

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF USING GAME-BASED METHOD IN TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING TO THE SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS

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Abstract: This research investigates the effectiveness of using game-based method in teaching speaking skills to second-year English-majored students and examines student responses towards this innovative pedagogical approach. The study involved 70 second-year English-majored students at Khanh Hoa University over a 10-week period. Data were collected through questionnaires, group interviews, and classroom observations to evaluate listening and speaking achievement and student attitudes towards game-based method's implementation. Results show that there is an agreement on the benefits EFL learners can get as a result of using game-based method. They have asserted the fact that the fun and enjoyment embedded in such games help these EFL learners overcome their shyness and meanwhile motivate them to use the language as a means of communication with others in different contexts.

Keywords: game-based method, English speaking, educational games; teaching method; nature of games, English majors, effectiveness, students' responses

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I. INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills construct an essential component of English language proficiency, particularly for English-majored students who will eventually become language professionals. However, many second-year English-majored students struggle with feeling of tension and fear in classroom, fear of making mistakes, lack of interest in their speaking. These challenges often stem from traditional teaching methods that emphasize grammar, memorization, and repetition over spontaneous communication.

As an instructor teaching listening-speaking courses to multiple classes at the University of Khanh Hoa, I have observed considerable difficulties among second-year English-majored students in speaking English. Many students show their problems in English speaking due to issues like pronunciation, lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and limited exposure to real-life conversation.

The use of educational games and mainly EFL ones has many benefits for teachers as well as learners. For instance, the anxiety and depression learners usually suffer from make it difficult to learn appropriately and effectively. Language anxiety is referred to as the EFL learner's feeling of tension and fear in classroom. It is build up from typical self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behavior towards EFL language learning in classroom.

One of the benefits of using games for EFL learners is that games encourage them to use EFL language instantly without thinking about

the correct form of the and so their levels of anxiety comes down. Moreover, more opportunities will be provided to learners to express their opinions and feelings. Another benefit of using games for EFL learners is that games, in addition to being motivating and challenging, they can be viewed as a welcome break from the usual routine of language classes. They can help learners make and sustain their efforts of learning. They can provide language practice in various and integrated language skills. Moreover, they can encourage students to interact and communicate to each other. They can also create a meaningful context for language that is being learned by the student.

With regard to games' benefits for EFL teachers, games can stimulate the learners' enthusiasm to win by providing them with opportunities to use language in a less formal situation, without the pressure of speaking in perfect form. They can give them a variety of tools to facilitate the teaching-learning process. They can make the lesson less monotonous, and can raise the students' motivation. They can also make students produce language subconsciously, and can stimulate their participation and give them confidence. They can transform the teacher's role from that of formal instructor to that of an organizer or/and moderator of the class. They can serve as a testing mechanism, too.

While numerous studies have examined gamed-based method's applications in various

educational contexts, limited research specifically focuses on its effectiveness in teaching speaking to English-majored students. This study, therefore, aims to fill this research gap by evaluating the implementation of gamed-based techniques in speaking instruction for second-year English-majored students at the University of Khanh Hoa. To achieve the study objectives, two primary research questions were formulated:

1. How can gamed-based method improve second-year English-majored students' speaking skills?
2. What are students' responses towards using gamed-based techniques in English speaking?

II. RESEARCH CONTENT

2.1. Review literature on game-based method and English speaking

2.1.1. *The nature of language games*

Definitions of a game can be numerous in dictionaries and reference books, but the concept is the same. One definition says that games are activities with rules, a goal, and an element of fun. Competitive games, on one part, are games where players or teams race to be the first to reach the goal. Cooperative games, on the other part, are games where players or teams work together towards a common goal.

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EFL games are fun and enjoyable activities where English is used as an instructional language. They are usually conducted with some rules to reach a goal. They help teachers to create a better teaching-learning process. Besides, they could be presented to class in different ways at the appropriate moment to create a positive atmosphere without thinking about learning. Ten groups of activities of EFL teaching can be of several types. They involve:

1. Get-acquainted activities that can be practiced for situations where students in class

do not know each other and like to introduce themselves to others.

