


Exploring the Use of Game-based Ice-breaking Activities by English Teachers during the Teaching and Learning Process

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ABSTRACT

Game-based ice-breaking activities are essential for increasing student engagement and motivation during English lessons. Previous studies have highlighted their effectiveness in creating a learning environment that focuses on student experiences. This study aims to fill the gap by exploring the types of game-based icebreaker activities used by English teachers and their impact on them. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, collecting data from three elementary school teachers in Malang, East Java, through observation and interviews. The study found that both non-digital and digital games were used as ice-breaking activities to foster a more interactive learning environment. These activities strengthened teacher-student relationships and encouraged creativity in teaching methods. However, challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and managing student behavior were observed. These findings indicate the importance of integrating games into teaching strategies to enhance the relationships between teachers and students, thereby improving the classroom atmosphere and promoting creativity in teaching methods. They also highlight the need for teacher training programs to address challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and managing student behavior when implementing games.

Keywords: Game-based icebreakers, English language teaching, Student engagement, primary education

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning are systematic and planned processes involving teachers and students to achieve optimal learning outcomes. In this process, teachers play various roles such as educators, instructors, guides, directors, coaches, evaluators, and assessors (Haudi, 2021). In this context, the teaching and learning process involves interaction between the teacher as an educator and students, or among students themselves, in an educational setting to achieve specific objectives (Fitria, 2023). Teaching success depends on the teacher's ability to manage the classroom and create a learning environment where students are ready to learn without pressure. Additionally, students are motivated to learn when they feel happy and prepared, as most people have limited focus and concentration (Fitria, 2022).

In the teaching and learning process of English at elementary schools in Indonesia, the 1994 curriculum serves as a guideline for the local curriculum. Under this local curriculum, each school has the discretion to design its own learning plans for English instruction (Rachmidiana & Saputra, 2023). Consequently, teachers must be creative in making the learning process engaging for elementary school students, as English is a complex subject that encompasses four skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Susanthi, 2020). Additionally, teaching English starting at the elementary level is considered beneficial due to students' brain capacity, which allows them to acquire any language more easily (Inez & Yousra, 2020).

Ice-breaking activities are a learning process that combines play and educational activities to alleviate boredom among students and enhance their enthusiasm for learning (Fitria 2023).

Meanwhile, Panggua (2016) explains that these activities are intentionally designed to help students get to know each other better, allowing them to feel more relaxed and comfortable, thus preparing them for the material. There are many types of ice-breaking activities, including greetings, games, movements and songs, motivational words, quizzes, exercises, light humor, various forms of applause, and playful challenges (Sukmajadi & Simanjuntak, 2021). As facilitators in the learning process, teachers need to align the learning material with various ice-breaking activities. This aligns with Fitria (2023), who states that ice-breakers should be educational and relevant to the material presented, effectively maintaining the teacher's charisma.

The principles of using ice-breaking in the learning process include effectiveness, where ice-breaking activities are tailored to the classroom situation. It also encompasses motivation, as the primary goal of ice-breaking is to enhance students' motivation during learning. Furthermore, these activities should be synchronized and not excessive; they must align with the learning material to ensure that ice-breaking contributes to achieving the learning objectives set by the teacher while also considering the available time. Additionally, ice-breaking activities should be suitable for the situation; if the classroom environment is already conducive to learning, introducing ice-breaking unexpectedly may disrupt students' focus. Lastly, ice-breaking activities must not contain elements of discrimination or pornography, ensuring that they maintain positive and educational values throughout the learning process (Sunarto as cited in Alwi, 2023). The duration of ice-breaking activities can be adjusted as needed, but they generally should last about 15 minutes during English lessons (Prihatini, 2021).

The preliminary observations conducted by the first researcher of this article in three elementary schools in Malang, involving three teachers, indicate variations in the use of ice-breaking activities. The first and second observations were performed with the English teachers from two of the schools on 22 April 2024. Meanwhile, the third observation was conducted with the homeroom teacher on 3 May 2024. It was found that some teachers often use ice-breaking activities, while others do so infrequently. The teachers commonly incorporated activities such as singing, clapping, guessing pictures, and dancing. However, they primarily utilized games like bingo, dice games, snakes and ladders, word searches, Quizizz, and Wordwall. In the teaching and learning process, ice-breaking activities help alleviate students' boredom, enabling them to participate and prepare for active learning. Nevertheless, the implementation of games in ice-breaking activities remains limited due to teachers' difficulties in finding games that are suitable for the learning materials. A game that is appropriate for one subject may not necessarily be suitable for another (Prihatini, 2021). Therefore, this research aims to further explore the use of various game variations in ice-breaking activities to enhance English language learning in elementary schools.

