

## Effectiveness of Language Games (Guessing Pictures and Matching Words) on Speaking Skills

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**ABSTRACT** This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of language games, specifically picture-guessing and word-arranging activities, in enhancing maharah kalam (speaking skills) among students at MADIN Al Falah Kesamben Jombang. Language games are considered to be influential in teaching speaking skills because they engage students actively, foster creativity, and provide innovative and interactive learning experiences. By integrating these games into language instruction, students are expected to develop their speaking abilities in a more enjoyable and effective way. This study investigates the effectiveness of language games, specifically picture-guessing and word-arranging, in enhancing maharah kalam (speaking skills) among first-grade students at MADIN Al Falah Kesamben Jombang. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected through observations, tests, questionnaires, and documentation and analyzed using validity, reliability, normality tests, and ANOVA. The sample consisted of 24 students. The results indicate that both the picture-guessing game ( $p = 0.000$ ) and the word-arranging game ( $p = 0.001$ ) significantly improved students' speaking skills. Furthermore, combining the two games showed a significant overall effect ( $F_{count} = 4.255 > F_{table} = 3.01$ ;  $p = 0.0003$ ). These findings suggest that interactive language games are an effective and engaging method for developing speaking abilities in young learners.

**Keywords:** *Language Game, Guess The Picture, Compose Words, Maharab Kalam.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Language is used in daily life as a means of communication, and every person is expected to master at least one foreign language to access global information. The teaching of Arabic is an interactive activity between students and teachers within Arabic lessons to achieve specific instructional goals. Foreign language instruction aims to develop students' abilities to use the language both orally and in writing. The ability to use a language within the context of language teaching is referred to as language skills (*maharat al-lughab*). These skills consist of four components: listening skills (*maharat al-istima*), speaking skills (*maharat al-kalam*), reading skills (*maharat al-qira'ah*), and writing skills (*maharat al-kitabah*) (Khaerati, 2023).

According to Ali Kamil, the foundation of Arabic language teaching is learning to communicate. The primary goal of Arabic instruction is to improve students' abilities to communicate in Arabic, both verbally and in written form (Al-Saedi, 2021). Communication involves an interactive process between teacher and students using the Arabic language to

achieve certain objectives. Therefore, students must master several essential skills in learning Arabic, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Teachers must strive to encourage students to speak and communicate in Arabic. Efforts to achieve this must be supported by appropriate teaching methods and learning media that help students develop their language abilities and enhance their linguistic skills. To stimulate students' motivation in speaking Arabic, language games can be implemented. Through such games, students are guided to learn while playing an approach that aligns well with the joyful and exploratory nature of childhood. Language games provide enjoyable activities that help students acquire specific language skills in a meaningful way (Kaur & Abdul Aziz, 2020). Language itself is spoken expression or *kalam*. *Kalam* is one of the most essential linguistic activities for both children and adults. People use speaking skills more often than writing; they speak more frequently than they write. Speaking is the first productive skill and the primary skill emphasized in language teaching. Many language educators believe that approximately 95% of language activity is oral, and spoken language forms the foundation for various types of written expression.

In general, the goal of *mabarrah al-kalam* is to enable learners to communicate verbally in a proper, natural, and socially acceptable manner. This involves conveying messages clearly and appropriately in real communicative situations. The technique also aims to provide students with opportunities to use Arabic spontaneously and creatively in natural contexts, while still maintaining proper grammar. The focus is on delivering meaning that aligns with communication demands in real-life situations.

The teaching of speaking skills is closely related to meaning and content in delivering oral messages. Students must be able to use appropriate forms and techniques according to their ability levels. Speaking skills involve the practical use of various linguistic elements. The benefits of speaking skills include enabling individuals to interact with others and comprehend what speakers intend to communicate. Instruction begins once students are familiar with Arabic sounds and can distinguish them from sounds of other languages (Abd Elwahab, 2020). The framework of speaking instruction includes training students in Arabic sounds, vocabulary, and varied linguistic expressions across different difficulty levels.

