



A Play-Based Approach: Using Sorting Games to Improve English Speaking and Listening Skills Among Second Graders

Ahmed Raba¹, Ayat Tarazi²

¹ Associate Professor, Methods of Teaching Department, Faculty of Humanities and Education, An-Najah National University, Nablus (Palestine)

✉ ahmedm@najah.edu

² Assistant Professor, Methods of Teaching English Department, Faculty of Humanities and Education Sciences, An-Najah National University, Nablus (Palestine)

✉ ayat.terazi@najah.edu

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Abstract:

Capturing younger learners' attention is not easy, and finding the best ways to motivate and engage them in all class activities is the key to a teacher's success. Given the value of sorting games in creating an engaging environment, it is necessary to increase young learners' English vocabulary and improve their ability to listen and speak fluently. To that end, this study investigated the role of sorting games in improving second-grade students' English speaking and listening skills from the points of view of EFL teachers in Palestinian public schools. To reach this goal, the researchers used a mixed approach to investigate 30 teachers' points of view toward utilizing sorting games to promote English speaking and listening skills among second graders. The questionnaire results show that sorting games improve students' speaking and listening skills, motivate them, and increase their engagement and participation. The results of the open-ended questions emphasize that sorting games can be time-consuming, and English teachers may find it difficult to design or get suitable sorting materials. Considering these results, the researchers recommend primary English teachers adapt sorting games for other English skills and categories (semantic, grammatical, and sound) to meet the diverse needs of students with different learning styles and abilities. Also, the researchers recommend providing teachers with specific training on effectively integrating sorting games into their lesson plans, including strategies for differentiation, classroom management, and addressing potential challenges.

Keywords: *Sorting Games; Improve English Speaking Skills; English Listening Skills; EFL Teachers' Perspectives; Play-Based Approach; Second Graders.*

نهج قائم على اللعب: استخدام ألعاب الفرز لتحسين مهارات التحدث والاستماع باللغة الإنجليزية

بين طلاب الصف الثاني

أحمد رباع¹، آيات ترزي²

¹ أستاذ مشارك، قسم أساليب التدريس، كلية العلوم الإنسانية والتربية، جامعة النجاح الوطنية، نابلس (فلسطين)

ahmedm@najah.edu ✉

² أستاذ مساعد، قسم أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية العلوم الإنسانية والتربية، جامعة النجاح الوطنية، نابلس (فلسطين)

ayat.terazi@najah.edu ✉

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ملخص:

إنَّ جذب انتباه المتعلمين الصغار ليس بالأمر اليسير، كما أنَّ إيجاد أفضل السبل لتحفيزهم وإشراكهم في جميع الأنشطة الصفية يُعدّ مفتاح نجاح المعلم. ونظرًا لما تتيحه ألعاب التصنيف من قيمة في خلق بيئة تعليمية محفّزة، تبرز الحاجة إلى تعزيز حصيلة المتعلمين الصغار من المفردات الإنجليزية وتحسين قدرتهم على الاستماع والتحدث بطلاقة. ومن هذا المنطلق، هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء دور ألعاب التصنيف في تحسين مهارات التحدث والاستماع باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلبة الصف الثاني الأساسي، وذلك من وجهة نظر معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية للناطقين بغيرها (EFL) في المدارس الحكومية الفلسطينية. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، اعتمد الباحثون منهجًا مختلطًا لاستقصاء آراء (30) معلمًا حول توظيف ألعاب التصنيف في تنمية مهارات التحدث والاستماع باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلبة الصف الثاني. وقد أظهرت نتائج الاستبانة أنَّ ألعاب التصنيف تسهم في تحسين مهارات التحدث والاستماع لدى الطلبة، وتزيد من دافعيتهم، وتعزز مشاركتهم وتفاعلهم داخل الصف. كما بيّنت نتائج الأسئلة المفتوحة أنَّ ألعاب التصنيف قد تستغرق وقتًا طويلاً، وأن معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية قد يواجهون صعوبة في تصميم أو الحصول على مواد تصنيف مناسبة. وبناءً على هذه النتائج، يوصي الباحثون معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية في المرحلة الأساسية بتكييف ألعاب التصنيف لتطوير مهارات إنجليزية أخرى وفئات متنوعة (دلالية، وقواعدية، وصوتية) بما يراعي الاحتياجات المتنوعة للطلبة واختلاف أنماط تعلمهم وقدراتهم. كما يوصي الباحثون بضرورة تزويد المعلمين بتدريب متخصص حول كيفية دمج ألعاب التصنيف بفاعلية في خططهم الدراسية، بما يشمل استراتيجيات للتفريق بين المتعلمين، وإدارة الصف، والتعامل مع التحديات المحتملة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ألعاب الفرز؛ تحسين مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية؛ مهارات الاستماع باللغة الإنجليزية؛

وجهات نظر معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ النهج القائم على اللعب؛ طلاب الصف الثاني.

