

## ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH A COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH WITH THE SIMON SAYS GAME

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### Abstract

Effective communication is essential in learning English, especially in the speaking aspect. This challenge was evident at SMPN 22 West Jakarta, where students struggled to communicate with their teachers due to language barriers. To address this, the researcher conducted a study in class 9F, involving 33 students, using Classroom Action Research (CAR) across three cycles. The class was chosen due to limited interaction and communication during English lessons. The goal was to improve students' speaking skills through a communicative approach, supplemented with the Simon Says game. The data was gathered through observation within three cycle of class room action research where the data will be analyzed using thematic analysis in each first second and third cycle and it will show see whether the students learning problem can be solved through the game or not. The results showed beneficial improvement in speaking skills. In cycle I, only 11 out of 33 students (33%) could speak English. By cycle III, this number increased to 100%, demonstrating that the communicative approach combined with the Simon Says game was proven helpful in enhancing speaking skills at the junior high school level.

**Keywords:** *Communicative Approach, Simon Says Game, Speaking Skills*

### INTRODUCTION

There are many junior high schools in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta, where numerous students do not enjoy the English subject. Based on the author's experience teaching at two different levels of schools, only a few students genuinely like English. The rest simply lose comprehension and find themselves confused and do not know what they should be doing. There is no interest at all. The problem is that some students do not understand English, how to learn it, or why it is important. Even though English is one of the essential subjects in junior high school, like Math, Science, and others, the author observes that English has become one of the most difficult subjects for students, and this issue has persisted for a long time.

Moreover, English has become the international language for global citizens. (Mampuono, 2022) stated that English has become a global language, and its use is no longer in question in any country around the world. The author also believes that English remains one of the most widely

spoken languages across the globe. Presidents or Prime Ministers often use it for speeches, conveying information, and during meetings to discuss bilateral cooperation. Additionally, being able to speak English can make it easier to find a job. This is supported by Lisandy & Adijaya, (2019), who stated that English plays a significant role in various fields such as business, travel, technology, education, the economy, politics, and entertainment. It is one of the most essential skills in the job market, especially in English-related careers, such as teaching, translation, and tour guiding.

Additionally, working in countries like England, the USA, and other European nations, or even becoming an actor, often requires proficiency in English. Dilobar (2022) stated that the demand for English-speaking skills has dramatically increased due to its strengthening position as the language of international communication. But how can students work in another country if they cannot speak English well? They rarely practice it because they find the subject difficult. The author observed that junior high school students have very little interest in English. This is evident from several test scores and final English exam results from secondary schools between 2015 and 2019, as reported on the Ministry of Education and Culture's website, which showed an average score of under 63%. Based on the author's experience teaching in elementary and middle schools for five years, student achievement was only 52%. This reflects the author's experience teaching English in junior high schools.

Moreover, learning English is not as simple as becoming good at speaking. Speaking English as a foreign language is perceived as a difficult skill to teach and learn because learners must think and speak simultaneously to express their ideas orally, as noted by Haryudin & Jamilah (2018). There are four key aspects of learning English: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are interconnected and equally important for students. Among them, speaking is one of the hardest skills to learn and practice. In learning to speak, students not only need to master vocabulary and grammar but also other aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension of the topic. In the 9th grade at SMPN 22 West Jakarta, many students struggle with learning English, particularly in speaking skills. Therefore, the author aims to conduct research and find solutions to address this issue.

Furthermore, there are many advantages to speaking English well. Learning English in junior high school has several benefits, but the author believes that two key points are important

to highlight. First, in terms of global communication, English is an international language widely used in business, technology, and communication. By studying English in middle school, students will develop global communication skills that enable them to interact with people from different cultures. This is supported by Siswandi (2018), who stated that English, as an international language, is a tool for communicating both verbally and in writing in the global world. The second key point is accessing information. This is important because many vital sources of information and literature related to science and other fields are available in English. By mastering English, students can access and understand a broader range of materials. However, to make students able to master English is not easy. Capturing the phenomenon in SMPN 22 West Jakarta where students are facing the learning problem, this research was intended to be done.

