# IMPROVING SPEAKING PROFICIENCY OF KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TAIWAN UTILISING SPEAKING GAMES: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

**by**

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**ECLARATION**

**I, Nomfundo Sibusisiwe Nomvuyo Msomi (4104-241-7), declare that** *Improving speaking proficiency of kindergarten English Foreign Language learners in Taiwan utilising speaking games: An action research design is my work,* and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated or acknowledged using complete references. I further declare that I submitted the thesis to an originality-checking software programme.

**Nomfundo Sibusisiwe Nomvuyo Msomi** **Date:** 31 July 2026

**DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR**

I, Prof NP Khumalo, declare that the thesis has been submitted to originality checking software.

This dissertation was submitted with my approval.

*NP Khumalo*
Prof. NP Khumalo

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**DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my late grandmother and guardian angel, Danile MaNgobese Zuma (1924 – 2000), whose passion for progress through education, purity through God, and generosity through extended hands is shaping the woman I am becoming.

May your legacy live through every step of progress I take, and may you continue to rest in power.

With love and gratitude for your life – uMfundo.

**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of implementing game-based teaching resources that aimed to improve the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan. It focuses on the low English-speaking proficiency of young English Foreign Language (EFL) learners and the teaching resources used by EFL teachers to develop learners' English-speaking skills. An action research study was conducted by a teacher-researcher at a kindergarten in Taiwan. The research employed participant observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires to generate qualitative data. Data was analysed using critical discourse analysis. This study was guided by the interpretivist research paradigm. The findings of this classroom action research study indicate that game-based teaching resources are an effective pedagogical approach for improving English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners. Additionally, games created a socially interactive and emotionally supportive classroom environment that facilitated increased speaking opportunities and encouraged risk-taking in language use. Teacher questionnaires further revealed teachers' awareness of low speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners, the resources/strategies they employ to develop English-speaking skills, and their experiences implementing traditional and game-based resources. The study recommends that EFL kindergarten curricula formally integrate game-based teaching strategies as a core instructional approach for developing speaking proficiency. Furthermore, kindergarten EFL teachers can employ game-based learning in EFL classrooms, using traditional resources to reinforce speaking practice. Educational institutions such as schools should provide structured professional development programmes to equip teachers with the skills needed to design, adapt, and effectively implement game-based learning activities.

This study provided an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of game-based learning in developing English-speaking proficiency amongst kindergarten EFL learners.

**Key words:** English-speaking opportunities, English-speaking proficiency, foreign language, facilitator, game-based teaching resources, teacher/researcher, teaching resource.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAR – Classroom Action Research
EFL – English Foreign Language
MKO – More Knowledgeable Other
UNISA – University of South Africa
ZPD – Zone of Proximal Development

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Despite the recognised importance of speaking proficiency, numerous studies indicate that EFL learners continue to demonstrate inadequate levels of English-speaking competence (Wong Hui Ting and Yunus, 2021; Erdiana et al., 2020; Damayanti, 2019; Sheerah and Yadav, 2022). Difficulties in speaking English fluently and confidently persist across various EFL learning contexts. Various studies conducted globally, in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa have revealed the low English speaking demonstrated by learners (Alimuddin: 2026; Zhou: 2024; Gobena: 2025). Consequently, researchers have increasingly focused on identifying effective game-based instructional approaches and teaching resources, that can enhance language acquisition and improve learners' communicative competence (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019; Gunes & Sarigoz, 2021; York et al., 2019). These studies emphasise the importance of learner-centered and engaging teaching practices, including game-based teaching resources, that provide meaningful opportunities for learners to improve English speaking proficiency skills.

Furthermore, although substantial research has been conducted on English language acquisition and speaking development among EFL learners (Wong Hui Ting and Yunus, 2021; Erdiana et al., 2020; Damayanti, 2019), comparatively little attention has been given to learners in the kindergarten phase and the implementation of game-based learning in improving speaking proficiency. This gap is particularly important because early childhood represents a critical period for language development, during which appropriate instructional strategies may significantly influence learners' future language proficiency.

In response to these challenges and the identified gap in the literature, this action research study seeks to investigate the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources in improving the English-speaking proficiency of kindergarten EFL learners in Taiwan. By examining how game-based learning can support oral language development, learner engagement, and confidence in speaking English, this study aims to contribute to both classroom practice and the broader field of early childhood EFL education.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

Global studies that investigated the role played by teaching resources in improving learners English speaking skills demonstrate the importance of implementing appropriate resources, such as games, in supporting learners speaking development (Gunes & Sarigoz, 2021;

Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019; York et al., 2019). Educational contexts across Asia, teaching resources such as game-based resources have been implemented in classrooms with the intention of assisting EFL learners to improve English speaking skills (Lin and Tein: 2026; Chen and Liu: 2024). Studies conducted in Indonesia, Malaysia, China revealed that game-based resources are more effective in developing speaking skills compared to implementing traditional teaching approaches (Gunawani: 2025; Al-Jamili, Aziz et. al.: 2024; Zhou: 2024). Recent studies conducted in Taiwan found that game-based learning significantly improved speaking fluency and speaking confidence, vocabulary and speaking confidence (Lin and Tein: 2026; Chang; Chang, et al., 2025; Chen and Liu: 2024). Although studies that investigate game-based learning and English-speaking skills have been conducted in Taiwan, most of these have focused on secondary school and elementary learners. Research investigating Game-based learning and English-speaking proficiency at EFL kindergarten schools remains limited.

Erdiana et al. (2020) observes that when learners are prompted with questions, they are often unable to articulate verbal responses and instead display hesitation or anxiety. Similarly, Damayanti (2019) notes that spontaneous speech production remains particularly challenging for learners, even in cases where they demonstrate competence in cognitively oriented tasks that require individual intellectual effort. The author further highlights that learners tend to prefer written forms of expression over oral communication, thereby limiting opportunities to develop speaking proficiency.

This limited engagement with spoken English is closely associated with reduced confidence and disinterest in oral communication, which ultimately hinders the development of speaking proficiency (Seraj & Habil, 2021). In addition, research by Wong Hui Ting and Yunus (2021) indicates that many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue to demonstrate inadequate levels of speaking competence. Collectively, these findings suggest that speaking remains one of the least developed language skills in EFL contexts. A frequently identified contributing factor in the literature is the use of inappropriate or ineffective instructional resources in the teaching of English as a foreign language. For instance, Gunes and Sarigoz (2021) conclude that outdated and ineffective teaching resources significantly contribute to learners' limited speaking competence. In support of this view, multiple studies have demonstrated that traditional teaching resources are insufficient in promoting English-speaking proficiency among EFL learners (Wong Hui Ting & Yunus, 2021; Habil, 2021; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019).

A further concern raised in the literature is the dominance of teacher-centred pedagogical approaches that rely heavily on traditional instructional tools. Such approaches tend to restrict opportunities for meaningful learner participation in oral communication (Wong Hui Ting & Yunus, 2021). Consequently, traditional teaching resources have been widely criticised for contributing to stagnation in the development of speaking skills among EFL learners. Seraj and Habil (2021), in a systematic study, found that conventional resources such as textbooks are limited in their ability to support the development of oral English skills. As a result, classroom interaction is often dominated by the teacher, with learners adopting a more passive role and receiving limited opportunities to engage in spontaneous spoken communication.

Similarly, Namaziandost and Nasri (2019) argue that traditional teaching resources tend to hinder verbal interaction among learners and fail to foster a communicative use of English. Resources such as textbooks, worksheets, and overhead projectors are often associated with structured, form-focused learning activities that do not prioritise spoken interaction. Liu, Vadive, and Namaziandost (2021) further emphasise that the use of such traditional resources negatively affects learners' motivation and confidence in speaking English. In addition, Namaziandost and Nasri (2019) highlight that traditional EFL classrooms generally place limited emphasis on the development of oral proficiency, instead privileging rote learning, memorisation, and written reproduction of language forms. This instructional orientation delays the development of speaking proficiency and reduces learners' opportunities to use English in meaningful communicative contexts.

Moreover, Namaziandost and Nasri (2019) identify that traditional EFL classrooms are typically teacher-centred and heavily reliant on textbooks, resulting in restricted learner participation in oral activities. This critique is supported by Alghamdi et al. (2019), who argue that such classroom environments provide limited opportunities for learners to actively engage in speaking activities. Taken together, the literature suggests that traditional, teacher-centred instructional approaches and resources are not conducive to the development of English-speaking proficiency. Instead, there is growing recognition that learner-centred, interactive, and engaging teaching approaches are more effective in supporting oral language development.

In response to these challenges, several studies have explored the effectiveness of game-based learning as an alternative instructional approach in EFL classrooms. Evidence suggests that using games as teaching resources can enhance learners' speaking proficiency

and increase their confidence in using English orally (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019; Dujmovic, 2006; Jimenez, 2017). Dujmovic (2006) emphasises that speaking is a fundamental mechanism through which children acquire language, particularly in early developmental stages. The author further argues that speaking should precede writing in the language-learning process, as it lays the foundation for communicative competence. In line with this perspective, Jimenez (2017) asserts that educational systems, particularly in Asian contexts, should shift away from an exclusive emphasis on writing, spelling, and grammar. Instead, greater emphasis should be placed on interactive and game-based pedagogical approaches that actively promote learner participation and oral communication.

### 1.1.1 Context of Kindergarten school and Classroom learning

The action research study was conducted at a kindergarten in Taiwan, Asia. The participants were English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners aged 5 to 7. Within this context, learners have limited exposure to English beyond the school environment, with opportunities to use the language primarily confined to EFL classroom lessons. Learners attend English lessons for approximately 4 hours per day, during which instruction predominantly focuses on developing foundational literacy skills, particularly reading and writing.

Teaching and learning in this setting are largely teacher-centred and highly structured, guided by rigid lesson plans and predetermined instructional objectives (Shi & Yeung, 2024). Learners are generally required to complete tasks individually, while the teacher maintains central control over classroom activities, pacing, and language input. This instructional approach results in limited opportunities for spontaneous interaction, communicative practice, and meaningful oral engagement in English (Zeng, Gui & Wang, 2025). Consequently, classroom discourse is predominantly teacher-led, with minimal opportunities for learner-initiated speaking.

Traditional pedagogical practices in this context rely heavily on textbooks and worksheets as the primary instructional resources (Shi & Yeung, 2024). These materials are mainly designed to support reading, writing, and memorisation-based learning rather than the development of communicative competence. As a result, learners are frequently required to memorise language forms and respond passively to teacher instructions rather than actively using English in authentic communicative situations. This emphasis on rote learning and individual written task completion restricts opportunities for oral participation and limits the development

of speaking proficiency (Khittahira & Tyas, 2022). Over time, this contributes to low levels of spoken English competence, reduced communicative confidence, and limited willingness to engage in verbal interaction.

Despite these pedagogical constraints, the kindergarten setting is relatively well-resourced in terms of both physical and technological learning materials (Khittahira & Tyas, 2022). The school has access to the Internet, printing facilities, colour printers, subscriptions to educational websites and game-based learning platforms, computers, manipulatives, and a range of art supplies available to each learner. In addition, the institution provides both indoor and outdoor physical spaces that could be effectively integrated into teaching and learning activities, particularly within English lessons (Bautista, Yu, Lee & Sun, 2023). However, although these resources are available, they are not consistently utilised as core instructional tools for language learning. Instead, they are often perceived as supplementary, recreational, or support materials rather than as integral components of structured EFL pedagogy (Saputra, Septiani, Adriani, & Sundari, 2021). This represents a missed opportunity, as such resources have the potential to enhance learner engagement, increase interaction, and support communicative language development when purposefully integrated into teaching practice.

In addition, the current classroom organisation and resource utilisation reflect a broader pedagogical gap between available affordances and actual instructional practice (Saputra, Septiani, Adriani & Sundari, 2021). While the environment provides opportunities for interactive, multimodal, and game-based learning, these are not systematically embedded in English language instruction (Bautista, Yu, Lee & Sun, 2023). This mismatch further limits learners' exposure to meaningful spoken English and reduces opportunities for experiential learning.

From this perspective, the context of the study highlights a clear need to explore alternative instructional approaches that can better capitalise on existing resources while promoting learner-centred, interactive, and communicative language learning. Approaches that actively encourage oral participation and engagement may help address the identified limitations in the development of speaking within this setting.

### 1.1.2 Rationale of the study

This study is significant as it provides valuable insight into the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources on improving the English-speaking proficiency of kindergarten EFL learners. The findings of this study will benefit kindergarten EFL teachers by providing insight into language learning in young learners and how games can be implemented to improve learners' verbal interaction. The classroom action research adopted by this study can assist teachers in identifying instructional challenges and improving their teaching practices. Education stakeholders will gain practical insights into an EFL kindergarten classroom context to inform effective curriculum decision-making and the implementation of game-based resources to improve learners' speaking engagement in EFL kindergarten classrooms. By exploring game-based learning, this study will provide practical insights for policymakers and teachers on implementing teaching resources, particularly game-based ones. Policymakers will gain further insights into teachers' experiences, opinions, and the outcomes of teaching resources implemented in kindergarten EFL classrooms. Policymakers can use the findings of this study to inform curriculum and pedagogical innovations and make informed decisions about the EFL curriculum. Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of research on game-based teaching resources and their role in the kindergarten EFL education context in Taiwan.

In my own teaching practice as a kindergarten EFL teacher, fostering spontaneous verbal interaction and encouraging learners to communicate in English during classroom activities have been significant challenges. Although learners participate in various learning tasks, many remain reluctant to initiate conversations, respond verbally, or engage in sustained English-language interactions. As a result, classroom communication is often characterised by limited natural conversation and minimal opportunities for meaningful language use. These observations have highlighted the need to identify innovative teaching strategies that effectively bridge the gap between language learning and language use while promoting learners' confidence and willingness to communicate in English. One of the most persistent challenges I have encountered involves learners' limited English-speaking proficiency, coupled with low motivation and confidence when speaking English. In addition, concerns remain regarding the effectiveness of the teaching resources commonly employed in EFL kindergarten classrooms. Gunes and Sarigoz (2021) found that many learners continue to struggle with speaking proficiency and fluency despite having begun learning English at an

early age. This suggests that early exposure to English alone may not be sufficient to develop effective oral communication skills.

## 1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to briefly discuss the theoretical framework applicable to this study. A theoretical framework provides clear guidelines for research design, data collection methods, arguments, and the interpretation of the study's findings (Sreekumar, 2023). The theoretical framework chosen for this study is Lev Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory. The theory is chosen for its relevance to the study as it advises that effective learning is interactional and that language plays a crucial role in internalizing knowledge. Furthermore, social constructivism identifies learning as a process supported by an individual with greater knowledge, referred to as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). This action research study positions the teacher-researcher as the MKO who embodies advanced English-speaking proficiency to facilitate learner participants.

### 1.2.2 Social Constructivist Theory

The Social Constructivist Theory, associated with Lev Vygotsky (1978), has become increasingly influential in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education due to its emphasis on learning as a socially mediated process. Suhendi, Purwarno, and Chairanin (2021) explain that social constructivist classrooms conceptualise learners as active participants who engage with others to co-construct knowledge through interaction and collaboration. Within this framework, learning is not viewed as an individual cognitive process alone, but rather as fundamentally shaped by social engagement. Vygotsky (1978) emphasises that social interaction is central to language development, as learners acquire communicative competence through meaningful engagement with others.

In this theoretical perspective, the role of the teacher shifts from a knowledge transmitter to a facilitator of learning who guides, supports, and scaffolds learners' development. Suhendi et al. (2021) further highlight that learners can co-create knowledge when appropriately supported by teachers and peers within structured social environments. It can therefore be inferred that language acquisition, particularly speaking proficiency, is strengthened when

learners are provided with sustained opportunities for interaction and dialogue. In this regard, game-based learning offers a pedagogical approach that creates structured yet flexible opportunities for meaningful interaction among learners. Namaziandost and Nasri (2019) support this view by arguing that games can significantly enhance learner interaction by providing communicative and engaging learning environments.

A central component of Vygotsky's theory is the concept of the genetic law of development, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and mediation (Suhendi et al., 2021). The genetic law of development posits that higher mental functions originate through social interaction, suggesting that learning is first experienced interpersonally before being internalised individually. In language learning, this implies that children develop communicative competence more effectively when immersed in socially rich environments that foster peer interaction. The ZPD further explains learning as the distance between what a learner can achieve independently and what they can achieve with guidance or support. Suhendi et al. (2021) emphasise that appropriate instructional resources serve as mediating tools that support learners in extending their current abilities and achieving higher levels of competence. In this context, teaching resources that facilitate interaction and scaffold learning processes are essential for developing English-speaking proficiency. Accordingly, the adaptation of instructional resources within EFL classrooms becomes a critical factor in supporting learners' oral language development.

Empirical studies support the view that game-based learning can serve as an effective mediating tool within the social constructivist framework. The researcher, therefore, posits that the speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners can be enhanced through the use of games as instructional resources. This position is supported by Hayuningtyas and Fariziah (2020), who argue that games positively impact learners' speaking proficiency by creating engaging, interactive learning experiences. Similarly, Mohammed and Kinyo (2020) highlight that teaching tools play a significant role in shaping learners' ability to learn effectively and further emphasise that game-based resources facilitate interactive learning environments that are particularly suitable for young learners.

From a social constructivist perspective, learning is closely linked to problem-solving through social interaction. Game-based learning aligns with this principle as it often involves collaborative tasks in which learners work together to solve problems, complete challenges, or achieve shared goals. This collaborative process naturally creates opportunities for meaningful verbal interaction and for learners to negotiate meaning. Suhendi et al. (2021)

reinforce this argument by stating that social interaction is foundational to language development and plays a crucial role in supporting the learning process. In addition, Mohammed and Kinyo (2020) explain that social communication facilitated through interactive learning tools encourages active participation and verbal responsiveness among learners. Likewise, York et al. (2019) found that using games as instructional tools increases verbal interaction among learners, thereby promoting communicative engagement in the classroom.

Social Constructivist Theory conceptualises learning as a dynamic, flexible, and socially mediated process rather than a rigid or individualised activity. Within this framework, instructional resources must be adaptable, interactive, and capable of supporting meaningful social engagement among learners. Games, when appropriately aligned with learners' cognitive and developmental levels, foster an environment of collaboration, communication, and active participation. The literature suggests that game-based learning aligns with social constructivist principles, as it provides opportunities for learners to engage in authentic interaction while developing language skills. Therefore, this theory is highly relevant to the present study, as it underscores the importance of social interaction in language acquisition and supports the use of games as a pedagogical strategy to enhance the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan.

## 1.3 KEY CONCEPTS

**Foreign language**- is a language that is learned within the constraints of a classroom and is not spoken by the general society in which the learner is immersed (Brown & Larson – Hall, 2012). Osuchukwu (2018) further explains that a foreign language is limited in its use and has a specialised function. In this study, the term "foreign language" refers to English, which is a foreign language in the Taiwanese context.

**Teaching resources**- They are tools that support learning and facilitate knowledge acquisition (Lynch, 2023). Additionally, Mousab (2023) defines teaching resources as professional materials used by teachers to enhance teaching effectiveness. In this study, teaching resources are the tools teachers use to help learners comprehend the lesson.

**Speaking proficiency** - It refers to the degree of speaking competency of a particular language, which encompasses the use of vocabulary, fluency, and the ability to articulate oneself clearly when engaging in conversations (Ghafar & Raad, 2023). In this study, speaking

proficiency refers to the competence of EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan to speak English.

**Game-based learning** – refers to a teaching method or instructional method that utilizes structured digital and physical games and resources to assist students in achieving defined educational outcomes (Hu: 2024). In this study game-based teaching resources refer to the materials implemented that facilitate learners' verbal interaction with the aim of achieving a pre-established learning outcome.

**Learner interaction** – It refers to meaningful communication that aims to share ideas and information between learners, facilitators and digital systems (Dao and Hiver: 2026). In this study learner interaction specifically pertains to the manner in which learners verbally interact with each other as they engage with game-based teaching resources.

## 1.4 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This preliminary literature review examines existing research on the use of games as instructional resources for improving the speaking proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It also considers literature on learners' speaking confidence and the extent to which teaching resources create opportunities for oral interaction in the classroom. A key observation across the literature is that relatively limited research has focused specifically on EFL learners at the kindergarten level, despite the importance of speaking as a foundational skill in early language development.

International studies conducted across Asia, Africa, and the United States have examined the relationship between teaching resources and EFL learners' speaking proficiency (Gunes & Sarigoz, 2021; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019; York et al., 2019). Overall, these studies suggest that instructional design plays a significant role in shaping learners' oral language development. In particular, game-based learning is often identified as an effective pedagogical approach for improving speaking proficiency, increasing learner confidence, and fostering interaction (York et al., 2019). Evidence from several studies indicates that games promote learner participation, enhance verbal communication, and increase willingness to speak (York et al., 2019; Hayuningtyas, 2020; Gunes & Sarigoz, 2021). York et al. (2019) further argue that the deliberate integration of games into EFL instruction can lead to improved speaking outcomes.

However, despite these positive findings, speaking proficiency remains a persistent challenge among EFL learners. Wong Hui Ting and Yunus (2021) note that learners continue to experience difficulties in developing competent speaking skills. Gunes and Sarigoz (2021)

attribute this challenge partly to the use of ineffective or inappropriate teaching resources. Similarly, York et al. (2019) identify learner anxiety, lack of motivation, and reliance on textbooks as major barriers to speaking development. Traditional teaching resources such as textbooks are often criticised for limiting communicative practice and prioritising form-focused learning over oral interaction. As a result, several studies conclude that traditional methods alone are insufficient for developing speaking proficiency (Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019; Gunes & Sarigoz, 2021; York et al., 2019). A recurring theme in the literature is that teacher-centred approaches restrict opportunities for oral communication. Wong Hui Ting and Yunus (2021) argue that such approaches reduce learner participation and limit interaction in EFL classrooms. Seraj and Habil (2021) similarly found that textbook-based instruction often results in minimal opportunities for learners to speak, with the teacher dominating classroom discourse. Namaziandost and Nasri (2019) further emphasise that traditional resources such as worksheets and textbooks do not foster interactive or communicative learning environments. This limits learners' opportunities to practise speaking in meaningful contexts and negatively affects motivation and confidence (Liu, Vadive, & Namaziandost, 2021).

In contrast, a growing body of research highlights the effectiveness of games in supporting speaking development. Studies show that board games and similar interactive tools increase speaking opportunities and encourage learner engagement. For example, Hayuningtyas (2020) found that using "Speak It Up" board games had a positive impact on learners' speaking skills. York et al. (2019) similarly recommend integrating game-based approaches into EFL curricula to improve learner participation and oral communication. Additionally, Ho et al. (2020) and Mohammed et al. (2019) report that games promote verbal interaction and provide learners with opportunities to practice language in communicative settings.

Further evidence suggests that game-based learning enhances motivation and social interaction in the classroom. Ho et al. (2020) found that learners exposed to game-based instruction demonstrated greater spontaneous speech and active participation than those taught using traditional methods. Likewise, Ting and Yunus (2021) conclude that board games help develop confident English speakers by increasing meaningful interaction. Shtayeh (2022) also argues that games transform the classroom into a dynamic and interactive learning environment that encourages speaking.

