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Strategies Used by English Teachers through Gamification at Secondary School: Strategi yang Digunakan oleh Guru Bahasa Inggris melalui Gamifikasi di Sekolah Menengah

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Abstract

This study explores the strategies employed by an English teacher in conducting speaking activities in a secondary school setting. Using a qualitative research method, the research aims to understand the teaching approaches and techniques used by the teacher to enhance students' effective speaking skills. Data was collected through classroom observations and in-depth interviews with the teacher, focusing on the implementation of various speaking activities designed to enhance student participation and communication. The research examines how teachers create an interactive and engaging learning environment that encourages students to speak English. The research provides insight into the practical application of speaking strategies in the classroom. It contributes to the wider field of language teaching and the development of speaking skills in secondary education.

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Introduction

Strategies in teaching speaking skills are pivotal in fostering students' oral proficiency in English, particularly at the secondary school level. Effective approaches ensure that students are not only able to communicate fluently but also confidently in a variety of contexts. The main problem in teaching speaking skills to students is often related to the effectiveness of the strategies teachers apply. Speaking skills are one of the critical aspects of language acquisition that require students to have good communication skills, both in formal and informal contexts. Research shows that when teaching speaking skills in secondary schools, teachers often face challenges such as low student motivation and a lack of active student participation during the teaching-learning process [1]. In addition, underlined that appropriate strategies are needed to overcome these obstacles and improve students' speaking skills, emphasising the importance of using student-centred techniques, such as group discussions and role plays [2]. Also, it adds the perspective that in some cultural contexts, such as in Saudi schools in Kuala Lumpur, teachers must overcome linguistic and cultural barriers to create a learning environment that supports students' speaking skills [3].

Every teacher has their own learning strategies in teaching their students. The teacher wants students to succeed in their studies. It is submitted that the more creative and interesting the activities, the more students will be interested in. Therefore, it is recommended that effective teaching strategies for public speaking be employed in order to enhance students' ability to improve their public speaking skills [4]. Learning strategies are commonly defined as the operations or processes which are consciously (or unconsciously) selected and employed by the learner to learn the target language or facilitate a language task [5]. Then, it is encouraging to observe learners taking the initiative to speak, which suggests they are enthusiastic about the subject matter and eager to contribute something unique to the discussion. Their motivation may also stem from a desire to assist the group in achieving a work goal. In this study, researchers was only focused on learning strategies, since research on strategies for teaching speaking skills [6]. Thus, it is our sincere hope that the result of this study was prove useful as a reference point for further research into the use of language learning strategies.

The language used is commendable, demonstrating a grasp of grammatical correctness, relevance, and ease of intercommunication. Learners' utterances are generally appropriate in terms of these aspects. Students' speaking skills can be improved by providing interactive activities during teaching and process by giving them project-based assignments, so they can collaborate with other students and share their ideas. As discussed in various studies, teaching strategies are key to improving students' speaking skills in secondary schools. emphasised the use of podcasts as an effective tool in enhancing students' speaking skills, mentioning that this medium helps students to listen to authentic conversations and practice independently in a more relaxed environment [7]. This is relevant to the findings that using technology in learning can provide a more interactive learning experience and stimulate student interest [1]. It is crucial for teachers to understand and master higher-order thinking skills so that they can guide students to employ the knowledge and skills acquired to be able to find new ways and means to solve their daily problems and make appropriate decisions [8].

Low fluency may affect effective communication between speakers, as it can cause the interlocutor to hesitate and the message expressed to be unclear. Conversely, having good fluency and accuracy in speaking English can help the speaker or interlocutor to produce spoken language. Additionally, it may cause the interlocutor to hesitate, potentially leading to a lack of clarity in the message being conveyed. However, by having good fluency and accuracy in speaking English, the speaker or interlocutor can produce spoken language [9]. The conclusion that can be drawn is that effective strategies in teaching speaking skills require adaptive and innovative approaches to motivate students and increase their active participation. Language is a means of communicating thoughts or information in a way that others can understand. Speaking lessons are designed to help students communicate effectively because they involve more than just accuracy. This means more than just accuracy; it also requires fluency. The most effective way to achieve communication goals is to give sufficient importance to language use. This means focusing on language use, rather than just usage; fluency, rather than accuracy; authentic language and context; and students' eventual need to apply classroom knowledge to previously unrehearsed circumstances in the real world.

The existing studies on teachers' strategies in secondary school speaking activities mostly focus on general positive student responses without evaluating their long-term impact or contribution to speaking development outside the classroom. This indicates a need for a better understanding of the sustained effectiveness of these strategies. Additionally, the understanding of the specific difficulties faced by students with high speaking anxiety or low language proficiency, particularly at the junior high school level, is lacking. Therefore, there is an opportunity to explore more inclusive and adaptive strategies that cater to the individual needs of these students. Filling this gap in research would provide a more comprehensive view of the effectiveness of speaking teaching strategies, considering both immediate classroom responses and their support for students' overall development in and outside the formal learning environment. Overall, this research aims to contribute to a more complete and in-depth understanding of these strategies and their outcomes [10]. Additionally, previous research highlights the barriers to teaching speaking in secondary schools, such as limited learning time and students' vocabulary limitations. However, there is a lack of in-depth documentation on teachers' creative strategies to overcome these obstacles. The existing literature primarily focuses on problem identification rather than exploring the concrete solutions teachers employ. This gap in the literature hinders a comprehensive understanding of teachers' creativity and limits the inspiration available to educational practitioners seeking more effective approaches to teaching speaking skills [11].

The results of pre-observations made by researchers at a junior high school demonstrate that students perform better when teachers apply strategies in English classes. Gamification is the integration of game elements into teaching and learning to motivate students to achieve at higher levels and engage with the subject matter in more meaningful ways. In other words,

gamification influences learning indirectly by changing behaviour and attitude. Serious games are designed for training, stimulation, and education in virtual environments, and learning objectives have already been set out [12]. The teachers were conducting a diagnostic assessment first to find out how far students understand and how far students can learn English. After the results are available, the teacher will design a method that is suitable for these students so that they are happy to learn English. Thus, the teacher uses the gamification method for students, and before entered the material, the teacher makes students comfortable first by introducing the gamification method.

This research study presents a novel approach by conducting an in-depth qualitative study of students' responses during speaking activities in secondary school. The selection of the school was influenced by its positive reputation and consistent performance in developing students' speaking skills. Unlike previous studies that focused on general responses such as students' motivation, confidence, and speaking level, this study focuses on teachers' strategies [13]. This research also contributes to the field by going beyond quantitative-based results and general positive responses, and enabling the development of adaptive and inclusive teaching strategies to cater to students with varying levels of speaking ability. Overall, this research brings unique value and insights to the field of English language teaching [14].

To explore effective teaching strategies for speaking activities in English classrooms, this study was designed to answer the following main question:

1. What kind of teachers are used in teaching English speaking at the secondary level?
2. How to the teacher's selection of strategies for teaching English speaking at the secondary level?

Method

This research employs a utilisation of the gamification method. The researcher conducted data collection at SMP Bhayangkari 7 Porong and made observations across seven grades. The total students is 28. Participants selected a teacher who has extensive teaching experience, especially in English language teaching at the secondary school level, and the teacher has applied gamification methods in learning, which is relevant to the focus of this research.. The involvement of these participants in professional training programs and their contribution to improving the quality of education. The reason why the researcher chose the school is that it has a good track record in supporting students' skill development, particularly in English language learning. Focusing on the perspectives of an English teacher who has used gamification techniques in their classroom, this study intends to investigate how gamification affects speaking abilities among students in secondary school learning English[15].

The following elements represent the research method: An English teacher from one of the junior high schools in Sidoarjo with experience in gamification teaching methods participated in the study. The teacher was chosen based on their demonstrated utilisation of gamified activities in language training and desire to participate. The gamification activity conducted by the teacher is a descriptive-themed action game to train students' speaking skills. In this game, students are given an image which can be a place, person or thing. Their task is to give a detailed description of the picture without mentioning its real name. The classmates have to guess what is meant based on the description given. If students are struggling, the teacher provides additional clues to help them complete the description more precisely.'

The framework of this study is supported by insights from [16], which emphasises the integration of structured techniques and strategies in teaching speaking skills. These strategies include cognitive, metacognitive, and social approaches, which align well with the principles of gamification. In this study, a semi-structured interview format was used to enable an in-depth exploration of teachers ' experiences, perceptions and insight into the use of gamification to improve students' speaking skills. In this research, the researcher used interviews and observation. The interview guide included questions about preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

The implementation of these strategies has been demonstrated to enhance the efficacy and efficiency of the teaching and learning process, thus facilitating the transformation and development of students' knowledge, irrespective of their learning styles. Furthermore, it can render the learning process engaging and conducive to the development of students' abilities. The indicators listed in this observation sheet aim to assess the extent to which gamification techniques used by teachers can influence student engagement, speaking skill development, and overall teaching effectiveness. Each aspect, from the use of point systems, leaderboards, and time challenges, to game-based activities. In addition, an assessment of the teacher's role in providing constructive and motivational feedback is also important to ensure that gamification not only improves students' speaking skills but also creates an enjoyable learning atmosphere that supports holistic language development [17].

The researchers employed two data collection techniques, including classroom observation and interviews with the teacher, as primary data sources. The transcribed interview was analysed using analysis to identify key themes and insights related to the teacher's experience of gamification and its impact on speaking skills. Interpreting the findings to understand the impact of gamification on classroom practice and student outcomes. Informed consent was obtained from participating teachers. All data was anonymised to protect the identity of the teacher. The qualitative nature of the study may introduce subjectivity in the interpretation of teacher responses. The researcher strove to maintain objectivity through systematic analysis. However, the findings provided valuable information about the use of gamification in developing speaking skills.

Result And Discussion

A. Result

The interview revealed that English teachers at a school in Sidoarjo use gamification strategies when teaching speaking to their students. The teacher who is the subject of this study is an experienced junior high school English teacher who has implemented gamification in learning. In speaking learning activities, she combines conventional approaches with a touch of gamification to make learning more interesting. The teacher shared that she designed the form of gamification herself to meet the needs of the students and the technologically limited classroom situation. Classroom observations reveal that teachers design and prepare learning materials in a structured and thorough manner, considering the appropriateness of the content to the established learning outcomes. The strategies used by the teacher are as follows:

1. Board Games

This activity was conducted on February 10th, 2025. The activity conducted by students is illustrated in Figure 1. Students are divided into 4 groups. The atmosphere in the English classroom was filled with excitement and curiosity. The students entered the room with cheerful faces, wondering what kind of activity they were going to do that day. The teacher greeted the class warmly and started the lesson by reviewing the previous material briefly. Then, she explained that they would be playing a board game related to the lesson they had learned from their module. The students were thrilled and began to whisper among themselves in excitement. The teacher divided the class into four groups, ensuring a balance of abilities in each. She handed each group a colourful board game and one die. The board games had been carefully designed by the teacher, using materials taken directly from the students' learning module. Before starting, the teacher gave clear instructions on how to play the game and what each space on the board meant. The students listened attentively and asked questions to make sure they understood the rules. Then, the game began. Each group took turns rolling the dice. The number they rolled determined how many spaces they moved on the board. When a player landed on a space, they had to complete a task or answer a question written there. The questions varied; some asked for definitions, others required short dialogues, and some asked questions about descriptions of people and the structure. Laughter and learning filled the room as the students took turns. One student in each group acted as a recorder, writing the answers in the group's notebook. The teacher walked around the classroom, stopping at each group to observe their interactions, offer support, and make sure they stayed on task. She praised their efforts, corrected mistakes gently, and encouraged shy students to participate actively. The students looked enthusiastic and engaged. Some shouted joyfully when they got an easy question, while others helped their friends when they struggled. There was a sense of healthy competition and teamwork in the air. After every student had their turn, the teacher asked the groups to prepare a short presentation based on the answers they had collected. Each group collaborated to organise their results, decide who would present, and rehearse their parts. One by one, the groups presented their findings to the class. The audience listened respectfully and clapped after each presentation. To close the lesson, the teacher gave positive feedback to each group, highlighting their strengths and suggesting ways they could improve. She asked the students how they felt about the activity, and many replied that it was fun, helpful, and made learning easier. One student said, *"I hope we can do this kind of game again!"* The teacher smiled and said she was proud of their effort and teamwork. Finally, the class ended with a quick reflection session, where the students wrote down what they learned and how they felt during the activity. The classroom, once buzzing with energy, settled into a calm and satisfied mood. It had been a productive and enjoyable learning experience for everyone.