When discussing the purpose of learning English, there are at least two main goals. The first is to equip students with the four core skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—to enhance these skills to prepare for the future era of globalization. The second is to prepare students to compete in the business world and job market. To support these objectives, a learning game called Simon Says is used, complemented by the Communicative Approach. This method is widely adopted by many teachers in middle and high schools, as well as in universities. Sujinem (2023) states, "The Communicative Approach is a globally recognized and established method. It has been widely adopted as a way of teaching languages, especially English." This approach focuses on communication skills, emphasizing student interaction as the primary goal of learning.

Additionally, Abdullah et al., (2023) stated that the Communicative Approach emphasizes the ability to communicate and interact in everyday situations. By meaning, this method is not only important for helping students to improve their speaking skills but also to incorporate culturally relevant content into lessons. To make students =speak fluently as well as to apprehend their existence as part of a bigger culture. There are some ways to do so, for instance, teachers might design activities that simulate everyday interactions like ordering food in a restaurant or having conversations about their favorite music. This makes English feel more practical and immediately useful for them. Meanwhile, later teachers might also introduce English vocabulary and grammar through Indonesian folktales or local current events. Such integration allows students to connect their cultural identity with the language they are learning and, in the end, it will foster a deeper interest within the students.

There are several functions of the Communicative Approach. The first one is student-centered learning, where teachers allow students to actively participate in learning activities and build their understanding through interaction with the language—specifically, English. Secondly, the method focuses on active communication, encouraging students to participate in activities that promote the use of English in everyday communicative contexts within the classroom. One of the various activities that can be considered in adopting a communicative approach is the implementation of Simon says learning strategy.

The Simon Says game is used in language learning activities, specifically English, to train students' listening skills and their responses to the teacher's instructions. Researchers believe this game is suitable for 9th-grade middle school students. Felogau (2018) also supports this view, stating that the Simon Says game is "a game that involves students following commands, which helps them learn vocabulary in a fun way." This type of game not only helps students improve their vocabulary but also enhances their English-speaking skills. Therefore, Simon Says games are valuable for both expanding vocabulary and developing speaking abilities.

The Simon Says game offers benefits for learning English, including increasing vocabulary and improving speaking skills, which aligns with the goals of this Classroom Action Research (CAR). According to Murni and Zuhriyah (2023), "It is a simple and straightforward game that is highly helpful for students practicing listening in a fun way." In addition to being enjoyable for students, the Simon Says game is also beneficial for teachers because it requires minimal learning materials which makes it quite efficient in terms of allocating time and funding. However, whether the learning game will be a helpful strategy for the students is the core idea that this research wants to answer.

## **METHOD**

The researchers applied the Classroom Action Research (CAR). It was chosen as an effective and efficient method because it specifically focuses on addressing learning problems that arise in the classroom. The primary goal of CAR is to solve these learning challenges and enhance students' speaking skills both inside and outside the classroom. One of the key advantages of CAR is its simplicity for teachers to implement, as it does not require complex learning media or many tools. It only requires creativity and effort from the teacher, along with the integration of engaging

methods such as educational games. This research was conducted over three cycles, with each cycle consisting of one meeting lasting approximately 2 x 40 minutes. The subjects of this study were 32 students from class 9F at SMPN 22, West Jakarta.

Data were collected from observations in three cycles undertaken in CAR. Each cycle dealt with a specific problem faced by the students in learning and were assigned a game-based learning strategy. Each of these cycles made the researcher keenly observe and record the interaction of the students, their level of engagement, and the effectiveness of the game-based approach in enhancing the targeted learning outcomes.

Data from each cycle was then analyzed through thematic analysis. The analysis was further used to test if recurring themes or patterns emerged from the observational data. This thematic analysis allowed the researcher to organize the data into key themes, such as "active in active as well as the result of the learning based on the minimum passing grade (KKM)" The thematic analysis provided an in-depth understanding of how students learn in a qualitative description. The data will give us information on whether the Simon Says game can be a helpful tool to improve students' English mastery, particularly speaking.

The participants, or students, whom the researcher participated in this research were from SMPN 22 West Jakarta. The researcher focused on class 9F, which consists of 33 students. During the pre-cycle phase, the researcher found that 71%, or approximately 23 students, out of the 33 were not actively engaged in learning English in class. This prompted the researcher to investigate the reasons behind this issue and the contributing factors throughout three cycles, using the Communicative Approach and the Simon Says game.

