre-activity and post-activity. Their speaking ability, motivation, and anxiety differed slightly between pre-activity and post-activity. The result of the questionnaire were 107 for pre-activity and 108 for post-activity. Moreover, students were improved by the result of pre-test speaking test scores, which were total score for pre-test (12.28), post-test cycle I (13.28), and post-test cycle II (14.31). It showed that all linguistic features was increased for students' speaking skill. These results showed that the speaking test

improved linguistic features. In addition, students' less anxiety also showed from their mean scores in the pre-cycle (14.87) and post-cycle (12.66). The results of high-motivation were shown in pre-cycle (17.21) and post-cycle (20.20). The scores of students' anxiety decreased by 2.21 points, while students' motivation increased by 2.99 points. It means, students are motivated to learn English.

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Conflict of Interest

Disclose any conflicts of interest, or explicitly state "The authors declare no conflicts of interest." Authors are required to disclose and acknowledge any personal circumstances or interests that may be perceived as inappropriately influencing the representation or interpretation of the research results.

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