Figure 1. The board games were played by students.

2. Guessing Vocabulary

This activity was conducted on February 12ᵗʰ, 2025. The activity conducted by students is illustrated in Figure 2. The teacher divided the class into 6 groups, and the English class was filled with a sense of excitement and curiosity. The students came in smiling, chatting with their friends, and guessing what kind of activity their teacher had prepared. The desks were pushed aside, and the chairs were arranged along the walls. This unusual setup made the students even more curious. The teacher greeted the students warmly and began the lesson by asking some simple review questions from the previous topic. The students responded actively, and the teacher praised them with encouragement. Then, she announced that they would be playing a relay game while listening to an English song titled APT. The students cheered and looked enthusiastic, especially when they heard that music would be part of the activity. The teacher divided the class into six groups and handed each group a sheet of paper with several questions related to the topic of personal information and abilities. Some examples were *"What do you like?"*, *"What can you do?"*, and *"What do you want to be?"*. The teacher then asked the students to form a large circle in the middle of the classroom. Before starting the game, the teacher clearly explained the rules. As the song played, the students had to pass a piece of paper around the circle. When the music stopped, the student holding the paper had to read and answer the question written on it. If their answer was correct, the paper moved on. However, if the answer was wrong, the student had to pick one additional card with another question. If they still could not answer, they would receive two more follow-up question cards related to previous lessons. The students listened attentively and nodded in understanding. The teacher stood in the middle of the circle, monitoring the activity closely and making sure every group was participating equally. She encouraged quieter students to speak up and made the environment supportive and non-judgmental. The song began to play, and the paper started to move quickly from one student to another. Laughter and excitement filled the room as the students passed the paper in rhythm with the music. When the music stopped, a student named Riko held the paper. He read the question aloud: *"What do you like?"* and answered confidently, *"I like playing games."* His group clapped, and the game continued. Another student answered, *"I can cook,"* in response to the question *"What can you do?"* There were a few students who struggled with the answers, but they tried their best. The teacher helped guide them by giving hints and examples when needed. Some students had to answer more than once due to mistakes, but they stayed motivated, especially with their friends cheering them on. The class was lively, yet organised. Most students looked happy and engaged. They laughed when they made mistakes, but they also showed determination to improve. The relay game successfully created a fun and educational environment where students could practice speaking in English without fear. After the activity, the teacher gathered the students and gave them positive feedback. She praised their effort, participation, and teamwork. Then, the teacher asked a few students to share how they felt about the activity. One student said, "It was so fun! I want to play again next time." Another student added, "I was nervous, but now I feel more confident to speak." To close the lesson, the teacher summarised the vocabulary and sentence patterns used during the game. She then asked the students to write a short paragraph about themselves using the expressions they had practised, like "I like...", "I can...", and "I want to be...". The class ended with smiles and applause. The students left the room still humming the tune of the song, feeling proud of what they had learned. It was a memorable and meaningful learning experience for everyone

Figure 2. Guessing vocabulary was played by students

By understanding the condition of the class and the character of the students, the teacher can design speaking activities that are not only fun but also appropriate to their individual ability levels. The use of visual media, such as pictures, in descriptive materials is a concrete example of how gamification can be integrated into the subject matter while improving students' speaking skills. In this section, the author presents the answers to the researcher's questions about teachers' perceptions of learning to speak using gamification.

No.	Element	Indicator	Comment	Answer
1.	Gamification implementation	The aim is to understand the background and motivation behind the implementation of gamification strategies.	What are your reasons for implementing gamification strategies in speaking lessons? In what materials do you often use gamification?	The important thing is that we as teachers know the students' needs, what the needs of the students are, then whether this material can be conveyed well or not. So there is a sequence that they end up being proactive and also very collaborative in learning in class. In terms of productive skills, they are also active in speaking. 2. The descriptive material will make them more proactive and preposition of place.