1. Introduction

In the world of everyday living, language is vital to individuals because it is their means of communication. The ability to communicate and interact with others requires the learning of basic language skills such as speaking and listening. Developing these two skills contributes to both the social and academic lives of learners and allows them to be responsive and receptive to information thus improving their own competency (Alharbi, 2015). Due to this, acquiring any foreign language will only be considered complete if all skills are mastered and applied effectively in everyday situations (Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia, 2020).

Nevertheless, learning is not always an enjoyable experience, and students' motivation and enthusiasm for learning may be eroded through constant repetition, memorization, and imitation implemented in traditional methods of teaching. Thus, new strategies have been developed so that foreign language learners, particularly the youngest ones, can be motivated. The task of teaching young learners is not easy since kids are moody and fickle creatures with short attention spans so the best methods for motivating and engaging those young learners should be devised, and for these goals to be achieved, any effective teacher must possess love and passion for teaching those youngers, and try his best to create an enjoyable and interactive classroom environment whereby students are actively involved in the learning process (Raba & Herzallah, 2015). The problem arises when learning is boring, there is no engagement happening, and essentially no learning happens.

It is widely believed that those who learn a foreign language at an early age will have a higher chance of success, and that if there is a period during which language can be acquired more easily than at any other time, then childhood would be it (Richards, 2000). Educating our children is crucial to the future of our society, so giving them the chance to learn English in depth is the gift of a bright future for them. Nevertheless, teaching any foreign language and especially English is challenging, so teachers must develop an effective pedagogy to develop students' English language skills, among which are listening and speaking skills (Payan Rivera & Restrepo Montoya, 2009).

There is no doubt that learning a language, especially learning English as foreign language, can be extremely difficult, and that learners can sometimes be detached and reluctant to participate. In fact, there is a lot of evidence suggesting that most English learners do not like English classes. For instance, Kim et al. (2018) explained that a common problem for educators is that their students do not actively participate in class activities due to the absence of motivation. Moreover, the researchers noted, since numerous learners lack motivation and would rather not participate in English classes, it is evident that the English classes are not as desirable as they should be. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that games can help students feel engaged and motivated to practice English skills by providing an enjoyable atmosphere in which they can feel more excited about their learning.

Gamification is used in various pedagogical approaches, methodologies, and strategies to teach English as a foreign language in educational settings. Each of these is a result of how language learning instruction has evolved throughout generations. As part of the transition, several motivational strategies and approaches used in traditional pedagogy are also included, such as Behaviorism, Cognitivist approaches, along with social interaction and sociocultural theory (Amaya-Díaz & Bajaña-Zajia, 2020). Ideally, all learning environments must provide active learning, and game-based learning meets this need. A good game should actively engage learners, so they experience the joy of exploring and absorbing new information. Thus, the use of well-designed games can penetrate distractions and engage learners in a way that very few other teaching techniques can (Bautista, 2020). In addition, games may bring real context for learners to use the language in the classrooms, and they may also prevent negative evaluation because students focus on the play of game and interactions, and not on the language. Therefore, teachers are advised to use suitable games for teaching English skills and link the games with the course content (Bin-Hady, 2021).

Needless to say, that playing-based approach helps in shaping individuals' mental and physical health, whether children or adults, because they help shape their personalities on all levels: cultural, linguistic, emotional, mental, physical, moral, and skills-based (Ibrahim, 2020). In addition, Landers and Armstrong (2017) argued that playing can fulfill a variety of needs of individuals, such as rehabilitating, educating, stimulating the senses, developing reasoning skills, adapting to new situations, and managing emotions and stress.

