



Exploring the Use of Studycat Application in Supporting Students' Speaking Practice

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Abstract

Speaking is a key skill when learning English, especially for kids. Many young students struggle to speak because they don't feel confident and don't know enough words. Therefore, using interactive digital media is seen as a good way to help students practice their speaking skills. This study looks to how this Studycat app can help pupil engage in speaking exercises. A qualitative descriptive strategy was used in the investigation. This people involved in five third-graders from an Islamic primary school participated in this study MIS Al-Washliyah, Bogak Besar-Serdang Bedagai. This information was acquired from watching courses., talking to people, and using scoring guides for speaking abilities. The findings reveal that the implementation of the Studycat application provides substantial support for students' speaking practice. The exploration shows that students demonstrated increased engagement, self-confidence, and active involvement in their learning. Furthermore, the application facilitated students in repeating words, answering simple questions, and utilizing basic vocabulary in spoken sentences. The study concludes that interactive digital media like Studycat effectively creates a supportive environment for young learners' speaking exploration.

Keywords: Studycat; Speaking Practice; Young Learners; Interactive Learning

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INTRODUCTION

English is a key subject that needs to be taught to children from a young age. Early childhood is considered the golden age for language acquisition, making it the ideal time to introduce English to build a strong linguistic foundation and cognitive flexibility (Cameron, 2001; Harmer, 2007). When learning English, one of the most crucial skills is the ability to speak. Speaking is an essential ability for learning a second or foreign language, assisting pupils communicates verbally through conversations and language exchanges (Prawiyata, et al., 2026). Many young learners still have trouble speaking English because they don't have enough words to use and feel unsure about themselves. In traditional classrooms, speaking activities are usually not very common and not very interesting. Building confidence in students when they speak is really challenging, which means teachers need to spend a lot of time and be very patient in helping them (Prawiyata & Barus, 2021). As a result, students often become passive and are not willing to speak. So, teachers should use new and engaging ways to show things so that students will take part more in learning.

According to (Emi et al., 2024) In the twenty-first century, scientific and technological advancements are primarily digital. It also affects the field of education in keeping with technological advancement and innovation, such as changes in pedagogy and approaches to facilitating and delivering learning content.

One of the digital learning apps that can help with speaking practice is Studycat. This app includes fun games, helpful pictures, and repeated practice that work well for young students. Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of digital learning applications in English language education. For instance, Fathiaturrizkiyah (2026) and Nifa and Muryanti (2024) found that the Studycat application effectively enhances young learners' English vocabulary mastery. Similarly, Aleksić-Maslač et al. (2018) and Li and Jianxing (2025) reported that gamified learning significantly improves students' motivation and academic achievement. However,

these previous studies have notable limitations. First, the majority of the research on Studycat has predominantly focused on vocabulary mastery rather than speaking skills. Second, most of these studies employed quantitative or quasi-experimental designs to measure learning outcomes, leaving the actual process of how young learners interact with the app to build speaking confidence underexplored. There is a lack of in-depth qualitative research that explores the students' lived experiences, engagement, and speaking practice processes in a specific context, such as an Islamic primary school in a semi-rural area. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how the Studycat application supports students' speaking practice through a qualitative descriptive approach, providing a comprehensive understanding of the implementation process and students' responses.



Figure 1. Main Menu Screen of Studycat

Speaking allows students to convey ideas, making it one of the most important language skills, opinions, as well as feelings effectively. Speaking is a useful ability because, according to Harmer (2007), develops through continuous practice and meaningful interaction. (Nunan, 2003) States that mastering speaking is essential for language learners because successful communication depends on the ability to express ideas clearly and interact with others appropriately. Speaking is one of the four language skills often considered the most challenging for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL) since it requires vocabulary knowledge, accurate pronunciation, grammatical competence, and self-confidence. Speaking is an interactive process of creating meaning that includes generating, receiving, and processing information, according to Brown (2004). Therefore, learners need continuous practice to develop their speaking ability. According to (Wariyati dkk., 2025), Speaking is a useful ability this develops through continuous practice and meaningful interaction. Likewise (Mingyan dkk., 2025) Speaking English is one of the most difficult skills for EFL students, mostly because there are not many opportunities for real-world practice, particularly in monolingual environments like China. Likewise, (Thornbury, 2005) argues that learners need frequent opportunities to use English in authentic communication in order to improve their speaking ability. Therefore, providing interactive learning environments is essential for helping young learners develop their oral communication skills.

Young learners generally enjoy learning through visual materials, games, songs, and interactive activities. Unlike adult learners, children have shorter attention spans but are naturally curious and enthusiastic when learning takes place in enjoyable environments. Cameron (2001) explains that young learners understand new concepts more effectively when relevant and captivating actions are used to present language. Adriyanti (2021) asserts that teaching children as early learners is a great way to empower them via both language acquisition and the integration of moral principles. Teaching English to young students is a difficult endeavor, according to Wulandari et al. (2020). To keep students interested and motivated in the teaching and learning process, teachers must employ effective teaching tactics. Therefore, integrating digital learning applications into English classrooms can create enjoyable learning experiences while maintaining students' motivation and attention.

As stated by (Chong M, 2024) Gamification strategies can enhance the educational experience for Generation Z students enrolled in computer courses at the university level. In order to address issues like engagement and efficient problem-solving in computer programming education, it investigates game-based learning techniques. By means of a survey conducted among students in several academic fields.

