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The Effectiveness of the Among Us Game to Enhance EFL Students' Speaking Skills

Kevin Hendrawan[1], Alifiah Pratiwi[2], Heri Alfian[3], Kadaruddin[4], Susi Astiantih[5], Muhammad Irfan Rahim[6]

[1,2,3,4,5,6]Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Sembilanbelas November Kolaka, Kolaka, Sulawesi Tenggara

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Corresponding Author:
Kevin Hendrawan
Kevinhendrawan24@gmail.com
Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, Universitas Sembilanbelas November Kolaka,Kolaka, Sulawesi Tenggara

Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the Among Us game in enhancing EFL students' speaking skills and to explore their perceptions of its implementation in speaking classes. The study employed a mixed-methods approach with a one-group pre-test–post-test pre-experimental design. Although 25 students initially participated, only 12 students completed all stages of the study and were included in the quantitative analysis. Quantitative data were collected through speaking performance tests administered before and after the intervention, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with five participants. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), the Shapiro–Wilk normality test, a paired-sample t-test, and normalized gain (N-Gain) analysis, while the qualitative data were analyzed using narrative analysis. The results indicated a medium level of improvement in students' speaking performance based on the mean N-Gain score of 0.4715. The qualitative findings represented students' perceptions and indicated that they became more willing to communicate, perceived improvements in their speaking performance, and developed greater self-confidence when using English in classroom activities. The novelty of this study lies in combining empirical evidence from pre- and post-intervention speaking performance with students' reported learning experiences to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of Among Us in EFL speaking instruction. These findings suggest that the Among Us game has potential as a game-based learning medium for creating an engaging, interactive, and communicative environment that supports EFL speaking instruction.

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1. Introduction

Speaking is one of the four fundamental language skills and serves as a primary means of communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. Unlike receptive skills, speaking requires learners to produce language spontaneously while integrating pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence in real-time communication. Therefore, speaking proficiency is often considered an important indicator of learners' communicative competence and their ability to use English effectively in academic, professional, and everyday contexts (Ahmed, 2020). Developing speaking skills has consequently become an important objective of English language instruction, particularly in higher education, where students are expected to communicate effectively and confidently in various contexts.

Despite its importance, speaking is one of the most difficult skills for EFL students. Many students have difficulty expressing concepts verbally because of inadequate vocabulary, incorrect pronunciation, lack of fluency, and low confidence in using English. These challenges can restrict students' participation in classroom speaking activities and reduce opportunities for meaningful oral practice (Ahmed, 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019). Conventional classroom speaking activities may further limit these opportunities when they rely heavily on teacher-led questioning, controlled exercises, or scripted dialogues. Consequently, EFL learners need learning environments that provide repeated opportunities to use English spontaneously and meaningfully while interacting with their peers.

To address these challenges, Game-Based Learning (GBL) offers one possible approach to creating interactive learning environments in which learners actively use English to accomplish meaningful tasks. Rather than treating games merely as entertainment, GBL integrates instructional objectives with structured game activities that encourage learners to participate in tasks, solve problems, collaborate, and use language in context (Putri et al., 2025). In language learning, the pedagogical value of GBL lies not simply in its ability to make learning enjoyable, but in its potential to create meaningful opportunities for interaction and repeated language practice. Thus, the effectiveness of a game-based approach depends on how its mechanics support the use of the target language for meaningful communicative purposes.

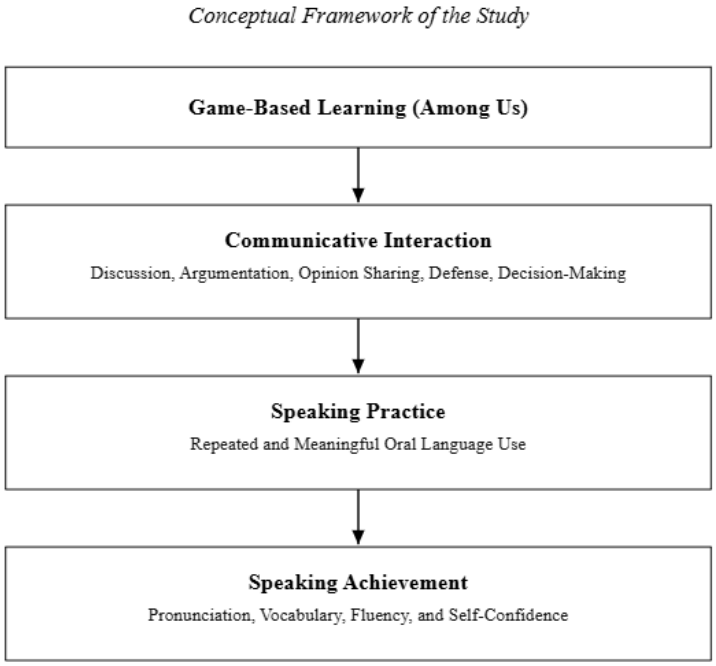
Among various digital games, Among Us may be particularly suitable for EFL speaking instruction because its core gameplay requires players to exchange information, present arguments, defend opinions, persuade others, and make collective decisions through discussion. When adapted into face-to-face classroom activities, these game mechanics can create communicative tasks that require students to use English to accomplish meaningful objectives. The communicative demands generated by the game are therefore expected to provide repeated opportunities for oral language production, spontaneous responses, and negotiation of meaning.

