IMPROVING STUDENT'S SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH WORD RELAY GAME ON INTRODUCTION ONE-SELF MATERIAL IN MTSN 1 PROBOLINGGO

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is a crucial component of English language learning; however, many EFL students experience anxiety, low confidence, and limited vocabulary when speaking. This classroom action research aimed to improve the speaking skill of seventh-grade students at MTsN 1 Probolinggo through the implementation of the Word Relay Game in self-introduction materials. The study applied two cycles following the Kemmis and McTaggart model, involving 25 students. Data were collected through speaking tests, observation, and fiel notes. To overcome this, researchers combine the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Game-Based Learning (GBL) in an interesting and innovative teaching method. The results showed a significant increase in students' average scores from 36.92 in the pre-test, increasing to 60.60 in the first cycle, and reaching 89.40 in the second cycle. Overall learning completeness is achieved, where 100% of students can achieve the specified minimum grade. These results indicate that the Word Relay Game effectively enhances students' pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, and speaking confidence. Therefore, this strategy can be considered an effective and engaging alternative for teaching speaking skills in junior high school EFL classroom. development.

Keywords: Speaking Skill, Word Relay Game, EFL students

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are the most important aspect of learning English because they serve as a communication tool to convey ideas, feelings, and information orally. According to (Novia et al., 2021) Communication is an activity that conveys information and interaction with other individuals. Speaking is also part of a daily routine that is believed to maintain positive community participation and according to (Ilinawati, Elisa, n.d.) speaking skills include not only pronouncing words correctly, but also the ability to express, choose appropriate vocabulary, and ensure messages remain clear when communicating. Students have negative factors so that they feel difficulties in speaking English such as according to (Fikni et al., 2022) factors that cause students to have difficulty speaking including embarrassment to the interlocutor, worries about not being able to convey information well, lack of

preparation, low confidence, and lack of language skills. Therefore, the application of innovative learning methods, such as games or collaborative tasks, is able to create a fun learning environment and encourage students to communicate more freely and confidently.

To address these issues, interactive teaching appproaches have been widely recommended. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which makes interaction the main core of the language learning process, with Game-Based Learning (GBL), which connects learning activities with game elements to make them more interesting, motivating, and focused on achieving results. According to Santos dan Miguel (2020) in the (Wathawatthana et al., 2025) CLT Supporting real interaction and problem-solving through active learning. Activities such as role-playing and games create a good atmosphere, encouraging more senior students to speak with confidence, while teachers serve as mentors and According to Qasserras (2023), CLT is a blend of diverse language ideas, including sociolinguistics, functional linguistics, semantics, and pragmatics. According to Asih & Halisiana (2022) in the (Nuriyanti, 2025) The recently developed learning techniques such as gamification and game-based learning (GBL) are thought to be appropriate for enjoyable English language learning. Meanwhile, according to Wulan et al (2025) The use of Game-Based Learning to Improve Students' Speaking Skills shows that Game-Based Learning can effectively improve students' speaking skills, despite obstacles such as lack of facilities and training for teachers.

One intstructional game that has gained attention in language learning is word Relay Game. In this game, all students work in a group, before going to the game stage all students drilled together according to the vocabulary introduction and after that the students take turns mentioning words that correspond to certain predetermined categories. The word generated by the first student becomes a reference for the next student to add a new word and the process of playing this game continues until the time is up. According to Dewi and Syahuma (2022) in the (Nuriyanti, 2025) the Word Chain Game is a game-based learning technique, in which students take turns saying words following the rules, so that the process of remembering vocabulary becomes easier, more fun, and encourages students to communicate actively. while according to Muhammad et al (2022) in the (Dafitriya, 2025) Word chain is a well-known game where players have to say something based on a theme that is chosen simultaneously and has been used in various language classes for a long time. Meanwhile, according to Latief (2021), explaining that relay games in language teaching are methods that involve students in groups or alternately, in a fast and moving way, and can improve students' speaking skills.

