



Enhancing English Speaking Skills through Learning Media and Discourse Marker Mastery: A Quasi-Experimental Study

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Abstract

Challenges such as disinterest in learning media and poor conversation structuring skills impact English speaking proficiency among Indonesian senior high school students. This study uses a quasi-experimental design with non-equivalent control groups in a 2 x 3 factorial pre-test-post-test format to investigate how learning media and mastery of discourse markers affect speaking skills. One hundred students from a State Islamic High School in Serang participated. Data were collected through a speaking assessment and a discourse markers test, then analyzed using inferential statistics and Two-Way ANOVA. Results indicate that the effectiveness of learning media on speaking outcomes is contingent upon the student's mastery of discourse markers. Specifically, Scrabble was more effective than Flashcards at improving speaking performance for students with varying levels of discourse marker proficiency. These findings underscore teachers' need to adopt engaging English learning media and intensively teach discourse markers to enhance students' speaking abilities.

Keywords: Discourse marker, learning media, speaking skill, English language learning

INTRODUCTION

The proficiency of Indonesian students in the English language, particularly in speaking skills, has been a longstanding issue, as evidenced by multiple studies (Fitriani & Zulkarnain, 2019; Halimah, 2018; Hanifa, 2018; Mukminin et al., 2015). Senior high school students in Indonesia struggle with English speaking due to limited opportunities to practice vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and conversational responses. These challenges limit their communication ability and pose significant obstacles to language acquisition (Erdiana et al., 2020). Moreover, traditional teaching methods, which often rely on rote memorization and focus predominantly on grammar, fail to engage students or develop their practical language skills effectively.

Observations in this research indicate that many secondary school students have difficulty forming coherent sentences needed for communication in English. The current instructional approaches and learning materials must be updated to foster speaking skills effectively. These methods often exclude modern technologies or digital tools that could facilitate learning, especially in mastering discourse markers, which are crucial for understanding and participating in continuous interactions (Arya, 2020). To address these issues, educators must adopt innovative teaching materials and methodologies that resonate with students and teachers. Integrating various media into the learning environment has been recommended to make lessons more engaging and relevant (Syafrizal et al., 2020). Comprehensive language education should encompass practical communication scenarios such as introductions, telephone conversations, requests, interruptions, expressions of gratitude, apologies, and social greetings. Ultimately, the goal is to enhance students' ability to think and communicate effectively in English, fostering their overall language development (Lumettu & Runtuwene, 2018).

This study tries to find the effectiveness of two educational tools, Scrabble Word (SW) and Flashcards, in enhancing oral communication skills through vocabulary acquisition. Scrabble Word is noted for aiding students in developing spatial, creative, social, and personal skills integral to analytical thinking. It allows students to focus on words' semantic and morphological aspects while providing an enjoyable learning experience (Kobzeva, 2015). On the other hand, Flashcards are particularly beneficial for students with specific learning needs, though they are just one of many effective media for improving speaking skills (Ramdhani, 2022). Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the broader definition of 'mode of communication,' which encompasses the medium and its contextual factors. These factors include the communication method—spoken or written—along with elements like planning and engagement, all of which can influence the choice and use of discourse markers (Crible & Cuenca, 2017).

Previous research has demonstrated that educators can utilize Scrabble to create an educational environment that fosters comprehensive learning, engages students in critical thinking, promotes the exploration of idea connections, and prepares them for real-world challenges (Klimova, 2015; Kobzeva, 2015). Discourse markers, which are words and phrases used to structure our speech, play a crucial role in linking present, past, and future statements and enhancing the clarity of communication (Manan & Raslee, 2018). Building on these foundations, this study aims to assess the impact of two educational tools, Scrabble and Flashcards, on enhancing students' speaking skills, particularly their ability to use various discourse markers effectively. Moreover, the research seeks to identify outcome differences based on the instructional media used. While previous studies have examined these elements separately, this research integrates them, exploring how different mastery levels of discourse markers (high, medium, and low) affect speaking skills when combined with these learning tools.

