



Development of Communication Skills through Interactive Game-Based Learning: A Qualitative Study

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Received : February 21, 2024	Revised : March 2, 2023	Accepted : March 9, 2024	Online : March 13, 2024
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Abstract

This research is about developing students' communication skills through interactive game-based learning. This method of learning is carried out in relation to the problems that lecturers often complain about in the learning process, namely the lack of student involvement during the learning process in the classroom, as is done at the Politeknik Negeri Media Kreatif Jakarta campus. The creativity of the lecturers at the Politeknik Negeri Jakarta campus in creating games for learning that are different for each meeting and giving rewards for each learning is unique. This research aims to determine the communication development that takes place in students following the implementation of interactive game-based learning. The research methodology used a qualitative approach with a case study as the research analysis. Researchers specifically conducted this study on one English class due to its communication challenges. For this reason, the research informants consisted of one lecturer and three students who were involved in learning in the English class. The results showed that interactive game-based learning that had been applied to students was able to develop student's communication skills, especially those related to students' emotional factors, such as being more courageous, motivated, active, and enthusiastic, which in turn improved students' interactive communication skills with lecturers during English learning, such as speaking skills, pronunciation, vocabulary, mastery, and increased understanding.

Keywords: *Communication Skills; Game-Based Learning; Interactive Communication*

INTRODUCTION

Learning through internet technology [online/digital media] was expected to fade after the COVID-19 pandemic had passed. Communication technology development directly impacts the effectiveness of communication in all human activities, including the teaching and learning processes in schools and colleges (Harun, 2015). Advances in communication technology provided some benefits to doing activities and jobs, even in situations that were impossible due to time and distance constraints. Individuals could perform interpersonal activities or work without having to meet face-to-face. Technology has transformed conventional working methods into online or virtual formats, thus enabling collaboration between individuals, for example, by building virtual teams (Purwati & Nugroho, 2016).

However, different opinions were also assumed by the researchers: based on some research, online media was considered the new media solver for communication problems in learning, but it did not always satisfy all parties. Therefore, the solution to be sought was the method of learning-in this case, the process that was carried out while learning continued.

The issue was very much related to what was often complained about by teachers: the lack of student involvement in the learning process. It was only the teacher or lecturer who was actively providing the learning material, and there was rarely a response from students, either online or offline. As a result, ineffective learning outcomes occurred, in which students lacked understanding of the given learning, proving to have test scores that tended to be poor. One example of this teaching consensus was a case that occurred at the Polytechnic State Media Creative Jakarta campus. Especially in learning that required consensus, like English lessons.

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According to one of the lecturers who facilitated English learning, the learning score in the English class, especially in the class, was the worst among the other lessons. This made the lecturer frustrated, and he revealed that it was because of the communication that had gone very badly, like the poor student response in some of the learning processes that had taken place. As a result, the student's grades were also very low.

Regarding the issue, some students at the State Polytechnic campus of Creative Media Jakarta who successfully conducted interviews, specifically for English classes with the lowest grades, revealed that their less active problems during the learning process were often caused by shame, fear of making mistakes, as well as a lack of confidence and excessive use of foreign languages. Some of them even acknowledged that there was really something to ask, but they were afraid that the question would not be good or that they would be misunderstood and considered stupid for asking. This problem occurred not only during offline classes, but also during online classes. It turned out that the problem tended to be psychological, and that was actually their main problem in expressing their thoughts while studying English in class.

These problems were also understood by their lecturers because some of them had good and close relationships with their lecturers, like the class leader, who sometimes expressed their problems. For the problem, the teachers tried as hard as possible to help the students, and one of the solutions they found was using interactive game-based learning using online/digital media, even when the lessons were conducted offline in the classroom. The use of digital media and game formats was considered to be appealing to the current generation of students, so it was expected that this method would make the students more enthusiastic about learning and more able to express their opinions in class. In other words, during the learning process, there would be good interaction between students and lecturers, according to one of the lecturers who conducted the research.

