

PROMOTING ENGLISH SPEAKING THROUGH DAILY ENGLISH GAMBITS AMONG ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRAK

Keterampilan berbicara dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL) di sekolah dasar masih menjadi tantangan karena siswa sering kali memiliki kosakata dasar, tetapi belum memiliki keberanian dan perangkat ujaran yang cukup untuk berpartisipasi secara lisan. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pergeseran fungsi daily English gambits dari pengulangan imitasi menuju penggunaan pragmatis, serta mengidentifikasi perbedaan adopsi ungkapan rutin berdasarkan usia siswa. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus longitudinal selama Januari-Desember 2025 di madrasah ibtidaiyah Andalan Ciamis. Subjek penelitian terdiri atas tiga siswa berusia 12, 10, dan 8 tahun yang dipilih secara purposif, dengan guru kelas sebagai informan pendukung. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas partisipatif dan wawancara semi-terstruktur berkala, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik dengan perhatian pada perkembangan temporal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa daily English gambits berkembang melalui lintasan fungsional dari imitasi, partisipasi terarah, hingga penggunaan pragmatis yang lebih mandiri. Siswa yang lebih tua cenderung menggunakan gambits untuk klarifikasi, pengelolaan giliran, dan penyusunan respons, sedangkan siswa yang lebih muda memanfaatkannya sebagai sarana keberanian partisipasi dasar. Kesimpulannya, daily English gambits merupakan perangkat pedagogis sederhana, tetapi strategis guna menjembatani keterbatasan linguistik siswa dengan kebutuhan komunikasi lisan siswa sekolah dasar dalam konteks bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL).

Kata Kunci: *Daily English Gambits; Bahasa Formulaik; Pembelajaran Berbicara; EFL; Madrasah Ibtidaiyah*

ABSTRACT

Speaking skill in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in primary school remain a challenge because students often have basic vocabulary but lack the courage and speech tools to participate orally. This study aims to analyze the shift in the function of daily English gambits from imitation and repetition to pragmatic use, and to identify differences in the adoption of routine expressions by student age. The research uses a qualitative approach with a longitudinal case study design during January-December 2025 at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Andalan Ciamis. The research subjects were three students aged 12, 10, and 8 years old, purposively selected, with the classroom teacher as the supporting informant. Data were collected through participatory classroom observations and periodic semi-structured interviews, and were then analyzed thematically with attention to temporal development. The results showed that daily English gambits developed through a functional trajectory from imitation and directed participation to more independent pragmatic use. Older students tend to use gambits for clarification, turn management, and response drafting, while younger students use them as a means of basic participatory courage. This study concludes that daily English gambits are a simple yet strategic pedagogical tool for bridging students' linguistic limitations with their oral communication needs in elementary school EFL classes.

Keywords: Daily English Gambits; Formulaic Language; Speaking Learning; EFL; Islamic Elementary School

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I. INTRODUCTION

Learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at the basic education level can ideally equip students with functional, meaningful oral communication skills. Under ideal conditions, elementary school-age learners have ample opportunities to interact, spontaneously recall vocabulary, construct meaning, and respond in a supportive social context (Trana et al., 2024). These speaking skills develop optimally when classroom instruction is integrated with a daily routine appropriate to the child's age and cognitive development. An interactional environment rich in exposure to the target language should foster communicative confidence, with students actively using English not just for formality but as an authentic tool for classroom interaction (Erman & Lewis, 2024; Hidayat & Nurlatifah, 2023).

However, the reality on the ground shows that speaking skills remain one of the most challenging domains for young learners. This difficulty is exacerbated by the lack of exposure to spoken English outside class hours, uneven levels of student confidence, and the dominance of teaching methods focused on written grammar and exam preparation (De Wilde, 2026; Newton & Nation, 2009). In addition, the demand to formulate sentences under time pressure often triggers communicative anxiety that inhibits active participation. As a result, many elementary school students remain reluctant to take the initiative to speak up, fearing mistakes. Hence, classroom verbal interactions tend to be passive and limited to brief responses guided directly by the teacher (Lucas, 2023; Wood, 2010).

