

**IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY BY
USING TIC-TAC-TOE GAME TO BE MEDIA AT JUNIOR
¹HIGH SCHOOL**

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ABSTRAK

Salah satu media untuk meningkatkan kemampuan siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) dalam **speaking** (berbicara) adalah **Tic-Tac-Toe Game**. Dalam permainan **Tic-Tac-Toe Game**, siswa dibagi menjadi dua kelompok dan setiap anggota dari kelompok dituntut aktif untuk berbicara sesuai dengan materi yang telah mereka pelajari. Mereka juga harus memiliki strategi yang baik, dan sama-sama berpartisipasi mengemukakan ide sehingga terjadi kerja sama dengan kelompok. Di sinilah siswa diajarkan untuk mempraktekkan **speaking** karena setiap kelompok bertanggung jawab memberikan pendapat agar dapat memenangkan permainan. Siswa juga diharuskan untuk berfikir kritis. Cara ini dapat memotivasi mereka dalam berbicara dalam kelas.

Kata kunci: Tic-tac-toe game, teaching speaking, teaching junior high school students.

A. Introduction

In learning English, there are four skills that should be mastered by the students. They cannot be separated each other because they are integrated.

The four skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Someone will be good in a language if he or she can master these skills. And he or she should support these skills by having other components of English such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Speaking is one of the skills that should be mastered by junior high school students, because it is important for them to improve their ability to

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communicate orally by presenting their ideas in real life. There are many definitions about speaking stated by the experts. Brown (1994:1) states that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, accepting and processing information. The meaning depends on the context where it occurs, including the participants, collective experience and the physical environment.

Furthermore, Harmer (2003:87) states that through speaking, the students will understand ideas, opinions and information from other people. It seems that speaking is one of ways to introduce each other and something, such as knowledge, technology, how to make relationship, or a good communication in a society.

Caroline (2005:45) states that speaking is a basic oral communication among people in society. It is speaking which serves as natural means of communication of the members community for both expression of thought and form a social behavior. Moreover, Kayi (2006:1) states that speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal in variety of context. Jordan (2009:3) explains that speaking is the action of delivering information or expressing someone's thought and feeling in spoken language. It seems that speaking is the action used to give or share the information to other and express thoughts and feeling orally. Furthermore, Widdowson (1990:2) says that speaking is the active or productive skill.

Among the media, game is one of the effective ways to increase students' speaking ability. By using game, the students will easily understand the lesson and reduce boredom. It also helps the students to understand the lesson faster and easier. It is a misconception if learning should be serious and solemn in nature. But it has to be fun and there is hilarity and laughter (Kim, 1995:36). By using game, it can make teaching learning process fun and give variation to a lesson, so the students get the lesson easily.

According to Zuckerman and Horn (1983:380), game is a special category of real things. A game is a simplified, operational model of a real life situation that provides students with various participations in a variety of roles and events. It means that in game, the teacher invites the students to participate and follow the roles. In this situation, the students should obey the decision.

Furthermore, Amy (2010:6) writes that games allow the students to work collaboratively towards a common goal. This collaborative effort is more than just learning to work with others. It also promotes a relationship where they can learn from each other, such as supply reasons for why their answer is the best and learn to listen to their teammates. Games are highly motivating because they are amusing and interesting. They can be used to give practice many types of communication.

There are many advantages of using games. Games bring relaxation and fun for students and usually involve friendly competition and interested in learning. These create the motivation for learners of

English to get involved and participate actively in learning activities. Richard (in Uberman, 1988:20) states that “Games can lower anxiety, thus making the acquisition of input more likely”. In other words, relaxed atmosphere which is created by using games students remember things faster and better. They also enable learners to acquire new experiences within a foreign language which are not always possible during a typical lesson. Silvers (in Uberman, 1998:20) says that many teachers are enthusiastic about using games as “ a teaching device ”, yet they often perceive games as mere time-fillers, “ a break from the monotony of drilling” or frivolous activities. He also claims that many teachers often overlook the fact that in a relaxed atmosphere, real learning takes place, and students use the language they have been exposed to and practice earlier.

Before the teacher plays a game, he or she should choose appropriate game. The teacher should be careful in choosing game if he or she wants to make them profitable for the learning process. If the games are bringing wanted result, they must correspond to either student’s level or to the material. Games become difficult when the task or the topic is not appropriate with the students’ experience.