These game-based methods were thought to be more capable of activating students' cognition, given that they belonged to the Generation Z, which loved everything in the form of games. Generation Z was born between 1995 and 2011, and they grew up in the digital age. Their preferences and ideologies were different from those of generations X and Y. It was not surprising that digital media was very familiar with Generation Z, and they tended to be more responsive to anything digital. Furthermore, most of the students currently attending lectures belong to Generation Z.

Game-based learning methods were used in primary and secondary schools but were rarely implemented at the college level. That's why the lecturers at Politeknik Negeri Media Jakarta tried to implement this method as a solution to the problems that had been identified. What was interesting was the creativity of the lecturers at the State Polytechnic campus of Jakarta in creating different games for each session and the unique rewards given for each learning activity. This creativity was considered an innovation or novelty in research because previous studies did not show the same approach.

Based on the problems that had been presented, the researchers were interested in studying the phenomenon specifically in the lecturers and students who participated in the English language class at the Polytechnic State Media Creative Jakarta campus. The goal of the research was to determine what communication developments occurred in students after the interactive game-based learning process was conducted.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication skills involve the exchange of information, knowledge, and emotions through oral or written language, body movements, or symbols. Cultural background and individual interpretations influence interpretation. It happened at the interpersonal, group, organizational,

and mass levels, aiming at mutual understanding through clear messages, proper language, context, and empathy. The Latin word "communication" encompassed several actions, such as sharing, giving, trading, informing, talking, connecting, and having a topic, from which the term "communications" derived (Hardjana, 2003). From different perspectives, communication was generally defined as the process of interaction between human individuals to convey information in a way that was understandable to both parties. (Turnip & Siahaan, 2021). Furthermore, communication was the process of sending messages from one individual to another with the purpose of communicating or influencing attitudes, opinions, or behavior, either orally or through the media (Setiadi, 2016).

Interactive Game-Based Learning: Interactive game-based learning blended the elements of the game with the active participation of students in the learning process. It encouraged students to actively engage with the learning material through game-related activities, fostering deeper motivation and understanding. The benefits included improved motivation, improved understanding, and skill development (Voreopoulou, 2024). Other perspectives stated that educational games included various types of games designed specifically to provide learning or teaching opportunities to players, including games with classical content that could be considered challenging but still had educational and teaching value. From this perspective, games that were deliberately designed to provide knowledge or encourage certain behaviors, such as strengthening solidarity and teamwork, could be classified as educational ones because they offered interesting and effective learning opportunities (Fatimah et al., 2023).

Interactive communication involved the active exchange of messages and mutual understanding. Obstacles such as technical disruption, communication skills, cultural differences, and environmental disruptions could impede its effectiveness. The research aimed to overcome such barriers by improving communication skills, using reliable technologies, understanding cultural differences, and creating a conducive environment, all of which could ultimately improve the effectiveness and significance of interactive communication in the context studied. Wulandari et al. (2022) found that interactive multimedia technology positively increased student interest and motivation in the learning process. In addition, the use of multimedia could also create a more dynamic and exciting classroom environment, thereby addressing the potential boredom students experience. Related research has investigated the use of interactive learning media, including computers, animations, music, videos, and other components. The use of such media aimed to facilitate interaction and activity between students and computers in the context of learning (Nulhakim et al., 2019). Through an interactive communication platform, the study aimed to help students understand the learning material in depth. Interactivity here refers to the ability of the media to exchange information in two or more directions with the user.

The Social Information Processing Theory (SIP), introduced by Joseph Walther in 1992, focused on social information processing. The essence of this theory is related to relationships in the online world (Walther, 1992). This theory studied the impact of technology, especially the Internet, on the development of relationships. On the contrary, the theory of social information processing (SIP) recognized the importance of non-verbal communication but did not regard it as a key element in interpersonal relationships. Moreover, this theory acknowledged the need for affinity, which was associated with the "uncertainty reduction theory," both in face-to-face and online communication. The SIP theory focused on word selection in online relationships, beyond face-to-face intimacy. As time passed, researchers also applied this theory to online relationship development. (West et al., 2010). There were three assumptions in the theory of social information processing: [1] Online communicators were motivated to create a good impression of themselves among others. [2] SIP individuals in online relationships generally showed positive aspects of themselves to others. Other research also supported this assumption, which suggested that

individuals on social networking sites like Facebook tried to show their uniqueness to others. [3] The third assumption stated that the rate of exchange and accumulation of information significantly affected the development of SIP relations.

