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From Digital Engagement to Meaningful Speaking: A Reflective Case Study of Wayground in EFL Descriptive Text Learning

Nenik Prihartini[1], Syaadiah Arifin[2], Silih Warni[3]
[1,2,3]Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. Hamka, Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:
Syaadiah Arifin
syaadiah.arifin@uhamka.ac.id

Abstract

This study examined how Wayground, formerly Quizizz, was integrated into descriptive text learning to support speaking, how students experienced its use, and what challenges emerged. A qualitative case study with a reflective teacher-researcher component was conducted with 36 Grade X students at a public senior high school in Jakarta, Indonesia. Data from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, the teacher-researcher's reflective journal, and supporting documents, including students' written reflections, were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. Four findings emerged: Wayground supported speaking participation through audio responses, collaborative discussion, open-ended tasks, and a tourism video project; its interactive and game-like features enhanced engagement; audio recording created a lower-pressure space for rehearsal and re-recording, supporting confidence and willingness to communicate; and vocabulary, pronunciation, internet connectivity, and unequal participation remained challenges. Teacher reflection helped shift activities from mainly written and objective tasks toward more speaking-oriented instruction while strengthening scaffolding and participation management. Overall, Wayground was most valuable when combined with purposeful communicative tasks, collaboration, and continuous reflective teaching.

Keywords: *Wayground, EFL speaking, descriptive text, reflective teaching, technology-enhanced language learning*

Introduction

Speaking is a central component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it enables learners to transform linguistic knowledge into meaningful communication. Successful speaking requires appropriate vocabulary, intelligible pronunciation, fluency, interactional responsiveness, and sufficient confidence. For many EFL learners, these demands make speaking especially challenging. Limited vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, anxiety, fear of mistakes, and low confidence can reduce oral participation (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2018; Lee & Chiu, 2023; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). The pedagogical challenge is therefore not simply to provide more speaking tasks, but to create conditions in which students are willing and able to participate meaningfully.

This challenge is particularly relevant in descriptive text learning. Describing people, places, objects, and experiences provides accessible contexts for oral production because learners can draw on familiar vocabulary, visual information, and personal knowledge. Nevertheless, conventional speaking tasks may create performance pressure when students are expected to respond immediately or speak before the whole class. In the classroom examined in this study, students frequently hesitated because they were concerned about mistakes, struggled with vocabulary, and were not accustomed to

expressing ideas orally in English. These conditions created a need for speaking activities that allowed preparation, participation, and repeated oral practice.

Digital technologies can expand opportunities for learner interaction, multimodal input, flexible practice, and participation beyond conventional whole-class performance (Dooly & Sadler, 2020; Kessler, 2018). Gamified platforms may also strengthen attention and engagement when game-like features are connected to meaningful learning activities (Wang & Tahir, 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2020). Wayground, formerly known as Quizizz, has commonly been associated with quizzes, formative assessment, and game-based activities, but its open-ended, multimedia, and audio-response features can also be adapted for language production.

Previous studies have shown that Quizizz/Wayground can support positive engagement, participation, and learning experiences. Munawir and Hasbi (2021) reported gains in engagement and learning outcomes, while Permana et al. (2023) synthesized generally positive learner perceptions of gamified foreign-language learning through Quizizz. Indonesian studies have likewise documented positive perceptions of Quizizz alongside practical classroom challenges (Aulia & Warni, 2024; Kartika & Budiarta, 2025). Research more directly related to speaking suggests that gamified Quizizz activities and video-response tasks can support motivation, confidence, and opportunities for oral production, although these studies have often been conducted in non-formal or junior-high settings rather than Indonesian senior-high-school descriptive-text classrooms (Nawawi et al., 2024; RatnaNegara & Megawati, 2025).