Through these interactions, students can practice expressing ideas, responding to peers, and sustaining communication in context, which may contribute to the development of their speaking performance. The concepts of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which place a strong emphasis on meaningful engagement and language use as essential components of language learning, align with this possibility (Ha et al., 2022).

The expected relationship between the use of Among Us and speaking development can be represented through a conceptual framework linking four main elements: Game-Based Learning, communicative interaction, speaking practice, and speaking achievement. In this framework, Among Us functions as the game-based learning context in which students engage in communicative interaction through discussion, argumentation, opinion

sharing, defending positions, and decision-making. These interactions create repeated and meaningful opportunities for speaking practice. Through such practice, students are expected to develop specific aspects of speaking performance, namely pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence. Thus, the conceptual relationship can be described as follows:

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Game-Based Learning, Communicative Interaction, Speaking Practice, and Speaking Achievement



This framework explains that Among Us is expected to contribute to speaking development not simply because it is an enjoyable game, but because its task structure creates communicative interaction that requires learners to repeatedly use English for meaningful purposes. Increased opportunities for contextualized speaking practice are therefore expected to support improvement in the speaking components examined in this study.

Previous studies have reported promising findings regarding the use of Among Us and other multiplayer digital games in language learning. The existing literature suggests that the game can support different aspects of language learning, including vocabulary development, language competence, communicative interaction, and classroom participation (Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, 2021; Casanova-Mata, 2023; Forutanian, 2021; Menuin, 2024).

More broadly, research on game-based learning indicates that interactive game environments can provide opportunities for learners to engage with language while completing meaningful tasks (Putri et al., 2025). Taken together, these findings suggest that the pedagogical value of Among Us lies in its capacity to create interaction and language-use opportunities through gameplay. However, the existing evidence has largely examined specific aspects of learning separately, such as vocabulary, general language competence, perceptions, or participation, rather than examining changes in speaking performance alongside students' learning experiences.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the potential of Among Us as an instructional medium for English language learning, several gaps remain. First, existing studies have often focused on vocabulary learning, general language competence, students' perceptions, motivation, or classroom participation rather than examining changes in

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speaking performance as the primary outcome (Calvo-Ferrer & Belda-Medina, 2021; Casanova-Mata, 2023; Menuin, 2024; Wijanarko et al., 2021). Second, previous research has not sufficiently examined how the communicative interaction generated by the game may translate into measurable development across specific speaking components. Third, students' learning experiences and their actual speaking performance have rarely been examined together within the same intervention. Therefore, further research is needed to investigate not only whether students' speaking performance changes following the implementation of Among Us, but also how students perceive and experience the speaking activities facilitated by the game.

Another consideration in this study concerns the assessment of speaking ability. Speaking is a multidimensional construct, and different aspects of speaking may develop differently following an instructional intervention. Accordingly, this study assessed four components: pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence. Pronunciation was selected because intelligible oral production is essential for effective communication. Vocabulary was included because learners need sufficient lexical resources to express ideas and respond to others during spontaneous interaction.

Fluency was assessed because the ability to produce speech with continuity is central to spontaneous and meaningful communication. Self-confidence was included because students' confidence in using English is closely related to their willingness to express ideas and participate in oral interaction. These four components were selected because they correspond closely to the communicative demands generated by the Among Us-based speaking activities, which required students to express ideas, respond to peers, defend positions, and communicate spontaneously.

Grammar was not included as a primary scoring component because the instructional activities were designed primarily around meaningful communication and task completion rather than formal grammatical accuracy. Consistent with communicative and task-based approaches, the activities emphasized students' ability to convey meaning, participate in interaction, and use English to accomplish communicative purposes (Ha et al., 2022). This does not imply that grammar is unimportant in speaking development; rather, its exclusion reflects the specific scope and communicative orientation of the present study. The assessment therefore prioritized pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence as components most directly aligned with the learning objectives and communicative demands of the intervention.

