

**THE USE OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE GAMES AND ITS IMPACT IN
EFL-SPEAKING CLASSROOM IN TERTIARY LEVEL**

Purwanti Taman

Pamulang University
dosen00771@unpam.ac.id

ABSTRACT

There has still been speaking apprehension for Indonesian students studying English, even though they are already in the university level. This case study is aimed to explore the students' perception towards the use of Communicative Language Games and its impact on teaching speaking skill especially for university students. It was conducted in Pamulang University – South Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia. The procedures were planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. It was executed into two cycles which each consisted of seven meetings with group interview, direct observation, questionnaire, and group presentation. The results showed that the use of Communicative Language Games in teaching speaking is not only beneficial, but also giving a positive impact towards the students learning attitude. They became more enthusiastic and motivated. The games have encouraged them to be more active, confident, and fluent, and more importantly reduced the feeling of hesitation and burden, which eventually created an enjoyable learning environment.

Keywords: *Communicative language games, Enjoyable Learning, Students' Perception, and Teaching speaking*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the basic skills to master for EFL/ESL students due to its significance for communication. It is undeniable that English is the most commonly accepted language in the world that it will be very beneficial for them improve their knowledge, skills, and also to get a job (Dewi, Kultsum & Armadi, 2016). However, many EFL/ESL students feel stress and anxious in learning the language that it may impede their language performance abilities in their speaking classrooms. A study conducted by Tanveer (2007) stated that there may be some cultural reasons behind the anxiety reactions of some learners. In Indonesia for example, those cultural reasons might have been inherited from previous learning style:

judgment of teacher or friends, feeling afraid of making mistakes, and being ridiculed in front of their classmates. Many of them respond in short phrases because they may not feel confident or too shy to speak it out. They also, sometimes, giggled when did not know how to express their thoughts appropriately. These anxiety-related factors worsen when students aim to achieve native-like pronunciation and to use higher level of vocabulary to express their thoughts.

The reason why a foreign language classroom is a highly anxiety-evoking place believed to be evaluative nature; evaluation by the teachers, peers, and by learners' high expectations and beliefs about foreign language learning. The feelings of anxiety become more threatening when the language instructors' manner of error correction is rigid and humiliating and when they consider language class a performance rather than a learning place. Anxiety has also been found to be exacerbated by students' feeling of low proficiency or lack of confidence in general linguistic knowledge, the evidence of which students do not want to display. The subjects expressed many problems and difficulties in learning English language like grammar, pronunciation, English word-class system, modal verbs etc., which were commonly thought to impede the fluency of the ESL/EFL learners and hence, were perceived to be major obstacles in achieving the desired performance goals in English language.

A major cause of facing these target language difficulties was found to be the lack of sufficient input and chances of practicing speaking skill (out put) in the social contexts where English is not used as a mother language. Many times students reported that they know certain vocabulary items and sentence structures but they do not come out right when needed in any communicative situation. From psycholinguistic perspective, it can be seen that when learners' cognitive processes of using a language (speaking) are not regularized due to lack of practice either in the classroom or in the society, these difficulties are likely to continue causing trouble for the English learners. In addition to these psycholinguistic factors, some cultural aspects of English language learning can also contribute to language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners. In their interaction with the English-speaking interlocutors, the learners may have a good command of linguistic knowledge (patterns of language, grammar, vocabulary, etc.) but may feel apprehensive to use it because they are not sure of the cultural rules.

The use of communicative language games in learning and teaching speaking is sometimes considered time consuming and swaying away the learning and teaching goals. However, many studies believe that Communicative Language Games activity is beneficial for students in assisting their language development. The students become more confident in

speaking in English because they go through direct practice instead of theory. A study mentioned that Language Games activity enabled students from different levels of proficiency to work and learn together and allowed them to participate in group discussions and contribute towards accomplishing their tasks as a team (Masrom & Yusof, 2013). This also allowed students who were from the lower language proficiency to learn at their own pace. Communicative Language games are supposed to be one of the solutions in breaking the wall of anxiety. Knowing the impact of the games toward teaching would enable teachers in ESL/EFL classroom to help reduce the anxiety experienced by the students. This study is supposed to uncover the benefits of using language games in speaking classroom, note some factors that need improvement, and highlight some techniques in delivering the games.