In Cycle 1, the first step was to begin with a prayer before starting the lesson. The researcher then checked the classroom cleanliness and the students' uniforms for neatness. At the beginning of the lesson, the researcher provided motivational encouragement, emphasizing the importance of learning English. The introductory step is needed to prepare students for entering the learning process. Afterward, the researcher introduced the Simon Says game, explaining it clearly. The game was simple for the students to follow. It focuses on students' quick responses to words or commands given by the teacher, which begin with "Simon Says." For example, "Simon Says, jump!" and the students would jump. However, if the teacher says "jump" without "Simon Says," the students should not follow the command.

The next step involved the researcher writing several verbs or command phrases on the whiteboard and asking the students to memorize them within five minutes. Then, the researcher had the students prepare for a game simulation before the real activity began. During the simulation, some students struggled to understand the game, so the researcher provided further clarification. Once the explanation was complete, the researcher initiated the real activity. By the end of Cycle 1, it was observed that the Simon Says game was enjoyable for the students. It also helped increase the students' confidence in speaking English. However, some students struggled to keep up with the game compared to their peers. In the next cycle, the researcher planned to ensure that these students would better understand the game so they could fully participate.

In Cycle 2, as usual, the researcher began the lesson with a prayer and checked the cleanliness of the classroom and the students' uniforms. The researcher then gave additional motivational support, especially to the students who had difficulty following the game, as well as to those who were doing well. The lesson started with a brief review of the Simon Says game, and the game was played throughout the lesson. It remained enjoyable, and the students who previously struggled to understand the game improved and were able to respond to commands during the game. The game also indirectly helped boost their confidence and English-speaking skills. However, five students still showed little interest in the English lesson, making it difficult for them to engage in the game or the lesson. Therefore, the researcher planned to focus on these five students in the next cycle, while still paying attention to the rest of the class.

In the final cycle, Cycle 3, the researcher concentrated on the five students who had shown no interest in the English lessons. The goal was to help them build confidence and improve their speaking skills. At the beginning of the lesson, the researcher followed the usual routine of praying and checking the cleanliness of the classroom and the students' uniforms. The Simon Says game was used again throughout the lesson, and, in the final activity, the researcher asked the five students to bring their chairs to the front of the class. The researcher played the Simon Says game with them individually, asking each student questions closely and carefully. By the end of the cycle, the results were satisfying: these five students were able to follow the game and achieved good scores in the lesson.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

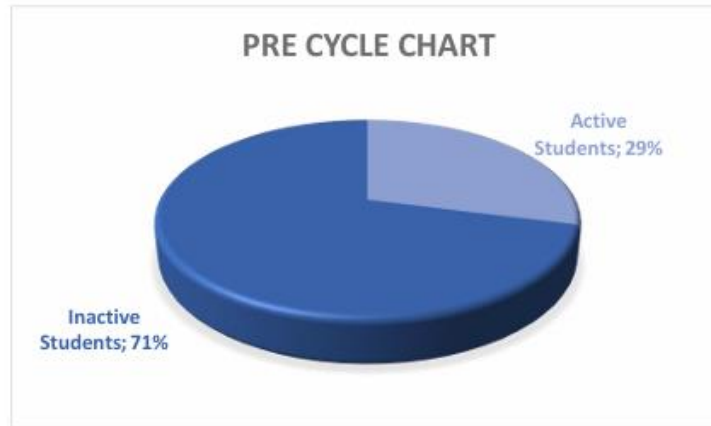
This research was made to know whether Simon Says game as a part of communicative approach might be useful for students' problems in learning English, particularly in speaking skills. Before conducting the action research, the researcher first observed the English learning process in the 9th-grade classroom. The observation revealed that the learning process was predominantly teacher-centered, with the teacher being the main focus of instruction, while the students played a minimal role. The students primarily acted as passive recipients, simply absorbing what the teacher conveyed.

Students in learning aspects	Pre cycle		Explanation
	Frequency	Percentage	
Listening	7	21%	Active
Speaking	3	8%	
Reading	10	31%	Inactive
Writing	13	40%	

Table 1. Rate of Students' Participation

The table above show that 71% of students are not actively participating, while only 29% are actively engaged in the English learning activities conducted by the class teacher. Most of the inactive students struggle specifically with speaking skills.