However, perspectives on the factors influencing speaking proficiency are not entirely consistent. While Gunes (2021) emphasises psychological factors such as motivation, beliefs, and learner attitudes as key determinants of speaking ability, other studies highlight

the role of instructional methods and teaching resources. For example, Sheerah and Yadav (2022) report persistent speaking difficulties among learners exposed to traditional methods, while Mehdiyev (2020) links increased motivation and willingness to speak directly to the use of game-based learning strategies.

Overall, the literature suggests a general trend toward the effectiveness of game-based learning in improving EFL speaking proficiency. However, most existing studies focus on primary, secondary, or tertiary education contexts, with limited attention given to kindergarten learners. This represents a notable gap, as early childhood is a critical stage for language development. Therefore, further research is needed on the use of games as instructional resources to improve speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners.

## 1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

A number of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners possess insufficient verbal and oral production skills and communicative self-efficacy to engage in effective interaction beyond the instructional context (Alimuddin, 2026; Zhou, 2024; Gobena, 2025). In informal, naturalistic communicative settings, learners frequently resort to their first language rather than English, indicating limited transfer of classroom-based learning to authentic communicative situations (Shi & Yeung, 2024). Similarly, international research has shown that EFL learners enrolled in English-medium instructional programs across various Asian contexts display relatively low oral proficiency (Gunes & Sarigoz, 2021; Namaziandost & Nasri, 2019; Jimenez, 2017).

A key contributing factor identified in the literature is the nature of instructional practices and teaching resources used in EFL classrooms (Gunes & Sarigoz, 2021). The Taiwanese English learning contexts are typified by classroom instruction that relies heavily on traditional resources such as textbooks and worksheets, which tend to emphasise individual written work and controlled language practice, while limiting opportunities for meaningful social interaction and oral communication among learners (Chan & Chan, 2024; Shi & Yeung, 2024). For instance, Namaziandost and Nasri (2019) found that the use of traditional teaching resources limits oral communication in the classroom, resulting in teacher-dominated instruction in which learners assume a passive role and have minimal opportunities to engage in spoken interaction.

Although previous studies have explored EFL speaking proficiency in various contexts (Wong Hui Ting and Yunus, 2021; Erdiana et al., 2020; Damayanti, 2019; Sheerah & Yadav, 2022), there remains a significant gap in research focusing specifically on game-based teaching resources implemented in Taiwanese EFL kindergarten classrooms and their effectiveness on learners' speaking proficiency development. This gap is particularly important given that early childhood is a critical stage for language acquisition and communicative development (Purwanti, 2024).

In the context of this study, kindergarten EFL learners in Taiwan generally perform well in reading, writing, and completion of textbook-based tasks; however, they continue to demonstrate weak speaking proficiency and low confidence in oral communication (Shaleha, Mukrim, Lebagi & Hasyim, 2025). The low English-speaking proficiency of learners in Taiwan is reflective of a mismatch between instructional outcomes and communicative competence (Chen & Lui, 2024). Traditional teaching resources such as worksheets and textbooks have been insufficient in developing learners' speaking skills, as they do not adequately promote interaction, spontaneity, or communicative use of English (Chang & Chang, 2026). Lin and Tien (2026) found that game-based teaching resources significantly improved learners' English speaking proficiency. Despite existing studies on the effectiveness of game-based learning in improving English-speaking proficiency, a research gap remains regarding its benefits for English-speaking proficiency among kindergarten EFL learners in Taiwan. Therefore, the main research aim guiding this study is to explore the role of speaking games as a teaching resource in developing the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan.

### 1.5.1 Research question

1. What is the role played by speaking games as a teaching resource to improve the English- speaking proficiency of EFL Kindergarten learners in Taiwan?

### 1.5.2 Sub-questions

1. What teaching resources are used by Kindergarten EFL teachers to assist their learners to speak English confidently and proficiently?
2. How do games improve learners' verbal interaction in an EFL kindergarten context
3. Which model should be employed to assist Kindergarten EFL teachers to assist their learners to speak English confidently and proficiently?

## 1.6 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.6.1 Research aim

The aim of this study is to explore the role of speaking games as a teaching resource for improving the English-speaking proficiency of kindergarten EFL learners in Taiwan.

### 1.6.2 Research objectives

1.6.2.1 To determine the teaching resources used by Kindergarten EFL teachers to assist their learners in speaking English confidently and proficiently.

1.6.2.2 To explore the role played by playing games in improving the speaking proficiency of Kindergarten EFL learners during classroom learning.

1.6.2.3 To recommend an appropriate model that should be employed to assist Kindergarten EFL teachers to assist their learners to speak English confidently and proficiently.

## 1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to a systematic, structured, and scientific approach that provides the researcher with a clear framework for conducting a study (Sreekumar, 2023). It outlines the procedures that guide the research process, ensuring the study is conducted coherently, validly, and reliably. According to Ciesielska and Jamielniak (2018), the research methodology section specifies the type of data to be collected, the data collection instruments to be used, and the methods of data analysis, thereby providing a comprehensive account of how the study is designed and implemented. In this sense, research methodology serves as a guiding framework that establishes the study's boundaries, procedures, and limitations, ensuring rigour and transparency throughout the research process. In line with Sreekumar (2023), this section of the study will outline the research design and research method adopted in the current investigation.

### 1.7.1 Research design

Jain (2023) defines research design as a blueprint that guides the overall process of conducting research. Research design is the general plan for the techniques and methods to

collect and analyze data. This section presents the interpretivist research paradigm, which provides a framework for a deeper understanding of how game-based resources influence English-speaking proficiency. The qualitative research approach provides an in-depth understanding of learners' experiences, meanings, and interpretations of game-based learning in the EFL classroom. The classroom action research was chosen as a suitable research design and research strategy to give a systematic exploration of how game-based teaching resources affect the English-speaking proficiency of learners.

#### 1.7.1.1 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is a set of philosophical assumptions that guide scientific inquiry, encompassing ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature and acquisition of knowledge), and the processes by which knowledge is generated and interpreted in research (Du Preez & Reddy, 2018). Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) further explain that a research paradigm shapes how researchers interpret data and construct meaning based on their worldview. In this study, the research paradigm provides the foundational framework for investigating the role of game-based learning in improving the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners. Du Preez and Reddy (2018) further note that a paradigm also determines the choice of research methods, research design, expected outcomes, and approaches to data analysis and interpretation.

This study is situated within the interpretivist paradigm. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2020) and De Vos et al. (2020), interpretivism enables researchers to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of social phenomena by focusing on participants' subjective experiences and meanings. In the context of this study, interpretivism is appropriate, as it allows for an in-depth exploration of how EFL kindergarten learners experience and engage with speaking games as a teaching resource for developing English-speaking proficiency in Taiwan.

Lincoln and Guba (1994) identify four interrelated components of a research paradigm, namely ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. Epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the knower and what is known (Guba, 1994; Khatri, 2020). In this study, knowledge is understood to emerge through learners' participation in speaking activities, with the researcher acknowledging that meaning is co-constructed through interaction. Ontology concerns the nature of reality and what exists in the social world (Khatri, 2020).

From this perspective, the study assumes that learners' experiences of using games in language learning constitute a socially constructed reality that can be explored and interpreted. Methodology, as the third component, concerns the processes and strategies used to generate knowledge, including participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures (Guba, 1994; Khatri, 2020). In line with this understanding, the researcher selects appropriate participants and employs suitable qualitative methods to explore the research questions in depth. Axiology, the fourth component, concerns the role of values and ethical considerations in the research process. Guided by Lincoln and Guba (1994) and Khatri (2020), the researcher ensures that ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for participants, are upheld throughout the study. Collectively, the four components of the interpretivist paradigm provide a coherent philosophical foundation for this study, which seeks to understand how EFL kindergarten learners experience and engage with game-based learning in relation to their English-speaking development and confidence.

#### 1.7.1.2 Research approach

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore the role of game-based learning in improving the English-speaking proficiency of kindergarten EFL learners. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study as it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, meanings, and interpretations within their natural learning context. Spencer et al. (2021) argue that qualitative research enables flexibility, breadth, and rich, in-depth interpretation of data derived from observations and interactions. This makes it particularly well-suited to examining complex educational phenomena, such as language learning in early childhood settings.

Furthermore, McCombes and George (2022) emphasise that qualitative research prioritises the perspectives and lived experiences of research participants. This focus is central to the present study, as the voices, interpretations, and responses of EFL kindergarten learners are essential in understanding how game-based teaching resources influence their speaking development. By centering participants' experiences, the qualitative approach enables a more nuanced exploration of how learners engage with English-speaking activities and how they perceive their own communicative competence.

In this study, a qualitative research approach facilitates a detailed, contextually grounded understanding of how games, as teaching resources, influence learners' speaking

proficiency, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English. It therefore provides the depth and interpretive richness needed to capture the complexity of language-learning processes in a kindergarten EFL classroom.

### 1.8 Research type/strategy

The research strategy adopted in this study is Classroom Action Research (CAR). CAR is a systematic, reflective inquiry used by teachers in their classrooms to identify, address, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions for teaching and learning challenges. (Oranga and Gisore, 2023). CAR is considered appropriate for this investigation, as it enables the systematic exploration and improvement of classroom practice, particularly regarding the use of games as a teaching resource to enhance the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan. The study specifically examines how instructional interventions influence learners' speaking development, focusing on improving speaking confidence and increasing opportunities for meaningful oral interaction in the classroom.

Classroom Action Research is particularly suitable for studies that aim to bridge the gap between theory and practice by enabling researchers to implement, observe, and reflect on pedagogical interventions in real classroom settings (Oranga & Gisore, 2023). In this study, CAR provides a structured framework for investigating and refining the impact of game-based learning on learners' speaking proficiency through iterative cycles of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

Furthermore, CAR is often implemented as a collaborative research design in which the teacher assumes the dual role of practitioner and researcher, working alongside learners as active participants in the learning process (Prabandari et al.2024). The collaborative dimension is central to the present study, as learners are directly engaged in using games as instructional tools to support language development and address the research questions. Semathong (2023) argues that when conducted ethically and systematically, collaborative Classroom Action Research can yield valuable and meaningful insights into classroom learning and teaching practices.

In this study, CAR is therefore considered highly suitable, as it offers the researcher an opportunity to critically examine and improve instructional practice while simultaneously exploring the role of game-based learning in enhancing the speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners. Research methods.

Research methods refer to the specific techniques and procedures used to collect and analyse data in a study, and they are essential for generating evidence that addresses the research questions. In this study, the researcher employed classroom observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires as the primary data collection methods to examine the impact of game-based learning on learners' English-speaking proficiency and confidence. These methods were selected to capture both observable behavioural changes in classroom interaction and learners' subjective experiences of speaking English during game-based activities. To enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, data were collected across three iterative action research cycles, thereby allowing for triangulation of evidence (McCombes & George, 2022).

Selection of participants

Participant selection was guided by relevant criteria, including learners' English-speaking ability, age, and duration of exposure to kindergarten education. The study involved twelve kindergarten learners in the middle kindergarten phase, aged between five and six years. These learners were selected to ensure a relatively consistent developmental and language proficiency level, which is important for maintaining comparability within the study. Data collection through observations and focus group interviews was conducted during the summer school period.

During the study, particular attention was given to learners' willingness to speak English, their responses to verbal prompts, the extent of meaningful peer interaction, and their participation in spontaneous spoken communication during game-based activities. These behaviours were systematically observed and recorded as part of the data set used to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention.

The sampling strategy adopted in this study is homogeneous convenience purposive sampling. According to Nikolopoulou (2022), homogeneous purposive sampling is appropriate for small-scale qualitative studies where participants share similar characteristics and are readily accessible to the researcher. This approach was suitable for the present study because the selected EFL kindergarten learners shared comparable backgrounds, similar levels of English-speaking proficiency, and were enrolled in the same educational setting (Nikolopoulou, 2022). The use of this sampling strategy ensured consistency within the participant group, thereby allowing for a more focused investigation of the role of speaking games in enhancing English-speaking proficiency in the kindergarten EFL context in Taiwan.

**Data collection**

In this study, qualitative data were collected using observation checklists, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires. These instruments were selected to support the cyclical nature of Classroom Action Research and to ensure triangulation of data across multiple sources, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

i) Participant observation

Participant observation was conducted during each action research cycle to systematically document learners' engagement in game-based learning activities. The researcher focused on learners' ability to interact verbally, respond to prompts, and engage in spontaneous English communication during game-based tasks. Particular attention was given to speaking confidence, willingness to communicate, and the extent of learner talk time generated by games. This method was appropriate for the study as it allowed the researcher to observe authentic classroom interactions among kindergarten learners with similar backgrounds, age range, and English proficiency levels. Through continuous observation across cycles, the researcher was able to trace patterns of improvement in speaking behaviour and identify how game-based resources influenced oral language development. The observation checklist, adapted from Tunnel (2024), provided a structured and systematic framework for recording behavioural indicators related to speaking proficiency. This ensured consistency in data collection across the three action research cycles and contributed to the production of reliable, comparable observational data on the effectiveness of game-based learning in improving English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan.

ii) Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted with learner participants to explore their experiences and perceptions of speaking English during game-based learning activities. The interviews were designed to encourage learners to express themselves verbally, respond spontaneously, and reflect on their learning experiences in a supportive and interactive environment.

Questions were deliberately structured to provide learners with sufficient time for reflection, speaking opportunities, and freedom of expression, in line with ethical and child-centered qualitative research practices (McCombes & George, 2022). Where necessary, questions were simplified and scaffolded to accommodate learners with lower English proficiency,

ensuring that all participants could contribute meaningfully to the discussion.

Across the action research cycles, focus group interviews provided valuable insights into learners' changing levels of confidence, willingness to speak, and perceived enjoyment of English-speaking activities. This method also enabled the researcher to capture learners' subjective experiences of game-based learning, particularly regarding speaking practice and classroom participation.

iii) Teacher questionnaires

Teacher questionnaires were used to gather data on educators' perspectives on instructional resources for developing learners' speaking skills. The questionnaires elicited teachers' experiences, beliefs, and classroom practices regarding English language teaching in kindergarten settings, with particular emphasis on integrating game-based learning strategies. The responses provided insight into teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of existing teaching resources and their willingness to adopt alternative approaches, such as game-based learning, to enhance speaking development. This data source contributed to a broader understanding of classroom practices and supported the triangulation of findings by enabling comparisons among teacher perspectives, learner observations, and focus group interview data collected across multiple action research cycles.

### 1.7.2 Data analysis

Data was analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis. Luo (2019) states that critical discourse analysis is valuable for collecting information about language patterns and how research participants view language in relation to their context. Therefore, the researcher was able to gain an in-depth understanding of the language patterns that EFL learners in Taiwan are exposed to in their contexts of living and learning, as well as their attitudes toward speaking English. Qualitative data collected from focus group interviews and observations were analyzed inductively to gain in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of teaching resources for speaking. The learners' responses were consistently recorded throughout the observation and interview cycles. Consistencies in verbal and non-verbal responses were coded and categorized into themes to reveal the impact that games, as a teaching resource, will have on learners' English-speaking proficiency and confidence. Luo (2019) further states that critical discourse analysis is useful for gathering data based on the use of language in its

context. The research investigated participants' ability to use English during the learning process in relation to their lived experiences. To ensure the study was valid, the researcher provided participants with a detailed explanation of the study's objectives before each cycle. The researcher listened to the study recordings and the research participants' responses twice before transcription. Finally, a matrix table and data entry form were used to record data from observations and interviews. The researcher then conducted an extensive literature review of findings on improving speaking proficiency and adapting teaching resources for games. A detailed analysis of the data helped identify common themes and codes. Further re-examination of the data revealed the impact of using games as a teaching resource on English-speaking proficiency and the English-speaking opportunities they offered learners during learning.

## 1.8 MEASURES FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE STUDIES

Trustworthiness is achieved in a study when the researcher convinces readers that the research findings are noteworthy and valuable (Guba & Lincoln, 2008). Trustworthiness involves credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure the scientific consistency of the study.

### 1.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is an important aspect of trustworthiness that this study should achieve for its findings to be regarded as significant, reliable, transferable, and trustworthy (McCombes & George, 2022). To ensure the credibility of the findings, three methods were used to collect data: observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires. This study collected data from different sources to ensure triangulation. Furthermore, to enhance credibility, the researcher conducted the study in collaboration with research participants. The participants' input and feedback strengthened the quality and credibility of the findings. Participants' exact words and explanations were recorded accurately, without distorting the meaning.

The researcher facilitated discussions related to the research process and findings. Focus group interviews were conducted to make participants feel relaxed and to help them understand the questions.

### 1.8.2 Transferability

Transferability can be achieved through detailed elaborations of the research context. Transferability provides detailed descriptions of the sampling methods used in the study (Ahmed, 2024). A detailed description of the research context in which the findings were defined determined whether the findings could be used in similar contexts; in this case, EFL Kindergarten classrooms were provided (Kajamaa, Stenfors, Bennett, 2020).

To ensure the transferability of the research, the researcher conducted the study in a way that provided a detailed account of its context, allowing other researchers to use it in their own contexts. Thick descriptions of the kindergarten setting, background of learners, types of games implemented and research procedures and methods adhered to in this study will allow readers to determine whether the findings are transferable to other EFL kindergarten settings.

### 1.8.3 Dependability

Dependability is the extent to which the research findings can be extended to similar contexts. (Megheirkouni & Moir. 2023). The detailed description and transparency of the procedures in this study ensured that the findings could be replicated in other EFL kindergarten classrooms that implement game-based learning. Rigorous member checking enabled participants to review research findings and the collected data (Ahmed, 2024). In this study, English proficiency was described in relation to the general context of the research participants. This will enable future researchers, EFL teachers, and curriculum experts in Taiwan to benefit from and relate to the findings. The researcher provided a systematic and detailed account for each cycle of data collection. Data-rich documents that showed the planning, observations, focus group interviews, teacher questionnaire feedback were recorded and preserved. The detailed documentation of data collection procedures will allow readers to obtain an in-depth understanding of how findings were reached. For each action research cycle, the researcher collected data using consistent data collection and tools and procedures. Consistent data collection procedures ensured the reliability of data analysis.

### 1.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the trustworthiness element that ensures the quality of qualitative research through peer debriefing (Ahmed, 2024). This proposed study presents a comprehensive theoretical framework and a literature review to ensure that the interpretations and findings

are objective and reliable. The researcher kept records of data collected from observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires, and consistently reflected on the research data to minimize researcher bias. The findings of this research were derived from collected through each cycle of action research. Th The data collected for this study will be valuable to researchers in EFL, EFL teachers, learners seeking to acquire language skills, particularly English proficiency, and curriculum experts.

## 1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are central to rigorous educational research, ensuring the protection of participants' rights, dignity, privacy, and well-being while upholding the principles of academic integrity and responsible scholarship (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021). Prior to data collection, ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the University of South Africa (UNISA) Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Clearance Number: 2024/11/15/00000326/06/RB). In addition, formal permission to conduct the study was secured from the head teacher of the participating school.

Given that the study involved kindergarten learners, particular attention was paid to ethical safeguards associated with research involving minors. All research procedures, data collection instruments, and participant interactions were designed to be developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and sensitive to the educational context of young children. Parents or legal guardians were provided with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, and anticipated outcomes. Informed consent was obtained through written consent forms that clearly outlined the objectives of the research, the nature and extent of participation, potential risks and benefits, data management procedures, and participants' rights, including the right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without adverse consequences (McCombes & George, 2022).

Furthermore, assent was sought from the child participants in an appropriate manner to ensure that their willingness to participate was respected.
The principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and data protection were rigorously maintained throughout the research process. No personally identifiable information was recorded in

observation schedules, interview transcripts, field notes, or any other research documentation. Participants were assigned unique codes or pseudonyms to safeguard their identities. All research data were securely stored in password-protected electronic files and locked storage facilities accessible only to the researcher, in accordance with institutional ethical guidelines and data protection requirements.

The emotional, psychological, and social well-being of the learners was prioritised throughout the study. To minimise potential anxiety and promote authentic engagement, observations and focus group interviews were conducted within the learners' familiar English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom environment. The researcher adopted a non-intrusive, child-centered approach during data collection, ensuring interactions remained supportive and respectful. Continuous monitoring was conducted to identify signs of discomfort, distress, or fatigue, and participants were reminded of their right to discontinue participation at any time. These measures were implemented to ensure that the research process posed no foreseeable harm and that the best interests of the child remained paramount throughout the study. The study also upheld the principles of academic honesty and integrity by accurately citing and referencing all sources consulted. Findings were shared with the caregivers of participating learners before submission to academic institutions, thereby promoting transparency and accountability. The researcher acknowledges that interest in this study was informed by professional experience teaching English communication to kindergarten EFL learners in Taiwan, where an increase in parental interest in English language proficiency was observed. To minimise potential bias, the researcher maintained reflexivity, objectivity, and methodological rigour throughout the study.

## 1.10 LIMITATIONS

The proposed study was an Action research study that selected one class of EFL kindergarten learners; therefore, the results will not be generalisable to all EFL learners who are immersed in varying ages and contexts of learning. The action research was conducted by the learners' EFL teacher, who served as a teacher-researcher. Learners’ familiarity with the teacher-researcher may have influenced learners' behaviour and the research outcomes. Learner familiarity may also have influenced the researcher’s interpretation of the data. The scarce availability of digital screens may have been the cause for limited verbal interaction during the digital game session. Furthermore, observing learners’ verbal interactions over

three cycles did not provide sufficient time to assess the effects of game-based learning on English-speaking proficiency over a longer period.

## 1.11 DELIMITATIONS

The delimitation of this study includes the subliminal assumption that learners would be willing to participate in games and did not clearly account for individual learners' personality dispositions and interaction preferences. Furthermore, this study focuses on EFL kindergarten learners and excludes other EFL grades. Selected games were limited to board and digital games, excluding physical games and other forms of Taiwanese indigenous games. The effects of game-based resources on speaking proficiency and learners' verbal interaction were observed, excluding other English skills such as reading fluency, listening comprehension, and the ability to provide appropriate responses to questions.

## 1.12 CHAPTER DIVISION

This study consists of 5 chapters.

- **CHAPTER ONE: Orientation**

Chapter one presents the introduction, background, theoretical framework, definition of basic concepts, and related concepts. The problem statement, research aim, research methodology, including rationale and literature review, and research design. Finally, measures of trustworthiness and ethical consideration were presented.

- **CHAPTER TWO: The literature review and theoretical framework**

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and a literature review to provide a broader understanding of the topic.

- **CHAPTER THREE: Research design and methodology**

Chapter Three presents research design, including a discussion of the chosen research paradigm, approach, and type, as well as the research methods. This study is guided by a constructivist research paradigm and uses a qualitative research approach and a classroom action research (CAR) design. The chapter also discusses measures for trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

- **CHAPTER FOUR: Data analysis and interpretation**

This chapter outlines the steps taken in the data analysis. For instance, a critical discourse analysis was employed to analyse the data in this research, which was underpinned by a social constructivist learning theory. It also entails a discussion comparing the data collected in this study with information from relevant literature in similar contexts.