Games are a type of ice-breaking activity that can support elementary school students' developmental stages. Engaging in play is crucial for elementary school-age children, as it encourages movement, stimulating both physical and mental development (Fitria 2023). The advantages of using games as ice-breaking activities include being enjoyable and entertaining, increasing active participation from students in learning, providing immediate feedback, allowing for the application of concepts or roles in real-life situations and societal contexts, being flexible, and being easy to create and diversify (Sadiman, as cited in Istikomah et al., 2020). However, the implementation of these game-based ice-breaking activities must still be adjusted to the material being discussed and must adhere to the principles of ice-breaking activities.

Several studies have examined the use of ice-breaking activities. The first was conducted by Fitria (2023). The findings indicate that ice-breaking can create a comfortable and interactive classroom atmosphere, facilitate peer interaction among students, and enhance their focus. Additionally, teachers can modify ice-breaking games while considering the necessary duration. Preparing ice-breaking activities can also improve educators' pedagogical and

professional skills. However, Fitria's study did not directly observe how ice-breaking activities are implemented during the teaching and learning process in elementary schools, as it was a library research study. For this reason, further research is needed to directly observe how ice-breaking activities are implemented during the teaching and learning process, particularly in English lessons. The current study is therefore proposed to fill this gap.

Furthermore, Fayanto et al. (2021) provide evidence that the use of ice-breaking activities is highly beneficial during the learning process in elementary schools. Their survey analysis shows an interest percentage of 80% and a happiness percentage of 85%. In their study, the types of ice-breaking activities included clapping and various forms of applause. Unlike Fayanto et al. (2021), the current research investigates the use of games as ice-breaking activities in English language learning. This study is based on initial observations, which indicate that teachers rarely or have never used game-based ice-breaking activities.

Marzatifa et al. (2021) conducted another library study suggesting that ice-breaking activities can be applied across all subjects and integrated with various teaching methods or game techniques. Additionally, the research highlights the challenges that teachers encounter when using ice-breaking activities, as well as the benefits for students. However, the study does not thoroughly investigate the benefits and challenges experienced by teachers. Consequently, further research is needed to explore the advantages and difficulties of implementing game-based ice-breaking activities, with a specific focus on teachers' experiences in teaching English.

The results of this research are essential, especially for teachers, as they are facilitators of learning in the classroom. Exploring various types of ice-breaking activities will help teachers develop effective teaching techniques through games. This will enable them to create a more diverse English learning experience. Therefore, this research aims to delve deeper into the use of various games in ice-breaking activities, along with the benefits and challenges faced by English teachers in elementary schools. The research questions guiding this study are as follows: What types of games do teachers use in the teaching and learning process of English through ice-breaking activities? What benefits do teachers experience in the process of teaching and learning English through ice-breaking activities? What challenges do teachers encounter in the process of teaching and learning English through ice-breaking activities?

Literature Review

Game-based in Teaching and Learning English

Game-based learning is an active strategy combining game elements with the educational environment to encourage and enhance learning, practice, and assessment (Miller et al., 2021). Games-based learning relies on defined learning outcomes and often employs a cycle of failure, reflection, and repetition to provide students with a safe yet meaningful learning experience. According to Paul (as cited in Nurmayulia, 2021), games provide a non-threatening environment for learning because when students learn by playing, they tend to be able to accept risks when making mistakes without feeling like they have failed. Moreover, students can discover new English words, expressions, and patterns, or are even more motivated to learn English. The type of game in ice-breaking activities should be related to the subject matter so that the material can be delivered optimally without reducing the time allocation in the teaching and learning process (Prihatini, 2021).

According to Lee (as cited in Nurmayulia, 2021), a good game should meet several criteria. Firstly, it must have a clear goal, provide straightforward instructions, and outline how to organize activities. Additionally, it should include photocopiable materials that support learning, allocate appropriate time for play, and focus on the main language skills for the students. Furthermore, games should encourage pair work, as this allows students to collaborate and become more engaged. Group monitoring is also important, as it enables students to provide continuous feedback to one another. Before being implemented in class,

games should be tested and demonstrated to ensure their effectiveness. Lastly, it is crucial that games are played fairly.

Miller et al. (2021) classified educational games into digital games and non-digital games. Digital games are played on devices such as computers and mobile phones, while non-digital games do not require any electronic devices. For instance, the game "Articulated Songs" helps students learn narrative texts by having them answer questions on yellow cards, which aids in their understanding and retelling of the song as a narrative and summarizing it. In the realm of digital ice-breaking activities, the "English Snake Game" features a guessing game followed by a competitive round lasting 7 minutes. This activity reinforces the material, boosts confidence, and enhances understanding, particularly of the passive voice (Prihatini, 2021). Both non-digital and digital games can be commercial games, and each type offers unique benefits that make them worth the purchase price whether non-digital or digital, commercial games can foster literacy communication, teamwork, problem-solving, forecasting, and strategic thinking (Miller et al., 2021).

