Evaluation on the Implementation of the Spelling Bee Competition for Elementary and Junior High School Students in Polbeng Business Expo

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
  Open Access	This study aims to evaluate the implementation of the Spelling Bee competition at Polbeng Business Expo and its impact on the participants' English language skills. The competition is considered effective in improving English language skills, including the ability to spell complex words, spelling speed, letter pronunciation, and vocabulary enrichment. This study used a qualitative approach by collecting data through participant interviews and observations. The results showed that there were some challenges faced by the participants, such as difficulties in word comprehension, pronunciation, and listening skills, as well as technical constraints and organizational issues. Nonetheless, the participants showed high adaptability and had a positive impact on their confidence and motivation to learn. Based on the analysis, several suggestions for improvement have been proposed, including the selection of vocabulary appropriate to the participants' ability level, the improvement of audio-visual quality, and the implementation of a more objective word selection system. This research emphasizes the importance of academic support and a fun competition atmosphere to create an inclusive and meaningful experience. With these improvements, the Spelling Bee competition is expected to continue to be an effective tool for language development and personal growth. **Keywords:** Spelling Bee, Evaluation, English Language Skills, Competition, Education.

1. Introduction

English proficiency is a fundamental skill in today's globalized world, especially for students at the elementary and junior high school levels. Mastery of English from an early age plays a crucial role in cognitive development, academic performance, and future career opportunities. Research has shown that early exposure to the English language significantly enhances students' literacy skills, vocabulary retention, and confidence in communication. Karatas et al. (2022) suggest that structured language learning methods, such as competitions, can create a more engaging and effective learning environment.

One widely recognized method to improve English proficiency is the Spelling Bee competition. This competition is not just about spelling words correctly but also involves understanding their meanings, usage in sentences, and even word origins. According to Peters and Thompson (2021), Spelling Bee competitions contribute to the enhancement of students' literacy skills, expand their vocabulary, and boost their confidence in using English. Similarly, Rahman and Johnson (2023) highlight that competitive activities like Spelling Bee increase motivation and encourage students to engage more deeply in English learning.

In Indonesia, the implementation of Spelling Bee competitions has been growing, particularly at the elementary and junior high school levels. Events such as the EF Spelling Bee Competition held in various cities illustrate the increasing enthusiasm for such competitions. However, several studies indicate that there are inconsistencies in the way Spelling Bee competitions are conducted across different schools and regions. Research by Sulistyowati and Purnomo (2022) highlights challenges such as variations in preparation, execution, and evaluation methods. Similarly, Hartono et al. (2023) found that 65% of schools face difficulties in standardizing competition procedures, which can impact the effectiveness of the program. Nugroho and Saputra (2023) further emphasize that 78% of schools require more comprehensive guidelines to conduct Spelling Bee competitions effectively.

To address these challenges, continuous evaluation is necessary to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of Spelling Bee competitions in improving students' English language skills. Ahmad and Wilson (2024) emphasize the importance of evaluating the program's impact to ensure its long-term success. Kusuma and Wijaya (2023) found that systematic evaluations can increase program effectiveness by up to 45%, making it essential to analyze the key aspects of competition planning, execution, and assessment.

The Polbeng Business Expo 2024, organized by the International Business Administration students of the State Polytechnic of Bengkalis, featured the Spelling Bee competition as one of its main events. This competition aimed to motivate students to excel in academics while enhancing their English proficiency. The expo itself served as a platform for students to gain hands-on experience in business and event management while engaging with the local community. The participation of students from various educational levels throughout Bengkalis Regency demonstrated a strong interest in the competition, reinforcing the importance of such events in educational development.

Despite its success, evaluating the Spelling Bee competition at the Polbeng Business Expo is essential to understanding its overall impact and identifying potential areas for improvement. This research aims to examine the competition's planning, execution, and assessment, focusing on its effectiveness in enhancing students' English skills. By analyzing these aspects, the study seeks to provide valuable recommendations for improving future Spelling Bee competitions and ensuring their long-term benefits for students, educators, and event organizers.

2. Research Methods

This research is conducted in several elementary and junior high schools in Bengkalis Sub-district, selected based on accessibility to facilitate effective data collection. The study focuses on analyzing teachers' and parents' perspectives on the effectiveness of Spelling Bee competitions as a learning tool. It also examines how participants perceive their experience and evaluates the competition's impact on students' English proficiency, vocabulary retention, and academic motivation.