- **CHAPTER FIVE: Summary, conclusions, and recommendations**

The last chapter presents a summary of the study. Conclusions, future research recommendations, limitations of the study, and the final concluding remarks.

## 1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The discussion above presented the research proposal for the study entitled *IMPROVING SPEAKING PROFICIENCY OF KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TAIWAN UTILISING SPEAKING GAMES: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY.* The background and context of the study were presented. The chosen theoretical framework was also highlighted, and its relevance to the study was briefly discussed. The literature was reviewed in both local and international contexts. The research methodology section, which explained how the study would be conducted, was briefly presented. Data analysis procedures were also outlined. Lastly, this chapter outlined measures for trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and the intended division of the study's chapters.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a systematic thematic review of literature and examines the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The review provides a critical analysis of scholarly contributions related to the development of English-speaking proficiency among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) kindergarten learners, with particular emphasis on the use of games as a pedagogical resource. Furthermore, the chapter establishes the theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding the role of developmentally appropriate teaching resources in facilitating language acquisition and enhancing oral communication skills in early childhood education. To achieve this aim, the literature is organised around three interrelated themes: (a) the importance of developing competent English-speaking proficiency for EFL learners;
(b) challenges associated with the acquisition of speaking competence in EFL contexts; (c) challenges of employing speaking games as a teaching resource for EFL learners. (d) the importance of selecting effective teaching resources for language acquisition. (e) balancing traditional and game-based teaching resources and, lastly (f) the impact that games as a teaching resource have on improving English-speaking proficiency. By examining these themes, the chapter seeks to identify existing knowledge, highlight research gaps, and provide a conceptual basis for the current study.

The growing importance of English as a global language has intensified the demand for effective English language instruction across diverse educational contexts. In discussing the global status of English, Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023) draw on the influential model proposed by Kachru (1985), which categorises English users into three concentric groups based on the historical and sociolinguistic functions of the language. The first group, the Inner Circle, comprises native speakers of English from countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The second group, known as the Outer Circle, consists of individuals who use English as a second language in multilingual societies, such as India. The third group, the Expanding Circle, includes speakers who learn English as a foreign language in countries where English is not an official language but is widely taught for educational, professional, and international communication. Examples include countries in Asia, Brazil, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Poland, the Middle East, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, and Turkey (Kachru, 1985; Zafar & Kholkhoja, 2023). According to Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023), the substantial number of English

speakers worldwide, both second language and foreign-language, relative to native speakers, underscores the growing significance of English as a global means of communication. The authors argue that the widespread use of English has created strong incentives for individuals to acquire proficiency in the language to access educational opportunities, international networks, and participation in influential global economies, particularly those associated with English-speaking countries such as the United States of America. Consequently, the growing prominence of English in international communication, commerce, technology, and education has fueled global interest in English language learning and strengthened the demand for effective approaches to developing oral communication competence among EFL learners.

This trend is evident in various international contexts. For example, Zakirovich and Qizi (2024) observe that although English is classified as a foreign language in Uzbekistan, it has evolved into one of the most prominent subjects taught throughout the education system, from kindergarten to university level. This development reflects the increasing recognition of English proficiency as an essential skill for academic achievement, professional advancement, and global engagement. The growing emphasis on English-language instruction at an early age further underscores the importance of identifying effective pedagogical strategies and teaching resources to foster speaking proficiency among young EFL learners.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework establishes the conceptual boundaries of a research study and provides a structured basis for interpreting and analysing its findings (Sreekumar, 2023). As outlined in Chapter One, the theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism. In the sections below, I expand on the work presented in Chapter One.

According to Lev Vygotsky (1978), social interaction forms the foundational basis for cognitive development and knowledge construction. In this regard, Leeds-Hurwitz (2009) conceptualises learning as a fundamentally social process in which relationships among individuals serve as a mechanism for knowledge acquisition. Similarly, social constructivism holds that individuals construct knowledge through interaction with others within a specific cultural context (Devi, 2019). From this perspective, skills such as speaking a foreign language are developed through sustained engagement and meaningful interaction with others. Roth (2000) and Devi (2019)

further elaborate that knowledge initially develops at the social level before being internalised and expressed at the individual level. In other words, higher cognitive processes are first mediated through interpersonal interaction before becoming internal cognitive functions. Building on this foundation, one of the central assumptions of social constructivism is that reality is not an independent, objective entity but is constructed through social interaction within a particular context. Consequently, human understanding is shaped by participation in communities, social relationships, and collaborative engagement (Kim, 2001). Learners, therefore, develop their understanding of reality through continuous interaction and active participation with peers.

The second assumption of social constructivism concerns the development of insight, positing that cognitive growth does not occur in isolation but is facilitated by social interaction (Kukla, 2000). In this sense, learners are more likely to develop deeper understanding and acquire new skills when engaging collaboratively with others rather than learning independently (Shibina & Vijayalakshmi, 2022). The third assumption emphasises learning as an inherently social process, whereby knowledge construction is achieved through interaction, dialogue, and shared meaning-making.

Collectively, these assumptions highlight that social constructivism places contextualised social interaction at the Center of learning and cognitive development. In the context of language acquisition, this theoretical perspective is particularly relevant, as it underscores the importance of interaction in developing communicative competence. Consequently, social constructivist approaches have been widely applied in EFL classrooms to reduce speaking barriers and enhance learners' oral language production (Shibina & Vijayalakshmi, 2022).

Social constructivism emphasises learners' inherent capacity to construct knowledge through active collaboration with others (Devi, 2019). It recognises that learning is situated within cultural and social contexts, and that knowledge and skills are developed through participation in these contexts (Shibina & Vijayalakshmi, 2022).

From this perspective, cognitive development is not an individualised process but is mediated by interaction, communication, and shared experiences. Building on Vygotsky's theoretical perspective, Abdullayeva (2024) argues that effective learning should be experienced by learners as a collaborative, engaging, and enjoyable process. In this regard, integrating game-based instructional strategies, such as role-playing and multimedia games, supports the

creation of playful, developmentally appropriate learning environments. These approaches help to reduce overly formal or academic instruction, which may be less suitable for young learners, and instead encourage active participation and engagement. Devi (2019) further emphasises that learners' cognitive development is strongly influenced by their ability to collaborate and interact with peers within dynamic social settings. Through such interaction, learners can develop essential communicative competencies, particularly speaking skills, as they negotiate meaning and express ideas in real time. This highlights the role of collaboration as a key mechanism for facilitating observable language development in EFL contexts.

In addition, Shibina and Vijayalakshmi (2022) note a growing shift towards learner-centred pedagogical approaches in EFL classrooms, largely informed by social constructivist principles. These approaches prioritise collaborative learning experiences, which have been shown to enhance language acquisition by increasing learner engagement and communicative practice. Similarly, Abdullayeva (2024) supports the view that social constructivism provides an effective framework for young EFL learners, as it recognises the importance of creating natural, interactive, and play-based environments that promote meaningful language use. Scaffolding, within a social constructivist framework, refers to the support provided to learners by a more knowledgeable other to facilitate knowledge construction and skill acquisition (Devi, 2019). This support enables learners to engage in tasks that would otherwise be beyond their independent capabilities, thereby promoting gradual cognitive and linguistic development. Devi (2019) further explains scaffolding through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as introduced by Lev Vygotsky (1978).

The ZPD represents the developmental distance between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with guidance from a more knowledgeable peer or adult. In this sense, learning occurs most effectively when learners are supported in bridging this gap, allowing them to develop vocabulary and language skills that would not be attainable through independent effort alone. Within this process, the teacher assumes a facilitative role, guiding learners through structured support that enables them to progress towards higher levels of cognitive functioning and the internalisation of new knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Similarly, Shibina and Vijayalakshmi (2022) emphasise the importance of the ZPD in language learning by highlighting the role of appropriate mediating tools in the acquisition of new skills and concepts. These tools include the teacher as a facilitator, peer interaction, language input, and, in the context of the present study, instructional materials such as teaching games. In this

regard, Abdullayeva (2024) concurs, arguing that learners develop language proficiency more effectively when teachers provide structured linguistic input through interactive and engaging activities, including game-based learning, which functions as a form of scaffolding.

Devi (2019) also underscores Vygotsky's view that learners should be engaged with appropriately challenging tasks, supported by suitable scaffolding from teachers during the learning process. Over time, this support should be gradually reduced as learners develop greater independence and internalise the strategies required to complete tasks successfully. This gradual withdrawal of teacher assistance reflects the transition from external mediation to internal self-regulation, which is central to the scaffolding process (Devi, 2019). Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism is suitable for this study, as it embraces the idea that language development is facilitated through social interaction and collaborative learning within a learner's Zone of proximal development. Game-based teaching resources facilitate an engaging and active classroom learning experience for young learners.

## 2.3 CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

A contextual framework provides the background and setting within which a study is conducted, enabling the research phenomenon to be understood in relation to its broader educational, social, and linguistic environment. In the present study, the contextual framework situates EFL learners' speaking proficiency and the use of teaching resources within the wider English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Positioning the study within this broader framework facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing language acquisition and the development of oral communication among young EFL learners. Furthermore, contextualising the study within the existing body of EFL research enables the findings to be interpreted in relation to established knowledge, empirical evidence, and conclusions drawn from studies conducted in comparable educational settings. This approach strengthens the relevance, credibility, and transferability of the study's findings by linking them to broader scholarly discourse and contextual realities.

**The importance of developing competent English-speaking proficiency for EFL learners:**

The globalised nature of contemporary society necessitates interaction among individuals from diverse communities and cultures, with English serving as a widely recognised international language. Namaziandost et al. (2020) state that it is of paramount importance for individuals to attain an adequate level of competence in English communication. Language mastery encompasses the ability to effectively write, speak, listen, and read in the target language. Despite the increasing demand for English language proficiency driven by global labour markets, achieving competent speaking skills remains a significant challenge for both learners and English educators. Islam et al. (2022) reveal that the historical influence of colonisation by Western native English-speaking countries has contributed to the prominence of English as a cornerstone of career success. In Bangladesh, Islam et al. (2022) found that although English is the medium of instruction at the tertiary level, many students continue to experience difficulties with spoken English. This limitation negatively affects their career prospects, global competitiveness, and overall communicative competence. Similarly, Azlina and Saraswathy (2021) stated that graduates from Malaysian institutions, despite receiving instruction in English as a formal language of education, often lack proficiency in spoken English. Consequently, many are unable to meet the communication requirements necessary to secure employment in the international labour market.

**The role of English - speaking proficiency for EFL kindergarten learners**

The development of English-speaking proficiency at the kindergarten level has been widely recognised as a critical foundation for future academic and professional success. Purwanti (2024) validated the importance of fostering English-speaking competence among young learners during the kindergarten phase, emphasising that early language development contributes significantly to later achievement. The researcher noted that kindergarten learners acquire English proficiency more effectively when immersed in an English-rich classroom environment characterised by songs, daily communication, and game-based activities. Similarly, Qizi (2021) strongly supported the development of language skills in EFL learners from an early age. The researcher explained that young learners have relatively simple language needs and are not yet required to master complex vocabulary. As a result, language learning at the kindergarten level serves a practical, functional purpose, enabling learners to build a basic vocabulary foundation that supports future language development.

The growing emphasis on early English language learning is evident across different international contexts. According to Munoz (2019) and Yuan (2019), learning English at the kindergarten level has become increasingly prevalent among non-native English-speaking communities in Peru and Shanghai, where English proficiency is perceived as a competitive skill that can contribute to future success. In support of this view, Purwanti (2024) linked the development of English-speaking skills to enhanced cognitive abilities, including critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and increased self-confidence. More significantly, the researcher identified multicultural awareness and multilingual competence as key determinants of future academic and career success among young learners.

Likewise, an EFL kindergarten in Peru introduced English instruction at an early age based on the belief that proficiency in this globally recognised language is essential for achieving academic advancement and career opportunities in the future (Munoz, 2019).
Despite the growing body of research on early English language learning, there remains a significant lack of studies investigating the use of games to improve English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan. This gap emphasises the need for further research into effective game-based approaches to enhance young learners' speaking skills in the Taiwanese EFL context.

**Challenges associated with the acquisition of speaking competence in EFL contexts:**

The use of traditional and inflexible teaching resources in EFL classrooms has been widely criticised for its inability to develop high levels of English-speaking proficiency among learners. According to Namaziandost et al. (2020), autonomous learning systems and static instructional resources have not been effective in fostering the communicative competence required for proficient English-speaking performance. Similarly, a study conducted by Azlina and Saraswathy (2021) on the poor English-speaking proficiency levels of English second-language learners in Malaysia attributed learners limited oral communication skills to the predominance of teacher-centred instructional materials. Despite recognising the limitations of these resources, the researchers acknowledged that teachers often remain reliant on traditional materials, such as textbooks, due to institutional pressures to prepare learners for standardised assessments. As a result, the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language have frequently been approached as a rigid, methodical process rather than as an

interactive and communicative practice that requires meaningful language use (Namaziandost et al., 2020). This overreliance on conventional teaching approaches has sparked considerable debate among educational stakeholders about the factors hindering the development of English proficiency among EFL learners.

One issue that has received significant attention in the literature is the assumption that low levels of English proficiency are associated with the employment of non-native English-speaking teachers in regions such as China, Europe, and the Middle East (Abdullayeva, 2024). However, empirical evidence challenges this perspective. Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023) found no correlation between learners' English-speaking proficiency and the native or non-native status of their English teachers. Their findings suggest that factors other than the teacher's linguistic background may play a more influential role in determining learners' speaking outcomes. In contrast, Qizi (2021) emphasised the importance of professionally trained teachers in the instruction of young EFL learners. The researcher argued that specialised teacher training equips educators with the pedagogical knowledge and skills necessary to promote active language learning and meaningful learner engagement. Supporting this view, Abdullayeva (2024) highlighted the shortage of qualified EFL teachers in early childhood education and the negative consequences this has for the selection and implementation of age-appropriate teaching resources.

Furthermore, Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023) identified the uncritical use of traditional, non-communicative teaching materials as a major obstacle to developing learners' fluency and advanced English-speaking skills. Collectively, these studies suggest that the effectiveness of English language instruction is influenced less by teachers' native-speaker status and more by the quality of pedagogical practices, teacher training, and the appropriateness of instructional resources employed in the classroom.

English-speaking opportunity constrained by teaching resources implemented in EFL classrooms

The development of English-speaking proficiency largely depends on learners' opportunities to actively use the language in meaningful communicative contexts. Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023) argued that English-speaking proficiency is not biologically determined but rather acquired through continuous practice and interaction within learners' educational and social

environments. Despite this understanding, many EFL classrooms continue to prioritise knowledge about the English language over opportunities to use the language as a tool for communication, self-expression, and problem-solving. The challenge of creating sufficient speaking opportunities is particularly evident in early childhood EFL settings.

A study conducted by Munoz (2019) at an EFL kindergarten in Peru acknowledged that developing English-speaking proficiency among young learners remains a complex task for teachers. The researcher noted that effective speaking development ideally requires regular one-on-one interaction between teachers and learners to provide personalised language support and feedback. However, such individualised instruction is often difficult to implement in kindergarten classrooms, where teachers are responsible for multiple learners with diverse learning needs. Consequently, researchers have emphasised the need for teaching approaches that maximise learner participation while simultaneously addressing individual learning differences. For instance, Namaziandost et al. (2020) argued that effective language instruction should promote active engagement among all learners rather than relying on passive learning approaches. Similarly, Sinaga and Oktaviani (2020) found that encouraging learners to speak during English lessons remains one of the most challenging aspects of language teaching. This challenge is further compounded by learners' limited vocabulary knowledge, which Shibina and Vijayalakshmi (2022) identified as a major factor contributing to low speaking confidence and reluctance to communicate in English. The literature further suggests that the nature of instructional resources plays a significant role in either facilitating or constraining learners' speaking opportunities (Saputra, Septiani, Adriani, & Sundari, 2021).

Traditional teaching resources have often failed to capture learners' interests, connect with their real-life experiences, or encourage personal expression. As a result, these resources may restrict vocabulary development and limit learners' ability to participate meaningfully in English conversations. Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023) provided a critical perspective on instructional materials that emphasise grammatical accuracy at the expense of communicative competence. Moreover, the researchers argued that excessive attention to correcting grammatical errors can inhibit learners' willingness to speak and that fluency should be prioritised as a foundation for the gradual development of grammatical accuracy. They further contended that increased opportunities for meaningful communication contribute positively to both fluency and grammatical development.

Furthermore, Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023) observed that learners demonstrated higher levels of speaking engagement when instructional materials were enjoyable, interactive, and motivating. In this regard, games were identified as valuable pedagogical tools because they provide learners with opportunities to interact meaningfully through English while reducing the anxiety often associated with language learning. Supporting this view, Shibina and Vijayalakshmi (2022) linked young learners' inability to demonstrate advanced English proficiency to the continued use of outdated and conventional teaching resources in EFL classrooms. Collectively, these studies indicate that limited speaking opportunities in EFL classrooms are not solely a consequence of learner-related factors but are also influenced by the nature of instructional resources and pedagogical approaches. The findings suggest that communicative, engaging, and learner-centred resources, such as games, may play a critical role in increasing learners' participation and supporting the development of English-speaking proficiency.

Despite the pedagogical value of game-based learning in enhancing learners' oral language development, several challenges have been identified in its effective implementation within EFL contexts. Sari and Yusuf et al. (2020) highlighted that one of the most significant barriers to the successful use of game-based learning is inadequate teacher preparation, particularly in classroom management. This suggests that the effectiveness of speaking games depends closely on teachers' pedagogical competence and their ability to structure and manage interactive learning environments.

Building on this perspective, Purwanti (2024) emphasised that implementing game-based learning places considerable demands on EFL teachers to be creative, flexible, and resourceful in designing instructional materials. The researcher further noted that teachers are often required to compile and adapt available resources to develop suitable language-learning games. However, Purwanti (2024) concluded that a major constraint in this process is the limited access that teachers have to appropriate, well-developed instructional resources for fostering English-speaking skills. Similarly, Abdullayeva (2024) supported this view, arguing that many EFL teachers lack access to age-appropriate, engaging, and research-based resources designed to develop language proficiency in young learners. As a result, teachers are frequently compelled to rely on traditional instructional materials, which are often less effective in promoting communicative language development.

In addition to resource-related constraints, learner perceptions and classroom implementation practices also influence the effectiveness of game-based learning. In contrast to the interactive and engaging learning environment proposed by Purwanti (2024), Li (2024) found that kindergarten learners in China often perceived English learning as tedious and uninteresting. Although games were incorporated into classroom activities, they were largely teacher-directed, which significantly limited learner autonomy and active participation. According to learners' interview responses, English lessons were not found to be enjoyable or engaging due to the highly structured, teacher-centered classroom environment and the continued reliance on conventional teaching resources.

Collectively, these findings indicate that while speaking games have strong potential to enhance English-speaking proficiency, their effectiveness is constrained by multiple factors, including inadequate teacher preparation, limited access to appropriate resources, and the dominance of teacher-centered instructional practices. These challenges suggest that successful implementation of game-based learning requires not only suitable materials but also sufficient teacher training and a shift towards more learner-centered pedagogical approaches.

## 2.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF SELECTING EFFECTIVE TEACHING RESOURCES FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Traditional content-based teaching resources, which typically require learners to complete tasks in isolation, have been widely critiqued for their limited effectiveness in developing English-speaking proficiency. Abdullayeva (2024) argues that such resources, including worksheets and textbooks that demand higher levels of independent cognitive processing, may hinder language acquisition, particularly among young EFL learners whose developmental needs are not adequately considered. Moreover, these activity-based materials often restrict opportunities for collaborative interaction and oral communication, thereby limiting meaningful speaking practice in the classroom. In line with this perspective, Namaziandost et al. (2020) emphasise that the careful selection of teaching resources and pedagogical approaches is essential for effective second language acquisition. Similarly, Seraj and Habil (2021) describe traditional instructional resources as predominantly teacher-centered, prioritizing teacher-controlled instructional delivery. In such classroom environments, the teacher's voice

dominates the learning process, while learners tend to assume passive roles and engage minimally in communicative activities.

Empirical evidence further highlights the negative consequences of relying on inappropriate teaching materials in EFL contexts. For instance, Islam et al. (2022) identified the use of unsuitable instructional resources as one of the key barriers preventing university students in Bangladesh from developing competent English-speaking skills. The study further revealed that these materials often fail to provide learners with sufficient opportunities to practice speaking, thereby limiting their vocabulary development, fluency, and communicative confidence. Similarly, Abdullayeva (2024) concurs that traditional teaching resources are often academically rigid and insufficiently engaging, leading to limited learner motivation to interact in the target language. Such materials do not adequately support interactive learning experiences and therefore fail to encourage sustained speaking practice among EFL learners. Reinforcing this view, Rahmat (2020), in a study conducted with EFL learners in Malaysia, concluded that teachers should employ instructional resources that capture learners' interest and motivation, as this significantly increases learners' willingness to actively participate in English-speaking activities during lessons.

In contrast to traditional instructional materials, game-based resources have been widely recognised as dynamic and contextually meaningful tools for promoting English-speaking proficiency. Namaziandost et al. (2020) advocate for the use of interactive and dynamic learning resources that are relatable to learners' lived experiences and therefore more easily internalised. Such resources enable learners to engage more meaningfully with the target language by situating learning in familiar, engaging contexts. Furthermore, Namaziandost et al. (2020) emphasise that children develop speaking skills more effectively when they are given opportunities to practice the target language collaboratively, particularly through group-based activities that require them to solve shared problems.

In such learning environments, the primary focus shifts from the formal structure of the language to the communicative use of language as a tool for interaction, meaning making, and problem-solving. In this regard, Seraj and Habil (2021) argue that the target language should function as a medium for communication rather than the central focus of instruction, thereby encouraging learners to prioritise the expression of ideas over grammatical accuracy during

initial stages of learning.

Similarly, Shibina and Vijayalakshmi (2022) stress the importance of selecting appropriate instructional resources that actively promote language production among EFL learners. They argue that activity-centred classroom practices, supported by a facilitative teacher role, are particularly effective in fostering communicative competence and developing learners' speaking abilities. Within this framework, game-based learning provides structured opportunities for interaction, negotiation of meaning, and the use of meaningful language.

Supporting this perspective, Abdullayeva (2024) highlights the importance of incorporating age-appropriate, engaging teaching materials, such as various educational games, to create stimulating and enjoyable learning environments for young EFL learners. The researcher further notes that playful, interactive, and exploratory learning contexts enhance learners' motivation, increase engagement, and strengthen their commitment to language learning, thereby contributing positively to the development of speaking proficiency.

## 2.5 BALANCING TRADITIONAL AND GAME-BASED TEACHING RESOURCE

The effectiveness of teaching resources in EFL classrooms has increasingly been discussed in relation to the balance between traditional and interactive pedagogical approaches. Azlina and Saraswathy (2021) argue that the use of rigid, teacher-centred instructional resources has been largely ineffective in developing learners' soft skills, particularly in relation to interpersonal communication, self-expression, and the ability to articulate lived experiences. As a result, learners often demonstrate limited competence in using English fluently and meaningfully in authentic communicative contexts. Consequently, the researchers call on curriculum designers to critically review and revise their continued reliance on traditional materials, such as textbooks and worksheets, in EFL instruction. In support of this view, Abdullayeva (2024) emphasises the need to reform traditional teaching resources to ensure they provide more learner-centred and interactive learning experiences, particularly for young EFL learners.