These studies leave an important gap. Existing research has more often treated Quizizz/Wayground as an assessment, gamification, or practice tool than as a medium for examining the classroom processes through which speaking opportunities are created. Much of the evidence emphasizes outcomes or general perceptions, while providing less detail about how teachers configure the platform for oral production, how collaboration shapes participation, and how instructional decisions change in response to classroom realities. Emotional conditions also matter because anxiety, enjoyment, perceived competence, classroom support, and digital communication anxiety influence whether learners choose to communicate (Botes et al., 2022; Dewaele et al., 2018; Khajavy et al., 2018; Lee & Chiu, 2023).

The present study addresses this gap through a qualitative case study with a reflective teacher-researcher component in a Grade X EFL classroom in Jakarta. Rather than asking whether Wayground statistically improves speaking proficiency, the study examines how the platform was pedagogically configured, how students experienced the resulting speaking activities, what linguistic, technical, and participatory difficulties emerged, and how teacher reflection informed instructional adaptation. The novelty lies in showing how pedagogical design and reflective adaptation can transform a gamified platform from a tool for digital task completion into an environment for meaningful oral participation. The study also examines the double-edged nature of technology-supported collaboration, in which shared-device group work can encourage discussion while simultaneously limiting quieter students' opportunities to speak.

Accordingly, the study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1. How was Wayground pedagogically integrated to support EFL students' speaking participation in descriptive text learning?

RQ2. How did students experience Wayground-supported speaking activities in terms of engagement, confidence, and willingness to communicate?

RQ3. What linguistic, technical, and participatory challenges emerged during implementation, and how did teacher reflection inform instructional adaptation?

Method

Research Design and Context

This study employed a qualitative case study with a reflective teacher-researcher component (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018; Farrell, 2015). The case study design was appropriate because the research sought to understand classroom processes, students' experiences, and instructional adaptations in a naturally occurring educational setting rather than to measure the effectiveness of Wayground through experimental comparison or statistical testing. The reflective component was consistent with teacher self-study traditions that use systematic examination of practice to understand instructional decisions and professional learning (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Loughran, 2004).

The study was conducted at a public senior high school in Jakarta, Indonesia, during the second semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The implementation took place across three classroom meetings in May 2026. The sequence progressed from introductory activities that familiarized students with Wayground to more speaking-oriented tasks involving audio responses, peer interaction, and a collaborative tourism-video project. The initial meeting included multiple-choice, matching, and open-ended tasks, while subsequent meetings emphasized audio recording, opinion-based prompts, collaborative discussion, and project-based speaking activities.

The researcher simultaneously served as the classroom teacher. Reflection was incorporated throughout the implementation to examine instructional decisions, students' responses, emerging classroom difficulties, and subsequent pedagogical adjustments. This insider position provided close access to classroom processes but also created the possibility that the teacher-researcher's expectations could shape both instruction and interpretation. Reflexivity was therefore treated as an ongoing responsibility rather than a post-lesson add-on, with the reflective journal used to document instructional decisions, emerging interpretations, and points requiring reconsideration in light of other data sources.

Participants and Researcher Role

The participants were 36 students from Grade X-4, approximately 15-16 years old, enrolled in the class in which Wayground was integrated into English speaking activities. The class was selected purposively because it provided an authentic setting for investigating Wayground-supported speaking within descriptive text learning. Students showed varying levels of speaking participation and confidence, and some hesitated when they were uncertain about vocabulary or pronunciation.

The teacher-researcher designed and implemented the lessons, facilitated students' use of Wayground, observed classroom interaction, documented students' responses, and reflected on instructional decisions. Because this insider role could influence interpretation, the analysis did not rely solely on the teacher-researcher's account. Evidence from observations, interviews, written reflections, the reflective journal, and classroom documents was compared throughout analysis, with attention to both convergence and divergence between the teacher-researcher's interpretations and students' reported experiences.

Following the classroom implementation, 11 students were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. The selection represented different levels of classroom participation and speaking confidence so that the interview data reflected a range of experiences rather than only those of highly active students.

Data Collection

Data were generated through four complementary categories of evidence: classroom observations, semi-structured student interviews, the teacher-researcher's reflective journal, and supporting classroom documents. The supporting documents included students' written reflections, lesson plans, teaching materials, Wayground submissions, screenshots of learning activities, and recorded responses. Using multiple sources enabled comparison between students' reported experiences and evidence from classroom practice.

