



# Enhancing TVET Students' English Speaking Skills at Community College Using the Snake & Ladder Game

Gopal K.<sup>1\*</sup>, Quah W. B.<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sungai Petani Community College,  
No. 77, Lengkok Cempaka 1, Pusat Bandar Amanjaya, Sungai Petani, Kedah, 08000 MALAYSIA

<sup>2</sup>Universiti Putra Malaysia, Persiaran Masjid, Serdang, Selangor, 43400 MALAYSIA

<sup>3</sup>Human Resource Management Division, Ministry of Higher Education,  
Aras 14 & 15, No 2, Menara 2, Jalan P5/6 Presint 5, Putrajaya 62200 MALAYSIA

\*Corresponding Author

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**Abstract:** The students from Sungai Petani Community College precisely in Hospitality Course had several difficulties speaking English, including anxiety of making mistakes, fear of being laughed at by their friends, and a lack of understanding of the pronunciation and grammar that they used. This study aims to determine the students speaking skills by enhancing their motivation level and also to determine how students can communicate effectively when games are integrated in the lesson. This research was implemented with SPM leavers who are attending Hospitality Course in this community college. A total of 30 students participated in this study. Snake and ladder game was used out to develop students' motivation in speaking English. When snake and ladder game is induced in the learning process, students will learn to speak spontaneously while playing the games and indirectly they will be able to motivate and train themselves in being a skillful speaker gradually. The researchers used pre-test and post-test, the researchers' observation and interviews with a few students. When students participated in speaking tasks, particularly during games, they felt more liberated, free, and confident, according to the findings. They work together, support each other, and interact. Furthermore, when they had to perform in small groups, they were relaxed and joyful. Games have been and will always be an important part of learning a second or foreign language. Researchers have pointed out the importance of using snake and ladder game in the English learning process. This game is motivating and exciting experiences for students to develop the speaking skills. The study indicated, employing communicative games as a method of instruction improved students' achievement and speaking skill. Students enjoyed their learning session and gained more motivation, curiosity, and confidence in their English class.

**Keywords:** Speaking skills, gamification, motivation, hospitality

## 1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, particularly community colleges, play a crucial role in Malaysia's education system. These institutions offer a range of vocational programs that provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in various industries. For the requirement of admission to community college, candidates only need to pass Bahasa Melayu dan Sejarah (SPM 2013 and above) and get ONE (1) credit in any subject. This means students don't need to have good grades for English subjects. In fact, in the field of hospitality, employees need to communicate in English. Although, the students in this community college's Hospitality Course were able to express themselves in writing. Through listening activities, they can even grasp commands and obey simple

\*Corresponding author: [krishnavehni@gmail.com](mailto:krishnavehni@gmail.com)

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directions. They were even able to read and interpret simple texts. Their sole flaw is that they appear disinterested and restrained while participating in activities that require oral abilities. Most of them feared being chastised and humiliated in front of their peers. As a result, they avoided participating in speaking activities. Due to its importance and utility in communication, speaking is one of the core language skills that students must master (Bharathi, 2016). It is critical to be able to communicate in English because it is the most widely acknowledged language in the world. Those who can do so will benefit not only in terms of improving their knowledge and abilities, but also in terms of finding work. Furthermore, it will allow them to speak effortlessly with people all around the world when they travel (Garg, & Gautam, 2015). The researcher discovered that students suffer numerous difficulties when speaking English, including anxiety of making mistakes, fear of being laughed at by their friends, and a lack of understanding of the pronunciation and grammar that they employ. Furthermore, they are not confident in their ability to articulate their ideas and are cautious due to a lack of language. Additionally, they indicated that the traditional method of learning English bores them because they are unable to talk freely, and their speech is structured by the teacher. Thus, the researcher considers that it is vital to figure out a suitable method for them to enhance their speaking skills in an interesting way. The researcher determined that an innovative research effort fostering the growth of oral ability was required. This resulted in the use of communicative game in the English teaching and learning process.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

This research intends to answer two research questions which are:

- i. How can games encourage students to improve speaking skills?
- ii. What happens to students' oral production when they are engaged in games?