The researcher further advocates integrating game-based activities aligned with learners' cognitive and developmental needs, arguing that such approaches enhance engagement and support language development more effectively than conventional instructional methods alone. However, contrasting perspectives suggest that traditional and communicative approaches need not be mutually exclusive. Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023), in a study conducted in

Uzbekistan, found that a blended approach combining traditional instructional methods with communicative and interactive strategies can enhance learners' ability to use English in authentic contexts. Their findings indicate that while traditional resources such as textbooks and worksheets remain widely used across Asian EFL contexts, their effectiveness is significantly enhanced when supplemented with communicative activities that encourage meaningful language use.

Furthermore, Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023) highlight that integrating communicative tasks into content-based instructional materials is essential for developing advanced English-speaking skills. They argue that an exclusive focus on written accuracy and grammatical correctness in worksheets should be balanced with opportunities for spoken practice, particularly through interactive and game-based learning activities. In this regard, combining traditional resources with game-based pedagogies provides a more comprehensive approach to language learning, enabling learners to develop both accuracy and fluency in English speaking.

Teaching resources play a pivotal role in shaping learner-centred practices and fostering opportunities for meaningful English-speaking development in EFL kindergarten classrooms. Purwanti (2024), in her investigation of kindergarten English language teaching, acknowledges the teacher's central role in creating a conducive learning environment. However, she further extends this perspective by emphasising that the teacher's role should be primarily facilitative rather than directive, supporting learners' active participation rather than dominating classroom interaction. In this regard, she highlights the importance of designing engaging and enjoyable learning experiences, arguing that young learners acquire English-speaking proficiency more effectively through play-based activities and game-supported learning.

Similarly, Rahmat (2020) found that instructional resources that capture learners' interest significantly increase their willingness to engage in English-speaking activities during lessons. This aligns with Namaziandost et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of dynamic and contextually meaningful learning resources that learners can relate to and internalise within their lived experiences. Such resources are particularly effective when they promote collaboration, as learners develop speaking skills more effectively through group-based interaction and shared problem-solving tasks. In these contexts, the focus shifts from language form to language use, where English functions as a tool for communication, interaction, and meaning-making. This learner-centred orientation is further supported by Li (2021), who notes that progressive EFL kindergarten settings in China reflect a policy shift aimed at reducing the

“schoolification” of early childhood education. These reforms prioritise play-based and socially interactive pedagogies that support holistic learner development. Li (2021) further argues that such approaches move beyond traditional, cognitively focused instruction by fostering deeper learning through social interaction and engagement. In line with this, group-based activities, such as circle-time discussions and game-based tasks, provide opportunities for sustained verbal interaction, thereby increasing learners’ speaking practice and communicative confidence (Purwanti, 2024). However, challenges remain in contexts where traditional instructional practices dominate. For example, research conducted on EFL learners in Indonesia identified limited opportunities for learners to actively engage in English-speaking during classroom instruction. This limitation was attributed to the continued reliance on rigid, worksheet- and textbook-based resources, which restrict verbal interaction and reduce opportunities for meaningful communicative practice.

Similarly, Azlina and Saraswathy (2021) argue that teacher-centred instructional resources are ineffective in developing learners’ soft skills, particularly interpersonal communication and self-expression. They further contend that such approaches limit learners’ ability to express ideas, share lived experiences, and develop fluency, thereby calling for a critical review of conventional resources such as textbooks and worksheets.

In contrast, Zafar and Kholkhoja (2023) provide evidence that a blended pedagogical approach combining traditional teaching methods with communicative and interactive strategies can enhance learners’ ability to use English meaningfully in authentic contexts. While acknowledging the continued prevalence of traditional resources in Asian EFL contexts, they argue that their effectiveness is significantly improved when integrated with communicative, learner-centred practices. Likewise, Li (2021) notes that although traditional pedagogies remain present in some contexts, there is an increasing shift towards child-centred, play-based curricula in EFL kindergarten education, particularly in China, where policy reforms emphasise holistic learner development. From this perspective, the evolution of EFL kindergarten pedagogy reflects a broader movement away from instruction focused primarily on form and controlled practice towards approaches that prioritise interaction, collaboration, and meaningful communication.

Munoz (2019) supports this view by highlighting that one of the key challenges in EFL kindergarten classrooms is the limited opportunity for individual speaking practice due to large class sizes. To address this, the researcher proposes using interactive group work, which

enables learners to engage in peer communication, exchange ideas, and provide feedback. Such learner-led interactions significantly increase speaking opportunities and promote active language use.

Overall, the literature suggests that teaching resources are a critical catalyst for promoting learner-centered learning in EFL kindergarten classrooms. When designed and implemented effectively, particularly through game-based and collaborative activities, these resources facilitate increased learner engagement, enhanced interaction, and improved opportunities for English-speaking development

## 2.6 THE IMPACT THAT GAMES AS A TEACHING RESOURCE HAVE ON IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING PROFICIENCY

Games, as interactive and engaging instructional resources, provide meaningful opportunities for learner participation and facilitate the natural acquisition of vocabulary, thereby contributing to the development of English-speaking proficiency. However, Zakirovich and Qizi (2024) caution that in some educational contexts, games are still narrowly perceived as tools for entertainment rather than as pedagogically purposeful learning resources. In contrast, a growing body of research demonstrates that game-based learning can significantly enhance language development by improving speaking proficiency and supporting immersive learning experiences (Li, 2021; Purwanti, 2024; Munoz, 2019; Sinaga & Oktaviani, 2020). The effectiveness of games in promoting speaking proficiency is closely linked to the creation of dynamic, interactive learning environments that prioritise communication and learner engagement. Namaziandost et al. (2020) emphasise that the development of English-speaking skills is fundamentally an interactive and co-constructed process, in which learners actively engage in meaning-making through social interaction. In this regard, games provide structured opportunities for such interaction by encouraging learners to use language collaboratively in contextually meaningful tasks.

From an affective perspective, Purwanti (2024) found that young EFL learners experience deeper learning and reduced anxiety when engaged in game-based activities. This is supported by Sari and Yusuf et al. (2020), who argue that learners' emotional states play a critical role in determining levels of engagement, comprehension, and oral participation. Similarly, Sinaga and Oktaviani (2020) reported that elementary EFL learners in Indonesia

exhibit higher motivation and willingness to speak English when learning activities are perceived as enjoyable and stimulating. In this context, games align with young learners' natural inclination towards play, thereby fostering confidence and spontaneous language use (Rahmani, 2020).

Empirical evidence further supports the effectiveness of games in promoting spontaneous oral communication. In a study conducted by Irkinovich (2022) in Uzbekistan, EFL elementary learners demonstrated increased willingness to speak English spontaneously during game-based activities. The researcher further highlighted that game-based learning can serve as an inclusive pedagogical approach, particularly for learners who are typically reserved or reluctant to participate in traditional classroom discussions, by providing a low-anxiety, non-threatening environment for communication.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of game-based learning is not without limitations. Islam et al. (2022) identify broader systemic factors, including teaching materials, curriculum design, and socio-economic conditions, as influential in shaping English-speaking outcomes among undergraduate learners in Bangladesh. Similarly, Azlina and Saraswathy (2021) argue that improving learners' speaking proficiency and preparing them for global competitiveness requires the use of appropriate, well-designed instructional resources that address existing communicative deficiencies. In addition, Sam (2024) emphasises that learners' intrinsic motivation is strongly influenced by the teaching strategies and learning materials implemented in EFL contexts. The researcher further asserts that curriculum developers must prioritise learner needs when designing English language programs, particularly for non-native speakers, in order to enhance learning effectiveness and engagement. In line with this, Sari and Yusuf et al. (2020) argue that instructional materials should stimulate learners' intrinsic motivation and encourage active and spontaneous participation in language learning.

Namaziandost et al. (2020) further note that dynamic teaching resources, such as games, enhance authentic learner participation by reducing the pressure associated with traditional, outcome-focused instruction. This allows learners to engage more freely in communication without the fear of making errors or being constrained by rigid instructional expectations. However, Sari and Yusuf et al. (2020) also found that game-based learning may present challenges when learners are exposed to unfamiliar or decontextualised vocabulary, which can

lead to confusion and disengagement. The researchers therefore emphasise the crucial mediating role of the teacher in scaffolding understanding and sustaining learner engagement during such activities.

Despite these challenges, Zakirovich and Qizi (2024) argue that integrating game-based learning with traditional instructional resources can enhance overall learning effectiveness by creating a more inclusive pedagogical approach that accommodates diverse learner needs. Similarly, Rahmani (2020) concludes that game-based learning transforms learners from passive recipients of knowledge into active participants who take greater responsibility for their own learning. This heightened engagement ultimately increases speaking opportunities and supports the development of more appropriate and accurate vocabulary use in English communication.

The section below will further discuss the types of games implemented in similar EFL contexts, namely role-playing, video games, interactive APP games, and board games.

**Role-playing**

Role-playing games have the potential to provide enriched learning experiences for young EFL learners. Zakirovich and Qizi (2024) claimed that role-playing games provided learners with more opportunities to communicate in English by using vocabulary and expressions from authentic contexts. He also observed that learners found mimicking characters entertaining. Hue and Lan (2024) were consistent with Zakirovich and Qizi (2024), clearly asserting that role-playing games positively influenced learners' speaking proficiency. The author extended the study's findings to supportively argue that role-playing games improve pronunciation and that learners can receive instant feedback, facilitate immediate teacher support and speaking practice.

**Video games**

Winaldo and Oktaviani (2022) suggested that video games had a significant impact on language acquisition, despite the learner's limited vocabulary use when engaging with video games as an EFL teaching resource. The researchers also asserted that, in addition to restricting authentic and vast vocabulary, video games utilize visuals. To address the challenge of restricted vocabulary, Winaldo and Oktaviani (2022) and Soyoof and McLay (2019) both found that learners were eager and proactive in acquiring new vocabulary and practicing speaking to compete successfully.

### Interactive APP games

Interactive APPS are dynamic, innovative teaching resources that engage learners and support higher language development and speaking proficiency. Additionally, interactive apps utilised in EFL classrooms aim to facilitate language learning and improve speaking proficiency amongst EFL learners. Moreover, interactive apps have been observed to be useful in meeting the varying learning needs of learners at different speaking proficiency levels (Hue & Lan, 2024).

### Board games

Yuan (2019) explored the effectiveness of implementing picture books in EFL kindergarten classrooms in Shanghai, China. She found that, due to their interactive and verbally engaging nature, picture books expanded learners' vocabulary and their ability to learn new concepts effectively.

## 2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented a thematic review of the literature, beginning with an overview of the theoretical and contextual frameworks underpinning the study. The review focused on key issues related to the development of English-speaking proficiency in EFL contexts and the role of teaching resources in supporting or constraining this development. The discussion was structured around the importance of English-speaking competence for EFL learners, the challenges of acquiring speaking skills, the effectiveness of different teaching resources in language learning, and the impact of games as instructional tools on enhancing speaking proficiency. Overall, the literature highlighted both the limitations of traditional teaching resources and the potential benefits of game-based learning in promoting learner engagement, interaction, and communicative competence, thereby establishing a clear rationale for the present study's focus.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research design and methodological approach adopted to investigate the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources in enhancing the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan. The study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm and employs a qualitative research approach to generate in-depth insights into how instructional resources influence oral language development in classroom settings. A classroom action research design was implemented to examine learners' verbal interaction, speaking opportunities, and the extent of communicative control facilitated by game-based teaching resources. The cyclical and iterative nature of this approach, comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection, enabled the collection of context-specific, real-time data that was directly responsive to classroom practice.

Data was collected through participant observation, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires to ensure methodological triangulation and enhance the trustworthiness of the findings. The collected data were subsequently analysed using critical discourse analysis to examine patterns of language use, interactional control, and speaking dominance within game-based learning activities. The chapter concludes by addressing issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations, and by providing a summary of how the chosen research design and methods were applied to address the research questions

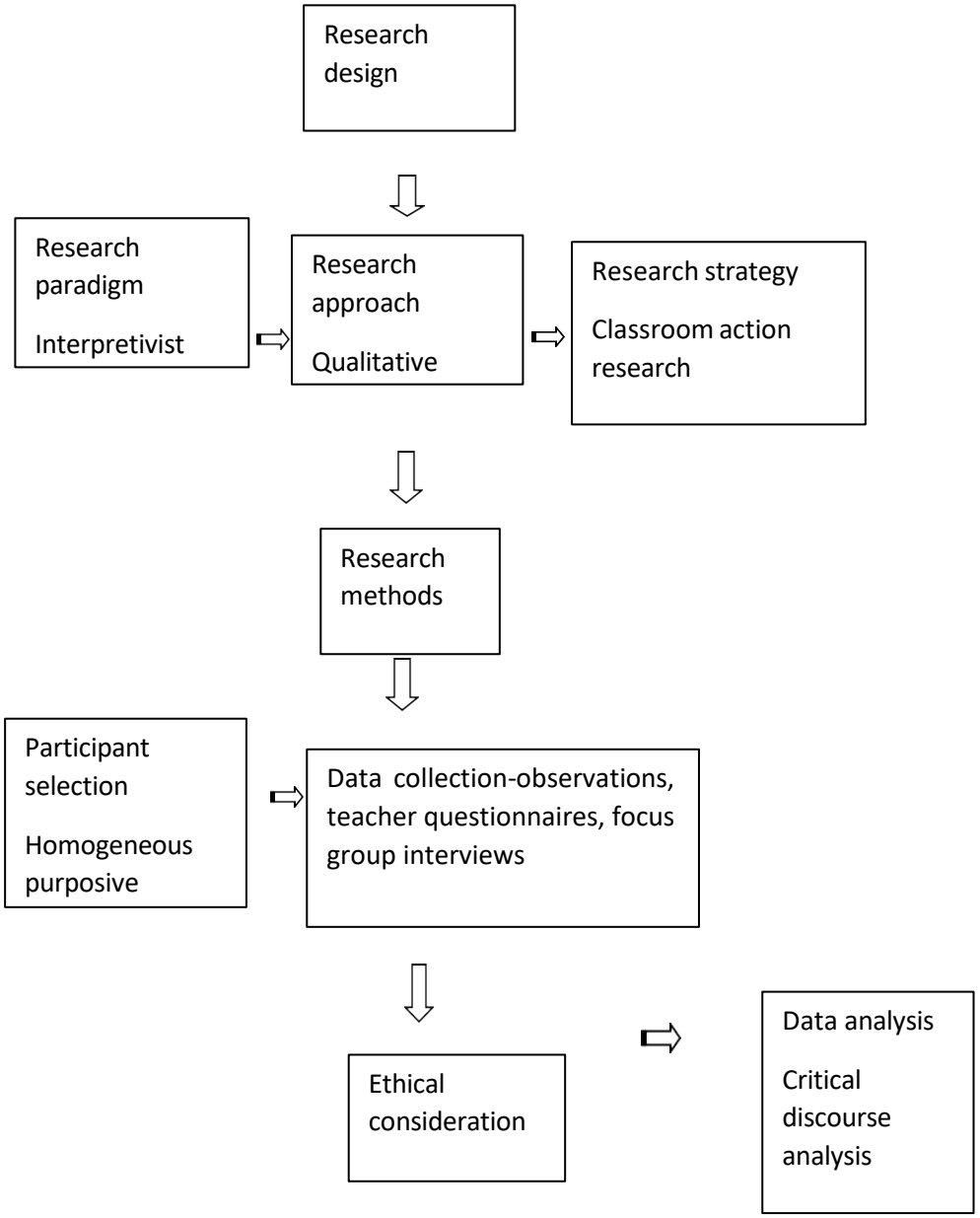



**Figure 3.1 shows the grammatical overview of Chapter 3 – Research methodology chapter**

## 3.2 RATIONALE FOR EMPIRICAL ENQUIRY

The rationale for adopting an empirical enquiry was to obtain in-depth, contextually grounded insight into the effectiveness of games in enhancing English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners. In contrast to purely desk-based research, empirical investigation enables the collection of first-hand data that captures the complexity and dynamism of classroom interaction, particularly learners' verbal engagement during game-based learning activities (Koning, Kramer et al., 2024).

Unlike secondary sources, empirical enquiry allowed the researcher to directly observe classroom practices and conduct focus group interviews within the learners' natural learning environment. This form of contextual immersion provided rich, authentic data that enhanced the credibility and depth of the findings. Furthermore, administering teacher questionnaires enabled the researcher to capture educators' professional perspectives, experiences, and evaluations regarding the selection and effectiveness of teaching resources in a specific EFL kindergarten context. Such real-time, context-specific insights are typically not accessible through secondary data sources.

Empirical enquiry was therefore essential to this action research study, as it facilitated the generation of practical, practice-based insights and actionable recommendations (Nguyen, 2025). In addition, it provided education stakeholders with evidence-based findings on the role of game-based teaching resources in promoting English-speaking development within EFL kindergarten classrooms (Paparini, Green et al., 2020).

## 3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the overall strategic framework that guides the processes of data collection, measurement, and analysis within a study (Bhandari, 2025). It provides a structured methodological blueprint that ensures coherence, systematic inquiry, and validity in addressing the research questions (Jain, 2023). A well-defined research design is therefore essential for aligning the research purpose, methodological choices, and data interpretation. In this study, Classroom Action Research (CAR) was adopted as the research design to investigate the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources in improving the English-speaking proficiency of young EFL learners.

Classroom Action Research is a systematic, reflective, and improvement-oriented research design that enables teachers to investigate and enhance their own classroom practices while simultaneously improving learner outcomes (Kazu & Kuvvetli, 2024). CAR is characterised by cyclical processes of problem identification, planning, action, observation, and reflection, which are implemented within authentic educational settings to address context-specific challenges. According to Kazu and Kuvvetli (2024), CAR is inherently learner-centred and focuses on generating practical solutions to educational problems through continuous inquiry and reflection. In this study, CAR was implemented in an EFL kindergarten classroom to examine how integrating game-based teaching resources could enhance learners' opportunities for verbal interaction and support the development of English-speaking proficiency.

One of the primary strengths of Classroom Action Research is its iterative nature. Kemmis et al. (2014) emphasize that action research operates through recurring cycles that enable researchers to refine interventions based on evidence generated during previous cycles. This cyclical process allows for the progressive improvement of teaching practices while generating rich and trustworthy data. Secondly, CAR positions teachers as active participants in the research process, enabling them to draw upon their professional knowledge and classroom experiences to interpret findings and implement meaningful changes. Burns (2009) argues that teacher involvement in action research promotes professional growth and facilitates the development of contextually relevant pedagogical practices. Thirdly, CAR focuses on naturally occurring classroom interactions, making it particularly well-suited to investigating teaching and learning processes in authentic educational environments. Mertler (2024) notes that action research generates practical knowledge that is directly applicable to classroom improvement because it is grounded in everyday educational practice. Finally, the reflective component of CAR encourages ongoing evaluation of teaching strategies and learner responses, thereby supporting continuous professional development and instructional refinement.

Burns (2009) further contends that action research is particularly valuable in language education because it enables teachers to systematically investigate instructional innovations and evaluate their impact on language learning outcomes. Similarly, Stringer & Aragón (2020) maintain that action research empowers practitioners to address educational challenges collaboratively and generate locally relevant knowledge to inform future practice. These

perspectives reinforce the suitability of CAR for examining the role of game-based teaching resources in promoting English-speaking proficiency among young EFL learners.

Despite its strengths, Classroom Action Research presents several limitations. The dual role of the teacher as both practitioner and researcher may introduce subjectivity and increase the potential for researcher bias during data collection and interpretation. Additionally, because CAR is conducted within a specific classroom context, the findings may have limited generalisability beyond the study setting. Mertler (2024) acknowledges that action research prioritises contextual relevance over broad generalisation, as its primary purpose is to improve practice within a particular educational environment. Furthermore, the pre-existing teacher–learner relationship may influence participant behaviour and responses, potentially affecting the authenticity of the data collected.

In this study, Classroom Action Research was employed to determine the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources in improving the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners. The researcher assumed the dual role of teacher and researcher and implemented three iterative cycles consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Through these cycles, the study sought to generate contextually grounded insights into how game-based learning influences learners' verbal interaction, speaking opportunities, and overall English-speaking proficiency within the EFL kindergarten classroom.

### 3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm refers to the set of philosophical assumptions, beliefs, and interpretive frameworks that guide a researcher's understanding of reality and the processes through which knowledge is generated (Rahman, 2023). These underlying assumptions influence methodological choices, data interpretation, and the overall construction of meaning within a study.

This study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm to examine the extent to which games as a teaching resource enhance English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners. The interpretivist paradigm was considered appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth understanding of participants' interactions, language use, and meaning-making processes within their social and educational context (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). In this regard, learning is viewed not as an objective phenomenon, but as a socially constructed process shaped through interaction, experience, and interpretation.

Within this paradigm, games as pedagogical tools create an interactive, socially engaging

learning environment that aligns with the interpretivist view of reality as subjective and context-dependent. Learners construct meaning through participation, collaboration, and shared experiences, thereby generating multiple perspectives of the same learning activity. This epistemological stance is particularly suitable for qualitative methods such as participant observation and focus group interviews, which were employed in this study to capture rich, contextually embedded data on learners' oral language development (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022).

Interpretivism further emphasises the significance of context in shaping human behaviour and social interaction (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). Accordingly, this study placed strong emphasis on the learning environment and the role of learner participation in facilitating English-speaking development through game-based activities. By focusing on context-specific interactions, the study generated detailed insights into how games influenced communication, engagement, and language use among young learners.

In addition, interpretivism acknowledges that meaning is derived from individuals lived experiences. In the context of this study, learners perceived games as enjoyable and motivating activities that enhanced their willingness to participate verbally in English. As York et al. (2019) note, games inherently promote enjoyment and engagement, which in turn support active participation and meaningful language use. This reinforces the argument that emotional and experiential factors play a critical role in second language acquisition, particularly among young learners.

Grounding game-based learning within an interpretivist paradigm, therefore, enabled a holistic understanding of language development, where cognitive, social, and affective dimensions are considered collectively. This approach also highlights the importance of learners' cultural backgrounds and contextual realities in shaping language-learning outcomes. According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020), interpretivism enables researchers to explore complex human phenomena by examining how individuals construct meaning within specific sociocultural contexts.

In this study, the researcher's immersion in the classroom environment further supported a contextual understanding of learners' linguistic experiences, particularly regarding variations between American English and Taiwanese English usage. For instance, differences in vocabulary, such as "subway station" (American English) and "MRT station" (commonly used in Taiwan), illustrate how the meaning of language is shaped by cultural and contextual factors. In this sense, the researcher also functioned as a cultural mediator, assisting learners

in navigating between different linguistic forms and enhancing their understanding of alternative expressions. This role contributed to richer learner engagement and supported deeper comprehension of language variation in authentic contexts.