Various previous studies have examined issues related to the development of oral skills and the use of formulaic language among English language learners. Lee & Chiu (2023) highlight the importance of reducing communication anxiety to increase EFL students' willingness to communicate. Trana et al., (2024) emphasize that successful verbal participation relies heavily on opportunities for repetitive and authentic interactions. Chang et al., (2024) found, in their longitudinal study, that self-efficacy and enjoyment of learning contribute significantly to the development of speech skills. Vercellotti et al., (2021) demonstrate that the use of multiword sequences can reduce learners' cognitive load when speaking directly. Yang et al., (2021) show that the quality of interaction between teacher and child directly predicts lexical development. Lucas (2023) emphasizes that language instruction for young learners is much more effective when integrated into meaningful classroom routines rather than isolated memorization exercises.

Although the literature on formulaic language and children's language development continues to grow, a significant research gap remains. Most current empirical studies tend to focus on adolescents, college students, or instructional settings with large samples, thereby missing the dynamics of individual development at the micro level. In addition,

previous literature has not comprehensively documented longitudinally how children of different age groups gradually adopt routine English expressions (daily gambits). This gap becomes increasingly evident in the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah, where few studies have explored how the routine of expression intersects with the values of politeness, turn-taking discipline, and interaction manners that are at the core of the educational culture in that environment.

Departing from this gap, this study positions daily English gambits as an essential pedagogical solution. Routine phrases such as “Good morning”, “May I answer?” or “Please repeat” are not mere memorized phrases but linguistic instruments that carry substantial interactional impact. For beginner learners, these ready-made expressions serve as low-risk communication entry points, allowing them to open conversations, respond to, and ask for clarification without having to master complex grammar first. Therefore, structured and continuous observation is indispensable for observing the functional transitions of these phrases in the classroom.

The novelty of this research lies in the use of a longitudinal, qualitative case study approach over a full year to specifically track the micro developmental trajectories of students of different ages in the madrasah ibtidaiyah environment. This approach allows researchers to photograph the shift in the function of gambits, from mere teacher-guided imitation to self-contained functional speech and pragmatic aim. The impact of this study on the world of education, especially language education in elementary schools, is crucial. In practice, the results of this study offer educators a pedagogical foothold: rather than delaying speaking practice until students have mastered sentence structure perfectly, it can directly build basic communication smoothness through the integration of managed, psychologically safe, and contextually appropriate oral routines.

Based on the above explanation, this research focuses on two main problem formulations: (1) How does the function of daily English gambits shift from mere repetition (imitation) to pragmatic use aimed at students' speaking practice from time to time? and (2) How do age group differences affect the way students adopt and utilize such routine expressions in classroom interactions? In line with the formulation of the problem, this study sets two main objectives, namely: (1) to analyze and document the functional transition of daily English gambits in supporting students' participation and oral communication; and (2) to identify the pattern of adaptation to the use of these expressions based on the level of development of the age of students in the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah environment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the researchers discuss 2 sub-discussions in line with the focus of this study. The two sub-discussions include: daily English gambits as a formulaic language in oral learning, and language learning in elementary children and longitudinal dynamics. The forementioned two sub-discussions are highlighted as follows.

Daily English Gambits as a Formulaic Language in Oral Learning

Understanding of formulaic language has been widely studied as an essential element in the mastery of spoken language. [Myles & Cordier \(2017\)](#) define a formulaic series as a string of words that frequently appear and are processed, stored, and recalled

from memory as a whole rather than assembled word by word. Wood (2010) argues that in the context of speaking, such sequences are of great value because they can support fluency, reduce the burden of cognitive planning, and help the speaker manage the organization of discourse. Thomson et al., (2023) assert that explicit instruction and the repetition of multiword expressions in meaningful contexts can significantly improve learners' verbal fluency and conversational readiness.

These three views form a complementary understanding of the cognitive and functional mechanisms of formulaic language. The view of language processing as a whole explains cognitively why the burden of learning mental planning can be reduced. When learners do not need to translate or assemble grammatical structures word-for-word slowly, their cognitive energy can be diverted to maintain the flow of communication. In addition, cognitive efficiency demands instructional practices that focus on recycling expression in real, meaningful interaction situations (Myles & Cordier, 2017; Thomson et al., 2023; Wood, 2010).

