



## Communicative Games: Their Implementation to Improve Students' Speaking Skills

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.56855/ijcse.v2i3.617>

Received June 02, 2023; Accepted July 18, 2023; Available online November 20, 2023

**Abstract:** This classroom action research aimed to improve the eighth-grade students' speaking skills of SMP N 7 Yogyakarta using communicative games. The participants of this study were 32 students. The data were collected through classroom observation, interviews, and tests. The quantitative data were obtained from tests, and the qualitative data were collected through classroom observation, interviews, and documentation. Descriptive statistics analyzed the quantitative data, and qualitative data were analyzed by data display, verifying, and drawing a conclusion. This study's findings indicate that communicative games can improve students' speaking skills. The increase in student scores shows it; in the pre-test, the student average was 2.96. In post-test 1, the student's average was increased to 3.17. Meanwhile, in post-test 2, the student's average increased to 3.54. Therefore, it can be concluded that using communicative games improves students' speaking skills.

**Keywords:** Communicative games, Speaking skills, Junior high school students

### 1. Introduction

The ability to communicate ideas, thoughts, and sentiments in meaningful ways as well as to construct proper sentences will be made easier for the students by acquiring good English, especially when speaking. Speaking is the process of creating through giving and receiving knowledge (Sekarini & Syaife'i, 2016). It indicates that speaking skills are crucial for children to develop since they will prepare students for using the language in everyday situations. According to Yurdean and Syafei (2016), speaking is the most crucial ability to master when learning a foreign language. In conclusion, speaking ability is a prime concern for language learners.

However, it is not as simple as it may seem to acquire speaking skill. Students need greater practice speaking in English both inside and outside of the classroom. According to Susanti and Amri (2013), students need to communicate in English more. This means that when teaching speaking, teachers must pay close attention. The teachers must attempt to create a classroom where English is spoken actively. According to the observation and interview conducted by the researchers in SMP N 7 Yogyakarta, there are some problems found related to speaking proficiency. The main cause of the problem is that the students do not have maximum chances to speak. The teaching and learning process mostly focuses on doing the task on the textbook. Moreover, students in this class usually have low learning motivation and interest. They are shy, nervous, and lack confidence when answering teacher questions or giving a presentation. In learning to speak, the activities provided by the teacher are commonly dialog practices, which are more focused on remembering than producing sentences orally. These activities only require students to memorize their turns in the dialog. Therefore, they find it difficult to produce what is on their mind once asked to speak.

To help students improve their speaking skills and enhance their motivation in learning the language, it is highly recommended for the teacher to create interesting learning media, peaceful classroom situations, and enjoyable activities. According to Nunan (1999), teachers should assist their students by developing strategies to manage all forms of communication to ensure that all students have equal and fair opportunities to develop their interpersonal speaking and listening skills through large and small group discussions. One of the various activities that can be used in implementing communicative games. In this way, students are better able to produce the target language this way. They will have more fun and communicative experiences speaking English. Based on the problem's explanation above, the researchers conducted a study entitled "The Use of Communicative Games to Improve the Eighth Grade Students' Speaking Skill in SMP N 7 Yogyakarta". Further, this study aims to improve the students' speaking skills by using communicative games as interesting media.

The main goal was the communicative games in a communicative activity. However, to be able to perform it, the students would go through several pre-communicative activities. In these two kinds of activities, the students' interaction with one another will improve, and they can expand their interactive ability. The activities will involve at least two students. The form of activities would be working in pairs or small groups. These kinds of grouping would impact the students in giving support and help to each other to progress together. The connection between language and communication communicative language teaching seeks to broadly implement the theoretical perspective of the communicative approach (Laser-Freeman, 2000). CLT's objective is to provide pupils with the ability to speak accurately and fluently in the target language. It calls for the pupils to be aware of the language's grammatical structures, connotations, and purposes. It encourages pupils to engage in meaningful communication in certain circumstances.