Therefore, this study is structured to address three specific questions. First, does using Scrabble or Flashcards lead to different levels of improvement in students' speaking skills? Second, does the mastery level of discourse markers significantly affect students' speaking abilities? Third, is there an interaction effect between the type of learning media and the level of discourse marker mastery on students' speaking proficiency? The outcomes of this investigation are expected to advance our understanding of effective teaching

strategies and have significant implications for incorporating technology and modern educational tools in teaching English, particularly in enhancing speaking competence among Indonesian high school students.

METHOD

This study adopted a quantitative, quasi-experimental design utilizing non-equivalent control groups in a 2 x 3 factorial pre-test-post-test format, as recommended by [Creswell and Poth \(2016\)](#). This approach allowed us to systematically evaluate the effects of two distinct treatments—Scrabble and Flashcards—on English speaking skills among students. Specifically, the research focused on the role of discourse markers, which are crucial for maintaining coherence and fluency in speech. While it is hard to state their necessity for English speaking definitively, discourse markers undeniably enhance the flow and coherence of communication, linking smaller speech segments and integrating text with non-linguistic contexts ([Aidinlou & Mehr, 2012](#)).

The participant pool comprised 245 students from class XI at MA Negeri 1 Serang, from which 100 were randomly selected and divided into groups of 50. One group received the Scrabble intervention, and the other received the Flashcard intervention. Further differentiation was made within each group based on the student's proficiency with discourse markers, categorized through a specialized assessment into high and low-proficiency groups. The aim was to assess grammatical accuracy and evaluate the coherence and consistency of their spoken English, providing insights into the practical effects of each educational tool on language proficiency.

Data collection for this study involved speaking evaluations and Discourse Marker's exams during the initial semester, utilizing comprehensive assessments for each tool. Participants were eleventh-grade students from Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Serang, Indonesia, chosen for their representativeness of the broader student body. A speaking test was also conducted to assess the student's proficiency in English, requiring exclusive use of the language during the test. Each student in the experimental groups underwent pre-test and post-test assessments following their respective educational interventions, focusing on using discourse markers. These markers were further analyzed in assigned speaking tasks using Fraser's theoretical framework, which clarifies the roles and connections among various discourse markers ([Fraser, 1990](#)).

The collected data, including speaking scores and mastery of discourse markers, was subjected to parametric testing based on the assumption of normally distributed variance in speaking scores ([Gall et al., 2007](#)). Inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses alongside descriptive statistics for data examination. Additionally, normality and homogeneity tests were conducted as part of the analytical process. Finally, the data was analyzed using a Two-Way ANOVA within a 2 x 3 factorial design, employing inferential statistics to understand the effects of the interventions on student performance.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the researchers evaluated the effectiveness of two learning media, Scrabble Words and flashcards, on the English-speaking skills of students, with a particular focus on their mastery of discourse markers. The researchers aimed to ascertain which learning medium was more effective and to understand how the interaction between the

type of medium and mastery levels of discourse markers affected students' speaking abilities.

The post-test results confirmed that Scrabble was generally more effective across all discourse marker mastery levels than Flashcards. Specifically, the average post-test scores for Scrabble users were consistently higher than those for Flashcard users, regardless of their mastery level. This suggests that Scrabble may be a more suitable learning medium for enhancing English-speaking skills among students at varying levels of discourse mastery.

Table 1. Pre-test. Speaking Skill

Learning Media	Discourse Markers	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Scrabble Word (Control)	High	60.83	2.041	6
	Moderate	54.42	8.406	26
	Low	69.57	6.200	23
	Total	61.45	10.031	55
Flashcard (Control Class)	High	62.27	6.497	22
	Moderate	59.17	9.174	6
	Low	50.29	12.559	17
	Total	57.33	10.902	45
Total	High	61.96	5.828	28
	Moderate	55.31	8.608	32
	Low	61.38	13.397	40
	Total	59.60	10.581	100

Comparing the pre-test (Table 1) and post-test (Table 2) results, the researchers observed student performance changes using two different learning media, Scrabble Word and Flashcard, across different mastery levels of discourse markers. In the pre-test, students using Scrabble Word averaged 61.45 overall, with high, moderate, and low mastery groups scoring 60.83, 54.42, and 69.57, respectively. For flashcard users, the overall average was 57.33, with the high, moderate, and low groups scoring 62.27, 59.17, and 50.29, respectively. The combined average across all students was 59.60.

