

From Game to Gain: Using Mafia Games to Boost English Speaking in EFL Classroom

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Putri Wahyu Firmayanti, AB Prabowo Kusumo Adi, Maria Yosephin Widarti Lestari^{abc}

¹²³Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding author: putriwahyu1231@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to enhance students' speaking abilities using Mafia Games in a classroom setting. The research involved 9 students in DCT-1 class at BBC Banyumanik Semarang. Data was collected through observation sheets, measurement tests, and open-ended questionnaires. This research employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design and is conducted in two cycles during mid-term and final-term. Results showed an improvement in communication/content from 66 to 85, pronunciation from 68 to 84, range of vocabulary from 67 to 86, and grammar/accuracy from 65 to 86 between the first and second cycles which passed the BBC's Minimum Completeness Criteria of 70 points. The finding showed that the Mafia Games make learning activities more enjoyable and students are able to speak more confident through the game that marked by increased the BBCs' speaking measurement points.

Keywords: *Mafia Games, Teaching speaking, Classroom Action Research*

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a country where English is not the mother tongue, makes English one of the compulsory subjects for early childhood education, elementary education and secondary education levels as regulated in Permendikbudristek No. 12 of 2024, which means that Indonesian students are EFL (English for Foreign Languages) learners. And speaking abilities are basic abilities that must be possessed by EFL students because they are a tool for them to fully participate in everyday conversations, as a way for them to express their ideas, or interact with English speakers from various backgrounds. The importance of English-speaking abilities for EFL students is because English is the basis of global communication where it is the main means of communication to express ideas, thoughts, or emotions effectively (Amiruddin et al., 2022). In an academic context, good English-speaking abilities enable students to participate actively in English classes, in addition to that good English-speaking abilities will reduce long silent pauses because students can articulate ideas clearly and this will affect students' self-confidence levels (Aziez et al., 2024). Furthermore, English speaking abilities are integrated with other English language abilities such as listening, reading, and writing. To be able to speak well requires good listening abilities as well, listening provides input that is processed and will be used by students in their spoken output (Indriani, 2024). Mastery of vocabulary and grammar developed through reading and writing activities is very important to improve EFL students' speaking abilities where reading enriches students' understanding of vocabulary and grammar by providing meaningful contextual input, while writing offers active practice in organizing language accurately (Quines, 2023). The development of these interrelated abilities ensures that students can express themselves more fluently, accurately, and confidently in speaking.

Speaking entails speakers creating a language, which consists of sounds or words imbued with meaning, comprehensible to the listener and mastering the elements of a language enables speakers to articulate effectively, assuring comprehension by the audience

(Maji et al., 2022). That goes along with Brown that the validity and reliability of an oral production test are inevitably compromised because, although speaking is a productive ability that can be directly and experimentally seen, the observations are always coloured by the correctness and efficacy of the test-takers' listening abilities (Lander & Brown, 1995). Pursuant to this statement, the speaking abilities of students are essential for precision and efficacy, as they allow for the formulation of personal language to articulate thoughts or engage with others. Students must attain fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical proficiency to effectively develop a language and be reinforced by gestures, confidence, and motivation. Consequently, further practice is essential for training pupils to articulate their thoughts proficiently. Moreover, Harmer defines speaking as the capacity to articulate fluently, necessitating both linguistic knowledge and information processing abilities. English speakers encounter difficulties in fluency stemming from inadequate grammar, pronunciation, and diction. To effectively engage the audience, presenters should concentrate on both verbal and non-verbal communication abilities, ensuring they can articulate their message properly (Yinger, 1987).

As EFL learners where English is not the dominant language used, of course there are still many students who often experience problems in speaking English, this is influenced by various factors, such as linguistic, psychological, and contextual factors. Linguistic difficulties include a lack of vocabulary proficiency, grammar problems, and pronunciation issues. Fear of making mistakes, shyness, anxiety, lack of confidence, and a lack of motivation are all examples of psychological issues (Kadek et al., 2023). Contextual issues include the adoption of a script-based teaching technique or challenges with internet connectivity during online learning (Umaroh et al., 2023).