Games can also enrich a context, add vividness, and reduce boredom. The teacher should create the appropriate game in order to improve students’ speaking ability. Actually, there are many games that can be used in teaching speaking such as mime and guess game, twenty questions game, slow reveal game, and tic-tac-toe game. This paper is intended to discuss the use of tic-tac-toe game in teaching speaking.

According to Wikipedia (2006), Tic-Tac-Toe, also called Noughts and Crosses, is a pen and paper game for two players, O and X, who take turns to mark spaces in 3 x 3 grid. The player who succeeds in placing three of their own marks in a horizontal, vertical or diagonal row wins the game. Harmer (1991:94) states that this popular children’s game can be easily adapted for the English classroom enabling the teacher to ensure practice of specific language in amusing context.

Tic-tac-toe game is a game in which two players alternately crosses and circles in one of the compartments of a square grid of nine spaces; the object is to get a row of three crosses or three circles before the opponent does. Tic-tac-toe game is played by two players, where one player represents nought (o) and the another player represents cross (x). The player makes nine grids on the paper or the other place in which the players want.

To be successful, the player must seek to complete as many of these objectives as possible with a single mark, without scarifying higher priorities. The player must also think ahead to see whether a mark can be made this turn that will allow him or her to achieve a higher priority in the next turn.

The first player, whom shall designate “X” has 3 possible positions to mark during the first turn. It might seem that there are 9 possible

positions, corresponding to the 9 square in the grid. For strategy purposes, there are only three possible first marks: corner, edge, or center. Player X can win or force a draw from any of these starting marks. The choice of which to make will depend on the player's knowledge of their opponent's weakness in recognizing good answer to a particular opening. In a series of games, alternating to opening mark and its superficial position can help a player win more often against a weaker player.

The second player, whom shall designate "O", must respond to X's opening mark in such a way to avoid the forced win. Player O must always respond to a corner opening with a center mark, and to a center opening with a corner mark. An edge opening must be answered either with a center mark, a corner mark next to the X, or an edge mark opposite the X. The winning player is the one who can mark their symbol vertically, horizontally, or diagonally in the grid in three row positions.

B. Discussion

A. Teachers' Role

In this step, the teacher should consider the strategies before presenting the games.

1. Preparing the media
The important preparation is about preparing the media. For this game, the important media needed is a board. It can attract students' attention and it helps students to understand the materials easily. To play tic-tac-toe game, teacher can bring a game board or a big sheet of paper. The board has to be large enough so all students can see or teacher can draw tic-tac-toe board by herself.
2. Preparing the students
The students need to be prepared to give themselves confidence to learn the material. Next, they need to be prepared for the topic in general and activity in particular.
3. Explaining learning skill
In choosing the language item, the teacher has to explain what to do at a certain point. Meanwhile, the teacher is the facilitator who can create the activity where the students do not only use the language, but the teacher also helps the students to understand the reason of knowing something. Tic-tac-toe game is one of the games that the teacher can choose as material. This game can be used to teach junior high school students.
4. Managing the classroom
The classroom should be a place where learners can speak freely.

B. Students' Role

Students have the role as active speakers. This game will not run effectively if there is no participation from the students. In this game, students will work in group. Students will cooperate in their group to play

and work to practice dialogue. It is expected that the students practice English well. It needs good cooperation between students.

C. Procedures of Tic-tac-toe Game

Here are some procedures of teaching speaking through tic-tac-toe game:

1. Pre-teaching Activity

This activity is conducted at the beginning of the study; most of the activities are in the spoken language. The focuses are to introduce the topic, build the students' knowledge and attract the students' attention to focus on the materials, as mentioned on the lesson plan prepared by the teacher. Before coming to the lesson, the teacher reviews the previous lesson to remind the students about the lesson and ask the students' understanding about the previous lesson. In this stage, the teacher also greets the students and checks the students' readiness to study.

Example: "Good morning students, how are you this morning?" I hopefully you are always fine".

"Ok, today we will play one kind of games, namely tic-tac-toe game." Do you know what tic-tac-toe game is?" or "have you ever played tic-tac-toe game before?"