2. Circle chat where students form two concentric circles, with the students in the inner circle facing those in the outer circle. Each student can introduce himself to the person directly in front of him. Then the teacher announces a topic that the students must discuss with their partners.

3. Story completion that is: a very enjoyable, whole-class, free-speaking activity for which students sit in a circle.

4. Interviews conducted by students on selected topics with various people.

5. Reporting before coming to class where students are asked to, in advance, read a newspaper or magazine and, in class, report to their friends the most interesting news they have found.

6. Storytelling where students can briefly summarize a fairy tale, Fable or story they heard beforehand, or create their own stories to tell their classmates.

7. Picture describing to foster students' speaking abilities using games since students can make use of pictures.

8. Role-play where students pretend they are in various social contexts and have a variety of social roles.

9. Simulations, in which students can bring items to the class to create a realistic environment.

10. Information gap where students are supposed to be working in pairs. One student will have the information that other partner does not have and the partners will share their information.

11. Find the difference: for this activity, students can work in pairs and each couple is given two different pictures. Students in pairs discuss the similarities and/or differences in the pictures.

Designers of educational games, in general and EFL ones, normally design the game with multi-interconnected levels of difficulty. The acquired or learned information forms the basis or the next problem-solving situation. In this way, students' lesson content understanding can be deepened through what is so called experiential learning. Most of these games can help learners make information-based decisions when facing

similar situations in future because their content is related to real life. Some other games are designed to promote learner-educator collaboration in order to strengthen their relationship, which is not feasible with other learning experiences.

With regard to the construction of any educational game, one can argue that for any game to be suitable for learners of all ages there should be a set of specific rules to follow. Before starting designing the game, the designer should state its type and aim. However, the teachers himself should test it to make sure that the learning objectives can be achieved. In addition, the game should allow learners enough time to guarantee very accurate results.

Another interesting point to mention is that game-based learning is, in general, a teaching method, which allows the teacher the opportunity to attract his learners' interest and make them learn and assimilate specific skills in real life situations. Nevertheless, the progress of each EFL learner will depend on his understanding of the subject matter being taught. In short, using games in classrooms make learning fun and challenging and provokes learners' engagement.

2.1.2. Literature review on game-based method and English speaking

A lot of research has been carried out to identify the effect or benefit of using games, mainly educational ones, as a teaching method in classrooms. As a result of reviewing previous studies and related literature, any interested researcher can come up with a number of studies, which strongly support the use of games. Most of these studies deal with using games method as a welcome break from the EFL classroom usual and boring routine to more enjoyable learning environment. The first productive skill that EFL learners should master to start communication with others is speaking. Ordering these studies in an ascending order can show the development of the beliefs about the benefits of using games in Teaching EFL inside classrooms.

One of the earliest studies, Leon & Cely, for instance concluded that by using games, students can gain confidence in speaking by overcoming

fear of making mistakes and perceived speaking as a natural process when they were playing. Whereas, Oradee ascertained that learners' speaking skills were significantly higher after using communicative games because games encourage interaction among students in the classroom.

Zhu also concluded that practicing speaking through participation in games helps develop sociolinguistic and discourse competence among learners in a multimodal and interactive classroom environment. Furthermore, Keshta & Al-Faleet claimed that puzzles, as one kind of games, are important in teaching speaking skills such as vocabulary achievement and retention. Besides, Mahmoud & Tanni found that using games as classroom energizers and short warm-up activities not only sustains attractiveness to learning but also brings real life learning.

Nguyen & Pham, on the other hand, concluded that via the use of games as a means of instruction, EFL teachers could encourage their learners to practice speaking in the classroom. Another study conducted by Jannah, Kuswari, Muna, & Nabilla showed that the use of games resulted in an improvement on student vocabulary mastery. Student motivation and involvement during teaching learning process also increased significantly. Most of students got high scores when translating English vocabulary. The implementation of games and other supporting fun activities succeeded in helping students to learn and understand new vocabulary. Overall, using games during teaching English was successful in improving students' vocabulary mastery.