CLT aims to achieve communicative competence, using language for purposeful communication (Richards, 2006). According to Richards (2006), language knowledge encompasses the following areas of communicative skill: (1) understanding how to utilize language for a variety of activities and purposes; (2) understanding how to adjust our language use to the context and audience; (3) understanding how to create and read various forms of texts; and (4) understanding how to communicate despite having limited language proficiency. Students must understand how to utilize the language by its aims and functions in various contexts to achieve communicative competence. They should also consider whom they communicate with and where it takes place. It is crucial to understand how to maintain effective communication.

According to Harmer (2007), for CLT activities to be successful, students must be motivated to communicate. Instead of concentrating on a specific language form, students should concentrate on the content of the things they are talking about or writing. Instead of sticking to one language framework, they should adopt a variety. Richards (2006) lists the following objectives of CLT:

- 1) Understanding the various roles and purposes of language.
- 2) Knowing when to employ formal and casual spoken language, for example, appropriate for the situation and the participants.
- 3) Understanding and producing many forms of writing (e.g., narrative text, report text, recount text, etc.)

#### 4) Understanding the various communication strategies and how to maintain communication

Activities that make students utilize and practice the language by interacting and communicating with others are necessary to help the students become fluent in English. According to the learning and teaching process of speaking, several experts have suggested communicative activities. According to Folse (1993), a communicative activity occurs when pupils have a variety of pieces of information that only they possess and must verbally convey to a partner. The pupils can only complete the assignment by interacting with one another because the two portions were taken from various sources. Therefore, practicing communication skills is crucial to learning to talk. Activities that make students utilize and practice the language by interacting and communicating with others are necessary to help the students become fluent in English. According to the learning and teaching process of speaking, several experts have suggested communicative activities.

Communicative tasks fulfil two crucial language learning needs: they help learners become more automatic with their language knowledge and prepare them for real-world language use (Thornbury, 2005). The objective of the activities is to utilize language; they take place in real-time; they force the students to communicate; the language produced is unexpected; and there are no restrictions on the language used (Thornbury, 2005).

Brown (2003) creates a list of the activities the students anticipate carrying out for the oral presentations;

##### 1) Imitative

The meaning of imitation is to copy. The kids can benefit in some ways from imitating others and repeatedly drilling or practicing particular sounds or sentences. Students can enhance their pronunciation by copying the proper pronunciations of words or sounds and then drilling them all. Drilling allows students to hone their oral abilities and correct any pronunciation errors from earlier training.

##### 2) Intensive

Any speaking exercises intended to practice grammatical aspects of languages are considered intensive speaking. It might be started by the students themselves or can be a part of a pair-work activity where students practice certain language forms.

##### 3) Responsive

Response is a brief inquiry or comment by a student responding to a teacher's or another student's query or viewpoint. There are no longer talks or conversations included in this responsive oral product. One example of initiative and responsive discussion is a brief conversation between a teacher and pupils in which the teacher inquires about how they are. A query that requires a brief response and does not start a prolonged discourse is an initiated action

##### 4) Transactional (dialogue)

The use of transactional language centres on exchanging meaning and information. People are more than just initiators or recipients of this type of communication. The purpose of the talk is to open a long discussion where specific information will be exchanged.

##### 5) Interpersonal

Interpersonal skills are expected of students. Language is created to preserve social relationships, not to convey meaning or knowledge. The students find this type of conversation more challenging since it requires them to be able to use sarcasm, humour, and slang.

##### 6) Extensive (monologue)

Advanced-level students are asked to do more orally. They must be capable of giving oral reports, summaries, and brief speeches. Here, more formal language is produced, either planned or unplanned.

