
**THE IMPACT OF VIDEO GAMES TOWARD STUDENTS'
SPEAKING ABILITY****Agung Muhammad^{1*}, Yuli Herman², Riyeen Permata³**¹ Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin
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Email: riyeenpermata@ummy.ac.id**ABSTRACT**

In Indonesia, many students still face challenges in developing their English-speaking skills due to limited practice opportunities and a strong focus on written exams. However, some students have shown strong speaking abilities without attending extra English lessons. This study explores the possible link between video game playing and speaking skill improvement in such cases. While informal language learning through digital media has been recognized, the specific impact of video gaming on speaking abilities—especially in the Indonesian junior high school context—remains underexplored. This descriptive qualitative study involved 30 eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Kota Solok in the 2023/2024 academic year who regularly played video games and demonstrated above-average speaking skills based on school performance and teacher evaluation. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observation, and students' report card analysis, then analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common patterns and insights. The results show that online multiplayer games such as Mobile Legends, Free Fire, and Roblox helped students improve fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary through frequent English communication with other players. These findings suggest that video games can be a valuable source of speaking practice, and they highlight the potential for educators and policymakers to consider integrating digital media as a complementary tool in language learning.

Keywords: *Students' speaking ability, video games*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory subject starting from junior high school, in line with the national curriculum. Despite this, the development of speaking skills among students remains a persistent challenge. Most English teaching in schools still focuses heavily on grammar, vocabulary memorization, and reading comprehension, with limited emphasis on

communicative competence (Sulistyo, 2009). According to the EF English Proficiency Index (2023), Indonesia ranks in the low proficiency category, with many students struggling to use English confidently in real-life situations. This highlights a major gap between formal instruction and actual speaking ability. Limited classroom time, lack of authentic interaction, and minimal speaking practice outside of school are often cited as contributing factors to the problem.

In recent years, researchers have begun to explore the potential of digital games to support language learning. Video games—especially those that require online communication and collaboration—offer informal yet immersive environments where English is used in context. Postic (2018) found that interactive video games can help learners acquire vocabulary and improve pronunciation through repeated exposure, audio-visual input, and player engagement. Similarly, Ningtyas (2019) emphasized that video games can increase students' motivation and involvement in language learning by integrating familiar and enjoyable media. These studies are supported by the input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), which suggests that learners acquire language best through meaningful exposure to comprehensible input, and by the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), which highlights the role of social interaction in language development. However, most existing studies focus on vocabulary learning or general language motivation, rather than directly examining spoken fluency or real-time interaction through games.

Moreover, prior research largely concentrates on university or senior high school students, leaving younger learners underrepresented. There is limited research on how casual gaming habits influence speaking skills in junior high school contexts, particularly in Indonesia. While some studies have acknowledged the language exposure provided by video games, few have systematically examined how it may contribute to actual speaking performance among younger learners. This gap suggests a need for further research that connects informal digital practices—like video gaming—with students' oral proficiency, especially in early adolescence.

This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Kota Solok during the 2023/2024 academic year. The school follows the national curriculum that includes English as a required subject. Before this research was designed, the researcher observed that certain eighth-grade students showed stronger English-speaking abilities than their peers. These students could engage in simple conversations, respond to basic questions, and pronounce words clearly, even though they had no record of private English tutoring. Through follow-up observation and informal

discussions, it was discovered that many of these students regularly played video games, particularly multiplayer games that involve real-time communication in English. This raised an important question: could video game exposure be contributing to their speaking ability?

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of video games on the English-speaking abilities of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Kota Solok. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: (1) Do video games influence students' English-speaking skills? (2) What types of video games contribute to speaking improvement? (3) How do students perceive the role of video games in their speaking development? This research aims to contribute to the growing field of informal language learning by providing insights from a junior high school context in Indonesia. The findings may help educators and policymakers consider how digital tools, including video games, can support speaking practice and language learning beyond the classroom.

METHOD

Research Design

This research employed a descriptive qualitative case study design to explore how video games influence the English-speaking abilities of junior high school students. A qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of students' personal experiences, perceptions, and language practices related to video games. The case study design enabled a focused investigation within a specific educational context—eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Kota Solok—allowing the researcher to examine how informal digital activities such as gaming contribute to speaking skill development in real-life learning environments.

