

“THE IMPACT OF INTERACTIVE SPEAKING ACTIVITIES ON STUDENTS’ CONFIDENCE IN ESL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract: Developing speaking skills is one of the most challenging aspects of learning English as a Second Language (ESL), and many students experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence when communicating in the target language. This study investigates the impact of interactive speaking activities on students’ confidence in ESL classrooms. A total of 40 intermediate-level ESL students participated in a six-week intervention involving structured role-plays, group discussions, debates, peer interviews, and collaborative storytelling tasks. Pre- and post-intervention surveys, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data.

The results indicated a significant improvement in students’ self-reported confidence and participation rates. Peer interviews and role-plays were particularly effective in reducing language anxiety, while collaborative storytelling encouraged creativity and active engagement. The findings suggest that interactive speaking activities not only enhance students’ oral proficiency but also create a supportive learning environment where learners feel comfortable expressing themselves, making mistakes, and learning from peer interaction. This study provides practical recommendations for ESL teachers to integrate diverse speaking activities into their curriculum to foster student confidence, motivation, and communicative competence.

Keywords: ESL, English as a Second Language, interactive speaking activities, student confidence, oral proficiency, language anxiety, classroom participation, role-plays, group discussions, collaborative learning

Introduction

Speaking skills are widely recognized as one of the most challenging aspects of learning a new language, especially for students in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Many learners experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence, which can hinder their overall language development (1,2). The ability to communicate effectively in English is not only crucial for academic success but also for social interaction, professional opportunities, and personal growth in a globalized world.

Interactive speaking activities, such as role-plays, group discussions, debates, and collaborative projects, have been increasingly emphasized in language teaching as tools to enhance learners’ confidence and oral proficiency. These activities encourage students to actively participate, think critically, and negotiate meaning with their peers, which in turn fosters a supportive and motivating learning environment (3,4). Research has shown that when students engage in meaningful communication, they are more likely to overcome language anxiety and develop a positive attitude toward speaking in English (5).

Despite the recognized importance of interactive speaking tasks, many ESL classrooms still rely heavily on traditional lecture-based methods, limiting students’ opportunities to practice real-life communication. This gap often results in students who possess grammatical knowledge but struggle to express themselves fluently in spoken English. Therefore, understanding the impact



of interactive speaking activities on students' confidence is essential for improving instructional practices and achieving better learning outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how interactive speaking activities influence students' confidence in ESL classrooms, identify the types of activities that are most effective, and provide practical recommendations for teachers to foster a more engaging and supportive speaking environment.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate the impact of interactive speaking activities on students' confidence in ESL classrooms. The research was conducted in two intermediate-level English classes at a local language institute, comprising a total of 40 students aged between 16 and 22. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that all students had similar proficiency levels and classroom experience.

Materials:

The primary materials included a set of structured interactive speaking activities designed to enhance communication skills. These activities consisted of role-plays, group discussions, debates, peer interviews, and collaborative storytelling tasks. Worksheets, discussion prompts, and visual aids were used to support students' participation. Additionally, pre- and post-intervention surveys were prepared to measure students' self-reported confidence levels. Observation checklists were also utilized to record classroom interactions and participation frequency.

Procedure:

The study was conducted over a six-week period. In the first week, a pre-test survey was administered to assess the baseline confidence levels of the students in speaking English. During weeks two to five, students participated in interactive speaking activities twice a week, each session lasting approximately 45 minutes. The activities were structured to gradually increase in complexity and encourage students to take on diverse speaking roles. Teachers facilitated the sessions by providing guidance, feedback, and creating a supportive environment that minimized fear of errors.

Observations were recorded during each session, noting students' willingness to speak, frequency of participation, and responsiveness to peers. In the final week, a post-test survey was administered to evaluate any changes in students' confidence levels. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 volunteer students to gather qualitative insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding the interactive speaking activities.

Data

Quantitative data from the pre- and post-surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify changes in confidence levels. Paired t-tests were conducted to determine the significance of observed improvements. Qualitative data from classroom observations and interviews were analyzed thematically, focusing on patterns in student engagement, anxiety reduction, and perceived effectiveness of different speaking activities.

Analysis:



This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how interactive speaking activities influence ESL students' confidence, combining measurable outcomes with in-depth insights into students' experiences and classroom dynamics.

