



## INDEPENDENT USE OF JENGA GAME AMONG INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, ABILITY, AND MOTIVATION

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### **Abstract:**

This study examines the independent utilization of the Jenga game, also referred to as Building Blocks, as a learning medium to improve the motivation, engagement, and ability of Indonesian EFL learners to express their opinions in English. This research offers a comprehensive comprehension of the experiences and perspectives of students when Jenga is integrated into the English language learning process through a case study approach. Twenty-eight eighth-grade students from Class VIII F at MTsN 1 Sidoarjo participated in the study from February to May 2024. Classroom observations and questionnaires were implemented to ascertain students' engagement, confidence, and capacity to express their thoughts in English. The results indicated that integrating Jenga into educational activities substantially improved students' confidence in expressing their opinions, reduced anxiety, and increased active participation. The game's interactive nature nurtured a collaborative environment, encouraging peer learning and motivation. Students exhibited a greater propensity to participate in class discussions and honed their critical thinking and communication abilities. The study emphasizes the efficacy of gamified learning aids in fostering linguistic abilities and fostering confidence in EFL contexts. These findings indicate that Jenga is a valuable resource for educators interested in innovative methods to support language acquisition and create a dynamic and motivating classroom environment. This method emphasizes the potential of games to promote active learning and real-world language use.

**Keywords:** *Giving Opinion Material, Jenga Game, Learning Media, Student's Perspective*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Educators frequently employ games as effective instruments to facilitate interactive and engaging learning activities. Games are an exceptional method for educators to present educational materials in a manner that captivates students' attention, as per Sugar (2002). Various games exist, including those that emphasize design and construction (Pinasthika et al., 2014). Jenga is a game that individuals of all ages can relish, and it involves stacking wooden or plastic blocks to form a tower. Jenga has been recognized as an enjoyable and unconventional method of acquiring English (Krisanti, G.E. et al., 2023). Jenga has the potential to be adapted to assist students in the practice of articulating their opinions, among other potential applications in language learning.

Expressing one's opinions entails manifesting one's emotions, ideas, or thoughts in response to a subject, frequently accompanied by facial expressions that reflect moods or emotions (Hornby, 1995). This skill is typically taught in English language learning through specific topics intended to help students effectively communicate their ideas to others. Nevertheless, a significant number of students struggle to articulate their opinions independently, frequently relying on the guidance of their teachers. Incorporating engaging and interactive learning media, such as Jenga, can considerably improve students' capacity to communicate their thoughts and build their confidence and involvement in the learning process, thereby addressing this challenge. This activity emphasizes the significance of incorporating game-based tools into teaching English.



Research studies have highlighted the positive impact of game media on English language teaching and learning (Winaldo& Oktaviani, 2022; Ghazy et al., 2021). One popular game used in English learning is Jenga. Fauziyah et al. (2021) conducted a study using Jenga as a cooperative learning strategy for critical reading of English texts. By modifying and adding questions related to critical reading, students could understand and analyze the text better. In a recent study, Frida and Hartoyo (2021) looked at how Jenga can be used to teach speaking skills to 10th-grade students. The study showed that using Jenga media in research and design is practical and received high scores for its validity. The study found that Jenga is a helpful tool for students to learn from. Research shows that playing Jenga can be an enjoyable and helpful way to teach English.

Several studies show the significance of board games being an effective learning medium for improving children's English language skills (Li & Liu, 2018, Lin et al., 2024). In a study, board games were used as a fun alternative learning tool for children aged 6 to 10 years, and the results showed that they effectively improved their abilities. The Snakes and Ladders game has proven to be very useful in enhancing young children's vocabulary skills in English. Another study focused on the effectiveness of the Snakes and Ladders game in helping children recognize English vocabulary (Nuraini et.al, 2024), and significant improvements were seen after using this game as a learning tool. Apart from that, bingo games have been proven effective in improving English vocabulary mastery in young children (Rahmasari, 2021). Board games have been identified as a learning tool that can improve children's English-speaking skills.