Communicative Language games are believed to be an effective way to improve students' social skills along with language skills, as highlighted by Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2006). They further mentioned that games can be applied for practicing skills in all the stages of the teaching and learning and for many types of communication. Playing language games allow the students to practice their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in a more relaxing way. Games also enable teachers to help learners go beyond the mastery of structures, to the point where they can use the language to communicate meaning in real situations. Language games develop students communicative ability in that it is a dynamic process of communication in which students as thinking beings, emotional beings, and communicators instead of knowledge receptacles, try to get their ideas, concepts, thoughts, emotions and feelings expressed, based on their life experiences, Shu-yun Yu (2005). Games as teaching – learning strategies create fun and a nonthreatening learning environment, enhances communication and teamwork, encourages active participation and enables students to demonstrate and apply previously or newly acquired language skills in a real context, Tanveer, M (2007). Language games help motivate students towards cooperating and consulting to win against the other group without any fear of being punished by the teacher, even for weak and shy students, Taheri Marzieh (2014). Furthermore, games can be used at any stage in a lesson: at the beginning to diagnose what the students can or cannot do; during the lesson for language practice purposes; or at the end as reinforcement and reward. Language games encourage the students to express their ideas for certain purpose and also collaborate with each other while actively participating in any game which creates a real life context to use language, Tanveer, M (2007).

This case study research is aimed to discuss in details of the students' perception in having communicative games in their speaking classroom. This qualitative research uses triangulation method in order to achieve data validity in a form of narrative description. The

focus is on the practical significance of findings, which usually disseminated through brief reports or presentations to local administrators, rather than statistical or theoretical significance. The participants are second semester of university students, consisting of 30 students both females and males, studying in English Department in Pamulang University - South Tangerang. The study was in seven weeks length for a cycle, and it consisted of two cycle – before and after Mid-Term Test. The procedures were planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The study was executed in to 14 weeks cycle or a semester in academic calendar of the university. The data was obtained by group interview, direct observation, questionnaires, and group presentation.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Many studies researching on the students' perceptions stated that the Language Games activity is found beneficial for the students in learning the target language. The students' become more confident in speaking English towards the end of the semester. The activity also enabled students from different levels of proficiency to work and learn together. It provided the environment for these respondents to participate in group discussions and contribute towards accomplishing their tasks as a team. Students who were from the lower language proficiency were able to learn at their own pace. Masrom & Yusof (2013). This innovative method of learning and teaching is important especially for classes which have learners from different levels of proficiency.

They can still learn together in the same class but those students who are better in their command of the language can learn faster while those who are weaker learn at a slower pace. Besides that, the interaction between the teachers and the students will create a strong rapport which will facilitate more learning to take place. The learning environment is not stressful as the students work together in groups, determining for themselves how much to learn at one time. Many studies relating to Language Games yielded positive results. One study stated that Language games as means of instruction has helped improve the students' achievement and results of their speaking skill provided that they enjoyed their lesson and got more motivation, interest and confidence in learning, Dewi , Kultsum & Armadi (2016). Another study mentioned that using language games has very significant effect in vocabulary retention and recall of the participants Taheri, Marzieh. (2014).

Interview Results

The individual interview which was conducted at the end of the first cycle showed that

almost everybody of the participants enjoyed the language games adoption in their speaking lesson because they could avoid being paid attention by the whole class members while still had chance to practice speaking during the lesson. Working in pair with classmate enabled them to express their idea easier without worrying to receive negative judgment. The group interview was also conducted, which took place in the end of the second cycle after the final assignment, group presentation. Speaking in front of the class alone, according to them, has caused stronger nervousness, while speaking in front of the class in group has allowed them to share the anxiety among the members of the group. Small group work, mingling with small group members, has also strengthen their confidence in expressing their idea further, and allowed them to alter using new vocabulary according to the topic discussion. This allowed them not only to build their fluency but also strengthening their lexical resources and reducing their nervousness.

Direct Observtion Results

Direct observation was done from the beginning until the end of the study. At the beginning of the research, those second semester students were hesitated, quiet, and had minimum response during the session. Only view students who might have gained some confidence did reply/respond the instructions /questions. The observation highlighted that up to the end of the first cycle, there has been tremendous improvement in form of students respond/reply toward instructions and questions.

