

Experimental Study: Effectiveness of 'The Witchy' Card Game in Enhancing EFL Students' Critical Thinking and Verbal Interaction Skills

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Abstract- The rapid advancement of digitalization presents challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in developing speaking skills. The widespread use of online games often leads to passive behavior, limiting opportunities for oral communication practice. In an increasingly competitive world, proficient speaking skills combined with critical thinking are essential for effective communication and problem-solving. To address this gap, the card game "The Witchy" was developed as an innovative, interactive solution. The game provides an engaging platform for students to practice communication while enhancing critical thinking skills. This study adopted the Research and Development (R&D) model by Borg and Gall (1983) to design, test, and refine the game. Data were collected through classroom observations, pre-tests, and post-tests to evaluate improvements in fluency, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure. The findings revealed three key outcomes: (a) The Witchy significantly improved students' speaking fluency, expanded their vocabulary, and enhanced sentence structure by incorporating role-playing scenarios and real-time language challenges; (b) the game effectively promoted critical thinking and communication skills by requiring students to develop strategies, explain their reasoning, and respond to unpredictable situations; and (c) its engaging and goal-oriented design fostered long-term motivation and active participation in English learning. Qualitative data, including classroom observations and student interactions, further supported the game's effectiveness. This study demonstrates the potential of game-based learning in language education, offering a practical approach to improving speaking skills and fostering higher-order thinking in EFL students.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Speaking Skills, Game-Based Learning, The Witchy Card Game

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's era of globalization, English communication skills have become essential for both personal and professional success. However, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners often face challenges in developing speaking skills and critical thinking abilities, which are crucial for effective communication. Traditional teaching methods may not always provide sufficient opportunities for meaningful

interaction or foster critical thinking.

To address these challenges, innovative teaching tools like educational games have gained popularity for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. One such tool is "The Witchy," a card game specifically designed to improve EFL students' speaking skills while encouraging critical thinking. By incorporating elements of strategy, role-play, and distraction, "The Witchy" creates a dynamic

learning environment where students actively engage in communication and problem-solving.

According to Şimşek and Işıkoğlu (2015), educational card games can significantly enhance students' academic achievements by making learning more engaging and interactive. Tsai and Chang (2015) found that digital game-based learning can effectively enhance students' speaking skills in English as a foreign language by creating an engaging and interactive environment. According to Vygotsky (1978), learners achieve higher levels of understanding through guided participation and collaboration. Harmer (2015) emphasizes the importance of engaging learners through a variety of teaching methods to develop their English language skills. In their study, Hattie and Timperley (2007) categorize feedback into three levels: task, process, and self-regulation, each playing a crucial role in student progress.

This study aims to explore how "The Witchy" card game can promote communication and critical thinking among EFL students. The game introduces a novel approach to language learning by combining fun and strategic thinking, encouraging active participation, and helping students overcome common speaking barriers. By evaluating the effectiveness of this game-based learning tool, the research seeks to provide valuable insights into simultaneously developing critical thinking and speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

"The Witchy" not only entertains but also challenges students to strategize communication, utilize critical thinking, and solve problems collaboratively. It is expected to boost students' confidence in speaking English, highlight the importance of critical thinking in communication, and prepare them for real-world interactions. This study aims to contribute significantly to discovering effective, enjoyable, and impactful language learning approaches for EFL students.

Research Problem

- a) How does "The Witchy" game affect EFL students' speaking fluency, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure?
- b) To what extent is "The Witchy" effective in developing students' critical thinking skills while improving their communication abilities?
- c) Does the motivation generated by "The Witchy" have a long-term impact on EFL students' interest in communicating in

English?

Problem-Solving Approach

This study employs a problem-solving approach to address the challenges faced by EFL students in developing communication and critical thinking skills. Traditional language teaching methods often fail to actively engage students in real communication scenarios or promote higher-order thinking skills. To overcome these limitations, the study introduces "The Witchy" card game as an interactive learning tool designed to improve speaking while fostering critical thinking through game strategies.