Recent studies such as Ho, Thien, An, & Vy believed that gaming in the classroom can have a great effect on training students on how to use the language because of its ability to encourage students to interact with each other, work together and become more creative in expressing their ideas. In addition, Meiningsih & Madya showed that students' speaking skills improved after learning through the use of guessing games and the main sub-skills that improved significantly were pronunciation, vo-

cabulary, and fluency. However, Grammar and comprehension were not improved significantly.

Whilst, Saha & Singh revealed that the use of games not only provides fun to the students but also engages them in the classroom by creating contexts for speaking, which helped them to use the language in communication. Using games transformed the learners from silent listeners into speakers by developing self-confidence. Students also developed the ability to introduce themselves to each other, answer questions asked by others, provide instructions and respond to instructions. In short, they have practiced and mastered a few speech function skills. Hernandez-Chérrez, Hidalgo-Camacho, & Escobar-Llanganate, on the opposite, concluded that students consider using games in the classroom beneficial for their learning. Likewise, it was evident that communication contributed significantly to the games students' oral production, which showed an increased level of vocabulary, more accuracy and fluency, and a more relaxed interaction with their peers and their teacher, after the intervention.

Recently, Adansia & Oringo's, for example, concluded that games could enhance learners' speaking skills, which significantly became higher after using communicative games because of interaction among students in the classroom. In addition, the use of games could involve all the basic language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Games could motivate learners, promote learners' interaction, and improve learners' acquisition.

2.2. The study

*Participants

Seventy second-year English-majored students at the University of Khanh Hoa participated in this study. All participants were 19 – 20 years old and had studied English as a foreign language for at least seven years in secondary and high school education. The students were enrolled in Listening and Speaking II course, which focuses on long-turn and collaborative tasks.

*Data collection instruments, procedures

This study employed a mixed-methods

approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The research was conducted over 10 weeks, during regular Listening and Speaking II course sessions. The researcher implemented game-based method while also applying task-based method in teaching English speaking, following the curriculum outlined in the course textbook “Progressive Skills Listening & Speaking Level 2 Coursebook & Workbook” by Terry Phillips Anna Phillips Nicholas Regan (2012).

During the intervention period, students participated in some games for pre-listening stage, or post-listening stage, both IT-based and non IT-based games. Each lesson began with game-based exercises which prepares students for the topic, activates background knowledge, and introduces key vocabulary. Activities include brainstorming, predicting, and warm-ups. Then after while-listening stage, game-based exercises allow students to use the language they just learned in a more communicative or creative way. Activities include follow-up discussions, role-plays.

In this study, questionnaires, group interviews and class observations were employed to ensure triangulation and enhance research validity. A structured questionnaire containing seven questions was administered to all participants. Three questions gathered demographic information, while four questions specifically addressed students' experiences learning Listening-Speaking II course with and without game-based techniques. Questions employed Likert-scale responses and open-ended formats to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. In addition, fourteen students were randomly selected and divided into two groups of seven for semi-structured interviews. Interview questions paralleled questionnaire topics but allowed for deeper exploration of student experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding game-based implementation in speaking instruction. Class observations were conducted during all intervention sessions, focusing on student engagement, participation levels, speaking behaviors, and overall classroom dynamics. Field notes documented

observable changes in student attitudes and speaking processes throughout the study period.

Quantitative data from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with response frequencies calculated and organized into thematic categories. Dominant response patterns were identified and highlighted for cross-referencing with qualitative data sources.

Interview recordings were transcribed and coded thematically, with responses categorized according to questionnaire themes for systematic comparison. Field notes from classroom observations underwent similar thematic analysis, focusing on behavioral patterns and engagement indicators.

All three data sources were compared and contrasted to identify convergent themes and patterns, ensuring comprehensive understanding of game-based method effectiveness and student responses.

