THE USE OF COMMUNICATIVE WEREWOLF GAME TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to find out how the Werewolf Game, adapted from the Werewolf Game, can improve the speaking skills of 10C students at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, Mempawah. This research applied a Classroom Action Research design, conducted in two cycles, involving 23 female students with low English-speaking skills and limited access to technology. The data were collected through field notes of classroom activities, a speaking test assessed using a scoring rubric, and video documentation during the game sessions. The data were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The results showed an increase in the average students' speaking score from 65 in the first cycle to 75 in the second cycle. All speaking components improved, students showed positive response, began to speak more confidently, and followed the flow of discussions. Through various roles, a mission, and discussions, the Werewolf Game effectively helped improve students' speaking skills. The implication is, this Communicative Game can act as an alternative classroom activity that provides opportunities and a low-pressure environment for students to use English, especially in the setting with limited learning resources.

Keywords : *Communicative Games, Islamic Boarding School, Speaking Skills, Werewolf Game*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an important productive skill for EFL students who learn English from a basic level. Mastering productive skills enables EFL students to engage effectively and maximize their participation in the learning process (Akhter, 2021). Mastering speaking involves the simultaneous control of four key elements: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and fluency. Yet despite its importance, speaking remains the skill most difficult to develop, particularly for EFL students who have limited exposure to authentic English use outside the classroom. This challenge becomes even more pronounced in restricted learning environments such as Islamic Boarding School where institutional regulations prohibit students from accessing communication devices and the internet, leaving them dependent solely on conventional learning resources.

This condition was evident in 10C class at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, Mempawah. Preliminary observations and interviews with the English teacher revealed that students consistently struggled with all four speaking elements. They frequently mispronounced common English words, produced grammatically incorrect sentences, relied on limited vocabulary stock and spoke with excessive pauses, repetitions, and stuttering that disrupted the flow of communication. These problems were aggravated by the boarding school's restricted learning environment, which prevented students from practicing English independently through digital media. Consequently, speaking became the most underdeveloped skill among students who were already in secondary education and were expected to communicate in English with reasonable competence (Akter, 2021; Menggo et al., 2019).

This situation raises a critical question: what classroom activity can effectively improve EFL students speaking skills in a low-resource environment without relying on digital tools? The significance of this question lies in the need to provide equitable learning experiences for students whose access to technology-based learning is structurally constrained. This research was therefore conducted to offer practical, evidence-based solution through the implementation of the Communicative Werewolf Game as speaking activity within the Game Based Learning approach, supported by Gamification elements.

Communicative games are classroom activities that require students to use language to complete a task, thereby creating authentic speaking opportunities that reduced anxiety and promote interaction (Dalimunthe et al., 2023). The Werewolf games is one such activity: a role-based discussion game in which players argue, question and negotiate to identify a hidden antagonist among them (Plotkin,2010). Its structure aligns naturally with inquiry dialog, a type of speaking in which students ask and answer questions to reach shared understanding (Burns & Siegel, 2018). In this study, the game was adapted to a cyber security storyline and enriched with four Gamification elements, namely processing narratives, mission, point, and feedback to maintain motivation and structure participation across sessions (Schöbel, Janson, & Söllner, 2020; Werbach & Hunter, 2020).

Prior research supports the relevance of this approach. Maryam (2020) demonstrated through Classroom Action Research (CAS) that communicative Games reduced student anxiety and increased participation in speaking activities among eight-grade students. Zulkifli and Fatimah (2019) specifically implemented the Werewolf Game in a senior high school class under the 2013 curriculum and found it effective in habituating students to speak English through discussion and argumentation. Dewi and Kulsum (2017) further confirmed that communicative games improve motivation, confidence, and all four elements of speaking skills. However, these studies were

conducted in conventional schools with greater access to resources and without Gamification support. None examined the game's effectiveness in a boarding school context governed by the Merdeka Curriculum, where technology restrictions fundamentally shape student's learning opportunities.

This research aimed to investigate how the Communicative Werewolf Game improves the speaking skills of 10C students at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, Mempawah. The Classroom Action Research design was employed across two cycles using the Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) model, with speaking performance measured through a scoring rubric assessing pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and use of asking and giving opinion expressions. It was hypothesized that the structured communicative interaction and gamification elements embedded in the Werewolf Game would create a low-pressure learning environment that motivates students to speak more frequently, thereby improving their speaking proficiency.