Alshahrani (2020) emphasizes that game-based learning can significantly improve EFL students' speaking skills by providing an engaging and interactive environment that encourages active participation in conversation (Alshahrani, 2020). Dewi, Hermawan, & Putri (2022) highlight that using multimedia tools, such as picture series, can enhance students' speaking motivation and ultimately improve their speaking abilities in English (Dewi, Hermawan, & Putri, 2022). Dewi, Putri, & Hermawan (2023) argue that incorporating wordy cards into teaching methods provides an innovative approach that enhances EFL students' speaking skills through interactive language use (Dewi, Putri, & Hermawan, 2023). According to Meyer and Land (2006), grasping threshold concepts is crucial for students to move beyond surface learning and engage with deeper, more meaningful knowledge.

The first step in this approach is to identify gaps in current EFL teaching methods, particularly in developing both communication and critical thinking skills simultaneously. By integrating "The Witchy" into the classroom, the study creates an active learning environment where students must use English to achieve specific goals, such as distracting opponents or using deception. The game's mechanics encourage students to think critically while communicating effectively in English. To measure the intervention's effectiveness, the study uses a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data are collected through pre- and post-assessments of students' critical thinking skills, based on Bloom's Taxonomy, as well as their speaking fluency. Qualitative data are gathered from surveys, questionnaires, teacher observations, and feedback, providing insights into student experiences and progress during

game-based learning sessions. According to Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke (2011), game design elements such as challenges and rewards foster gamification, which can improve learners' speaking abilities by making language practice more engaging (Deterding, Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011). Borg & Gall (1983) suggest that integrating game-based learning strategies into multimedia design can foster an interactive learning environment that encourages speaking practice among elementary school students (Borg & Gall, 1983).

This approach allows for a comprehensive evaluation of how "The Witchy" game addresses the challenges of inadequate speaking and critical thinking skills among EFL learners. By comparing students' performance before and after the game's implementation, the research aims to determine its impact and effectiveness in resolving identified challenges in EFL classrooms.

The Witchy Game

Recent research on using card games for English language learning in EFL contexts has advanced significantly. A 2022 study, "Wordy Card Games," demonstrated how a word-grouping approach effectively enhanced students' vocabulary. In this game, students categorized 75 cards containing various words, helping them grasp word relationships and retain new vocabulary more efficiently. The study reported notable improvements in students' vocabulary acquisition.

In 2023, another study explored grammar learning through the "Grammy 87 Game," which utilized 38 decks of cards, each featuring 75 grammar quizzes. The game's interactive map and competitive strategies heightened students' enthusiasm and engagement, transforming grammar learning—often perceived as monotonous—into an enjoyable experience. The research underscored the positive impact of game-based learning on fostering active language practice.

Building on these foundations, this research introduces "The Witchy" card game, offering a more comprehensive approach than previous studies focused solely on vocabulary or grammar acquisition. "The Witchy" is uniquely designed not only to enhance students' speaking fluency, vocabulary, and sentence structure but also to sharpen critical thinking skills. The game incorporates strategic elements like deception, distraction, and quick decision-making, pushing

players to articulate ideas clearly and respond dynamically.

"The Witchy" is an educational English role-playing game that challenges players' speaking skills, logical thinking, and speculation in a magical world. Set in The Witchy School, the most prestigious academy for aspiring White Witches, players take on the roles of students with unique magical abilities. However, hidden among them are the Dark Witches, who secretly plot to destroy the school from within.

The game focuses on verbal interaction, persuasion, and deductive strategies, encouraging players to speak logically and convincingly in English while trying to identify the traitors before it's too late.

The game unfolds over three rounds of the Purification Ritual, where each student must participate in discussions, magical tests, and communication-based challenges. Unique roles like The Seer, The Spellcaster, and The Oracle provide clues to help the White Witches, while the Dark Witches work in secret, using lies and clever tactics to manipulate the game. In each round, players debate and vote on who they suspect is a Dark Witch—but can they trust their instincts, or will they be fooled by deception?

With its suspenseful atmosphere and immersive role-playing elements, "The Witchy" offers an engaging learning experience, pushing players to think critically, speak confidently, and strengthen their social skills in English.

What sets "The Witchy" apart from existing games like "Wordy Card Games" and "Grammy 87 Game" is its dual focus on both language proficiency and cognitive skills. Unlike digital platforms such as Quizizz or Kahoot, which require electronic devices and internet access, "The Witchy" is a print-based card game. This offline format ensures flexibility and accessibility, allowing students to engage in interactive learning anywhere, even in environments with limited digital resources. By merging language mastery with strategic thinking and providing an inclusive, device-free learning experience, "The Witchy" introduces a novel, well-rounded approach to game-based English language learning.