According to Ur in Gitit I.P (2020) there are four steps for successful speaking activities contain in four features. At first, participants engage in extensive dialogue during the duration permitted for the activity. This may seem evident; however, a significant portion of time is consumed by instructor discourse or pauses. Secondly, class discussions are not concentrated by certain groups of loquacious individuals; every group member is afforded the opportunity to contribute, ensuring equitable participation. Third, students are prepared to engage in discussion since they are invested in the subject and possess unique perspectives, or they seek to contribute to achieving the task objectives. Finally, learners use language that is relevant, understandable, and accurate. To ensure the success of these four elements, a teacher must possess a method to facilitate their implementation, one of which is gamified learning.

In gamification of learning, teachers can employ English speaking abilities to increase student engagement, motivation, and learning results. Gamification in ELT is the purposeful use of game design features like points, leaderboards, and incentives to instil a sense of accomplishment and intrinsic motivation in students. This approach creates a secure environment for students to experiment, apply knowledge, and build linguistic abilities through interactive activities that include vocabulary learning, grammar practice, and language creation (Putu Wulantari et al., 2023).

Werewolf Games also called Mafia Games is an excellent choice for educators looking to experiment with simulation games due of its diverse strengths because the game has very few rules, making it less difficult than other school exercises, it's also requiring little preparation time (Conner & Baxter, 2022). Dmitri Davidoff was the creator of Mafia Games in 1986, which was a popular party game in Russia (Wan Norhaidi et al., 2019). Players are divided into groups consisting of mafia, doctors, police and citizens who have exclusive tasks in their roles whose main goal is to find the mafia. According to York cited in Kian (2021) claims that the chosen game is the well-known social deduction Mafia Games, which gives students more chances to express and communicate their ideas, opinions, and reasoning.

Based on Ri (2022) there are 2 secret players in the mafia Games, namely the mafia and citizen, which are divided into several subtasks, namely the citizen itself, the police, and the doctor, and there is one task that is known to everyone, namely the Moderator who is tasked with guiding the event. The mafia's job is to find and kill the citizen and the citizen's job is to reveal who the mafia is in the game. The phase in the Mafia Games is divided into 2, namely

the day phase and the night phase. Where during the day phase all players guess the mafia so that there will be an argument to protect themselves considering that no one knows the role of each person except the moderator. For the night phase all players must close their eyes and the moderator will call the roles one by one in turn to carry out their duties where the mafia will kill the citizen, the police will guess who the mafia is and the doctor will save the citizen in secret. To win the Mafia Games, students must communicate with one another and protect themselves as good as possible. Researcher used Mafia Games as the communicative games, it meant to help educate the learning process in speaking class with joy, excitement, and without pressure. Also, the researcher wants to know how Mafia Games affect students' speaking abilities in English course especially conversation class in English course.

METHOD

Research Method

The researcher employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) as the methodology. Classroom Action Research (CAR) is reflective study that involves taking specific activities focused on at increasing learning method in the classroom professionally. It plays a crucial role in scientific research as it affects the quality of study outcomes; hence, the researcher intends to implement Classroom Action Research (CAR) to assist students in enhancing their speaking abilities by addressing their speaking challenges (Gaspersz, 2020). this approach allowed for iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection, facilitating immediate adjustments and improvements based on classroom experiences and student feedback. Thus, CAR provides a practical framework for improving speaking instruction and evaluating the effectiveness of Mafia Games directly and in context. The research procedures in Classroom Action Research based on Kemmis and Taggart (1988) as cited in Kamala (2022) were conducted in some stages as follows:

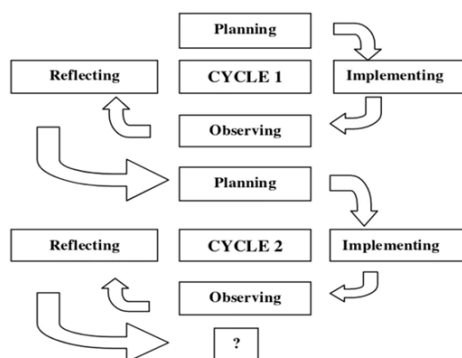


Figure 1. The stages in Classroom Action Research

Respondent

The research was conducted at BBC Banyumanik Semarang and the DCT-1 (Dynamic Conversation for Teenagers) chosen due with the expectation that students would exhibit greater motivation to engage in speaking English, although having taken English lessons, some of students still had difficulty to speak in English. Since DCT-1 was the first conversation class for teenagers, it provided representative sample of Junior High School students' that researcher intends to examine. There were 9 students in the class, consisting of 3 boys and 6 girls. Due to limited classes at the DCT level, the participants were taken from only one class.

Techniques of Data Collection

To gather the necessary data for the study, the researcher employed observation and measurement techniques. An observation was used to systematically record various classroom and student behaviours that could influence the learning process, while a measurement test was administered to assess students' knowledge and understanding of the material. Due to BBC has its own speaking assessment, the researcher adapted it accordingly. This measurement tests were a subjective evaluation based on the BBC's speaking assessment by the teacher. The BBC speaking assessment has four categories: (1) Communication/Content, (2) Pronunciation, (3) Vocabulary Range, and (4) Grammar/Accuracy with a score of 1-100.

The analysis of student learning outcomes, following corrections and scoring, is conducted in accordance with the BBC's Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM) of 70, which signifies mastery of the presented information.

Instruments of Data Collection

The instruments of data collection involved observation sheets, open-ended questionnaire, and speaking test. The observation sheets and open-ended questionnaire identified key conditions affecting the teaching-learning process, allowing the researcher to reflect on and adjust instructional methods. The observation sheets reflect the teacher's evaluation of the student's performance throughout the game, whereas the open-ended questionnaire is given to students for evaluating their perceptions of the teaching-learning process through the Mafia Games. The observation sheets and open-ended questionnaire provide explanations through descriptions based on the established criteria. For measurement tests, the researcher uses speaking cards containing conversational material that has previously been conveyed to students through a review of the material at one level before the final test. Experts assert that employing diverse data gathering methods in classroom action research is vital for obtaining both qualitative and quantitative insights, which are critical for evaluating the efficacy of teaching methods (Burns et al., 1967).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a crucial component, it elaborates on how these methods are essential for interpreting data accurately, testing hypotheses, and drawing meaningful conclusions. This systematic approach ensures the reliability of research findings and supports evidence-based strategies (Taherdoost, 2020). In this study, data was analysed using both score analysis and descriptive analysis. The descriptive analysis examined information obtained from observation sheets and open-ended questionnaire, describing phenomena according the researcher and students' interpretation. This method aimed to analyse circumstances to describe norms and understand the context. The score analysis involved evaluating each students' individual test results from cycle 1 and cycle 2 to assess their performance after implementation of the plan. The results from both cycles were compiled into a score list, allowing for the calculation of the mean score for the group and the individual score of each student. The formulation is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Individual Degree of Score} &= \frac{\text{Total score}}{\text{maximum score}} \times 100 \\ \text{Subject Mean Score} &= \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{number of students}}\end{aligned}$$

The result of mean score would be categorized as follow:

Table 1. Criteria of Mean Score by BBCs' Speaking Assessment.

Criteria	Excellent (86-100)	Good (76-85)	Average (75-66)	Poor (55-65)	Fail (Less than 55)
Communication/Content	Speaks clearly and confidently with relevant ideas in conversation naturally.	Speak with mostly relevant ideas and some hesitation but still understandable.	Expresses basic ideas with pause or repetition.	Ideas are hard to follow and limited communication.	Can't express ideas clearly.
Pronunciation	Pronunciation is clear and natural with minimal or no errors.	Mostly clear pronunciation with few noticeable errors.	Understandable but includes frequent pronunciation issues.	Difficult to understand due to pronunciation problems.	Mostly unintelligible and severe pronunciation issues.
Range of Vocabulary	Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary naturally and effectively.	Uses a good range of vocabulary with some variation.	Uses limited vocabulary and some repetition or basic words.	Very limited vocabulary and struggles to find words.	Minimal vocabulary and unable to use words appropriately.