Considering these gaps, the present study differs from previous Among Us research in both its focus and its integration of evidence. Rather than examining the game primarily in relation to vocabulary learning, general language competence, perceptions, or participation, this study focuses specifically on EFL students' speaking performance across four components: pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence. In addition, the study combines quantitative evidence of changes in speaking performance with qualitative accounts of students' perceptions and learning experiences during the intervention. This integration provides a more comprehensive understanding of the potential relationship between game-based learning, communicative interaction, speaking practice, and speaking achievement.

The inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative evidence enables this study not only to determine whether the implementation of *Among Us* significantly improves students' speaking performance but also to explain how learners perceive the learning experience during the intervention. Such a combination of findings is expected to strengthen the practical implications of digital game-based learning for English language teaching and provide a richer understanding of how collaborative online games can facilitate speaking development in EFL classrooms.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the Among Us game in enhancing EFL students' speaking skills and to explore students' perceptions of its implementation in speaking classes. Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions: (1) Does the implementation of the Among Us game improve EFL students' speaking skills? and (2) How do students perceive the use of the Among Us game in speaking classes? The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on game-based language learning by providing empirical evidence of changes in speaking performance alongside students' reported learning experiences, while also offering practical insights for English lecturers and educators seeking to design communicative speaking activities that encourage meaningful oral language use.

2. Method

Research Design

This study used a pre-experimental research design using a one-group pre-test-post-test design to look into changes in EFL students' speaking performance after playing the Among Us game. The methodology comprised testing students' speaking performance before and after the educational intervention. This allowed changes in the outcome variable to be investigated within the same group (Reichardt et al., 2023). This design was selected because it provides a practical approach for evaluating instructional interventions when the inclusion of a control group is not feasible (Capili & Anastasi, 2024; Nayeri et al., 2024). Accordingly, the effectiveness of the intervention was examined by comparing participants' pre-test and post-test speaking scores. However, because the design does not include a control or comparison group, the findings should be interpreted cautiously, as changes observed between the two measurements cannot be attributed exclusively to the intervention (Bierer et al., 2025).

However, because this study did not include a control group, any observed improvement in students' speaking performance cannot be attributed solely to the Among Us intervention. Other factors, such as students' ongoing learning, repeated exposure to speaking tasks, or other experiences occurring during the research period, may have contributed to the observed changes. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of improvement following the intervention rather than definitive evidence of a causal effect of the Among Us game.

Participants

The participants were second-semester students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Sembilanbelas November Kolaka for the academic year 2025/2026. Participants were chosen via purposive sampling since they were enrolled in the Speaking course, where the instructional intervention was applied. Initially, 25 students volunteered to take part in the study. However, just 12 students finished the entire research process, which included the pre-test, all four therapy sessions, and the post-test. Participants who did not finish the study were unable to attend certain research sessions, resulting in incomplete data. As a result, they were omitted from the quantitative analysis because their pre-test, treatment, and post-test data could not be matched for a paired analysis.

The reduction in the number of participants from 25 to 12 represents substantial participant attrition and may have implications for the validity and interpretation of the findings. The resulting small sample size may limit the generalizability of the findings to other EFL learners. In addition, the participants who completed the study may have differed from those who did not complete it, potentially introducing attrition bias. Therefore, the

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quantitative findings should be interpreted with caution and considered within the context of the reduced final sample.

For the qualitative component, five participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The interview participants were not selected to represent specific levels of speaking achievement but were included based on their willingness to participate. Therefore, their interview accounts should be understood as individual perceptions and experiences rather than as representative of all participants or of different achievement levels.

Research Instruments

This study employed two research instruments: a speaking test and a semi-structured interview.

The speaking test consisted of a pre-test and a post-test administered before and after the instructional intervention to measure students' speaking performance. Students' speaking ability was assessed based on four components: pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence. The speaking assessment rubric was developed by adopting established speaking assessment criteria proposed by Brown (2004), Danial (2024), and Tahir et al., (2025). Specifically, the pronunciation component was adopted from Brown (2004), as supported by Danial (2024), while the vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence components were adopted from Tahir et al., (2025). Grammatical accuracy was not included as a primary assessment component in this study.

This decision was based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, which prioritize meaningful communication and the ability to convey meaning rather than formal grammatical accuracy alone (Richards, 2022). Consistent with communicative and task-based approaches to language teaching, the speaking activities in this study encouraged students to focus on expressing ideas, maintaining interaction, and negotiating meaning rather than producing grammatically perfect sentences (Ha et al., 2022).