"The Witchy" offers a new approach to addressing these challenges, specifically designed to enhance speaking and critical thinking skills simultaneously. Unlike existing games, "The Witchy" incorporates strategy, deception, and distraction, requiring players to think critically while engaging in live

communication. This dynamic makes the game not only educational but also interactive, challenging, and fun for the players.

The uniqueness of "The Witchy" lies in its flexibility and appeal beyond the classroom. While designed to improve language learning in school, the game can also be played in more casual settings like cafes, restaurants, homes, parks, or social gatherings. Its versatile nature allows it to be enjoyed by a wide range of people, providing an enjoyable and stimulating way to practice English, regardless of age or background, in relaxed and social contexts. The broad applicability and innovative design, aimed at enhancing speaking and critical thinking skills, make "The Witchy" a groundbreaking tool in language learning and game-based education.

II. METHODS

Research Objectives

To ensure transparency in thematic analysis, this study will apply Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis while incorporating intercoder reliability checks and peer debriefing to validate the coding process. This study aims to improve students' speaking skills and critical thinking abilities through the use of the educational game "The Witchy." A qualitative approach using thematic analysis from the book *Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology* by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006) will be applied to understand students' experiences while engaging with the game. Thematic analysis allows for the identification of key themes in data obtained from interviews, observations, and reflective notes from students after playing. By analyzing these patterns, the research will reveal how "The Witchy" supports the development of students' speaking and critical thinking skills.

Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) emphasize that applying interactive game-based approaches in education supports the development of speaking skills by creating environments where students can engage in authentic language use. Creswell & Plano Clark (2011) argue that combining game-based methods with mixed research designs offers a comprehensive way to improve speaking skills, as it provides opportunities for students to practice and reflect on their speaking abilities.

The research process will begin with initial observations and interviews to gather data on students' baseline skills. Subsequently, students will participate in several "The Witchy" game sessions, where each interaction and response

will be observed in detail. The data collected will be analyzed using Braun and Clarke's approach, with coding conducted systematically and reviewed through intercoder reliability checks. Peer debriefing sessions will also be employed to enhance the credibility of the thematic findings. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the long-term motivation built through the game, showing that "The Witchy" not only improves speaking skills in the short term but also fosters ongoing motivation for learning English.

The research process will start with an initial observation of students' speaking skills, followed by a series of "The Witchy" game sessions to identify changes and improvements in those skills. Yin (2011) emphasizes the importance of understanding context through observations and in-depth interviews, which support the collection of detailed data and exploration of students' motivations for learning. Through documenting the process and outcomes of the game, this study aims to determine how "The Witchy" can become an effective learning tool, improving speaking skills in the short term while also building long-term motivation to learn English.

Description of the Game "The Witchy"

"The Witchy" is an interactive card game designed to enhance EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students' speaking skills by developing their critical thinking, observation, and character defense abilities in English.

Overview of "The Witchy" Game:

"The Witchy" is a card game created to provide an engaging and challenging learning experience for students. Inspired by popular games like Werewolf and Mr. White, it involves identifying secret roles within a group while using English as the main language. Players are encouraged to describe characters, present arguments, and defend themselves from elimination, all while practicing new vocabulary relevant to the game.





Image2: The Witchy card Game
Game Components:

1. **Number of Players:** 10 students and 1 teacher as the Game Master (GM).
2. **Roles:**
 - a) **Witch (2 players):** The good witches who must survive until the end of the game and reveal the Dark Witch.
 - b) **Dark Witch (3 players):** The dark witches who disguise themselves as White Witches and try to eliminate other players.
 - c) **Newbie Witch (5 players):** Neutral witches who help the White Witches identify the Dark Witches.
3. **Character Cards:**

Each player receives a card that secretly indicates their role. These cards also contain descriptive vocabulary that the players must use to explain their role.

Game Rules

1. **Preparation:** a) The Game Master randomly distributes role cards to the players. b) All players silently read their cards to understand their roles and the vocabulary they must use.
2. **Gameplay Process:** The game takes place in 4 rituals (rounds), with each round ending in elimination: a) Ritual 1: Players discuss and eliminate 2 people. b) Ritual 2: Discussion continues, and 2 more players are eliminated. c) Ritual 3: Eliminate 3 players. d) Ritual 4: From the remaining 3 players, 2 are eliminated until the winner is determined.

Each player must: a) Argue their role using

English. b) Observe the behavior, word choice, and reactions of other players to identify the Dark Witch. c) Develop a strategy and create a convincing alibi.

3. **Victory:** a) The White Witch wins if all Dark Witches are eliminated. b) The Dark Witch wins if they successfully disguise themselves until the end of the game.

Key Elements of the Game: a) **Critical Thinking:** Players must analyze the arguments and behavior of others to make the right decisions. b) **Observation:** Players need to pay attention to details in the way their peers speak and express themselves. c) **Character Defense:** Players must practice speaking fluently and persuasively to convince others.

Positive Objectives of the Game "The Witchy"

1. Improving Speaking Skills

- a) Encouraging students to speak spontaneously and confidently in English.
- b) Expanding students' vocabulary through the context of the game.

2. Sharpening Critical and Analytical Thinking Skills

- a) Players are trained to analyze information, evaluate arguments, and make decisions based on limited data.
- b) Encouraging logic and strategy in constructing arguments and defending positions.

3. Enhancing Observation and Verbal Interaction Skills

- a) Students learn to pay attention to details in both verbal and non-verbal behavior of their peers.
- b) Developing social interaction skills in a fun and engaging learning environment.

4. Strengthening Collaboration and Healthy Competition

- a) Players are taught the importance of teamwork to achieve group objectives.
- b) Healthy competition motivates students to perform well while still respecting their peers.

5. Increasing Motivation to Learn English

- a) The game provides an interactive and enjoyable learning experience, increasing students' interest in English.
- b) Players are challenged to continue practicing to improve their speaking and understanding of the game.

6. Building Social Skills

- a) Students are trained to speak clearly, listen actively, and respect others' opinions.
- b) Developing confidence in communicating in front of a group.

Methodology

The methodology section will outline the steps from the development of the card game to evaluating its effectiveness in a real classroom environment. The research procedures involve planning and creating the game, initial testing, and adjustments based on early feedback. Data collection will be conducted through a combination of observations, surveys, and interviews, all designed to measure the impact of the game on students' communication skills and critical thinking.

Research Procedure

This study will be carried out in several stages, starting with the design and development of "The Witchy" card game, followed by its implementation in the classroom, and concluding with an evaluation of its impact on students' speaking and critical thinking skills.

Step 1: Data Collection

Data will be collected using various methods to ensure the reliability of the research findings:

- a) Pre-test and Post-test: These tests will assess students' speaking fluency and critical thinking abilities before and after the game implementation. The speaking assessment will focus on fluency, accuracy, and complexity, while critical thinking will be measured using a framework based on Bloom's Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).
- b) Surveys and Questionnaires: Students will complete surveys regarding their learning experiences and the effectiveness of the game in enhancing their speaking skills. This survey will provide an overview of students' perceptions of the game and its impact on their speaking ability.
- c) Observations and Teacher Feedback: Teachers will observe students' engagement and communication strategies during the game sessions. Additionally, teachers will provide qualitative feedback on the educational impact of the game, particularly

regarding the development of students' speaking and critical thinking skills.

Step 2: Game Development

"The Witchy" game design is based on game-based learning principles, aimed at increasing student engagement and encouraging active learning (Gee, 2007). The Research and Development (R&D) model introduced by Borg and Gall in 1983 serves as a comprehensive framework for developing educational products through systematic research, repeated testing, and evaluation. According to Borg and Gall, "The goal of educational R&D is to produce products that have been systematically tested and refined to meet effectiveness, quality, or both criteria."

In the development of "The Witchy Card Game," this model will be applied to enhance students' speaking skills. The iterative process ensures the game is continuously refined through trials and feedback, making it a more effective tool for language learning. The card game will include strategic elements such as deception, critical thinking, and communication tasks. The cards will contain speaking prompts and scenarios that require players to think critically in order to distract opponents while advancing their position in the game. At this stage, the game prototype will be tested with a small group of students to refine the rules and mechanics.

Step 3: Classroom Implementation

The game will be introduced to EFL students at the high school and college levels. Students will play "The Witchy" during regular class sessions over a period of four weeks. Each session will last about 60 minutes, with students divided into small groups to ensure active participation. The teacher will act as a facilitator, observing the students and providing guidance as needed.