Teaching speaking skills serves as a key pillar in language learning, including Arabic learning at both basic and secondary levels. Speaking involves not only accurate pronunciation but also the ability to express ideas, thoughts, and feelings appropriately according to communicative context. Thus, speaking cannot be separated from meaning, as its core lies in conveying clear and meaningful messages to listeners. In learning Arabic, students must use linguistic elements functionally, not only memorize vocabulary or grammar. Therefore, the main objective of speaking instruction is to train students to use Arabic in real, relevant, and meaningful situations. In Arabic education, speaking skills (*mabarrah al-kalam*) are considered complex because they involve multiple linguistic components simultaneously. Rosyidi emphasizes that speaking instruction begins after students master Arabic phonemes and can differentiate them from other languages. Arabic features unique phonological characteristics such as emphatic sounds (ص، ض، ط، ظ) and deep-throated sounds (ح، خ، ع، غ) which are unfamiliar to Indonesian learners. Correct pronunciation is essential because mispronunciation can change meaning (Suparlan & Rosyidi, 2022). Thus, phonetic training is fundamental, followed by vocabulary building, sentence patterns, communicative phrases, and contextually appropriate language use.

The framework of speaking instruction requires gradual practice, from simple to complex levels. Initially, teachers introduce basic vocabulary related to daily life family, school objects, occupations, and daily routines. Students then practice using this vocabulary in simple sentences, guided dialogues, and repetitive drills. These activities build linguistic memory and speaking fluency. As students progress, speaking activities expand to free dialogue, expressing opinions, storytelling (*qishah*), and role-play. Such activities promote natural communication and allow

students to express themselves using appropriate vocabulary and structures. Effective speaking instruction provides space for students to experiment, decide how to express meaning, and adjust language according to social context thus developing not only linguistic competence but also pragmatic competence. (Erliana et al., 2025)

Pedagogically, speaking instruction requires integrating linguistic theory with practical communication. Teachers function as facilitators who create a supportive environment where students feel confident and unafraid of making mistakes. One major challenge in Arabic learning is the limited exposure students receive outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers must design strategies that make Arabic present in various classroom activities, such as communicative approaches, task-based learning, and interactive techniques like language games. Language games are particularly effective because they combine enjoyment with instructional value. They also accommodate diverse learning needs, motivate participation, and create an engaging atmosphere. Games such as picture guessing (*tebak gambar*) and *word-matching* activities provide opportunities for students to practice speaking in meaningful contexts (Sitanggang & Nababan, 2024).

Picture-guessing activities train students to interpret visual stimuli and describe them in Arabic. Teachers show images and ask students to guess or describe them using appropriate words or sentences. This encourages active speaking practice while enriching vocabulary. Word-matching games, meanwhile, train students to match words with images or arrange phrases to form meaningful sentences or paragraphs. Such activities enhance grammar, vocabulary, and fluency, while reducing boredom and anxiety.

Ali Kamil argues that language games are effective tools for developing speaking skills because they make learning more engaging, reduce monotony, and encourage student participation (Al-Saedi, 2021). Games stimulate students to understand spoken and written messages, express opinions, and use language meaningfully. They turn abstract linguistic features into concrete, experiential learning processes making them easier to remember and apply. Teachers must select games appropriate to students' proficiency levels to ensure they enrich vocabulary and strengthen grammatical competence. The role of the teacher becomes that of a learning manager: advisor, guide, motivator, and facilitator. Teachers must design learning activities that maximize participation and enable students to practice speaking in enjoyable and purposeful ways.