In the context of this research, the theoretical foundation is relevant to the application of daily English gambits such as "May I answer?", "Please repeat", or "I agree" in students of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Andalan Ciamis. Elementary-age students often face time pressures, communication anxiety, and vocabulary limitations that prevent them from speaking. By positioning gambits as ready-made, fully processed phrases, these minor linguistic instruments serve as a low-risk stepping stone for students. The practice of recycling daily phrases in classroom opening routines, activity switches, and Q&A sessions allows students of different ages to manage verbal interactions with a lighter cognitive load.

Thus, the formulaic language theory that emphasizes reducing cognitive burden and facilitating fluency is very much in line with the use of daily English gambits in this study. The use of daily expressions is not just about memorizing vocabulary. Still, an interactional strategy rooted in the principle of language processing as a whole directly equips elementary school students with practical tools to participate and communicate more confidently in the classroom.

Language Learning in Elementary Children and Longitudinal Dynamics

Oral language development in elementary-age learners is influenced by instructional design, the quality of interaction, and individual trajectory differences over time. Lucas (2023) argues that early English learning is more effective when embedded in meaningful classroom routines, play, and social activities than in isolated memorization exercises. Yang et al., (2021) stated that the quality of interaction between the teacher and the child directly predicts later lexical and language development. Wilde et al., (2021) highlight the importance of a longitudinal perspective by showing that after instruction begins, young learners display highly variable developmental patterns depending on their individual differences and language contacts.

The elaboration of these three views emphasizes that the success of language mastery in elementary children is a combination of environmental design and learners' internal characteristics. This concept of the importance of socially meaningful routines provides a framework for creating high-quality teacher-child interactions. In addition, supportive interactions in daily routines provide children with a sense of emotional security, helping them begin producing language. However, the same environmental exposure does not necessarily result in uniform acceleration. Therefore, language development should be understood as a dynamic process in which age readiness, confidence, and intensity of language contact create a unique trajectory of achievement for each individual (Lucas, 2023; Wilde et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021).

The relevance of this theory to the context of this research is evident in the use of a longitudinal qualitative case study design for one year, namely January-December 2025. This research not only embeds gambits in meaningful classroom routines, but also captures how teacher-student interactions oversee these ability transitions. Furthermore, the theory of longitudinal developmental variation is relevant for explaining the findings across all three participants: 8-year-old students (S3) who initially parroted greetings ritualistically, gradually demonstrated basic independence, while 12-year-old students (S1) more quickly manipulated turn-taking strategies for speaking and clarification.

It can be concluded that the theoretical underpinnings regarding the significance of meaningful interactional routines and individual developmental variations justify the need for a longitudinal approach in this study. Monitoring students for a full year showed that daily expression routines facilitated by supportive educator interactions can accommodate students' age-varying developmental patterns and shift their verbal abilities from repetition to more functional pragmatic communication.

III. METHOD

Research Type and Approach

This study employs a qualitative methodology under a longitudinal case study design. A qualitative approach is applied to explore in depth how a small group of students adopt daily gambits over time and to understand their interactions in class, rather than to measure speaking achievement statistically. This approach is relevant to the view of [Creswell & Poth \(2024\)](#), who affirm that qualitative design is important for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups give to a social or human problem in depth. The selection of the longitudinal case study design was based on the need to track the same subject for an entire year, from January to December 2025. This design allows researchers to interpret language development as a continuous interactional process rather than a momentary final product, in line with the principle of case study inquiry, which prioritizes the comprehensive investigation of contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts ([Yin, 2018](#)).

Research Time and Place

The present study was carried out intensively from January to December 2025. The whole stages of data collection were focused on the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Andalan Ciamis, West Java.

Research Subject

The subjects of the study were three students selected using the purposive sampling technique. The three subjects were deliberately chosen to represent different age groups and grade levels in the madrasah community: one 12-year-old student (S1) in the upper-class range, one 10-year-old student (S2) in the middle-class range, and one 8-year-old student (S3) in the lower-class range. This micro sample size is consistent with the inquiry logic in longitudinal case studies, where depth of observation, contextual interpretation, and tracing of individual developmental trajectories are top priorities, rather than statistical generalizations in large populations.