Implementing digital games can enhance student motivation by utilizing images, sounds, and colors to encourage engagement. Playing online requires students to develop teamwork skills, such as communication and negotiation, as they work together to solve challenges. For learning English, a language game like "Duolingo" tracks scores and progress throughout the game, providing instant feedback and allowing students to revisit completed levels to improve their results. Digital games that promote decision-making, such as "Sandbox games," enable players to control an avatar exploring a virtual world while making independent choices. This fosters a sense of adventure and offers opportunities to learn from mistakes. Learning in computer-simulated environments allows students to assess the real-world feasibility of various choices, ideas, and structures, encouraging them to take risks, experiment, and learn from their experiences (Adipat et al., 2021). However, access to technology may not be available to all students, and there can be higher costs associated with purchasing and maintaining digital devices and software. Furthermore, excessive screen time can lead to health issues, including eye strain and reduced physical activity.

On the other hand, implementing non-digital games into learning can be more cost-effective and quicker than using digital games. Simple games like "Bingo" require only paper and pencil. Commercial board games can be tailored to the content or recreated with similar mechanics. Card games, such as "Miles Bornes" or "Memory," are excellent for review. Non-digital games offer creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding and can help them achieve higher cognitive levels on Bloom's Taxonomy through game creation as an assessment (Miller et al., 2021). Moreover, non-digital games provide physical exercise, while digital games typically promote passive physical activity (Adipat et al., 2021). However, non-digital games may lack the engagement factor that multimedia elements in digital games provide. They can also be less interactive and may not offer instant feedback on progress, which can be a key motivator for students.

Providing students with access to both types of games allows them to benefit from each's advantages. Digital games offer engaging, interactive, and feedback-rich experiences, while non-digital games provide cost-effective, accessible, and physically active learning opportunities. Balancing both can cater to diverse learning needs and environments, helping students maintain curiosity and achieve a well-rounded education.

The Utilization of Game-based Ice-breaking Activities for Teaching and Learning English

Despite the benefits of games in boosting students' motivation and learning, some teachers avoid them due to a lack of knowledge or a belief that games undermine classroom formality. However, many argue that games enhance learning quality and engagement (Pasassung et al., 2023). The utilization of games recommended to be used in the classroom, such games for learning motivation, games for student participation, games for learning achievement, games for social interaction, and games for emotional skills.

To be a motivating game, classroom instruction should not be stressful, but rather full of fun, interest, and enjoyment, but challenging, purposeful, and competitive. Games for student participation are helping to enhance student participation. Teachers should foster a more student-centered approach, wherein their speaking time is minimized compared to the students. Incorporating engaging games into lessons makes what might have been a dull class captivating and absorbing. It's evident that games effectively seize students' focus and involvement, igniting their desire to delve deeper into learning.

Games for learning achievement, when students are actively involved in classroom games, it boosts their participation and improves their learning achievement. In teaching, the idea is that when students find the material interesting, they are more likely to understand it and apply it in their everyday lives. So, using games for the teaching and learning process is not just about having fun, but it's about making learning more effective and relevant. Games for social interaction serve as valuable tools for both entertainment and education, facilitating social learning, especially among children. Students observe, learn, and collaborate through group activities, fostering teamwork and mutual respect. This interactive process, including team members and competitors, enhances social skills and promotes cooperative behavior, contributing to students' overall social development.

Games for emotional skills, help students understand and manage their emotional intelligence, which is often more predictive of success than IQ. Therefore, students should engage in activities that develop their socio-emotional skills. Group-based games promote patience, understanding, and tolerance, teaching emotional control and empathy, ultimately enhancing students' personal growth (Pasassung et al., 2023).

In addition, the application of games as ice-breaking is adjusted to the application of ice-breaking before starting the lesson, during the learning process, before ending the learning activity, or at any time during the learning process if necessary (Fitria 2023). Its implementation can be adjusted by the teaching module or class conditions during the learning process.

METHOD

Research Design

A descriptive qualitative design was employed in this research to develop a deeper understanding of using games as ice-breaking activities in English language learning. The study aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the implementation of game-based ice-breaking activities in the classroom and to explore the experiences of English teachers. Three English teachers from different state elementary schools in Malang, East Java, participated in this study. Although not all of them had educational backgrounds in English, they were experienced in teaching the subject. These teachers faced challenges in incorporating games as ice-breaking activities in the classroom due to limited class time and restricted access to technology, such as mobile phones. Additionally, they utilized school facilities like LCD projectors and laptops in the English teaching and learning processes.