Language games significantly influence speaking skills, as they introduce innovative approaches that capture students' interest. They are highly suitable for Arabic-speaking instruction because they provide direct practice in producing language. However, in the case of Madin Al Falah Kesamben Jombang, speaking instruction while functioning adequately has not reached optimal effectiveness. This is due to teacher-related and student-related factors: some teachers rely on outdated, one-way teaching methods with little variation; learning media are limited; students fear making mistakes; and backgrounds differ among students from MI and elementary schools where Arabic is not taught.

The goal of Arabic instruction at Madin Al Falah Kesamben Jombang is for students to master listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, many students struggle with speaking because instruction focuses too heavily on memorization without sufficient scaffolding, examples, or meaningful practice. Students report boredom and lack of motivation during speaking lessons.

Several previous studies support the effectiveness of language games. (Carmona et al., 2025) found that students taught using language games achieved higher Arabic proficiency than those taught without games. (Sevik, 2020) reported the positive impact of language games on writing skills. (Bayatpour et al., 2022) found that language games improved students' understanding of Arabic grammar. Based on these findings, the present study examines the effect

of language games on speaking skills (*maharah al-kalam*), with students of Madin Al Falah Kesamben Jombang as the research subjects.

The rationale for this study lies in the need to enhance speaking instruction through interactive and student centered methods that can overcome these challenges. Language games offer a novel approach by combining learning with play, which aligns with the natural curiosity and exploratory tendencies of children. Unlike conventional methods that often emphasize rote memorization, language games provide meaningful, context-based opportunities for students to practice speaking, construct sentences, and expand their vocabulary in real communicative situations. This study is novel because it applies specific types of language games picture guessing and word-arranging within an Arabic learning context at a Madrasah Diniyah, a setting that has been less explored in previous research. By systematically evaluating their impact on *maharah al-kalam*, this research contributes empirical evidence on the effectiveness of interactive, game-based approaches in enhancing oral proficiency among young learners, addressing a gap in both pedagogical practice and academic literature.

## METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach. A quantitative research approach is grounded in positivist philosophy and is used to investigate a specific population or sample. Data collection is conducted using research instruments, and the data are analyzed statistically. Amirudin explains that quantitative research is carried out through data collection using structured questionnaires developed based on measurements of the variables being studied, which subsequently produce quantitative data. In this study, the researcher uses a quasi-experimental research design. Experimental research is a type of study that examines hypotheses related to causal relationships. A quasi-experiment includes a control group but does not fully function to control external variables that may influence the implementation of the experiment. In line with the research problem and methodology, the focus of this study is to determine the effectiveness of language games on students' speaking skills/competence.

In this study, data collection was conducted using observations, tests, questionnaires, and documentation to obtain comprehensive and reliable information about students' speaking abilities before and after the implementation of language games. The data obtained were then systematically processed and analyzed using statistical software, specifically SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), which allowed the researcher to perform validity and reliability tests, normality tests, and inferential analyses such as ANOVA. This application facilitated accurate calculation, comparison, and interpretation of quantitative data, ensuring that the results reflect the effectiveness of the language games in improving students' *maharah al-kalam* (speaking skills).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research is quantitative in nature because its primary objective is to determine the effectiveness of language games (picture guessing and word matching) on students' speaking skills. The population of this study consisted of first-semester students totaling 24 learners. The researcher conducted an experiment by administering a pre-test prior to the implementation of language games to determine the students' baseline speaking ability. A post-test was then administered after the learning process using language games to analyze the improvement in students' speaking abilities after receiving the treatment. The pre-test results showed that students obtained an average score of 59, indicating that their speaking ability fell into the "weak" category. Meanwhile, the post-test results showed that students achieved an average score of 82.7, indicating that their speaking ability had improved to the "very good" category. Thus, there was a significant increase in students' speaking scores between the pre-test and post-test.