## **2. Literature Review**

When games were utilised to teach in their classroom, according to Garg and Gautham (2015), their pupils seemed to learn more quickly and retain the taught materials better in a stress-free and pleasant environment. There are a variety of approaches that can be used to assist pupils in overcoming their difficulties in speaking English. In other words, these activities will engage students in genuine conversation, with the attainment of their communicative goal taking precedence over the accuracy of the language they use. As mentioned by Prank, games are utilised to provide students with intense and passionate involvement in communication so that they can sense fun and pleasure in learning (Mahmoud Raba & Tanni, 2016). A communicative game is a collection of activities that have been carefully designed to encourage student participation in the classroom. These activities require kids to participate actively in the classroom by speaking and writing to express themselves or provide information. Furthermore, due to its concept in forming interaction habits, pupils' confidence would be automatically established. Furthermore, a game is defined as "an activity in which learners play and typically interact with others" (Ruggiero, 2015). To summarise, a communicative game is a combination of well-designed exercises that encourages students to communicate in the classroom. Students must participate actively in the classroom by speaking and writing to convey their own point of view or provide facts in these activities. Then, as a result of its notion in forming interaction habits, their confidence will be established automatically. Language games are an important tool for teachers to utilise in helping students develop contexts in which language is useful and meaningful in transmitting meaning (Garg & Gautham, 2015). Learners are required to participate actively in language activities based on the message they have received from their partners, as well as converse and engage with others. Students must convey what they have written or said in order to transfer information utilising games. Instead, than only studying the use of a language, language games can help students feel it in the classroom. Most language games, in particular, can provide access to a greater number of language elements than traditional drill exercises. Furthermore, the value of language games is determined by the length of time spent practising the language as well as the quality of the language game. Language games, in addition to being of high quality, provide opportunities for real-life communication practise (Mahmoud Raba & Tanni, 2016).

## **3. Methodology**

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to gather the data for this study. Pre-test and post-test were conducted to garner the data on students' English achievement whereby qualitative method was applied when the students' participation in the class were observed while language games was implemented during the lesson. An interview was also conducted to gain the students' insight on the implementation of snake and ladder game in their lesson. The basic goal of action research is to aid the "actor" in refining or improving his or her behaviours (Harmer, 2001). The lecturer who delivered the lesson to 30 Hospitality students in their third semester was the researcher. These students were chosen because they are taking 'Workplace English' course in the third semester. There were 30 students in the class and all of them had completed Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). SPM is a compulsory exam that these students should sit before they are eligible to further their certificate studies in Hospitality course. It is needed to stress here that these students' proficiency level are from weak to intermediate only. Furthermore, in this specific class, there is no student with high proficiency level. Their proficiency level is determined from and their grades for SPM English paper. They all received passable grades, some even failed, and none of them received an A or B. The goal of this study was to uncover

students' difficulties in improving their speaking skills and to provide solutions to the problems arose by using communicative games to tackle students' speaking problems. The researcher acted as the teacher who carried out the lesson of the day. Another colleague of the teacher helps the researcher out by acting as the observer who records students' participation and their active engagement when the lesson is being carried out. Before conducting the lesson using games, the researcher has conducted the same lesson without integrating games and carried out a pre-test for the students. Their results were recorded. During the second week, identical lesson was taught with the addition of games, and the students were given a post-test to complete. At the end of the class, an interview was conducted to obtain the students' responses to both lessons and to see how the approaches of utilising games versus not using games affected their speaking skills. The results of the pre- and post-tests were compared to determine the effectiveness of employing games to improve students' English language speaking skills. Another colleague observed and recorded the students' participation in class when the snake and ladder game was integrated into the lesson.

## 4. Result

This study had garnered information from both qualitative (interviews and observation) and quantitative method, from the questionnaires. The data from the questionnaire was analysed and interpreted while the information gathered from the interview and observation was reported and analysed.

### 4.1 The Observational Note's Result

The observational notes revealed a number of elements linked to the execution of communicative games. There will always be advantages and disadvantages. All of these flaws could be overcome in the end. For example, at the start of the class, the teacher struggled with time management and class control, but she quickly realised her error and adjusted it so that it did not happen again in the next phase. When the pupils were asked to speak, they were confused, humiliated, and terrified at first. They still struggled to convey their views, opinions, and thoughts, and they found it challenging to pronounce the new vocabularies. They were also less interested in playing the games. Those issues were explored and studied, and then a communicative game was proposed as a solution to the situation. As the researcher carried out the lesson and use games to revise the topic during the production stage, students keen to develop more interest and enthusiastic to involve in the learning process. During this stage, a board game with the concept of snake and ladder was used to let students practice communicative skills.