Step 4: Data Analysis

Braun & Clarke (2006) outline a six-phase process for analyzing qualitative data, such as teacher feedback and observations, using thematic analysis. The first phase is familiarization, where the researcher reads and examines the data in depth to gain an initial understanding. The next phase is generating initial codes, where specific patterns or features relevant to the research questions are identified. In phase three, the researcher looks for themes by grouping similar codes. Phase four involves

reviewing the themes to ensure they accurately reflect the data. In phase five, the themes are defined and named, providing a clear narrative of the research findings. Finally, phase six involves writing up the analysis, linking the themes back to the research questions and discussing broader implications. This process allows the researcher to systematically interpret complex qualitative data.

Research Flowchart

The flowchart below (see Figure 1) illustrates the step-by-step research process, from the initial design of "The Witchy" to the final evaluation of its effectiveness in improving communication and critical thinking skills among EFL students.

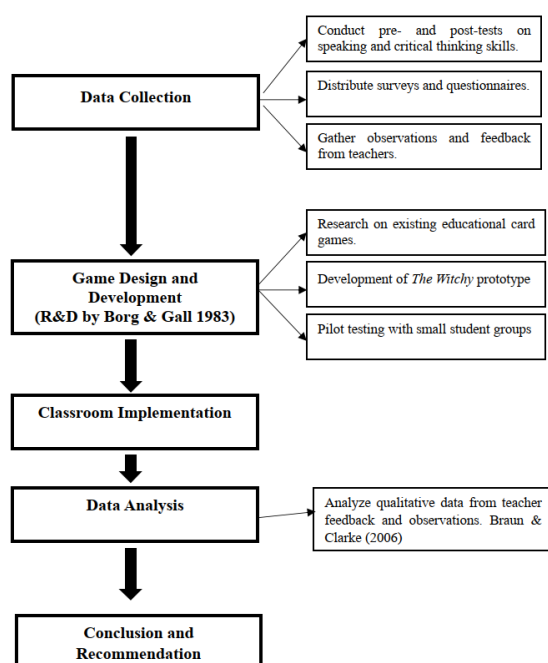


Table 1: Research Flowchart

Table 1: Research Flowchart

4. Evaluation and Testing Methods

The evaluation and testing methods to assess the effectiveness of "The Witchy" card game will primarily involve the collection of qualitative data. This approach, as outlined by Creswell & Plano Clark (2011), allows for a deeper exploration of how the game influences students' speaking abilities and critical thinking skills.

Testing Process: The evaluation in this study will focus on several qualitative techniques to gather rich and contextual data, including:

- a) **Classroom Observation:** Observations will be conducted during the game to capture students' interactions, language

use, and their level of engagement. Both the teacher and the researcher will record how students express their ideas, their speaking fluency, vocabulary usage, sentence structure, and strategies they use to outsmart their opponents. These observations will be systematically documented through field notes and video recordings to ensure accuracy and detail.

- b) **Teacher Feedback:** The teacher's perspective will provide valuable external insights into student progress. Through interviews or written feedback, the teacher will share observations on how the game influences student participation, critical thinking abilities, and speaking skills over time. This feedback will highlight general trends in student development and compare game-based learning with traditional teaching methods.
- c) **Student Reflection and Focus Group Discussions:** After each game session, students will participate in reflective discussions or focus groups. These sessions will allow students to express how the game has affected their comfort level with speaking English, their use of new vocabulary, and the critical thinking strategies they employed during the game. By capturing students' direct perspectives, the researcher can gain insights into the motivational and cognitive effects of the game.
- d) **Pre-test and Post-test (Qualitative Assessment):** Although pre-tests and post-tests are typically quantitative, in this study they will be used qualitatively by analyzing open-ended responses. For example, students will be asked to describe a situation using specific vocabulary before and after playing the game. The researcher will assess changes in complexity, speaking fluency, and critical thinking in their responses.

Through these evaluation methods, this study aims to gain a deep understanding of the impact of "The Witchy" game on the development of students' speaking and critical thinking skills, as well as how the game can motivate students in learning English effectively.



Image 2: Implementation of the game in the classroom

Data Analysis:

Qualitative data will be analyzed through thematic analysis, as recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006). This process involves identifying patterns or themes that emerge from observations, feedback, and student reflections. The key themes that will be evaluated include:

- a) **Speaking Fluency and Vocabulary Usage:** Assessing whether students show progress in using English fluently and integrating new vocabulary during and after the game.
- b) **Sentence Structure and Complexity:** Observing whether students begin to form more complex sentences or use more advanced grammar structures. Focus will be placed on students' ability to construct sentences with varied structures and appropriate contextual use.
- c) **Development of Critical Thinking:** Analyzing the strategic thinking processes demonstrated by students, including how they plan, reason, and communicate their strategies during the game. This will include students' ability to think logically, solve problems, and consider multiple possibilities in different situations.