Procedure

To maintain longitudinal design accuracy, the data collection procedure is distributed into three phases of observation structured throughout the year. The initial

phase (January-April) focused on recording the learner's initial response to routine expressions, especially the phenomenon of mass repetition and teacher-guided echoing. The intermediate phase (May-August) is geared towards monitoring functional transitions, especially how students begin to initiate the use of language expressions to request turns or respond with diminishing impulses. The final phase (September-December) focuses on the variety of pragmatic tactics that students use, specifically based on their age, in the classroom.

Data, Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

This qualitative research relies on layered and repetitive data collection. The main instrument is the researcher himself, who serves as a direct observer, assisted by a teacher and by supporting instruments, including class observation rubrics and semi-structured interview guidelines. Data were collected through classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. Class observation is carried out to participate in the practice of daily expression routines in real communication slots, for example, when greeting, asking for permission, requesting repetition, giving a brief response, and continuing until the end of the class. Semi-structured interviews are conducted periodically over a short period with the three target students and the relevant teachers to juxtapose the behavior of speaking in class with what the learners feel.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected qualitative data are analyzed thematically, with special attention to temporal developments. Thematic analysis was chosen because it provides a flexible and rigorous framework for identifying and reporting patterns of meaning across qualitative data sets, while allowing researchers to pay detailed attention to individual cases (Braun & Clarke, 2025). The analytical process was carried out through repeated reading of field notes and interview data, initial coding of gambit use, comparison of data across time for each participant, and the construction of interpretive themes that capture changes and continuities in behavior. Because these studies are longitudinal, the analysis does not treat student development as a static endpoint. In contrast, data interpretation combines within-case analysis and cross-case comparison to track the shift in discourse from imitation to more independent functional speech across age ranges (Yin, 2018).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The results of this study were obtained through participatory classroom observation and semi-structured interviews conducted periodically during January-December 2025. Class observations focused on the practice of using daily English gambits in real communication slots, such as greetings, asking for permission or taking turns, requesting repetition or clarification, giving brief responses, and closing class interactions. Meanwhile, semi-structured interviews are used to understand students' subjective experiences and teachers' reflections on changes in students' speaking behavior over time.

The results show that the use of daily English gambits in the classroom routine not only serves as a repetition of English phrases but also becomes an interactive device that gradually helps students manage verbal participation. Based on longitudinal observations and semi-structured interviews, the development of gambit use proceeds through three main phases: the imitation phase, the functional transition phase, and the pragmatic use phase. The three phases do not appear uniformly across all students but are influenced by

age, cognitive readiness, communicative courage, and the intensity of students' involvement in the classroom routine.

Table 1. Results of Class Observations on the Use of Daily English Gambits in Real Communication Slots

Classroom communication slots	Examples of observed daily English gambits	Early phase January-April 2025	Intermediate phase May-August 2025	End phase September-December 2025	Meaning of development
Say hello and open class.	Good morning, how are you? I am fine	Students generally follow the teacher model collectively. S3 only parroted the greeting in a quiet voice, S2 followed with friends, while S1 began to repeat more steadily.	Students begin to respond to greetings more quickly. S2 and S1 showed a more independent response, while S3 still needed the teacher's encouragement.	S1 and S2 can respond to greetings without direct instructions. S3 began to use simple greetings at regular times.	Class-opening gambits serve as the starting door for safe and repeatable verbal participation.
Ask for permission or take turns speaking	May I answer? Can I try? May I speak?	Usage is still very limited. Students are waiting for teachers to be appointed. S2 and S3 tend to follow a friend's response.	S1 begins to use expressions to take turns speaking. S2 started trying to use May I answer? with a light boost. S3 still rarely initiates its own turns.	S1 uses gambits strategically to get into the conversation. S2 began to take the initiative to speak without always waiting to be appointed. S3 uses simple expressions only in very familiar situations.	Gambits help students move from passive participation to more independent verbal initiation.
Request a repetition or clarification.	Please repeat; Pardon me; What does it mean?	Almost all students have not used clarification expressions independently. When they don't understand the instructions, students tend to be silent or look at their friends.	S1 starts using Please repeat to request a repetition. S2 begins to mimic these strategies in certain situations. S3 still depends on the teacher's cues.	S1 uses clarification as a communication strategy. S2 begins to understand the Please repeat function to reduce response errors. S3 has not been consistent, but it is beginning to recognize the function of the expression.	Clarification gambits indicate a shift from silence when not understanding to communication improvement strategies.