This study employs a qualitative research method, using primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected through observations and interviews with teachers, parents, and students, while secondary data is obtained from books, journals, and other literature related to Spelling Bee competitions. The data collection techniques include interviews, where researchers gather insights on the competition's impact and challenges, observations to assess participant engagement, and documentation to analyze event records and related materials.

The data is analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis, where findings are presented without making generalizations. According to Sugiyono (2016), this method describes collected data objectively. The study explores the competition's impact, challenges, support systems, and recommendations for improvement.
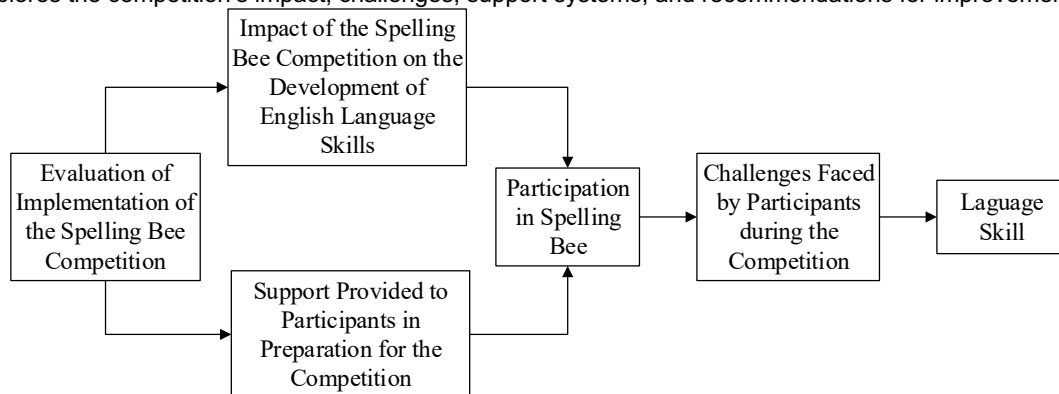

Figure 1 Framework
Source: processed Data 2025

This research is classified as descriptive research with a qualitative approach, as it aims to evaluate the Spelling Bee competition based on participants' experiences. According to Kurniawan & Puspitaningtyas (2016), descriptive research analyzes independent variables without making comparisons or establishing causal relationships, providing insights for future improvements.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. History of Spelling Bee Competition in the World

Spelling bee competitions, which began in the early 19th century, have evolved significantly since their first formal occurrences in the United States in the 1820s. Initially informal community events designed to promote literacy, the term "bee" comes from the Old English word bene, meaning a gathering in Vivianti et al., (2023). By the late 1800s, Aras and Hastini (2023) says spelling bees became a fixture in American elementary schools, praised for their educational value in enhancing spelling, vocabulary, and self-confidence.

The National Spelling Bee, introduced in 1925, was a pivotal moment in the competition's history, popularizing it across the U.S. With the rise of television, spelling bees gained national visibility, prompting countries like India, the UK, and Canada to establish their own national competitions in the 1970s. This global spread was further accelerated by the advent of digital platforms, making these events accessible worldwide and fostering cultural inclusivity in education.

Spelling bees are now a common tool in educational settings, utilizing game-based formats that improve cognitive skills such as vocabulary comprehension and retention. Studies confirm that these competitions provide a fun, competitive environment for learning, while also helping students build important qualities like discipline, focus, and the ability to perform under pressure.

The history of spelling bees shows how they evolved from local literacy events into global educational traditions that foster language learning and cross-cultural engagement, benefiting students' academic skills and personal growth.

3.1.1. Structure of Organizer

The Spelling Bee at the Polbeng Business Expo was organized by International Business Administration students at Politeknik Negeri Bengkalis, providing them with a hands-on opportunity to apply academic knowledge in event management. The competition aimed to promote English language skills both among students and the wider community while highlighting Polbeng's commitment to foreign language development.

As part of the Polbeng Business Expo, the Spelling Bee was designed to showcase the institution's role in advancing education and innovation. The event was managed by students from the Business Administration Department, specifically those specializing in International Business Administration. This allowed the students to gain practical event management experience, while contributing to the success of the competition.

The involvement of these students also reinforced the educational value of the event. It attracted a diverse group of participants from elementary and junior high schools, providing a fun and competitive environment for improving English proficiency. The structure of the event highlighted the practical application of academic knowledge and offered valuable learning opportunities for both organizers and participants.