The findings of this research confirmed that the Communicative Werewolf Game successfully improved students speaking skills across all assessed elements, with averages scores rising from 65 in cycle 1 to 75 in cycle 2. Most notably, students became progressively more confident and active in discussion sessions, using a wider variety of expressions and making fewer speaking errors by the final cycle. These results contribute to the field EFL speaking instructions by demonstrating the game-based, technology free learning activities can be both engaging and measurably effective in restricted school environments. Future research may explore whether similar communicative games produce comparable outcomes with mixed gender groups, younger learners or across different speaking topics beyond asking and giving opinion.

METHOD

This research employed a Classroom Action Research design following the Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) model, which operates through four cyclical stages: planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). The research was conducted at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Sekubang, Mempawah, involving 23 female students from grade 10C. Participants were selected based on their low English-speaking proficiency and limited access to technology-based learning resources.

The research was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of two meetings of 90 minutes each. Cycle 1 meetings took place on May 26 and June 2, 2025, while cycle 2 meetings were held on June 16 and June 23, 2025. In each meeting, the researcher acted as the teacher implementing the Werewolf Game following the seven stages of Game-Based Learning (Daniela, 2023), determining learning objectives, selecting and designing the game, delivering instruction, explaining game concepts and rules, playing the game, summarizing knowledge and conducting reflection.

Three data collection techniques were employed: observation (fields notes documenting classroom activities and student interactions), measurement (speaking test assessed through a scoring rubric covering pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and use of speaking expressions), and audiovisual materials (photographs and video recordings of game sessions). The scoring rubric, adapted from Brown's (2004) oral proficiency categories, used a four-point scale (Poor = 1, Moderate = 2, Good = 3, Excellent = 4) for each aspect. Students' scores were calculated

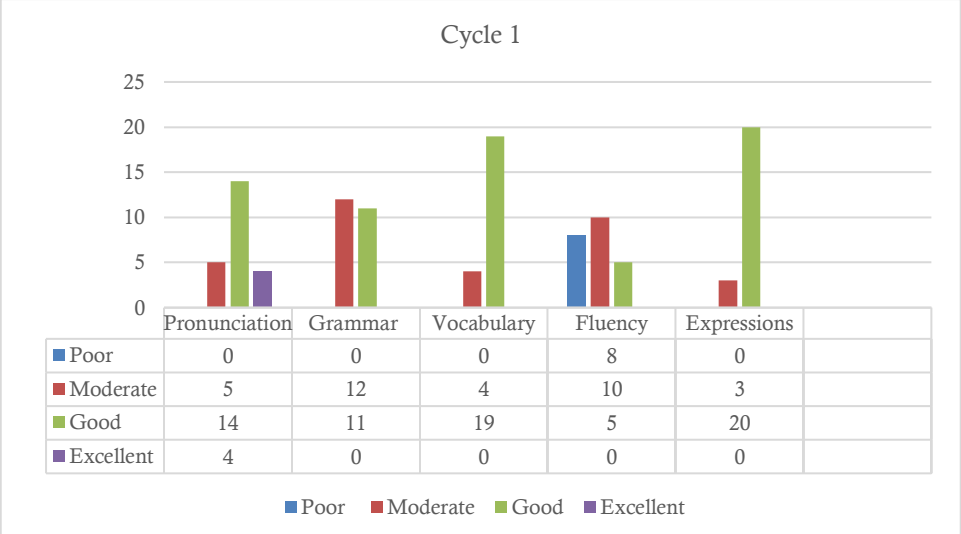
using the formula: Score = Student's score = $\frac{Obtained\ point}{Max\ point}\ x\ 100$, then classified according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud, 2024) achievement categories.

The Werewolf Game used in this study was adapted with a cyber-world theme. Role cards consisted of five characters: System Admin (moderator), Hacker (werewolf), System (villager), AI Analyst (seer) and the Cyber Medic (doctor). Gamification elements implemented included processing narratives(storyline), mission, point and feedback. In cycle 2, revisions were made to the learning materials by adding Indonesian translations, restructuring game rule delivery using printed handouts, and providing balanced practice for both asking and giving opinion expressions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this Classroom Action Research revealed that the implementation of the Communicative Werewolf Game successfully improved the speaking skills of the tenth-grade students of Darussalam Islamic Boarding School Mempawah. The improvement was observed throughout two cycles of action research involving planning, acting, acting, observing and reflecting stages. The students demonstrated progress in several aspects of speaking, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and the use of expressions for asking and giving opinions.