Based on preliminary observation, the VII grade of MTsN 1 Probolinggo revealed that most students still have difficulties in speaking English, especially in the Introduction One-self material. Students feel hesitant to speak due to limited vocabulary and lack of practice in correct pronunciation as well as lack of confidence. In addition, the use of conventional learning methods also contributes to low student participation and motivation in practicing speaking skills. This condition has an impact on the achievement of learning outcomes that do not meet the Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM). Therefore, the strategy of using the word relay method is very appropriate to be used as a new solution in English learning to overcome problems in MTsN due to students' low speaking skills.

Previous research discussed the use of word relays and results in language learning. According to Putri & Asari (2024), word relay games involve students taking turns naming or writing words belonging to a specific category. This activity has been shown to be effective in improving students' vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. Dafitriya (2025) also found that word chain games can help students master vocabulary better and Latief (2021) showed that relay games can improve students' speaking fluency and pronunciation through a competitive and enjoyable learning environment. According to Asfia & Manurung (2025) revealed that the application of chain word games significantly improves students' vocabulary understanding in terms of meaning, how to use, and how to spell. while according to Maharani (2024), it revealed that the application of word relay games can significantly increase the vocabulary mastery of students at the junior high school level.

In general, previous research has consistently shown that the use of games, especially word relays is only able to improve students' mastery and understanding of vocabulary in the classroom, without specifically applying word relay games to the topic of self-introduction. Therefore, this study fills these shortcomings by focusing on how Word Relay Games can improve students' speaking skills about self-introduction material at the junior high school level.

This study focused on the application of Word Relay Games to improve students' speaking skills on the topic of self-introduction, which was rarely a concern in previous studies. This research emphasizes speed, cooperation, confidence, and spontaneous speaking ability in Word Relay Games to encourage direct communication between students. The novelty of this research lies in the incorporation of the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Game-Based Learning (GBL), which are applied in a collaborative and time-limited format. This method not only improves students' vocabulary but also trains their pronunciation, fluency, and confidence when speaking in English. The research also provides practical benefits for teachers by providing creative and engaging alternative methods for teaching speaking skills, especially regarding self-introduction materials at the junior high school level.

The uniqueness of this study lies in integrating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Game-Based Learning (GBL) principles into a collaborative timed game format to enhance students' speaking skills particularly emphasizing self-introduction materials, which have received limited attention in prior research. Unlike previous studies that focused more on vocabulary development, this research examines how the Word Relay Game can simultaneously improve fluency, pronunciation accuracy, confidence, and spontaneous communication skills among junior high school students.

Based on this rationale, the study aims to address the following research questions:

- How does the Word Relay Game improve students' speaking skills, particularly in the theme of self-introduction?
- Which speaking aspects (pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, and confidence) show significant improvement after implementing the Word Relay Game?

METHOD

This research uses Classroom Action Research developed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1998) which consists of four stages in each cycle, namely: 1. planning 2. acting 3. observing 4. reflecting. The research was designed with 2 cycles, each with 2 meetings. This research was conducted at MTsN 1 Probolinggo and involved 25 students consisting of 18 girls and 7 boys. Class VII H was chosen because based on initial observations, most students had difficulty in speaking, lacked confidence, and were not yet fluent in introducing themselves in English. Only about 30% of students achieved a minimum passing score of 70, so an interesting and interactive strategy was needed. Therefore, the Word Relay Game was chosen as a teaching technique to encourage interaction, build self-confidence, and improve students' speaking skills.

The instruments used for this study consisted of observation sheets, assessment rubrics for speaking, speaking tests (pre-test and post-test), as well as documentation and field notes. The observation sheet includes, student participation in the group, pronunciation accuracy, students' fluency when speaking, students' enthusiasm in participating in the Word Relay Game, collaboration skills, and students' response to directions from teachers. The speaking assessment rubric evaluates four aspects, namely fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, and confidence using a scale of 1 to 4 which is then converted to a 100-point scale. Documentation and field records are used to support observational data.

This research process follows the steps of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection in each cycle;

1. Planning: Prepare a plan for learning, prepare word cards and sentences related to the theme of Self-Introduction, and also the observation sheets, assessment rubrics, and instruments for the test.
2. Implementation: Students are divided into groups and take turns mentioning or making sentences according to the category within a predetermined time. This activity begins with vocabulary practice and then continues with a word relay game.
3. Observation: Conducted concurrently with the implementation of the action by researchers and collaborators to record student behavior, participation levels, pronunciation accuracy, and student interaction patterns.
4. Reflection: Data from observations, tests, and notes are analyzed to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in the learning process. The results of this reflection are used to improve strategies in the next cycle, for example by adding pronunciation exercises or extending speaking time to increase student fluency and confidence.