3.1.2. Description of Participants

The Spelling Bee competition at the Polbeng Business Expo featured 115 participants, comprising students from elementary and junior high schools in Bengkalis Regency. They were divided into two categories: elementary school students (ages 7-10) and junior high school students (ages 11-15). The competition was designed to accommodate varying levels of language proficiency, with the elementary category featuring easier words and the junior high category focusing on more difficult terms.

The competition also examined the gender diversity among participants, as both male and female students took part. The study highlighted how factors such as age, gender, and education level influenced preparation and performance. Junior high school students, being more advanced in language acquisition, faced more challenging words, while elementary students tackled simpler tasks that tested their basic language skills.

Further analysis focused on the participants who excelled in the competition, exploring how success in the event impacted their language acquisition, motivation, and academic progress. Understanding these participants' experiences provided valuable insights into how spelling bee competitions can inspire long-term enthusiasm for language learning.

3.1.3. Competition System

The Spelling Bee competition was split into two categories: the Difficult Category for junior high school students and the Easy Category for elementary school students. Both categories were designed to assess participants' spelling skills, speed, and accuracy, with increasing difficulty at each round.

In the Difficult Category, participants competed by ringing a bell to spell a word after it was announced. If incorrect, others had a chance to answer. As the rounds progressed, the words became harder. The final round required participants to spell five words correctly within a 3-minute time limit, testing both speed and accuracy.

The Easy Category followed a similar format but incorporated visual elements. Participants were shown images of objects and had to identify and spell the names correctly. The final round used audio prompts, where participants had to spell words they heard. This category tested both visual recognition and listening comprehension, culminating in a race against the clock.

In both categories, the competition emphasized speed, accuracy, and adaptability to increasing difficulty. The final rounds in each category were especially focused on individual performance, where participants had to manage their time effectively while maintaining high spelling accuracy.

3.2. Characteristics of Respondents

The study also examined the perspectives of participants, teachers, and parents, gathering insights into the competition's impact on learning and educational development. A total of eight informants—three teachers and five parents—provided feedback on the implementation, challenges, and effectiveness of the event.

The interviews revealed that the competition enhanced students' language skills, boosted their confidence, and promoted a sense of healthy competition. Teachers and parents also shared their observations on how the event influenced the students' motivation and academic progress. These insights

will help shape future spelling bee competitions, ensuring that they continue to offer valuable educational experiences.

3.3. Result of the Study

This study analyzed data collected from structured interviews involving eight respondents, consisting of five parents (62.5%) and three accompanying teachers (37.5%). The respondents were predominantly female (75%) and provided insights regarding five main aspects: participants' experiences, benefits of the competition, support and preparation, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. The data were processed using descriptive analysis to determine frequency and percentage values, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Frequency of Respondents' Answers

No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Enthusiasm	7/8	87.5%
2.	Vocabulary Increase	8/8	100%
3.	Parent Support	6/8	75%
4.	Anxiety/Nervousness	5/8	62.5%
5.	Language Development	8/8	100%
6.	Category System	6/8	75%

Source: Processed Data, 2025

The findings indicate that the majority of participants (87.5%) demonstrated enthusiasm in participating in the Spelling Bee competition. This enthusiasm was reflected in their dedication to preparation and willingness to engage in an English-language competition despite it being their first experience. Additionally, 100% of respondents reported that participants showed vocabulary improvement and increased language development, highlighting the competition's effectiveness in enhancing English skills. However, some challenges were identified, particularly anxiety or nervousness (62.5%), technical difficulties (50%), and preparation time constraints (37.5%). These findings suggest the need for further refinement in organizing the competition to maximize its benefits for participants.

3.3.1. Impact of the Spelling Bee Competition on English Language Skill

The Spelling Bee competition had a notable and positive impact on participants' English language skills, particularly in building their enthusiasm, confidence, and interest in learning English. According to data analysis, around 87.5% of participants showed a high level of enthusiasm throughout the event. This was evident from their consistent participation during preparation, active involvement in training sessions, and excitement leading up to the competition day. The participants expressed strong motivation to learn, which was also observed through their improved study habits and eagerness to practice spelling and pronunciation.

This enthusiasm translated into a visible improvement in the participants' self-confidence when using English in both written and spoken forms. Many parents reported seeing their children more willing to speak English at home and show courage in facing new academic challenges. The competition gave them a platform to overcome their fear of making mistakes, and instead, encouraged them to take risks and use English more frequently in daily situations.