Not all of the demands placed on students by their teachers can be met. The instructor must set expectations that are appropriate for the student's abilities. Because of this, teachers must carefully anticipate what pupils can do. Overestimating or underestimating students must be avoided. Some different communicative task kinds are suggested by Thornbury (2005). Those are:

- 1) Information gap activity  
Since there is a knowledge gap in the class, collaboration will be required to do the task.
- 2) Jigsaw activity  
There are four groups in the class. Every group has a unique image. Each group's members are dispersed to get descriptions of other images that will be shared in the final section with their groups.
- 3) Info-gap race  
The task is similar to a listen-and-draw exercise. Students must describe their geometric designs to partners who cannot see them and draw them.
- 4) Surveys  
Students must respond to and ask questions in surveys to complete a questionnaire.
- 5) Blocking games  
To block one student in the games, some other roles would be the partners must have surprising dialogue, and one person must play a role with predictable dialogue.
- 6) Guessing games

In the games, one student must develop a concept related to the theme, and the other players must guess what it is by asking yes/no questions. As mentioned by Richards (2006), communicative language teaching (CLT) marked the beginning of a shift away from the traditional lesson format, where the emphasis was on

A crucial consideration when teaching speaking is whether the instructor is "teaching a language through speaking" or "teaching a language in its spoken form." Despite seeming insignificant, the difference is significant. Hughes argues that there must be a lot of speaking exercises in the classroom but that teaching speaking effectively is different from teaching a language in its spoken form. She adds that teaching speaking calls for the proper articulation, precision, fluency, and cultural understanding of where to put utterances in the target language (Hughes, 2011). Richards (2008) said that many second or foreign-language learners highly emphasize developing their English-speaking abilities. As a result, students frequently assess their spoken language ability and performance in language study. Speech fluency requires linguistic expertise and the capacity to comprehend language and information "on the spot" (Harmer, 2001).

According to Brewster and Ellis (2004), games have seven benefits for language teaching and learning. As follows:

- 1) They promote the memorization of linguistic fragments that can be used in various situations.
- 2) Language chunking offers beneficial pronunciation practice
- 3) Instead of focusing on language practice for the sake of language practice, the language required for the game may be utilized as a part of an activity in which the priority is on accomplishing a task.
- 4) Language practice may be combined with a more general educational or intellectual objective, such as playing reading games to improve vocabulary and the idea of classification and learning more about the subject.
- 5) Besides basic repetition, the game's terminology may promote more creative language use.
- 6) Through problem-solving and puzzles, the students may engage in casual language analysis and notice language objects or rules.

By using as many different strategies as possible, such as patterns and colour, movement and mime, or personalization, games make learning more memorable and accessible.

Games are recommended to be used in the class to help the students learn the target language more effectively, as evidenced by the benefits of the games described above. One of them is to communicate in the games using the target language. Instead of learning the language for its purpose, the target language is used in this context as a means of communication. The teacher should consider several factors when integrating games into the learning activities in the classroom to maximize the effectiveness of the usage of games. Paul (2003) lists seven key roles for teachers in implementing games.

- 1) Designing games  
The teacher must consider the students' learning and knowledge needs when creating games for them. Modifying the game is a recommended course of action to create it to satisfy the learners' needs. To meet the learning objectives, games must also be modified.
- 2) Getting the pace right  
While the student is playing games, the teacher will occasionally step in as certain circumstances arise. The teacher steps in throughout the games to give the pupils hints. When the games are challenging or too simple to achieve the goals, the teacher should intervene to change the game's difficulty. The teacher must also ensure that the kids comprehend the language they are supposed to learn to play the game.
- 3) Answering questions  
The teacher needs to be accessible for any queries as the pupils engage in the games. There must be inquiries because the student is learning new vocabulary and rules while playing the games. The teacher can encourage students to ask questions about their learning processes and be accessible to answer any questions.
- 4) Extending the student's ability  
The teacher needs to ensure that games are difficult so pupils can use their full potential. Students can develop their skills by adding more challenging words, speaking to them in natural and clear English in the game context, and encouraging students as they play.
- 5) Cheating creatively  
There must be teams or individuals left behind when playing games. You must have the skill to cheat intentionally to separate your students from the rest of the class.
- 6) Giving all students a chance  
The game requires participation from everyone in the class because they all have an equal chance to play. The teacher must persuade reserved students to participate. The teacher must strategically set up the teams during a team game.
- 7) Taking part  
It is not a problem to join the students in the game and have fun with them. However, if students start to feel uneasy about the teacher participating in the game, for instance, if they care deeply about their actions and constantly turn to look at the teacher, the teacher should leave the room.