In the post-test, the overall average for Scrabble Word users increased to 64.17, with significant improvements in the high mastery group (72.50 from 60.83) and slight decreases in the moderate group (55.00 from 54.42). The low mastery group also showed slight improvement (70.00 from 69.57). For flashcard users, the overall average also saw a slight increase to 57.50, with the high mastery group improving to 64.42 from 62.27. However, there were decreases in the moderate and low mastery groups, scoring 50.00 and 43.75, respectively, down from 59.17 and 50.29. Across both types of media, the total average score for all students in the post-test was 61.50, up from 59.60 in the pre-test, reflecting general improvements, particularly in the high and low mastery groups. Notably, the standard deviation in scores generally increased in the post-test, suggesting a broader dispersion in the results. This analysis indicates varied effects of the learning interventions over time, with Scrabble Word typically showing more improvement than flashcards, especially among high and low-mastery students.

Table 2. Post-test. Speaking Skill

Learning Media	Discourse Markers	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Scrabble Word (Experiment)	High	72.50	.000	4
	Moderate	55.00	8.389	28
	Low	70.00	8.975	28
	Total	64.17	12.009	60
Flashcard (Experiment)	High	64.42	6.975	26
	Moderate	50.00	.000	2
	Low	43.75	7.724	12
	Total	57.50	11.875	40
Total	High	65.17	6.757	30
	Moderate	54.67	8.193	30
	Low	63.88	15.831	40
	Total	61.50	12.340	100

Table 3. Two-way ANOVA analysis shows a significant difference in the results of students' English speaking abilities using Scrabble Word and flashcard learning media (Sig. 000 and $F = 25.915$). Then, mastery of discourse markers also significantly affected students' English-speaking skills (Sig. 000 and $F = 9.899$). Learning media and mastery of discourse markers interact with students' English-speaking skills with a significance value of 0.000 and $F = 14.088$. According to the results, the interaction effect was significant ($F=14.088$, $p=0.000$), explaining 60.5% of the variation in participants' speaking outcomes. The impact of learning media on speaking outcomes relies upon the mastery level of discourse markers. To find out how the interaction between teaching media and high, medium, and low students' mastery of discourse markers on students' English-speaking ability can be predicted through a post-ANOVA follow-up test or the following Scheffe test.

Table 3. Test of ANOVA 2 ways

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	9127.404 ^a	5	1825.481	28.851	.000
Intercept	134118.102	1	134118.102	2119.697	.000
Learning Media	1639.704	1	1639.704	25.915	.000
Discourse Markers	1252.707	2	626.354	9.899	.000
Learning Media* Discourse Markers	1782.804	2	891.402	14.088	.000
Error	5947.596	94	63.272		
Total	393300.000	100			
Corrected Total	15075.000	99			

a. R Squared = .605 (Adjusted R Squared = .584)

Furthermore, table 4 below displays the outcomes from a post-ANOVA Scheffe multiple comparison test, which assesses differences in English-speaking skills across groups with varying mastery levels of discourse markers—high, moderate, and low. This

statistical approach helps clarify the significance and magnitude of differences in speaking skills between each group pairing.

The analysis reveals that students with high discourse marker mastery outperform those with moderate mastery by an average of 10.50 points, a statistically significant difference with a confidence interval ranging from 5.39 to 15.61. Conversely, when comparing moderate to high mastery, the result is simply the inverse, reaffirming this difference in performance. Additionally, students with moderate mastery perform significantly better than those with low mastery, with a mean difference of 9.21 points and a confidence interval from 4.43 to 13.99. Interestingly, direct comparisons between the high and low mastery groups do not show a statistically significant difference, as the results (mean difference of 1.29 and a wide confidence interval crossing zero) suggest minimal disparity in their speaking skills.