Classroom observations were conducted throughout the three instructional meetings and focused on how Wayground was incorporated into lessons, students' oral participation and engagement, peer interaction, confidence, and responses to linguistic, technical, and participatory challenges. Observation notes documented how the instructional activities unfolded in the classroom.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 11 selected students after implementation. Open-ended questions explored their experiences of Wayground-supported speaking activities, perceptions of the learning process, perceived benefits, and challenges. With participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The teacher-researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout implementation to document instructional decisions, classroom events, students' responses, implementation challenges, and changes made to subsequent activities. The journal recorded both reflection during classroom decision-making and post-lesson evaluation of what had or had not supported meaningful speaking participation.

Ethical Considerations

The post-implementation student interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent. In reporting the findings, the 11 interviewed students are identified by codes S1-S11 rather than by name.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2022). This approach enabled the researcher to identify and interpret patterned meanings across multiple qualitative sources while acknowledging the researcher's active role in theme development.

The analysis followed six interconnected phases. First, the researcher became familiar with interview transcripts, observation notes, written reflections, reflective journal entries, and supporting documents. Second, meaningful data segments were coded, particularly those related to speaking participation, engagement, confidence, student perceptions, implementation challenges, and teacher reflection. Third, related codes were grouped into provisional themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed against coded extracts and the complete dataset. Fifth, the themes were refined, defined, and named according to their central organizing ideas. Finally, the themes were interpreted in relation to the study's research focus and relevant literature.

The process was iterative rather than strictly linear. Evidence from interviews, observations, written reflections, and the reflective journal was continually compared, with particular attention to similarities as well as differences between what students reported and what was observed. The researcher also revisited emerging interpretations against evidence from sources other than the reflective journal so that teacher

expectations did not function as the sole basis for theme development. The analysis generated four interconnected themes concerning meaningful speaking participation, engagement and learning experience, confidence and willingness to speak, and challenges accompanied by reflective instructional adaptation.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across observations, interviews, written reflections, the reflective journal, and supporting documents. This use of multiple evidence sources is also consistent with recommendations for transparent and trustworthy thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017).

Transferability was supported by describing the participants, classroom context, instructional activities, and implementation process. Dependability was addressed through systematic documentation of lesson planning, data collection, coding, theme development, and analytical decisions. Confirmability was strengthened through the reflective journal and continual comparison of interpretations with evidence from different sources. Reflexivity was treated as an ongoing analytic practice: journal entries made instructional decisions and emerging interpretations visible, while student interviews, written reflections, observations, and classroom documents were compared for convergence and divergence. These procedures were particularly important because the researcher occupied the dual role of teacher and researcher.

Results

Reflexive thematic analysis generated four interconnected themes: (1) movement from digital task completion toward meaningful speaking participation, (2) engagement through interactive and collaborative learning, (3) audio recording as a lower-pressure space for speaking, and (4) linguistic, technical, and participatory challenges accompanied by reflective instructional adaptation.

In reporting the findings, S1–S11 denote the 11 interviewed students, CO1–CO3 denote classroom observation records from Meetings 1–3, and TRJ1–TRJ3 denote the teacher-researcher's reflective journal entries from Meetings 1–3.

From Digital Task Completion to Meaningful Speaking Participation

Wayground was implemented progressively across the three classroom meetings. During the first meeting, students were introduced to the platform through multiple-choice, matching, and open-ended activities related to descriptive texts. Classroom observations showed enthusiasm and curiosity, but much of the participation involved selecting or writing responses rather than producing spoken language (CO1).

The second meeting therefore placed greater emphasis on oral production. Students completed audio-response tasks in which they described places, answered open-ended prompts, and expressed opinions orally. Before recording, students frequently discussed possible responses with group members and repeated recordings when they wanted to improve pronunciation or fluency (CO2).