The concepts of communication skills, game-based learning, and interactive communication were closely related to the research studies of researchers. Similarly, the information processing theory was based on the development of communication through Internet-based technology as well as the impact of communication processes that built better relationships, in this case, interactive communication relationships between teachers and students in the classroom, so that the desired goals could be achieved.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research approach used a qualitative-descriptive methodology. According to [Saldaña \(2011\)](#), qualitative research was a general term for several approaches and methods used to study social life naturally. Moleong's Perspective ([Moleong, 2017](#)) in the journal article was in line with the understanding, which stated that in qualitative research, the individual or organization studied should be seen as a holistic whole, not isolated into variables or hypotheses.

Researchers' studies used case studies to reveal in-depth and holistic findings ([Mulyana, 2010:201](#)) defined case studies as a comprehensive description and explanation of various aspects of an individual, a group, an organization, a program, or a social situation. While, according to [Yin \(2011\)](#), case studies were methods to show how something happened and were understood in a complex way. Another point added by K. Yin was that in case studies, in-depth analysis was obtained from various sources. It was related to researchers' research on communication problems in classroom learning, specifically in the case of an English class where the students' response during the course of learning was very low. The data was obtained through observations and interviews, where the information came from a variety of sources, including not only students but also lecturers.

The research informants consisted of three students who acted as informants in one classroom and a lecturer who facilitated the teaching-learning process as well as a key informant. The informants were purposefully selected by the researcher, which meant that the sample was selected according to the criteria for the purpose of the research ([Mulyana, 2010:187](#)). Here, the criteria were students participating in English classes and lecturers who conducted English lessons during the specified semester, precisely from September to December 2023.

In order to uphold the ethics of research, the researchers also sought permission from the informants to be investigated and obtained approval. To respect and preserve the privacy of the informants, the researchers would also disguise their identities, for example, by giving only initials for their identity as informants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Communication Skills

The first theme was the positive outcome that the lecturer expected, which was the improvement of communication skills, especially those related to emotional and psychological problems like shame, anxiety, and fear. This was stated by all informants x, a, b, and c.

"Improved communication was positive, yes. Emotionally, students became more visible. They spoke more boldly, even racing to answer and ask..."

"...they felt more playful and motivated to win..."

"You were scared, you were excited, and I was motivated."

"...it was the spirit..."

The findings, after the interactive game-based learning process was carried out, showed that the method was quite successful in several online class meetings. This was observed both orally and in writing, where students answered questions with enthusiasm, smiled, and showed joyful emotions through their voices and gestures during the interview, even though it was conducted online. Communication skills involve the exchange of information, knowledge, and emotions through oral or written language, body movements, or symbols. This finding was also in line with what informant x, as a lecturer directly involved in learning, stated. It aligned with the understanding of the theory of information processing, which affirmed the impact of internet technology in online game-based learning. It had a positive impact on improving both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. When consistently applied, this interactive game-based learning method ultimately built students' communication skills.

Interactive Communication

Interactive communication involves the active exchange of messages and mutual understanding. Barriers such as technical disruptions, communication skills, cultural differences, and environmental disruptions that impede learning effectiveness were overcome when interactive communication was well established. This was proven by what all informants x, a, b, and c said, as follows:

"After a few lessons were applied, everything went well. Technical disturbances, even though they sometimes appeared, did not diminish the student's motivation to learn. Yes, the feedback between me and the students flowed smoothly. They spoke better in English, and their vocabulary improved."