For most of the students, this Spelling Bee was their first experience joining an English-language competition. According to accompanying teachers, although it was new territory, the students embraced the challenge with determination. Their seriousness in preparation and their commitment throughout each stage of the event showed that the competition was successful in creating an engaging, enjoyable, and educational experience, especially for beginners in competitive environments. Overall, the competition not only improved language ability but also helped shape a positive learning attitude among the participants.

3.3.2. Affected Support Provided to Participants

The success of the participants in the Spelling Bee competition was closely linked to the support system surrounding them. The study found that the support came from three main sources—parents, schools, and teachers—each playing a crucial role in helping participants prepare and perform well in the competition.

1. Parental Support (75%): Parents provided both academic and emotional support. They helped manage their children's study schedules, assisted in understanding difficult materials, and offered encouragement when their children felt stressed or unmotivated. Many parents also invested in resources such as dictionaries, learning apps, or online courses to support their children's preparation. In some cases, they created a conducive learning environment at home, free from distractions, to help their children focus better.
2. School Support (62.5%): The schools played a significant role in organizing training sessions and giving students access to practice materials and mock competitions. Schools also implemented flexible policies that allowed students to join the competition without being burdened by regular school assignments or attendance issues. In doing so, they created an academic structure that supported extracurricular excellence.

3. Teacher Support (87.5%): Teachers were among the most active contributors in supporting the participants. They provided technical guidance, such as teaching correct pronunciation, common spelling patterns, and tips for memorizing difficult words. Teachers also organized extra practice sessions outside school hours and monitored the students' progress through assessments and feedback. Their consistent mentoring and encouragement played a key role in helping participants build confidence and improve their skills.

In combination, these three support elements created a strong and holistic ecosystem that nurtured not only the academic readiness of the participants but also their emotional and motivational resilience.

3.3.3. Challenges Faced by Participants

Despite the success and high enthusiasm, several challenges were experienced by the participants during the competition. Through a mix of interviews, surveys, and direct observation, the study identified four major types of challenges:

1. Anxiety and Nervousness (62.5%): The pressure of performing in front of others, especially in a competition setting, caused many students to feel anxious. This was particularly evident in first-time participants, who found it difficult to manage their nerves during the event.
2. Technical Difficulties (50%): Participants encountered technical issues, such as unfamiliarity with digital platforms (for online rounds), unclear instructions, or timekeeping errors. These problems affected their concentration and overall performance.
3. Limited Preparation Time (37.5%): Some participants struggled to balance their school responsibilities with the extra time needed for competition preparation. As a result, they felt less confident going into the competition due to a perceived lack of readiness.
4. Material Difficulty (45%): Many students found the vocabulary level challenging, especially when it included advanced or unfamiliar words. Participants with a lower level of English exposure had more difficulty understanding and remembering the materials.

These challenges highlight the need for better planning and targeted support to ensure that all participants, regardless of their background or experience level, can enjoy and benefit from the competition equally.

3.3.4. Recommendations for Improving the Implementation

Based on comprehensive evaluations and feedback from parents, teachers, and participants, several recommendations were put forward to improve the future organization of the Spelling Bee competition. These suggestions aim to make the event more effective, inclusive, and supportive for all involved.

1. Improve the Category System (75%): It was suggested that the competition should categorize participants more precisely according to age or English proficiency level. This would ensure a fairer playing field and help avoid discouraging beginners who may be matched against more advanced students.
2. Upgrade Facilities (62.5%): Better facilities, including clearer sound systems, adequate seating arrangements, and sufficient space, are needed to improve the comfort and focus of participants during the competition. For online competitions, stable internet and user-friendly platforms should also be prioritized.
3. Enhance Technical Execution (50%): Organizers should ensure smoother logistics and technical procedures during the event. This includes training staff or volunteers on how to handle different scenarios, provide timely instructions, and troubleshoot issues as they arise.
4. More Structured Preparation Programs (45%): Participants would benefit from a more structured training program, with scheduled practice sessions, clear learning targets, and progress tracking. This would help students feel more prepared and reduce anxiety before the event.

These recommendations reflect a collective desire from stakeholders to improve the competition experience while maintaining its educational value. With better planning and more inclusive support, future Spelling Bee competitions can become an even more effective platform for language development and student growth.

3.4 Discussion

The Spelling Bee competition at the Polbeng Business Expo provided an in-depth look into how extracurricular academic events can play a significant role in shaping not only students' language proficiency but also their psychological growth and learning motivation. The analysis of this program reveals multiple layers of experience, impact, and development involving the students, the support systems around them, and the implementation challenges faced throughout the competition.