Furthermore, the specific focus on EFL kindergarten classrooms in Taiwan aligns with the interpretivist emphasis on context-bound inquiry (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This allowed for an in-depth exploration of the development of speaking proficiency within a clearly defined educational and cultural setting. Focus group interviews, guided by interpretivist principles, enabled the collection of multiple perspectives regarding learners' experiences with game-based learning. This ensured that diverse subjective interpretations of classroom interaction were captured and analysed.

Within this paradigm, the researcher assumes a facilitative role rather than a detached position. As Pervin and Mokhtar (2022) argue, interpretivist research requires the researcher to develop empathetic and supportive relationships with participants to access authentic meanings and experiences. This facilitative role was particularly important given the age of the participants, as young learners often require guided support in managing behaviour, emotions, and interpersonal communication during learning activities (Bonache & Festing, 2020). A further key principle of interpretivism is the centrality of language in constructing and negotiating meaning within social environments (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). In this study, this principle was reflected in the way game-based teaching resources facilitated increased speaking opportunities while reducing teacher-dominated talk time, thereby promoting learner-centred communication.

Despite its strengths, the interpretivist paradigm also presents certain limitations. The subjective nature of interpretation introduces the potential for researcher bias, which may influence data analysis and the construction of findings. In addition, the context-specific nature of interpretivist research limits the generalisability of results to other educational settings. The findings of this study are therefore best understood as contextually bound insights rather than universally applicable conclusions.

Nevertheless, the interpretivist paradigm remains highly suitable for this study, as it enables a deep, nuanced exploration of how game-based teaching resources influence English-speaking development within a specific EFL kindergarten context in Taiwan. It also aligns effectively with the study's focus on learner interaction, meaning-making, and socially situated language learning.

## 3.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to investigate the role of game-based teaching resources in improving the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan. Qualitative research is characterised by the collection and analysis of non-numerical data through methods such as observations, interviews, and document analysis to develop an in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena (Shava & Nkengbeza, 2019). The authors further assert that qualitative research is particularly valuable for exploring human interactions and the meanings individuals attach to their experiences within specific contexts. Similarly, Islam and Aldaihani (2022) argue that qualitative research is well-suited to examining the relationships among people, activities, and tools, particularly when the objective is to understand how and why particular phenomena occur. Aspers and Corte (2021) further describe qualitative research as an iterative and cyclical process in which emerging insights continuously inform subsequent stages of inquiry, thereby facilitating a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The qualitative approach was considered appropriate for this study because the development of English proficiency among twelve young EFL learners is a socially situated, context-dependent process. The study sought to explore how a group of 12 learners interacted with game-based teaching resources, how these interactions shaped opportunities for verbal communication, and how learners experienced language learning in collaborative classroom environments. Qualitative inquiry enabled the researcher to capture the richness and complexity of learners' verbal interactions, engagement patterns, and behavioural responses during game-based learning activities. Through direct classroom observations, the researcher documented learners' spontaneous use of English, participation in oral exchanges, and emerging communication skills in real time. These naturally occurring interactions provided valuable insights into the extent to which game-based teaching resources promoted speaking opportunities and facilitated language development.

A further strength of the qualitative approach was its ability to explore learners' experiences, motivations, and challenges in learning English through games. By focusing on participants' perspectives and classroom experiences, the study generated a nuanced understanding of how game-based learning influenced learner engagement, confidence, and willingness to

communicate in English. The approach also enabled the researcher to examine how games altered classroom dynamics by increasing learner participation and reducing teacher dominance during language-learning activities. Consequently, qualitative research provided a suitable framework for evaluating the educational value of game-based teaching resources and their contribution to creating meaningful opportunities for oral language practice.

Moreover, qualitative research was particularly relevant given the limited context-specific research on the use of games to improve English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan. As noted by Islam and Aldaihani (2022), qualitative inquiry is especially useful in contexts where knowledge gaps exist and where a detailed exploration of participants' experiences is required. By investigating learners' interactions and speaking opportunities in game-based learning environments, this study sought to provide contextually grounded insights into effective strategies for supporting the development of English-speaking proficiency among young EFL learners. The qualitative approach, therefore, provided the depth, flexibility, and contextual sensitivity necessary to address the study's research questions and objectives.

## 3.6 RESEARCH STRATEGY

A research strategy refers to a systematic plan that guides the overall research process and provides a framework for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data in a manner that addresses the research problem effectively (Saunders, et al., 2003). It encompasses the procedures and techniques researchers use to generate credible, contextually relevant findings. This study employed a classroom action research strategy consisting of four stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Three action research cycles were implemented to observe the speaking interactions and opportunities of 12 learners and to improve speaking proficiency during game-based learning.

## 3.7 PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Research methods refer to the systematic techniques, strategies, and procedures that a researcher uses to collect, analyse, and interpret data to address research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this section, the population from which the researcher selected participants and the sampling methods are discussed.

A population refers to the entire group of individuals about whom a researcher intends to draw conclusions, while a sample is a smaller subset of that population that shares relevant

characteristics and is selected for investigation (Bhandari, 2022). The population group for this study consisted of 35 kindergarten learners from different age groups and years of experience at an EFL kindergarten. Participant selection involves identifying individuals whose characteristics are relevant to the purpose of the study and who can provide meaningful data to address the research questions (Willie, 2024).

For this study, the researcher employed a homogeneous sampling method to select 12 EFL kindergarten learners as participants. Homogeneous sampling is a purposive sampling technique in which participants are selected based on shared characteristics deemed significant for addressing the research question. This sampling strategy allows researchers to obtain rich, detailed, and context-specific information from participants who possess similar attributes relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Campbell et al., 2020). In this study, homogeneous sampling ensured that data were generated from twelve EFL kindergarten learners with similar language backgrounds, age ranges, years of kindergarten attendance, and English proficiency levels. All learner participants demonstrated comparable English-speaking proficiency and had similar experiences to those of EFL kindergarten learners, with Chinese as the primary language spoken outside the classroom.

Selecting 12 kindergarten learners with comparable language backgrounds, proficiency levels, ages, and EFL experience in kindergarten enhanced the study's trustworthiness by reducing the influence of extraneous variables on the findings. Homogeneous sampling is particularly valuable in qualitative research because it enables the researcher to focus on a specific subgroup and generate in-depth insights into participants' shared experiences (Gill, 2020). The twelve learners who participated in the study provided rich and detailed insights into how game-based teaching resources contribute to the development of speaking proficiency among young EFL learners. Furthermore, purposive sampling strategies have been found to strengthen methodological rigor when participant characteristics closely align with the study's aims and objectives (Campbell et al., 2020). However, a limitation of homogeneous sampling is that findings are restricted to a specific group of participants and cannot be generalized to other populations. Despite this limitation, homogeneous sampling enabled the collection of in-depth, context-specific data on the implementation of game-based teaching resources in EFL kindergarten classrooms and their influence on learners’ speaking development.

## 3.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the systematic process of gathering information from various sources to answer research questions and achieve a study's objectives. The data collection process involved determining the type of data required, selecting appropriate methods for obtaining the data, and ensuring that the collected information adequately addresses the research problem (Hassan, 2022). To generate comprehensive and credible data, this study employed three data collection methods: participant observation, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires. The use of multiple data collection methods facilitated methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings (Fusch et al., 2018).

### 3.8.1 Participant observations

Observations involve the systematic collection of qualitative data through the direct examination of behaviours, interactions, and events within a natural setting. This method enables researchers to obtain firsthand information about participants' actions and responses as they occur within the research context (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In this study, participant observation required the researcher to immerse themselves in the classroom environment to observe how game-based teaching resources encouraged learners to engage in verbal interaction with their peers. Participant observations enabled the researcher to gain in-depth insights into learners' speaking behaviours, levels of engagement, and responses to game-based activities in a natural and relatively unobtrusive manner. As this study adopted a classroom action research approach informed by social constructivist principles, the researcher assumed the dual role of teacher-researcher. Social constructivist theory emphasises the importance of social interaction and guided participation in learning, with the teacher serving as a facilitator who supports learners' cognitive and linguistic development (Vygotsky, 1978).

During observations, attention was given to the extent to which classroom discourse, speaking opportunities, and language use were mediated by the teacher and the game-based activities. Data was accurately transcribed using descriptive words on the observation checklist form. Notes of what took place during observations were written under each

category. The duration of the observations was 30 – 35 minutes for each cycle. These interactions were analysed through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), guided by Fairclough's framework (Fairclough, 1989), to examine issues of participation, control, and opportunities for language production within the classroom setting. The teacher-researcher's dual role was clearly defined to minimise disruption to learners' authentic and spontaneous interactions.

An observation form was used to systematically record field notes relating to learners' language use, and levels of engagement during game-based activities. Learners' language use was observed on a spectrum that ranged from 'regular use', engaged' and' low engagement'. Learners' language used observed learners use of English to respond and interact with other participants during game-based learning. Learners who demonstrated a high level of language use were regarded as highly engaged. Learners who did not use English regularly to verbally communicate with other participants were indicated as low engaged learners on the observation checklist form. Learners speaking engagement was classified on a range of 'very engaged', fairly engaged' and 'low engagement' on the observation checklist form. Learners who were observed to demonstrate active verbal interaction and spontaneous verbal responses were regarded as 'very engaged' on the observation checklist form. Learners who demonstrated moderate verbal participation with some dis-engagements were grouped as 'fairly engaged'. Very low interest and engagement, and highly distracted learners who did not verbally respond to English-language prompts, were recorded as 'low engagement' on the observation checklist form. Participant observations provided valuable firsthand insights into the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources in promoting verbal interaction, increasing speaking opportunities, and supporting the development of speaking proficiency.

Furthermore, observations generated contextual data on the social interactions facilitated by game-based learning, which complemented and strengthened the findings from the focus group interviews. Although participant observation can be time-consuming because it requires prolonged engagement, systematic recording, and detailed analysis, it provides rich and contextualised data that may not be obtained through other methods (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

### 3.8.2 Focus group interviews

The fundamental purpose of focus group interviews is to explore social issues or phenomena

by encouraging participants to express their views, experiences, and perceptions through verbal interaction (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). Focus group interviews are particularly useful in qualitative research because participant interaction can generate richer data and deeper insights into shared experiences (Nyumba et al., 2018).

In this study, learners were interviewed using a series of semi-structured questions for 20 minutes per cycle. Although broad questions were prepared before the investigation, the interviews remained flexible, allowing the researcher to adapt follow-up questions according to participants' responses. The data collection instrument used during focus group interviews was designed to help the researcher ensure that questions were research-appropriate and relatable to young learners. The instrument guided the researcher in making a role distinction between a teacher and a researcher. This approach enabled learners to communicate their experiences naturally and reduced restrictions associated with highly structured questioning. Focus group sessions began with setting the scene for learners before they participated in the game-based activities. Learners engaged in circle time discussions for five minutes, which helped create a familiar and non-intimidating environment, as these discussions were part of their normal classroom routine. Following participation in the games, learners were encouraged to reflect on their experiences and discuss aspects of the activities that they enjoyed or found challenging. This reflective process enabled learners to evaluate and articulate their experiences of game-based learning.

Bhakhsh (2025) confirmed that reflection on subjective experiences is a valuable feature of Critical Discourse Analysis because it provides insight into how individuals construct meaning from their experiences. The ways in which learners internalised and described the learning process generated useful and relevant data regarding their perceptions of game-based learning and its contribution to English-speaking development.

The main question was directed at the learners, while subsequent questions emerged from participants' responses. The use of unstructured interview questions reduced the influence of researcher assumptions and enabled learners to engage in spontaneous, authentic, and meaningful discussion. Focus group interviews were useful in examining learners' verbal interaction, confidence levels, and perceived development of English-speaking skills. Finally, the closing phase acknowledged the learners' efforts in attempting to communicate in English during game-based learning activities. Interview responses were recorded and transcribed to ensure accurate representation of participants' perspectives and to facilitate rigorous data analysis (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

### 3.8.4 Teacher questionnaires

A teacher questionnaire is a data-collection instrument used to gather information on teachers' experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and practices within a specific educational context (Taherdoost, 2022). Teacher questionnaires are particularly useful because they enable researchers to collect data from participants in a structured, efficient manner while also allowing participants to express their views on educational practices and challenges (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Furthermore, teacher questionnaires provided an additional source of evidence that complemented the learner observations and focus group interviews, thereby strengthening the study's trustworthiness through methodological triangulation (Fusch et al., 2018).

This study utilised teacher questionnaires to understand the resources EFL kindergarten teachers use to develop learners' English-speaking proficiency. Furthermore, the questionnaires were used to explore teachers' experiences, perceptions, and challenges associated with implementing teaching resources, particularly game-based learning activities.

Teachers completed the researcher-provided questionnaire, which included both open- and closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions enabled participants to provide detailed descriptions of their experiences and perceptions of the effectiveness of teaching resources for developing English-speaking skills. These responses generated rich qualitative data concerning teachers' professional experiences and instructional practices. The closed-ended questions provided specific information that helped the researcher identify patterns and improve the accuracy of data interpretation. Multiple-choice questions in the teacher questionnaire data collection instruments provided further insight into EFL kindergarten experiences with teaching resources aimed at improving learners' speaking proficiency and were used to support the qualitative data. The combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions enhanced the comprehensiveness of the data collected by allowing both descriptive and explanatory information to emerge

## 3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is a systematic process of organizing, reducing, interpreting, and transforming raw data into meaningful findings that address the research questions.

The process involves collecting information, identifying and removing irrelevant or inconsistent information, categorising data into meaningful units, and developing themes that provide insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In qualitative research, data analysis entails interpreting, categorising, and making sense of participants' experiences and perspectives to develop a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon (Islam & Aldaihani, 2022). This study employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary analytical framework. Critical Discourse Analysis examines the relationship between language, power, and social practices, and seeks to reveal how discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures and ideologies (Wodak & Meyer, 2015). Fairclough (2019) developed a framework that conceptualises discourse through interconnected dimensions that explain how language influences power relations and vice versa. In this study, CDA was used to investigate whether games as a teaching resource increased learners' opportunities to speak English and contributed to the development of speaking proficiency.

Guided by the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher sought to understand how game-based learning influenced classroom discourse, learner participation, and speaking opportunities. Particular attention was given to whether games positioned the teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than the dominant source of classroom interaction. The analysis focused on how game-based teaching resources reduced teacher-centred instruction and increased learner autonomy, verbal interaction, and opportunities for authentic language use.

Qualitative research inherently generates large volumes of rich and detailed data that must be systematically organised, condensed, and interpreted to identify meaningful patterns and themes (Davidson, et al., 2019). Within this classroom action research study, data generated from participant observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires were analysed using Fairclough's (2019) Critical Discourse Analysis framework and inductive thematic analysis procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The integration of these approaches enabled the researcher to examine both the linguistic features of discourse and the broader social meanings embedded within participants' interactions.

Fairclough's framework consists of the following phases:

- Textual analysis
- Discursive practice analysis
- Social practice analysis

Applying these phases required the researcher to systematically transcribe observation notes, focus group interview responses, and teacher questionnaire responses. The data were subsequently coded, categorised, and repeatedly examined to identify recurring patterns and themes. Findings were then interpreted to determine the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources in improving English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners.

Data analysis was conducted across three Classroom Action Research cycles. The iterative nature of action research allowed insights gained during one cycle to inform subsequent cycles, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness, credibility, and depth of the findings (Stringer & Aragón, 2020).

### 3.9.1 Textual analysis

Textual analysis focuses on the linguistic features present within spoken or written discourse. During participant observations, the researcher examined how the twelve EFL kindergarten learners engaged with language during game-based learning activities. Attention was given to vocabulary use, grammatical structures, sentence formation, participation levels, and communicative initiative (Alasiri, 2024).

Descriptive data generated during classroom observations and focus group interviews were systematically recorded and analysed. The researcher, as a teacher and participant in this study, was aware of and kept her role in check to avoid exerting her power unnecessarily and affecting learner participation and communication. Textual analysis enabled the researcher to determine whether game-based teaching resources facilitated meaningful learner interaction beyond teacher-directed instruction. Through the examination of language patterns, learner contributions, and communicative behaviours, the researcher gained insight into the extent to which games promoted speaking proficiency and active language use.

### 3.9.2 Discursive practice analysis

Discursive practice analysis examines how discourse is produced, interpreted, and distributed within a specific social context. In this study, discursive practice analysis focused on how learners produced and negotiated meaning during game-based learning activities. The analysis considered learners' shared understanding, role negotiation, participation patterns, attitudes towards communication, and opportunities for verbal interaction (Alasiri, 2024). This phase examined how language functioned within the

collaborative learning environment created through games. Particular attention was given to whether game-based activities increased speaking opportunities for all learners and encouraged more equitable participation. Patterns relating to learner-to-learner interaction, learner autonomy, and verbal engagement were identified and analysed.

The teacher's contribution to classroom discourse was also examined. Instances where the teacher facilitated interaction, encouraged participation, and scaffolded communication were classified as facilitative. Conversely, interactions that limited learner participation or reinforced teacher dominance were classified as dominant. This analysis provided insight into how game-based learning influenced classroom discourse and participation structures.

### 3.9.3 Social practice analysis

Social practice analysis examines the broader social, cultural, and ideological meanings embedded within discourse. This phase was used to determine how games as a teaching resource influenced learners' use of English within broader social contexts and how language practices reflected underlying power relations and educational ideologies (Burhanudin, Sumarlam & Rakhmawati, 2021).

The researcher critically examined teacher-learner verbal power relations, twelve participant learner-learner interaction patterns, the capacity of games to facilitate communication, and the educational assumptions that games reinforce or challenge. Particular attention was given to how participation in games influenced learners' confidence, willingness to communicate, and ability to transfer newly acquired language skills beyond the classroom environment.

Furthermore, the analysis explored whether vocabulary, language structures, and communication patterns acquired during game-based activities could contribute to learners' English-speaking proficiency in other social settings. This phase enabled the researcher to situate the findings within the broader sociocultural context of EFL kindergarten education in Taiwan. Data collected from participant observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires were analysed inductively while systematically adhering to the following six steps.

**Step 1. Systematically organising data**

Data generated from participant observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires were transcribed, organised, and reviewed to ensure accuracy and completeness. All participant responses were documented faithfully to minimise researcher bias and preserve the authenticity of participants' perspectives.

Given the substantial volume of qualitative data generated, information was systematically condensed into manageable units for analysis. Bakhsh (2025) described initial qualitative data as providing a "thick description" of a phenomenon. Through careful organisation and categorisation, the researcher reduced the data into more focused analytical units while preserving contextual meaning. Repeated reading and familiarisation with the data enhanced the researcher's understanding and facilitated subsequent coding and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

### Step 2. Coding

Coding involved systematically reviewing the data to identify significant words, phrases, behaviours, and ideas relevant to the research questions. Codes were generated inductively from participants' responses rather than being imposed by predetermined assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The researcher utilised participants' own language wherever possible to preserve the authenticity of the findings. Additional codes were generated as new patterns emerged until no substantially new information was identified. Consistent with Critical Discourse Analysis, coding also considered power relations, learner participation, classroom interaction patterns, and the teacher's role as facilitator or authority figure.

### Step 3. Pattern identification

Following coding, the researcher examined recurring observations, behaviours, and participant responses to identify meaningful patterns across the dataset. Relationships among codes were explored to determine how different patterns contributed to understanding the role of game-based learning in improving English-speaking proficiency. This stage enabled the researcher to identify similarities, differences, and connections within the data and to generate preliminary interpretations regarding the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources.

### Step 4. Theme development

Themes were developed by grouping related patterns into broader categories that captured significant aspects of participants' experiences. Theme development focused primarily on learners' speaking opportunities, verbal engagement, social interaction, and participation within game-based learning contexts.

Themes were grounded in the original data and reflected learners' language use, communicative behaviours, and perceptions of game-based learning. The process of theme development facilitated a deeper understanding of how game-based teaching resources influenced English-speaking proficiency (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

### Step 5. Data triangulation

Data triangulation involves using multiple sources or methods to examine a phenomenon and strengthen the credibility of research findings (Bhandari, 2022). This study utilised participant observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires to generate multiple perspectives on the effectiveness of game-based learning in supporting English-speaking proficiency.

The inclusion of teacher perspectives provided additional insight into the effectiveness of teaching resources currently used within EFL kindergarten classrooms. Furthermore, the cyclical nature of classroom action research strengthened the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. Repeated cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting enabled the researcher to verify emerging interpretations and minimise potential researcher bias (Fusch et al., 2018).

### Step 6. Critical Interpretation

Research findings were interpreted through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis. The following aspects of learner performance were examined and evaluated using the categories poor, fair, good, and excellent:

- Learners' willingness to speak English during game-based learning
- Learners' spontaneous verbal interaction during games
- Learners' ability to communicate comprehensively and express ideas in detail
- Learners' overall interaction with peers

The interpretivist paradigm underpinning this study guided the critical interpretation of power relations and participation structures embedded within classroom discourse. Particular attention was given to the extent to which game-based teaching resources transferred communicative control from the teacher to learners and created opportunities for increased learner participation. The researcher analysed whether games positioned teachers as facilitators rather than dominant authorities and whether learners assumed more active communicative roles. The identities constructed through game-based learning, as well as learners' perceptions of their own language use, were also examined. Finally, findings were interpreted within the broader sociocultural context of EFL kindergarten education in Taiwan and the educational practices that influence learners' opportunities to develop English-speaking proficiency.

## 3.10 MEASURES OF TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE STUDIES

Measures of trustworthiness in qualitative research are used to ensure that research findings

accurately represent participants' experiences, perspectives, and realities. Trustworthiness provides evidence that the research process has been conducted rigorously and that the findings are credible and worthy of consideration in similar contexts. In qualitative research, trustworthiness is commonly evaluated through four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stahl & King, 2020). These criteria were applied in this study to enhance the quality and rigor of the research process.

### 3.10.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which research findings accurately represent participants' experiences, perceptions, and realities, thereby establishing confidence in the truthfulness of the interpretations (Stahl & King, 2020; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, credibility was enhanced through methodological triangulation, involving participant observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires, which enabled cross-verification of findings across multiple data sources. In addition, the iterative and cyclical nature of classroom action research, conducted over three cycles, enabled continuous refinement and verification of emerging interpretations, with findings from each cycle informing the next. Prolonged engagement within the research context further strengthened credibility by enabling a deeper understanding of classroom interactions and participants' experiences**.**

### 3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which qualitative findings can be applied or transferred to other contexts with similar characteristics, rather than statistical generalisation (Stahl & King, 2020; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This study enhanced transferability by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research context, participant profiles, classroom environment, and implementation of game-based teaching resources. These thick descriptions enable readers and researchers to assess the relevance and applicability of the findings to comparable EFL kindergarten settings, thereby supporting contextual interpretive generalisation.

### 3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency, transparency, and stability of the research process over time, ensuring that the study can be followed and understood by other researchers

(Nowell et al., 2017).

In this study, dependability was achieved through detailed documentation of the research design, participant selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis process. The classroom action research cycles were systematically implemented through planning, acting, observing, and reflecting stages, with clear procedural records maintained throughout. This audit trail strengthened the transparency and methodological consistency of the study.