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Grammar/ Accuracy	Uses correct grammar structures consistently and effectively.	Some grammar mistakes, but don't affect understanding .	Makes frequent grammar errors, the meaning is sometimes unclear.	Grammar errors often affect understanding .	Grammar is consistently incorrect and prevents communication s,
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To find the level of students' improvement, the formula for calculating the percentage of improvement were used. The formula was used to calculate the percentage of improvement in cycle 2 from cycle 1. It can be obtained by using the formula from Meltzer (2008) cited in Daniati (2018). The formula could be seen as follow:

$$P1 = \frac{y1-y}{y} \times 100\% \quad (3)$$

P : Percentage of students' improvement in cycle 2

y : Cycle 1 mean score

y1 : Cycle 2 mean score

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Student improvement is what is expected from the use of this Mafia Games. This can be seen from how students become enthusiastic and active during the teaching and learning process who were previously silent, listening, and talking with their friends. Students who were previously passive and answered only when appointed by their teacher in class became more active and enthusiastic in participating in lesson using Mafia Games.

There were several issues that were found during the first cycle. First, through the observation sheet, it was found that most of students were not ready even after the class was opened. This was due to the fact that the majority of students had just returned from school and went directly to BBC Banyumanik Semarang, which resulted in a slight exhaustion from the lessons being delivered by the teacher. Besides that, the unpreparedness was also seen from the students who were still talking to their friends. Thus, the lesson could start on time. The other issue that was found was that many students did not actively participate during Mafia Games to express opinions and provide responses using English. This is because students' vocabulary is still limited and they are still afraid of making mistakes, so they are reluctant to speak English. Despite that, students exhibit considerable enthusiasm for participating in the Mafia Games, regardless their continued usage of a mixture of languages, specifically Indonesian and English.

For measurement speaking ability test in the first cycle, it is found that the means score of the first cycle is; 66 for communication/content, 68 for pronunciation, 67 for range of vocabulary, and 65 for grammar/accuracy. These means are majority categorized as poor to average in the criteria of mean score by BBCs' speaking assessment. Based on these numbers, the mean score is room for improvement if the next cycle is to be carried out accordingly. Down bellows are the calculation of the mean score.

Communication/Content

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{Number of students}}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{597}{9}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = 66.33$$

Pronunciation

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{Number of students}}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{608}{9}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = 67.56$$

Range of Vocabulary

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$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{Number of students}}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{599}{9}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = 66.56$$

Grammar/Accuracy

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{Number of students}}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{585}{9}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = 65$$

Meanwhile, through the measurement test for the second cycle, it is found that the means are; 85 for communication/content, 84 for pronunciation, 86 for range of vocabulary, and 86 for grammar/accuracy. These means are majority categorized as average to good in the criteria of mean score by BBCs' speaking assessment. Down bellows are the calculation of the mean score.

Communication/Content

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{Number of students}}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{769}{9}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = 85$$

Pronunciation

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{Number of students}}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{757}{9}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = 84$$

Range of Vocabulary

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{Number of students}}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{772}{9}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = 86$$

Grammar/Accuracy

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{\text{sum of students' score}}{\text{Number of students}}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = \frac{771}{9}$$

$$\text{Mean Score} = 86$$

The mean score of the test on the first cycle and second cycle, the improvement of students were able calculated. Details of the data are displayed in Table 2. Based on the available mean score above, the percentage of students' improvement in the second cycle can be seen as follows:

Communication/Content

$$P1 = \frac{y1 - y}{y} \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = \frac{85 - 66}{66} \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = 0.2878 \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = 29\%$$

Pronunciation

$$P1 = \frac{y1 - y}{y} \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = \frac{84 - 68}{68} \times 100\%$$