Questionnaire Result

Table 1

The Students' Perception about the Learning Value of Using Games in Language Learning

No	Statement	Agree	Disagree
1	I think that games are both fun and full of learning value.	86.67%	13.33%
5	I think that games a special role in a foreign language teaching programme.	93.33%	6.67%
9	I think that games present many opportunities to students to show their skills not only in fluency but also in many language areas.	100%	0%
13	I think games can only be used for fun and breaking down boredom.	46.67%	53.55%

As it can be seen on the table 1, the vast majority of the students perceive positivity in using games in the class while they are learning. More than half of the students also think that games are not only for fun and breaking down boredom but also for core learning method

which can be applied at anytime.

Table 2

The students' Attitude towards the Use of Games in Learning Speaking as a Form of Instruction

No	Statement	Agree	Disagree
2	I think I cannot measure my own speaking ability when I am involved in games	36.67%	63.33%
6	I believe that using games to learn speaking may distract my attention during the instruction.	43.33%	56.67%
8	I believe that using games in my speaking class can be time-consuming	40%	60%
10	I feel unclear when my teacher does not give the exact rule for every speaking subject.	80%	20%
12	I think my teacher uses appropriate games for every aspect of speaking.	86.67%	13.33%

Table 2 gives information about a number of students, more than half, who think positively that they are able to control themselves in terms of measuring own ability, keeping themselves focus, and not to consume longer time. However, the vast majority of the students think that games could cause them unclear instruction, even though their teacher have chosen the appropriate one to use. This highlighted that a teacher needs to ensure that their goal in delivering certain message should not be impeded by the fun of the games.

Table 3

Students' Perception about the effectiveness of Using Games in Learning Speaking for University Students

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
3	I believe that using games can lower my anxiety towards speaking learning	93.33%	6.67%
4	I believe that games are not very effective in speaking learning	23.33%	76.67%
7	I believe that communicative games encourage, entertain, teach and promote fluency	40%	60%
11	I believe that communicative games are highly motivating and entertaining especially for weak and shy students.	86.67%	13.33%
14	I believe that by playing a game, I am not concerned about focusing on the structures, but learn them unconsciously	86.67%	13.33%

Table 3 demonstrate the efficiency of adopting games in learning speaking for university students. The significant number of students has confidence that communicative games lower their uneasiness, allow them not too focus in grammar when speaking, and encourage those who are hesitant and lack in skill. Still more than half of the participants convince themselves that games are effective method for learning speaking, even though supported by lower belief of promoting fluency.

Table 4

The frequency of Using Games for Teaching/Learning Speaking

No.	Statement	Agree	Disagree
15	I expect to have games in my speaking class as much as possible	63.33%	36.67%

Table 4 enumerates that more than 63 percents of the participants enjoy and expect to have games in their speaking lesson. This shows that games are enjoyable tools in teaching and learning speaking not only for younger group of students but also those who are in university level.

Group Presentation Result

There was only one session of group assignment which was conducted at the very end of the second cycle. The presentation cannot be compared with any other performance in the study, but in terms of anxiety, alertness, and comfort in speaking could be seen that it was improving significantly. They no longer giggling when speaking and forgot or did not have sufficiency vocabulary items in expressing their thought. Instead, they would paraphrase or respectfully asked their lecturer the English terms of their ideas. In addition, they were also able to explain in a clearer way of what being discussed or decided in their group work.

CONCLUSION

There is limited number of research, particularly which included the drawback of language games, but numerous of them stated positive results. I personally think that language games may need more time span and greater preparation for the lecturers, but it contributed significant support of students' speaking progress, namely improving fluency, adding vocabulary item, putting grammar knowledge into practice, and especially reducing nervousness among the participants.

The games, however, should vary from time to time, which promote initiative and challenge to conduct the class better, and eventually to support their students in achieving better goals. The adoption of Communicative language games for tertiary level of students

does not mean spending unnecessary time but, to some extent, building a fundamental need of the students – to feel secure in expressing their thoughts. This would eventually enable them to start speaking English not only in the class room but also in their comfortable-ring of friends and family in their daily life. This possibility would allow them to develop greater language ability in general.

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