Table 4. Post-ANOVA Follow-up Test Using Scheffe

(I) Discourse Markers	(J) Discourse Markers	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
High	Moderate	10.50*	2.054	.000	5.39	15.61
	Low	1.29	1.921	.798	-3.49	6.07
Moderate	High	-10.50*	2.054	.000	-15.61	-5.39
	Low	-9.21*	1.921	.000	-13.99	-4.43
Low	High	-1.29	1.921	.798	-6.07	3.49
	Moderate	9.21*	1.921	.000	4.43	13.99

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 63.272.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Furthermore, the following graph estimates the marginal mean between learning media and mastery of discourse markers on students' English-speaking abilities. As visualized in Figure 1, through the medium of Scrabble, the group with low mastery of discourse markers significantly outperformed the group with high mastery of discourse markers regarding speaking results. On the other hand, in implementing flashcard teaching, the group with high mastery of discourse markers significantly improved their speaking results compared to the group with low mastery of discourse markers.

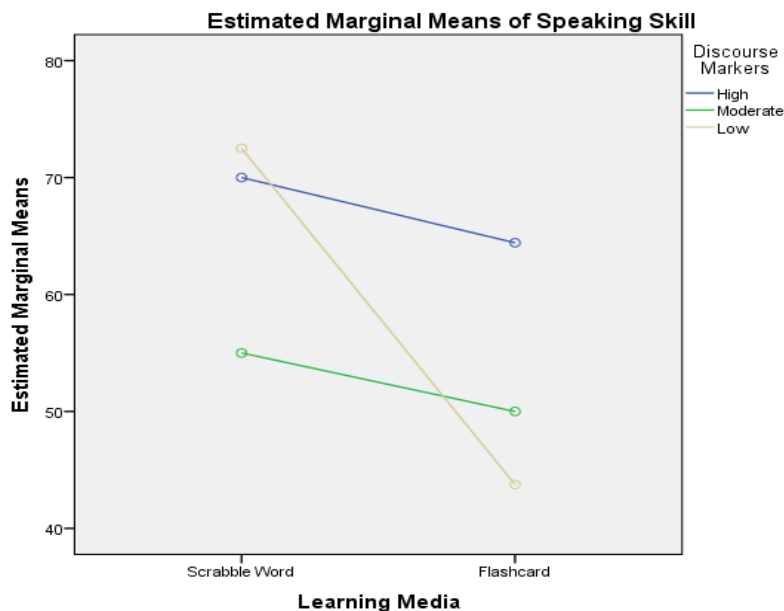


Figure 1. Interactive Effects of Variables

This study focuses on three key research questions related to the impact of these learning media on students’ mastery of discourse markers and overall speaking abilities. The findings reveal that despite the potential of Scrabble and flashcards to enhance speaking skills—a fact supported by several studies (Hebblethwaite, 2009; Ramdhani, 2022; Utami et al., 2021)—many students still struggle with basic English vocabulary. This struggle is often due to educational practices overemphasizing grammar and using traditional methods like dictionary-based learning, which may not effectively address vocabulary and discourse marker mastery needs.

Moreover, the study notes that Indonesian students frequently encounter difficulties with key speaking components such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation (Kusuma, 2021). Although students are regularly exposed to discourse markers, especially in learning procedural text genres, their mastery of these linguistic tools still needs to be improved. This research underscores the need for innovative teaching methods that improve vocabulary and grammar and enhance students’ understanding and use of discourse markers to boost their overall English-speaking proficiency.

The research explores how mastery of discourse markers affects English speaking skills among senior high school students, particularly at MA Negeri 1 Serang. Discourse markers are crucial in dialogues due to their referential use, indicating active student participation. This study investigates explicitly whether students’ speaking abilities differ when using two types of learning media, which are Scrabble Word and flashcards. The findings reveal that the effectiveness of these learning media varies significantly with the students’ mastery levels of discourse markers—high, medium, and low. Students with high mastery levels demonstrate considerably better speaking skills using Scrabble and flashcards than those with lower mastery levels. Notably, among students with high discourse mastery, those using Scrabble significantly outperformed their counterparts using flashcards, albeit by a narrow margin.

For students with low mastery of discourse markers, the performance disparity between the two media types was pronounced. The post-test results, analyzed via a two-way ANOVA, showed a significant difference in English speaking ability across all mastery levels after the educational interventions. These outcomes suggest that the impact of learning media on speaking proficiency is contingent upon the level of discourse marker mastery, with Scrabble proving particularly effective for both high and low-mastery groups. Supporting these conclusions are multiple studies indicating that Scrabble can substantially enhance speaking skills. For instance, [Klimova's \(2015\)](#) research at a Russian university and [Khaira et al. \(2021\)](#) study with 7th-grade students in Indonesia found significant improvements in participants' speaking abilities after employing Scrabble as a learning tool. These findings underscore the importance of tailored educational approaches that consider the specific linguistic competencies of students.