3.4.1. Participant Experience and Development

The experiences of participants indicate that the Spelling Bee was more than a language competition; it was a platform for personal development. Teachers and parents observed improvements in students'

behavior, such as increased confidence, better communication in English, and higher motivation to learn. Students like Joice and Azhar, for instance, demonstrated enthusiasm and persistence during the preparation phase, which carried through to their performance during the competition.

For many participants, this was their first formal exposure to an English-language competition. This novelty brought both excitement and nervousness, but it also opened opportunities for growth. Students learned to deal with pressure, speak in public, and follow formal procedures in an academic setting. Their ability to memorize and pronounce English words improved through consistent practice and exposure. This kind of real-world application of language skills goes beyond the classroom, reinforcing what they have learned and encouraging them to continue developing these skills independently.

The competition also contributed to building self-discipline. Preparing for the Spelling Bee required time management, regular practice, and the ability to stay focused—skills that are useful for academic success in general. These experiences align with current educational approaches that emphasize holistic development, including cognitive, emotional, and social growth.

3.4.2. Support Systems and Their Influence

The findings highlight the crucial importance of external support systems in ensuring the success and development of the participants. This support came from three primary sources: parents, schools, and teachers.

Parents played a central role in encouraging their children and ensuring that they had the necessary tools and time to study. They helped children maintain a consistent study routine, motivated them during difficult moments, and provided learning materials such as books or access to online resources. The presence of parents at the competition and during preparation also gave emotional support, which helped reduce nervousness and improved their children's overall performance.

Schools contributed by offering flexibility in schedules and administrative support, allowing students to participate in training sessions and the competition without conflicts with their regular studies. Some schools even developed mini-training programs to simulate the competition environment, helping students feel more prepared.

Teachers, meanwhile, were identified as the most active and consistent supporters. They provided guidance on spelling strategies, pronunciation, and techniques for staying calm and focused during the competition. In some cases, teachers organized extra sessions outside regular class hours to ensure their students were well-prepared. They also monitored student progress, provided feedback, and adjusted training methods based on individual learning needs.

This three-part collaboration created a nurturing and effective learning ecosystem that not only increased the students' academic readiness but also strengthened their confidence and sense of responsibility. The support system around the competition thus proved essential to student development and successful participation.

3.4.3. Challenges Faced During the Competition

Despite the many benefits, the Spelling Bee competition was not without its challenges. Several participants, particularly those new to such events, reported experiencing anxiety and nervousness, especially when speaking in front of an audience or judges. These psychological barriers were common and significantly affected performance in some cases.

In addition, there were technical challenges related to the implementation of the event itself. Some participants found the instructions unclear or difficult to follow. There were also moments when logistical aspects—such as the order of participants, sound system issues, or timing of word delivery—caused confusion. These elements could reduce participant focus or create unfair situations if not carefully managed.

Furthermore, lack of familiarity with the competition format was another barrier. Some students, despite being good at spelling in class, were not accustomed to spelling words out loud in front of a crowd or dealing with time pressure. This indicates a need for early introduction to competition-style learning activities as part of regular school programs.

Another notable challenge was the limited time for preparation. Since the event was tied to the larger Polbeng Business Expo schedule, both students and teachers had to work within a relatively short time frame. Some schools also had limited resources or time to support additional training, which may have led to unequal levels of readiness among participants.

3.4.4. Importance of Fairness and Competition Structure

An important concern raised by several informants was the need for a more structured and transparent competition system. There were calls for improvements to the word selection process, as some participants were assigned easier or more difficult words than others. Suggestions were made to introduce a randomized word selection system using a digital platform or pre-shuffled word lists to ensure fairness.

Another recommendation was to group participants by educational level rather than age. According to Ruzaini and Asila Ulfa, grouping by grade (e.g., all second-graders competing together) would create a more balanced competition, since students of the same level generally share similar learning experiences and capabilities. This approach would prevent younger or less experienced students from being disadvantaged by competing with older or more advanced participants.

