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# The Effect of Language Games on Students' Proficiency in Spoken English: A Focus on Junior Secondary Schools in Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State

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## ABSTRACT

The study examined the effect of language games on students' spoken English proficiency, focusing on junior secondary schools in Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The report provides a systematic review of published relevant studies on the use of language games in improving students' spoken English competency from 2010 to 2019. The primary goal of this systematic review is to provide researchers and reading educationists with a synthesis of the evidence from previous studies on the impact of language games on students' spoken English proficiency. This will allow for more development and implementation research to be conducted in this area. This study aims to address two questions: how effective are language games in enhancing students' speaking abilities, and what are students' experiences like while playing the game? The findings of this investigation shed light on the value and positive effect that language games have on improving students' speaking abilities. The study recommends, amongst others, that there is a need for the government and all other relevant agencies to incorporate language games into the language class.

**Keywords:** Language Games, Speaking Skills, Junior Secondary School, Learner's Experience, Systematic Review, Ekiti State

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The English language is a global language that serves almost all purposes in Nigeria. It is the language of instruction in educational institutions, the press, politics, business, law, education, religion, the court, and the media, according to Obadare and Deji-Afuye (2019). In addition, Liadi (2019) argues that English is undeniably a global language due to its widespread usage. One may argue that it is the most significant thing the British left behind in Nigeria. Moreover, English is the official language of several nations across the globe, including Nigeria, and has been the country's official language since the end of the British colonial government as a colonial linguistic heritage.



While there are many different languages spoken all over the globe, we all have one in common: English, an international language. Malaysia is among most nations that use English as a second language. English is somehow taught and spoken in nations where it is not the national language (Qureshi, n.d). Although English is a second language in many nations, it is extensively utilised in many fields, including medicine, education, engineering, higher education, business, technology, banking, and many more (Qureshi, n.d). Regarding the internet, English is still the language of choice. The world of business and society has likewise embraced English. It is crucial to acquire English speaking skills because of the significant role that English plays in our daily lives.

In addition to assisting speakers in understanding the language, learning English as a second language also aids in understanding the speaker's culture (Diana, 2012). In a different light, learners will acquire more information and possibly better understand their culture. When people from various backgrounds learn about and appreciate one another's traditions, they are more likely to bond and find common ground (Diana, 2012). The cultural exchange allows participants to learn about and experience the traditions and customs of people from various parts of the world (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004; Darwish et al., 2020)

Similarly, language games are tools instructors may use to help students learn a language more effectively. Teachers employing language games in the classroom should thoroughly understand the games' meanings, benefits, and proper use. Well-chosen language games are essential because they provide learners with a respite while still allowing them to practise their language skills, which may be challenging while learning a new language. Language games, however, should not be used to socialise learners or pass the time. Sorting, ordering, or arranging games, information gap games, guessing games, search games, matching games, labelling games, board games, and role-play games are just a few examples of the many different language games available (Kunierrek, 2015). Since they are enjoyable and allow them to study while having fun, games may also guarantee complete participation from learners in the classroom (Mahmoud& Tanni, 2014). Due to the naturally competitive nature of human beings, games may provide a fun and healthy environment for students to practise their English language skills. They must speak, comprehend, and act in English to win or accomplish the mission (Gate, 2013). Games are a great way for students to hone their language skills and their ability to communicate effectively in various situations (Betterigde & Bucky, 2006).

Games that promote cooperation are also available. Certain games are played in groups, and the use of games in the classroom facilitates communication between learners. In order to finish the assignment, learners must collaborate. The teacher has to intervene if learners aren't working together as a team. Learners get an appreciation for teamwork from this setting. Also, it allows pupils to socialise with others in their year.

### **1.1 Speaking Skill**

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are the four English language skills. The second skill is speaking, and it is a useful ability. According to Gbinedio (1996), language acquisition starts with hearing, but speaking is necessary for communication. Children learn to talk by mimicking what they have heard. Moreover, according to Oyinloye (2002), a man learns to speak a language like he learns to walk, ride a bike, or write.



The capacity to communicate effectively, in a manner that is both flexible and conversational, using domestically and globally accepted language is the cornerstone of language use and is known as speech. In addition, Ofodu (2016) submits that speaking is the most utilised skill in many Nigerian schools, though it is the most abandoned communication skill by many English language teachers. In addition, speaking is an act peculiar to human beings alone. According to Ogunmola (2005) the process of speech production involves the movements of some parts of the body (lips, tongue, teeth vellum etc.) to produce vocal sounds. It is important to note that animals produce vocal sounds, but man is the only animal to produce vocal sounds that form meaningful speech. Speech is one of the first things a child learns as he grows.

However, it is important to note that the ability of a child to acquire a particular language is innate in him. Siddique (2007) asserts that individuals learn by making a response, and a learner learns from situations which demand a response from him. Individuals do not acquire a language by getting it defined or explained to them; rather, they learn it via active usage. One can only learn what one practises doing. Similarly, Gbenedio (1996) asserts that speech is the capacity to communicate effectively in a conversational style both domestically and globally acceptable. Spoken English helps train students to speak the language with national acceptability and international intelligibility.

### **1.2 Language Games**

According to Oyinloye (2002), language games strategy could be used for teaching any aspect of language. According to Ofodu (2012), instructional strategies are the approaches, methods, and skills teachers use throughout the teaching and learning process. As learners learn at varying paces and in various methods, Ofodu (2012) argues that teachers should be prepared with various tactics for maintaining order in the classroom. According to Obadare (2007), the chalk-and-talk approach is the most often used teaching style. Considering the present state of affairs, Ofodu (2012) argues that teaching cannot continue at this level bearing in mind the current realities. Moreover, there are several skills, often referred to as "21st-century skills," that students must acquire in order to succeed in today's educational system. In addition, Obadare (2007) asserts that teachers and learners must embrace new methods to gradually replace traditional teaching methods, which are fast becoming boring and outdated.

In addition, Ofodu (2010) opines that teachers should use various types of questioning techniques to elicit student responses. Teachers should ensure active participation in drills and exercises by using pictures, postcards, photographs and cut-outs from newspapers or magazines to drill students using correct stress and intonation. Teachers should also engage students in dialogues.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Language teachers, educators, and the general public are concerned about the current level of English language use among learners in speaking competence. This concern results from some speaking defects evident in their speeches, like undue mannerisms, unnecessary repetition, hesitation, mistakes in grammar and inability to speak confidently. As a result, the following questions were generated; will there be a remarkable improvement in the speaking of junior secondary school students if they are exposed to the use of language games? Will the use of language games prevent speaking defects among junior secondary school students?



#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to examine the effectiveness of language games in enhancing speaking skills in junior secondary schools in Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State. Specifically, the study is set to;

1. Present synthetic evidence found in the past related studies on how language games help students' proficiency in spoken English.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. How effective is language games, in improving students' proficiency in spoken English?
2. What are the students' experiences when playing the games?

#### **1.6 Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study was limited to the junior secondary school one (JSS I) students in Ikere LGA of Ekiti State, Nigeria. The students were appropriate because they have been taught speaking skills topics in the syllabus during their first term session.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

An empirical research methodology was adopted for the investigation. Data used were secondary, meaning they were taken from other sources already in the public domain. Google Scholar, the Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Science Direct, Springer Open Access Journals, and Sage are some of the worldwide online bibliographic databases on which these studies are based. The research focused on English-language journal articles, doctoral dissertations, and conference proceedings pertaining to language games, ESL speaking, and language games. From 2013 and 2019, there was a narrow window for research. (Language games), language games and English speaking skills, language games in developing competency in spoken English, and (ESL students' view on language games) were used as search phrases to locate relevant literature.

The first search returned 170,000 hits, and the titles were then filtered using the following criteria:

1. Publication required to provide detailed information about games (title, type, genre, features).
2. Participants in the research might be in their elementary, secondary, or postsecondary years.
3. Find volunteers who speak English as a second language or another language.
4. Language games should be the category for the games that have been implemented.
5. Games should be used to teach English language skills, particularly speaking skills.
6. The research might be qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, or quasi-experimental.
7. Language games have to be employed in a classroom context.

The present literature review did not include any studies that focused on other skills and games, such as listening, reading, and writing. Junior Secondary Schools in the Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State shared features with the participants in these studies. The goals of the study were supported by the findings from the secondary data evaluation. The process of data gathering begins with the selection of specific language games for analysis, which in turn informed the formulation of research questions. In light of these goals, an examination of the relevant literature was conducted.



Although the data obtained were mostly qualitative, content analysis was used to examine the data. To determine the existence of certain themes, phrases, or ideas within the provided qualitative data, content analysis is a research technique (Krippendorff, 2018). By analysing and classifying text, content analysis may draw reliable conclusions. The existence, meaning, and connections of words, themes, or ideas may be measured and analysed using content analysis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students at a secondary school in the Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State were surveyed to see whether they had played any language games, and if so, how did they learn speaking skills? The results of this investigation indicate that learners' competency in spoken English has improved as a result of the usage of language games. As shown in Table 1, the findings of the study were presented as per the objectives.

**Table 1: Results**

Author and Year	Research Design	Types of games	Findings and Results (Impact of games)
Puspitorini (2018)	Descriptive Research	Role-plays	The role-playing method has an effect of 74.3 percent, according to the hypothesis test result (R-square: 0.743), and it considerably improves students' English-speaking abilities...
Fung and Min (2016)	Quasi-experimental research	Board game	Board games are a good method for keeping students interested in class activities. The speaking skills of kids with limited language competency are also improved through board games. Students' anxiety is reduced by board games.
Amal and Majeda (2014)	Quantitative Research	Word game	Word games enhance motivation and pleasure. Language skills may be improved with the use of games. Students' involvement is increased via games.
Kusnierek (2015)	Quantitative Research	Role - plays	Learners' speaking abilities are improved via the use of role-play activities.
Wahyuni and Yulianti (2019)	Quantitative Research	Guessing game	Students' participation in the guessing game has had some good effects. Students' self-assurance was boosted by playing guessing games, which also improved their speaking skills.
AL-Garni and Almuhammadi (2019)	Descriptive Research	Problem Solving	The mean, median and standard deviation of the pretest score for the experimental group were 3.50, 3.00, 1.03 and 4.24, 4.50, 1.14, respectively. The mean, median, and mode were 3.29, 3.00, and 1.347 in the control group and 3.714, 3.00, and 1.401 overall. Speaking skills of EFL students are impacted by communicative language teaching activities.