Students noticed this shift from conventional digital answering to speaking-oriented activities.

> *"Usually, Quizizz is only for answering questions by clicking options. This time, it included speaking activities, so it gave me a new experience and made the lesson more enjoyable" (S2, Interview).*

"During the speaking activities, there were texts, videos, written-answer tasks, and audio-answer tasks. I liked the audio tasks the most" (S4, Interview).

These accounts distinguish between using the platform merely to submit answers and using redesigned tasks to produce spoken language. Students' preference for audio responses was therefore associated not simply with the novelty of Wayground, but with a change in what the activities required them to do linguistically.

During the third meeting, students worked in groups to produce descriptive tourism videos by selecting destinations, preparing scripts, allocating responsibilities, recording narration, editing videos, and preparing final products. Classroom observations indicated that students exchanged ideas and coordinated their contributions throughout the project (CO3). Peer discussion also occurred before oral production, as students generated ideas, negotiated possible answers, and helped one another with language.

"Because we worked in groups, so our friends could help us" (S3, Interview).

"Because we discussed the questions first before answering them" (S7, Interview).

Taken together, the interview and observation evidence suggests that collaboration functioned as pre-speaking support. Students first generated and negotiated content with peers and then used that preparation for recorded responses and the tourism-video project. This support was useful for idea generation and language preparation, although later evidence showed that group work did not automatically provide equal speaking opportunities for every student.

Engagement Through Interactive and Collaborative Learning

Classroom observations showed that students remained involved in analyzing descriptive texts, discussing tourism destinations, preparing spoken responses, and developing video projects. During project work, they contributed ideas, prepared scripts, and coordinated group responsibilities (CO2; CO3). Interview accounts likewise described the learning experience as enjoyable, interactive, and different from conventional activities.

"Because it felt more like learning while playing a game" (S6, Interview).

"Very fun and interactive. The learning process was not boring because it had its own challenges" (S8, Interview).

These comments indicate that enjoyment was connected to interactivity and challenge rather than novelty alone. At the same time, the first classroom observation showed that high visible engagement could coexist with limited oral production. Engagement therefore became pedagogically consequential for speaking only when subsequent tasks required students to formulate and produce spoken responses.

Collaboration also contributed to students' positive experiences. Students described becoming more involved through group interaction and found it easier to communicate with peers. Across the sequence, texts, videos, quizzes, discussions, audio responses, and project-based tasks provided varied forms of participation (CO1-CO3).

Audio Recording as a Lower-Pressure Space for Speaking

The audio-response feature was one of the most prominent elements of students' speaking experience. Classroom observations showed that students frequently rehearsed and repeated recordings before submission. Some students who initially appeared hesitant became increasingly willing to complete recorded speaking activities and participate in group discussion (CO2).

"Because I was not speaking directly in front of many people. I could simply record my voice" (S2, Interview).

"If I made a mistake, I could record it again" (S2, Interview).

"Because we only record audio and our faces are not shown, I feel braver" (S1, Interview).

Observation evidence was consistent with these accounts. Rather than immediately submitting their first responses, students rehearsed, listened, and recorded again when dissatisfied with their performance (CO2). These findings concern opportunities for repeated oral practice, confidence, and willingness to participate. They should not be interpreted as evidence of measurable gains in speaking proficiency because the study did not use standardized speaking tests, analytic rubrics, or quantitative measures of fluency, pronunciation, grammar, or accuracy.

Challenges and Reflective Instructional Adaptation

Despite generally positive experiences, students encountered linguistic, technical, and participatory difficulties. Vocabulary and pronunciation were among the most frequently reported linguistic challenges.

"I still have difficulty understanding English expressions and vocabulary" (S3, Interview).

"Sometimes I pronounce words incorrectly" (S7, Interview).

Technical challenges included unstable internet connectivity and occasional application disruption (CO2; CO3). Group participation also varied. Students worked in six groups using one device per group; while this arrangement encouraged discussion, some students reported that more dominant members controlled the device or speaking opportunities.

