

Bridging Young Learners' English Proficiency through Interactive Educational Games at SDN Ciheuleut 2, Bogor City

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ABSTRACT

This report investigates the integration of interactive educational games aimed at enhancing English language learning in elementary level. Conducted at SDN Ciheuleut 2 in Bogor City, the study focused on three games – "Shout Out Loud," "Guess the Animal," and "Stack the Blocks" – specifically designed for vocabulary and language development. Employing pre-test/post-test assessments, the study aimed to uncover their impact on student proficiency levels. The results showed an increase in students' test scores following the integration of these games, showing a 20.65% rise in overall test scores. Classroom observations also noted heightened student enthusiasm during class activities. These findings highlight the positive relationship between educational games and students' language development, establishing an engaging learning atmosphere crucial for young learners' language acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

In today's educational landscape, it is necessary to have English language proficiency. Despite its importance, young learners often face persistent challenges in acquiring proficiency. Conventional teaching methods often fall short, lacking the interactive and engaging elements needed to captivate young minds and facilitate efficient learning. These have led to difficulties in vocabulary acquisition and communicative skills. To address these challenges, integrating interactive educational games has emerged as a promising solution. Educational games not only enhance engagement but also foster a convenient environment for effective language learning. Studies suggest that they remain relevant due to their highly engaging and motivating nature, providing real-time feedback and built-in goals to motivate students (Şenel & Akman, 2016; Saputra, Septiani, Adriani, & Sundari, 2021). According to a UNICEF report, game-based learning serves as a pedagogical framework, facilitating knowledge acquisition through experiential learning (Coley-Agard, 2016).

Moreover, prior research has demonstrated the potential of interactive games in language acquisition among students (Oktavia & Lestari, 2022; Al-Karawi, 2020). These games create a safe, enjoyable, and friendly learning environment, positively impacting students' motivation and learning experience (Adiyana, Dewi, & Wiguna, 2018; Sari & Lestaria, 2023; Ningsih, 2023). Collectively, these findings suggest that interactive games offer a promising approach to language development, aligning with the premise of the present study. However, challenges, such as technology constraints, have been identified in the implementation of game-based English language learning (Wulantari, Rachman, Sari, Uktolseja, & Rofi'i, 2023; Nazaruddin, Irwan, Soepriyanti, & Nuriadi, 2019). Therefore, this study attempted to provide an alternative by taking a non-tech approach in providing accessible interactive educational games for elementary school students. By conducting community service, this study aimed to report the classroom actions that facilitate elementary students in their quest for English language proficiency. In addition, it also seeks to guide those interested in undertaking similar projects, providing a practical alternative to conventional language teaching methods.

IMPLEMENTATION AND METHODS

The community service aimed to enhance English language proficiency among elementary school students at SDN Ciheuleut 2 in Bogor City. It involved lecturers and students from the College of Vocational School, IPB University. There were two meetings held on 10 November and 25 November, 2023, targeting elementary school students as participants. The main objective of these meetings was to implement a set of interactive educational games—namely, "Shout Out Loud," "Guess the Animal," and "Stack the Blocks"—designed to facilitate language development. These sessions took place within a classroom setting and the school field, employing hand-crafted colorful props tailored specifically for each game to engage the students.

The details of the games and the participants and are provided in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Table 1 displays the objective, materials, and steps taken in each game. Table 2 illustrates the demographics of the participants, showing the total number of students, their grade levels, and their gender distribution during both meetings.

Table 1. Objectives, Materials, and Procedures of the Interactive Games

Game	Shout Out Loud	Guess the Animal	Stack the Blocks
Objective	To improve vocabulary and speaking skills.	To introduce new words and reinforce vocabulary retention	To enhance listening skills and teamwork.
Materials	wooden boards, sticks representing letters, colored paint, glue, and a spinning mechanism.	a banner with animal images, 18 animal clue cards, and classroom tables.	sets of carpet blocks with alphabet characters.
Procedure	Participants take turns spinning the wheel. When a letter appears, they vocalize a word in beginning with that letter.	With limited time, teams arrange the animal clue cards atop corresponding animal images on the banner.	Teams engage in a competition to arrange blocks to form words related to pre-test vocabulary.