The researcher observed that even some students who were initially quite shy and quiet, started to speak a few words in order to win the game. They play the games in groups hence they are not embarrassed to make mistakes when they need to speak and answer the questions to win the game. At first they were hesitating to speak even when the teacher encouraged them to answer a few questions they just come out with a few words and kept mum. But when the teacher had divided them in groups and let them to play the game following the lesson learnt, these students did participate well in speaking and answering to their group mates. The sole reason for them to throw away their shyness and starts to speak is because their only aim is to win the game, and they did not focus on vocabularies, grammar and feel low self-confidence. They just express their answers freely, ignoring their mistakes and they feel it does not matter when they make pronunciation mistakes since they are only playing games. Eventually, practice makes perfect. When they tend to speak frequently ignoring their flaws and errors, soon they will develop better speaking skills and will gain a high self-confidence when interacting with people in future. Students' frequent conversation in the target language will also enable them to improve on their pronunciation and make less grammatical errors. If they never try, they will never learn, and games provides them a room to try speaking in a less taxing situation. From the researchers' observation, majority students were competing within themselves to play the games and try to win the game by uttering the correct responses. This environment will definitely encourage them to speak more in target language and allows them to be a better speaker.

### 4.2 The Pre-test and Post-test Results

It was discovered that the pupils' speaking skills were gradually developing based on the results of their speaking achievement. The outcomes of all of the students' scores are listed below.

**Table 1 - Pre-test and post-test results**

NO	Name of Respondents	Y	Y1
1	Student 1	2	5
2	Student 2	3	5
3	Student 3	5	6
4	Student 4	4	7
5	Student 5	4	6
6	Student 6	4	6
7	Student 7	3	5

8	Student 8	4	6
9	Student 9	5	7
10	Student 10	5	8
11	Student 11	6	8
12	Student 12	7	9
13	Student 13	5	6
14	Student 14	3	6
15	Student 15	2	4
16	Student 16	4	5
17	Student 17	3	4
18	Student 18	3	4
19	Student 19	3	5
20	Student 20	4	6
21	Student 21	4	7
22	Student 22	4	7
23	Student 23	4	6
24	Student 24	6	7
25	Student 25	5	6
26	Student 26	5	6
27	Student 27	6	7
28	Student 28	7	8
29	Student 29	8	10
30	Student 30	6	9
Total		134	191

Y= Students score for pre-test      Y1 = Students score for post-test

The researcher takes a few steps to compare the test results from pre-test to post-test. Calculating the students' mean test score, calculating the class percentage, and calculating the students' improvement score from pre-test to post-test into % are all examples of these calculations. The first step in assessing pre-test data is to get the class mean score. The formula is as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum xi}{n}$$

<b>X1 = 134/30 = 4.46 (Y)</b>	<b>X2 = 191/30 = 6.36 (Y1)</b>
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To find the improvement score from pre-test to pre-test and post-test the following formula is used:

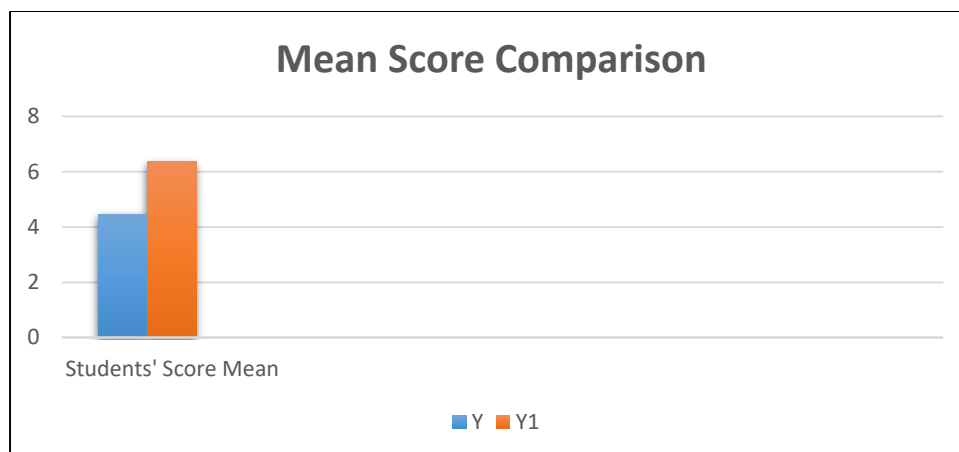
$$P = \frac{y_1 - y}{y} \times 100\%$$

(191-134) / 134 x 100 % = **42.53 %**

**Table 2 - The improvement scores from pre-test to the post-test**

Score	Y	Y1
<b>Total Score</b>	134	191
<b>Students' mean score</b>	<b>4.46</b>	<b>6.36</b>

The following figures are the result of the mean score improvement.