Previous studies show that some indeed use Jenga as a medium, but few research has used Jenga as a medium to express opinions in English. This fact means that this research aims to discover the perspectives of students who use the Jenga game to express their views on learning English. Several methods, such as observation and questionnaires, were used for this research. As a result, students' involvement, abilities and motivation when using Jenga as a medium for expressing opinions in English learning were investigated.

In education, the engagement theory is a critical concept that covers three main dimensions of engagement: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. Cognitive engagement is defined not just as how often students engage in instructional activities but rather as the quality of that engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004). In such a language learning context, it refers to learners' ability to think critically, integrate knowledge, and tackle language issues. In the language learning context, cognitive engagement refers to students' ability to think critically, integrate knowledge, and solve language problems. It can be inferred that students are not only focused on being receptive to information passively but can also process and apply that information in real-language contexts. This means that students are not only focused on passively receiving information but can also process and apply the information in a natural language context. Some EFL students, for example, are faced with problem-solving situations through game activities; they have to use critical thinking skills to understand, formulate, and respond to the challenges that arise in the game (Skinner et al., 2008).



Cognitive engagement needs students to go way beyond memorization, driving students to both analyze and apply language performance in a dynamic and unexpected context.

In addition to stimulating students to think critically, there is engagement that relates to students' positive feelings. Effective engagement gives rise to students' positive feelings with the existence of learning materials, and their interest, enthusiasm, and motivation are also involved in language learning (Arcipe & Balone, 2023). This follows the findings of Ryan and Deci (2000) in Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which reveals that the feeling of competition will be able to increase students' intrinsic motivation. In the Jenga game, the challenge of certain elements will create a competitive learning environment that will motivate students to engage in deeper learning.

A study conducted in Indonesia by Wijayanti and Harahap (2022) strengthened this belief by finding that student engagement increased when using interactive games in EFL classes. They demonstrated how interactive games like Jenga decreased students' pressure or the anxiety they often experience when speaking English and fostered a more fun and favourable atmosphere. Consequently, learners are more likely to feel confident in communicating in English and engaging in more intense interactions with their peers or the learning material itself. Having a sense of both challenge and success in the game, they become more highly motivated to work, ultimately improving their affective and cognitive involvement in their language learning.

Furthermore, behavioural engagement also plays an important role, especially in active participation in classroom activities, discipline, and sustained effort in achieving learning goals (Finn, 1993). When students are behaviourally engaged, they show perseverance, resilience and a desire to keep participating, significantly supporting language learning. Wijayanti and Harahap (2022) noted that in an EFL classroom in Indonesia, students actively engaged in games such as Jenga showed improved speaking and listening skills as they were encouraged to interact spontaneously. It is implicit that by combining cognitive, affective and behavioural engagement, play-based learning may create the perfect holistic learning experience and foster effective engagement in learning English as a second language.

Using Jenga in EFL teaching allows students to develop language ability in a contextualized manner. Indeed, the game, when modified for instructional purposes, involves the use of language in every move, from the instruction to the interaction among students. This insight is consistent with Bandura's (1986) theories of social learning, which highlight that learner learn through observation, role modelling and social interaction. In games like Jenga, the students observe and imitate the correct use of language and practice. This engagement process allows students to speak verbally, tune in, and respond in English, greatly enriching their learning experience through direct engagement.

A study by Ali and Wahyuni (2021) indicated that this game accurately enhances students' language skills, mainly due to its collaborative nature. Through working in collaboration in small groups or pairs, the learners are supported to communicate and resolve common issues, hence enabling them to enhance their mastery of vocabulary



and grammatical constructions. It allows them to explore different ways of presenting ideas, clarifying meaning, and giving instructions, which indirectly improves their confidence and speaking skills.