### 3.10.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which research findings are grounded in participants' data rather than researcher bias, assumptions, or subjectivity (Stahl & King, 2020; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, confirmability was ensured using methodological triangulation, incorporating multiple data sources to corroborate findings across observations, interviews, and questionnaires. Researcher bias was further minimised through systematic data collection and rigorous analysis guided by Critical Discourse Analysis. Data were consistently grounded in responses from 12 participants, ensuring that interpretations reflected the evidence rather than the researcher's perspectives.

## 3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

A participant information sheet and consent letter outlining the research topic, its aims and purpose, expected learner involvement, and potential risks were distributed to all parents/guardians prior to data collection. Ethical clearance and permission to conduct the study were obtained from the kindergarten school director. To ensure informed consent, a Chinese-speaking teacher translated the consent documentation into Chinese, thereby ensuring that parents/guardians could fully understand the content and implications of participation. The consent process explicitly informed parents/guardians that participation was voluntary and that they retained the right to withdraw their child from the study at any stage without penalty or negative consequences.

Participants were also informed of the relevant ethical requirements in accordance with the University of South Africa Ethics Review Committee guidelines, and a copy of the institutional ethics policy was attached to the consent documentation (ethics reference number: 2024/11/15/000000326/06/RB). Full institutional details authorising the study, as well as the contact information of the research supervisor, were clearly provided to ensure transparency

and accountability.

The study adhered strictly to ethical principles of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy. Measures were implemented to protect learners' identities, and no personally identifiable information was disclosed in any reporting of findings. Attention was given to safeguarding learners' emotional well-being and ensuring that participation remained appropriate for their age and developmental level. The researcher emphasised that all activities were designed to be child-friendly, with game-based tasks carefully selected to ensure safety, inclusivity, and age appropriateness. These safeguards ensured that the research process minimised risk while maintaining respect for learners' rights and dignity throughout the study.

## 3.12 ASSENT FROM MINOR PARTICIPANT

As this study involves 12 minor children aged 5-7 years, assent was obtained from the participants in addition to parental consent. The purpose of this study was explained to the participants in an age-appropriate manner. The teacher-researcher informed the participants that they can refrain from participating in the study at any time. The researcher explained to the participants that choosing to withdraw from the study will not yield any negative consequences. Before data collection, the researcher ensured that each child had a clear understanding of what participating in games and observations involved. Furthermore, the participants' verbal agreement and willingness to participate were observed throughout observations and focus group interviews.

## 3.13 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the research design and methodology used to investigate the impact of game-based teaching resources on the development of English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners. It presented the research paradigm, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis, and ethical considerations that guided the study. The next chapter will present the analysis and discussion of the collected data, interpreting the findings in relation to the research questions and the existing literature on game-based learning and English-speaking development in early childhood EFL contexts.

# CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents, discusses and analyses data generated from a classroom action research study investigating the use of games as a teaching resource to improve English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners, situated within an interpretivist paradigm and informed by Social Constructivism, particularly Lev Vygotsky's theory which emphasises learning through social interaction. Data was collected through participant observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires, and analysed using Critical Discourse Analysis as developed by Norman Fairclough (1995), focusing on textual, discursive, and social practices. The findings are organised according to the three action research cycles: Cycle One, Cycle Two, and Cycle Three, with each cycle presenting observed data followed by analytical discussion, and a broader thematic discussion provided at the end of the chapter. The twelve learner participants' age ranged from 5 to 7 years. The research participant group consists of seven boys and five girls. The learner participant's home language is Chinese. The twelve learners who participated in this study were in their fourth year at an EFL kindergarten. Although the learners were exposed to playing games for entertainment during EFL classes, the participants had no prior experience with game-based teaching resources.

## 4.2 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS: ACTION RESEARCH CYCLES

Across all three action research cycles, learners participated in a series of game-based learning activities designed to promote English-speaking proficiency. The activities were implemented repeatedly throughout the cycles, with adaptations informed by the reflective process of each cycle. A brief overview of the key game-based learning activities is presented below.

The teacher used three games to improve learners' oral proficiency.

Name of the first game: All About Directions Game

The first game was called "All About Directions." The game involved learning directions, including travelling, campus directions, continents, and the important features of each continent.




**Figure 1 shows learners participating in the game, 'All About Directions game'.**

**Duration:** 20 to 25 minutes

Materials needed: Flash cards with pictures, campus rose directions

**Lesson objectives**: To improve the learners' speaking proficiency and opportunity by allowing each learner to verbally interact using game-specific vocabulary when talking about directions, travelling, campus directions, and important features of continents.

The lesson aimed to help learners transfer previously learned vocabulary into spoken communication and strengthen their ability to interact confidently in English through meaningful exchanges. The game was designed to develop learners' English-speaking proficiency through directional vocabulary and sentence construction. This game was conducted in three cycles.

In the first cycle, learners worked in pairs using a compass rose, picture cards, and vocabulary items related to directions and geographical concepts. Initially, the teacher modelled correct pronunciation and provided verbal instructions, such as *"Put the bird on the North*, (learner 4)" allowing learners to review previously learned vocabulary while responding in complete sentences. The teacher supported the learners by verbally communicating prompts and instructions.

Teacher: "*Take the picture of the tree and put it on the North*".

After checking that all the learners have placed the picture in the correct direction, the teacher would ask the learners a reflective question.

Teacher: "*Where is the tree?"*
Learners: *"The tree is on the North".*
Teacher: *"Everybody say, North".*
Learners: *"North".*
This was repeated for all directions and for all the pictures to assist learners with pronunciation and vocabulary.

As the action research cycles progressed, learners increasingly assumed leadership roles by giving instructions to their peers, negotiating meaning, and guiding gameplay independently. For example, during the second cycle, the learners took over the teacher's role of giving instructions.

Learner 5: *"Put the flower on the East".*

In cycle one, this was the teacher's role.

During the second cycle more advanced learners corrected the pronunciation of weaker English speakers. For example, a learner said, "*that is a tree not a plant*" (Learner 2).
The activity encouraged learners to use English vocabulary in authentic communicative contexts, promoted peer interaction, and increased opportunities for verbal participation, while the teacher's role gradually shifted from instructor to facilitator. For example, learners used vocabulary such as 'East' and 'South' instead of 'go there' and 'put the bird here' (while pointing to show their partners).

Learner 1: *"Where must I put the dog"?*
Learner 2: *"Put the dog on the South".*

During the third cycle, learners communicated in English spontaneously. Learners were able to give instructions using full sentence and verbally enforce game rules. The game increased learner engagement and provided opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge to real-world scenarios. For example;

Learner 3: *“Do not put the dog and the bird on the North because the North is very cold”.*

Learner 1: *“Birds like flowers so we can put them both on the West”.*

**Name of the second game: Digital game**

The second game was a computer-based learning game in which learners read sentences aloud, collectively identified mistakes, and discussed the best way to fix each sentence.



**Figure 2 Showing learners participating in the game, ‘Digital game’.**

Duration: 20 to 25 minutes

**Materials needed:** Computer screen, WIFI connection, Subscription to EFL learning games

**Lesson objectives**: To improve the learners’ speaking proficiency and opportunity by allowing each learner to verbally express their cognitive knowledge.

In this game, it was expected that for every grammar/vocabulary mistake the learners fixed, the game would reward them by allowing them to form part of a picture until the picture was complete.

Learners previously produced high-quality work on traditional worksheet activities before the game. This game provides learners with the opportunity to express themselves verbally, share their knowledge, and collaborate while controlling their own learning experience.

The game was conducted in two stages (Stage 1 and Stage 2), each comprising three cycles (Cycle 1, Cycle 2, and Cycle 3). In Stage 1, learners worked as individuals and collaboratively; in Stage 2, they completed tasks individually. Each cycle within the stage involved specific activities, as outlined below.

Stage 1: During the first cycle, the teacher prompted learners to read the sentence displayed on the digital screen aloud and collectively. Learners listened to themselves and each other’s pronunciations of English words.

The teacher helped learners with pronouncing and reading some words. The teacher also used her index finger to tap words, aiming to influence reading speed and fluency.

In the second and third cycles, the learners showed improvement in reading sentences displayed on the digital screen with less teacher assistance. Learners were eager to read for themselves and appeared eager to verbally direct their classmates in finding and fixing grammatical mistakes.

Stage 2: Learners took turns going to the digital screen to fix errors. Each learner listened to peers' verbal instructions on the changes to make to the sentences. For example, learners would verbally say, *"change the word iz, remove the z and put s"* (learner 1) *or "that is a question sentence, so you need to put a question mark at the end*" (learner 6).

During the first cycle, the teacher would ask learners to verbally explain the rationale for the amendments to the sentences. For example, the teacher would verbally ask the group, "*Why are you changing the beginning letter of a sentence into a big lette*r?" (teacher). The learners would have to verbally and spontaneously respond by saying, "*because sentences begin with a big letter" (learners)*. The learners would verbally explain their sentences to achieve clarity. Additionally, in the first cycle, the teacher prompted the learners to verbally explain their justification for changing the sentences projected on the digital screen as follows.

Teacher: "*Why must Christmas start with a capital letter*?"

Learner's response: "*Because Christmas is a special holiday".*

Below is another example of the interaction between the teacher and learners based on the second game

Teacher: "*Why must we write a question mark (?) at the end of the sentence?"*

Learner's response: "*Because the sentence begins with a question word".*

During the second and third cycles, the learners verbally explained the reasons for making changes without the teacher seeking a rationale. For example, one learner spontaneously said, "*Put a period at the end of the sentence. All sentences end with a punctuation mark"* (learner 7).

To ensure that all learners had sufficient speaking opportunities, a number system was applied in addition to collective speaking contributions. The number system was used to ensure that all learners had an opportunity to speak during the game. The teacher facilitated and monitored the learners' adherence to the number system by helping learners keep track of

who was next.

**Name of the third game: Bingo**

The third game was a bingo activity in which learners worked in pairs.

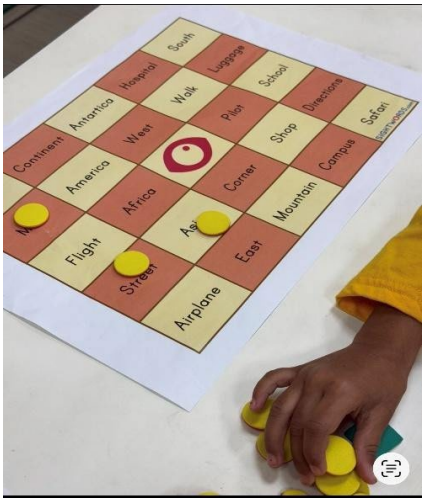





**Figure 3 Showing learners participating in the game,' Bingo'.**

**Duration:** 20 to 25 minutes

**Materials needed:** flash cards, bingo dots, boards

**Lesson objectives:** To help the learner gain greater verbal control.

During the game, one learner would serve as the leader, giving verbal instructions, while the other would listen and follow. The leader called a word from a flash card, and the other learner tried to find it on the board and cover it with a bingo dot. For example, the leader would say, *"Find the word, Africa" (learner 5).*

Previously, when using traditional learning methods, the teacher would dictate the words, and learners would passively find or write them down. Allowing learners to take turns dictating words to each other improved speaking opportunities, learner interaction, and learners' ability to take risks by attempting to verbally interact. Employing Bingo as a teaching resource for word recognition, reading, and spelling progressively facilitated language development.

During the first cycle, the teacher took control of giving instructions to the learners.

Teacher: "*Find Africa*".

The learners placed a bingo dot on the correct vocabulary word. As the first cycle progressed, learners' word recognition improved, enabling them to find the words the teacher dictated more quickly.

During the second and third cycles, learners gave each other instructions. One learner would dictate a word, and the other learners would place a bingo dot on the correct word. Learners' speaking control and interaction increased.

Below is the discussion of what transpired when the teacher used the three games in each of the three cycles.

### 4.1.1 Cycle One: Discussion (Enhanced with Participant Voices)

The findings from Cycle One indicate a predominantly teacher-centred classroom discourse pattern, consistent with conventional EFL instructional practices. Learner participation was restricted in both frequency and complexity, with oral production largely limited to isolated lexical items rather than meaningful communicative exchanges. Observation data revealed that learners typically responded with single-word utterances such as *"North"* and *"Bird"* and frequently relied on the teacher to manage interaction and resolve communication breakdowns.

These observations were further supported by data from focus group interviews. During the first cycle, learners struggled to elaborate on their responses and often provided brief answers when discussing their experiences with the games. For example, when asked how they felt, one learner simply responded, *"Happy"* (learner 3). Similarly, when invited to explain why they did not enjoy a particular game, a learner responded, *"I don't know" (learner 8).* Such responses suggest that learners had limited confidence and linguistic resources to sustain independent spoken interaction.

Teacher questionnaire data corroborated these findings. Teachers consistently reported relying on textbooks, worksheets, and flashcards to support language instruction.

One teacher explained that *"It can be very difficult to motivate kindergarten learners to practice speaking English when referring to a textbook".*

While another stated that:

> *"Learners have limited opportunities to practice spoken English because classroom activities are largely teacher-directed*".

These responses indicate that traditional teaching resources may contribute to restricted learner participation and reinforce teacher control of classroom discourse.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, the teacher occupied a dominant discursive position, exercising control over topic initiation, interactional flow, and turn-taking. Learners functioned primarily as passive recipients of instruction, with limited agency in

shaping classroom discourse. This power unevenness reflects a traditional pedagogical orientation in which language use is controlled by the teacher, thereby limiting opportunities for spontaneous communication and learner-driven meaning negotiation. Consequently, Cycle One establishes a baseline against which shifts in learner autonomy, interactional competence, and discourse redistribution can be measured in subsequent cycles of the action research process (Mercer & Howe, 2012; Walsh, 2016).

### 4.1.2 Cycle Two

Cycle Two indicates a clear shift from teacher-directed interaction toward a more collaborative and learner-centred communicative environment. Observation data demonstrated that learners increasingly interacted with one another, took turns during activities, and produced fuller utterances while completing game-based tasks. Learners began to regulate interactions independently through statements such as *"It is my turn"* (learner 2) and *"Please show me what to do" (learner 5),* indicating growing communicative confidence and ownership of the learning process.

Focus group interview data further confirmed these developments. Unlike Cycle One, learners increasingly responded in complete sentences and provided explanations for their opinions. For example, when asked how they felt, one learner responded, *"I am feeling excited because I like playing games with my friends"* (learner 7). Learners also began engaging directly with each other rather than directing all responses to the teacher/researcher, suggesting an emerging shift towards peer-mediated interaction.

Teacher questionnaire responses aligned with these observations. Several teachers acknowledged that traditional resources provide limited opportunities for oral interaction.

One teacher stated that:

> *"The main challenge we face as EFL teachers is that learners do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking because of the teacher-focused activities commonly used"*.

The increased learner participation observed during the implementation of game-based activities, therefore, suggests that games created communicative opportunities not typically available through conventional classroom resources.

From a discourse perspective, a partial redistribution of classroom power relations became evident as learners assumed greater responsibility for turn-taking, instruction-giving, and

meaning negotiation. Although some learners still required occasional prompts, the findings demonstrate a clear movement toward increased learner agency and participation.

The findings align with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasises learning as a socially mediated process in which knowledge is co-constructed through interaction (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Swain et al., 2015). The data suggest that repeated exposure to game-based activities contributed to the gradual development of communicative competence through peer scaffolding and collaborative engagement.

### 4.1.3 Cycle Three

Cycle Three demonstrates a substantial transformation in classroom interaction patterns, characterised by increased learner autonomy, communicative confidence, and interactional control. Observation data revealed that learners consistently produced complete sentences without teacher prompting, negotiated meaning independently, and actively modified game rules to increase challenge and engagement. Learners also initiated conversations, corrected peers, and used language for both academic and social purposes. For example, learners would negotiate with one another during a game. *"It's not your turn, it's my turn*" (learner 9). "*You need to speak using a full sentence, not one word"* (learner 1).

These developments were strongly supported by the findings of the focus group interviews. Learners expressed greater confidence in speaking English and demonstrated a willingness to engage in extended discussions with peers. Statements such as *"I feel happy when I speak English with my friends"* (learner 2) and *"I can talk more now than before"* (learner 3), illustrated increased self-confidence and positive attitudes towards English-speaking activities. During focus group interactions, learners also challenged one another's views, negotiated meaning, and defended their opinions, as reflected in exchanges such as *"Don't say that Bingo was easy because you took a long time to find a word," "You also broke the rules,"* and *"No, I didn't."* These interactions demonstrate a level of communicative competence and discourse control that was absent during Cycle One.

Teacher questionnaire data further corroborated these findings. Teachers acknowledged the limitations of traditional resources and expressed support for more interactive teaching

approaches.

One teacher noted that

> *"Kindergarten learners must be exposed to more exciting and fun teaching resources,"*

While another suggested that

> *"a combination of textbooks and games would be beneficial because learners will be more playful while learning."*

These views support the observed improvements in learner engagement and speaking proficiency during the game-based intervention.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, a significant redistribution of classroom power relations occurred. The teacher's role shifted from primary controller of discourse to facilitator, while learners assumed responsibility for initiating, sustaining, and regulating classroom communication (Fairclough, 2015). From a Social Constructivist perspective, learning became increasingly mediated through peer interaction rather than teacher instruction. Learners demonstrated evidence of internalising communicative practices developed through repeated social interaction, reflecting movement through Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Mercer, 2013). The findings therefore demonstrate that game-based teaching resources can effectively promote learner-centred discourse, increase speaking opportunities, and enhance English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners.

## 4.2 INTEGRATED DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### 4.2.1 Increased Oral Participation

One of the most significant findings across the three cycles was the steady increase in learners' oral participation. During Cycle One, learners produced predominantly one-word responses such as *"North," "Bird,"* and *"Happy,"* and relied heavily on teacher prompts before contributing verbally. Observation data revealed that learners were hesitant to initiate communication independently and often depended on the teacher to sustain interaction. Focus group interview data corroborated these findings, as learners typically provided brief responses when asked about their experiences with the games. For example, when asked how they felt, a learner simply responded, *"happy."* Similarly, when prompted to recall

vocabulary used during gameplay, learners listed isolated words such as *"directions, campus, hospital, America."*

By Cycle Two, learners demonstrated greater verbal engagement and began producing complete sentences while interacting with peers. Observation data showed that learners were increasingly able to dictate vocabulary, provide instructions, and engage in turn-taking activities during games. Expressions such as *"It is my turn"* and *"Please show me what to do"* reflected growing participation and communicative involvement. During focus group discussions, learners began providing more elaborate responses. For example, one learner stated, *"I am feeling excited because I like playing games with my friends*" (learner 9). Such responses indicate a shift from isolated lexical production to more meaningful language use.

Cycle Three revealed the highest level of oral participation. Learners engaged in spontaneous communication, initiated conversations independently, and sustained peer interactions without teacher prompting. Observation data showed that learners used complete and more sophisticated sentences, such as *"Where must I go to find the school?"* and *"Let's try again, it is wrong."* Focus group interviews similarly demonstrated increased verbal interaction among learners, with participants responding directly to one another rather than relying on the interviewer to facilitate discussion. For example, learners engaged in exchanges such as:

*Learner 1: "My favourite part of the game was when I won Bingo."* Learner 2, on the other hand, responded*: "I did not like playing Bingo because I didn't win."* Learner 3: added by saying *"Bingo was easy. while" Learner* 2 contested that by commenting*, "Don't say that Bingo was easy because you took a long time to find a word."*

These findings suggest that repeated exposure to game-based learning activities increased opportunities for authentic language use and supported the development of spoken English proficiency. The progression from isolated vocabulary items to spontaneous conversational exchanges illustrates substantial growth in learners' oral participation.

### 4.2.2 Shift in Classroom Power Relations

Another prominent pattern across the cycles was the gradual redistribution of classroom power relations. During Cycle One, interaction was strongly teacher centred. Observation data revealed that learners relied heavily on the teacher to initiate communication, explain game rules, resolve misunderstandings, and manage turn-

taking.

For example, when a learner complained, *"Teacher, he/she is not showing me the picture,"* the teacher responded, *"Ask your friend to show you the dice."* Such interactions illustrate the extent to which learners depended on the teacher to mediate communication. The teacher frequently prompted participation through directives such as *"It's your turn," "Who is next?"* and *"Say it in a full sentence."*

Teacher questionnaire responses reinforced this finding. Teachers reported that traditional resources such as textbooks, worksheets, and flashcards dominated classroom practice and often positioned learners as passive recipients of knowledge. One teacher noted, *"It can be very difficult to motivate kindergarten learners to practice speaking English when referring to a textbook."* Another explained that *teacher-focused activities limited opportunities for learners to practice speaking independently*. Traditional teaching resources implemented in EFL kindergarten classrooms constrain English-speaking development.

By Cycle Two, observation data revealed that learners were beginning to regulate their own interactions. Learners increasingly assumed responsibility for managing turn-taking, giving instructions, and guiding gameplay. Statements such as *"It is my turn"* and *"Please show me what to do"* reflected emerging control over classroom discourse. The teacher's role shifted from directing interaction to facilitating learner engagement.

This redistribution of power became more evident during Cycle Three. Learners not only managed interactions independently but also modified game rules, corrected peers, and negotiated meaning without teacher intervention. Exchanges such as *"No, I didn't say that"* and *"Let's try again, it is wrong"* demonstrated learners' ability to regulate discourse and challenge one another's contributions. Focus group interviews similarly showed learners taking ownership of discussions, responding directly to peers, and sustaining conversations without reliance on the interviewer. These findings suggest that game-based learning reduced teacher dominance and created opportunities for learners to assume greater responsibility for communication, thereby fostering a more democratic and learner-centered classroom environment.

### 4.2.3 Development of Communicative Confidence

A third theme evident across the cycles was the development of learners' communicative confidence. During Cycle One, many learners appeared hesitant to speak English and often relied on gestures, facial expressions, and pointing when they could not express themselves verbally. Focus group interviews revealed that quieter learners listened attentively but rarely volunteered responses. When invited to elaborate on their experiences, learners frequently provided minimal responses or said, "I don't know."

As learners became more familiar with the games during Cycle Two, observable changes in confidence emerged. Learners demonstrated a greater willingness to participate in speaking activities and become increasingly comfortable interacting with peers. Observation data indicated that learners persisted in using English even when they encountered difficulties, while focus group discussions revealed greater enthusiasm for speaking. One learner explained, *"I am feeling excited because I like playing games with my friends".* Learners also began helping one another during activities, reflecting growing confidence in both language use and peer collaboration.

By Cycle Three, learners demonstrated improved communicative confidence. Observation data showed that previously passive learners actively participated in discussions, initiated conversations, and used English spontaneously. Learners no longer required frequent prompting to produce complete sentences and willingly engaged in peer correction and negotiation. Focus group interview responses reflected positive attitudes toward speaking English, with learners stating, *"I feel happy when I speak English with my friends"* and *"I can talk more now than before".* The willingness to challenge peers, defend viewpoints, and participate in extended exchanges suggests that learners had become more confident language users.

Teacher questionnaire responses further supported this finding. Teachers observed that learners became more enthusiastic, vocal, and willing to participate when games were incorporated into lessons. Collectively, the findings indicate that game-based learning created a supportive, low-anxiety environment that encouraged learners to take linguistic risks, thereby increasing communicative confidence.

