

TEACHERS' EFFORTS TO INCREASE ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION THROUGH INTERACTIVE LEARNING

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Diterima: 1/1/2026; Direvisi: 8/1/2026; Diterbitkan: 15/1/2026

ABSTRAK

Rendahnya motivasi dan partisipasi pasif siswa dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris menjadi tantangan signifikan dalam pengembangan kompetensi komunikatif di tingkat sekolah dasar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan motivasi belajar siswa melalui penerapan strategi pembelajaran interaktif yang meliputi permainan edukatif, diskusi kelompok, dan penggunaan lembar kerja visual. Dilaksanakan dengan metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) di Sekolah Sahabat Alam Palangka Raya, studi ini melibatkan 21 siswa kelas lima dan enam melalui dua siklus yang terdiri dari tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan, pengamatan, dan refleksi. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara, dan tes untuk mengukur perubahan perilaku belajar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada seluruh indikator motivasi antara Siklus I dan Siklus II: partisipasi siswa meningkat sebesar 28% (dari 58% menjadi 86%), keaktifan berbicara naik 29% (dari 52% menjadi 81%), kerja sama kelompok bertumbuh 28% (dari 60% menjadi 88%), dan antusiasme meningkat 27% (dari 63% menjadi 90%). Secara kualitatif, siswa menunjukkan peningkatan kepercayaan diri dan keberanian untuk berinteraksi dalam bahasa Inggris tanpa rasa takut salah. Disimpulkan bahwa integrasi alat pembelajaran interaktif efektif mengubah dinamika kelas menjadi lebih hidup dan bermakna, sehingga guru direkomendasikan untuk mempertahankan strategi ini guna menjaga konsistensi motivasi siswa dalam jangka panjang.

Kata kunci: *Upaya guru, pembelajaran interaktif, motivasi, pembelajaran bahasa Inggris, penelitian tindakan kelas*

ABSTRACT

Low motivation and passive participation of students in English learning are significant challenges in developing communicative competence at the elementary school level. This study aims to improve student learning motivation through the implementation of interactive learning strategies that include educational games, group discussions, and the use of visual worksheets. Conducted using the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method at Sahabat Alam School, Palangka Raya, this study involved 21 fifth and sixth grade students through two cycles consisting of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Data collection was conducted through classroom observations, interviews, and tests to measure changes in learning behavior. The results showed a significant increase in all motivation indicators between Cycle I and Cycle II: student participation increased by 28% (from 58% to 86%), active speaking increased by 29% (from 52% to 81%), group cooperation grew by 28% (from 60% to 88%), and enthusiasm increased by 27% (from 63% to 90%). Qualitatively, students showed increased

confidence and courage to interact in English without fear of mistakes. It was concluded that the integration of interactive learning tools effectively changed the classroom dynamics to be more lively and meaningful, so teachers were recommended to maintain this strategy to maintain the consistency of student motivation in the long term.

Keyword: *Teachers' efforts, interactive learning, motivation, English learning, classroom action research*

INTRODUCTION

Due to the rapid acceleration of globalization, the English language has firmly established itself as a fundamental prerequisite for successful global communications and unrestricted access to information networks (Krath et al., 2021). In the context of early childhood and primary education, learning English is not merely about acquiring a new linguistic skill; it is crucially important for the development of novice communicative competence that serves as a foundation for future interactions. Furthermore, proficiency in this language is essential for meeting the students' comprehensive academic and social needs as they navigate an increasingly interconnected world. Ideally, the pedagogical approach to students' English lessons should be inherently motivating, creating an atmosphere where learning is perceived as a desirable activity rather than a burden. In such an ideal setting, students should be active, enthusiastic, and willing participants in the lessons, engaging dynamically with the content and their peers (Aina, 2025; Zeng et al., 2024). This foundational stage is critical because the attitudes formed toward language learning during these formative years often dictate the trajectory of a learner's future linguistic proficiency and cultural adaptability.

However, the reality observed in many educational institutions contrasts sharply with this ideal vision. In many elementary settings, despite the recognized importance of the subject, students' motivation to learn English is simply absent or significantly diminished (Lestari et al., 2024; Ningsih, 2023). This absence of drive creates a disconnect between the curriculum's goals and the actual classroom experience. Consequently, this pervasive lack of motivation translates directly into passive participation, where students remain silent observers rather than active users of the language. This passivity inevitably leads to limited vocabulary acquisition and poor comprehension, even in scenarios where instructional time and educational materials are theoretically adequate (T.-I. Chen et al., 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2024). The failure to ignite student interest suggests that the mere availability of resources is insufficient without the catalyst of engagement. When students fail to see the relevance or enjoyment in learning English, the cognitive processes required for language retention—such as attention and memory encoding—are not fully activated, resulting in suboptimal educational outcomes.