Subject of Research

The participants consisted of 30 eighth-grade students selected from a total population of 368 students at SMP Negeri 2 Kota Solok during the 2023/2024 academic year. The school has 11 classes named after Indonesian national figures. Using a criterion-based purposive sampling technique, the researcher selected students who (1) had played video games regularly for at least two months and (2) showed functional English-speaking ability based on informal observation and teacher input. Participants were drawn from 9 of the 11 classes, specifically: Bagindo Aziz Chan, K.H Agus Salim, Soetan Syahrir, M. Syafei, R.A Kartini, Rahma Elyunus, Rasuna Said, Siti Manggopoh, and Syafruddin Prawiranegara.

The sample size of 30 students was considered appropriate for qualitative study, as it allowed for meaningful, detailed analysis while also achieving data saturation—the point at which no new themes were emerging. The purposive sampling was used to ensure participants were relevant to the study’s focus.

Research Instrument

The primary instrument used for data collection was a semi-structured interview protocol, developed by the researcher and aligned with the three research indicators:

1. Whether video games helped students’ speaking ability
2. How video games supported learning to speak
3. What types of video games contributed the most

The interview questions were self-developed and underwent expert validation by five lecturers in English education to ensure alignment with the research objectives and appropriateness for the participants’ age and language level. A pilot test was conducted with several students outside the main sample to assess the clarity and relevance of the questions. Feedback from the pilot and experts was used to revise and finalize the instrument. A complete list of indicators and guiding questions is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Interview questions and indicator

No	Indicators	Questions
1	Whether video game helped student in their speaking ability	1. What helped you learn speaking ability?
		2. Do you think your speaking ability increases after playing video games?
2	How video game help student in learning speaking skill	1. How did video games help you learn speaking
		2. Does playing online help you practice speaking English?
		3. How do you think video games help you practice English outside of school?
		4. How often do you play video game?
3	The game and their type that help students learn speaking	1. What are the games you played?
		2. What game do you think helped you the most in your speaking ability
		3. Why do you think that game helped you the most on learning speaking ability?

Techniques of Data Collection

Data were collected through individual, open-ended interviews conducted in English. The interviews took place on school grounds during non-instructional times. Each session lasted approximately 3 to 5 minutes, allowing the researcher to assess students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and coherence while responding to the questions. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

In addition to interviews, the researcher also conducted classroom observations, focusing on students' participation in speaking activities. Furthermore, document analysis was carried out using the students' English report cards to support their speaking proficiency levels as evaluated by the school. This multi-method approach provided a more complete understanding of the students' language development.

Technique of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (2014) flow model, which includes three phases:

- Data reduction: Interview transcripts were read closely, and relevant excerpts were selected based on their connection to the three research indicators.
- Data display: Selected responses were organized into thematic categories and presented narratively for clarity.
- Conclusion drawing: Patterns and relationships across the students' responses were identified, allowing the researcher to answer the research questions based on recurring themes.

The analysis used inductive thematic coding, where codes were generated from the data rather than pre-defined categories. Coding was done manually, and recurring patterns were grouped into broader themes that matched the research focus—namely, the impact of video games, how games help, and which types of games are most effective.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, several strategies were implemented:

- Triangulation: Data from interviews, classroom observations, and report card analyses were compared to strengthen the validity of findings.
- Expert validation: Interview questions were reviewed and refined by five English education lecturers.

- Pilot testing: Preliminary interviews were conducted to ensure the clarity and effectiveness of the instrument.
- Peer debriefing: The researcher discussed coding and emerging themes with academic supervisors to minimize personal bias.
- Member checking: Participants were asked to review the researcher's interpretation of their responses to confirm accuracy and avoid misrepresentation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

After analyzing the interview answers, the researcher collected a range of responses from each student, which served as a reference point for evaluating and analyzing the impact of video game on students' education and their performance in speaking ability, as the interview was conducted in English to check students' speaking ability as well.

Students' Speaking Ability

In order to prove that these students were capable in speaking English, their speaking ability were also measured while they answer the question of interview. As the interview was conducted fully in English, researcher was able to check the students' fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and coherence in their speech.

Overall, students demonstrated solid progress in their speaking skills, with frequent gaming exposure contributing positively to fluency, vocabulary, and coherence. Those engaged in real-time multiplayer games like *Mobile Legends* and *Roblox* exhibited higher fluency, smoother pronunciation, and better sentence structure due to the necessity of quick communication. Vocabulary growth was notable across the board, with games offering opportunities to learn new words and phrases. While most students' grammar was correct but simple, their coherence was generally strong, with logical and clear responses. Pronunciation improved most for students using voice communication, though those relying on text-based games and movie dialogues still benefited from regular exposure to English.

