

THE EFFECTS OF WAYGROUND ON CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION AND SPEAKING OUTCOMES AMONG VOCATIONAL EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Developing speaking proficiency remains a major challenge for vocational EFL learners due to limited opportunities for authentic communication and active classroom participation. This study investigates the effect of Wayground on students' classroom participation and speaking achievement in a vocational high school EFL classroom. A quasi-experimental design was employed involving 60 twelfth-grade students at SMKN 2 Lamongan, who were assigned to an experimental group ($n = 32$) and a control group ($n = 28$). The authors used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the data collected from the speaking performance tests and the classroom participation observation checklists. The results revealed that both groups showed significant improvements in speaking performance. The mean speaking score increased from 34.71 to 50.71 in the control group and from 39.88 to 55.88 in the experimental group. Paired-sample t-test results indicated significant differences between the pre-test and post-test scores in both groups ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the independent-sample t-test revealed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group on the post-test ($p = 0.033$). More students in the experimental group actively participated in class afterward. These data imply that Wayground is a useful tool for enhancing classroom involvement and aiding speaking development in vocational EFL settings.

Keywords: Classroom Participation, EFL, Gamification, Speaking Achievement, Wayground

A. INTRODUCTION

Learning English, speaking is typically recognized as one of the most important abilities since it indicates the learners' capacity to utilize the language for real communication, not only understanding the language rules (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). English learners need opportunities to speak (Al-Jaro et al., 2026) so that they may communicate their views clearly in academic, social, and professional circumstances. Proficiency in speaking is not

only related to the knowledge of grammar but also fluency, pronunciation, intelligibility, and the ability to transmit ideas effectively (Zahro, 2021). Hence, speaking is seen as an educational objective and a valuable life skill that enhances interpersonal relationships and problem-solving in EFL contexts (Yilik & Tanriverdi-Koksal, 2026). Vocational high school students must be able to talk because many future vocations require communication, collaboration, and contact with different audiences (Soraya, 2023). Therefore, students must have communication competency that is the precision of language, the fluency, the pronunciation, and the confidence of oral expression.

Speaking ability is intimately related to classroom involvement because language learning is done through interaction and communication. Active student participation in classroom activities will provide additional opportunities to negotiate meaning, to gain feedback, and to improve their language production (Badash, 2024). Repeated oral engagement is also important to increase confidence and make the learners ready to talk in English (Wulansari & Hardianto, 2025). On the other hand, passive engagement limits the chances of using the language effectively and may hinder the development of oral skills even if the learners have an adequate understanding of grammar and vocabulary (Teshome Abebe et al., 2024). Therefore, classroom engagement is an observable behaviour and an influential way of fostering communicative language learning and speaking growth (Hajiyeva, 2023).

While speaking and engagement are important, many vocational EFL learners still have major difficulties in oral communication. Speaking is still one of the most difficult language skills to master, especially in vocational courses where chances for meaningful spoken contact are typically restricted (Staddon, 2023). Many vocational EFL learners feel anxious and hesitant when doing speaking tasks, which may cause a lack of oral language development (Nurjihan et al., 2025). Students' involvement in speaking activities is further hampered by fear of mistakes, low confidence, and peer evaluation concerns (Fadillah et al., 2025). The preliminary observation in SMKN 2 Lamongan showed an identical condition where many students of Grade XII were unwilling to speak English during the classroom interaction. Despite having enough vocabulary knowledge, students often experienced difficulty in producing spontaneous and fluent oral responses, indicating little experience in communicative speaking practice (Staddon, 2023). This indicates that the classroom must be a supportive place where mistakes are regarded as an ordinary part of the learning process (Fadillah et al., 2025). This will promote active student participation in the process.

However, typical EFL training is often teacher-centered exercises based on textbooks and lecture-oriented explanations (Wubalem, 2021). Such strategies consider children as passive recipients of information rather than as active users of language. Reduced opportunities for meaningful oral communication have been associated with reduced school participation and poorer speaking performance (Simanjuntak et al., 2024). Educational technology is a growing trend, and there have been more fascinating and fun classrooms and technology-based media, such as video learning, that have been demonstrated to boost the students' attention and involvement (Suhartono et al., 2017). Thus, the demand for instructional innovations to deliver more dynamic and communicative learning environments is needed. Gamification is one of the educational practices that is frequently advocated to promote learner engagement. The current advancement in educational technology has made gamification an innovative strategy to promote learner engagement and participation in educational settings (Laura-De La Cruz et al., 2023). Gamification is the use of game-based elements, such as points, competition, challenges, and quick feedback in learning activities

to engage students in more dynamic and entertaining learning experiences (Ahmad et al., 2024). Previous research has indicated that the usage of gamified learning environments can have positive effects on students' motivation, engagement, and language learning achievement (Safitri et al., 2025). Also, gamification can be used to decrease speaking fear and to make learners participate in classroom communication more actively (Yulianti & Jayantini, 2023). However, the adoption of gamification in many EFL classrooms still appears to be more receptive to learning activities, such as vocabulary and multiple-choice exercises, than constructive conversational communication.

