

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1.The Background of The Study

Speaking skill was the most dominant of the language skills that the students needed to master, even at the primary level. But the truth was, many elementary students still covered up their mouths and felt insecure when they tried to start speaking English. This suggested a disconnect between what perfect would be seen as in learning English and what it actually was in practice. According to Dell Hymes (1970), successful instruction in speaking should be based on engaging and interactive approaches that stimulated students' motivation and fostered participation. In real situations, teachers sometimes found a lot of problems generating a fun learning atmosphere to help improve students' speaking skills.

There were many theories and research evidences on the benefits of using interactive games in speaking learning, which proved the effectiveness of interactive games in improving the students' speaking skills. Interactive games, according to Gee (2003), promoted an active and participatory learning environment consistent with the tenets of constructivism in which learning resulted from direct experience in a social context. Moreover, students' intrinsic motivation was enhanced when they found the learning enjoyable, and interactive games were fun and challenging, bringing fun and challenge to the learning activities, thereby stimulating the students' intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan,

1985). This coincided with the stance taken by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), who noted that students' engagement in learning could be promoted through experiences that were applicable and demanding in a way the interactive games offered.

Interactivity was one of the important features of games and had implications for learning, as it could attract students' attention, enhance learning motivation, and supply enjoyable and meaningful learning experiences. It had been demonstrated in previous research that the use of interactive games in learning languages made significant contributions to improving students' speaking abilities.

Additionally, the argument was consistent with empirical evidence. According to Mahmoud & Tanni (2014), interactive games created high-spirited and enthusiastic communication engagement where learners enjoyed and felt happy when learning. They also argued that through playing games, a relaxing, friendly, and humorous environment, which could help decrease the boredom and stress of the students, was constructed, while raising the level of their confidence and interaction in the speech class. According to Hadfield (1996), games could be described as "activities with rules, a goal, and fun," and Wright et al. (2006) stressed that games promoted communication among players, which was important in foreign language education. Other research also validated that interactive games enhanced not only speaking but also students' motivation and engagement levels significantly over traditional teaching.

Types of interactive games that could accommodate different styles of learners—visual, auditory, or kinesthetic—were inclusive and effective mediums for learning. Jääskä and Aaltonen (2022) also supported this and stated that game-based learning worked in cooperation with the students, with the games, and with teachers, offering relevant feedback that strengthened the learning process.

In this study, the researcher conducted research at SD Islam Sabila Amanda, specifically with 4th plus grade students. The researcher examined the use of interactive games in teaching English speaking skills to students in 4th grade plus at SD Islam Sabila Amanda. The interactive games used were Online ESL games: Games to Learn English.

Games to Learn English was an innovative platform dedicated to enhancing English language learning through interactive gameplay. It was created by Owen Dwyer. Online ESL games were designed for online English as a second language (ESL) learning. These games helped students overcome English language anxiety, revised vocabulary, taught new language structures, and allowed practice speaking in a fun and motivating environment. Online ESL games were often used in distance learning to make the learning process more engaging and interactive, and could be tailored to students' language levels and needs.

The interactive game used in this lesson was a tool specifically designed to improve students' English speaking skills. This game had been implemented at Sabila Amanda in previous years, however in different classes and with different subgames. The experience of implementing this game in previous classes provided an important foundation for understanding how interactive game media

could be adapted to the needs and characteristics of students in the 4th plus grade at SD Islam Sabila Amanda, thus optimally impacting the speaking learning process.

Furthermore, at SD Islam Sabila Amanda, particularly in 4th plus grade, the implementation of interactive gaming-based learning of speaking skills had not been fully exploited, and most importantly, it had never been investigated. For that reason, the present study used a qualitative design to explore how the use of interactive games could contribute to promoting speaking skills more effectively than before. The researcher used a qualitative design which had the advantage of allowing better exploration of the learning process, the way that students interacted with the game media, and the various difficulties and benefits that arose from learning. This study aimed to offer practical insights for educators in creating more engaging and effective speaking instruction techniques, while also enhancing academic research concerning the application of interactive games in elementary English language education.

In the English syllabus, games were optional to meet students' needs in English lessons. Then, in the English syllabus, every English student in grades 4 and up had to achieve at least 70 points. If they wanted to pass English below the minimum passing grade, they received remedial classes.

Furthermore, the researcher thought that games were very important since during the teaching and learning process in the classroom, games played an important role in increasing students' ability to speak.

Previous studies had generally discussed the use of board games or conventional games in speaking instruction, but there was still very limited research examining the use of interactive digital games, particularly in the context of English language learning in elementary schools. Furthermore, no research had been found specifically focusing on 4th plus grade students at SD Islam Sabila Amanda in utilizing interactive games as a medium for speaking instruction. This indicated a lack of research that in-depth examined the influence of interactive games on learning motivation and English speaking skills in fourth-grade students, thus requiring further research.

In addition to gaps related to students, there was also a research gap regarding the role of teachers in using interactive games as a medium for speaking instruction. There was limited previous research examining how teachers prepared and managed learning using interactive games, particularly in the context of 4th plus grade students at SD Islam Sabila Amanda. There was little research on teacher competency in effectively integrating interactive game technology to improve students' speaking skills. Furthermore, the obstacles, strategies, and attitudes of teachers in addressing the challenges of using interactive game-based media were also underexplored. Therefore, this aspect was crucial for further research to provide a comprehensive overview of the teacher's role in teaching speaking using this method.

1.2.The Research Problems of The Study

After describing the background of the problem in this study, the focus of this study was as follows:

1. How did the teacher use Interactive Games in teaching English to 4th plus grade students at SD Islam Sabila Amanda?
2. What were students' responses to learning English by using Interactive Games in teaching English speaking skills to 4th plus grade students at SD Islam Sabila Amanda?

1.3.The Objectives of The Study

Based on the background and research problems, this study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To discover ways and techniques that were used to employ interactive games as an efficient method to teach students in the classroom how to speak English well.
2. To investigate how students responded toward interactive games in learning English for speaking skills.

1.4.The Significance of The Study

1. Theoretical Significance

This research was intended to promote science, especially EFL learning in elementary schools. The findings of such a study also contributed to the theoretical development of the integration of interactive games, which had the

potential as a powerful teaching and learning tool for enhancing students' speaking ability. Furthermore, this research was considered a basis for other studies that wished to observe the use of innovative learning media in English language learning.

2. Practical Significance

a. For Teachers

This study offered inspiration and certain pedagogical references for teachers who opted to choose and apply interactive games as an approach to teaching English. Particularly, a target was found to intensify students' oral skills within their classes.

b. For Next Researchers

This study was a reference and an informative source for researchers who were interested in conducting studies of the same nature, at the elementary and other educational cycles.