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$$P1 = 0.2352 \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = 24\%$$

Range of Vocabulary

$$P1 = \frac{y1 - y}{y} \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = \frac{86 - 67}{67} \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = 0.2835 \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = 28\%$$

Grammar/Accuracy

$$P1 = \frac{y1 - y}{y} \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = \frac{86 - 65}{65} \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = 0.323 \times 100\%$$

$$P1 = 32\%$$

Table 2. Students' Speaking Test Score

Assessment of Speaking	Communication/Content		Pronunciation		Range of Vocabulary		Grammar/Accuracy		Status
Cycles Students	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	
A	60	82	60	80	60	80	60	83	Improved
B	72	87	75	85	70	90	75	88	Improved
C	67	88	70	86	69	88	65	85	Improved
D	65	80	63	80	65	80	60	80	Improved
E	71	90	75	92	70	94	74	95	Improved
F	65	80	63	86	62	80	60	80	Improved
G	67	90	68	85	68	90	62	95	Improved
H	68	88	70	83	71	90	69	85	Improved
I	62	84	64	80	64	80	60	80	Improved
Total Score	597	769	608	757	599	772	585	771	
Mean Score	66	85	68	84	67	86	65	86	

It is found that mean score of the first cycle test is 66 for communication/content, 68 for pronunciation, 67 for range of vocabulary, and 65 for grammar/accuracy. Student improvement in cycle 2 varies in each category; 29% in communication/content, 28% in range of vocabulary, 24% in pronunciation, and the highest improvement is 86% in grammar/accuracy. The improvement brings the students' mean score to 85 for communication/content, 84 for pronunciation, 86 for range of vocabulary, and 86 for grammar/accuracy. These numbers suggest significant gaps from the first cycle test to second cycle. This clearly shows that the use of Mafia Games as an English speaking for teaching technique is highly recommended. Students' curiosity and students are also able to apply their high order thinking abilities well in carrying out or doing the assignments given. In other words, significant improvement has happened to the students regarding to their speaking ability. On the other hand, the calculation of overall student test results in using Mafia Games, the individual scores obtained by each student during the process of implementing Mafia Games can be a significant benchmark. From the table of the student test results above, there are many students who get almost overall low scores with the code; student A, student C, student D, student F, student G, student H, students I. Those who previously get low scores that range from 60-69 for all criteria which do not even reach the BBC' Minimum Completeness Criteria in cycle 1, can get a significant increase in scores in cycle 2. However, one of the students with code Student A who is only able to get in average for all categories 60 in cycle 1, is able to get in average 81 in cycle 2. It can then be concluded, that each individual was able to obtain satisfactory grades after the implementation of Mafia Games in teaching and learning process class.

Based on the data from the existing table, the highest increase presentation criteria are in grammar/accuracy which is 32%. Indicating that during the learning process where students get material from the teacher, students have succeeded in applying grammar/accuracy mastery well in speaking English. On the other hand, the lowest

percentage increase is in the pronunciation criteria which is only 24%, there are still many students who still cannot apply some words in proper English pronunciation. For communication/content, students' improvement is 29% and range of vocabulary the percentage increase in students' abilities is 28%. Students experience an increase in communicating with more confidence to express their opinions so that it is related to this indicating an increase in vocabulary compared to Cycle 1.

In addition, for the field note, Cycle 1 showed that the class began after they just back from school in Monday and at that time the students were taking their end-semester exam at school, leading to some students arriving late and being unprepared for the lesson because they feel tired. Additionally, some students were talking among themselves in Indonesian even Javanese, reflecting a lack of active engagement in using English.

However, in Cycle 2, the classroom environment and student behavior improved markedly. The class started on time, with all students arriving punctually and ready to learn, and the Cycle 2 was taking on Thursday. The teacher introduces an ice-breaking activity before the lesson, crating a more enjoyable and conducive atmosphere for learning. The classroom was more comfortable, allowing students to focus better. Student participation increased, with student more active to speak in English during the Mafia Games. Moreover, the teacher provides rewards, such as voucher BBCs' canteen for the winning role, which heightened their interest and motivation in game. Overall, Cycle 2 demonstrated enhanced student readiness, engagement, and motivation compared to Cycle 1.