To address these deficiencies, the philosophy of language education needs to shift towards more learner-centered approaches. Ideally, the process of learning English should stimulate curiosity and foster learners' autonomy, empowering them to take ownership of their educational journey. This involves incorporating activities where learners socialize, articulate their thoughts freely, and derive genuine pleasure from the experience of communication (Alibakhshi et al., 2025; Gunawan, 2025a). Unfortunately, the current pedagogical landscape often fails to meet these standards. Many students are still subjected to the monotonous instructional methods of direct, uncontextualized explanations, and copious worksheets, which dominate the lessons of the students. These traditional methods often prioritize rote memorization over meaningful interaction, stifling creativity and enthusiasm. The gap is evident: while motivating, interactive, and communicative instruction is expected and

theoretically supported, students' actual focus and interest in the English lesson is trapped in passivity. This discrepancy highlights the urgent need for instructional reform that prioritizes the psychological and emotional engagement of young learners alongside cognitive development.

Theoretically, the link between internal drive and learning outcomes is well-established. The most significant determinant of success in acquiring a new language, according to established language learning theory, is motivation (Ika Dhamayanti, 2021). Without this driving force, even the most well-structured curriculum may fail to produce competent speakers. Wallace and Leong (2020) assert that the classroom environment, the specific teaching style employed by the instructor, and the degree of interaction among learners significantly affect learners' persistence and overall engagement with the material. A supportive environment that encourages risk-taking and minimizes anxiety is essential for fostering a willingness to communicate. More recent studies confirm this claim, noting the positive effects on learners' motivation and engagement in English learning of the adoption of advanced interactive pedagogical methods. These methods include those that incorporate visual media, educational games, interactive worksheets, and collaborative learning activities (Gini et al., 2025; Harahap & Kembaren, 2023; Permana et al., 2023; Zeng et al., 2024). Such findings reinforce the notion that the "how" of teaching is just as important as the "what."

Building on the potential of interactive pedagogy, specific tools and strategies have shown remarkable promise in bridging the motivation gap. For instance, the use of interactive picture books has helped young learners become more motivated and significantly improve their comprehension in English classes by providing visual context to linguistic input (T.-I. Chen et al., 2023). In much the same way, Al-Khresheh (2025) stated that gamified learning environments improve language acquisition on both the cognitive and motivational planes, creating a dual benefit that traditional methods rarely achieve (Aina, 2025; Jara Chiriboga et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025; Supasa et al., 2024). Games introduce elements of challenge, competition, and immediate feedback, which trigger the brain's reward systems and sustain attention. However, while evidence in favor of interactive learning continues to grow, the motivation gap in English language teaching, more specifically elementary English focused on the integration of play and interactive worksheets, remains largely unstudied in specific local contexts (Cahya Susaniari & Santosa, 2024; Lestari et al., 2024). This lack of specific research leaves educators with general principles but few concrete, context-specific examples of successful implementation.

Addressing this specific research void is essential for developing practical solutions for teachers in the field. Therefore, this study seeks to understand the design, implementation, and reflection on interactive learning strategies employed by a teacher in order to motivate students to learn English (Arsen Nahum Pasaribu et al., 2021a). It analyzes not only the effectiveness of the teacher's interactive strategies in improving student engagement but also the depth of reflection the teacher engages in when adapting these strategies for the classroom. Understanding the teacher's reflective process is crucial because it reveals how pedagogical decisions are made in real-time to accommodate the fluctuating energy and needs of young learners. By focusing on the interplay between the teacher's intent, the interactive tools used, and the students' responses, this research aims to provide a granular view of how motivation is constructed and sustained in a live educational setting. It moves beyond checking if a method works, to exploring *how* and *why* it functions within the complex ecosystem of an elementary classroom.

This study is unique because of its pioneering combination of interactive games and worksheets in one classroom action research in order to assess their impact on motivation (Husain Subroto et al., 2024). This study was carried out at *Sekolah Sahabat Alam Palangka Raya* with fifth and sixth grade students and aims to capture the changes during the planning, implementation, observation, and reflection cycles. By documenting these distinct cycles, the research provides a dynamic account of educational improvement rather than a static snapshot. I hoped to make a theoretical contribution to motivational language learning and a practical contribution to teachers for the design of playful, meaningful, motivating English lessons for young learners (Deliman, 2025; Alibakhshi et al., 2025). This study will document the changes for each of these cycles and the case study, offering a detailed roadmap for educators who wish to replicate this success. Ultimately, this innovation seeks to prove that rigorous language learning and joyful engagement are not mutually exclusive, but rather, mutually reinforcing elements of effective education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applies a collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, adapting the cyclical model by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The study was conducted at *Sekolah Sahabat Alam Palangka Raya*, an educational institution that embraces a nature-based learning concept. The research subjects involved 21 students from combined fifth and sixth-grade classes, selected to address specific challenges regarding low motivation in English language learning during the implementation of the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Merdeka Curriculum). In its execution, the researcher collaborated intensively with the English teacher, who served as a collaborator and co-researcher. This collaboration aimed to identify practical classroom problems, design instructional materials, and evaluate the effectiveness of the applied strategies. This location was chosen due to the discrepancy between the school's environmental facilities—which support an engaging learning atmosphere—and the reality of previous English teaching methods, which were still dominated by conventional worksheets (Arsen Nahum Pasaribu et al., 2021a).

The research procedure was conducted over two intervention cycles to improve learning quality incrementally. In the first cycle, the teacher began integrating simple visual media; however, observations indicated that student engagement remained sub-optimal. As a reflective response, the second cycle was designed by implementing more dynamic interactive learning strategies through educational games, such as *Word Race*, *Guess the Vocabulary*, and *Find Someone Who*. Data collection utilized various instruments to capture both process and learning outcome dimensions. These instruments included classroom observation sheets to record student participation and interaction, as well as semi-structured interview guides to explore the affective responses of the teacher and students toward the new methods. Furthermore, comprehension tests were administered at the beginning (*pre-test*) and the end (*post-test*) of each cycle to objectively measure the improvement in students' cognitive competence (Mintarsih & Yani, 2024).

Data analysis was performed using a mixed-method approach to ensure the validity of the findings. Quantitative data from test results were processed using descriptive statistics to calculate average scores and the percentage of improvement between cycles. Meanwhile, qualitative data from observations, field notes, and interviews were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of change in motivation, self-confidence, and student collaboration dynamics. To ensure data trustworthiness, the researcher applied source triangulation techniques by comparing data from various instruments and conducted member checking with the partner

teacher to validate the interpretation of the observation results. All research procedures were carried out in compliance with academic ethics, including obtaining permission from the school principal, securing parental *informed consent*, and using pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of the students' identities during the reporting of the research results (Lestari et al., 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

On the other hand, the results of this study indicated a drastic change in students' attitude and motivation towards English learning after applying interactive learning strategies (Alibakhshi et al., 2025). In the absence of such methods, students were quiet and afraid to speak up. They needed my instructions all the time, and I had to call them to encourage participation (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Jara Chiriboga et al., 2025; Permana et al., 2023). In contrast, after incorporating games, group-based activities, and visual worksheets, students have been very active; the class was full of enthusiasm as it seemed a place to make sense of things. There was curiosity and a chance to laugh and interact. Students were willing to make mistakes and articulate their thoughts; they seemed to know that I would be there to correct their sometimes faulty sentences. By analyzing the observation data, it can be observed that motivation gave promising results for all categories, and from both focus group interviews and self-reflection indicator, students described the learning experience as more fun and comprehensive (Saptarina et al., 2025). My reflection journal also described interactivity based learning positively in terms of reflection and class effectiveness. Consequently, these results demonstrated that interactivity can bring about a change in creating a lively environment beyond improving motivation.

Result

The purpose of this research was to examine the teacher's attempt to use interactive learning, specifically games, to motivate students to learn English. The research was done at Sekolah Sahabat Alam, where one English teacher and 21 students from Grades 5 and 6 were involved. The research used classroom observation, teacher interviews, and student interviews to collect data.

At the start of the research, students were hesitant to speak English and passive. They were very anxious and waited for the teacher's command to speak, reluctant to talk for fear of committing an error. The teacher, however, observed that the use of interactive games and activities shifted the students' classroom behavior to more positive and engaging participation. There was a marked improvement in enthusiasm, collaboration, and self-assurance during the lessons.

To provide a clearer picture of the improvement in students' learning motivation between Cycle I and Cycle II, Table 1. presents the comparison of motivation aspects observed during the research

Table 1. Improvement of Students' Motivation Indicators

No	Motivation Aspect	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (%)	Improvement%
1	Students' participation in activities	58	86	28
2	Activeness in speaking	52	81	29
3	Cooperation in group work	60	88	28
4	Enthusiasm and attention	63	90	27

Table 1 shows all aspects of students' motivation increased 25% or more. It was noted that students became more active and enthusiastic as well as confident learners. Students who used to be quiet even started to join in discussions and ask to participate in games. The teacher noted improvement in classroom management as students became more focused and engaged.

Besides the observation data, motivation and motivation interviews with the teacher and students shed more light on the changes in students' motivation and learning behavior.

To summarize the main findings from these interviews Table 2. presents the teacher's and students' perspectives on the implementation of interactive learning.