Instruments

This study collected data by documenting lesson plans and classroom conditions as teachers implemented game-based ice-breaking activities in the teaching and learning process. Throughout the sessions, the researcher employed observational instruments, including check notes, supplemented by photo and video documentation to capture the teaching process directly. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the English teachers across various classrooms, encompassing both lower grades (2nd and 3rd) and upper grades (5th).

Procedures

The data were collected using multiple techniques over two sessions, each incorporating distinct types of game-based ice-breaking activities. The first method involved documenting the teachers' lesson plans to gain a comprehensive understanding of how these ice-breaking activities were planned and adapted to the learning context in the classroom.

Structured observation was then carried out in the classroom during English lessons, employing a check note sheet across two meetings. The check note was divided into three categories: preparation, implementation, and closure of English lessons facilitated by game-based ice-breaking activities. This observational tool was used to examine the various aspects of the game-based ice-breaking activities implemented by English teachers, as well as classroom dynamics, including interaction patterns between the teachers and students, and among the students themselves. During the observation sessions, documentation in the form of photos and videos was also conducted to capture the implementation of the activities.

The third method involved conducting semi-structured interviews after the teaching sessions. These interviews were held twice with English teachers: once after using non-digital games and again after employing digital games. A mobile phone was used as a recording device during the interviews. The purpose of these semi-structured interviews was to explore the teachers' experiences with game-based ice-breaking activities, encompassing various materials and different types of games for each implementation. These interviews provided the researcher with deeper insights into the teachers' perspectives.

Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using an interactive data analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. The researcher used triangulation to check the validation or truthfulness of the data and data analysis (Sugiyono, 2013). Triangulation is a data collection technique that uses different methods to obtain data from different sources or at different times. This research used structured interviews to delve deeper into and clarify the initial findings from the observations and structured interviews, by comparing data from the structured and semi-structured interviews and verifying the collected data's consistency, accuracy, and validity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Types of game-based ice-breaking activities

The first aim of this study is to explore the use of game-based ice-breaking activities as part of English learning in elementary schools. Based on data obtained from observations and interviews with three teachers, it was found that teachers use various types of non-digital and digital games to create an interactive and enjoyable learning environment. The teachers used non-digital games in the first session, while in the second session, they used digital games.

The first variety of non-digital games was implemented in upper elementary classes, specifically in 5th grade, with the learning material from My Next Words book in chapter 1 "What Delicious Bakso" covers various food and drink flavors. The first non-digital game used was "Look and Match", where students match English vocabulary for flavors with pictures of food or drinks carried out after the teacher brainstormed about the material being discussed. This game uses worksheets designed to be as engaging as possible and is completed individually.

The second type of non-digital game is the "Listen and Stick It" which is conducted in groups. In this game, students listen to the flavor words in English spoken by the teacher, and group representatives race to the front to stick pictures of food that correspond to the flavor mentioned by the teacher. To add a challenge, the teacher asks the group representatives to create sentences based on the flavors and food pictures placed on the board.

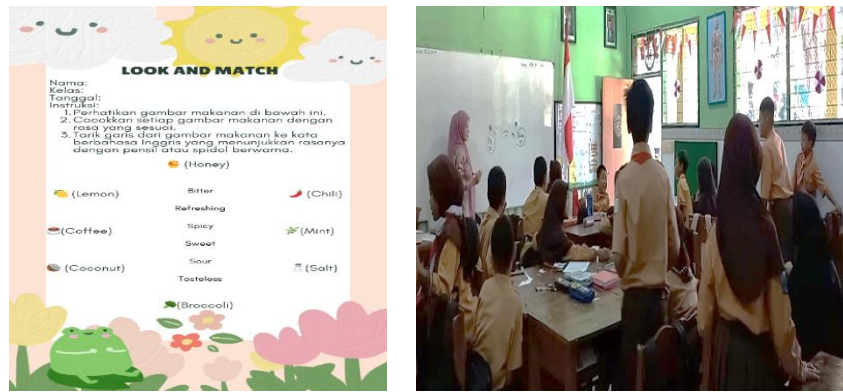


Figure 1 Look and Match Worksheet & Listen and Stick It Game

The next game also utilizes worksheets and is implemented in lower elementary classes, specifically in 3rd grade. The material is taken from the book *My Next Words*, Chapter 1, "I Like Mie Aceh," which covers various English vocabulary related to food and drinks carried out after the teacher brainstormed about the material being discussed. In this activity, the teacher provides two worksheets that are completed individually containing four different types of games. The first worksheet, "Food and Drinks Missing Letters in Words," contains incomplete vocabulary and pictures. In this worksheet, students are asked to fill in the missing letters to form complete words. On the reverse side, there is another worksheet titled "Food and Drinks Vocabulary Matching Worksheet." In this worksheet, students are asked to write the correct vocabulary, provided in an English word bank, that matches the corresponding pictures of food or drink.