**Fig. 1 - Comparison of students' mean score**

### 4.3 The Result of Post Interview

A few days following the lecture, the researcher conducted a post-interview with the three students in the class. Following the completion of the post-test, this interview was done. The goal was to learn about the students' perspectives on classroom activities using communicative games. The students' condition was determined to be better than before in terms of self-confidence, participation, keenness, and fluency, based on their answers during the interview. They claimed that communicative games can generate beneficial conditions in which kids can learn while having fun. It gives students a sense of comfort in their learning while also reducing tedium and stress. However, they told that as they move further to the next level in the game, they do face certain difficulties to utter a few words, but they do not mind making mistakes between their peers. Even if they did encounter errors, they will just laugh out loud since they feel they are only playing and are not bounded in a serious classroom environment.

The more they practice speaking the more it will lead to their successful speaking skill. It also depends on the students' and teacher's inventiveness in conducting and playing the games, as well as the manner they give information, control the class, and manage the time. Finally, they implied that the game should be maintained and carried on. One student even mentioned that when game is added as a part of their lesson, they do not feel stressful to attend their class. Moreover, they claimed that after a whole tiresome day in their technical class, they need some fun activities to ease and clear their mind during their next class. They believe that communicative games are really effective and have a positive impact on classroom English speaking activities.

## 5. Discussion

In the preliminary study, the mean score of students on speaking before the research was 4.46. The mean score of post-tests at the first circle was 6.36. This clearly indicated that using game to practice speaking skills among the students does result in a positive increase in their speaking scores. During the pre-test, that was before the class was conducted using snake and ladder game, the students did not score much but once the researcher conducted the lesson, by integrating snake and game in it, the students does experience a positive result. They did well for their post speaking test. This evidently proves that communicative games (snake and ladder) can be used as teaching aids to handle the students, especially weak and intermediate students since they have lesser motivation level and focus to guide them through the lesson. This research did answer two research objectives raised earlier. Games helps students improve their speaking skills by providing them a less taxing space to practice speaking in the target language. Hence, when they are given comfortable situation to engage more in speaking process, directly and indirectly they can expand their speaking skills and will be a better English speaker in future. Thus, when students engage in communicative games, they will automatically try to speak to win the game since everyone naturally loves to play and win. This will result in them developing a good oral skill as the time goes by. The data showed that communicative game used was success. However, there were two students who did not perform well even after using games. This is because the students are extremely weak with limited knowledge in English Language. Therefore, another intervention is recommended for the students in the second cycle. Looking at their proficiency level and ability, using guided role play would be helpful for weak students. Guided role play will provide students' some ideas, input on choice of words and expose to various sentence structures to converse (Rojas & Villafuerte, 2018). For example, teacher can set a language lab for weak students and provide them with samples, cue words, questions, get them to listen to tapes or dialogues. Alternatively, holding regular guided role play will eventually train them to use the language.

This research did answer two research objectives raised earlier. Snake and ladder game helps students improve their speaking skills by providing them a less taxing space to practice speaking in the target language. Hence, when they are given comfortable situation to engage more in speaking process, directly and indirectly they can expand their speaking

skills and will be a better English speaker in future. Hence, when students engage in communicative games, they will automatically try to speak to win the game since everyone naturally loves to play and win. This will result in them developing a good oral skill as the time goes by. The data showed that communicative game used was success.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Motivation, enjoyment of language learning, and positive attitudes toward language learning are all factors that contribute to students' confidence in speaking English. The study found that employing communicative games as a method of instruction improved students' achievement and speaking skill results. Students enjoyed their class and gained more motivation, curiosity, and confidence as a result of their studies. As a result, communicative games should be used as planned activities in the classroom to improve speaking abilities. It is advised that the research be kept and expanded to include other linguistic skills. The teacher must plan ahead of time how to organise the students and the classroom so that the game may be put up as fast and efficiently as feasible. Wherever possible, encourage pair and group work, as this will boost student participation and provide far more language practise for each student. While the students are working, it is beneficial for the teacher to keep an eye on pairs or groups of students to assist, correct, or stimulate those who are less active. Before the students get tired of a game, the teacher should end it and switch to something different. Their willingness and concentration are preserved in this way.

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