Chart 1. Pre cycle



This has motivated the researcher to implement improvements through new methods and games in learning, which will be carried out over the next three cycles.

#### A. Cycle 1

In this cycle, the researcher applied Classroom Action Research (CAR) to all students in the classroom. The table and chart below represent the data from Cycle 1:

Range	Category	Cycle 1	
		Frequency	Percentage
81 – 100	High	2	6%
71 – 80	Medium	9	27%
61 – 70	Low	15	46%
40 – 60	Very Low	7	21%
<b>Total</b>		33	100%
<b>Maximum Score</b>		90	
<b>Minimum Score</b>		45	
<b>Average</b>		68,63	
<b>Minimum Completeness Criteria</b>		75	

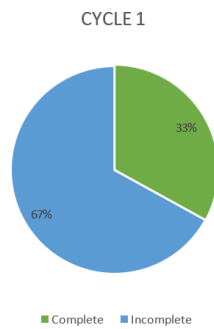
Table 2. Students' Activeness in Learning Aspect in the cycle 1

In Table 2 above, it can be seen that only 2 students (6%) succeeded in achieving learning mastery with the highest scores, and 9 students (27%) met the minimum passing grade (KKM) of 75. Meanwhile, 15 students (46%) scored below average, and 7 students



(21%) had very low scores, both groups failing to reach the KKM. Although the class average score reached 68.63 (rounded up to 69), the fact that 67% of students were unable to achieve learning mastery is a significant concern for the researcher. Therefore, the researcher decided to continue the Classroom Action Research (CAR) as outlined in the previous research design.

Chart 2. Cycle 1



#### B. Cycle 2

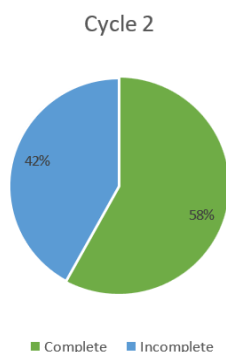
In this cycle, the researcher focused on the 67% of students who did not achieve the required scores in the previous cycle, aiming to help them improve. The table and chart below present the data from Cycle 2:

Range	Category	Cycle 2	
		Frequency	Percentage
81 – 100	High	6	18%
71 – 80	Medium	13	40%
61 – 70	Low	9	27%
40 – 60	Very Low	5	15%
Total		33	100%
Maximum Score		95	
Minimum Score		65	
Average		73,93	
Minimum Completeness Criteria		75	

Table 3. Students' Activeness in Learning Aspect in the cycle 2

Based on the table 3, which reflect the results from Cycle 2 of the research, it can be concluded that several students have shown significant progress in speaking English with correct pronunciation, word structure, vocabulary, and fluency on appropriate topics. Nearly all students have met the Minimum Passing Grade (KKM) set by SMPN 22 West Jakarta, which is 75. Approximately 19 students, or 58%, have successfully achieved this benchmark.

Chart 3. Cycle 2



However, despite this progress, the researcher still encountered a few obstacles. Some students remained passive and showed little interest in English lessons. As a result, 14 students, or 42%, scored below KKM. The researcher will seek solutions to help these students develop an interest in learning English, aiming for them to at least participate in classroom activities like their peers in the final cycle, Cycle 3.

### C. Cycle 3

In this cycle, the researcher followed a similar approach as before but focused specifically on the few students who had completely lost interest in English.