This comprehensive qualitative evaluation will provide a deep understanding of how "The Witchy" card game can enhance students' speaking and critical thinking skills. Through this approach, the effectiveness of the game will be measured not only by exam results but also by significant changes in student behavior, language usage, and cognitive engagement. This evaluation is expected to show that the impact of "The Witchy" extends beyond test score improvement to the broader development of students' communication and analytical thinking

skills.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To address the feedback regarding the triangulation of data sources in this study, we clarify how class observations, pre-tests, and post-tests complement one another to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

This study aims to measure the effectiveness of "The Witchy" card game in improving English language skills among EFL students, focusing on speaking fluency, critical thinking, and motivation. The combination of class observations, pre-tests, and post-tests provides a multi-faceted approach to data collection, ensuring that the results are both reliable and valid.

1. Speaking Fluency:

- **Pre-tests** established baseline data regarding students' speaking abilities, highlighting common issues such as long pauses, limited vocabulary, and basic sentence structures.
- **Class observations** during game sessions captured real-time improvements, such as increased spontaneity in speech, reduced hesitation, and more dynamic conversations.
- **Post-tests** quantitatively measured these improvements, revealing enhanced speaking fluency, more diverse vocabulary usage, and more complex sentence patterns. The alignment between observed behaviors and test results confirms the game's positive impact.

2. Critical Thinking:

- **Pre-tests** assessed students' initial ability to form arguments, identify logical gaps, and use reasoning.
- **Class observations** recorded how students analyzed peers' arguments, countered inconsistencies, and devised strategies during the game, showcasing their growing critical thinking skills in practice.
- **Post-tests** reflected these gains by evaluating students' structured responses, logical consistency, and strategic language use, reinforcing the observational data.

3. Motivation:

- **Class observations** captured immediate

behavioral indicators of motivation, such as active participation, enthusiasm, and voluntary speaking.

- **Pre- and post-tests** included reflective questions that gauged students' interest in using English both inside and outside the classroom. The increase in students' self-reported confidence and eagerness to speak English further validated the observed motivational boost.

By triangulating these methods, the study not only tracks changes over time but also cross-verifies findings, ensuring that the observed improvements in speaking fluency, critical thinking, and motivation are credible and consistent. This integrated approach highlights the effectiveness of "The Witchy" game as a powerful tool for EFL learning.

IV. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the card game *The Witchy* is an innovative and effective method for enhancing EFL students' English skills, particularly in fluency, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure. Through interactive game mechanics, students are encouraged to speak spontaneously and confidently, incorporate newly acquired vocabulary, and construct arguments with improved sentence structure. The game also fosters an engaging learning environment, transforming previously passive students into active communicators.

Trial results indicate measurable improvements in students' critical thinking skills, as observed through qualitative analysis of their gameplay interactions. Specifically, students demonstrated enhanced abilities in analyzing situations, making logical decisions, and developing strategies aligned with their roles in the game. While progress was noted across all these aspects, strategy development showed the most significant advancement, as students became increasingly adept at anticipating outcomes and adapting their approaches in response to in-game challenges.

Additionally, *The Witchy* has a lasting motivational impact on students' interest in communicating in English, both inside and outside the classroom. This game transforms students' perceptions of learning English from a monotonous task to an engaging and intellectually stimulating activity. Although initial challenges arose—such as students' adaptation to the game's language and necessary refinements in the card design and manual—the

research successfully identified solutions to ensure the game's effectiveness.

The effectiveness of *The Witchy* is evident in students' increased confidence and willingness to communicate in English. Through interactive gameplay, students demonstrated greater fluency in expressing their ideas, improved coherence in structuring sentences, and enhanced ability to use newly acquired vocabulary in context. Observations and reflections from students also indicate a shift in mindset, as they became more proactive in discussions, took initiative in strategic decision-making, and showed a higher level of engagement in collaborative problem-solving. By blending educational and entertainment elements, *The Witchy* not only provides a dynamic approach to language learning but also cultivates essential higher-order thinking skills, preparing EFL students for future academic and professional challenges.

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