During language teaching, motivation is among the critical elements that help make students academically successful (Dörnyei, 2001). Therefore, in the case of teaching EFL, it is essential to recognize that motivation can assist learners in not only acquiring the vocabulary and procedures of the EFL language but also actively putting them into practice. Following Gardner's Socio-Educational Model, motivation consists of three main concepts: a desire for language understanding, persistent learning behaviours, and an intrinsic level of motivation from learning itself (Gardner, 1985). When this intrinsic motivation is developed, students become more engaged in their studies and find it challenging to avoid language obstacles. It is essential to improve their efficacy and involvement in learning the language.

The game provides healthy skills and creates an engaging learning environment, which can increase students' motivation to learn English. Based on Dewi and Kusuma (2022), experiential learning through games such as Jenga can nurture an instructive environment in the classroom and increase students' self-trust in their ability to participate in language teaching. Through the fun of the game, students are more comfortable communicating in English without consistently stopping to solve problems. This powerful motivation prompts students to engage more in the learning experience and may even reduce any fear or worry inhibiting their advancement. In such a manner, engaging games help students improve their language skills and encourage them to overcome barriers that appear throughout the learning experience.

## 2. METHOD

The approach used in this research is a case study approach that provides an in-depth description of students' opinions when using the English language game, namely Building Blocks or Jenga, especially in learning to express opinions. An in-depth investigation of an incident or extraordinary incident is the definition of a case study. This approach offers a comprehensive understanding of phenomena in real-life contexts (Creswell, 2014). This case study was conducted from February to May 2024 and involved 27 class VIII F MTsN 1 Sidoarjo students. Researchers conducted observations and distributed questionnaires to explore their experiences using the Jenga game to learn English more deeply, especially in expressing opinions.

The results of using Jenga in previous English language learning resulted in a clear explanation of the research instruments used for data collection. This instrument is designed to measure student engagement, learning outcomes, and the effectiveness of Jenga as a tool for expressing opinions in English. Several questionnaires that function as data collection consist of three parts. The first section will collect demographic data on respondents, including gender, grade, age, and level of English proficiency. The second part consists of 10 questions to measure students' experiences and perceptions of using Jenga as a learning medium. This section focuses on enthusiasm, self-confidence, structured thinking and overall engagement. The third section contains 13 observation items to evaluate student behaviour, interactions, and learning outcomes



during Jenga-based learning sessions. These items will be specifically observed directly by the researcher during class.

In the initial stages, the survey used a series of general student engagement scales adapted to the specific aims of using Jenga to teach English. This survey has ten questions grouped into several sections to measure student engagement. Some of these items measure students' excitement and willingness to participate in learning activities with Jenga. It includes three components: enthusiasm, motivation, and will. The second aspect, confidence and fluency, also consists of three things. These items assess whether students feel more confident and able to speak English fluently after playing the game. The structured and organizational thinking aspect involves two items that assess students' ability to organize their thoughts using Jenga. Finally, the class interaction and participation construct include two items assessing how students interact during class. We used a structured approach to analyze students' engagement with Jenga in the classroom.

Meanwhile, the third function is that observation data is collected by the teacher using a checklist. Operations are focused on 13 aspects, including student participation, compliance with rules, self-confidence, and overall class atmosphere. They are evaluated using a 'Yes' or 'No' format, with additional descriptions to provide context for each observed behaviour. Considering the observation items, both the second and third use a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree to capture the level of student agreement with each statement in the questionnaire.

According to Tuckman (1999), experts in the areas that were being measured, such as student participation, three experts were selected to validate the instrument, interaction in the classroom and language learning. From the example, I will make sure how students interact and express their opinions in Jenga activities and what the function of Jenga is as a language teaching medium. The third expert was from educational psychology, who ensured that the instrument accurately measured students' motivation, confidence, and structured thinking, especially regarding how Jenga influences these psychological factors. Using the instrument, these experts reviewed it to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and aligned with the research objectives. In addition to providing detailed feedback on the appropriateness of each item to capture student engagement, speaking fluency, and classroom dynamics, they made suggestions for improvement where necessary.