Classroom communication slots	Examples of observed daily English gambits	Early phase January-April 2025	Intermediate phase May-August 2025	End phase September-December 2025	Meaning of development
Give a brief answer or opinion.	I think... I agree; My answer is...	Students still answer with a single word or repeat the teacher's words. S2 is more comfortable answering with a group, while S3 has not dared to formulate their own responses.	S1 started using I think... to compile a short answer. S2 starts using gambits as a simple response opener. S3 still requires strong prompting.	S1 can use gambits to structure responses. S2 combines gambits with brief personal opinions. S3 starts to give a simple response to recurring slots.	Gambits serve as a starting framework for building more meaningful speech.
Close class interactions	Thank you; See you; Goodbye; See you tomorrow.	Closing phrases are used collectively and are ritualistic. Students follow the teacher without variation in function.	Students begin to recognize closures as part of the classroom interaction pattern. S2 and S1 responded more spontaneously, while S3 still followed the class.	S1, S2, and S3 can use several closing expressions more naturally according to the class routine.	Closing gambits reinforce an orderly, polite, and predictable pattern of class interaction.

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the development of the use of daily English gambits did not take place suddenly. In the early phases, daily expressions are more used as a form of imitation or collective repetition. In the intermediate phase, some students begin to understand the function of the expression as a tool for taking turns, asking for repetition, and opening responses. In the final phase, especially in S1 and S2, gambits begin to function as pragmatic tools to manage verbal interactions more independently. S3 shows a slower progression, but still changes from just parroting to simple use in familiar communication slots.

Table 2. Semi-Structured Interview Results on Student Experience and Teachers' Reflections on the Use of Daily English Gambits

Informant	Focus of the interview	Early phase January-April 2025	Intermediate phase May-August 2025	End phase September-December 2025	Thematic interpretation
Classroom teacher	Changes in student speaking behavior and the function of gambits in the classroom routine	Teachers see that students are still very dependent on collective repetition. Students understand daily gambits as memorized	The teacher observed that daily repetition began to help students recall phrases. Some students start using gambits to request turns or repetition.	The teacher considers that some gambits have turned into functional speech tools. Older students start using it to	From the teacher's perspective, gambits evolved from class memorization into an instrument of verbal

Informant	Focus of the interview	Early phase January-April 2025	Intermediate phase May-August 2025	End phase September-December 2025	Thematic interpretation
S1 is 12 years old	Experience using gambits to organize interactions	phrases to follow the routine at the beginning and end of class. At first, S1 repeated the expressions exemplified by the teacher to follow the routine and avoid the demand for longer speech.	S1 began to realize that expressions such as "Please repeat" could be used to request clarification and avoid miscommunication.	manage interactions, while younger students use it to build basic courage. S1 feels that gambits help formulate answers, ask for clarification, take turns, and reduce doubts when speaking. S2 shows increased courage,	participation that has a pragmatic function. In older students, gambits develop into more conscious pragmatic strategies for managing classroom communication.
S2 is 10 years old	Experience using gambits as response openers	At first, S2 felt safer following repetition with friends because he didn't have to talk to himself.	S2 is starting to feel that phrases like "May I answer?" and "I think..." can be conversation starters that make responses feel easier.	taking the initiative to speak and share short opinions without always waiting for the teacher to be appointed.	In middle-aged students, gambits serve as a bridge between collective participation and individual responses.
S3 is 8 years old	Experience using gambits to build basic courage	S3 still interprets participation as following the teacher's words. He has not been confident in composing or using expressions independently.	S3 still needs strong encouragement from teachers to use simple phrases like 'good morning' or 'thank you'.	S3 begins to feel more confident about speaking up when the phrases used are familiar and appear in multiple class slots.	In the youngest students, gambits mainly serve to lower anxiety and unlock basic verbal participation.