Data were obtained through observations at each meeting during Cycle I and Cycle II. Quantitative data were collected from students' speaking scores and analyzed to determine the average improvement and the percentage of students achieving a minimum score of 70 on the previous test, Cycle I and Cycle II. Qualitative data were used to describe student participation, behavior, and confidence based on observations, documentation, and reflective notes. These two analyses were used to obtain a comprehensive picture of students' speaking skill improvement through the Word Relay game.

As a measure of success, an action is considered successful if at least 80% of students score 70 or higher in a post-test and show improvement in speaking during
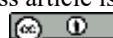
the Word Relay Game activity. These indicators are established to ensure that improvements can be observed in both aspects of learning outcomes (quantitative performance) and learning processes (student engagement as well as communication progress during the cycle).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Findings

This research was conducted in class VII H MTsN 1 Probolinggo in the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year with 25 students. The purpose of this research was to improve students' speaking skills in introducing themselves using the Word Relay game. This research consisted of two cycles and used the (Kemmis and McTaggart) model which included the planning, acting, observation, and reflecting. Data were obtained through speaking tests (pretest, posttest cycle I, posttest cycle II), observation, field notes, and documentation.

In the initial stage (pre-cycle), a pretest is conducted to measure students' speaking ability. The results of the pretest show that the level of students' speaking ability is still low. The average student score was only 36.92, and none of the 25 students achieved a passing grade (≥70). Observations show that students look hesitant when speaking, imprecise pronunciation, limited vocabulary, sentence structure is still very simple and lack of confidence. This situation is the basis for planning actions in cycle 1.

In the planning phase of Cycle I, the researcher prepared learning materials, media, and a series of activities to implement the Word Relay Game. The core activities were designed so that students could practice memorizing vocabulary, pronouncing words, and creating simple sentences through relay-based group competitions. In the action phase, students worked in groups and took turns arranging word cards, pronouncing them, and then using them to create oral self-introduction sentences. This activity created a more enjoyable and interactive classroom atmosphere. During the observation phase, Students begin to be actively involved in groups. Their spirits increased, but there were still mistakes when speaking. The confidence to speak is starting to show, although it is not evenly distributed. the researcher noted that some students began to participate more actively, although some still experienced difficulties in pronunciation and vocabulary selection. In the reflection phase, the results of the Cycle I posttest showed an increase in learning outcomes with an average score of 60.60, and 4 students (16%) achieved the minimum passing score. Although these results showed significant progress compared to the pre-cycle, because students have problems in pronunciation, word selection, and additional pronunciation exercises and more complete sentence examples are needed. they did not meet the research success indicator, namely mastery ≥80%, so improvements were needed for the next cycle.

The researcher developed an improvement plan for Cycle II with more focus on vocabulary, correct pronunciation practice, clearer role determination in each group to ensure active and increase the duration of the Speaking Exercise. In the action phase, conduct intensive pronunciation exercises for all students, Next, carry out a Word Relay game with provisions that ensure each team member actively speaks and Assign students to express their introductory sentences spontaneously within the time limit. After that, provide feedback on errors in pronunciation and

sentence structure. During the observation phase, significant behavioral changes were seen, students demonstrate correct pronunciation results, students showed higher self-confidence, were more active in communicating, and were faster in composing and delivering sentences. In the reflection phase, the results of the Cycle II posttest showed very good progress with an average score reaching 89.40, and all students (100%) managed to achieve the minimum passing score. This indicates that the research success indicators were fully achieved and the strategies implemented were proven effective in improving students' speaking skills.