The next worksheet is titled "Food and Drinks Unscramble the Words." In this worksheet, students are asked to rearrange jumbled English vocabulary related to food or drinks into the correct English words. This worksheet also includes images of food and drinks, which must match the proper English vocabulary numbers. On the reverse side, there is a worksheet titled "Food and Drinks Crossword Puzzle," which features a picture-based crossword puzzle. In this activity, students are required to write the English vocabulary for food and drinks in the crossword boxes according to the number on the pictures of the food and drinks. Among these four worksheets, the crossword puzzle is the most challenging, as students must correctly guess the English vocabulary using only the clues provided by the pictures.



Figure 2 Food and Drink Worksheets

The final type of non-digital game was implemented in lower elementary classes, specifically in 2nd a grade. The material source used is from the book *Find My Words*, Chapter 2, "My Father Likes Watermelon," which discusses vocabulary related to likes or dislikes of different fruits with various subjects. This game is played after the teacher re-explains the previous material or is called brainstorming. The game used is called "Like or Doesn't Like," which is played in groups. Initially, the teacher writes an incomplete sentence

on the board while attaching a picture of a fruit. If the fruit picture matches the sentence the teacher has spoken, students must write a missing-word sentence using the vocabulary likes, and if it does not match, they use the vocabulary doesn't like. This game is conducted as a competition, where the group that raises their hand first and correctly completes the sentence written by their representative earns points.



Figure 3 Like or Doesn't Like Game

On the other hand, the digital games implemented include platforms such as Educandy, Eduplay, and Wordwall, designed to increase student engagement in learning through technology-based activities. For Wordwall and Eduplay games, a laptop and projector that is already available in the classroom are used to display the games, whereas for Educandy, only a laptop is used.

The first type of digital game implemented was using the Wordwall website. This website was used at the beginning of the lesson from My Next Words, Chapter 1, "I Like Mie Aceh," in 3rd grade. The game was presented as a picture quiz where students guessed the correct English vocabulary for a picture of food or drink. This game was done individually, where each student took turns according to the attendance order. The teacher would call random attendance numbers, and the student whose number was called would choose a numbered box displayed on the screen. These numbers contained pictures and two English vocabulary options for food or drinks. Out of these two options, the student had to guess the correct English word for the food or drink shown in the picture.



Figure 4 Wordwall Game

The next type of digital game used was the Eduplay website. This game was applied at the end of the lesson, based on the material from Find My Words, Chapter 2, "My Father Likes Watermelon," in 2nd B grade. Before starting the game, the teacher distributed illustrated worksheets to students, which contained the same questions that would be displayed on the screen. This game was conducted in groups of five. The teacher allotted 10 minutes to complete the 10 questions. After completing the worksheet, the teacher called two representatives from

each group to come forward and play the game directly on the laptop, with the screen displayed on the board so that all groups could see the points earned by each team.



Figure 5 Eduplay Game

The final digital game used the Educandy application, based on the material from My Next Words, Chapter 1, "I Like Mie Aceh," in 5th grade. This game was conducted in the middle of the lesson in groups of five. For the Educandy game, the teacher provided a word-matching quiz where students had to guess the taste of each food based on the pictures shown. During the activity, the teacher moved around the classroom to assist students in playing the game on the laptop. For the other groups waiting for their turn, the teacher assigned tasks from their textbooks. Even though all groups answered the questions correctly, their scores varied because each question was time-limited. The faster the students answered the questions correctly, the higher the points they earned.