Therefore, the assessment focused on pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence, which were considered more closely aligned with the communicative objectives of the Among Us-based speaking activities. Prior to its implementation, the rubric was reviewed through expert judgment by a lecturer teaching the second-semester Speaking course and was deemed appropriate for use after minor contextual revisions. To enhance the reliability of the assessment, each student's speaking performance was independently evaluated by two raters using the validated analytic scoring rubric. The consistency of the two raters' scores was subsequently examined using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC).

The pre-test and post-test used the same general role-play speaking task and assessment criteria to ensure comparability between the two assessments. However, the specific role assigned to each participant was changed in the post-test, and the game setting or arena was slightly modified. These modifications were intended to maintain the same general task demands while reducing the possibility that students' post-test performance would be influenced solely by familiarity with the exact role or setting used during the pre-test. Thus, the pre-test and post-test tasks were considered comparable in terms of their overall speaking demands, while differing slightly in role allocation and setting.

The qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted after the completion of the intervention. Semi-structured interviews were selected because they provide a flexible approach for exploring participants' perceptions, experiences, and reflections while allowing the interviewer to follow up on relevant responses (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Five participants who volunteered to participate were

interviewed to learn about their perspectives and learning experiences with the Among Us game in speaking education. Each interview lasted about 5–10 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure the accuracy and completeness of their responses. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim and used as the primary data source for qualitative analysis. Prior to data collection, all participants were told about the study's objectives and procedures, and they volunteered to participate.

The interview questions were developed based on the objectives of the study and the relevant literature on EFL speaking learning and students' learning experiences. The interview questions were not pilot-tested before the main data collection. However, the questions were reviewed for their relevance to the research objectives and were used as a semi-structured guide to allow participants to describe their experiences in their own words.

Before the research was conducted, the researcher obtained institutional permission to carry out the study. The research was supported by an institutional recommendation letter from the university, signed by the Head of the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM), and the required permission/recommendation from the relevant local authority. All participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and participated voluntarily.

Research Procedure

The study was conducted over six meetings. During the first meeting, participants completed a speaking pre-test to determine their initial speaking proficiency. The following four meetings were allocated for the instructional intervention using the *Among Us* game as the primary learning medium. All 12 participants included in the final quantitative analysis attended all four treatment sessions before completing the post-test. Thus, each participant included in the analysis received the same number of treatment sessions. Each treatment session lasted approximately 60–90 minutes. Throughout the intervention, students participated in collaborative discussions, role-playing activities, argumentation, and decision-making tasks that required them to communicate actively in English. These activities encouraged students to express opinions, defend arguments, negotiate meaning, and interact spontaneously while completing the game objectives.

In the sixth meeting, participants completed the speaking post-test using the same assessment criteria as those applied during the pre-test. Although the general role-play task remained the same to maintain comparable speaking demands, the roles assigned to individual participants were changed and the setting or arena was slightly modified. These adjustments were made to maintain task comparability while minimizing the influence of familiarity with the exact pre-test role and setting. Following the post-test, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five volunteer participants to obtain more in-depth insights into their perceptions and experiences of learning speaking through the implementation of the *Among Us* game.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data was evaluated with IBM SPSS Statistics version 16.0. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize students' speaking performance in both the pre-test and post-test. The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) was used to assess inter-rater reliability and the consistency of scores awarded by the two raters. Before hypothesis testing, the Shapiro-Wilk test was used to determine the normality of the data distribution. A paired-sample t-test was then used to see if there was a statistically significant difference between students' pre- and post-test speaking scores.

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Furthermore, normalized gain (N-gain) analysis was used to measure the extent of students' progress after implementing the Among Us game. The qualitative interview data were analyzed using narrative analysis. The analysis focused on participants' accounts of their learning experiences with the Among Us game. Following transcription, the interview transcripts were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with each participant's account.

Relevant sections describing participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections on the intervention were identified and organized according to the sequence and content of their narratives. The researcher then examined each participant's account to identify meaningful descriptions of changes in speaking performance, confidence, willingness to communicate, and classroom participation as perceived by the participants. Related experiences were considered across participants to identify common patterns and points of convergence while preserving the individual context of each participant's story.

The resulting narratives were then interpreted in relation to the research questions and presented as representative accounts of students' perceptions and experiences of learning speaking through the Among Us game. No formal coding procedure was applied to the interview data. Instead, the analysis relied on repeated reading, identification and organization of meaningful narrative segments, and interpretation of participants' accounts. This approach was used to preserve the participants' experiences as narratives rather than reducing their accounts to a set of coded thematic categories.