Hence, a piloting study was conducted to test the instrument's reliability, involving 27 students from the same grade level. Moreover, the questionnaires were distributed in person during a class session where Jenga was used as a teaching tool. The coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha for the second construct was as follows: Enthusiasm and Motivation 0.75. Either Self-Confidence or Speaking Fluency: 0,79. Structured Thinking and Organization: 0.72. Interaction and Class Participation: 0.80

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.7 indicates good reliability, and values above 0.6 are acceptable for exploratory research, according to Field (2013). Therefore, as the results show, an instrument is reliable and can be confidently used in the primary research to assess the impact of the Jenga game on students' ability to express opinions in English.

### 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussion should be written in different parts. They should be presented continuously, starting from the main result until supporting results, and they should be equipped with a discussion.

The analysis and interpretation of data based on Jenga game data in English language learning are presented below. Given this, the instrument used aims to measure student engagement, learning outcomes, and the effectiveness of the Jenga game as a medium for expressing opinions in English. From the previous stage, the next step is to analyze data using descriptive and inferential statistics. After that, all the results are detailed below.

**Table 1** Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for Each Variable in This Study

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient
Enthusiasm and Motivation	3	0.75
Confidence and Speaking Fluency	3	0.79
Structured Thinking and Organization	2	0.72
Classroom Interaction and Participation	2	0.80

The method used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire is Cronbach's Alpha. All elements show acceptable reliability and can well exceed what has been limited by the limit of 0.7, the recommendation obtained by Pallant (2013).

#### Data Analysis

The average scores were calculated using descriptive analysis to ascertain the confidence, engagement, and learning outcomes of students who played the Jenga game. Hence, as shown in Table 2, the mean scores were interpreted using the classification scheme offered by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Applying the simple Spearman Rho test, the inferential analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between the constructs of student engagement, self-confidence, and overall learning outcomes. The correlation effect based on Cohen et al. (2007) is shown in Table 3.

**Table 2** Mean Score Interpretation (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994)

Main Score	Level of Interpretation
4.01 - 5.00	High
3.01 - 4.00	Medium-High
2.01 - 3.00	Medium-Low
1.00 - 2.00	Low



### Descriptive Analysis

A total of 27 respondents participated in this study. The demographic information of all respondents is presented in Table 4. They were divided into different levels of English proficiency and other age groups, but most were between 12-13 years old.

### Level of Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

The average score and standard deviation for each construct in Jenga-based learning were calculated. The overall level of student engagement was high (Mean = 4.15, SD = 0.421). The highest mean score was recorded among the constructs: Class Interaction and Participation (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.385), followed by Enthusiasm and Motivation (Mean = 4.20, SD = 0.452). Competency and Speaking Fluency recorded a mean score of 4.11 (SD = 0.474), while Structured Thinking and Organisation had the lowest mean score (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.482), although still categorized as Medium-High.

**Table 3** Level of Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Enthusiasm and Motivation	4.20	0.452	High
Confidence and Speaking Fluency	4.11	0.474	High
Structured Thinking and Organization	3.98	0.482	Medium-High
Classroom Interaction and Participation	4.32	0.385	High
<b>Overall (Engagement)</b>	4.15	0.421	High

Several statements showed positive results in students' engagement, ability, and motivation to express their opinions. Concerning the aspect of engagement enthusiasm, 29.6% of students strongly agreed, and 33.3% agreed that they felt more enthusiastic about participating in English classes by using the Jenga game. On the other hand, 37% of the students felt neutral about the statement. Regarding students' active participation, about 18.5% of students strongly agreed and 40.7% agreed that they were more active in expressing their opinions during class discussion using the Jenga game. On the other hand, about 33.3% of students felt neutral, and 7.4% disagreed. A size of 48.1% of students strongly agreed, and 29.6% agreed that the classroom atmosphere became more conducive to expressing opinions with the Jenga game. Still, 11.1% of students felt neutral, and 11.1% disagreed. The results of students' engagement, which include aspects of students' enthusiasm, active participation, and the classroom atmosphere, show that the Jenga game creates a positive response in students' engagement while learning to express opinions in English.