Gamification is the use of gaming elements in educational settings to increase learners' motivation as well as engagement. Features such include levels, challenges, points, prizes, and instant feedback encourage students to participate actively in learning activities. (Aleksić-Maslač, 2018) Reported that gamified learning environments significantly improve students' motivation and classroom engagement. Similarly, (Landers dkk., 2017) suggested that gamification promotes meaningful learning experiences by encouraging learners to complete educational tasks through enjoyable activities.

According to (Cui et al., 2024) the research shows that gamified learning experiences can effectively improve the outstanding issues of students in online learning, such as lack of continuous motivation and easy burnout, thereby improving the effectiveness of online learning. Then, Goethe (2019) said that the goal of gamified learning experiences is to enhance learning via engagement and fun, grabbing students' attention to help them learn more. Thus, gamification is the process of identifying game components that pique students' attention and inspire them, then using these aspects in a non-gaming setting (learning) to affect behavior.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with an observational approach to explore the use of the Studycat application in supporting students' speaking practice. A qualitative method was chosen to describe students' learning experiences, participation, and speaking performance in a natural classroom setting. The research was conducted at Islamic elementary school MIS Al-Washliyah in Sei Rampah, Indonesia. MIS Al-Washliyah was selected purposively based on several considerations. Firstly, the school integrates Islamic values with modern educational technology, yet it is located in a semi-rural area (Serdang Bedagai) where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Secondly, the school has initiated an English program for upper-grade students, but faces challenges in providing interactive speaking media due to limited technological facilities and teachers' reliance on conventional methods. The school accommodates around 150 students, with limited access to digital language laboratories. Therefore, implementing a mobile-based application like Studycat in this context provides a strategic solution to bridge the gap in speaking practice opportunities. The participants consisted of five third-grade students who were selected purposively because they had basic English learning experience, owned or had access to smartphones at home, and were actively involved during the initial learning activities. The participants were selected purposively because they had basic English learning experience and were actively involved during the learning activities.

The students' speaking performance was analyzed qualitatively by observing their utterances, comparing their pronunciation and fluency with the speaking assessment rubric, and interpreting their progress based on triangulated data from observation notes and interviews. This study was conducted in two meetings. In this first meeting, this pupil learned about this app and worked on listening to and repeating words. In the second meeting, the students worked on speaking and responding to basic expressions. The data were looked at in a descriptive way to understand how much students participated, how confident they felt, and how their speaking skills improved.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation show that this implementation from this Studycat application positively supported students' speaking practice. Based on classroom observations, students showed noticeable improvements in pronunciation, confidence, and classroom participation throughout the learning activities.

Table 1. Speaking Performance Assessment

Assessment Criteria	Meeting 1	Meeting 2	Improvement
Pronunciation	Fair	Good	Improved
Confidence	Moderate	Good	Improved
Participation	Moderate	Very Good	Improved

Table 1 demonstrates that following the adoption from this Studycat application. Improvements were observed in pronunciation, confidence, and classroom participation during the second meeting. The improvement in students' pronunciation demonstrates that repeated exposure to native-speaker audio in the

Studycat application helped students imitate correct pronunciation more accurately. Moreover, students became more confident when responding to classroom questions during the second meeting.

Table 2. Observation

Theme	Evidence	Interpretation
Engagement	Students completed activities enthusiastically	High engagement
Pronunciation	Students repeated words after audio	Pronunciation improved
Confidence	Students answered teacher's questions	Confidence increased
Participation	Students volunteered during activities	Active learning

Table 2 presents the major themes identified during classroom observation. The findings revealed that the implementation of the Studycat application positively influenced students' engagement, pronunciation, self-confidence, and classroom participation. During the second meeting, students demonstrated greater enthusiasm and were more willing to participate in English speaking activities. These findings suggest that the interactive and gamified features of Studycat created a supportive learning environment for young learners.

The improvement in students' pronunciation and confidence aligns with the findings of Fathiaturrizkiyah (2026), who noted that repeated pronunciation models in Studycat help learners imitate native-like sounds. Furthermore, the increase in active participation supports the study of Aleksić-Maslač et al. (2018) and Li and Jianxing (2025), who argued that gamified elements such as instant feedback and rewards reduce language anxiety and foster active engagement. Unlike traditional methods that often cause passive learning and reluctance to speak (Prawiyata & Barus, 2021), the interactive nature of Studycat provides a safe, low-anxiety environment. This confirms that gamified digital applications do not merely serve as entertainment, but function as effective scaffolding tools that bridge the gap between vocabulary mastery and actual speaking production (Nifa & Muryanti, 2024).

Table 3. Overall Findings

Research Question	Findings
How was Studycat implemented?	The application was integrated into two classroom meetings using interactive speaking activities.
How did students respond?	Students showed positive attitudes and actively participated.
How did Studycat support Speak practice?	It improved pronunciation, confidence, vocabulary use, and classroom participation.

The overall findings suggest that this implementation from Studycat not only supported students' speaking practice but also encouraged active participation and independent learning. Students gradually developed confidence while practicing pronunciation and simple conversations through interactive activities. Similar findings were reported by Nifa and Muryanti (2024), who concluded that Studycat effectively improves young learners' English learning experiences through enjoyable and engaging activities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of the Studycat application positively supports young learners' speaking practice by significantly improving their pronunciation, confidence, vocabulary use, and classroom participation. The interactive features, pronunciation models, and gamified activities created an enjoyable and engaging learning environment, encouraging students to participate actively and develop self-confidence in using English. These findings suggest that integrating digital applications like Studycat is highly recommended as a supplementary learning medium to create meaningful speaking practice. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to utilize such interactive digital tools to overcome students' speaking anxiety, while future researchers should consider conducting similar studies with larger participant numbers, longer implementation periods, or mixed-method designs to obtain more comprehensive findings.

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