There are several advantages that educational games possess, as well as the great contribution they can make to the process of knowledge construction. The advent of games as a teaching strategy has been a reaction to the traditionalism of academic teaching, and although they are primarily recreational activities whose main purpose is enjoyment, they have been proven to be effective in the teaching-learning process. Educational games are recommended as an effective tool for teaching English as a foreign language to primary-stage students and for language acquisition, increase student interest, diversify learning experiences, improve performance of speaking skills, students were confident in their listening skills during the implementation of games compared to other classroom activities and enhance the sustainability of education (Benavides, 2001; Payan Rivera & Restrepo Montoya, 2009; Mubaslat, 2012; Posada & Francis, 2012; Bautista, 2020; Upadhayay, 2022; Tekman & Yeniasir, 2023). By the same token, Marzano et al. (2011) confirmed that when a competition is added to educational games, mild pressure provides another stimulus for attention. Richards (2000) added that game-based approach provides a fertile environment for the growth of students, by motivating them to become more engaged in the learning process, provoking positive attitudes toward learning, and encouraging them to interact with educational materials.

Although speaking is often seen as the outcome of long studies of grammatical rules and memorizing vocabulary, it has been shown that it is important throughout learners' instruction to optimize how they construct their foreign language. In this regard, Hughes (2006) stated that speaking has become an increasingly important part of foreign language teaching. Also, speaking activities provide rehearsal opportunities for students, a chance for them to practice real-life speaking in a safe, comfortable setting (Harmer, 2008). Furthermore, speaking skills can make a positive contribution to other elements of language development, such as listening skills. For example, oral communication typically involves both speakers and listeners, and consequently, to facilitate any successful exchange of information, the participants must also can receptively receive information, and as such, individuals will have several opportunities to develop their listening skills (Farrell, 2005).

Recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of language games in enhancing students' speaking and listening skills in English learning contexts. Games have been shown to improve speaking abilities across various age groups, from preschool to secondary school students (Valipour & Aidinlou, 2014; Maryam, 2020). These activities promote student engagement, motivation, and teamwork while allowing for tailored learning experiences (Kaur & Aziz, 2020). Communicative language games have proven effective in improving speaking skills when combined with other strategies like classroom English use and varied themes (Maryam, 2020). The use of language games also helped develop the students' self-confidence in presenting their oral stories in front of the class, as they were able to construct sentences more quickly and present their games without feeling nervous or afraid of making mistakes (Marzuki & Kuliahana, 2021). For listening skills, games have also shown significant positive impacts, with studies reporting improved student performance and assertive responses to game-based learning (Syafii et al., 2020). Overall, the integration of language games in EFL classrooms appears to be a promising approach for enhancing both speaking and listening skills, offering an engaging and effective method for language acquisition.

Previous researchers explored a myriad of communicative language games to improve speaking skills. For example, board games are employed as one of the most useful tools to improve speaking skills among pupils. According to the study of Wong & Yunus (2021), board games had several positive impacts in learners' speaking performances such as improving speaking competency, enhancing motivation in speaking and increasing interpersonal interaction among learners. These games also offer engaging, real-time language practice, promoting fluency, confidence, and motivation (Munawarah et al., 2024). As stated by NG et al. (2021) the integration of ICT, such as the QR code and digital version of the Pick and Speak game, was viewed as beneficial in enhancing the participants' motivation and reducing their fear of making mistakes while speaking. In recent years, EFL games and activities have become increasingly popular as teaching tools to improve listening skills among EFL learners (Abdulateef et al., 2023).

In fact, there are a variety of games available nowadays, but selecting the right one can be difficult. When it comes to young learners, sorting games can be an effective way to enhance their skills in critical thinking, analysis, relating things together, drawing conclusions, and communicating naturally (Bin-Hady, 2021). Observations have shown that sorting for young learners includes moving a collection of manipulatives, shapes, or small toys from one place to another and grouping them together. In turn, this builds confidence and provides learners with an opportunity to develop their cognitive skills by demonstrating higher-order thinking and making decisions.

Furthermore, sorting games provide many opportunities for extending learning potential. For instance, whenever teachers ask students questions to encourage more dialogue about what they are doing through sorting, it will naturally result in the development and use of numeracy vocabulary, as well as improving the learners' listening and speaking skills (Bacha, 2002). Besides, Reed (2012) indicated that teaching young learners how to sort and classify objects according to attributes, such as colors, sizes and shapes, enhances their ability to explore the relationships between objects, identify differences and similarities, and think critically. Furthermore, using these sorting games to develop beginner learners' spelling skills makes learners more confident speakers (Reed, 2012).