Author and Year	Research Design	Types of games	Findings and Results (Impact of games)
Bakhshizsdeh and Alaie (2017)	Quasi-experimental Research	Problem Solving	The pre-test results did not substantially differ between the experimental group (Mean = 14.66, SD = 1.01) and the control group (Mean = 13.87, SD = 1.19); $t(40) = -2.3, P = 0.23$ . The post-test findings revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental group (Mean = 16.95, SD 1.11) and the control group (Mean = 14.09, SD 1.51); $t(40) = -6.9, P = 0.000$ . The speaking ability of Iranian Intermediate EFL students at a private English language school in Sharekord is impacted by problem-solving activities.
Sevy-Biloon (2016)	Qualitative Research	Board race game	Learners' interest in and enthusiasm for learning English rose as a result of playing these games, which helped them improve their speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills.
Cheng (2018)	Quantitative Research	Board race games	Improved speaking abilities were evident. Students' anxiety levels dropped as they played games with their peers, but remained high when they took tests alone.
Sasidharan and Eng (2013)	Quantitative Research	Language Board game (Challenge)	After playing the game, the students' feedback was overwhelmingly favourable.

Source: Author (2022)

### **Effectiveness of language games in improving students' proficiency in spoken English**

This study set out to answer the question, "Do language games have an effect on the development of speaking abilities among junior secondary school students in the Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State?" The research used an empirical analytic strategy to accomplish this goal, analysing pertinent material from prior investigations. Oyinloye (2002) asserts that language games may be used to teach every component of language. A variety of games played in a language class can improve speaking ability.

The 10 journals are divided into two groups based on the systematic review: those that published research using just one language game and those that published research using several language games. There are six studies that employed just one game to teach language skills (Puspitorini, 2018; Fung & Min; 2016; Amal & Majeda, 2014; Wahyuni & Yulianti, 2019; AL-Garni Almuhammadi & 2019; Sevy-Biloon, 2016). Both students and teachers benefit from playing games to learn a language, according to the majority of research.



According to the findings of all these studies, the effectiveness of language games varies from one another; however, several studies (Fung and Min, 2016; Amal and Majeda, 2014; AL-Garni & Almuhammadi, 2019; Bakhshizsdeh & Alaie, 2017; Sasidharanand Eng, 2013) have found that language games increase students' motivation. The goal of group problem solving is to improve communication, problem-solving, leadership, and teamwork skills. It works effectively for both new and established teams, as well as groups of children and adults. As the experimental group consistently outperformed the control group, the research concluded that speaking skills are highly influenced by problem-solving. This result corroborates the results of Bakhshizsdeh & Alaie (2017), who discovered that the use of problem-solving activities greatly improves the learners' speaking competency. Students' participation in the guessing game has had some good effects. Students' self-assurance was boosted by playing guessing games, which also improved their speaking skills (Wahyuni & Yulianti, 2019).

#### **Students' experience through Language Games**

Students might be requested to write a certain number of words from a certain category in board racing games, which are enjoyable ways to review vocabulary and grammar. The teachers employed board games to improve vocabulary and grammar, encourage the development of various skills, and apply a variety of teaching techniques to create an atmosphere in which learners were intrinsically driven to learn and absorb language. The research found that board games helped learners improve their speaking abilities. The results of this research lent credence to the claims of Cheng (2018) and Sevy-Biloon(2016), who indicated that employing board games may considerably increase students' grasp of grammar and vocabulary, respectively. Moreover, Sasidharan and Eng (2013) discovered that students responded well to the Language Board game.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The study looked at the effects of language games on students' spoken English competency at Junior Secondary School in the Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State. The students' success in speaking English was significantly boosted by the usage of language games. Due to the interaction between students in the classroom, students' speaking abilities improve substantially after playing unrestricted games. Games helped students improve their speaking, reading, listening, and writing abilities while also boosting their passion for and appreciation for studying English. Learning may be boosted by using games since they keep students engaged, encourage group work, and boost communication. The research found that all types of board games, including role-playing games, word games, guessing games, problem-solving board races, and language games, substantially and confidently improved students' English language skills. The games help students significantly in their grammatical knowledge and fluency in conversation.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following suggestions were made based on the findings of the study:

- Government and other relevant bodies should include language games in language instruction.
- The traditional method of teaching should be de-emphasised.
- English remains our official language so all hands must be on deck for its right acquisition.
- Students should be taught to express themselves in flexible conversational English.



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