3. Results

Participants' Characteristics

This study began with the recruitment of 25 second-semester students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at Universitas Sembilanbelas November Kolaka. However, just 12 students finished the entire research process, which included the pre-test, four therapy sessions, and the post-test. The other subjects were omitted from the quantitative analysis due to inconsistent attendance at intervention sessions, resulting in incomplete matched data. As a result, all quantitative analyses were conducted on data collected from the 12 participants who completed the whole research procedure.

Inter-Rater Reliability

The inter-rater reliability of the speaking assessment was examined using the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC), which is widely used to assess the reliability of ratings provided by multiple raters (Shrout & Fleiss, 1979). The analysis was conducted using a two-way random-effects model with a single-measure absolute-agreement specification, ICC(2,1), following the recommendations for selecting and reporting ICC models (Koo et al., 2016). The results indicated good agreement between the two raters for the pre-test scores (ICC = 0.764) and excellent agreement for the post-test scores (ICC = 0.859).

These findings indicate that the speaking scores assigned by the two raters demonstrated satisfactory to high levels of agreement, supporting the reliability of the assessment procedure. Therefore, the mean scores of the two raters were used as the students' final speaking scores for subsequent statistical analyses.

Table 1. Inter-Rater Reliability Results for the Speaking Assessment

Assessment	N	ICC (2,1)	Interpretation
Pre-test	12	0.764	Good agreement
Post-test	12	0.859	Excellent agreement

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics showed an overall improvement in students' speaking performance from the pre-test to the post-test. As presented in Table 2, the mean pre-test score was 8.04 (SD = 1.98), while the mean post-test score increased to 13.63 (SD = 2.17). In addition, the minimum score increased from 5.00 to 11.00, whereas the maximum score improved from 10.50 to 16.50. These findings indicate an overall increase in students' speaking scores following the instructional intervention.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Pre-test	12	8.04	1.98	5.00	10.50
Post-test	12	13.63	2.17	11.00	16.50

Changes in Individual Speaking Components

Students' speaking performance was assessed in four components: pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence. The results showed that the mean scores for all four components increased from the pre-test to the post-test. As presented in Table 3, the mean pronunciation score increased from 2.25 in the pre-test to 3.58 in the post-test, representing a mean increase of 1.33 points. The mean vocabulary score increased from 1.96 to 3.46, with a mean increase of 1.50 points. Similarly, the mean fluency score increased from 1.71 to 3.04, representing a mean increase of 1.33 points. Meanwhile, the mean self-confidence score increased from 2.13 to 3.58, representing a mean increase of 1.46 points.

Among the four assessed components, vocabulary demonstrated the largest mean increase (1.50 points), followed by self-confidence (1.46 points). Pronunciation and fluency both showed a mean increase of 1.33 points. These findings indicate that the improvement in students' overall speaking scores was accompanied by higher mean scores across all four assessed components.

Table 3. Comparison of Students' Speaking Component Scores

Speaking Component	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Mean Difference
Pronunciation	2.25	3.58	1.33
Vocabulary	1.96	3.46	1.50
Fluency	1.71	3.04	1.33
Self-confidence	2.13	3.58	1.45
Overall	**8.04**	**13.66**	**5.62**

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Note: *Component means are rounded to two decimals; their sum may differ slightly from the overall mean reported in Table 2 due to rounding.*

Normality Test

Prior to hypothesis testing, the normality of the data was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The results indicated that both the pre-test (p = .078) and post-test (p = .156) scores were normally distributed because the significance values exceeded the .05 threshold. Accordingly, the assumption of normality was satisfied, and a paired-sample *t*-test was considered appropriate for subsequent analysis.

Table 4. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test

Variable	Statistic	Sig.	Interpretation
Pre-test	.876	.078	Normal
Post-test	.899	.156	Normal

Effectiveness of the Among Us Game

To examine changes in students' overall speaking performance before and after the instructional intervention, a paired-sample t-test was conducted. The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, with a mean difference of −5.58, t(11) = −11.10, p < .001. The negative mean difference reflects the direction of the calculation in which the pre-test scores were subtracted from the post-test scores. In terms of actual performance, students' mean speaking score increased by 5.58 points, from 8.04 in the pre-test to 13.63 in the post-test. These findings indicate that students obtained significantly higher overall speaking scores in the post-test than in the pre-test following the instructional intervention.

However, because the study employed a one-group pre-test–post-test design without a control group, the observed improvement cannot be attributed exclusively to the Among Us intervention. Other factors, such as students' ongoing learning experiences, repeated exposure to speaking tasks, or other events occurring during the research period, may also have contributed to the observed changes.