Given the value of sorting games in creating engaging environment, increasing young learners' English vocabulary and improving their ability to listen and think critically, interpret information, make connections, draw conclusions, and speak fluently. Bernabeu and Goldstein (2016) reported that it appears that almost all the studies supported the positive effects of games on the acquisition of EFL. Additionally, educational games can motivate and increase students' attention in class (Marzano et al., 2011). While the current study intends to identify the role of using sorting games in enhancing second graders' English speaking and listening skills from EFL teachers' perspectives as emphasized and confirmed by many researchers. This study also attempts to investigate the advantages and potential problems of utilizing sorting games with primary-level students in an English language classroom from English teachers' viewpoints. Consequently, the results of this paper will help teachers in overcoming difficulties in integrating sorting games into second grade English classes and helping in creating a comfortable atmosphere, increasing second graders motivation and developing their English listening and speaking skills. Considering the main objectives of the present study, three research questions were posed as follows:

- RQ1. What is the role of using sorting games in enhancing second graders' English speaking and listening skills?
- RQ2. What advantages do teacher believe sorting games can provide for enhancing primary-level students' English speaking and listening skills?

- RQ3. What are the potential problems of utilizing sorting games with primary-level students in an English language classroom?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design and Instrument

The researchers used mixed method approach in this study for its suitability for the study purposes; to investigate 30 teachers' evaluations of their attitudes toward utilizing sorting games to promote English speaking and listening skills among second graders. The researchers administered a 16-item closed-ended questionnaire to a random sample of 20 male and female English teachers. The questionnaire has three sections: The first section concerned demographic information whereas the second section consisted of 16 closed-ended questions divided into two domains, the first domain included 8 items to survey EFL teachers' perspectives toward the role of sorting games in enhancing second graders' speaking skills, while the second domain included 8 items to find out EFL teachers' viewpoints toward the role of sorting games in improving second graders' listening skills. For the third section, the researchers distributed an online survey, an invitation letter detailing the study's objectives and who might participate, and a consent form. A total of 25 female Palestinian teachers with various academic degrees were sought out from various primary schools to participate in this phase by answering two open-ended questions associated with the potential advantages as well as difficulties that primary English teachers encounter when implementing sorting games in their English classrooms. The final sample consisted of the eligible ten female English teachers.

2.2 Participants

Using stratified random sampling, to do so, researchers posted an online survey, an invitation letter outlining the study's goals and who was eligible to participate, and a consent form on social media sites. A total of 45 Palestinian English teachers with different academic degrees were selected from various primary schools. The final sample comprised 9 males and 21 females. The sample was distributed according to three independent variables: gender, academic qualification, and number of years' experience. Most participants were female 60%, the rest were 40% male. While the majority of respondents 56.7% held BA. Other respondents 43.3 had a MA degree. On the other hand, 46.7% of the respondents had 1-5 years' experience, and 23.3% had 6-10 while 30% of the participants had more than 6-10 years' experience.

2.3 Research Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the instrument, two experts in the field of teaching English language were consulted to review the accuracy of the questions and questionnaire items. Following the feedback provided by the experts and the necessary revisions by the researchers, the questionnaire was finalized. Moreover, the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by calculating the Cronbach

alpha coefficient, the reliability coefficient for the whole questionnaire was 0.917, which is an acceptable reliability index. Obviously, reliability value is less than 1, indicating that the tool is reliable and that researchers can draw meaningful conclusions from the data and analysis.

2.4 Procedures

The study was conducted in several stages. Firstly, the researchers developed a data collection tool in English language based on the research questions, which consisted of four concerns covering primary English teachers' background information, attitudes towards the role of using sorting games in enhancing speaking skills, their perspectives towards the role of using sorting games in enhancing second graders listening skills, and the potential advantages as well as difficulties that primary English teachers encounter when implementing sorting games in their English classrooms. Secondly, the developed tool was sent to two experts in English language field to validate the accuracy of the questions and questionnaire items.

Thirdly, a consent form that guarantees participants' understanding of the ethical issues regarding voluntary participation, data security, and the anonymity of any data or information used in any publication arising from this study was first distributed online and in person to 45 Palestinian primary English teachers. The final number of teachers who indicated their agreement by signing the consent form to participate and have experience using sorting games in their English classes was N= 30. Finally, the researchers used Statistical Package for social science SPSS version 17.0 to record and analyze quantitative data. To analyze the data, the researchers used various statistical treatments, including means, frequencies, percentages and standard deviations to assess teachers' responses on each item and total score; and Cronbach Alpha formula to assess the reliability of the study's instrument. Besides, every open-ended question was arranged and transcribed for qualitative analysis. Important themes in the data were then found and classified by the researchers. Lastly, the researchers describe the findings and offer their interpretations.