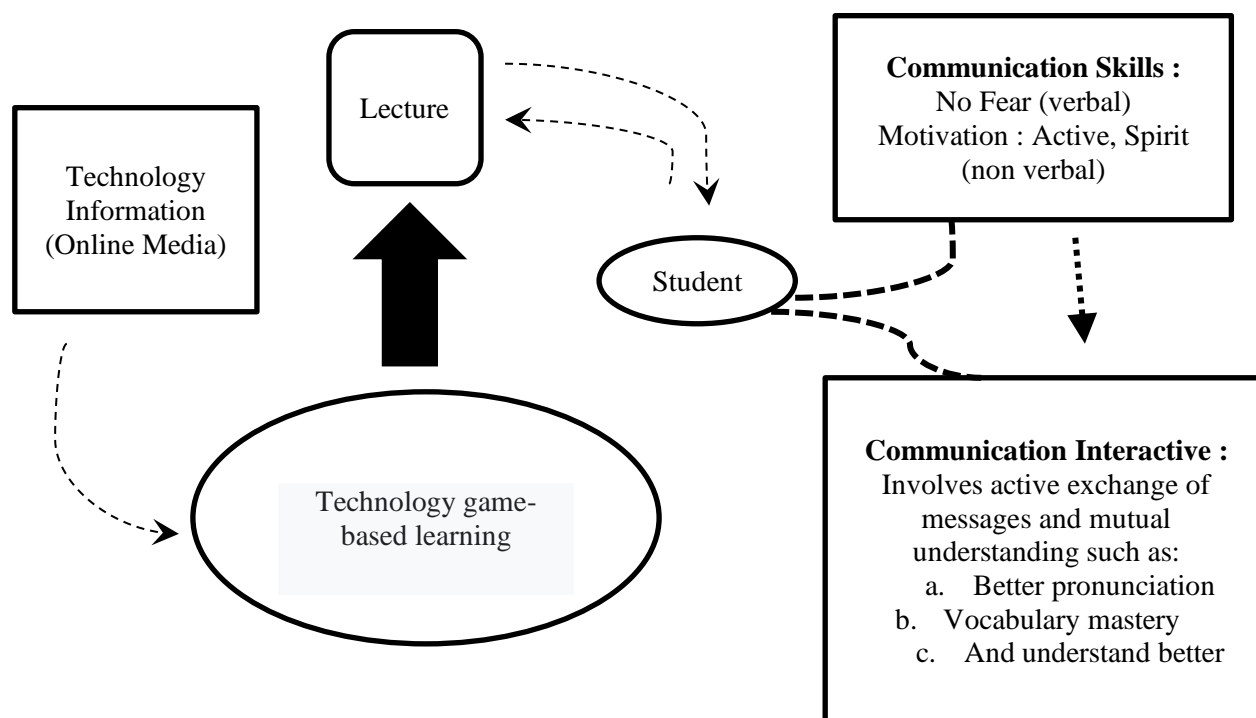
"..through the interactive game method, I now understand better."

"Under online class conditions and various barriers, now they are not so influenced. Learning through games makes them more active in speaking because it's more understandable."

"...by the way, it's smoother, not like before."

Student informants generally stated that they had become more fluent in speaking English because they understood better, their speech improved, and their vocabulary mastery increased. Language environments that used interactive games also contributed to the development of their communication skills. From a psychological perspective, informants generally explained that the use of interactive games helped reduce feelings of fear, shame, anxiety, and lack of confidence.

Here's a model of the results of the study, Interactive Communication Models Through Game-Based Learning



Source: The results of the development of the researcher's research

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the researchers' observations, game-based learning not only promoted interactive communication between students and lecturers but also created a more active classroom atmosphere. The students' spirits were now active in both gestures and discussions. The English lessons that students once feared now felt more like entertainment in the classroom. This demonstrated that interactive game-based learning has proven to build student communication in the classroom. Problematic aspects such as speech problems, vocabulary, language environments, and psychological factors like fear of making mistakes, shame, anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and lack of motivation have now been reduced.

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