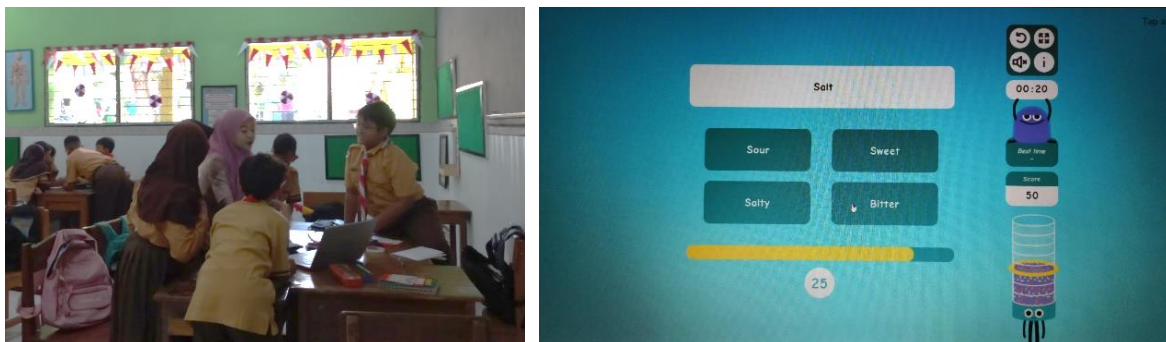


Figure 6 Educandy Game

As an additional ice-breaking activity besides games, the 2nd A and 3rd-grade teachers use songs to introduce the lessons. In class 2 A, the teacher invited students to sing at the beginning of the first lesson before the material was given and the implementation of non-digital games. The theme of the song was about various types of fruits, sung in English. Meanwhile, in grade 3, the teacher invited students to sing together at a meeting as a student brainstorming session regarding the Food and Drink material. The singing activities effectively help students familiarize themselves with new vocabulary and prepare them for the material. This approach creates a relaxed atmosphere and introduces the content gradually, contributing to better students' comprehension.

Benefits of applying game-based ice-breaking activities

This study reveals the various benefits obtained by teachers in implementing games as part of ice-breaking activities in English language learning in elementary schools. The use of games, both non-digital and digital, not only creates a more enjoyable learning atmosphere but also significantly impacts teachers' roles and performance in the learning process.

One of the main benefits felt by teachers is increased learning effectiveness. By using games, teachers can achieve learning objectives better, because games help focus students' attention and increase their involvement in learning activities. As the teacher mentioned:

"If used games, children will be more concentrated, they will be able to focus better, and they will be more enthusiastic. Children understand the material better, especially if there are interesting games." (English teacher of 2nd grade).

Another teacher added:

"With games, children understand faster, they can memorize vocabulary better." (English teacher of 3rd grade).

This shows how games enhance student focus and material comprehension, making complex topics more accessible because students become more responsive and motivated to learn through interesting and interactive activities. In addition, the following statement also supports this:

"Students look more enthusiastic and fresh when learning using games, so they find it easier to understand the material being taught and don't get bored." (Teacher of 5th grade).

The use of games also encourages creativity and innovation in teaching. Teachers become more creative in designing learning strategies, adapting games to the material being taught, and adapting various digital and non-digital resources according to class needs. A teacher explained:

"I look for inspiration from the internet and TikTok, then modify the game according to the material being taught. The type of game is adapted with observation, imitation, and modification methods. So, each game is adjusted to the needs of the class." (Teacher of 5th grade).

Another teacher shared her experience:

"I have to be more creative, for example, if we use digital games, we adjust the theme. If it is non-digital, we can make it from the images we search for and adapt it for the material." (English teacher of 3rd grade).

This highlights how games enrich teaching methods and help teachers develop new and creative skills, especially in utilizing technology to support learning. Meanwhile, for grade 2 English teachers, even though she has used the same digital web games, the teachers still modify the appearance and content of the game.

Furthermore, game-based ice-breaking activities strengthen the relationship between teachers and students. With a more relaxed and interactive classroom atmosphere, teachers can build better communication with students, which in turn increases student participation and strengthens emotional bonds in the classroom. One teacher observed:

"Children are more enthusiastic when there are games, they are more active in asking questions and working together. The classroom atmosphere is also more relaxed, and I can get closer to the students during the game." (English teacher of 2nd grade).

Another teacher stated:

"When we play games, children are more willing to talk to their teachers and participate. This also helps me understand how well they understand the material." (English teacher of 3rd grade).

These statements show that the game allows teachers to receive immediate feedback from students during the game, which helps them assess students' understanding more accurately and adjust their teaching methods to students' needs.

Challenging of applying game-based ice-breaking activities

This study also identifies several challenges teachers face when implementing games as ice-breaking activities during teaching English. One of the significant challenges is the time-consuming nature of preparing both digital and non-digital games. As one teacher shared:

"Non-digital game require extra effort because I have to find the images, print them, and prepare the materials ourselves." (Teacher of 2nd grade).

Another teacher of 5th grade highlighted similar difficulties with digital games, she stated:

"The game is not free so the game templates are limited."

From these statements, it can be seen that preparing both games take a long time to prepare so that they remain in line with learning objectives.

In addition, by adapting to the teaching module, the teacher prepares the ideas and materials so that it always takes time to prepare non-digital games or digital games. This is supported by the statement of the class 2nd teacher:

"I looked for a tutorial first before making a digital game."

Meanwhile, for non-digital games, teachers must prepare student worksheet materials or materials that need to be printed. In this context, preparing the game needs a process for both non-digital games and digital games.

Managing students' behavior during game activities also presents a challenge, especially when their enthusiasm is high. One teacher noted:

"The conditions of the children are different, some are active and can be conditioned, some are not, so it is usually quite difficult to discipline the students." (English teacher of 3rd grade).