Table 5. Paired-Sample t-Test

Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
−5.583	−11.097	11	.000	Significant

In addition to statistical significance, Cohen's d was calculated to determine the magnitude of the difference between students' pre-test and post-test speaking scores, as recommended for interpreting the practical magnitude of an observed difference (Cohen, 1988). The analysis yielded a Cohen's d value of 3.203, indicating a very large effect size. This finding suggests that the intervention was associated with a substantial difference in students' speaking performance between the pre-test and post-test.

Table 6. Effect Size of the Pre-test and Post-test Difference

Comparison	Cohen's *d*	Effect Size Interpretation
Pre-test vs. Post-test	3.203	Very large effect

To determine the magnitude of students' improvement relative to the possible score gain, a normalized gain (N-Gain) analysis was also performed. The analysis produced a mean N-Gain score of 0.4715, which falls within the medium improvement category according to Hake's(1998) classification. This result indicates a moderate level of improvement in students' speaking scores following the instructional intervention.

Table 7. N-Gain Analysis

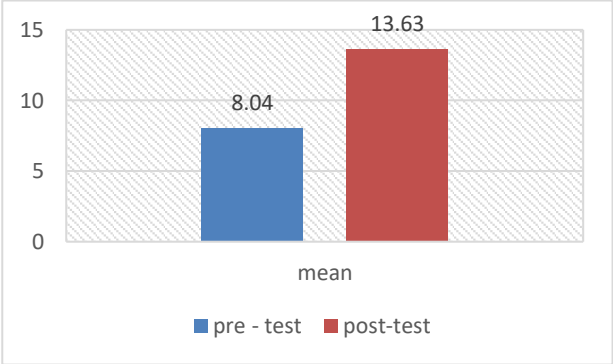
N	Mean N-Gain	Category
12	0.4715	Medium

The N-Gain result provides complementary information to the effect size analysis. While Cohen's d indicated a very large standardized difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, the N-Gain analysis indicated a medium level of improvement relative to the maximum possible gain. These measures therefore describe different aspects of students' improvement.

Graphical Representation of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Figure 2 presents a graphical comparison of students' overall mean speaking scores before and after the instructional intervention. The figure shows an increase in the mean score from 8.04 in the pre-test to 13.63 in the post-test.

Figure 2. Mean Pre-test and Post-test Speaking Scores



Interview Findings

The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results by providing insight into students' experiences before, during, and after the implementation of the Among Us game. The interview data were analyzed using narrative analysis, focusing on participants' accounts of their speaking experiences, engagement, perceived changes in speaking abilities, and overall perceptions of the intervention. Although all five participants reported positive changes, their experiences were not entirely identical, particularly in terms of their initial difficulties and the aspects of speaking they perceived to have improved.

Initial Speaking Difficulties and Anxiety

Before participating in the Among Us activities, most participants reported low confidence, anxiety, and fear of making mistakes when speaking English. Rifka described her speaking experience as stiff and uncomfortable because of limited vocabulary and insufficient opportunities to use English: *"I felt stiff and afraid because I did not know much vocabulary, and the environment was also not adequate for speaking English fully."* Similarly, Anggie stated, *"Before using Among Us, I felt very nervous and afraid to speak in class because I was afraid of making mistakes."* Dita also reported feeling embarrassed because of her pronunciation, while Apip described a lack of confidence caused by fear of making mistakes.

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The participants, however, experienced different specific challenges. Rifka was concerned about grammar, Dita and Anggie emphasized limited vocabulary, while Winda focused more on classroom conditions and boredom. Winda explained that classroom noise sometimes made it difficult to hear the lecturer and that conventional lessons often felt monotonous. These accounts indicate that the participants did not begin the intervention with identical difficulties. Their initial confidence levels also varied, ranging from approximately 1/100 for Anggie to 40/100 for Winda, although all participants generally described their confidence as low.

Engagement and Willingness to Communicate

The participants generally described the Among Us activities as more enjoyable and engaging than conventional speaking activities. Dita stated, *"It was fun because we could learn while playing,"* while Winda found the activities more interesting because they were less monotonous than conventional classroom instruction. Apip similarly described the experience as enjoyable because the game encouraged students to interact while speaking English.

The game mechanics also encouraged participants to communicate more actively. Rifka explained that the activity encouraged her to speak by providing expressions and language that could be used to present arguments: *"It encouraged me because we were given words or sentences that we could use while playing the game and presenting arguments."* Dita described a similar experience, explaining that players needed to communicate to defend themselves and avoid being suspected as the impostor. Anggie also emphasized the role of the game rules: *"Of course, because according to the rules, we had to defend ourselves."*

Most participants also felt more relaxed when speaking English during the game. Rifka stated, *"I did not feel pressured or afraid of making mistakes. It is not as bad as before because I became accustomed to speaking through the game."* These narratives suggest that the game provided a less formal environment that encouraged participation and reduced the pressure associated with speaking English.