To clarify the results of students' speaking skill development, you can see the graph below:
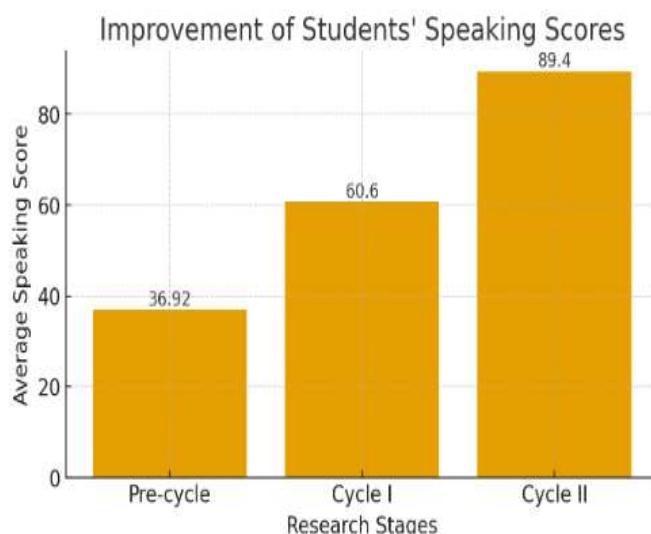
Figure 1. Graph of the improvement in the value of students' speaking skills
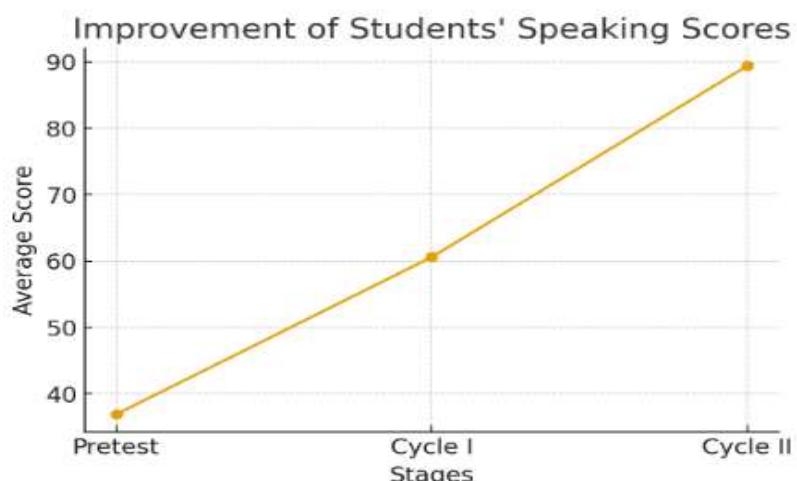

Figure 2. Graph of student speaking improvement

Based on the graph above, there is progress for students' speaking skills from the pre-cycle stage, cycle 1 and cycle 2. The percentage of learning success shows progress from 0% to 16% to reach 100%, which indicates a significant increase in achievement, both in terms of grades and student engagement during the learning process. The results of observations also support this quantitative data, students appear more confident, more active in speaking, and demonstrate better

collaboration and communication skills. These findings prove that the application of the Word Relay Game method can improve the speaking skills of class VII H students at MTsN 1 Probolinggo.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the use of the Word Relay Game has an impact on improving students' speaking skills, especially in introducing themselves. The improvement from the pre-cycle stage to Cycle I followed by a greater improvement in Cycle II indicates that this method is effective in helping students overcome their initial difficulties in the aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary mastery, speaking fluency, and self-confidence.

This improvement aligns with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes active interaction, meaningful communication, and the application of language in real-life situations. In these activities, students asked to memorize vocabulary, construct sentences, and practice pronunciation. This aligns with Santos dan Miguel (2020) in the (Wathawatthana et al., 2025) CLT Supporting real interaction and problem-solving through active learning. Activities such as role-playing and games create a good atmosphere, encouraging more senior students to speak with confidence, while teachers serve as mentors. The use of games in language teaching is also supported by Game-Based Learning (GBL) theory. According to Asih & Halisiana (2022) in the (Nuriyanti, 2025) The recently developed learning techniques such as gamification and game-based learning (GBL) are thought to be appropriate for enjoyable English language learning. According to Dewi and Syahuma (2022) in the (Nuriyanti, 2025) the use of Word Chain Games is a game-based learning technique in which students take turns pronouncing words according to rules, making vocabulary memorization easier, more enjoyable, and encouraging active communication.

The findings of this study also align with previous studies. Putri & Asari (2024) stated that word game activities help students develop vocabulary mastery, fluency, and self-confidence. Maharani (2024) also emphasized that chain and relay-based word games strengthen vocabulary retention and verbal activity in the classroom. Similarly, Latief (2021) showed that relay games have a positive impact on pronunciation and fluency through engaging and repetitive group activities and Asfia & Manurung (2025) revealed that the application of chain word games significantly improves students' vocabulary understanding in terms of meaning, how to use, and how to spell. So, this study extends these findings by applying the Word Relay Game specifically to self-introduction materials.

The implementation of the word relay method in this study is in accordance with the principles of classroom action research proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), which include the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Meanwhile, the quantitative data showed an increase in students' average score from 36.92 in the pre-cycle to 60.60 in cycle 1, then increasing to 89.40 in cycle 2. This indicates that students' speaking skills gradually improved throughout the research cycle and Qualitative data from the observation sheets also showed the progress of student involvement and the quality of interaction during the learning process.

The indicator of success for this study has also been well met in Classroom Action Research. Learning is considered successful if at least 80% of students

obtain the minimum required score and demonstrate progress in the learning process. In Cycle II, all students (100%) successfully achieved the minimum passing score, indicating that the Word Relay Game efficiently supports the cognitive and affective aspects of learning. Students not only improved their speaking scores but also demonstrated more positive learning attitudes, such as cooperation, self-confidence, and active communication.

Overall, the Word Relay Game proved to be an effective teaching method in improving students' speaking skills in self-introduction materials. The combination of interactive communication exercises, vocabulary reinforcement, pronunciation exercises, and collaborative game structures creates a rewarding and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Thus, this method can be suggested as an innovative option for English teachers to improve students' speaking skills and participation in theIt covers the findings and discussions of the study in which there is no separation within. It is expected that in the discussion, the author investigates his/her findings and refers back to the theoretical or empirical study which is written systematically, critically, and informatively.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Word Relay Game is an effective instructional strategy for improving students speaking skills, particularly in self-introduction materials at the junior high school level. The implementation of this game through two cycles of classroom action action research resulted in a substantial improvement in students speaking performance, as indicated by increased mean scores and complete learning mastery in cycle II.

In addition to quantitative improvement, qualitative findings revealed positive change in students' confidence, participation, pronunciation accuracy, and speaking fluecy. The integration of communicative language teaching and Game Based Learning ptinciples enable students to engage in meaningful communication within an enjoyable and supportive learning environment.

This study aims to examine the mechanisms by which the Word Relay Game enhances students' speaking skills, with a particular focus on self-introduction topics, and to identify the speaking components that exhibit the most substantial improvement. The research findings explicitly address both research questions.

First, the implementation of the Word Relay Game significantly improves students' speaking skills by creating an interactive and engaging learning environment. Through group competition activities and timed practice, students become more motivated to participate actively and spontaneously in speaking. Quantitative data show a consistent increase in students' average scores from 36.92 in the pre-cycle phase, rising to 60.60 in Cycle I, and reaching 89.40 in Cycle II indicating the effectiveness of this method in holistically enhancing speaking abilities.

Second, regarding specific speaking components, students demonstrated significant progress in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, and confidence. This confirms that integrating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Game-Based Learning (GBL) principles into the Word Relay Game not only strengthens linguistic competence but also fosters confidence and communicative participation.

In summary, the Word Relay Game proves to be a practical and innovative approach to improving students' speaking skills, particularly in self-introduction topics at the junior high school level. Educators are recommended to adopt this method as an instructional alternative to create dynamic and engaging English-speaking activities in the classroom.

For future researchers, it is suggested to apply the Word Relay Game to other speaking topics or language skills, such as storytelling, describing people, or expressing opinions. Then, explore its implementation in different educational contexts for instance, high schools or EFL classes at the university level to evaluate its broader generalizability. In the last, integrate the Word Relay Game with digital technology or multimedia to enhance students' learning experiences and assess long-term progress in communicative competence.

By expanding the scope and implementation tools, future research can further validate the pedagogical potential of the Word Relay Game and contribute to the development of interactive language learning strategies.

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