A gamified platform with potential for use in speaking instruction is Wayground (formerly known as Quizizz). Wayground also provides features such as interactivity and voice-response to enhance oral language practice and provide possibilities for learners to develop spoken language (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2022). Unlike traditional gamified activities that largely engage learners in selecting responses, the voice-based features allow students to generate vocal responses and have face-to-face verbal exchanges. By recording, repeating, and speaking immediately, students' frequency of speaking can be gradually increased, and the problem of speaking hesitation can be solved (Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2022). Such features can be especially successful in vocational EFL contexts where opportunities to use English outside the classroom are limited (Staddon, 2023). Voice-supported gamification thus provides a teaching technique that could enhance active involvement as well as speaking practice.

There is a growing body of research on gamified language acquisition, but there are numerous important limitations. Most previous research has been focused on students' motivation, viewpoints, classroom involvement, or receptive learning outcomes, not on productive speaking performance (Arip & Hashim, 2024; Safitri et al., 2025). Sa'diyah et al. (2025), for example, found that digital gamified platforms improved students' focus and involvement in English classrooms, even if the activities were mostly centered on text-based responses and answer-selection tasks. Therefore, empirical evidence examining the relationship between voice-based gamification, classroom participation, and measurable speaking achievement remains limited, particularly in Indonesian vocational high school contexts. To address this gap, the present study looks into the influence of Wayground on students' classroom participation and speaking achievement in a vocational high school EFL classroom. This study intends to give empirical evidence of how gamified speaking training may enhance active classroom engagement and improve oral communication performance with a particular focus on Wayground's voice-based interactive elements. It is hoped that the findings will add to EFL teaching by providing an alternative instructional technique for developing communicative skills and speaking in vocational education environments.

B. METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental design using a control group with pre-test and post-test measures. This design was selected because educational intervention studies commonly utilize intact classes as research groups, as random assignment is often impractical in authentic school settings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The design enabled the researcher to examine the effects of the intervention while maintaining the existing classroom structure and minimizing disruption to regular instructional activities. Moreover, the use of intact classrooms addressed administrative and ethical considerations that may limit participant randomization in educational contexts. Through this approach, the study

was able to compare changes in students' speaking achievement and classroom participation between the experimental and control groups following the intervention.

The research was conducted in SMKN 2 Lamongan, a vocational high school. Vocational education contexts were regarded as particularly applicable since communication competency is progressively related to workplace preparedness and employability. As stated by Yilik and Tanriverdi-Koksal (2026) that examining speaking teaching in vocational classes is important for educational practices that meet both language development and future occupational needs. The participants were Grade XII students of SMKN 2 Lamongan. Two intact classes with relatively similar academic characteristics were purposively selected. Grade XII Mechatronics Engineering (XII TM) served as the control group ($n = 28$), while Grade XII Industrial Electronics Engineering 2 (XII TEI 2) served as the experimental group ($n = 32$). The selection of vocational students was considered relevant because oral communication skills are closely related to their future workplace and professional demands.

The research instruments used in this study were a speaking test and classroom observation. The speaking test served as the primary instrument for measuring students' speaking achievement before and after the intervention. It was administered as a pre-test and post-test to identify changes in students' speaking performance following the implementation of Wayground-based speaking activities. The test evaluated several speaking components, including fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction, using an analytic scoring rubric. The pre-test was conducted to identify students' initial speaking performance and determine the comparability of the two groups before the treatment was implemented (Hedia, 2022). Following the intervention, the post-test was administered to measure changes in students' speaking performance and identify the extent of improvement achieved by each group. This approach allowed the researcher to examine both the outcomes of the intervention and the development of students' speaking ability over time. Therefore, the quasi-experimental design provided an appropriate framework for evaluating the effectiveness of Wayground-based speaking activities while preserving the natural conditions of the classroom environment (Al-khresheh, 2024).