The implementation of the Werewolf Game across two cycles produced measurable improvements in students speaking skills. The overall average speaking score rose form 65 in cycle 1 to 75 in cycle 2, marking an improvement of 10 points and a shift from the moderate category to the fair category. The summary of students speaking performance is presented in table 1.



	Pronunciation	Grammar	Vocabulary	Fluency	Expressions
Poor	0	0	0	8	0
Moderate	5	12	4	10	3
Good	14	11	19	5	20
Excellent	4	0	0	0	0

Figure 1. Result of Students' Speaking Test in Cycle 1

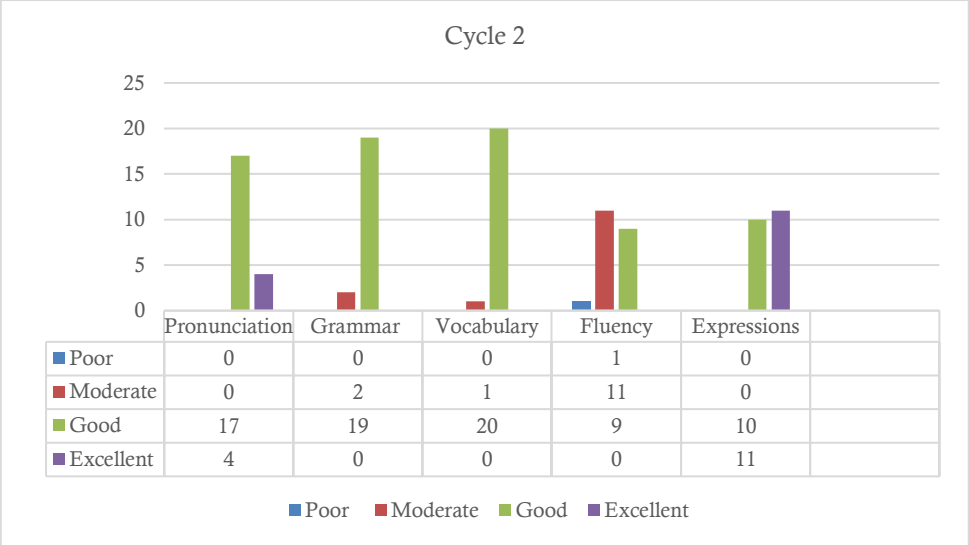


Figure 2. Result of Students' Speaking Test in Cycle 2

Table 1. Summary of Students Speaking Scores in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

Aspect	Cycle 1 Average Score	Cycle 2 Average Score
Pronunciation	Good (3)	Good (3 – 4)
Grammar	Moderate – Good (2 – 3)	Good (3)
Vocabulary	Good (3)	Good (3)
Fluency	Poor – Moderate (1 – 2)	Moderate – Good (2 – 3)
Speaking Expressions	Good (3)	Good – Excellent (3 – 4)
Average Score	65	75

During the first cycle, students showed positive responses toward the learning activity. The Werewolf Game created a more interactive classroom atmosphere and encouraged students to participate actively in discussions. However, some students still experienced difficulties in expressing their ideas fluently and accurately. Several students relied heavily on Indonesian expressions and hesitated when presenting arguments during the discussion sessions. Although the learning objectives were partially achieved, reflection results indicated the need for improvement in game instructions, vocabulary support and opportunities for speaking practice.

After revising the teaching procedures and learning materials, the second cycle demonstrated more significant improvement. Students became more confident in expressing opinions, defending arguments, and responding to their peers during the game. They were able to utilize the vocabulary lists and language expressions more effectively. The classroom interaction also became more dynamic because students actively participated in questioning, agreeing, disagreeing, and providing justifications during the discussion process. The findings indicated that students speaking performance improved in terms of pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary usage and fluency.

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In terms of pronunciation, cycle 1 showed that four students achieved the Excellent category, fourteen students were at the Good level, and five students remained at the Moderate level. By cycle 2, the results improved substantially, with four students achieving Excellent and seventeen students reaching Good, while no students remained at the Moderate or Poor categories. This improvement can be attributed to the game's turn-taking mechanism, which provided repeated opportunities for students to hear and reproduce target words, as well as the immediate feedback given by both peers and the teacher during discussions.