Perceived Improvements in Speaking Skills

All five participants perceived some form of improvement in their speaking abilities, although the specific areas varied. Pronunciation was one area of perceived development. Rifka provided an example from the gameplay, noting that repeated exposure helped her and her classmates improve the pronunciation of the word *"liar."* She explained, *"Many friends said 'liar,' but actually the pronunciation is 'laiyer.' Now they say 'laiyer.' So I think my pronunciation has improved as well."* Dita and Winda also reported improvements in pronunciation, while Anggie described her pronunciation as improving by "one level."

Vocabulary development was another commonly reported benefit. Rifka stated that the game helped her learn new vocabulary through repeated use, while Dita mentioned learning the expression *"from my POV,"* which she had not encountered before. Winda and Anggie also reported that the vocabulary provided and used during the game helped them acquire new words. These experiences were also perceived to contribute to greater fluency. Rifka explained, *"After playing Among Us, I became more fluent because I knew more vocabulary and practiced pronunciation."* Winda similarly reported that vocabulary she had previously forgotten became easier to remember through the game.

Although all participants reported positive changes, their perceived improvements were not identical. Some participants emphasized pronunciation and vocabulary, whereas others focused more on fluency, confidence, or willingness to speak. Thus, the qualitative findings indicate that the participants perceived different benefits from the intervention rather than experiencing a uniform pattern of improvement.

Overall Perceptions and Limitations

Overall, the participants viewed Among Us positively as a medium for speaking instruction. Rifka considered it *"very effective"* because the game required students to argue and communicate in English. Dita and Apip also viewed the game as effective and engaging, while Anggie described it as both enjoyable and effective because students could learn while playing.

However, not all participants expressed the same degree of enthusiasm. Winda provided a more moderate evaluation, describing the game as *"somewhat effective."* She also identified a limitation related to player elimination: *"When you are killed by the impostor, there is nothing more to do."* Nevertheless, she acknowledged that the game still encouraged students to speak English because they needed to communicate and defend themselves during the activity.

Overall, the narratives indicate that Among Us was generally perceived as an engaging and supportive environment for practicing spoken English. However, the participants' experiences were not completely uniform. While most emphasized increased confidence, engagement, vocabulary, and fluency, Winda provided a more moderate evaluation and identified a limitation of the game mechanics. These findings complement the quantitative results by illustrating how students experienced the learning process and perceived the game as a more interactive and less monotonous context for practicing English speaking.

4. Discussion

The present study investigated the potential of the Among Us game as a medium for supporting EFL students' speaking development. Students demonstrated a substantial improvement in speaking performance, with the mean score increasing from 8.04 in the pre-test to 13.63 in the post-test. The paired-sample t-test showed a statistically significant difference, while the Cohen's d value of 3.203 indicated a very large standardized pre-post difference. However, the mean N-Gain of 0.4715 was categorized as medium, indicating that the improvement represented a moderate proportion of the possible score gain. These findings suggest meaningful improvement during the study period, but they should not be interpreted as evidence that the Among Us intervention alone caused the observed changes because the study employed a one-group pre-test and post-test design without a control group.

The improvement may be related to the communicative nature of the adapted Among Us activities. Students were required to express opinions, defend themselves, present arguments, and respond to peers, creating repeated opportunities to use English for meaningful purposes. This interpretation is consistent with the task-based perspective that speaking development benefits from purposeful interaction and opportunities to use language in communicative contexts (Ha et al., 2022). The quantitative findings also showed improvement across pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence, with vocabulary showing the largest mean increase.

The qualitative findings provide similar evidence. Dita reported learning the expression "from my POV," while Rifka explained, "After playing Among Us, I became more fluent because I knew more vocabulary and practiced pronunciation." These accounts suggest that repeated exposure to vocabulary and language use during gameplay may have supported students' perceived development. This finding also corresponds with Calvo-Ferrer and Belda-Medina (2021), who highlighted the potential of multiplayer games, including Among Us, for L2 vocabulary learning.

The medium N-Gain suggests that improvement was meaningful but not sufficiently high to represent a large proportion of the possible gain. Several factors may explain this result. The intervention consisted of only four treatment sessions, which may have been insufficient for sustained development in speaking proficiency. In addition, game-based

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interaction may provide opportunities for spontaneous communication without necessarily offering sufficient explicit instruction, corrective feedback, or targeted practice in all speaking components. Students also entered the intervention with different difficulties, including limited vocabulary, pronunciation concerns, anxiety, and low confidence.