Previous research found that communication games could help students become more fluent speakers. Through communication games, students develop improved communication skills that help them communicate in everyday situations. Because they give every student an equal opportunity to speak, communicative games also encourage quiet and passive kids to speak up more in class (Andriani & Syarif, 2021). In line with Maryam (2020). Based on the data analysis findings, the author concluded that using communicative language games to teach English efficiently can enhance students' speaking skills. Several pieces of evidence can be used to support this claim, such as an observational finding that demonstrated how enthusiastically and actively the students engaged in the learning process.

Additionally, they were inspired to acquire spoken English, which decreased the students' hesitation to communicate in English. Dewi, Kultsum, and Armadi (2016). also said in their journal that the research had demonstrated how communicative games might enhance students' spoken communication abilities. Additionally, it enhances students' fluency, confidence, and active participation. The use of communicative games contributed to creating an engaging learning environment

## 2. METHOD

This study was classroom action research (CAR) conducted by teachers or participants in social situations at school to improve their rationality and practice understanding of these practices. This study was conducted in SMPN 7 Yogyakarta with 32 participants. This study uses a model of classroom action research by Kemmis and McTaggart model (1988) in Burns 2010), which contains the steps for each cycle: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The data were collected through observation, interview, documentation, pre-test, and post-test. In collecting data, the researchers used an observation checklist, interview guideline, speaking rubric, speaking test performance, camera, and recorder.

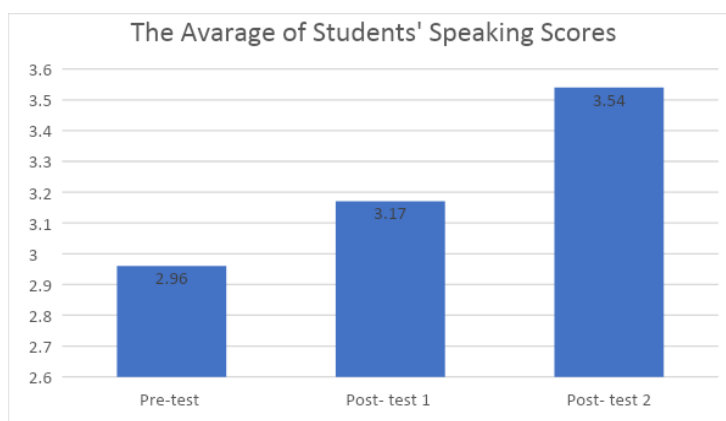
The data analysis model included three steps in data analysis: data condensation, data display, verifying, and drawing conclusions. While the validity used in this research included democratic, outcome, process, catalytic, and dialogic validity. In this research, the researcher implemented four types of communicative games to improve students' speaking ability in SMP N 7 Yogyakarta. Students' behaviour and interest during the learning process were also observed. In presenting the data, the researchers presented the data with a brief description.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 RESULT

The implementation of communicative games indicated that students' speaking skills improved using the games, and they were more confident in speaking English. The students also enjoyed the game and could get the materials more easily. They were more active and did not feel ashamed to express their ideas. They are almost accustomed to using English in class. in cycle 2, the students could construct with the correct structure. Therefore, the students can pronounce English words correctly and not hesitate to pronounce difficult and unfamiliar words.

Therefore, the students' speaking skills improved from the student's scores on the speaking performance test. It can be seen in the diagram below.



**Fig.1 - Average of students**

The diagram above shows the result of the students' speaking scores. There was a 0,21% increase in the student's scores from pre-test to post-test one and a 0,37% increase in students' scores from post-test 1 to post-test 2. So, using communicative games can improve students' quantitative and qualitative speaking skills. So, it can be concluded that implementing communicative games successfully improved students' speaking skills in the eighth grade of SMP N 7 Yogyakarta.