Impact of video game toward students' speaking ability

Whether video game help students in their speaking skill

The students that played role playing games like Hogwarts Legacy, Genshin and such said that they improved their speaking ability by the narrative and in game speech. The voice over with the context helped students understand and learn how to speak by listening. The good story telling, and fun mechanics are also what kept students interested. There were also dialogue options in this kind of game that made students choose the best dialogue appropriate to the question given in game. This could also help students learn more from video games. The students that played online team matchmaking agreed that communicating with their teammate helped them learn to speak and communicate, as gamers in Indonesia most likely played in the SEA server, they met with other SEA Country players such as Filipinos, Malaysians, and others.

How video game help students in learning speaking skill

Most of the students agreed that they could practice speaking English with video games. The students were not allowed to bring phone in SMP N 2 Kota Solok unless instructed by teacher, also they are not allowed to play game at school if they are instructed to bring phone. So, they could only play outside school hours. In conclusion, yes, video games helped students practice speaking outside school hours.

How video game help students in learning speaking skill

Through multiple games were mentioned by students, the type of video game that stands out the most helped students in their speaking ability was the online video game. Although researchers argue that role playing game helped better because the amount of voice and narrative available, apparently, it was not the case in this research. The most dominant game that shows up in this research was Roblox. The leading factor of this is that these kinds of games provide opportunity to communicate in English, whereas other type of games students learn the English available on the game and use it on school, homework or project, but online games are instant practice.

Discussion

The correlation between the theory, relevant studies, and findings underscores the pivotal role video games play in improving English-speaking abilities for EFL learners. The theory suggested that video games immerse learners in authentic language environments,

which engage them through visual, textual, and auditory elements, thereby supporting linguistic skill development (Toufik & Hanane, 2021). This is reflected in the findings, where students reported significant improvements in their English-speaking skills, particularly fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary, after playing games that require frequent verbal communication in English, such as Mobile Legends and Roblox. These findings aligned with Ningtyas and Suganda's (2020) study, which highlights that video games can motivate learners, pushing them to practice more often and helping to improve their speaking skills through engaging and immersive experiences.

Fenny Yutika Sali's (2022) study, which concluded that video games positively impact multiple language skills, also reinforces the discussion's point that games with voice communication, such as Roblox, had the most direct effect on speaking ability. Students in the discussion highlighted that the need to communicate in real-time with other players helped improve their pronunciation and fluency. The fast-paced nature of these games forces learners to respond quickly, replicating real-world speaking situations, which supports Sali's findings that video games enhance learners' speaking abilities through frequent verbal practice.

The findings also demonstrate that even single-player games, such as Hogwarts Legacy and Genshin Impact, contribute to speaking improvement through immersion in English dialogue and narratives, in turn helped them absorb new vocabulary that could be applied in spoken contexts. Although these games may not require direct communication with others, they exposed players to rich spoken content, which enhanced their speaking proficiency over time. This resonates with Fadli Amin's (2022) study on the role of video games in improving comprehension, as the language used in these games provides learners with models of how to use words and phrases in spoken English.

In conclusion, the theory, relevant studies, and findings all converge on the understanding that video games, especially those that promote interaction and verbal communication, significantly enhanced English-speaking abilities. Multiplayer games, in particular, provided the most immediate and practical opportunities for learners to practice speaking, while single-player games still contribute to overall language development by exposing players to English dialogue and vocabulary that could be used in spoken form. This demonstrates that video games can serve as a powerful tool in improving EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the analysis of presented data, researcher concludes that video games do have positive impact on students' speaking ability, answering the first question of the research. The second question is what video game and the type that helped students increase their speaking ability is the online video game that allows matchmaking on global server. This gives the students the opportunity to learn and practice their speaking ability in the game. Researcher suggested that it is necessary first to also check the impact of students' study overall before suggesting students to use video game as a media to learn speaking outside of school, or even implementing them to actual classroom study. Because video games are somewhat controversial as a media to study, it is proven in this research, and researches before that it can help students in their English study, in this research specifically the speaking category. Researcher believe that should some video games be recommended to students, it should be under parental supervision to set reasonable limits in gaming and to balance other academic responsibilities. Researcher also suggest doing another research regarding the way to improve speaking studies by adding some gaming elements, so that learning can be engaging, challenging and also fun to boost students motivation and skill altogether.

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