Several teachers and parents also pointed out the importance of clearly defined rules and consistent judging criteria. By having standardized evaluation procedures and clear communication before the competition, misunderstandings and disputes could be avoided. These improvements would not only enhance the credibility of the event but also make it a more enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

3.4.5. Recommendations for Future Implementation

Based on the findings, a number of concrete recommendations can be made to improve the future implementation of the Spelling Bee competition:

1. Structured Preparation Programs: Schools should consider organizing structured preparation courses or workshops before the event, including mock competitions and pronunciation practice.
2. Clear Guidelines and Communication: Organizers should provide comprehensive rulebooks and conduct briefing sessions for participants, teachers, and judges to ensure everyone understands the competition format and expectations.
3. Improved Facilities and Environment: Providing adequate space, good audio systems, and a calm environment can help reduce distractions and improve performance.
4. Digital Support Tools: Using technology for randomizing word selection and managing participant order can increase fairness and efficiency.
5. Increased Collaboration: Continued and enhanced collaboration between parents, teachers, and schools will ensure consistent support for students throughout the preparation and competition stages.
6. Pre-Event Orientation: First-time participants should be given orientation or trial runs to familiarize themselves with the setting, especially to reduce stage fright and anxiety.

These suggestions aim to improve not only the technical execution of the competition but also the overall experience of learning and participation for all students involved.

3.5. Comparative Research Results with Previous Research

The comparison between current research findings and previous studies reveals several alignments and new insights regarding the implementation of Spelling Bee competitions. In terms of impact on English language proficiency, prior research conducted by Peters and Thompson (2021) and Widodo et al. (2022) concluded that Spelling Bee competitions enhance vocabulary mastery and boost students' confidence in using English. The present study supports these findings, as observed through participants' increased confidence, such as Azhar, who showed notable improvement after competing, and Ruzaini's observations regarding participants' enhanced vocabulary acquisition.

Regarding implementation challenges, Sulistyowati and Purnomo (2022) identified gaps in preparation, execution, and evaluation, while Hartono et al. (2023) reported that 65% of schools struggle with standardizing competition procedures. The current study reinforces these concerns, highlighting technical issues such as malfunctioning buzzer systems, unclear word selection guidelines, inadequate space affecting participants' focus, and categorization problems between elementary and middle school students. These findings indicate that organizational challenges remain a significant concern in Spelling Bee competitions and require further attention to enhance overall execution quality.

In terms of support systems, Smith and Johnson (2023) and Lee et al. (2022) emphasized the crucial role of family and teacher involvement. This study corroborates their findings by providing concrete evidence of parental engagement, such as Siti Rohani, who actively assisted her child in vocabulary practice, and dedicated teacher guidance from Ruzaini and Asila Ulfa in preparing students for the competition. Additionally, school support in registration and training further underscores the importance of a well-structured support system.

The quality of implementation is another critical aspect explored in previous research. Kusuma and Wijaya (2023) found that systematic evaluation enhances competition effectiveness by 45%. The present study aligns with this conclusion, identifying areas requiring improvement, such as refining word selection criteria, establishing structured competition guidelines, optimizing venue arrangements, and improving participant categorization. These insights provide a foundation for refining competition structures to maximize learning outcomes.

Beyond reaffirming existing research, this study offers unique contributions by providing in-depth insights into localized implementation challenges at the Polbeng Business Expo. It presents concrete examples of the effectiveness of support systems through firsthand stakeholder experiences and identifies specific areas needing improvement in competition mechanics and organization. Unlike previous research, this study delves deeper into the contextual factors affecting Spelling Bee competition success, documents immediate impacts on participants' confidence and motivation, and proposes practical solutions for addressing technical and logistical shortcomings.

Overall, this comparative analysis demonstrates that while the current research aligns with previous studies, it also introduces new perspectives on Spelling Bee competition implementation in Indonesia. The findings serve as a valuable reference for improving future competitions by addressing both technical and organizational aspects while maintaining a strong focus on the educational benefits of such events. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how language-learning competitions can be effectively conducted in academic settings, ultimately enhancing English education for students.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the Spelling Bee competition at the Polbeng Business Expo has had a significant positive impact on the development of participants' English language skills. The competition not only contributed to vocabulary acquisition and increased confidence but also fostered greater motivation to learn. Participants demonstrated enthusiasm and dedication throughout the preparation and competition process, showing that such events can serve as an effective means of enhancing language proficiency.

Furthermore, the study highlights the crucial role of support from parents, teachers, and schools in preparing participants for the competition. The active involvement of these parties created a supportive and conducive environment that helped students overcome challenges and maximize their potential. However, several difficulties were identified, including anxiety, technical issues, and limited preparation time, which affected participants' experiences. Addressing these challenges will be essential in improving future competitions to ensure a smoother and more beneficial learning experience.

Overall, the Spelling Bee competition has proven to be a valuable platform for strengthening English education among students while providing meaningful competitive experiences. By refining the competition structure, enhancing.

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