A questionnaire was also administered, consisting of a number of items that required responses from the students. The questionnaire contained 24 items: 8 items related to picture guessing, 8 items related to word matching, and 8 items related to speaking skills. Responses from 24 students regarding item number 8 in the picture guessing section indicated that 11 students (46%) responded “always,” 9 students (38%) responded “often,” and 4 students (17%) responded “sometimes.” From the overall data analysis, it was found that the total score was 2284, which fell into the “very good” category. For the word-matching section, 15 students (63%) responded “always,” 8 students (33%) responded “often,” and 1 student (4%) responded “sometimes,” also resulting in a total score of 2284 in the “very good” category. Likewise, for the speaking skills section, 12 students (50%) responded “always,” 5 students (21%) responded “often,” and 7 students (29%) responded “sometimes,” once again yielding a total score of 2284 in the “very good” category.

### **Effectiveness of Picture Guessing Games on Students’ Speaking Skills**

The data analysis revealed that the significance value of the picture-guessing variable was  $0.000 < 0.05$ . This indicates that the hypothesis is accepted; therefore, the picture-guessing language game is effective in improving students’ speaking skills. The validity test results showed that all items were valid except for item number 5, leaving 7 valid items. The reliability test further indicated that the picture-guessing variable demonstrated reliable and dependable results.

The pre-test results indicated that students scored an average of 59, categorized as “weak.” In contrast, the post-test results revealed an average score of 82.7, categorized as “very good.” Thus, it can be concluded that students’ speaking ability increased significantly after participating in the picture-guessing language game activities.

Picture guessing in speaking skill development involves identifying learning-related images presented by the teacher. Students then guess and describe the images directly in Arabic. Teachers may ask students to explain the displayed images so that students utilize more sentences and vocabulary in Arabic (Elwahab & Waleed, 2020). This game aligns well with speaking skills because it requires students to exert meaningful efforts to achieve specific goals based on clearly defined rules. It is a logically organized activity wherein two or more students interact under established game rules to achieve specific learning outcomes. During this interaction, the game process is aligned with the teaching material.

In practice, teachers may present images related to particular themes such as body parts, classroom objects, daily activities, or professions. Students are required to describe what they see, name objects, identify colors or sizes, or explain actions occurring in the pictures. This activity directly enhances speaking skills because it requires students to express ideas verbally, select appropriate vocabulary, and construct coherent sentences.

The picture-guessing game also meets the criteria of an educational activity since it includes clear rules, explicit learning objectives, and meaningful interaction among students. Students may collaborate or compete to provide the most accurate and fastest responses. Throughout this interactive process, students’ language skills are trained spontaneously and communicatively. The game is flexible and can be adjusted according to the instructional material, allowing teachers to integrate speaking practice without diminishing lesson objectives. As a result, the classroom atmosphere becomes more dynamic, student motivation increases, and Arabic-speaking skills develop significantly. (Asdar & Mujahidah, 2024)

Through picture-based activities, learners stimulate their senses, coordinate visual perception with motor responses, enhance bodily awareness, and acquire new skills. Through pretend play, they learn to role-play, manage uncomfortable emotions, understand others’ perspectives, and build an understanding of the social world (Dey & Munshi, 2025). Students also develop problem-solving abilities, experience joy through creativity, and cultivate a positive attitude toward Arabic learning.

### **Effectiveness of Word-Matching Games on Students’ Speaking Skills**

Data analysis also showed that the significance value of the word-matching variable was  $0.001 < 0.05$ , indicating the acceptance of the hypothesis. Thus, the word-matching language game is effective in improving students' speaking skills. The validity test showed that all items were valid except for item number 1, resulting in 7 valid items. The reliability test confirmed that the word-matching variable was reliable.

Students initially scored an average of 59 on the pre-test, categorized as "weak." After the implementation of the word-matching game, the post-test average increased to 82.7, categorized as "very good." Therefore, students' speaking ability improved after participating in the word-matching game. As Ali Kamil explains, educational efforts to develop speaking skills may be supported through language games (Al-Saedi, 2021). Games help teachers create meaningful and useful linguistic content that stimulates students' desire to participate and contribute. The word-matching activity is a linguistic game aimed at enhancing students' speaking abilities.