To figure out the extent of the treatment's impact, observations were undertaken during classroom sessions. The observation concentrated on the student's conversational abilities, lesson participation, material understanding, collaboration and social interaction among classmates, as well as problem-solving and argumentation capabilities. The researcher observed that the majority of students were interested and enthusiastic during their classroom involvement. In the initial phase, there remains a desire to communicate in English, since this need support from educators and peers to foster the want to engage in English conversation. As the game progressed, kids started to appreciate it by utilizing a blend of Indonesian and English. In the subsequent game, students increasingly appreciated utilizing English for communication, expressing viewpoints, and engaging in arguments, as the learning atmosphere fostered by the teacher and peers motivated them to converse in English.

In the Mafia Games students also develop the way students think to solve existing problems, so that critical thinking abilities also develop during this game in addition to developments in English speaking abilities which are in line with the statement (Shibata et al., 2023) the results in his research say that Mafia Games has the ability to suspect what other people say, lie, or detect lies in conversations. The implementation of a student-centered applied-learning exercise utilizing the game Werewolf (a version of the Mafia Games including additional roles) allowed students to engage with symbolic interaction theory and evaluate everyday events. This implementation attempted to improve social theory by employing active learning approaches, utilizing the role-playing game Werewolf as an alternative instructional instrument that demonstrated a deep comprehension of essential topics (Conner & Baxter, 2022). The research that conducted by (Wan Norhaidi et al., 2019) about Mafia Games, the result showed that enjoyment in this game can reduce students' anxiety about the risk of being embarrassed in speaking English due to a lack of grammar abilities, making students with low abilities focus on their speech by speaking more freely and increasing spontaneity in speaking English. Apart from that, research by (Angelina & Dania, 2024), states that Werewolf games or Mafia Games have a positive impact on learning, students are emotionally involved which indicates that they tend to be more motivated to speak English, besides that Mafia Games provide interactive interaction between teachers and students to improve speaking abilities through verbal communication, public speaking, critical thinking, active listening, negotiation, persuasion, and expanding vocabulary.

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to improve students' English-speaking skills through the implementation of Mafia Games in a classroom setting. The findings demonstrate a clear positive impact on students' speaking performance across multiple aspects: communication/content, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar/accuracy. In Cycle 1, students exhibited a general lack of confidence and hesitancy to contribute verbally, frequently relying on Indonesian or Javanese during activities. The mean scores in the speaking assessment were found to be relatively low, with scores of 66 in the communication domain, 68 in the pronunciation domain, 67 in the vocabulary domain, and 65 in the grammar domain. The majority of the students demonstrated scores below the BBC's Minimum Completeness Criteria of 70. The findings indicate that students exhibited limited readiness, vocabulary, and a reluctance to make mistakes, as evidenced during classroom observations and corroborated by field notes. However, substantial enhancements were documented in Cycle 2. The implementation of enhanced classroom conditions, engaging ice-breaking activities, and motivational rewards led to a notable improvement in student behaviour. Specifically, there was a marked increase in punctuality, enthusiasm, and participation among the student body. It has been observed that the participants began to engage in English more actively during the Mafia Games. The mean scores increased to 85 (communication), 84 (pronunciation), 86 (vocabulary), and 86 (grammar), indicating gains of 29%, 24%, 28%, and 32%, respectively. These increases underscore two key aspects: the development of skills and the enhancement of learner confidence. The implementation of Mafia Games in the EFL classroom is an effective and engaging method for improving speaking proficiency. The method promoted measurable improvements in the core components of speaking and encouraged learner autonomy, critical thinking, and social interaction. The observed transformation—from passive learners to confident speakers—shows that game-based learning, when facilitated well, is a powerful tool for developing students' communicative competence in English.

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