"Some students were more dominant, so I did not have many opportunities to practice" (S5, Interview).

Teacher reflection informed responses to these classroom realities. After the first meeting, the teacher-researcher noted that students were enthusiastic and active, yet actual oral production remained limited because many tasks still relied on multiple-choice and written responses (TRJ1). Subsequent lessons increased audio-response tasks, opinion-sharing prompts, collaborative preparation, and speaking-oriented activities (TRJ1; TRJ2). Later reflections also identified the need for stronger vocabulary and pronunciation support, clearer group-role distribution, closer monitoring, and continued opportunities for rehearsal and re-recording (TRJ2; TRJ3). Across the three meetings, this created a recursive pattern in which observation of a mismatch between engagement and oral output informed the next lesson, while later reflection focused increasingly on language scaffolding and equitable participation.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Wayground supported speaking activities not simply because it provided an interactive digital environment, but because its features were progressively aligned with communicative tasks, collaborative preparation, repeated oral production, and reflective instructional adaptation. This pattern reinforces technology-enhanced language-learning research showing that digital tools become educationally useful when their affordances are connected to pedagogical objectives, learner interaction, and purposeful language use (Dooly & Sadler, 2020; Kessler, 2018).

Pedagogical Design as the Basis for Meaningful Speaking Participation

The first finding concerns the transformation of Wayground from a platform associated mainly with digital questions into a space for oral language production. The first meeting generated enthusiasm but relatively little speaking, whereas later tasks required students to describe places orally, respond to open-ended prompts, prepare scripts, discuss ideas,

and record spoken responses. The difference between digital participation and communicative participation is therefore central: speaking opportunities emerged from deliberate task design rather than from the platform alone.

This interpretation extends previous Quizizz/Wayground research that has more commonly emphasized engagement, assessment, general learning outcomes, learner perceptions, or broad gamification effects (Aulia & Warni, 2024; Kartika & Budiarta, 2025; Munawir & Hasbi, 2021; Permana et al., 2023; Wang & Tahir, 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2020). The present study adds a process-oriented explanation of how open-ended prompts, audio production, collaborative preparation, and project-based tasks can make spoken language necessary. This complements speaking-focused research on Quizizz that has reported positive motivation, confidence, and oral-production opportunities in other settings (Nawawi et al., 2024; RatnaNegara & Megawati, 2025). In this sense, the pedagogical contribution of Wayground lies in how teachers configure its features around communicative objectives.

Peer Collaboration as Support and Constraint

Peer collaboration supported speaking when students discussed possible answers, exchanged vocabulary, helped one another with pronunciation, and jointly prepared descriptive scripts. Such interaction provided a form of socially supported preparation before individual or group oral production, consistent with research emphasizing interaction and collaboration in technology-mediated language learning (Dooly & Sadler, 2020; Kessler, 2018).

However, the one-device-per-group arrangement also restricted access for some students. More confident members sometimes controlled the device or contributed more frequently, while quieter students had fewer opportunities to respond. This double-edged pattern is important because technology-supported collaboration should not be assumed to be automatically equitable. Clear group roles, turn-taking procedures, individual speaking responsibilities, and teacher monitoring are needed if collaboration is intended to expand rather than concentrate speaking opportunities.

Rehearsal, Reduced Performance Pressure, and Willingness to Speak

Audio recording produced one of the clearest patterns in the data. Students repeatedly emphasized that recording felt more manageable than immediate whole-class speaking because they could prepare, record, listen, and try again. This finding aligns with evidence that enjoyment, anxiety, perceived competence, classroom environment, and communication anxiety shape willingness to communicate (Botes et al., 2022; Dewaele et al., 2018; Khajavy et al., 2018; Lee & Chiu, 2023). It is also consistent with Quizizz-based speaking research suggesting that gamified and recorded-response tasks can support confidence, motivation, and opportunities for oral practice (Nawawi et al., 2024; RatnaNegara & Megawati, 2025).