Besides, several studies have indicated that flashcard is an effective medium to leverage the development of speaking children ([Febriani, 2020](#); [Khan, 2022](#); [Li & Tong, 2019](#); [Utami et al., 2021](#); [Wen et al., 2020](#)). Many studies have been conducted in the literature to compare flashcards and Scrabble media. A survey conducted by [Ramdhani \(2022\)](#) demonstrates that both media, Scrabble and flashcard, are beneficial in improving the speaking skills of children with specific learning impairments. However, Scrabble is found to be more effective than flashcards. Even so, in this study, the flashcard medium seems impractical, particularly for children with low discourse marker mastery. Despite those with high discourse mastery, the effectiveness is minimal.

The research focuses on using and mastering discourse markers among senior high school students in Indonesia, identifying a significant gap in students' familiarity and understanding of these linguistic tools. Discourse markers, such as "well," "now," "so," "but," "okay," and "let us start," among others, play a crucial role in organizing speech and enhancing fluency by marking sequences, topic shifts, continuations, and summarizations in dialogue ([Fung & Carter, 2007](#)). Despite their importance, many Indonesian teachers and students need to be better versed in the terminology of discourse markers, often using them unwittingly. This lack of awareness and teaching focus contributes to limited mastery among students. For instance, phrases that contribute to fluency and coherence in conversation are rarely explicitly taught in schools, even though the students routinely use them. This oversight can hinder students' ability to achieve fluency in English, a critical goal in language learning ([Rahimi & Riasati, 2012](#)).

In examining whether mastery levels of discourse markers (high, medium, low) affect speaking abilities, the study revealed varied impacts on speaking outcomes. The Scheffe follow-up test indicated significant differences in speaking abilities between the high and medium groups and between the medium and low groups. However, no significant difference was found between the high and low groups. This suggests that while some mastery of discourse markers correlates with better speaking performance, the most extreme levels of mastery do not exhibit a straightforward relationship.

Further, the study highlights a broader issue which is about a substantial number of students show proficiency in using discourse markers compared to those who do not, underscoring a need for targeted educational strategies at MA Negeri 1 Serang. This finding aligns with multiple studies suggesting that understanding and using discourse markers effectively can enhance speaking skills ([Arya, 2020](#); [Aşik & Cephe, 2013](#); [Jayantini et al.,](#)

2022; Sujarwati, 2017; Truong, 2022). However, it contrasts with research by Khamenei and Faruji (2020), who observed no significant effect of discourse markers on the speaking achievements of EFL students at an intermediate level. Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of well-equipped learning environments. School principals are encouraged to provide adequate facilities that support these innovative teaching methods. The study recommends that future research extend beyond high school education to include various educational levels, exploring the broader potential of learning media and discourse markers in enhancing English proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The research conclusively demonstrated that integrating specific learning media, such as Scrabble and flashcards, significantly influences the English-speaking abilities of high school students in Indonesia, particularly when combined with their mastery of discourse markers. This study found that the effectiveness of these learning tools is intricately linked to the student's proficiency levels in using discourse markers, indicating a crucial interaction between learning media and language proficiency. Quantitative analysis revealed that students exhibiting high mastery of discourse markers benefited more substantially from using Scrabble than flashcards. Conversely, those with lower levels of mastery did not show a marked improvement, underscoring the necessity for targeted educational approaches that cater to varying language competencies. The data suggests that while Scrabble and flashcards can enhance speaking skills, the choice of media should be aligned with the students' linguistic strengths and weaknesses to optimize learning outcomes. Moreover, the research highlights the broader educational implications, urging teachers to diversify their instructional strategies by incorporating engaging learning media and intensifying focus on discourse markers, pivotal in achieving fluency and coherence in English. The findings advocate for educational policies that equip schools with the digital tools to support this dynamic approach to language learning, thereby preparing students to meet global communication standards.

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