Table 2 shows that students' internal experiences align with the observed behavior patterns. S1 shows the most complex development because it can use gambits as a strategy to clarify and manage responses. S2 shows a shift from a sense of security in collective repetition to the courage to take a turn to speak. S3 shows a simpler development, from parroting to using familiar phrases in repetitive situations. Meanwhile, the teacher confirmed that daily repetition makes it easier for students to recall phrases and gradually use them for more tangible communication.

Based on the combined results of observations and interviews, it can be concluded that daily English gambits work through three main functions. First, gambits are a low-risk entry point for communication because students can speak without having to

compose sentences from scratch. Second, gambits become a transitional device from collective repetition to individual participation. Third, gambits serve as pragmatic tools whose use is influenced by a student's age and developmental readiness. Thus, the use of everyday English expressions in the classroom routine not only enriches language exposure but also gradually shapes students' courage, participation structure, and pragmatic awareness.

Discussion

This discussion is intended to address two research problems: how the function of daily English gambits shifts from imitation to pragmatic use, and how age differences affect how students adopt and utilize these routine expressions in classroom interactions. Theoretically, this discussion is situated within the broad frameworks of formulaic language theory, interaction theory in children's language learning, and the longitudinal development of young learners. These three foundations provide a basis for understanding that the speaking development of elementary school students in the context of EFL depends not only on mastery of vocabulary and grammatical structures, but also on the availability of ready-to-use expressions, interactional routines, teacher support, and student developmental readiness.

The Shift in the Function of Daily English Gambits from Imitation to Pragmatic Use

The first problem formulation in this study asks how the function of daily English gambits shifts from mere repetition to pragmatic use aimed at students' speaking practice over time. The study's findings show that in the early phases, everyday English expressions are still used as a form of imitation, highly dependent on the teacher's model. Students repeat the opening phrase, greeting, permission request, or closing of the class as part of the collective routine. At this stage, gambits are not yet fully self-sufficient communication tools, but they serve as a safe form of initial participation because students do not need to construct sentences from scratch spontaneously.

The findings can be explained through formulaic language theory. [Myles & Cordier \(2017\)](#) explain that a series of formulaic items is processed, stored, and recalled as a whole, not always assembled verbatim. In the context of this study, phrases such as good morning, May I answer? Please repeat, and I think. It serves as a ready-to-use language unit that students can use directly in classroom situations. Because it is processed as a whole, the phrase reduces the burden on students in designing grammatical structures spontaneously. Thus, imitation in the early phase cannot be seen as a purely passive activity, but as an initial stage of internalization of the formulaic language unit.

In line with this, [Wood \(2010\)](#) asserts that formulaic language can support fluency by helping learners reduce the cognitive burden of planning. The findings of this study show that this function is particularly relevant for elementary school students who still have limited vocabulary, confidence, and English-speaking experience. When students have ready-made phrases, they can more easily enter verbal interactions without first having to master sentence structure perfectly. In other words, daily English gambits serve as an initial buffer for students to begin speaking in a more psychologically safe environment.

In the intermediate phase, daily English gambits shifted from rote language to participation aids. Students begin using certain phrases to request a turn to speak, request repetition, or open a simple answer. This shift suggests that gambits are starting to acquire pragmatic functions. Expressions are no longer just repeated because the teacher requests them, but are now used to meet certain interactional needs. For example, please repeat 'starts' to function as a clarification strategy, whereas 'May I answer?' serves as a marker of readiness to take a turn to speak.

These findings expand on the views of Thomson et al., (2023), who suggest that teaching multiword expressions through meaningful use can improve learners' conversational readiness and verbal fluency. This study adds that the improvement can be seen not only in speech fluency but also in changes in language function. In a longitudinal context, formulaic expressions evolve from mere memorized chunks to pragmatic devices that help students manage classroom interactions. Therefore, an important contribution of this research is to show the functional trajectory of formulaic language in classroom practice, rather than merely explaining its benefits as a support for speech fluency.