The goal of this game is to train students' speaking skills, recognizing that each student possesses varying levels of proficiency. Teachers create words or sentences on cards, often accompanied by pictures, and ask students to arrange 3 to 8 cards to form a coherent paragraph. Through this game, teachers can effectively increase students' interest and motivation to learn, particularly in Arabic language instruction.

### **Overall Effectiveness of Language Games on Students' Speaking Skills**

Analysis of the hypothesis test produced a calculated value of 4.255 with a significance value of  $0.0003 < 0.05$ , leading to the acceptance of the hypothesis. This demonstrates that both picture-guessing and word-matching language games are effective in enhancing the speaking skills of students at Madin Al Falah Kesamben Jombang.

The validity test showed that all items were valid except for item number 1, leaving 6 valid items. The reliability test confirmed that the speaking-skills instrument was reliable. According to (Li et al., 2025), language games are educational tools that help develop speaking skills. They are highly effective in assisting students to understand lessons better while reducing monotony and boredom. Games help teachers create useful and meaningful language experiences that encourage students to participate actively. To achieve this, students must comprehend spoken or written input and express their ideas through speech or writing. Thus, the language they hear, read, speak, and write becomes more vivid, meaningful, and memorable.

According to (Proverbio et al., 2022) language games are effective educational tools designed to develop speaking skills. They help students better understand lessons while reducing monotony and boredom. Wahab emphasizes that language games should not be regarded merely as recreational activities or fillers within a lesson; rather, they are pedagogically meaningful strategies that encourage students to use language authentically. Through games, students must comprehend spoken or written input and then express their ideas verbally or in writing. This process makes the language they hear, read, speak, and write more vivid, memorable, and meaningful. Therefore, language games enrich students' linguistic experiences by engaging them cognitively, socially, and emotionally.

Speaking is one of the most complex skills in language learning because it demands the integration of several components such as vocabulary mastery, grammatical structure, pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and communicative confidence. Many students struggle with speaking not because they lack knowledge, but because they do not have sufficient opportunities to practice, feel anxious about making mistakes, or are exposed to teacher-centered instruction that limits student participation. Language games address these challenges by creating interactive learning environments that encourage active communication among students. (Izatunnajah & Wijayatiningsih, 2025)

The *picture guessing* game requires students to identify images, describe objects, respond to their peers' questions, or explain what is happening in the picture (Frinsel et al., 2020). This activity stimulates students to produce language spontaneously, reinforcing vocabulary retention and sentence construction skills. Visual images also provide concrete contextual support, making

the speaking process more engaging and meaningful. Numerous studies have shown that students who learn with visual media retain vocabulary better than those who solely rely on verbal explanations. This advantage occurs because visual cues activate cognitive processes related to memory and meaning-making.

On the other hand, the *word matching* game involves matching words or sentences with their corresponding meanings or pictures (Fatkurohmah et al., 2023). Although this game may seem simple, it encourages students to speak by prompting them to articulate the matched words, justify their choices, or negotiate meaning with peers. Teachers can expand this game into more complex speaking tasks such as storytelling, sequencing events, or creating dialogues using word cards. Thus, word-matching games contribute not only to vocabulary recognition but also to sentence formation, grammatical accuracy, and creative language production.

Psychological factors play a crucial role in speaking performance. Many students experience speaking anxiety, especially when interacting in formal or teacher-dominated classroom environments. Language games help reduce this anxiety by creating a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. Students perceive the activities as “play,” not as formal assessments, making them more willing to take risks, experiment with language, and accept errors as part of the learning process (Alexiou & Karasimos, 2023). In communicative language learning, such risk-taking is essential. A supportive learning environment helps boost intrinsic motivation. Students begin to participate not because they are compelled by the teacher, but because they enjoy the activity. Motivation, in turn, fosters a sense of ownership in learning and encourages consistent engagement. When students feel safe and relaxed, their speaking performance naturally improves because their cognitive load is reduced and their willingness to communicate increases.