Grammar also improved across the two cycles. In cycle 1, eleven students achieved the Good category while twelve students remained at the Moderate level. By cycle 2, nineteen students reached the Good category and only two students remained at the Moderate level. The structured use of simple present tense patterns through asking and giving opinion activities provided repeated exposure to correct grammatical forms in meaningful communication. This finding supports Bailey's (2020) view that grammar mastery develops more effectively through contextualized language practice.

Vocabulary achievement was positive throughout the research. In cycle 1, nineteen students achieved the Good category and four students remained at the Moderate level. In cycle 2, twenty students reached the Good category, while only one student remained at the Moderate level. The use of word banks and vocabulary support sheets enabled students to apply newly learned words directly during communication activities. These findings support Khan et al. (2018), who emphasized the important role of vocabulary mastery in speaking development.

Fluency remained the most challenging aspect of speaking, although it demonstrated the greatest relative improvement. In cycle 1, eight students were categorized as Poor, ten students as Moderate, and five students as Good. By cycle 2, only one student remained in the Poor category, eleven students achieved Moderate, and nine students reached Good. The reduction in speaking anxiety through the game-based learning environment, together with repeated speaking opportunities and peer support, contributed significantly to students' fluency development. This finding is consistent with Surayatika (2017), who argued that Communicative Games create a relaxed atmosphere that reduces anxiety and facilitates oral communication.

Students' understanding and use of speaking expressions also improved considerably. In cycle 1, twenty students achieved the Good category and three students remained at the Moderate level. Following revisions in cycle 2, eleven students achieved Excellent and ten students achieved Good, with no students remaining in lower categories. The balanced instruction of asking and giving opinion expressions proved effective in expanding students' communicative repertoire and encouraging more meaningful classroom interaction.

The overall improvement can be attributed to several characteristics of the Communicative Werewolf Game. First, the game provided opportunities for meaningful communication through discussion, negotiation, and problem-solving activities. Second, the role-playing elements encouraged students to use English naturally in order to achieve specific objectives within the game. Third, the integration of gamification elements, including feedback, processing narratives, missions, and points, increased students' motivation, engagement, and participation. Feedback allowed students to recognize and correct their mistakes, while the cyber-themed storyline maintained interest and provided a coherent communicative context. The mission system encouraged students to stay focused on speaking objectives, and the point system motivated consistent participation throughout the learning process.

These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting the positive impact of Communicative Games and Gamification on language learning. Maryam (2020) found that Communicative Games encourage students to speak more confidently and interactively, while Zulkifli and Fatimah (2019) reported that the Werewolf Game promotes spontaneous English use through a relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Similarly, Rahmani (2020) argued that gamification positively influences students' motivation, satisfaction, and speaking performance. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that the Communicative Werewolf Game is effective in improving speaking skills within a technology-restricted Islamic boarding school context.

Despite these positive outcomes, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved only one class consisting of twenty-three students and was conducted within a limited period of time. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all educational settings. Future studies are recommended to investigate the implementation of the Werewolf Game in different educational contexts, with larger participant groups and longer intervention periods, in order to provide more comprehensive evidence regarding its effectiveness.

Overall, the implementation of the Communicative Werewolf Game proved to be an effective strategy for improving students' speaking skills. The game not only enhanced students' linguistic performance in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and speaking expressions, but also increased their confidence, motivation, and active participation in English learning activities.

CONCLUSIONS

This Classroom Action Research demonstrated that Communicative Werewolf Game, supported by Gamification elements, effectively improved the speaking skills of grade 10C students at Darussalam Islamic Boarding School Mempawah across two cycles. Student average scores improved form 65 in cycle 1 to 75 in cycle 2, with positive growth observed in all five assessed aspects: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and use of speaking expressions. The game created a fun, low pressure and communicatively authentic environment that encouraged all students to participate actively in English speaking activities, even in a setting with limited technological resources. These findings suggest that the Communicative Werewolf Game serves as a practical and effective alternative learning activity for EFL speaking instruction, particularly for boarding school community of Darussalam Islamic Boarding School Mempawah for their cooperation and support during the research process.

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