### 3.2 DISCUSSION

This research focuses on improving students' speaking skills using communicative games in the eighth grade of SMP N 7 Yogyakarta. Communicative games were implemented in both cycle 1 and cycle 2. The general finding in this research showed that communicative games successfully improved students'

speaking skills because the action conducted in every cycle answered the formulated research questions. Communicative games improved the students' speaking skills, such as vocabulary and pronunciation.

Communicative games are expected to improve students' speaking skills in several aspects, such as vocabulary and pronunciation, and it can be proven that the student's vocabulary and pronunciation increased with the use of communicative games, which can be seen from the results of their speaking tests in each cycle. The students began to be able to speak English without a doubt because they already had more vocabulary and knew how to pronounce it right. They speak English more automatically and are communicative because they perform communicative activities with various games. This is in line with Thornbury (2005), who said that to make the speaking class work, the teacher can do some communicative tasks so that the students can be trained to produce English automatically and communicatively.

Communicative games help the students express their ideas and opinions because they do not feel nervous, shy, and afraid when talking to friends in a group or pairs. This follows the opinion of Richard (2008), which states that students must practice a class activity in the form of a group or cooperative rather than an individualistic approach to learning something. So, students will feel confident and more comfortable communicating if placed in pairs or groups with their classmates. Working in small groups helps them minimize anxiety when expressing their opinions. So, the use of paired assignments is very effective in improving students' English-speaking skills.

The involvement and participation of students increase in teaching and learning activities in the classroom. The students are more active and confident when playing communicative games in class because of fun and relaxing communicative games carried out in small-scale groups or pairs. This makes students feel more confident and safer in expressing themselves. Harmer's statement (2001) said that many students feel very exposed when they have to speak in a public class. So, researchers must create a comfortable classroom atmosphere and make them feel safe to express their ideas so they do not feel exposed when speaking in front of their friends.

The students are given appreciation for those who are actively involved in class during the activities. Giving rewards to students who actively participate succeeded in making students want to take part and be involved in class activities. They pay more attention to researchers explaining each material and want to work on the worksheet properly. This is in line with Brown (2000). This says that students also need appreciation in the classroom when they do good things or achieve something. It is done to take students' motivation in class because students will compete to get the award.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

According to qualitative research done through classroom interviews and observation, communicative games are fun exercises. The changes to the learning and teaching process. This study discovered that the student's participation increased during the research procedure. The pupils became more engaged in speaking their thoughts. In addition, it was discovered that the students enjoyed the games they engaged in. The students were encouraged to speak English through a variety of activities. The classroom had a good time and a relaxed vibe. The various activities made it easier for students to practice their vocabulary and pronunciation, the worksheet saved them time, and pay more attention to their studies. Additionally, classroom English had a positive impact on students' English.

Furthermore, students' behaviour is changing as a result of communication games. It is because the students were encouraged to speak up using communicative games. According to this study, the students no longer felt embarrassed to speak English. Additionally, they were no longer embarrassed by any errors they made when speaking English. It can be said that communicating through games has improved students' self-confidence. The study also discovered that communicative games help students learn the subject more quickly. Playing the games allowed the students to use some expressions linked to the tools used in real conversation, which helped them learn how to produce and keep practising English communication.

Based on the quantitative data from the pre-test, post-test I, and II, the student's speaking abilities increased in four areas: fluency, accuracy, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and intonation and stress. The students' mean score on the pre-test was 2.96 out of 5.00. Post-test I scored 3.17, and Post-test II

scored 3.54. According to the findings of this study, the grade VIII E speaking skills of students at SMP Negeri 7 Yogyakarta have successfully been improved through the implementation of communicative games on both qualitative and quantitative. Therefore, it was strongly advised that English teachers use Communicative Games to help students improve their speaking skills.

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