On the engagement aspect, the positive response was similar to the students' ability to use Jenga as a medium to express their opinions in English. About 51.9% of students strongly agreed, and 18.5% agreed that the Jenga game made it easier for them to express their views in English. In the statement of ease of expressing opinions, only 3.7% disagreed, while 25.9% felt neutral. As for structured opinion formation, 22.2% of students strongly agreed, and 44.4% agreed that the Jenga game helped them organize their opinions more structured. A little over 29.6% of students felt neutral, and 3.7% disagreed.

Meanwhile, regarding listening and responding to friends' opinions, 37% of students strongly agreed, and 48.1% agreed that the Jenga game helped them listen and respond to friends' views better. However, 14.8% of students felt neutral. On skill training, about 25.8% of students strongly agreed, and 48.1% agreed that the Jenga game effectively trains their ability to express their opinions in English. 18.5% of students felt neutral, and 7.4% disagreed. Based on the overall data, most students agreed that the Jenga game can improve their ability to express their opinions in English learning.

The motivation aspect, similar to the ability aspect, showed positive results. It was reported that 25.9% of students strongly agreed, and 37% agreed that they felt more confident expressing their opinions after playing Jenga. On the contrary, 33.3% of students felt neutral, and 3.7% disagreed with this statement. Regarding the statement of their desire to use Jenga, 25.9% of students strongly agreed, and 37% we were decided that they would like Jenga to be used more often in English language learning. Another 37% of students felt neutral.

Regarding the teacher's guidance in motivating students to learn, 33.3% of students strongly agreed, and 44.4% agreed that the teacher provided sufficient guidance when they expressed their opinions in the Jenga game. 22.2% of students felt neutral. It showed that although some students disagreed that Jenga motivated them to express their opinions, most agreed with Jenga as a medium to express their views in English learning.

The findings show that implementing the Jenga game in learning English positively impacts multiple aspects of student engagement, including enthusiasm, confidence, and active class participation. According to the results, the "Enthusiasm and Motivation" section received a mean score of 4.20 with a standard deviation of 0.452, representing a "High" level. This represents the average student's motivation and enthusiasm in engaging in classroom learning using the Jenga game.

The Jenga game made students feel more confident and fluent in speaking English, as evidenced by the mean score of 4.11 with a standard deviation of 0.474 in the "Confidence and Fluency in Speaking" category. Furthermore, with a mean score of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 0.385, the "Interaction and Participation in Class" component obtained the highest score and fell into the "High" category. This result shows how the Jenga game promotes student engagement and involvement in the classroom, fostering a more encouraging environment for dialogue.

The "Structured Thinking and Organization" section has a mean score of 3.98 with a standard deviation of 0.482, categorized as "Medium-High". This result shows the existence of variety in the ability of students to effectively manage their thoughts in a logically arranged and organized manner when utilizing the game as a medium of



learning. Several factors can account for this result. Some students may prefer a neutral response, especially if they feel unsure or have difficulty assessing the game's impact on their structured thinking. Further, according to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), the preference for a neutral response can occur when respondents do not strongly feel positively or negatively about a statement, which may bias the mean score to a "Medium-High" level for this section.

Apart from that, the individual's learning bias also plays an essential part. A few students may be more comfortable with a traditional learning approach and find play less severe or relevant in an educational setting. According to Vygotsky (1978), game-based learning can increase social interaction and critical thinking ability; nevertheless, a student's response to this approach may differ depending on their degree of comfort. As a result, this variation in learning preferences may make some students more moderate in their responses regarding their structured thinking, which is captured in the "Medium-High" results.

A related aspect that impacted these outcomes was students' perception of the game as a learning medium. Some students may perceive games such as Jenga as a less severe activity, which leads to more neutral or disapproving responses regarding enthusiasm and engagement (Kusnandar&Rohimah, 2019). However, Slavin (2006) believes learners' attitudes towards learning media may significantly impact the method's efficacy. Thus, if students viewed the game as unrelated to their learning goals, their feedback may have been more temperate, as demonstrated in the structured thinking outcome.