Thus, teachers must work hard to maintain a conducive learning environment to ensure that the game runs smoothly and is in line with the learning objectives even though they still find it difficult to control students' enthusiasm.

Furthermore, another teacher mentioned:

"Group division takes a long time, and class conditioning is still lacking because it is still a lower class so they are still busy with their groups, and if they do not match their friends there is a kind of rejection so it is not well conditioned." (English teacher of 2nd grade).

In this context, the age of students who are still considered to be young children is also a challenge for teachers in conditioning the class, especially in the context of learning while playing, of course, students tend to choose close friends to be their partners.

The next challenge is limited classroom space which also restricts the effectiveness of physical games. A teacher of 5th grade explained:

"The classroom is small, so if the game involves physical activity, the children have difficulty moving and don't get the most out of it."

This lack of space prevents students from being fully involved in physical activities whereas non-digital games require activities such as running. With limited space for students to move, each student does not get the same opportunity to compete in the game and they find it difficult so in its implementation, teachers must think of other ways in how to implement the game.

Moreover, limited access to electricity makes it even more difficult to use digital devices. As a 3rd-grade teacher said:

"The quiz was moved to the beginning of the lesson because there was a power outage." Although digital games can be used offline, using a projector screen requires electricity. In relation to this, the availability of electricity becomes an important factor in implementing digital-based games.

Lastly, the challenge faced by teachers in implementing games as ice-breaking activities, especially digital games, is the limited availability of laptops or other devices in the classroom. This shortage prevents all students from participating in the game simultaneously, which disrupts the flow of the lesson and reduces the effectiveness of the activity as a whole. As mentioned by one teacher:

"The problem is that there are not enough devices, so we have to create other activities for children who have not been able to try the game because they cannot do it together." (Teacher of 5th grade).

This situation forces teachers to create additional activities for students who are waiting to use the devices, adding complexity to classroom management and making it more difficult to maintain engagement and focus.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the games that teachers apply as basic are included in several categories of game types described in Nurmayulia's research (2021). Look and Match, food and drink worksheets, Like or Doesn't Like, Wordwall quiz, Educandy and Eduplay are non-digital and digital games that are included in the accuracy-focus games type. This type of game improves vocabulary memory which is useful for developing pronunciation, grammar, and correct word or sentence structure. Meanwhile, the Listen and Stick It, Like or Doesn't Like, Eduducandy, and Eduplay games are included in the fluency-focus game type. In this game, students focus on completing tasks in groups where this game is a learning part in the communicative approach. In addition, the game is also included in the competitive and cooperative game type where the goal is to win or collect the most points and the game must be completed by working together.

Game-based ice-breaking activities also play an important role in increasing student engagement and motivation during the English learning process in elementary schools. The use of this activity successfully created a more interactive and enjoyable atmosphere, which is in line with Fitria's (2023) view that ice-breaking is able to create a comfortable and conducive classroom environment for learning. Ice-breaking activities that use games also support students' physical and mental development by providing balanced stimulation, as stated by Inez & Yousra (2020) regarding the importance of learning involving physical activity for elementary school-aged children. This reflects the importance of teaching methods involving Total Physical Response (TPR) as suggested by Vélez, et al. (2021), which combines physical movement with language learning to strengthen students' memory of the material being taught.

The influence of games in ice-breaking activities, both digital and non-digital, can have a positive impact on learning effectiveness. As stated by Prihatini (2021), games that are adapted to the subject matter can improve students' understanding of the material being taught. The use of non-digital games such as Look and Match, Listen and Stick It, Food and Drinks Worksheets, and Like or Doesn't Like as well as digital games on the Worldwall, Eduplay, and Educandy websites can provide students with opportunities to learn while playing, which encourages active engagement. This is in line with the view of Miller et al. (2021) who stated that game-based learning can increase student motivation and help them apply learning concepts in relevant contexts.

This study also shows that the use of games as ice-breaking activities in English learning in elementary schools provides significant benefits for both students and teachers. In accordance with the findings of Fitria (2023), ice-breaking can create a comfortable and interactive classroom atmosphere, which is important for motivating students. In addition, games used in ice-breaking activities also make it easier for teachers to achieve learning goals through more creative and fun methods (Pasassung et al., 2023).

Games as ice-breakers are not only effective in increasing student engagement but also benefit teachers in improving their teaching skills. In accordance with research by Fayanto et al. (2021), the learning atmosphere becomes more positive and enjoyable. Teachers can more easily create an environment that supports interaction between students and teachers, which is important for facilitating effective learning.