### 4.2.4 Constraints in Digital Game Implementation

Although game-based learning generally produced positive outcomes, the findings revealed notable challenges associated with implementing digital games. Similar to Abdullayeva's (2024) observations on inadequate resource accessibility, this study's observation data indicated that digital games did not provide equal opportunities for participation because classroom access was limited to a single television screen shared among nine learners. As a result, some learners had fewer opportunities to engage directly with the activity and contribute verbally.

Focus group interviews highlighted learners' frustrations regarding this limitation. One learner stated, *"We only have one TV screen, and others don't get a chance to play the game".* Another explained, *"Others are too loud when playing the game, and I cannot hear what they are saying."* These responses suggest that, as a result of inadequate resources, digital games occasionally restrict meaningful participation and reduced opportunities for equitable interaction.

In line with Abdullayeva (2024), teacher questionnaire responses also reflected concerns about resource limitations. Teachers indicated that although technology-based activities could be engaging, practical constraints, such as insufficient equipment, curriculum demands, and limited preparation time, often limited their effectiveness. Several teachers noted that "*access to additional resources would be necessary for broader implementation of game-based learning approaches*".

While digital games promoted motivation and interest, observation data showed that physical and collaborative games, such as Bingo and the Directions Game, led to more frequent peer interaction and greater speaking opportunities. These activities allowed all learners to participate simultaneously, engage in turn-taking, and communicate directly with one another. Consequently, and in line with Qizi (2021), the findings suggest that the effectiveness of digital game-based learning is influenced by contextual factors such as resource availability, class size, and equitable access to technology. Addressing these constraints would be essential for maximizing the potential of digital games to support English-speaking proficiency among EFL learners (Yudintseva, 2015). The success of implementing digital games to improve speaking proficiency is largely determined by the availability of resources, such as digital screens allocated to learners.

| | Cyle 1 | Cycle 2 | Cycle 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Willingness to speak** | Learners' willingness to speak was negatively affected by learners limited vocabulary and low speaking confidence. | Learners displayed an increase willingness to speak. Verbal interaction moved from being teacher-centred to learner centred with learners leading the speaking interaction. | As a result of increased speaking confidence and speaking proficiency, learners' willingness to speak increased substantially. Learners negotiated meaning amongst themselves and spoke English without prompting. |
| **Verbal interaction** | Learners' verbal interaction was low and limited to a single word when required to speak. Learners gave direct answers. Verbal interaction was low. | Verbal interaction increased as learners appeared to be confident in speaking new words. Learners spoke in fuller and more complex sentences. Game-based resources provided the learners with more speaking opportunities. | Learners' verbal interaction improved considerably. Learners interacted with each other with more advanced and descriptive sentences. New rules were verbally negotiated, and new rules were verbally co-created by the learners. |
| **Spontaneity** | Learners waited for the teacher to give them a prompt before speaking. They listened more and spoke less. This cycle was characterised with low spontaneity. | Learners led verbal interaction and demonstrated authentic verbal speech. Learners spoke naturally without a lot of rehearsing or preparing what they wanted to communicate. | Speaking spontaneity greatly increased. Learners corrected each other while using advanced English words to create new game rules. Learners speaking control was dominant, which allowed learners to verbally express themselves without constraint. |
| **Confidence** | Learners demonstrated restricted confidence when required to speak new words related to the | Learners' speaking confidence increased as they were able to negotiate speaking turns | Increased speaking proficiency that was developed during the cycles of game-based |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | vocabulary of the game and focus group discussions. (North, directions) | amongst themselves. Game-based resources provided a relaxed and fun environment which reduced fear of making mistakes. This encouraged learners to experiment with speaking new vocabulary in more complex sentences. | observations and focus group interviews enhanced learners speaking confidence. Learners acquired a cumulative speaking proficiency through each cycle with allowed the learners to demonstrate a substantially improved English- speaking confidence. |

T**able 1: A summary of key indicators of speaking proficiency across three cycles**

The overall findings of this classroom action research indicate that game-based learning had a significant and progressive impact on learners' English-speaking proficiency within the EFL kindergarten context. As reflected in Gunes & Sarigoz (2021), this study also demonstrated that across the three cycles, structured game-based activities consistently enhanced oral participation, improved interactional competence, and supported the gradual development of communicative fluency. Learners moved from fragmented, teacher-dependent responses in Cycle One to increasingly autonomous, extended, and socially meaningful speech (Shi & Yeung, 2024). in Cycle Three. This progression suggests that game-based learning does not merely increase engagement at a surface level but actively contributes to the development of functional spoken language through repeated opportunities for meaningful interaction (Aftinia et al., 2025; Saputra et al., 2021).

Consistent with Erdiana et al. (2020), the present study also further indicates that game-based learning reduced learner anxiety and created a more supportive communicative environment. In the initial cycle, learners demonstrated reluctance to speak, limited confidence, and a strong dependence on teacher mediation. However, as game-based activities became more familiar, similar to the findings of Seraj & Habil (2021), learners displayed increased willingness to take linguistic risks, initiate conversations, and sustain peer interaction. This shift is evident in both observational data and focus group responses, where learners expressed positive affective orientations toward speaking English, such as *"I feel happy when I speak English with my friends" and "I can talk more now than before*".

These findings suggest that the affective dimension of language learning, particularly confidence, enjoyment, and reduced fear of error, was positively influenced by the gamified learning environment (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, these findings align closely with Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which posits that learning is fundamentally a socially mediated process that occurs through interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). In this study, games functioned as structured mediational tools that created opportunities for scaffolding, peer assistance, and collaborative meaning-making. Initially, learners relied heavily on teacher scaffolding to complete tasks and produce language. However, across successive cycles, scaffolding increasingly shifted from teacher-led support to peer-to-peer mediation. Learners began to support one another linguistically, correct errors collaboratively, and co-construct utterances during gameplay. This transition affirms Seraj & Habil (2021) finding that learners were gradually transforming language structures through repeated social interaction, moving from assisted performance toward more independent communicative ability.

From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, particularly drawing on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse, the study demonstrates a clear transformation in classroom power relations and interactional structures. At the textual level, learner language evolved from isolated lexical items to complex sentence structures and extended discourse. At the level of discursive practice, patterns of interaction shifted from teacher-initiated, teacher-controlled exchanges to more distributed, learner-driven communication. According to Alasiri (2024), during the social practice level, these changes reflect a broader reconfiguration of classroom authority, in which learners increasingly assume control over task taking, topic development, and meaning negotiation. The redistribution of discursive power is particularly evident when comparing Cycle One and Cycle Three. In the initial phase, the teacher occupied a dominant institutional position, controlling participation through directives and structured questioning. Learners, in contrast, functioned as passive recipients of input with limited discursive agency. By Cycle Three, however, learners demonstrated ownership of interactional processes, as evidenced by their ability to regulate gameplay, initiate peer correction, and sustain spontaneous dialogue without teacher intervention. In line with Burhanudin, Sumarlam, and Rakhmawati (2021), this shift suggests

that game-based learning disrupted traditional hierarchical classroom discourse patterns, enabling a more dialogic and participatory learning environment.

Despite these positive developments, the effectiveness of game-based learning was uneven and shaped by several contextual constraints. Firstly, resource limitations, particularly in implementing digital games, hindered equitable participation, as not all learners could simultaneously engage with shared devices. This resulted in unequal speaking opportunities and, in some instances, reduced interactional continuity. Secondly, curriculum structure and time constraints influenced the extent to which games could be consistently integrated into teaching practice, as teachers often had to balance interactive activities with prescribed instructional requirements. Thirdly, variability in classroom resources meant that some game formats were more effective than others, with physically interactive and peer-based games (such as Bingo and directional activities) producing richer communicative outcomes than digitally mediated tasks (Reinders & Wattana, 2015). In addition, teacher preparedness and institutional expectations emerged as indirect influencing factors (Abdullayeva, 2024).

Teacher questionnaire data indicated that while educators recognised the pedagogical value of games, constraints such as workload, lack of training, and adherence to prescribed materials limited their consistent implementation. These systemic factors highlight that the success of game-based learning depends not only on pedagogical design but also on broader institutional and infrastructural conditions (Qizi, 2021).

Throughout this study, the learners' cultural context was taken into account. The Taiwanese cultural background values honoring seniority, collective harmony, and perfectionism. These cultural values were considered when designing game-based resources to ensure that the learners' cultural values were supported. Games and interviews also considered the learners' maturity and age in relation to autonomy by allowing learners to use age-appropriate expressions when interacting with each other. While the teacher-researcher facilitated learner interaction throughout the research study to ensure appropriateness, learners had autonomy and freedom of expression.

Overall, the integrated findings suggest that game-based learning is a powerful pedagogical approach for enhancing English-speaking proficiency in early childhood EFL contexts. However, its effectiveness is maximized when supported by adequate resources, flexible

curriculum structures, and institutional support for learner-centred pedagogy.

## 4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented, analysed, and discussed findings from three iterative cycles of classroom action research guided by the planning–acting–observing–reflecting framework. It drew on data from classroom observations, focus group interviews, and teacher questionnaires to ensure triangulation and a comprehensive understanding of the impact of game-based learning on English-speaking proficiency in an EFL kindergarten context.

Overall, the findings revealed a clear and progressive improvement in learners' spoken English abilities across the cycles, with learners shifting from single-word responses in the initial cycle to producing fuller sentences, engaging in spontaneous dialogue, and participating in peer-led interaction. In the final cycle, there was an increased participation, communicative engagement, and willingness to use English during game-based activities. The chapter further demonstrated a marked shift in classroom interaction patterns and power relations, as teacher dominance gradually decreased while learners increasingly assumed responsibility for initiating communication, managing turn-taking, and co-constructing meaning. This reflected a move toward a more learner-centred learning environment. However, it also highlighted that the effectiveness of game-based learning was shaped by contextual constraints such as resource availability, curriculum demands, and limited digital infrastructure, which influenced the consistency of implementation. The next chapter will present the conclusions, recommendations, and implications of the study for practice, policy, and future research in EFL teaching and game-based learning.

# CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a synthesis of the study, drawing together the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations derived from a classroom action research investigation into the effectiveness of game-based teaching resources in improving English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners in Taiwan. The study was grounded in an interpretivist paradigm and informed by Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasises learning as a socially mediated process occurring through interaction, collaboration, and scaffolding. In addition, Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework guided the interpretation of classroom interaction patterns, particularly in relation to shifting power relations and learner participation in discourse.

Data were generated through participant observation, focus group interviews with learners, and teacher questionnaires across three iterative cycles of classroom action research following a planning–acting–observing–reflecting model. This cyclical design enabled progressive refinement of practice and supported a layered understanding of how game-based learning influenced oral language development over time. The study also engaged with existing literature on EFL pedagogy, communicative language teaching, and game-based learning to situate the findings within broader scholarly debates. Ethical considerations and trustworthiness were maintained throughout the research process through triangulation, reflexive practice, and systematic data analysis.

## 5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 5.2.1 Key Scholarly Review Findings

The literature reviewed in this study consistently highlights the increasing global demand for English proficiency, driven by English's status as a dominant international language (Namaziandost et al., 2020). As a result, English competence is widely associated with educational and socio-economic advancement (Islam et al., 2022). However, multiple studies indicate that many EFL learners, particularly non-native speakers, continue to demonstrate insufficient oral proficiency despite years of formal instruction (Azlina & Saraswathy, 2021;

Erdiana et al., 2020). Scholarly evidence further emphasises that language acquisition, especially oral proficiency, is most effectively developed through social interaction and meaningful communicative engagement (Devi, 2019; Abdullayeva, 2024; Shibina & Vijayalakshmi, 2022). Research also suggests that young learners benefit significantly from interactive and playful learning environments that encourage active participation and reduce affective barriers to speaking (Purwanti, 2024; Qizi, 2021; Muñoz, 2019).

Conversely, traditional, teacher-centred instructional approaches and rigid textbook-based resources have been shown to limit communicative opportunities and restrict learner autonomy, thereby constraining speaking development (Zafar & Kholkhoja, 2023; Abdullayeva, 2024). In contrast, game-based learning has been widely identified as an effective pedagogical approach for creating engaging, low-anxiety, and communicatively rich environments that promote spontaneous oral interaction (Namaziandost et al., 2020; Azlina & Saraswathy, 2021; Li, 2021). While some misconceptions position games as purely recreational, contemporary research confirms their pedagogical value in supporting structured language development and meaningful interaction in EFL contexts (Rahmani, 2020; Sam, 2024).

The scholarly review revealed that game-based teaching resources are effective in improving the English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners. Furthermore, it provided insight into traditional resources that are ineffective for developing learners' speaking proficiency. Game-based teaching resources provide a dynamic, interactive environment for learners to practice speaking English, thereby improving their confidence and speaking skills.

### 5.2.2 Key Empirical Findings

Empirical data from the three action research cycles demonstrate that game-based teaching resources enhanced learners' English-speaking engagement, participation, and communicative confidence. Across cycles, learners progressed from limited, single-word responses to more extended utterances and spontaneous peer interaction. Games created a socially interactive and emotionally supportive classroom environment that facilitated increased speaking opportunities and encouraged risk-taking in language use.

Findings further revealed a noticeable redistribution of classroom discourse, with learners progressively assuming greater control over interaction, turn-taking, and meaning-making. This shift reflects a transition from teacher-centred instruction to learner-centred communication, consistent with both Social Constructivist principles and CDA interpretations

of power redistribution in classroom discourse.

However, the study also identified limitations in digital game-based resources. These tools often limited equitable participation due to shared-access constraints, resulting in fewer speaking opportunities for some learners. Teacher questionnaire data further indicated that while educators recognised the value of game-based learning, successful implementation required additional institutional support, including preparation time, resources, and professional development.

Empirical findings revealed that game-based learning is effective at progressively increasing learners' English-speaking proficiency over time. The use of traditional resources in EFL kindergarten classrooms stifles learners' speaking development. However, incorporating game-based resources improves learner confidence and verbal interaction, therefore bearing a positive effect on English-speaking proficiency.

### 5.2.3 A proposed model to improve English-speaking proficiency of EFL kindergarten learners.

Figure 5.1 presents the proposed model for kindergarten EFL teachers to follow when implementing game-based activities to improve English-speaking proficiency. The iterative, cyclical nature of the model reflects the elements of the classroom action research design that guided this study. Drawing on the findings of this study and the literature review, the model can support kindergarten EFL teachers in integrating game-based learning into EFL classrooms. The model consists of five iterative stages that are repeated in progressive cycles. The first stage of the cycle is the ‘Learning objectives’ stage. The ‘Learning objectives’ stage involves the teacher clearly determining what the learners should be able to know at the end of the lesson. The second stage is ‘Planning’. This stage involves the teacher selecting the most appropriate game-based resource to achieve the lesson objectives while also fostering unrestricted learner verbal interaction. The third stage of the model is the ‘acting’ stage, in which learners engage with game-based teaching resources in a classroom context. Appropriate games that are aligned with learning objectives (stage 1) are implemented. The ‘Observing’ stage is the fourth stage, involving teacher observations to determine whether the games selected during the ‘planning’ stage are appropriate and are aligned with the learning objectives and English-speaking proficiency development of the learners. The fifth stage is the ‘reflection’ stage, in which the teacher evaluates the effectiveness of game-based resource implementation in attaining learning objectives and

supporting learners' development of English-speaking proficiency. Based on the empirical findings of this study, the teacher may evaluate the learner's willingness to speak, verbal interaction, spontaneity, and confidence. Improvements and resource adaptations for the next cycle can also be evaluated. The stages are repeated in iterative cycles to facilitate progressive improvement and to enable evaluations over time.

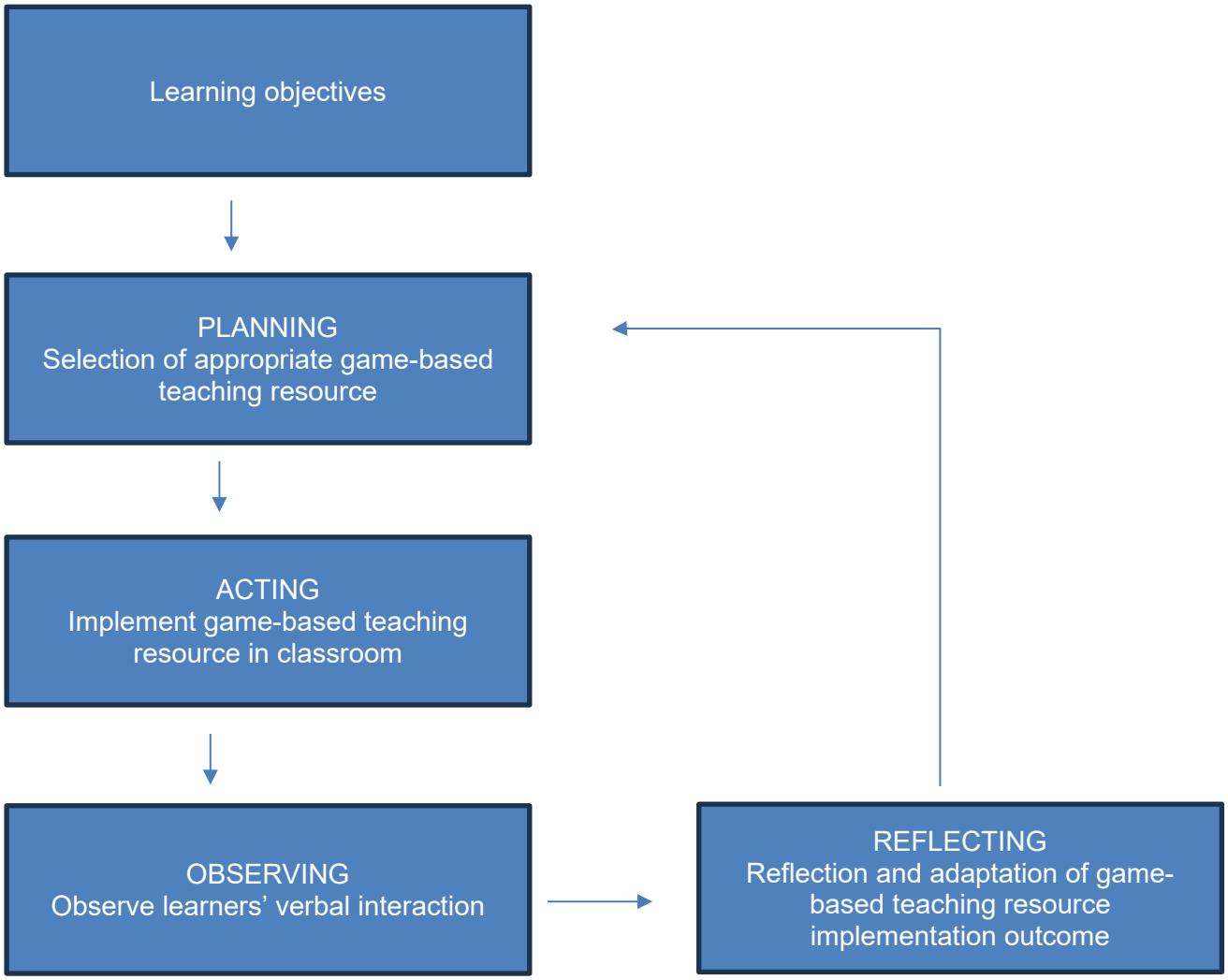



Figure 5.1 A proposed model to be adopted by kindergarten EFL teachers when implementing game-based learning to improve speaking proficiency

## 5.3 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this classroom action research study indicate that game-based teaching resources are an effective pedagogical approach for improving English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners. The intervention's iterative cycles demonstrated consistent improvement in learners' oral production, interactional competence, and communicative confidence.

The study concludes that games function as powerful mediating tools that facilitate language learning through social interaction, scaffolding, and collaborative meaning-making, in line with Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory. Furthermore, from a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, the implementation of game-based learning contributed to a gradual yet significant redistribution of classroom power relations, enabling learners to assume more active and autonomous roles in constructing discourseDissertationDissertationDissertation.

The study also concludes that while teachers are positively disposed toward integrating game-based learning, systemic constraints such as limited time, curriculum demands, and resource availability continue to influence classroom implementation. Nevertheless, the overall findings strongly support the pedagogical value of games in creating engaging, inclusive, and communicative EFL learning environments.

## 5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that EFL kindergarten curricula formally integrate game-based teaching strategies as a core instructional approach for developing speaking proficiency. Furthermore, kindergarten EFL teachers can employ game-based learning in EFL classrooms, using traditional resources to reinforce speaking practice. Educational institutions should provide structured professional development programs to equip teachers with the skills needed to design, adapt, and effectively implement game-based learning activities.

Furthermore, schools should allocate adequate planning time and resources to support the sustainable use of game-based pedagogy. Investment in appropriate classroom materials and improved learner-to-device ratios is also essential, particularly in contexts where digital games are used, to ensure equitable participation and maximise speaking opportunities for all learners.

## 5.5 AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Future research could compare digital and non-digital game-based learning approaches in EFL classrooms, particularly regarding their impact on oral fluency and learner participation. Additional research may examine the long-term effects of sustained game-based instruction on language retention and communicative competence across age groups and educational contexts.

## 5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted within a single EFL kindergarten classroom in Taiwan, involving a limited sample of learners and teachers. As a result, the findings cannot be generalized across all EFL contexts. However, in qualitative studies, the transferability of the classroom action research design is more applicable than generalisability. Qualitative research, unlike Quantitative research, seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon rather than generate findings to be applied to a broader population. A classroom action research design guided this study to understand and improve English-speaking proficiency among a specific group of learners in a current kindergarten EFL context. The aim of this study was not to produce generalisable findings but to provide insight into a context-specific practice through thick descriptions of data. The study was conducted over a short period; therefore, the limited duration did not provide additional insight into the effectiveness of game-based resources in improving English-speaking proficiency over an extended period. The researcher was actively involved in conducting research that was familiar to the learners as a teacher. The dual role of the teacher-researcher may have introduced a possibility of bias in the interpretation of the data. The age and cultural context of the participants, even though these aspects were considered throughout the study, may have restricted learners in adequately articulating themselves during focus group interviews.

## 5.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study has provided a comprehensive exploration of the role of game-based teaching resources in enhancing English-speaking proficiency among EFL kindergarten learners. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how interactive, socially mediated learning environments can support early language development. Importantly, the study highlights the

pedagogical shift from traditional teacher-centred instruction toward more participatory, learner-driven approaches. It also offers practical insights for educators, curriculum developers, and teacher-researchers seeking to improve English-speaking outcomes through innovative, engaging, and socially grounded teaching strategies.

