

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the study by describing its background, outlining the research problems, stating the objectives, explaining the significance, defining the scope and limitations, and clarifying the key terms used throughout the research.

A. Background of the Study

In English language instruction, speaking proficiency occupies a central position within the educational framework. As noted by Luoma (2009), oral communication represents one of the most demanding skills to cultivate, requiring learners to integrate multiple linguistic elements including proper pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and sufficient vocabulary. The ability to speak effectively demonstrates how successfully students can articulate their thoughts and ensure mutual understanding with their interlocutors.

Brown (2001) characterizes speaking as a dynamic meaning-construction process that encompasses the generation, reception, and interpretation of information. This skill involves more than mere verbal output; it requires learners to convey ideas, emotions, and viewpoints through spoken discourse. When students can successfully exchange information orally, their confidence in using the target language naturally improves.

During preliminary observations at MTs Ihyaul Ulum Canga'an, several recurring obstacles emerged. Students frequently exhibited anxiety about making errors, worried about peer judgment regarding their pronunciation, and

hesitated due to vocabulary limitations. The instructional approaches employed primarily involved rote memorization of dialogues and teacher-centered speaking drills, which often resulted in disengagement and reduced enthusiasm for learning. Although speaking assessments do not contribute to final examination scores, they remain essential components of ongoing classroom evaluation.

Recognizing these challenges, this investigation seeks to implement an alternative instructional strategy that can address student needs more effectively. Game-based activities present promising potential for creating engaging learning environments where students can practice oral skills with reduced anxiety. This study specifically examines the Tic-Tac-Toe game as a medium for enhancing speaking capabilities among junior secondary learners.

B. Problem of The Study

The research question guiding this investigation is: Is tic-tac-toe game effective in teaching speaking at MTS Ihyaul Ulum Canga'an?

C. Objective of The Study

This study aims to determine whether the Tic-Tac-Toe game constitutes an effective instructional technique for teaching speaking skills.

D. Hypothesis of The Study

Two hypotheses guide this investigation:

1. Alternative Hypothesis (H_a): A statistically significant difference exists in speaking proficiency between junior high school students instructed using the Tic-Tac-Toe game and those taught through discussion-based

approaches.

2. Null Hypothesis (Ho): No statistically significant difference exists in speaking proficiency between junior high school students instructed using the Tic-Tac-Toe game and those taught through discussion-based approaches.

E. Scope and Limitation

This investigation focuses on two eighth-grade classes at MTs Ihyaul Ulum Canga'an, comparing an experimental group receiving Tic-Tac-Toe game instruction with a control group experiencing conventional discussion methods. The study is limited to examining the effectiveness of this specific game for teaching speaking.

F. Significance of The Study

The findings are expected to benefit multiple stakeholders:

- Students: May experience more enjoyable and effective speaking practice.
- Teachers: Gain access to an alternative engaging instructional technique.
- Future Researchers: Receive reference material for related investigations.

G. Definition of The Key Terms

1. Speaking

The oral delivery of language utilizing various physiological mechanisms including the lungs, vocal apparatus, and articulatory structures to produce meaningful sounds.

2. Teaching Speaking

The instructional process focused on developing learners' oral communication competencies, encompassing pronunciation accuracy, grammatical appropriateness, and effective vocabulary usage.

3. Tic-tac-toe games

A traditional two-player activity played on a 3x3 grid where participants alternately mark squares with X or O symbols, aiming to achieve three consecutive marks horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

4. Discussion Method

The A collaborative learning approach where participants exchange perspectives and explore topics collectively, fostering deeper understanding through interactive dialogue.