Table 2. Participants

Meeting	Total	Grade	Gender
1	66 students	4 th	32 Male 29
		5 th	34 Female 37
2	63 students	4 th	33 Male 21
		5 th	30 Female 42

Following the implementation of these activities, both pre-tests and post-tests were conducted to assess the students' language proficiency. In the first session, students underwent a written assessment consisting of comprehension questions and written responses. The second session involved a listening exercise where students, guided by the examiner, listened to a song and were instructed to comprehend its content in a single playback. Post-listening, they were prompted to articulate specific lyrics from the song. The final session evaluated students' verbal proficiency through oral questioning.

Upon completion of the assessment, students who finished the test were allowed to leave and were given a snack as a token of appreciation for their participation. Initially, 66 students participated in the pre-test, and 63 students completed the subsequent post-test. However, upon analysis, it was found that only 28 students participated in both the pre-test and post-test. To ensure accuracy and consistency in the data, the subsequent findings primarily focus on these 28 students. Their involvement in both sessions allows for a more precise evaluation and comparison of their individual progress.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementing Interactive Educational English Learning Games

The implementation of interactive educational games, 'Shout Out Loud,' 'Guess the Animal,' and 'Stack the Blocks,' was conducted SDN Ciheuleut 2, Bogor City. Observations during the game sessions indicated an encouraging level of engagement and interaction among the participating students. The games fostered collaborative efforts, evidenced by active participation and teamwork among the students. These observations indicate these interactive activities stimulated engagement and promoted cooperative learning.



Picture 1. "Shout out Loud" Interactive Game

The interactive game 'Shout Out Loud' served as a catalyst for active participation among students, fostering spontaneous vocabulary recall and speaking exercises. The competitive nature of the game also increased student interest and motivation. Moreover, the game imposed a rule against repeating previously used words within the same group, encouraging vocabulary expansion. Furthermore, it contributed to the refinement of spelling skills through accurate word formations. Despite the evident enthusiasm, students also expressed a desire for extended game durations owing to their enjoyment.



Picture 2. "Guess the Animals" Interactive Game

During the game 'Guess the Animal,' students demonstrated enhanced proficiency in associating descriptive clues with respective animals, resulting in improved vocabulary retention. Participants displayed focus and engagement throughout the game. Using visual cues, the game augmented memory retention among the students, facilitating their understanding of animal-related terms in English. The game's thematic approach not only stimulated interest but also deepened students' comprehension of animal-related vocabulary. Moreover, the accuracy of these associations determined the success of the teams, actively promoting focus and knowledge acquisition, thereby facilitating a thematic exploration of animals.

During the game 'Stack the Blocks,' students showcased their listening skills and teamwork while actively engaging in collaborative exercises to assemble words using alphabet blocks. Increased participation and active listening were evident as students cooperated during the game. 'Stack the Blocks' contributed to the promotion of listening skills and teamwork among the participants. Its reliance on verbal instructions facilitated listening comprehension and vocabulary recall among the students. Throughout the activity, the formation of correct words earned points, fostering a competitive element that emphasized the importance of active listening and swift vocabulary recall. The game's design focused on rewarding accuracy, encouraging students to actively engage in attentive listening and prompt recall of vocabulary.