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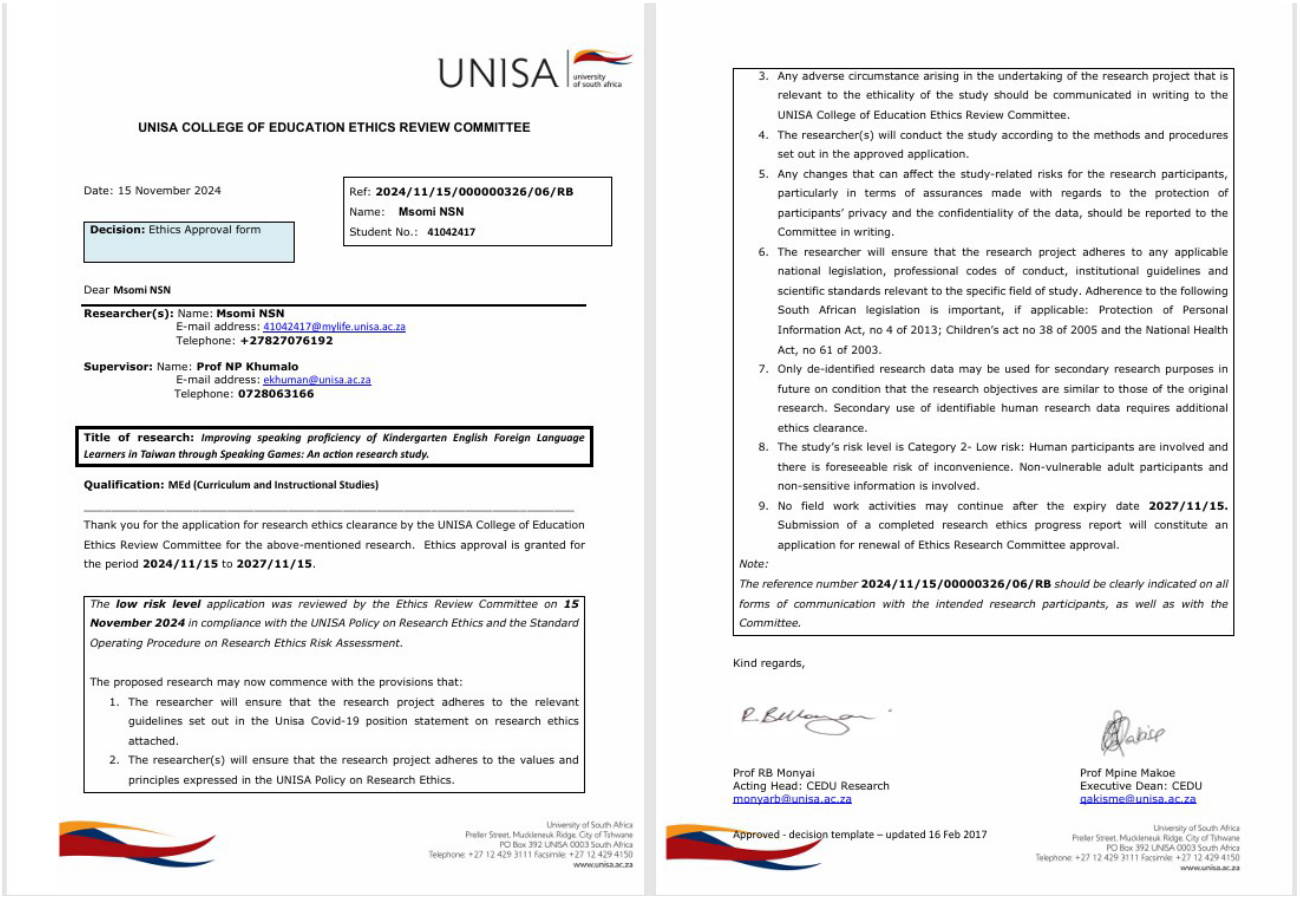
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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA university of south africa

**UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Date: 15 November 2024

Ref: **2024/11/15/000000326/06/RB**
Name: **Msomi NSN**
Student No.: **41042417**

**Decision:** Ethics Approval form

Dear **Msomi NSN**

**Researcher(s):** Name: **Msomi NSN**
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**Supervisor:** Name: **Prof NP Khumalo**
E-mail address: ekhuman@unisa.ac.za
Telephone: **0728063166**

**Title of research:** ***Improving speaking proficiency of Kindergarten English Foreign Language Learners in Taiwan through Speaking Games: An action research study.***

**Qualification:** **MEd (Curriculum and Instructional Studies)**

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period **2024/11/15** to **2027/11/15**.

*The **low risk level** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on **15 November 2024** in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the relevant guidelines set out in the Unisa Covid-19 position statement on research ethics attached.
2. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
3. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee.
4. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
5. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing.
6. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
7. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
8. The study's risk level is Category 2- Low risk: Human participants are involved and there is foreseeable risk of inconvenience. Non-vulnerable adult participants and non-sensitive information is involved.
9. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date **2027/11/15.** Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

*Note:*
*The reference number **2024/11/15/00000326/06/RB** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Kind regards,

Prof RB Monyai
Acting Head: CEDU Research
monyarb@unisa.ac.za

Prof Mpine Makoe
Executive Dean: CEDU
gakisme@unisa.ac.za

Approved - decision template – updated 16 Feb 2017

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## APPENDIX B: PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

**PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**
未成年參與研究計畫的父母同意書

**Dear Parent**

Your child is invited to participate in a study entitled IMPROVING SPEAKING PROFICIENCY OF KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TAIWAN THROUGH SPEAKING GAMES: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY
您的孩子被邀請參加一項名為「透過說話遊戲提升台灣幼兒園英語外語學習者的口語能力：一項行動研究」的研究

I am undertaking this study for my Master in Education – Curriculum Studies research at the University of South Africa. The study *aims* to explore the role that speaking games play as a teaching resource to improve the English-speaking proficiency of kindergarten EFL learners in Taiwan.

Moreover, the study's possible benefit is improving learners' English-speaking proficiency by utilizing speaking games as a teaching resource. I am asking permission to include your child in this study as it will benefit the development of their English-speaking proficiency and language acquisition. I expect to have 12 other children participating in the study.

我正在南非大學攻讀教育碩士 - 課程研究，並進行此項研究。本研究旨在探討說話遊戲作為教學資源在提升台灣幼兒園英語學習者英語口語能力方面所扮演的角色。

此外，研究的可能益處是利用口語遊戲作為教學資源來提高學習者的英語口語能力。我請求您的允許將您的孩子納入這項研究，因為這將有利於提高他們的英語能力和語言習得能力。我希望有另外 12 名孩子參與這項研究。

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

如果您允許您的孩子參加，我將要求他/她：

- Take part in an observation as I will be observing the impact that teaching resources, including games, have on the learners' willingness and ability to speak proficiently while learning. The observations will occur at the learners' English classroom at a designated time.
- Focus group interviews will be conducted in a manner where each group will consist of 3 learners. The learners will be asked questions, and their responses will be anonymously recorded.
- 參與觀察，因為我將觀察教學資源（包括遊戲）對學習者在學習過程中熟練說話的意願和能力的影響。觀察將在指定的時間在學習者的英語教室進行。

**PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MINORS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT**
未成年參與研究計畫的父母同意書

**Dear Parent**

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您的孩子被邀請參加一項名為「透過說話遊戲提升台灣幼兒園英語外語學習者的口語能力：一項行動研究」的研究

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我正在南非大學攻讀教育碩士 - 課程研究，並進行此項研究。本研究旨在探討說話遊戲作為教學資源在提升台灣幼兒園英語學習者英語口語能力方面所扮演的角色。

此外，研究的可能益處是利用口語遊戲作為教學資源來提高學習者的英語口語能力。我請求您的允許將您的孩子納入這項研究，因為這將有利於提高他們的英語能力和語言習得能力。我希望有另外 12 名孩子參與這項研究。

If you allow your child to participate, I shall request him/her to:

如果您允許您的孩子參加，我將要求他/她：

- Take part in an observation as I will be observing the impact that teaching resources, including games, have on the learners' willingness and ability to speak proficiently while learning. The observations will occur at the learners' English classroom at a designated time.
- Focus group interviews will be conducted in a manner where each group will consist of 3 learners. The learners will be asked questions, and their responses will be anonymously recorded.
- 參與觀察，因為我將觀察教學資源（包括遊戲）對學習者在學習過程中熟練說話的意願和能力的影響。觀察將在指定的時間在學習者的英語教室進行。

- 焦點小組訪談將以每組由 3 位學習者組成的方式進行。學習者將被問問題，他們的回答將被匿名記錄。

Any information obtained in connection with this study and can be identified with your child will remain confidential and only be disclosed with your permission. His/her responses will not be linked to his/her name or your name or the school's name in any written or verbal report based on this study. Such a report will be used for research purposes only.

與本研究相關的任何可識別您孩子身分的資訊都將保密，並且只有在您允許的情況下才會揭露。在基於本研究的任何書面或口頭報告中，他的/她的回答都不會與他/她的姓名或您的姓名或學校的名稱聯繫起來。該報告僅用於研究目的。

There are no foreseeable major risks to your child by participating in the study. A minor risk maybe your child feeling anxious when required to respond or participate in English. Your child will receive no direct benefit from participating in the study; however, the possible benefit to education is an in-depth knowledge of the most effective and appropriate resources that can be implemented for proficient language acquisition. Furthermore, the study's results will inform and equip educators in similar contexts with current knowledge regarding selecting appropriate resources for improving speaking proficiency.

Neither your child nor you will receive any payment for participating in this study.

參與本研究不會為您的孩子帶來可預見的重大風險。一個小小的風險可能是您的孩子在被要求回答或參與英語學習時感到焦慮。您的孩子不會因為參與本研究而獲得任何直接利益；然而，對教育可能帶來的好處是深入了解可以實施的最有效和最合適的資源，以實現熟練的語言習得。此外，研究的結果將為類似背景的教育工作者提供最新知識，幫助他們選擇合適的資源來提高口語能力。

您的孩子和您都不會因參與此項研究而獲得任何報酬。

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusal to participate will not affect him/her in any way. Similarly, you can agree to allow your child to be in the study and change your mind later without penalty.

您的孩子參加此項研究是自願的。您的孩子可以隨時拒絕參加或退出參加。退出或拒絕參加不會對他/她造成任何影響。同樣地，你可以同意讓你的孩子參加這項研究，然後稍後再改變主意而不會受到懲罰。

The study will take place during regular classroom activities with the prior approval of the school and your child's teacher. However, an alternative activity will be available if you do not want your child to participate. Your child can continue doing their normal classroom activities, which will be provided for by their teacher.

該研究將在學校和您孩子的老師的事先批准下在正常課堂活動期間進行。但是，如果您不想讓孩子參加，也可以選擇其他活動。您的孩子可以繼續進行正常的課堂活動，由老師提供。

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study, and you and your child will also be asked to sign the assent form accompanying this letter. If your child does not wish to participate in the study, he or she will not be included, and there will be no penalty. The information gathered from the study and your child's participation in the study will be stored securely on a password-locked computer in my locked office for five years after the study. Thereafter, records will be erased.

除了您的許可之外，您的孩子還必須同意參加研究，您和您的孩子還將被要求簽署隨附此信的同意書。如果您的孩子不願意參加研究，他或她將不會被納入研究，並且不會受到任何懲罰。從研究中收集的資訊以及您孩子參與研究的情況將在研究結束後五年內安全地儲存在我上鎖的辦公室裡一台有密碼鎖定的電腦上。此後，記錄將被刪除。

The benefits of this study are obtaining in-depth knowledge of the most effective and appropriate resources that can be implemented to acquire proficient language. Furthermore, the study's results will inform and equip educators in similar contexts with current knowledge regarding selecting appropriate resources for improving speaking proficiency.

Potential risks are that learner participants may feel anxious when required to interact and respond in English.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

這項研究的好處是可以深入了解可以用來獲得熟練語言的最有效和最合適的資源。此外，研究的結果將為類似背景的教育工作者提供最新知識，幫助他們選擇合適的資源來提高口語能力。

潛在的風險是，當需要用英語互動和回應時，學習者參與者可能會感到焦慮。

參與該項研究將不會獲得任何報銷或獎勵。

If you have questions about this study, please ask my study supervisor, Prof NP Khumalo, the Department of Curriculum, the College of Education, or the University of South Africa. My contact number is +886 909651629, and my e-mail is msomi151@gmail.com. The e-mail of my supervisor is ekhuman@unisa.ac.za. Permission for the study has already been given by T. Fayo (Campus Director) and the Ethics Committee of the College of Education, UNISA.

如果您對本研究有任何疑問，請諮詢我的研究指導老師、教育學院課程系或南非大學NP Khumalo 教授。我的聯絡電話是+886 909651629，電子郵件是msomi151@gmail.com。我的導師的電子郵件是 ekhuman@unisa.ac.za。該研究已獲得 T. Fayo（校園主任）和南非大學教育學院倫理委員會的許可。

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. You may keep a copy of this letter.

您正在決定是否允許您的孩子參與這項研究。您在下方的簽名表明您已閱讀上述提供的資訊並決定允許他或她參與本研究。您可以保留這封信的副本。

## APPENDIX C: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Appendix B

**Request for permission to conduct research at Cornel International School.**

Title: IMPROVING SPEAKING PROFICIENCY OF KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TAIWAN THROUGH SPEAKING GAMES: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

Date

Mr L. Fayo
Ministry of Education - Taiwan

Dear Ministry of Education

I, Nomfundo SN Msomi, am doing research under the supervision of Professor NP Khumalo, a Professor in the Department of Curriculum Studies, toward a Master of Education – Curriculum Studies at the University of South Africa. We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled IMPROVING SPEAKING PROFICIENCY OF KINDERGARTEN ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN TAIWAN THROUGH SPEAKING GAMES: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

The study aims to explore the role that speaking games play as a teaching resource to improve the English-speaking proficiency of kindergarten EFL learners in Taiwan.

Your school has been selected because of my interest in developing high-quality and effective teaching resources in my classroom practice.

The study will entail learner-participant observations and focus group interviews. The learners' ability to answer questions, verbal interaction, speaking confidence, and willingness to participate in game-based learning will be observed during observations. Focus group interviews will consist of several learners in each group who will be asked questions, thereafter, responses will be analysed, recorded, and grouped into themes.

The benefit of this study is an in-depth knowledge of the most effective and appropriate resources that can be implemented for proficient language acquisition. Furthermore, the study's results will inform and equip educators in similar contexts with current knowledge regarding selecting appropriate resources for improving speaking proficiency.

Potential risks are that learner participants may feel anxious when required to interact and respond in English.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

The feedback procedure will entail a comprehensive discussion and review of the research findings with the learner participants.

Yours sincerely

Nomfundo Sibusisiwe Nomvuyo Msomi

Educator

Cornel International School hereby grants permission to Nomfundo S.N. Msomi to conduct research during the 2024-2025 academic year.

L. Fayo – Foreign Director

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PAPER NAME

## APPENDIX D: TURNITIN REPORT

**Similarity Report**

PAPER NAME
**41042417 Final.docx**

AUTHOR
**NOMFUNDO SIBUSISIWE NOMVUYO MS OMI**

WORD COUNT
**29535 Words**

CHARACTER COUNT
**194045 Characters**

PAGE COUNT
**119 Pages**

FILE SIZE
**748.3KB**

SUBMISSION DATE
**Jul 16, 2026 1:52 AM GMT+8**

REPORT DATE
**Jul 16, 2026 1:54 AM GMT+8**

**24% Overall Similarity**

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.

- 15% Internet database
- 13% Publications database
- Crossref database
- Crossref Posted Content database
- 21% Submitted Works database

**Excluded from Similarity Report**

- Manually excluded sources

## APPENDIX E: DATA COLLECTION TOOL FOR OBSERVATIONS

Observer details

Name: Msomi NSN Date:

Time:

Activity:

LEARNER SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT

| **Participant** | **Very Engaged** | **Fairly Engaged** | **Low Engagement** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | | | |
| **2.** | | | |
| **3.** | | | |
| **4.** | | | |
| **5.** | | | |
| **6.** | | | |
| **7.** | | | |
| **8.** | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **9.** | | | |
| **10.** | | | |
| **11.** | | | |
| **12.** | | | |

| Very Engaged | Fairly Engaged | Low Engagement |
|---|---|---|
| **Shows verbal interaction, demonstrates active interaction, enthusiastically responds to prompts** | **Moderate verbal participation with some disengagement** | **Very low interest and engagement, highly distracted, not responding to prompts and questions** |

Name: Msomi NSN Date:

Time: Activity:

LANGUAGE USE

| Participant | Regular Use | Sporadic Use | Scarce Use |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1.** | | | |
| **2.** | | | |
| **3.** | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **4.** | | | |
| **5.** | | | |
| **6.** | | | |
| **7.** | | | |
| **8.** | | | |
| **9.** | | | |
| **10.** | | | |
| **11.** | | | |
| **12.** | | | |

| Regular Use | Fairly Engaged | Low Engagement |
|---|---|---|
| **Interacts often using English, Uses English words and phrases to engage** | **Occasionally speaks English** | **Does not often use English to engage or communicate** |

## APPENDIX F: DATA COLLECTION TOOL FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS AND TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES

| ACTIVITY LIST | DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY |
|---|---|
| 1. Circle time | 1. Whole group classroom greeting to explain the interviews and to create a relaxed atmosphere for the Learners |
| 2. Reflection of games | 2. Allow learners to respond to questions about the games, their dislikes and favourite moments of the Games |
| 3. Main question | 3. Display a picture prompt of the games and ask learners to discuss the picture, referring to their own experience of playing the game |
| 4. Closing | 4. Express appreciation to the learners for participating |

**ACTIVITY DETAILS**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Circle time** | **Morning greeting**<br><br>Hello friends, how are you feeling today?<br><br>Learners take turns to respond – I am happy, I am excited etc.<br><br>**Explain the purpose**<br><br>Today I want us to talk about the games we played, tell me what you liked and what you didn't like. I also want to know if the games helped you speak English to your friends. |
| **Reflection of games** | **Researcher asks questions**<br><br>1. Which game was your favourite?<br><br>2. Why was it your favourite game?<br><br>3. What did you like doing when playing the game? |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Main question** | **<u>Description of the game</u>**<br><br>Can you talk to me about the game you played with your friends?<br><br>What were the rules of the game?<br><br>How did you play the game?<br><br>**<u>Reflection of emotions experienced by learners while playing the game</u>**<br><br>How did playing the game make you feel? Were you excited, bored, nervous…?<br><br>**<u>Reinforcing new vocabulary</u>**<br><br>Do you remember any English words you used when playing this game?<br><br>Which English words did you like to use?<br><br>**<u>Assessing speaking opportunity</u>**<br><br>Did you have to speak lots of English words or just a few English words when you were playing the game? |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Did you get a chance to say everything you wanted to say to your friends when playing together?<br><br>**<u>Collaboration and acquiring speaking skill through peer support</u>**<br><br>Were all your other friends speaking English as well?<br><br>Did you help any of your friends to say words they did not know how to say?<br><br>**<u>Challenges experienced by learners</u>**<br><br>Was there a word or an idea or a feeling that you couldn't say in English when you were playing the game? |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Closing** | **<u>Appreciation and Encouragement</u>**<br><br>Thank you for trying your best to speak English, you did a great job! |

Data collection tool for focus group interviews

| **Activity Name** | **Observation focus area** | **Notes** | **Poor** | **Fair** | **Good** | **Excellent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Circle time** | **Learners' willingness and level of enthusiasm to participate is observed. The emotional wellbeing is also taken into consideration.** | *Take note of the learners' level of Comfort And Willingness To Participate* | | | | |
| **1.** | | | | | | |
| **2.** | | | | | | |
| **3.** | | | | | | |
| **4.** | | | | | | |
| **5.** | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **6.** | | | | | | |
| **7.** | | | | | | |
| **8.** | | | | | | |
| **9.** | | | | | | |

| **Activity Name** | **Observation focus area** | **Notes** | **Poor** | **Fair** | **Good** | **Excellent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reflection of games** | **The learners' spontaneous interaction and hesitation to speak with other learners is observed.** | *Observe The learners' Authentic Responses and general Observable attitude.* | | | | |
| **1.** | | | | | | |
| **2.** | | | | | | |
| **3.** | | | | | | |
| **4.** | | | | | | |
| **5.** | | | | | | |
| **6.** | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **7.** | | | | | | |
| **8.** | | | | | | |
| **9.** | | | | | | |

| **Activity Name** | **Observation focus area** | **Notes** | **Poor** | **Fair** | **Good** | **Excellent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Main question** | **Observation of the learners' ability to give detailed explanations, using a wide variety of English words. The ability of the learner to speak clearly showing insight to what they are communicating.** | *Assess learners' vocabulary and the use of repetitive words and new words. Take note of Learners Listening Comprehension when spoken to in English by taking note of mis-aligned responses.* | | | | |
| **1.** | | | | | | |
| **2.** | | | | | | |
| **3.** | | | | | | |
| **4.** | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5.** | | | | | | |
| **6.** | | | | | | |
| **7.** | | | | | | |
| **8.** | | | | | | |
| **9.** | | | | | | |

| **Activity Name** | **Observation focus area** | **Notes** | **Poor** | **Fair** | **Good** | **Excellent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Closing** | **Observe the learners overall verbal interaction with peers using English** | *Consider learners attitude and overall willingness to speak English* | | | | |
| **1.** | | | | | | |
| **2.** | | | | | | |
| **3.** | | | | | | |
| **4.** | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5.** | | | | | | |
| **6.** | | | | | | |
| **7.** | | | | | | |
| **8.** | | | | | | |
| **9.** | | | | | | |

3.4.2.3Teacher interview questionnaire

Grade:

No. of years teaching EFL:

No. of learners:

Please answer the following questions to give insight to teaching resources currently implemented in your classroom

Which resources do you use in your classroom to help your learners practice speaking English? (*Please circle the letter next to your selection*)

a. Textbooks

b. Worksheets

c. Flash cards

d. YouTube (read-aloud, stories etc.)

e. Gaming Apps

f. Board games

g. Role playing

How many times do you implement these resources? (*Please circle the letter next to your selection*)

a. Everyday

b. a couple times a week

c. a couple times a month

d. on rare occasions

Are the current teaching resources you are implementing effective at developing English speaking proficiency? (*Please circle the letter next to your selection*)

a. Very effective

b. Moderately effective, a review can be useful

c. On certain occasions they are effective but not consistently for all learners

d. Not effective, a review is highly required

- What criteria did you use to choose these resources and why? (*Please write a brief explanation)*

_____

_____

_____

_____

- What challenges have you encountered as a result of implementing the

resources? (*Please write a brief explanation)*

Please answer the following questions regarding the use and implementations of games as a teaching resource to improve the learners English speaking proficiency

Do you implement games when teaching English speaking in your classroom?

a. Yes, often

b. Yes, not often

c. No, I don't think games will be effective in developing English speaking proficiency

d. No, however, I think games could be useful in developing English speaking proficiency)

If yes, do you find games as a useful teaching resource in developing English speaking proficiency of your learners? Please write a short explanation of how games improved the learning experience of English speaking for learners.

Do you think games must be used in conjunction with other resources? Or games can be implemented solely on their own when teaching English speaking? Please explain.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding teaching materials implemented in EFL kindergarten classrooms?

## APPENDIX G: EDITORS CERTIFICATE




Date: 20 July 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The study titled èImproving speaking pro¸ ciency of kindergarten English foreign language learners in Taiwan utilising speaking games: an action research designê by Nomfundo Sibusisiwe Nomvuyo Msomi has been proofread and edited for language by me.

I verify that it is ready for publication or public viewing in terms of language and style. I believe that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards. Please note that no view of the documentsé subject-speci¸ c technical content is expressed.

Phumuzani Mpofu: Doctor of Education with Educational Psychology (NWU)

Signature: