

**UTILIZING MYSTERY BOX MEDIA TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SPEAKING  
PROFICIENCY AT MAYJEND SUTOYO SCHOOL**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research aims to assess the effectiveness of using mystery box media to improve English speaking skills among 14 eighth-grade students at Mayjend Sutoyo Middle School. The participants were chosen based on their enrollment in the class, ensuring a representative sample of the entire student cohort. The study employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, encompassing three phases: Pre-cycle, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2. This methodology allows for a comprehensive evaluation of the strategy's impact on student engagement and performance. Data collection methods include observations, speaking rubric evaluations, and documentation analysis. The implementation of the Mystery Box strategy led to a significant improvement in students' speaking skills. Initially, 14% of the students met the passing score in the pre-test. This rose to 71% after the first cycle and 85% after the second cycle, demonstrating the strategy's effectiveness in enhancing English speaking proficiency among eighth graders. These outcomes highlight the value of interactive, game-based learning techniques in fostering English speaking proficiency. Future studies might investigate the prolonged effects of this method on students' overall language development.

**Keywords** : *English Speaking Proficiency, Speaking Skills, Mystery Box, Utilization*

## INTRODUCTION

Speaking plays a crucial role for students as it helps them express emotions to others, convey ideas or thoughts clearly, communicate effectively, and build trust from others in what they communicate. Additionally, this skill is beneficial for showcasing individual abilities. Speaking is an essential skill that students must learn and master as it lays the foundation for language acquisition. In the practice of speaking, attention is not only directed at what is being discussed and the language used but also at the audience. Furthermore, a wise speaker also pays attention to the topic being discussed and utilizes language that is easily understood by their listeners. Moat (2016:88) says that speaking seem to be an important skill that a learner should acquire. Speaking one of skill very important the students learning and mastered, because it is the fundamental of learning a language. According to Rahmad (2008:14), persuasive communication with students, whether in groups or individually, is essential. Persuasive communication is the process of influencing people's attitudes, actions, and decisions (Husda et al., 2022).

Speaking plays a crucial role in learning English as its purpose is to enable students to communicate effectively in oral conversations (Wahyuni et al., 2021). However, a considerable number of students experience hesitancy in speaking. Most of them use English in the classroom due to academic requirements and rarely engage in it beyond the class setting. Hesitation in speaking often occurs in daily life, especially during unplanned speeches or interactions in English. In the interaction process, this hesitancy may manifest in sounds or noises that disrupt the fluency of speech. Carroll (2007) defines that hesitations are a silent moment that emerges between the units of language in uttering sentences (Dewi, 2020).

Conducting research on improving students' pronunciation skills through the use of specific strategies is crucial, as pronunciation is a foundational skill that enhances and motivates students in speaking classes (Asrul & Husda, 2022). Creating a conducive and engaging atmosphere is a teacher's responsibility to keep students enthusiastic during the learning process. One effective method is utilizing

media as a means of delivering messages to students. According to Andang Ismail (2009), play equipment is defined as any tool that can stimulate activities and bring joy to children. Meanwhile, educational play tools (APE) are a type of play equipment designed not only for entertainment but also to enhance educational functions (Wicaksono, 2015).

One of the methods that can be employed in language learning is the use of media. Media refers to the method used to convey specific messages or information to its recipients. In the field of education, media is commonly adopted as a means of instructional delivery. Learning media according to Cahyo (2019) a media that can be used in gaining knowledge, which includes teachers as coaches and methods of supporting knowledge to message recipients to gain knowledge. Mystery box is a box-shaped medium containing information about learning materials, physical objects, or instructional content. Mystery Box is a tool that is the idea of cardboard items used in learning (Arumsasi, 2022). In education, Mystery Box makes students curious about the content in the media so that it encourages students to understand the material (Khasanah, 2021). Mystery boxes are not commonly employed in English language learning, but they can serve as an engaging tool to capture students' interest in the educational process (Utami et al., 2022).

Previous research, such as that conducted by (Aisyah, 2021), emphasized the use of video learning media to enhance students' speaking skills. However, this study introduces a new dimension by introducing the Mystery Box as a more interactive and creative learning strategy. While audiovisual media aids students in better understanding and mimicking language, the Mystery Box directly boosts students' confidence through active engagement and surprise elements.

With a different approach, this research demonstrates that the Mystery Box has the potential to be an effective alternative in addressing junior high school students' speaking hesitations. Through comparison with previous studies, this research highlights the strengths and novel contributions offered by the Mystery Box in enhancing students' motivation and speaking skills. Thus, this study not only

complements prior research but also offers fresh insights into learning strategies that can enhance students' overall learning experiences. Based on the background provided, the research aims to address the following questions:

1. To investigate how the mystery box enhances students' English speaking proficiency.
2. To identify the factors contributing to English speaking proficiency.

The study focuses on VIII grade students at SMP Mayjend Sutoyo SM Medan, targeting speaking hesitation through the Mystery Box Strategy. It explores language learning challenges specific to this grade level. The research's significance lies in offering practical and theoretical insights beneficial to students and researchers.

**Theoretical Significance:**

This study investigates the Mystery Box Strategy's effectiveness in reducing speech hesitancy among junior high school students, contributing fresh perspectives to teaching methodologies.

**Practical Significance:**

**For Students:** The findings offer practical ways to overcome speech hesitancy, enhancing confidence and fluency.

**For Educators and Researchers:** The study provides innovative approaches for addressing speaking hesitancy, potentially influencing teaching practices and guiding future research in communication skill development.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The method used in this research is Classroom Action Research (CAR). Garpersz and Uktolseja (2020) state that Classroom Action Research (CAR) is reflective research by taking certain actions aimed at improving learning practices in the classroom professionally and has an essential role in scientific research because it determines the quality of research results (Marsevani & Habeebanisya, 2022). This research adopts the action research model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of Pre-cycle, Cycle 1, and Cycle 2. The Pre-cycle phase

involves the researcher making preparations to identify problems and issues. Each cycle 1 and 2 consists of 4 stages: (1) Planning, (2) Action, (3) Observing, and (4) Reflecting (Asrori & Rusman, 2020).

The subjects of this research were VIII grade students from Mayjend Sutoyo Middle School, comprising 14 students from a single class. The subjects were chosen by the researchers to analyze how the mystery box learning media functions in overcoming students' hesitation in speaking.

Researchers employ data collection methodologies to gather information for their research. Within this methodology, researchers utilize a variety of techniques to acquire data, with a particular emphasis on Speaking Rubric Scores, Observations, and Documentation.

#### 1. Speaking Rubric assessment

This rubric is an assessment tool to measure students' speaking abilities. This rubric consists of certain criteria that convey various aspects of speaking ability, such as clarity, correct pronunciation, fluency, and the level of understanding achieved through the application of the Mystery Box Strategy. According to Brown (2012), the rubrics can be used for assess students' language ability or for giving feedback of students' achievement or progress in learning language (Syafrizal et al., 2020).

**Table 1. Speaking Rubric Scores by H.Douglas Brown (2012)**

Scores	Aspects				
	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Accuracy	Fluency	Comprehensibility
1	Very unclear pronunciation with many errors	Very limited vocabulary, with many errors	Very poor grammar accuracy, with many errors	Very disjointed speech, slow	Very difficult to understand, many confusions

2	Somewhat difficult to understand, with some errors	Limited vocabulary, with some errors	Poor grammar accuracy, with some errors	Somewhat disjointed speech, slow	Somewhat difficult to understand, some confusions
3	Pronunciation is clear enough, with some errors	Vocabulary is reasonably wide, with some errors	Accuracy of grammar is reasonably good, with some errors	Speech is reasonably fluent, sometimes disjointed	Reasonably easy to understand, sometimes confused
4	Clear pronunciation, with few minor errors	Wide vocabulary, with few errors	Good grammar accuracy, with few errors	Fluent speech, rarely disjointed	Easy to understand, rarely confused
5	Very clear pronunciation, almost no errors	Very wide vocabulary, almost no errors	Very good grammar accuracy, almost no errors	Very fluent speech, almost no pauses	Very easy to understand, no confusion

## 2. Observation

In this research, observation involves direct examination of objects in the field. In this specific case, the researcher observes the process of students' English-speaking abilities when using the Mystery Box.