In applying tic-tac-toe game for teaching speaking, teacher should build the students' knowledge related to the materials. In building background knowledge, teacher can ask some questions about the previous lesson. The topic of the lesson is "simple progressive tense", the possible question might appear for students is :

Example : "Do you still remember about our last lesson?" or "In the last lesson, we talked about present progressive tense, right?" so today, we are going to talk about present progressive tense again by using tic-tac-toe game". Are you ready?"

2. Whilst-teaching Activity

Whilst-teaching activity is the activity conducted during the discussion of the materials. This is the stage in which tic-tac-toe game is implemented for teaching speaking. First, the teacher explains to the students about the purpose of the game. The purpose of the game is to motivate the students be active in speaking English, to enable the students practice the language item that has been learned. For example, the students have just learned about present progressive tense. The students will be asked to make a correct sentence in present progressive tense based on the phrase. So the teacher has to explain about the material first, as follows:

1. The teacher explains about present progressive tense:

The teacher tells the students that the present progressive tense indicates continuing action, something going on now. This tense is formed with the helping "to be" verb, in the present tense, plus the present participle of the verb (with an *-ing* ending), then the teacher gives some examples and write them down on the blackboard, such as *I am buying some books in the bookstore this afternoon, She is working through the holiday break.*

2. The teacher also explains that the present progressive can suggest that an action is going to happen in the future, especially with verbs that convey the idea of a plan or of movement from one place or condition to another. For example: *The team is arriving in two hours, He is moving to Canada this summer.* Because the present progressive can suggest either the present or the future, it is usually modified by adverbs of time.
3. The teacher gives more possible explanations about present progressive tense:

Singular	Plural
I am walking	We are walking
You are walking	You are walking
He/she/it is walking	They are walking

Singular	Plural
I am sleeping	We are sleeping
You are sleeping	You are sleeping
He/she/it is sleeping	They are sleeping

Singular	Plural
I am being	We are being
You are being	You are being
He/she/it is being	They are being

After that, the teacher asks students to make sentences about present progressive tense orally. Example:

1. The summer **is passing** too quickly.
2. Raul **is acting** like his father.
3. He **is playing** guitar right now.
4. My mother **is cooking** in the kitchen.

Then, the teacher uses tic-tac-toe game based on the material above and explains about the rules of the game. The students are divided into two teams, one represents nought (o) and the another represents cross (x). The teacher will make some phrases in the nine grids on the blackboard. The

phrase can be verb, adjective, to be, noun, and many others. The teacher tells the students that they can choose the phrase and make a sentence based on the phrase. In order to win the game, the students must choose a phrase horizontally, vertically, or diagonally in three rows.

○	×	×
×	○	○
×	○	○

The students should make a correct sentence in right order. If the teacher has explained about present progressive tense, the teacher may ask the students to make the sentence in present progressive tense. Here are the rules of the game:

1. The teacher divides the students into two groups
This is really needed for considering the class and level of difficulty that will be faced by the students. The teacher can organize the students into two groups; one represents crosses (x) and the another represents noughts (o). It can give the students the chance to work together. It can also helps the weak students to share their strategy.
2. Teacher decides who will be the first team. For example, it can be started by tossing the coin or the students can pick cards marked “x” or “o” randomly. The first team will be given a chance to choose one of the phrases in the grid.
3. The teacher makes nine grids on the blackboard. It can also be displayed by using set of laptop and LCD or the teacher makes interesting grids in nice paper sheet. Then, writes some words in it. The game can be adapted to any language item the teacher wishes to be practiced and the students have learned it. For example, the teacher asks the students to make the sentence in present progressive tense. The squares could contain question words, for example, verb, noun, to be, pronoun, etc.

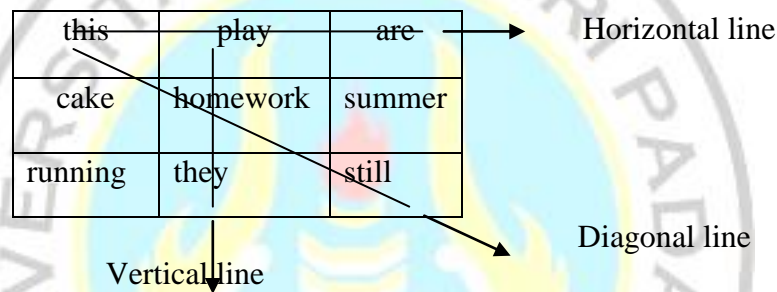
For example:

this	play	are
cake	homework	summer
running	they	still

4. Then, the first team chooses the square it wants to play, e.g. “homework”, and one member has to say a sentence by using the word

from the square. The team makes a sentence by using present progressive sentence, for example “*She is doing her homework.*” All members of the team should agree on the sentence. If the sentence is correct, the square is filled with a nought or a cross, depending on the team the player comes from. If it is incorrect, another team is given a chance to say the sentence. If there is no right answer, the teacher gives some possible sentences and she or he must shade the square.

- The team has to choose a grid in vertical, diagonal, or horizontal line. If the team has choose “homework”, they must choose “play” and “they” in order to make vertical line, or they can choose “cake”, “homework” and “summer” in order to make horizontal line or choose “this”, “homework” and “still” to make diagonal line.



For example

Word	Sentence	
Play:	He is <u>playing</u> guitar in the show	} Vertical line
Homework:	She is doing her <u>homework</u>	
They:	<u>They</u> are sitting in the living room	

This:	<u>This</u> new washing machine is not working well	} Horizontal line
Play:	He is <u>playing</u> guitar in the show	
Are:	You <u>are</u> copying the lesson in the class	

This:	<u>This</u> new washing machine is not working well	} Diagonal line
Homework:	She is doing her <u>homework</u>	
Still:	I am <u>still</u> staying in staying in my uncle’s house	

6. The opponent team must try to block the another team from making the three in rows and put their symbol in the grid. For example, if the noughts team has chosen the phrase “play” and “homework”, the crosses team must choose “they” in order to block the noughts team from their winning. But every team must try to have a line in three rows to have a win.
7. The team that is first able to make a sentence and has a symbol “o-s” or “x-s” in three rows (based on his /her group) horizontally, vertically, or diagonally is the winner.

3. Post-teaching Activity

Post-teaching activity is the activity which is conducted at the end of the classroom to evaluate students’ comprehension on the subject matter. This is the final stage of teaching done by the teacher. In this stage, the teacher directs the students’ attention to the skill being examined and asks them to monitor and assesses their own progress. Here are some evaluations that teacher can do:

1. Teacher writes in the blackboard every sentence that has been said by the students.
2. Teacher reads the sentence. The students listen carefully and pay attention to the teacher.
3. Teacher discusses with the students about the wrong sentence and finds the mistake in the sentence.
4. Teacher asks the students’ opinions about tic-tac-toe game. The information intended can be criticism or suggestion about the play of tic-tac-toe game.
5. Teacher evaluates the students’ activities.

In addition, this game can also be adapted in many others material, such as descriptive text, procedure text, etc. The teacher can represents tic-tac-toe game related to the syllabus of junior high shool.

Based on the discussion above, it can be believed that tic-tac-toe game is useful to improve the students’ speaking ability at junior high school because the procedures of this game are easily to be followed and understood by the students. So, the teacher can apply the tic-tac-toe game as a media to help students in learning English speaking.

D. The Advantages of Teaching Speaking through Tic-Tac-Toe Game

Playing tic-tac-toe game provides a meaningful context for many students to get actively involved in conversation. This game can build competitive environment for the students so that the students can be active and build their self confidence to speak. Usually the students are not confident if they speak alone. However, if the students work in group, they will not be shy to speak. In addition, this game also increases the students’ cooperation with their friends, so all of the students have opportunities to speak because the purpose of this game is to make the students speak in the classroom.

C. Conclusion

From the previous discussion, it can be concluded that by using tic-tac-toe game, the teacher can improve the students' speaking ability and it can make the students easier to understand new vocabulary. Besides that, this game can be used in practicing the language item that has been learned previously.

The teacher can use tic-tac-toe game as an alternative teaching media. Tic-tac-toe game is the game that includes two groups of the students who have to cooperate with their group and compete with another group for winning the game. The students are asked by teacher to say the words in the grids of tic-tac-toe game in order to practice what has been learned before. By having speaking activities through tic-tac-toe game, the teacher can give interesting, enjoyable, and comfortable atmosphere for the students. In the same time, this activity is expected to motivate the students and enable them to improve their speaking ability after having interesting learning activities.

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