In addition, games help keep students focused on complex English subject matter. As explained by Prihatini (2021), games that are adapted to the subject matter can help students understand difficult concepts in a way that is easier to understand. In this case, both non-digital and digital games used by teachers in this study proved effective in helping students remember vocabulary and practice it in English in a competitive yet fun context.

Developing teacher creativity in developing teaching methods is one of the main benefits of using games. As explained by Pasassung et al. (2023), teachers who use games as ice-breakings have the opportunity to develop their pedagogical and innovative skills. They can modify or create games that suit the needs of the class and subject matter so that learning

becomes more varied and interesting for students. This is in line with the statements of teachers in this study who stated that they often seek inspiration from various sources such as the internet to adapt games to the material being taught.

Marzatifa et al. (2021) also highlighted that ice-breaking, including those based on games, can be applied to all subjects and combined with other teaching methods. Teachers who use games as ice-breakings have the opportunity to integrate non-academic skills, such as social and emotional skills, with formal subject matter, which helps create a more balanced and holistic learning atmosphere.

Despite the clear benefits, this study also uncovered challenges in using games as icebreakers. Alwi (2023) noted that game preparation is often time-consuming and resource-consuming, especially in digital games that require technology. Teachers in this study stated that the limited availability of devices such as laptops and projectors limited the maximum use of digital games in the classroom. In addition, teachers also need to manage students' high enthusiasm during the game, which can pose challenges in maintaining student discipline and focus, following the findings of Marzatifa et al. (2021).

This study also uncovered challenges in implementing these activities, especially the limited time and resources faced by teachers. As teachers stated, preparing digital and non-digital games is time-consuming and often requires additional materials or technology that are not always available. This is in line with the challenges discussed by Adipat et al. (2021), who showed that the integration of digital games can be hampered by limited access to devices and infrastructure.

Several implications arise from the findings of the study. First, the research highlights that game-based activities enhance student engagement and motivation during English lessons. This suggests that incorporating such activities can foster an interactive and enjoyable learning environment, which is essential for foreign language learning. Second, the use of games strengthens relationships between teachers and students, implying that educators should consider integrating games into their teaching strategies to improve the overall classroom atmosphere. Third, the findings indicate that game-based activities promote creativity in teaching methods. This suggests that teachers should be encouraged to explore various game formats and adapt them for their lessons, facilitating innovative approaches to language teaching, particularly in elementary schools.

Additionally, the study identifies challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and managing student behavior when implementing games as icebreakers. This implies that teacher training programs should include strategies for addressing these challenges, ensuring that educators are well-prepared to incorporate games effectively. The other challenge is that limited access to technology can hinder the use of digital games in classrooms. This suggests that schools should invest in technology and resources to support the effective use of game-based learning, ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to benefit from these ice-breaking activities.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that ice-breaking games have a positive impact on English learning in elementary schools. The games used vary between non-digital and digital. Non-digital games such as Look and Match, Listen and Stick It, Like or Doesn't Like, and Food and Drinks Worksheets help students understand vocabulary and develop group work skills. Meanwhile, digital games such as Wordwall, Eduplay, and Educandy encourage student engagement through direct feedback and technology-based interactivity. Both types of games have succeeded in creating a more interactive and enjoyable learning atmosphere.

Benefits for teachers include increased creativity in designing interesting teaching strategies. Teachers become more flexible in adapting games according to the subject matter, which in turn helps improve student understanding. In addition, the relationship between

teachers and students is also strengthened through a more relaxed and interactive classroom atmosphere, where teachers can more easily observe and adjust students' learning needs directly.

However, teachers face several challenges in implementing these games. One of them is the time needed to prepare games, both digital and non-digital. Limited access to technology, such as the lack of digital devices and narrow classrooms, also become obstacles in optimizing technology-based games. In addition, managing students' enthusiasm during game activities requires extra effort from teachers to maintain students' discipline and focus during the learning process.

Overall, ice-breaking games provide great benefits for English learning in elementary schools, but further adjustments are needed to overcome existing challenges in order to achieve maximum effectiveness in their implementation.

In addition, based on the results of this study, several suggestions can be put forward for further research. First, further research is advised to explore other types of ice-breakers that are not only game-based, such as simulation activities, drama, or project-based methods, which can also increase student engagement in learning. In addition, future studies can focus more on the effects of games on specific language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, or speaking, to provide more specific insights into the impact of games on specific skills.

Further research can also compare the effectiveness of technology-based games with non-digital games at various levels of education, such as at junior high and senior high school levels, to see if the same benefits apply to students with different age groups. In addition, it is important to study more deeply about the optimal duration and frequency of using ice-breaking activities, so that the most effective combination can support the learning process. Research can also pay attention to student involvement in creating games as part of a learning strategy to increase their motivation and creativity..

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