## 3. Documentation

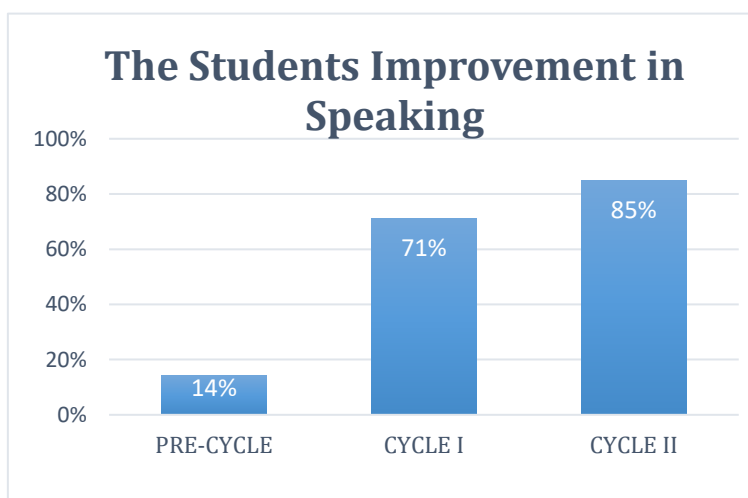
Document and note-based research uses existing data for research, the researcher will record field notes that include students' attitudes, their responses, and the researcher's personal reflections during English class. These notes will help in understanding changes in a student's speaking ability and how using the Mystery Box affects them. In addition to field notes, researcher will use photo documentation to record significant moments that occur during the lesson.

The data analysis technique employed in the research is based on the theory proposed by Kemmis and Taggart (2012), conducted over two cycles. Each cycle involves stages such as planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Asrori & Rusman, 2020). Planning involves the steps to be taken to improve, enhance, or change behaviors and attitudes expected as solutions to existing problems. In the Action phase, this concerns the researcher's efforts to make improvements, enhancements, or changes guided by the action plan. Observation is the data collection activity in the research, where the researcher observes the results or impacts of the actions taken on the students. Meanwhile, in the Reflection phase, the researcher evaluates, observes, and considers the results or impacts of the actions taken as a basis for concluding an understanding of the processes and outcomes that occur, including changes resulting from the actions taken.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The findings of this research are based on the results obtained from the pre-cycle to cycle II. The explanation of these findings is presented in the form of a graphic interpretation. During the implementation of the mystery box learning media to improve students' speaking skills, researchers observed that in the second cycle, the average score obtained by students in speaking had increased significantly and exceeded the KKM score (70). This information is depicted in the graphic below:



*Graphic 1 : Enhancement of English Speaking Proficiency Using Mystery Box Media*

The table above illustrates the percentage increase in students' speaking proficiency during the research phases. During the pre-cycle assessment, it was evident that the majority of students scored below average or did not meet the minimum passing threshold, highlighting the urgent need for significant intervention. This initial assessment served as a basis, shedding light on the areas where students faced the most difficulty, particularly in pronunciation, vocabulary, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. These fundamental aspects of speaking became the primary focus of intervention using the Mystery Box media.

In Cycle I, the researcher devised a learning plan tailored to the student curriculum. The implementation of the Mystery Box strategy aimed to cultivate an engaging and interactive learning environment conducive to skill development. The researcher found that 71% of the students achieved the minimum passing score ( $\geq 70$ ), marking a significant increase from the pre-cycle assessment where only 14% met the threshold. The remarkable improvement in Cycle I can be attributed to the engaging and interactive nature of the Mystery Box activities, which fostered a more dynamic and motivating learning environment. Students became not only more engaged but also more willing to participate and practice their speaking skills.

Further progress was observed in Cycle II, where refinements were made to the intervention approach based on insights gained from Cycle I. Clearer instructions, improved guidance, and targeted support mechanisms were implemented to optimize learning outcomes. All students (100%) reached or surpassed the minimum passing score. The consistent improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II underscores the sustained impact of the Mystery Box media on students' speaking proficiency. The additional 10% enhancement from Cycle I to Cycle II indicates that students continued to benefit from the interactive and practical nature of the Mystery Box activities, reinforcing their progress in English speaking proficiency. Moreover, the research has successfully achieved its objectives by the end of Cycle II, indicating that the study is considered sufficient at this stage.



## Discussion

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of utilizing the Mystery Box media in enhancing students' English speaking proficiency. The results demonstrate a substantial improvement in students' speaking skills from the pre-cycle assessment to Cycle II, indicating the efficacy of this innovative teaching approach.

One of the key observations from the research phases was the significant increase in students' speaking proficiency throughout the intervention. During the pre-cycle assessment, a majority of students struggled to meet the minimum passing threshold, underscoring the urgent need for intervention. However, with the implementation of the Mystery Box strategy in Cycle I, a remarkable improvement was observed, with 71% of students achieving the minimum passing score. This improvement can be attributed to the engaging and interactive nature of the Mystery Box activities, which created a dynamic and motivating learning environment.