2.5 Data Analysis

The researchers reviewed the data of the survey before entering it into the computer for data analysis. The impact degree ranged between "very high" and "very low" using a 5-point Likert scale, with percentages of 80% and more, 70–79.9%, 60–69.9%, 50–59.9%, and 50% and less, respectively. In addition, all the teachers' responses were between "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree," and the researchers then converted these results into numbers (i.e., a score).

3. Results

3.1 Results Related to the First Question

To answer the first question, the researchers measured mean and SD differences between repeated measures with the same instrument for each dimension and the total degree, as shown in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the respondents' answers (sorting games and speaking skill)

No.	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Response Rate %	Impact Degree
1.	Using sorting games improves students' speaking skills.	3.90	0.85	78.0	High
2.	Using sorting games motivates students to participate in class actively.	4.15	0.74	83.0	Very High
3.	Students are willing to take risks and try new words and phrases.	4.05	0.88	81.0	Very High
4.	Students use a variety of vocabulary words related to the sorting theme.	4.25	0.71	85.0	Very High
5.	Students communicate effectively with peers and the teacher.	3.95	0.75	79.0	High
6.	Sorting games help students ask and answer questions appropriately.	3.80	0.89	76.0	High
7.	Students enjoy participating in the game sorting activities.	4.05	0.94	81.0	Very High
8.	Using such games gives students opportunities to minimize pauses and hesitations.	3.75	0.71	75.0	High
Total degree		3.98	0.58	79.6	High

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of the respondents' answers (sorting games and listening skill)

No.	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Response Rate %	Impact Degree
9.	Using sorting games improves students' listening comprehension skills as evidenced by accurate sorting of items.	4.10	0.64	82.0	Very High
10.	Sorting games help grasp students' attention to the class and therefore gain confidence in their listening abilities.	4.15	0.74	83.0	Very High
11.	Students show progress in developing listening skills for understanding and responding to spoken English.	3.70	0.73	74.0	High
12.	Students maintain focus throughout the game, minimizing distractions and staying engaged in the listening task.	4.05	0.60	81.0	Very High
13.	Sorting games help students distinguish between similar sounds and words.	4.35	0.58	87.0	Very High
14.	Using sorting games helps students accurately sort items based on spoken instructions and demonstrate understanding of underlying concepts.	3.65	0.58	73.0	High
15.	Sorting games improves students' pronunciation and fluency in spoken English through active listening and participation in verbal and nonverbal activities.	4.10	0.64	82.0	Very High
16.	Students actively participate in the sorting games, showing enthusiasm and eagerness to engage in the listening activities.	4.15	0.67	83.0	Very High
Total degree		4.03	0.37	80.6	Very High

Table 1 presents the results related to the first dimension of the survey, which explored the role of using sorting games in enhancing second graders English speaking skill from English teachers viewpoints. The results indicate that teachers had a very high average response to items 2,3, 4, and 7.

with an average ranging from 81% to 85%. In contrast, the average response to items 1, 5, 6, and 8, as well as the total degree was high, ranging from 75% to 79.6%. Based on these results, it can be concluded that primary English teachers very highly value sorting games in English language instruction for second graders due to their inherent ability to foster joyful learning environments, increase student participation, and create a fun and engaging context for language practice and development. Specifically, items 2, and 5 received the highest percentage of agreement, whereas item 7 received the lowest percentage. Furthermore, the researchers emphasized that the respondents highly value sorting games in learning English speaking skills for second graders because of their proven ability to foster increased communication, prompting students to actively ask and answer questions, thus significantly enhancing their English speaking skills.

Based on Table 2 which presents the mean and standard deviation (SD) for primary English teachers' perceptions towards the role of using sorting games in enhancing second graders' English listening skill, it can be observed that the teachers' average response to items 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and total degree falls within a very high range, varying from 80.6% to 87%. These results suggest that teachers generally express very positive agreement towards the role of using sorting games in enhancing second graders' English listening skill that an online teaching. Furthermore, this indicates that teachers view sorting games as valuable tools for improving second graders' English listening skills due to their engaging nature, which fosters active listening and participation in verbal and nonverbal activities, enhances focus, enthusiasm and eagerness to engage in the listening activities, and provides a hands-on, interactive approach to learning, making language acquisition more enjoyable and effective in distinguishing between similar sounds and words.