The speaking test was administered as a pre-test and post-test to measure students' speaking performance before and after the intervention. The test assessed five components of speaking ability: fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction. An analytic scoring rubric with a 1–5 scale for each component was used to ensure consistent and objective evaluation of students' speaking performance. Moreover, an observation checklist was used to measure students' active participation during the teaching and learning process. The observation focused on five indicators: frequency of speaking, asking and answering questions, participation in discussion, initiative in performing speaking tasks, and engagement in Wayground activities. Each indicator was rated using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Inactive) to 4 (Very Active). The participation score was calculated by summing the ratings of the five indicators, with a maximum score of 20.

The use of multiple instruments enabled the researcher to obtain a broader understanding of the intervention outcomes. The speaking test provided quantitative data on students' oral performance improvement, while the observation checklist captured students' behavioral engagement during the instructional process. This combination supported a more comprehensive interpretation of the effectiveness of Wayground-based speaking instruction.

Then, the collected data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores, gain scores, and participation percentages, were used to describe students' speaking performance and classroom engagement. Before conducting inferential analysis, the data were tested for normality and homogeneity using the Shapiro–Wilk and Levene's tests. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare post-test scores between groups, while paired-samples t-tests were used to examine differences between pre-test and post-test scores within each group. Statistical significance was determined at a p-value < 0.05. Additionally, Cohen's d was calculated to determine the effect size of the intervention.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Speaking Achievement

The improvement in students' speaking achievement was examined by comparing the pre-test and post-test results between the experimental and control groups. The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 illustrate the changes in students' speaking performance after the instructional intervention.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Scores

Group	N	Pre-test	Post-test	Gain	N-Gain	Category
Control	28	34.71	50.71	16.00	0.245	Low
Experimental	32	39.88	55.88	16.00	0.266	Low

The pre-test scores show that both groups started the trial with a relatively low level of speaking competence, but the experimental group scored slightly higher with an initial mean of 39.88 than the control group with 34.71. These results mean that the two groups of students had similar problems in speaking skills before the treatment was applied, especially in terms of fluency and spontaneous oral production. After the instructional intervention, both groups improved their speaking achievement. The control group improved from 34.71 to 50.71, and the experimental group from 39.88 to 55.88. These findings suggest that both educational settings allowed students to improve their speech since they had the opportunity to practice oral communication in classroom activities. Both groups had the same raw gain score (16.00), but the experimental group had a slightly greater normalized gain (0.266) than the control group (0.245). The higher post-test mean and N-Gain show significantly better improvement after Wayground-based education, although both are still in the low category. To determine whether the improvement within each group was statistically significant, a paired-sample t-test was conducted. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Paired-Sample t-Test Results

Group	t	df	p	Interpretation
Experimental	8.24	31	<0.001	Significant
Control	7.66	27	<0.001	Significant

Table 5 demonstrates that both groups achieved statistically significant improvement from pre-test to post-test. The experimental group showed a significant difference with $t(31) = 8.24$, $p < 0.001$, while the control group also demonstrated significant improvement with $t(27) = 7.66$, $p < 0.001$. These results indicate that both instructional approaches contributed positively to students' speaking development. However, the slightly higher t-value in the experimental group suggests that Wayground-based instruction provided stronger support for speaking practice and student involvement compared to conventional instruction.

Furthermore, an independent-sample t-test was conducted to identify whether there was a significant difference between the two groups after the intervention. The results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Independent-Sample t-Test of Post-test Scores

Comparison	t	df	p	Interpretation
Experimental vs Control	2.18	58	0.033	Significant

The findings in Table 6 reveal a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups, $t(58) = 2.18$, $p = 0.033$. Since the p-value was below the significance level of 0.05, the result indicates that students who received Wayground-based instruction achieved significantly higher speaking performance than those who received conventional instruction. This finding suggests that the integration of interactive and voice-based gamification created a more supportive environment for students to practice oral communication. The higher speaking performance of the experimental group may be attributed to the communicative opportunities provided through Wayground activities. Speaking development requires meaningful interaction, repeated language production, and opportunities to receive feedback (Ding, 2021; Mulyono & Saskia, 2021). The voice-response and game-based features of Wayground encouraged students to actively produce spoken language, participate in classroom interaction, and practice speaking with greater confidence. Previous studies have also emphasized that gamified learning environments can increase learners' willingness to communicate and reduce anxiety during oral activities (Liu et al., 2021; Yulianti & Jayantini, 2023). To examine the practical significance of the intervention, the effect size analysis was conducted. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Effect Size Analysis

Comparison	Cohen's d	Interpretation
Experimental Pre-Post	1.48	Large
Control Pre-Post	1.45	Large
Between Groups	0.57	Medium

The effect size results in Table 7 show that both groups experienced substantial improvement in speaking performance, with large within-group effects in the experimental group ($d = 1.48$) and control group ($d = 1.45$). However, the between-group effect size ($d = 0.57$) indicates a moderate advantage of Wayground-based instruction. This finding suggests that although both instructional approaches improved students' speaking ability, Wayground provided additional benefits by creating more interactive and engaging speaking opportunities.