Moreover, the findings from Cycle II highlight the sustained impact of the Mystery Box media on students' speaking proficiency. With further refinements to the intervention approach based on insights gained from Cycle I, all students were able to reach or surpass the minimum passing score. This consistent improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II indicates the effectiveness of the Mystery Box approach in reinforcing students' progress in English speaking proficiency.

Furthermore, the research has successfully achieved its objectives by the end of Cycle II, as indicated by the attainment of the desired outcomes. The significant improvement in students' speaking skills underscores the relevance and importance of innovative teaching methodologies in language learning. By providing students with engaging and interactive learning experiences, such as those offered by the Mystery Box media, educators can create a conducive environment for skill development.

The findings of this study have several implications for language teaching and learning practices. Firstly, they emphasize the importance of incorporating interactive and engaging learning activities into the curriculum to enhance students' language proficiency. The Mystery Box approach, with its focus on active participation and practical application, offers a promising avenue for achieving this goal. Secondly, the research highlights the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address students' specific learning needs effectively.

In conclusion, the results of this study underscore the significant benefits of using the Mystery Box media in improving students' English speaking proficiency. The findings contribute to the body of knowledge on innovative teaching methodologies and provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers in the field of language education. Further research in this area could explore additional applications of the Mystery Box approach and its impact on other language skills, such as listening, reading, and writing.

## **CONCLUSSION AND SUGGESTION**

### **Conclusion**

Based on the conducted research, it is concluded that:

1. In this study, the utilization of the "mystery box" strategy significantly enhanced students' English speaking proficiency. This approach facilitated a supportive and engaging learning environment, encouraging students to speak spontaneously and creatively on various topics provided by the mystery box. By presenting unpredictable prompts, the strategy effectively mitigated students' fear of making mistakes, thereby bolstering their confidence in expressing themselves in English. Additionally, the "mystery box" fostered active participation and collaboration among students, as they eagerly anticipated the topics and engaged in discussions with their peers. Overall, this strategy not only improved students' speaking skills but also cultivated a positive and interactive classroom atmosphere conducive to language learning.

2. For future research endeavors, it is recommended to conduct a more nuanced analysis to explore specific variables, such as students' demographic backgrounds or the duration of strategy implementation, which may influence the efficacy of the "mystery box" approach. This deeper investigation would yield a more comprehensive understanding of the strategy's potential in enhancing English language education at the secondary school level. However, for future research, it is recommended to conduct a more in-depth analysis of how specific variables, such as students' backgrounds or the duration of the strategy implementation, may affect the effectiveness of the "mystery box" strategy. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the potential of this strategy in the context of English language education in secondary schools. The study identified several key factors that contribute to students' English speaking proficiency. Student motivation plays a crucial role; lack of motivation often stems from an unsupportive environment both at school and at home. Students seldom engage in English language interactions on a daily basis, and the media they access predominantly uses the Indonesian language. This leads to hesitancy and difficulties in maintaining fluency and accuracy in English pronunciation. Additionally, inappropriate or inaccurate vocabulary usage can cause confusion among listeners and reduce the clarity of the conveyed message. Students often lack variety and depth in their vocabulary usage. Other factors include insufficient understanding of the learning material and lack of attention to the teacher's explanations. Students frequently prioritize playing over studying, which results in low motivation to learn. The fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers also hinders students from expressing themselves fluently and confidently.

### **Suggestion**

In order to enhance the validity of the research, it should be acknowledged that this study still has limitations that need to be addressed. Expanding the sample size and utilizing more comprehensive evaluation methods could provide a deeper understanding of the impact of the Mystery Box strategy on students' speaking abilities. Furthermore, employing a variety of measurement instruments could offer a more holistic perspective.

To improve students' speaking skills, it is recommended that they become more actively involved in English language activities outside of class hours. This can be achieved through participation in English language clubs or practicing more frequently using online learning resources. For teachers, it is advised to continue developing teaching methods that focus on practicing English speaking skills and providing constructive feedback to students. However, it should be acknowledged that this research is not without its imperfections, and there are still shortcomings that need to be addressed in future studies. As for researchers, future studies may consider expanding the sample size or involving more variables to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing students' speaking abilities. Other researchers may also consider further investigating the effectiveness of the Mystery Box strategy in diverse educational contexts to broaden our understanding of its effectiveness.

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