In the final phase, daily English gambits have been used more independently, especially by older students. Routine phrases are used to structure responses, ask for clarification, take turns, and convey simple opinions. This shows that the use of spoken language does not develop abruptly from silence to fluency, but through micro-stages mediated by routine phrases. Thus, the answer to the first problem is that daily English gambits shift in function through three main stages: from teacher-guided imitation to directed participation with routine support, and then to a more independent and purposeful pragmatic use.

The Effect of Age Difference on the Adoption and Utilization of Daily English Gambits

The second problem formulation asks how age-group differences affect how students adopt and use daily English gambits in classroom interactions. The study's findings suggest that age affects the complexity of the gambits used by the students. Older students tend to use gambits for more complex pragmatic functions, while younger students use them primarily to build basic courage to speak. In addition, the 12-year-old S1 shows the most complex use of gambits. In the final phase, S1 not only repeats phrases but uses gambits to ask for clarification, manage the flow of interactions, and compose short responses. This suggests that older students have a greater capacity to understand the pragmatic functions of language. S1 no longer sees routine expressions as phrases to memorize, but as communication strategies to use when he needs time, clarification, or initial structure to speak.

S2, who is 10 years old, shows a transition pattern. At first, S2 felt safer participating in collective repetition with his friends. However, over time, S2 began using phrases like "May I answer?" and "I think..." as conversation starters. This suggests that, for middle-aged students, gambits serve as a bridge between collective participation and individual responses. S2 has not fully used gambits as complex as S1's, but it is already shown greater courage in taking turns speaking and delivering brief opinions. Furthermore, S3, who is 8 years old, shows a more elementary developmental pattern. In the initial phase, S3 mostly only parrots the teacher's speech. In the intermediate phase, it still needs strong prompting to use simple expressions. In the final phase, S3 starts to be able to use some simple gambits in very familiar class slots. Although this development is more limited, pedagogically, the findings remain important because they show that gambits help the youngest students lower the threshold of speech anxiety. For S3, success is not measured by the complexity of speech, but by the courage to speak in a familiar pattern of interaction.

These findings align with Wilde et al., (2021), who emphasized that language development in young learners should be understood longitudinally, as each child's developmental trajectory can differ depending on language contact, learning experiences, and individual differences. Besides that, the study showed that although all three students gained exposure to the same routine, the way they adopted and used gambits differed.

The age difference affects the extent to which gambits can be understood as pragmatic tools, response management tools, or simply tools for building initial courage (Mulyono et al., 2023).

These findings can also be read through the perspective of teacher-child interaction in language learning. Yang et al., (2021) emphasized that the quality of teacher-child interaction is closely related to children's language development. In this study, teachers play an important role in adjusting the level of support to students' needs. Younger students need stronger prompting and more familiar routines, while older students can be given more space to use gambits strategically. Thus, the age difference not only affects students' abilities but also demands differentiated pedagogical support from teachers. In addition, Lucas (2023) also emphasizes that learning English for young learners becomes more effective when inserted into meaningful classroom routines, games, and social activities. The findings of this study reinforce this view by showing that routines are not neutral, routines are a developmental space that allows students at different ages to use language according to their respective readiness. Younger students need routines to build a sense of security, while older students need routines as a starting structure to develop more complex pragmatic functions.

Thus, the answer to the formulation of the second problem is that age differences affect the rate and function of the utilization of daily English gambits. In younger students, gambits serve as a basic tool of courage and participation. In middle-aged students, gambits serve as response openers and as means of taking turns speaking. In older students, gambits develop into pragmatic strategies for managing interactions, asking for clarification, and drafting speech. These findings confirm that daily English gambits are a flexible and age-sensitive pedagogical tool (Hidayat et al., 2022; Thomson et al., 2023).

The novelty of this study in line with the meaning of daily English gambits as a transitional device in the development of EFL speaking of elementary school students. Previous research has mostly discussed formulaic language as a means of improving fluency, reducing cognitive load, or enriching oral expression. However, this study shows, more specifically, how routine expressions move longitudinally from imitation to pragmatic functions in real classroom practice. Thus, the novelty of the research lies not only in the use of gambits as teaching material, but in the explanation of the process of changing the function of gambits over time. Then, the second novelty deals with the use of a one-year longitudinal qualitative case study design to capture the micro development of oral language use. Many EFL speaking learning studies tend to assess speaking ability through final achievement, anxiety levels, willingness to speak, or performance scores. This study is different because it traces how students gradually transform memorized phrases into communication tools that have a pragmatic purpose. The longitudinal approach allows this study to show that speech development is not only reflected in increases in the number of words or speech length, but also in changes in the function of language in social interactions.