2.3. Finding and discussion

*Effectiveness of game-based method in teaching English speaking

Data analysis indicates that 90% of participants reported that their English-speaking ability showed significant improvement when the game-based method was implemented compared with traditional teaching approaches. Through activities such as group discussions, role-plays, and problem-solving games, students were provided with opportunities to practice language in meaningful and authentic contexts.

The results from the questionnaire reveal that 87,1 % of students agreed that games helped them expand their vocabulary and improve their pronunciation. Specifically, instead of relying on rote memorization, the integration of language games during the pre-listening and post-listening stages enabled students to activate their background knowledge and use newly acquired vocabulary more naturally. Classroom observation data also recorded noticeable improvements in both fluency and accuracy in extended speaking tasks and collaborative activities.

Furthermore, speaking quality assessment showed measurable improvements in the development of students' sociolinguistic and

discourse competence within a multimodal and interactive learning environment, with 84,3% of students producing conversations that maintain better focus on central ideas when applying game-based techniques. Traditional methods, which primarily emphasize grammar instruction and repetitive practice, achieved only 12,9% success in this field. The game-based approach encourages greater interaction among students, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of spoken language production. Students reported that the use of both IT-based games and traditional games created a flexible learning environment that met the diverse needs of second-year students.

*Students' responses and attitudes

Students' feedback regarding the implementation of the game-based approach was highly positive across all data collection methods. In the focus group interviews, 88,6% of students described these activities as "fun" and "enjoyable," noting that they helped them perceive speaking English as a natural process rather than an academic burden.

One of the most significant findings was the considerable reduction in speaking anxiety. Prior to the intervention, 68,6% of students reported feeling stressed and afraid of making mistakes during traditional speaking classes. However, when educational games were incorporated into the lessons, these students responded that the classroom atmosphere became more relaxed, enabling them to overcome shyness and express their opinions with greater confidence.

In addition, students' attitudes also demonstrated a positive shift in terms of learning motivation. The enthusiasm to win in competitive games encouraged students to participate more actively in the lessons and to make greater efforts to communicate in order to achieve the objectives of the games. 94,3% of students appreciated these activities because they provided a welcome break from monotonous daily learning routines, creating purposeful communicative contexts and stimulating creativity in the expression of ideas.

Overall, the findings confirm that the game-based approach not only improves

speaking skills but also fosters a proactive learning attitude, enabling second-year English-major students to better prepare for more complex communicative tasks in the future.

III. CONCLUSION

This research successfully demonstrated the effectiveness of the game-based method in enhancing the English-speaking skills of second-year English-majored students. The study provided empirical evidence that integrating educational games into the curriculum significantly improves students' oral proficiency, particularly in terms of fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation. Compared to traditional instruction, which often overemphasizes grammatical accuracy and rote memorization, the game-based approach fosters a dynamic environment that promotes spontaneous communication and meaningful interaction.

Furthermore, student responses toward this pedagogical innovation were overwhelmingly positive across all data sources. The findings indicate that the "fun and enjoyment" inherent in gaming activities helped learners overcome psychological barriers such as shyness and language anxiety. By transforming the classroom into an

engaging and low-anxiety space, the method significantly boosted students' motivation and self-confidence, encouraging them to perceive speaking English as a natural process rather than a stressful academic task.

From a pedagogical perspective, the implementation of game-based learning highlights a shift toward a learner-centered approach, where the instructor's role evolves from a formal lecturer to an organizer and moderator. This method provides a "welcome break" from monotonous routines and creates a realistic context for language practice, which is essential for developing sociolinguistic and discourse competence.

Despite these positive outcomes, certain limitations should be acknowledged, such as the sample size of 70 students and the 10-week timeframe, which may limit the generalizability of the results regarding long-term linguistic retention. Consequently, it is recommended that instructors continue to integrate diverse gaming activities including both IT-based and non-IT-based tools to further enhance student engagement and prepare them for complex real-life communication tasks.

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