The pedagogical value of recording therefore lies partly in recordability and revisability: students can move through preparation, rehearsal, self-monitoring, re-recording, and submission rather than treating the first attempt as final. Nevertheless, increased confidence and repeated oral production should not be equated with demonstrated proficiency gains. Because the study did not employ standardized speaking measures, the evidence supports claims about opportunities for practice and willingness to participate, not direct improvement in speaking ability.

Engagement as More Than Enjoyment

Students consistently described Wayground-supported learning as enjoyable, interactive, and challenging. These experiences correspond with gamification research linking game-like digital environments with attention, motivation, and participation (Munawir & Hasbi, 2021; Wang & Tahir, 2020; Zainuddin et al., 2020). Yet the first meeting showed that enjoyment alone did not guarantee substantial oral production. Engagement became more educationally meaningful when students' interest was connected to speaking through audio responses, discussion, descriptive scripts, and project work.

The study therefore adds nuance to positive perceptions of gamified learning: the key question is not only whether students enjoy the platform, but what they do linguistically while engaged. In this case, engagement supported speaking when activities required students to formulate, rehearse, negotiate, and communicate meaning.

Persistent Challenges and the Mediating Role of Teacher Reflection

Wayground did not remove the linguistic difficulties students brought to the classroom. Vocabulary limitations, pronunciation problems, and uncertainty about expressions remained evident, consistent with established accounts of EFL speaking challenges (Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017) and with research showing that affective classroom conditions can shape learners' readiness to communicate (Dewaele et al., 2018). Digital access therefore should not be confused with linguistic readiness: audio-response tasks still require vocabulary preparation, pronunciation support, examples, and feedback.

Technical constraints also showed that digital pedagogy depends on material conditions such as internet access and application stability. More importantly, the challenges became catalysts for instructional reflection. After recognizing that the first lesson produced strong digital engagement but insufficient oral production, the teacher redesigned subsequent activities to include more audio responses and speaking-oriented prompts. Reflection also informed vocabulary and pronunciation support and closer attention to unequal group participation.

This pattern is consistent with reflective-practice and teacher self-study literature, which emphasizes systematic examination of classroom events and responsive pedagogical adjustment (Farrell, 2015; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Loughran, 2004). Reflection functioned not merely as retrospective evaluation but as a link between technological use and instructional redesign. The distinctive contribution of the study is therefore the demonstration that the educational value of a digital platform emerges through a recursive process of task design, observation, reflection, and adaptation.

Conclusion

This study shows that Wayground became meaningful for speaking when its digital affordances were deliberately connected to communicative task design. Across three meetings, instruction moved from predominantly objective and written responses toward audio recording, open-ended speaking, collaborative preparation, and a tourism-video project. Students valued the opportunity to prepare and re-record responses, while peer interaction supported idea generation and language preparation. At the same time, vocabulary limitations, pronunciation difficulties, internet instability, application disruption, and unequal group participation demonstrated that digital engagement alone does not guarantee meaningful or equitable oral participation. Teacher reflection was

central because it exposed the gap between visible engagement and actual speaking and informed subsequent task redesign, scaffolding, and participation management.

The study is limited to one Grade X classroom, three instructional meetings, and a teacher-researcher design. It also did not employ standardized speaking tests, analytic rubrics, or quantitative measures of fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, or grammatical development. The findings therefore should not be interpreted as evidence that Wayground directly improved speaking proficiency. Rather, they support a process-oriented claim: when paired with purposeful communicative tasks, opportunities for rehearsal, peer preparation, language support, inclusive participation structures, and ongoing teacher reflection, the platform can create conditions that encourage oral practice, confidence, participation, and willingness to communicate.

Future research should examine Wayground-supported speaking across different schools, grade levels, and EFL contexts over longer periods. Longitudinal or mixed-methods designs could combine qualitative evidence of classroom processes with systematic measures of oral performance to investigate whether repeated digital speaking practice is associated with changes in fluency, pronunciation, accuracy, or other dimensions of speaking proficiency. Further research should also examine how device arrangements, task structures, and group-role systems influence equitable access to speaking opportunities.

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