Further, the third novelty concerns on the madrasah ibtidaiyah. In this context, daily English gambits not only function as a linguistic tool but also intersect with the values of politeness, turn-taking discipline, and communication manners. Expressions such as asking for permission, asking for a turn, asking for repetition, or conveying consent can be incorporated into the habit of orderly and polite communication. Thus, this study expands understanding of how English learning in madrasah-based elementary schools can integrate the development of oral competence with the formation of classroom interaction manners. Later on, the last novelty is in harmony with the identification of age trajectories in the use of gambits. The study did not treat young learners as a homogeneous

group but showed that 8-, 10-, and 12-year-old students used routine expressions in different ways. These findings provide a new understanding that the effectiveness of daily English gambits concern not on the uniformity of outcomes, but in their ability to accommodate different levels of developmental readiness. In other words, gambits are pedagogical tools that can move from affective, interactional, to pragmatic functions according to the age and readiness of students.

This research has several important implications for the field of English education in primary schools. First, learning to speak does not have to wait until students have mastered grammar completely. Teachers can begin building the courage to speak by using simple, formulaic phrases consistently in the classroom routine. This strategy is important because elementary school students often encounter obstacles with spontaneous speech. Daily English gambits provide a more secure, more memorable communication entry point and are more appropriate to their stage of development. Second, English teachers in elementary schools need to design classroom routines that provide space for real language use. Phrases such as “Good morning” and “May I answer?” Please repeat, I think..., I agree, and thank you should not be taught as separate memorization lists but integrated into class-opening activities, questions and answers, group work, clarification, giving opinions, and closing learning. In this way, students understand that English has a concrete social function in classroom interactions. Finally, in the context of madrasah ibtidaiyah, daily English drills can be a means of integrating language learning with the development of communication skills. Routine expressions used to ask for permission, to respect turns, to ask for clarification politely, and to convey approval can reinforce the value of manners in class interactions. This implication is important because learning English need not be seen as separate from the values of madrasah education, but can be part of the habit of polite, disciplined, and participatory communication.

Overall, this discussion shows that daily English gambits play an important role in English education in elementary schools because they bridge students' linguistic limitations with the need for verbal participation in the classroom. Within the framework of formulaic language theory, gambits reduce cognitive load and provide ready-made language units. Within the framework of interaction theory, gambits serve as tools of social participation that teachers facilitate through classroom routines. In a longitudinal perspective, gambits show the functional progression from imitation to pragmatic use. Therefore, this study confirms that EFL speaking instruction for elementary school students should be built on a consistent, meaningful, age-sensitive, and attuned expression routine that aligns with the needs of classroom interaction.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

To conclude that daily English gambits are transitional pedagogical tools that help madrasah ibtidaiyah students move from imitation repetition to a more pragmatic, independent, and purposeful use of English in classroom interactions. The main meaning of these findings is that speaking skills in the context of primary school EFL need not start with the production of long, grammatically perfect sentences; they can be built through routine, familiar formulaic expressions with a clear social function. The novelty of this study lies in the longitudinal mapping of changes in the function of gambits by age, showing that younger students use it as a door to courage to speak. In comparison, older students use it as a strategy for clarification, turn management, and response preparation. Therefore, English instruction in primary school should focus on the design of consistent, psychologically safe, age-sensitive, and contextually relevant oral routines so that students experience English as a real communication tool in the classroom.

Suggestions

In line with this conclusion, the researchers suggest that elementary school English teachers are advised to integrate daily English gambits into daily classroom activities, such as learning openings, questions and answers, permission requests, clarifications, giving opinions, and class closures. Then, for forthcoming researcher, research can broaden the scope of participants and involve more than one educational institution, enabling comparisons of variations in social and pedagogical contexts. Subsequent studies may also use a mixed approach by combining longitudinal observation, conversation analysis, measurement of speaking willpower, and assessments of vocabulary development or verbal fluency.

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