Furthermore, repeated practice and increased familiarity with the speaking tasks and assessment procedures may have contributed to the higher post-test scores. Testing effects and students' ongoing English learning experiences cannot therefore be excluded as alternative explanations. Consequently, the present findings demonstrate improvement following the intervention but cannot establish that the Among Us game was the sole cause of the improvement (Bierer et al., 2025; Reichardt et al., 2023).

The findings should also be interpreted in relation to previous experimental research. Al-Jamili et al. (2024), for example, used control and experimental groups with 60 participants and reported greater speaking improvement among learners receiving computer game-based instruction than those receiving traditional instruction. Such a design provides stronger evidence for comparative effectiveness than the present study. In contrast, only 12 participants completed the present study, and no control group was included. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as preliminary evidence that Among Us can be integrated into EFL speaking instruction rather than as definitive evidence of its causal effectiveness. The contribution of the present study lies in adapting a commercial multiplayer game into face-to-face speaking activities and combining quantitative evidence with students' accounts of their learning experiences.

The qualitative findings also indicate that students did not experience the intervention in exactly the same way. Most participants reported increased confidence, engagement, vocabulary, pronunciation, or fluency. However, Winda provided a more moderate evaluation, describing the game as "somewhat effective" and noting that "when you are killed by the impostor, there is nothing more to do." This observation highlights a limitation of the elimination mechanic, which may reduce speaking opportunities for eliminated students. The game may also require different forms of scaffolding for learners with different proficiency levels. Lower-proficiency students may benefit from vocabulary banks, sentence starters, and model expressions, whereas more proficient students may be encouraged to produce longer arguments and more spontaneous responses. However, because proficiency levels were not systematically compared in this study, the effectiveness of Among Us across different proficiency levels remains an issue for future research.

From a pedagogical perspective, Among Us may be most useful when its mechanics are deliberately aligned with speaking objectives. Teachers can provide vocabulary and expressions for accusation, defense, agreement, disagreement, and opinion sharing before gameplay. Students can then be required to use English when presenting evidence, defending themselves, or persuading peers. To ensure participation across proficiency levels, teachers can provide language scaffolding for lower-proficiency learners and more challenging argumentative tasks for higher-proficiency learners. Eliminated students should also remain involved through activities such as observing arguments, preparing evidence, or participating in post-game discussions. These adaptations may help transform the game from an entertaining activity into a structured environment for meaningful speaking practice.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The one-group pre-test and post-test design limits causal interpretation and leaves open the possibility of testing effects, task familiarity, and other influences during the research period. Participant attrition also reduced the sample from 25 initially recruited students to 12 participants who completed all research stages, limiting statistical power and generalizability. Although the very large

Cohen's d indicates a substantial pre-post difference, this result should be interpreted cautiously given the small sample and absence of a comparison group.

In addition, the speaking rubric was reviewed by only one expert, and the qualitative findings were based on interviews with five participants. Future research should employ larger samples, control or comparison groups, longer interventions, and parallel pre- and post-test tasks. Further studies should also examine differences across English proficiency levels and investigate how game mechanics and instructional scaffolding influence speaking outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the potential of the Among Us game as a game-based learning medium for supporting EFL students' speaking skills. The quantitative findings showed a statistically significant increase in students' speaking performance from the pre-test to the post-test, accompanied by a medium normalized gain and a very large effect size. Improvements were observed across pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, and self-confidence. The qualitative findings further indicated that the interviewed students generally perceived the learning activities as enjoyable, interactive, and supportive of their speaking development.

These findings suggest that the use of Among Us in face-to-face, role-based speaking activities may provide opportunities for communicative interaction, collaboration, and spontaneous language use in EFL classrooms. The game-based activities also appeared to encourage students to participate more actively and use English with greater confidence. However, given the one-group pre-experimental design and the absence of a control group, the observed improvement cannot be attributed solely to the Among Us intervention. Other factors, such as repeated speaking practice, increased familiarity with the speaking tasks, and the learning process itself, may have contributed to the improvement. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of potential effectiveness rather than definitive causal evidence.

Future studies are recommended to involve larger samples, include control or comparison groups, and employ longer intervention periods to provide stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of game-based learning for EFL speaking instruction. Future research may also examine whether the use of Among Us produces similar benefits across learners with different proficiency levels. In addition, researchers are encouraged to establish formal content and construct validity for speaking assessment instruments and to investigate the long-term effects of game-based speaking instruction.

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