2. Classroom Participation

The effect size results in Table 7 show that both groups experienced substantial improvement in speaking performance, with large within-group effects in the experimental group ($d = 1.48$) and control group ($d = 1.45$). However, the between-group effect size ($d = 0.57$) indicates a moderate advantage of Wayground-based instruction. This finding suggests that although both instructional approaches improved students' speaking ability, Wayground provided additional benefits by creating more interactive and engaging speaking opportunities.

Table 8. Mean Participation Scores

Session	Control	Experimental
Treatment 1	30.89	43.91
Treatment 2	33.93	60.63
Treatment 3	37.86	63.91
Treatment 4	41.43	73.44

The control group demonstrated moderate participation improvement, whereas the experimental group showed considerably stronger development. Participation in the experimental group increased from 43.91 to 73.44, indicating substantial engagement during Wayground-based speaking activities. These findings indicate that Wayground effectively facilitates classroom interaction and supports speaking development. The findings indicate that Wayground positively influenced students' classroom participation and speaking achievement. Although both groups improved, the experimental group demonstrated better final speaking performance and significantly higher classroom engagement (Saptiany et al., 2025). That students are able to actively engage in speech communication within a more dynamic learning environment appears to be Wayground's primary contribution.

The improvement in classroom participation also aligns with Yulianti and Jayantini (2023) that gamified environments may lower speaking anxiety and increase learners' willingness to communicate. Students in the experimental group showed steady improvement in their self-assurance when it came to speaking out in class and interacting with others. This result supports Fatmawati et al., (2021), who reported that game-based activities were interesting and helpful in reinforcing language learning. However, although participation improved considerably, some aspects of speaking performance, particularly pronunciation and spontaneous oral production, showed relatively limited development. This finding indicates that gamified environments may strongly promote learner involvement, yet short-term intervention may not always produce substantial improvement in all speaking components.

In addition, the present findings further highlight the importance of balancing motivational engagement with sustained language development in speaking instruction. While gamified environments may immediately attract students' attention and increase classroom involvement, improvement in linguistic competence often requires continuous practice and extended instructional exposure (Zhang & Hasim, 2023). However, the relatively similar gain scores between groups indicate that short-term intervention may not be sufficient to generate substantially different linguistic outcomes. The four-session treatment period may have limited the full impact of Wayground on measurable speaking achievement (Chueh et al., 2025). Despite this limitation, the stronger classroom participation observed in the experimental group suggests that Wayground effectively promotes behavioral engagement, which may contribute to long-term speaking development. Based on these results, Wayground is best used in conjunction with traditional instructional methods rather than as a substitute. Conventional instruction still produced measurable improvement when students were provided with speaking opportunities (Qiao & Zhao, 2023). Nevertheless, Wayground offered an additional motivational and interactive dimension that strengthened classroom participation and supported speaking practice in vocational EFL classrooms. Consequently, the present study contributes empirical evidence regarding the potential of voice-based gamification to support speaking instruction in Indonesian vocational education contexts (Gunawan, 2025). Hence, the results need to be understood in light of the time frame and curricular parameters of the study.

D. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Wayground-based gamified instruction positively influenced students' speaking achievement and classroom participation in a vocational EFL context. Although both groups showed improvement, students who received Wayground-based instruction achieved higher speaking performance and greater engagement compared to those taught through conventional methods. These results suggest that the interactive and voice-response features of Wayground created more opportunities for oral practice, active participation, and meaningful communication. Therefore, Wayground can be considered a valuable supplementary tool for English teachers to enhance speaking instruction by providing a more engaging and communicative learning environment. Despite these encouraging results, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted in a single vocational high school, involved a relatively small number of participants, and was implemented over a short intervention period. These limitations may have influenced the extent of the observed improvement in speaking achievement and may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other EFL contexts. Therefore, future research should investigate the long-term effects of voice-based gamification on both speaking development and classroom engagement by involving larger and more diverse participant groups, extending the duration of the intervention, and examining different educational settings. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of gamified speaking instruction across various EFL contexts.

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