Picture 3. "Stack the Blocks" Interactive Game

Implementing pretest and post-test sessions

Furthermore, the pre-test and post-test assessments revealed insights into the effect of these educational games on the students' language proficiency levels. The pre-test demonstrated varying initial proficiency levels among the participants, indicating diverse starting points in language acquisition. Meanwhile, the post-test results unveiled improvements across the majority of the students, reflecting the effectiveness of the implemented activities. in enhancing language skills. The results of pretest and post-test can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Pretest and Post-test

Grade	Number of Student	Pretest Average Score	Post-Test Average Score
4 th	9	53	64
5 th	19	62	75.4
Overall	28	59.5	71.8

The overall average pretest score was 59.5, while the average post-test scores significantly increased to 71.8. This indicates a difference between the pretest and post-test scores, with an average score improvement of 12.29. In percentage terms, this improvement represents a 20.65% increase in scores from the pretest to the post-test. This substantial rise demonstrates a positive impact and improvement in performance following the treatment implemented between the pretest and post-test assessments.

Among the 28 students, 22 individuals demonstrated enhanced scores following the treatment. This positive change indicates an improvement in their performance compared to their pre-treatment scores. However, it's noteworthy that six students experienced a decline in their scores post-treatment, marked by negative percentage changes. This observation indicates that despite the treatment, some students still faced challenges that impacted their performance negatively. Moreover, the range of percentage improvements is quite diverse among the students. While some students exhibited substantial increases up to 105% and 113%, while others showed more modest improvements, such as 2% or 4%. This variance in improvement rates could reflect the individual learning pace, comprehension levels, or the effectiveness of the treatment methods for different students. Overall, the diverse score changes highlight the varied responses and outcomes among the students following the treatment.

In addition, this study supports the findings of other prior studies highlighting that educational games have emerged as effective strategies (Saleh & Althaqafi, 2022; Silalahi, 2019; Fidyaningrum, Dewayanti, & Authar, 2021). Similar to the finding of this study, another study developed an interactive animal picture game that notably improved animal-related vocabulary among young learners (Hidayat, et al., 2022). This study also confirms the statement that that interactive educational games enhance student learning outcomes (Suri, Novriana, & Susanti, 2022), particularly in vocabulary development (Ningsih, 2023).

As another research also underscores the suitability of games as alternative learning media for young learners, emphasizing their enthusiasm and active involvement (Sari & Lestaria, 2023), this study demonstrates the benefits of interactive games to the group of elementary students. This is also echoed by the UNICEF report, which highlights the facilitative aspects of game-based learning, fostering active student involvement, social interaction, and decision-making (Coley-Agard, 2016). In line with these findings, this study reinforces the positive impact of integrating interactive educational games into English language learning for elementary school students, promoting engagement, active learning, vocabulary development, and overall language proficiency. In a realm increasingly characterized by digital dominance, this study's exploration of alternative, non-tech approaches underscore their accessibility, inclusivity, and potential cognitive benefits. This study bridges the gap between prevailing tech-driven trends and the timeless efficacy of interactive, non-tech educational methods for language development.

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To sum up, the community service conducted at SDN Ciheuleut 2, Bogor City, highlights the impact of integrating interactive educational games on enhancing English language acquisition among elementary school students. The first game, *Shout Out Loud* effectively promoted vocabulary enhancement and speaking skills. The game's competitive nature spurred students' interest and motivation, fostering an interactive learning environment conducive to language acquisition. These findings highlight the game's potential to enrich vocabulary and spelling competencies among students, indicating its positive influence on test comprehension and accurate word usage. The second game, *Guess the Animal* succeeded in reinforcing vocabulary and thematic learning, leveraging visual cues to augment memory retention. Its thematic approach stimulated interest and deepened students' understanding of animal-related terms in English. The third game, *Stack the Blocks* proved effective in promoting listening skills and teamwork. The activity's interactive nature and reliance on verbal instructions contributed to improved listening comprehension and vocabulary recall.

Moreover, the results indicate a remarkable 20.65% improvement in test score and affirm the effectiveness of these engaging tools in fostering language proficiency. The observed enthusiasm among students further emphasizes the positive reception and engagement these games offer. Moving forward, it is recommended to continue implementing such interactive educational games in language learning to facilitate language acquisition at the elementary level. Additionally, further research and continuous assessment of various game-based learning modules could broaden the understanding of their impact and aid in refining pedagogical approaches for language education.

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