Some teachers view games as additional or optional activities unrelated to curriculum goals. However, this study shows that language games can be fully aligned with curriculum objectives, especially in language learning. In the Arabic language curriculum, for example, core competencies include identifying vocabulary, describing objects, conveying simple information, and engaging in short dialogues. These competencies can be effectively developed through picture-guessing and word-matching games.

Thus, language games are not supplementary but integral to meaningful and effective language instruction. Teachers can adapt games according to lesson needs. For example, when teaching vocabulary about household items, teachers can display images of rooms or furniture and ask students to guess or describe the pictures in Arabic. When teaching verbs, teachers can use word cards containing daily activities and ask students to match them with images or construct sentences. This adaptability makes language games suitable for various age groups and proficiency levels.

The findings also show that student participation significantly increased during the implementation of language games. Students did not merely listen passively but were actively involved in producing language. In language games, every student plays a role whether as speaker, listener, guesser, explainer, or observer leading to dynamic interactions that enhance communication skills. The nature of language games supports *two-way communication*, which is essential for speaking development. Students learn how to respond appropriately to peers, negotiate meaning, repair errors, and clarify ideas. These communicative processes are fundamental aspects of speaking skills that cannot be achieved through rote memorization or passive learning. Interaction is the core of speaking, and language games naturally facilitate this interaction.

Overall, the study demonstrates that language games are highly effective for improving speaking skills. Picture-guessing and word-matching activities not only strengthen linguistic elements such as vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence structure but also contribute positively to students' psychological readiness, motivation, social interaction, and classroom engagement. With a very low significance value ( $0.0003 < 0.05$ ), the study provides strong evidence that the observed improvement in speaking skills did not occur by chance. Instead, the enhancement is

directly linked to the language-game intervention. The validity and reliability of the research instrument further reinforce the conclusion that language games are a sound pedagogical approach. Therefore, language games should be considered not merely as classroom entertainment but as essential components of communicative language teaching, particularly for developing speaking skills in young learners and beginners in Arabic language education.

Arifin emphasizes that efforts to improve Arabic speaking skills include (Azizah et al., 2024): (1) instilling a positive attitude towards Arabic; (2) designing enjoyable Arabic lessons; and (3) incorporating language games when materials become monotonous. Language games are essential because Arabic lessons often create student fatigue if taught conventionally. Implementing language games helps create a livelier learning environment. Essentially, games are activities aimed at acquiring certain skills in an enjoyable manner. When the skills acquired involve linguistic abilities, the activity is termed a language game. Although many teachers use games, they are often employed merely as time-fillers rather than as structured learning techniques (Gleason & Ratner, 2022). In teaching speaking skills, language games serve as logically organized activities based on specific rules, wherein two or more students interact to achieve clear objectives. During the interaction, the game aligns with the instructional material. Language games represent an innovative learning method in language programs, and their implementation has shown positive results in teaching speaking skills.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that language games are effective in improving *mabarab al-kalam* at MADIN Al Falah Kesamben Jombang. First, the picture-guessing game significantly enhances students' speaking skills, as shown by a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Second, the word-matching game also proves effective, supported by a significance value of  $0.001 < 0.05$ . Furthermore, the combined use of picture-guessing and word-matching games demonstrates overall effectiveness, with the calculated F-value (4.255) exceeding the F-table value (3.01) and a significance level of  $0.0003 < 0.05$ . These results are expected to contribute to improving speaking proficiency within the institution and to strengthen instructional practices for future academic years. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate language games to train students and build consistent Arabic-speaking habits, while ensuring that every learner is given opportunities to practice speaking. Likewise, students are expected to develop their speaking competence diligently and to cultivate an Arabic-rich learning environment.

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