Table 2. Summary of Teacher and Student Interview Findings

No	Source	Key Findings	Supporting Statements
1	Teacher	Interactive learning through games increased motivation and participation	“Students are more confident and excited when we play learning games.”
2	Student 1	Enjoyed teamwork and shared learning	“It’s fun to learn together because we can share ideas.”
3	Student 2	Felt more motivated and focused during fun lessons	“English is my favorite subject because we can play and learn.”
4	Student 3	Became more confident and less afraid of mistakes	“Games help me speak without being scared of being wrong.”

Table 2 shows that both the teacher and students perceived positive outcomes from interactive learning. The teacher noted that games encouraged students to participate more actively, while students expressed that the lessons became enjoyable and easier to understand. This confirms that interactive learning can positively influence students' motivation, confidence, and classroom engagement.

Discussion

According to study results, using interactive learning through games enhances students' motivational learning English. Initially, teaching was mostly in a one-sided manner, where students were passive listeners. After interactive learning was introduced, however, the class became more active, centered around students, and communicative. Students' motivation increases significantly when they are involved in meaningful and communicative activities as opposed to just listening to a teacher (Saputra et al., 2021). In the study, students were participative and cooperative through games like vocabulary guessing, quick competitions, and team challenges. The balance of enjoyment and intention resulted in a learning atmosphere that was personalized, as well as productive. The teacher also appreciated interactive learning, as it facilitated class control as well as a positive learning environment. In cooperation, students learn a language while acquiring the social and emotional skills necessary for motivation.

From the students' perspective, interactive learning helped in making the English language more meaningful and enjoyable. Fariha and Nada mentioned that they learned through group games, and this made them happier and more focused. Bintang, on the other hand, said that he gained confidence and became less anxious about making mistakes. In these situations, students were provided with autonomy (freedom to participate), competence (success in completing tasks), and relatedness (connection with peers). Nonetheless, there were some shortcomings to this research (Davis, 2022; Hernández et al., 2022; Jeno et al., 2022). First, when games were not used, some students lost focus and this shows that motivation for some students was dependent on the type of activity used. In addition, the interactive tasks emphasized speaking and vocabulary which limited the improvement of listening and reading skills. Thus, future research must focus on including interactive tasks that develop listening and reading comprehension skills (Pikhart et al., 2023; Zhang & Zou, 2021).

Another limitation involved time management. The teacher stated that interactive games usually took longer than anticipated which limited the time available for reflection after the activity. Future teaching iterations would benefit from having a couple of brief reflection or summarizing sessions after each game to aid understanding and achieve the desired learning outcomes. Notwithstanding these limitations, this study affirm the positive impact that interactive learning and teaching. The teacher's enthusiasm, and encouragement, and her role as facilitator were key to achieving a positive and enjoyable learning environment. To summarize, the interactive learning of games brought about a positive change. It changed the learners' perception towards learning English. It also changed the learners' confidence and engagement towards the lesson. The classroom shifted from a passive learning environment to a more active, enjoyable, and collaborative environment, confirm transformation from passive learning to active, student-centered engagement using interactive games. (Panmei & Waluyo, 2022). The teacher's role is to plan interactive learning activities alongside balanced skill-focused activities. This will be more effective with structured reflection and will help the learners to maintain their motivation across the four areas of the language.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the implementation of interactive learning strategies through educational games and visual worksheets proved highly effective in addressing the chronic problem of low motivation and student passivity in learning English at the elementary school level. Through a Classroom Action Research approach systematically implemented over two cycles at Sahabat Alam School, this pedagogical intervention successfully transformed the classroom dynamics from rigid and dominated by conventional methods into a highly dynamic learning environment. Empirical evidence of this success is clearly evident in the significant increase in all motivation indicators between the first and second cycles, with student participation increasing by 28 percent, speaking activity increasing dramatically by 29 percent, group collaboration growing by 28 percent, and enthusiasm for learning soaring by 27 percent. These statistics confirm that the integration of game elements can simultaneously stimulate students' cognitive and emotional engagement, making learning a challenging yet enjoyable experience.

Beyond the statistical results, the qualitative impact of this study demonstrates a profound psychological transformation in students, effectively alleviating fear, embarrassment, and anxiety about using a foreign language. The game-based learning environment provides a safe psychological space for students to express themselves freely without the shadow of fear of grammatical errors, thereby fostering self-confidence and the courage to interact spontaneously. The shift in the teacher's role from a dominant instructor to a reflective facilitator allows for the creation of autonomy, competence, and social connectedness among students, which are essential for language acquisition. The implications of these findings emphasize that the effectiveness of English teaching does not solely depend on luxurious facilities, but rather on the teacher's creativity in designing communicative activities. Therefore, it is highly recommended for educators to adopt and maintain this interactive strategy to maintain consistent student motivation and develop active language learners in the future.

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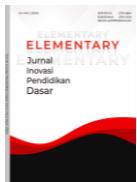
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