3.2 Results Related to the Second and Third Questions

It is important to note that the quantitative data only provides a broad view of teachers' perceptions and attitudes, so in order to gain deeper insights, we examined the results of these two open-ended questions to have a more nuanced understanding of how the respondents perceived the usefulness of sorting games in improving primary-level students' English speaking and listening skills as well as the potential problems of utilizing such games in an English language classroom.

For instance, one teacher from Sch.1 shared her experience and opinions as follows: "I have integrated sorting games and employed different sorting games activities in to English classes. I think these games create an engaging and enjoyable educational environment, making learning interactive and motivating students to actively participate in language activities."

Another English teacher added:

[By categorizing words or phrases, students expand their vocabulary and deepen their understanding of contextual language use. Sorting games also provide valuable opportunities for verbal

communication, enabling students to practice pronunciation and fluency while improving their listening skills through instructions and peer interactions. Additionally, these games foster collaboration and social skills by encouraging teamwork and interaction among students, as well as with their teacher, thereby enhancing communication abilities. Moreover, sorting activities promote critical thinking as students analyze and solve problems by organizing items based on specific criteria. Altogether, sorting games create a dynamic and supportive space for language development in the classroom..... I think sorting games is an efficient way to teach English speaking and listening skills but there were problems such as managing young learners can be difficult, as they may become overly excited, leading to a noisy or disruptive environment that could disturb other classes.....]

Another teacher explained potential advantages and disadvantages of sorting games: [participation can be uneven, with some students dominating the activity while others, particularly shy learners, may feel confused or embarrassed. Mixed-ability groups may also struggle, as students with lower language proficiency might find it hard to keep up, limiting their benefit from the activity. Furthermore, sorting games can be time-consuming, potentially reducing the time available for other essential instructional tasks. Designing or sourcing appropriate sorting materials can also be resource-intensive, posing a challenge for teachers....]

While other teacher shared another opinin" the cultural or contextual relevance of certain sorting criteria may not resonate with all students, diminishing the activity's effectiveness. Addressing these challenges requires careful planning and thoughtful implementation to maximize the benefits of sorting games (Female teacher, 6-10 years of teaching experience)."

Similarly, teachers from Sch.2 also had the same viewpoint about sorting games in teaching English speaking and listening skills for primary level students. One teacher discussed his views: "I have sufficient experience to teach English using sorting games. Additionally, the most important advantages of sorting games are enhanceing verbal expressions , and promoting active listening. There are also problems lacking of educational aids designed for sorting games activities (Female teacher, 1-5 years of teaching experience)."

Other teachers also echoed what the teachers said. For example, one teacher expressed her opinions as follows: "Sorting games bring in relaxation and fun for students, thus help them learn and retain new words more easily. One problem that I faced some of my students might relate to the mother tongue language. For example when I gave a lesson about number 7 by using sorting games one of the student related to number 6 in Arabic because of the shape (Female teacher, 1-5 years of teaching experience)."

Other English teachers also reported that:

Sorting games provide interactive and cooperative peer learning environment to help teachers develop EFL learners speaking and listening skills. On the other hand, utilizing sorting games with primary-

level students can pose challenges. For example, limited vocabulary and comprehension may hinder their ability to understand instructions or categorize items accurately. Overreliance on visuals can lead to guessing rather than genuine language learning. Additionally, shy or less confident students may struggle to participate verbally, while those with different proficiency levels might feel frustrated or left out. Without proper guidance, the games may focus more on fun than on meaningful language practice (Female teacher, 1-5 years of teaching experience).

Without truly thinking about how to use sorting games in an effective way, learners tend to match and sort items based on various criteria: shape, size, color, etc. However, understanding the concept that items can be grouped together by similar criteria, is actually one of the prerequisites for primary level learning. By learning the concept of sorting, they will also be able to understand the similarities and differences between items, as well as understand and create patterns, improve their speaking as well listening comprehension skills. Regarding the problems, I think the integration of sorting games into English classes needs much time and efforts (Female teacher, 1-5 years of teaching experience).

Other three teachers from Sch.1 and Sch.2 with different teaching experiences exhibited favorable attitudes toward integrating the sorting games into teaching English speaking and listening skills.