Regardless of the variability observed in the structured thinking outcome, the findings indicate that the Jenga game can provide a more enabling learning atmosphere, following the views of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), which states that enjoyable learning can enhance students' motivation and decrease anxiety. Likewise, Bandura (1997) highlights that emotional element in learning, particularly the enthusiasm caused by the game, are crucial in building students' self-efficacy and positive participation. Therefore, despite some variety in the "Medium-High" range, the Jenga game effectively generated a supportive learning atmosphere for students to express their opinions in English.

Regarding positively impacting student engagement, the Jenga game can be an impressive decision in settings with limited technological access. While numerous technology-driven instructional methods are used to increase student engagement and motivation, a game such as Jenga provides an exciting alternative that all learners can easily access without additional tools or internet access. Based on Prensky (2001), game learning enhances students' motivation and engagement while providing a more engaging and effective learning space. Hence, this game still cultivates a challenging learning situation and actively involves students. Moreover, Jenga is easily applicable as it does not require much cost and can be customized to the subject taught. Teachers can design activities using Jenga blocks, such as writing questions or discussion topics, encouraging students to think critically and interact when their turn comes.

The existence of a traditional block stacking game called Jenga can be a creative way to integrate into the curriculum, especially English language learning in schools that are not facilitated by technology. Using Jenga can create collaborative learning and interaction between teachers and students during the learning process. Social interaction provides a hands-on experience for students to gain new skills more



effectively. In such an environment, the Jenga game serves as entertainment and an effective learning medium that enhances students' ability to express opinions in English and develop their social skills.

In sum, it can be a practical and efficient option to help support students' learning in technologically challenged settings. Apart from providing a joyful learning experience, it offers an adaptable interactive approach to a broad range of learning subjects, significantly impacting students' engagement, motivation, and abilities in English language learning. As Hwang and Chang (2011) note, playing a game facilitates a practical lesson by addressing the obstacles created by limited technology, making Jenga an almost ideal tool to enhance the learning process in various contexts.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In learning EFL, using the Jenga game as a learning medium up to this point strongly influenced students' engagement, ability and motivation in expressing their opinions. This practical, interactive game fosters active engagement between students and helps them organize their thoughts in a structured way, improving their expression and overall communication skills. In this process, the Jenga game instils an atmosphere conducive to self-confidence in developing students, as students are encouraged to express their views in a casual and joyful setting. Besides, the collaborative quality of the game encourages constructive, positive interactions among peers so that students can handle any challenges involved in expressing their opinions in EFL.

By investigating the implementation of the integration of the Jenga game into English language learning, advocates have an exciting and interactive tool to provide students with an engaging context, particularly in the case of expressing opinions. Findings indicate that such highly interactive experiences increase motivation and improve learners' willingness to participate in classroom discussions. In particular, Jenga's successful integration shows non-digital learning media's growing popularity and relevance in a digital-focused educational landscape. What is highlighted here is how non-digital games can serve as a playful and, thus, effective medium to enhance the learning experience for students, proving that traditional approaches still have a place in the modern educational landscape.

A simple and engaging game of Jenga delivers a joyful learning experience that encourages learners to use their language with a risk-taking approach. Moreover, this intervention enhances students' engagement and participation in learning. In addition, teachers can utilize the game within the lesson to facilitate critical thought and encourage dialogue between students. With the Jenga blocks, for example, teachers could use these games in their classrooms to generate discussion leads or questions relevant to the course content. In the same way, the participating teachers in the creative game-based instructional strategies can benefit from those who want to incorporate more highly interactive learning strategies into their teachings. It could also give teachers insights on implementing different non-interactive online game titles, such as Jenga, in various educational situations, resulting in a more engaging and interactive learning space.



Despite this, the game is beneficial for increasing English language learning, explicitly developing students' ability to explore and express their voices. It underscores the significance of incorporating fun and interactive activities into the curriculum, reminding educators how traditional learning methods still have an impactful part to play in shaping students' learning journey. Employing that interactive approach, educators can create a more inclusive and encouraging atmosphere for teaching and learning, making way for more student success in language mastery.

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