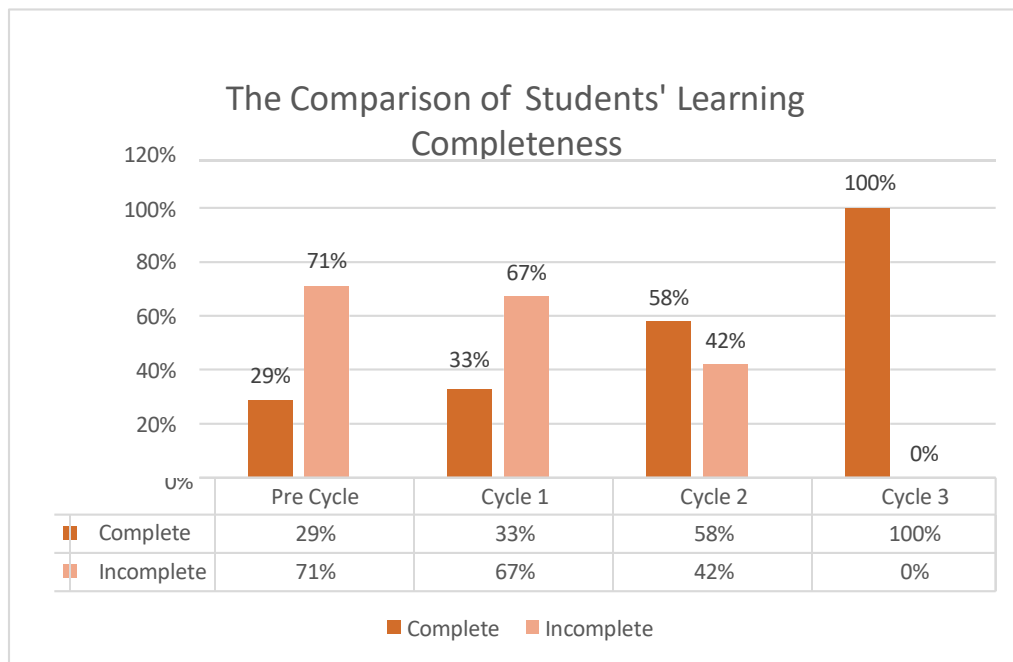
Range	Category	Cycle 3	
		Frequency	Percentage
81 – 100	High	17	52%
71 – 80	Medium	16	48%
61 – 70	Low	0	0%
40 – 60	Very Low	0	0%
Total		33	100%
Maximum Score		100	

<b>Minimum Score</b>	75
<b>Average</b>	84,39
<b>Minimum Completeness Criteria</b>	75

Table 4. Students' Activeness in Learning Aspect in the cycle 3

The graphic below illustrates the comparison between the pre-cycle, Cycle 1, Cycle 2, and Cycle 3. It demonstrates a significant improvement in students' speaking abilities. Additionally, both students' self-confidence and vocabulary mastery have increased, both directly and indirectly.

Graphic 1. The Comparison of the Cycles



From the graphics, the researcher successfully improved students' speaking skills through the Communicative Approach method, complemented by the Simon Says game. Among the 67% of students who were inactive in English lessons, the percentage of those engaged in speaking activities decreased to 33% in Cycle 2. By Cycle 3, the percentage of students actively participating in speaking activities dropped to 0%. Conversely, the percentage of students actively learning English in speaking aspects increased from 33% in Cycle 1 to 58% in Cycle 2. By the end of Cycle 3, this figure reached 100%. This outcome left the researcher feeling satisfied

with the results of this Classroom Action Research (CAR).

In this final part, the researcher concludes that the Communicative Approach, combined with the Simon Says game, beneficially enhances students' confidence in speaking English. Most importantly, it improves their English-speaking skills and indirectly boosts their vocabulary mastery. Being able to speak English well is crucial for students. This assertion is supported by Ilyosovna (2020), who notes that in today's globalized world, the importance of English cannot be denied, as it is the most widely spoken language. Thus, English is a vital subject in schools, particularly in Junior High School and Senior High School, alongside other subjects like Math.

In addition to the findings, this research might supplement the previous research on similar concerns, yet it is distinctive to the prior research like Felogau (2018). This research counts on qualitative elaborate findings while Felogau relies on quantitative data. The existence of qualitative information can be useful to trace any specific and detailed data that becomes the natural expertise of the typical research data. A uniqueness that fails to be performed by similar research with a quantitative approach.

## CONCLUSION

According to the results of the cycles, the researcher successfully improved students' speaking skills by using the Communicative Approach and the Simon Says game across three cycles. This is the beneficial achievement of this research. The game also helped boost students by giving a vivid description of how the improvement happened. Additionally, another success of the researcher was the indirect enhancement of students' vocabulary mastery, which is crucial for them to speak English more fluently. However, this research was conducted as classroom action research which by nature rarely can be generalized into other contexts. Therefore, a quantitative or mixed method may be interesting for further research that wants to discuss similar enterprises.

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