[Integrating the sorting games into teaching English speaking and listening skills enhance primary-level students' English speaking and listening skills by building vocabulary, improving active listening, encouraging practicing verbal explanations,pronounciation improvement,and problem-solving and critical thinking skill . These interactive activities connect language with visuals, making learning contextual and engaging. They also promote peer communication, sentence fluency, and confidence in a low-pressure environment. Regarding to the problems, the teacher raised the issue about limited language proficiency, misunderstanding , and classroom management problems (Female teachers, (1-5) and (6-10) years of teaching experience)].

Overall, as evidenced by the results of the above open-ended questions, it seems that most teachers demonstrated positive viewpoints regarding the potential benefits of using sorting games in teaching English speaking and listening skills for primary level. On the other hand, they tended to be less positive about problems they encounterd when utilizing sorting games in an English language classroom.This, however, does not mean that they were well-prepared in every aspect in utilizing such games. It seems that some teachers recognized the gap in using sorting games in teaching English speaking and listening activities.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research that has demonstrated the effectiveness of language games in enhancing students' speaking and listening skills (Valipour & Aidinlou, 2014; Maryam, 2020; Kaur & Aziz, 2020; Syafii et al., 2020). Like the positive impacts observed in studies utilizing board games (Wong & Yunus, 2021; Munawarah et al., 2024) and ICT-integrated games (NG et al., 2021), teachers in this study also highly valued the potential of sorting games to increase student engagement, motivation, and communication. These findings resonate with previous research emphasizing the importance of communicative language games in fostering fluency, confidence, and interpersonal interaction (Maryam, 2020; Marzuki & Kuliahana, 2021).

Furthermore, the results support the notion that sorting games are particularly well-suited for young learners. As noted by Reed (2012) and Bacha (2002) these games foster critical thinking, analytical skills, and the development of higher-order thinking skills. By encouraging students to categorize items based on various criteria, sorting games provide valuable opportunities for language development, as observed in this study. The teachers' observations regarding the importance of sorting games in enhancing vocabulary, improving active listening, and encouraging verbal explanations are consistent with these previous results.

The study also identified several challenges in utilizing sorting games, echoing concerns raised in previous research. These include managing classroom dynamics, addressing diverse learning needs, and ensuring meaningful language practice (Reed, 2012; Kaur & Aziz, 2020). However, the challenges identified by the teachers in this study – language proficiency limitations, over-reliance on visuals, and uneven participation are also consistent with the challenges identified in previous research on game-based learning (e.g., potential for off-task behavior, and difficulties in differentiation). These results underscore the need for careful planning and implementation of language games to ensure that all students benefit. Teachers need to be mindful of potential pitfalls and employ strategies to address the diverse needs of learners within the classroom.

5. Conclusions and Implications

Considering the results of the study, the researchers stressed that primary English teachers value the use of sorting games in improving second graders' English-speaking skills. Specifically, teachers strongly believe that sorting games effectively enhances student communication, prompting active question-asking and answering, which are crucial for developing English speaking skills. While overall agreement was high, some aspects were perceived as slightly more valuable than others, with teachers demonstrating the highest agreement on the role of sorting games in fostering joyful learning and increasing student participation.

Our study has shed light on the importance of incorporating sorting games into English language teaching methodologies for young learners. By actively engaging students and fostering a positive learning environment, these games can significantly contribute to the development of essential listening skills among second graders.

The researchers also concluded that teachers perceive sorting games as valuable pedagogical tools for improving English language proficiency in young learners. Still, several challenges are associated with implementing sorting games effectively, like over-reliance on visuals, classroom management, and a lack of readily available and age-appropriate educational aids specifically designed for sorting games, which can pose a practical constraint. Despite these challenges, the study suggests that with careful planning, effective implementation, and ongoing teacher professional development, sorting games can be a valuable addition to English language teaching methodologies at the primary level.

However, we understand the limitations of our study, as we only investigated the points of view of 30 English teachers who teach English as a foreign language at two Palestinian primary public schools. To conclude, these findings highlight the potential of sorting games as a valuable pedagogical tool in primary English language education, particularly for improving students' speaking skills.

Based on the study's results, the researchers recommended providing teachers with specific training on effectively integrating sorting games into their lesson plans, including strategies for differentiation, classroom management, and addressing potential challenges. Also, the researchers recommended developing a wider range of readily available and age-appropriate sorting game materials and resources. Finally, more in-depth studies should be conducted to investigate the long-term impact of sorting games on student learning outcomes and to explore innovative ways to address the identified challenges.

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