Results

The implementation of interactive speaking activities had a significant impact on students' confidence levels in the ESL classrooms. Pre-intervention survey results indicated that a majority of students (65%) reported feeling nervous or hesitant when speaking in English, often avoiding participation in class discussions. The post-intervention survey, conducted after six weeks of structured interactive activities, revealed a substantial improvement in students' self-reported confidence.

Observations during the study supported these survey results. Students were more willing to participate in discussions, volunteer answers, and engage in peer-to-peer communication. Role-plays and collaborative storytelling activities were particularly effective in reducing anxiety and encouraging shy students to speak more confidently. Debates and group discussions promoted critical thinking and allowed students to practice expressing opinions in a supportive environment.

The quantitative results are summarized in the following table:

Activity Type	Pre-Intervention Confidence (%)	Post-Intervention Confidence (%)	Average Participation per Session	Student Feedback Score (1–5)
Role-plays	40	78	6	4.5
Group discussions	35	72	5	4.2
Debates	30	68	4	4.0
Peer interviews	45	80	7	4.6
Collaborative storytelling	38	75	6	4.4

As shown in the table, all interactive activities led to notable improvements in students' confidence. Peer interviews demonstrated the highest increase in self-reported confidence (from 45% to 80%), indicating that one-on-one interactive practice was highly effective. Role-plays and collaborative storytelling also showed strong improvements, reflecting the value of active participation in immersive and meaningful speaking tasks.

In addition to confidence, participation rates increased across all activity types, suggesting that interactive methods not only enhance self-perception but also encourage more frequent engagement. Student feedback highlighted the enjoyable and motivating nature of these activities,



emphasizing that a supportive classroom environment and constructive peer interaction were key factors in reducing language anxiety.

Overall, the results demonstrate that structured interactive speaking activities are effective in improving both confidence and active participation among ESL students, providing a foundation for enhanced oral proficiency and more positive classroom experiences.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that interactive speaking activities have a substantial positive impact on students' confidence in ESL classrooms. The significant increase in post-intervention confidence levels suggests that actively engaging students in communicative tasks allows them to overcome initial anxiety and hesitation associated with speaking in a second language. This aligns with previous research emphasizing the role of meaningful interaction in reducing language learning anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1991; Dörnyei, 2001).

Role-plays and collaborative storytelling were particularly effective in fostering confidence, as they encouraged students to assume different perspectives and actively participate in a structured yet creative environment. Peer interviews showed the highest improvement in self-reported confidence, highlighting the importance of personalized interaction and the supportive nature of one-on-one communication. These findings confirm that different types of interactive activities cater to diverse learning preferences, allowing students with varying confidence levels to engage comfortably.

The increase in participation rates across all activity types demonstrates that interactive methods not only improve self-perceived confidence but also promote more frequent engagement in classroom discussions. Students' feedback emphasized that a supportive classroom environment, constructive feedback from peers and teachers, and opportunities to make mistakes without fear of judgment were crucial factors in enhancing confidence. This suggests that teachers' facilitation strategies, alongside carefully designed activities, play a key role in maximizing the benefits of interactive speaking tasks.

Moreover, the study indicates that consistent practice through interactive activities over a period of several weeks is essential for achieving measurable improvements in confidence. Short-term or sporadic activities may not yield the same positive outcomes, highlighting the need for integrating structured interactive speaking exercises into regular ESL curricula.

In conclusion, this discussion supports the notion that interactive speaking activities are an effective pedagogical approach for increasing students' confidence in ESL classrooms. They not only address language anxiety but also encourage active participation, collaborative learning, and development of oral communication skills, which are critical for overall language proficiency and academic success.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that interactive speaking activities significantly enhance students' confidence in ESL classrooms. Engaging students in role-plays, group discussions, debates, peer interviews, and collaborative storytelling allowed them to actively participate, reduce anxiety,



and develop a positive attitude toward speaking in English. Quantitative data from pre- and post-intervention surveys, along with observational records, confirmed that students' self-reported confidence and participation rates improved across all types of activities.

The findings highlight that structured and consistent use of interactive speaking tasks not only strengthens oral proficiency but also fosters a supportive learning environment where students feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them. Personalized activities, such as peer interviews, were especially effective in boosting confidence, suggesting the importance of individualized interaction alongside group-based exercises.

Overall, the study emphasizes that ESL teachers should integrate diverse interactive speaking activities into their curriculum to enhance students' communicative competence and overall confidence. By doing so, students are more likely to actively engage in classroom communication, develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and achieve better academic outcomes in language learning.

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