Enhancing Students' Engagement and Speaking Skills through Interactive Activities in English Language Teaching: Teachers' and Students' Perspectives

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Abstract

This literature review explores traditional and innovative English teaching activities that enhance students' engagement and speaking skills. Thirty peer-reviewed studies published between 2020 and 2025 were analyzed thematically and chronologically. Traditional approaches such as role-playing, storytelling, language clubs, and group discussions, together with innovative practices like vlog creation, gamified learning, mobile-assisted learning, and TikTok-based tasks, have been found effective in improving fluency, confidence, and motivation. Both teachers and students expressed positive attitudes toward these activities. However, long-term implementation across diverse contexts remains underexplored. This review highlights the importance of blended pedagogical approaches and calls for future research into sustainable engagement-based English instruction.
Keywords: Engaging Activities, Engagement, Speaking Skills, Motivation, English Language Teaching

Introduction

English language is often perceived as a difficult subject and is not liked by students (Yani, 2023). According to (Teknologi et. al, 2021), the English language is widely regarded as one of the most difficult to master. Its unpredictable spelling and difficult grammar make it hard for both learners and native speakers. This implies that the structure of English is complex to learn especially for non-native speakers and thus, could affect their ability to speak fluently. The study of (Maratul Azizah, 2025) revealed four difficulties in speaking English including difficulty in pronouncing English words, lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence, and confusion in using grammar. Additionally, a lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and unengaging teaching methods can further reduce their interest in the subject. Over the years, educators have explored a variety of methods and strategies to address this problem. As Krashen (1982) notes, the most effective language acquisition happens when lessons are not only interesting, but also fun. Moreover, creating an engaging and enjoyable learning environment significantly promotes students' motivation and success (Abdillah, 2024).

To address these challenges, recent studies have emphasized the importance of incorporating interactive and student-centered activities in the English classroom. When learners participate in

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collaborative and engaging speaking tasks, they are more likely to overcome their fear of making mistakes and build confidence in their abilities (Baskota, 2024). These activities also help students expand their vocabulary and improve pronunciation through consistent practice. As Goh and Burns (2012) highlight, enjoyable and meaningful tasks not only enhance retention but also encourage greater participation. Thus, adopting varied and interactive strategies not only makes English more accessible but also transforms the classroom into a space where students feel empowered to communicate effectively and with confidence.

The interaction between teachers and students plays a significant role inside the classroom as it contributes to student's learning and engagement in participation. According to the study of Goff (2022), there are a variety of potential reasons for motivated learners' disengagement, including disengaging classroom tasks and activities, the challenge of language learning, as well as competing priorities in learners' lives. Moreover, without a teacher's engaging and effective teaching style, students are likely to lose motivation, and the teacher may struggle to be effective. Hence, Ouyang and Scharber (2017), examined how teaching styles influence student collaboration and learning over the course of academic years. Their findings indicated that in the early years of education, teachers recognized a stronger need for active participation and interaction. Previous studies have shown that teachers' behaviors and instructional practices play an important role in students' motivation to learn in which the teaching method is also a vital factor that influences student motivation. If the teacher applies an appropriate method in teaching a subject, the students can be more comfortable in the learning process (Filgona, J. et al., 2020).

Therefore, this literature review synthesizes studies on both traditional and innovative classroom activities to determine their effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and speaking proficiency in English language teaching

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative literature review approach. Thirty peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 were collected from reputable academic databases such as Google Scholar, ERIC, and ResearchGate. The studies were selected based on their relevance to student engagement and speaking skill development. Unrelated studies, such as those focusing on general academic performance, were excluded. The reviewed articles were thematically and chronologically analyzed to identify emerging pedagogical trends and instructional implications.

Result and Discussion

Traditional English Teaching Activities

Traditional engaging activities have long been utilized across diverse learning context tools for teaching English subjects; it holds significant potential in enhancing English speaking skills given their long-standing presence in educational settings. These activities are rooted in cultural and educational

practices that prioritize active participation and learning. Recent studies emphasize the effectiveness of traditional engaging activities in enhancing the students' English-speaking skills and overall engagement, this includes debate El Majidi, A., de Graaff, R., & Janssen, D. (2024), storytelling Cindrić, I., & Milković, I. (2023), roleplaying Berdiyeva, S. (2023), flashcard game and visual worksheets Donasari, Renita & Rofiah, Tutik & Qurroti, Athi'illah. (2023), and variety of classroom activities—from interviews to group discussions Suban, T. S. (2021). These methods are inherently aligned with the goals of language acquisition, particularly in developing speaking fluency, building confidence, and encouraging interactive communication.

In the context of debate, El Majidi, A., de Graaff, R., & Janssen, D. (2024) demonstrated that using structural reasoning greatly improves students' communication skills by helping them in organizing their ideas and expressing them clearly. Cindrić, I., & Milković, I. (2023) found that storytelling not only promotes language development and enhances communicative competence but also encourages emotional connection and active participation among young learners. Similarly, Berdiyeva, S. (2023) highlighted that role-playing creates realistic communication scenarios that help learners practice fluency and build confidence. Donasari, Renita & Rofiah, Tutik & Qurroti, Athi'illah. (2023) explored joyful learning techniques in Islamic elementary schools, revealing that activities like flashcard games and visual worksheets make the learning environment more interactive and enjoyable, though they noted that challenges in organizing such activities can often reduce their effectiveness. Suban, T. S. (2021) emphasized a variety of classroom activities—from interviews to group discussions—that allow students to improve their speaking skills despite the fact that time restrictions and huge class sizes frequently make it difficult to perform these activities well. Although technology and online tools have transformed modern education, traditional engaging activities remain the foundational pillars of effective language learning, offering time-tested benefits that continue to support student development. These studies confirm that traditional engaging activities are not only enjoyable but pedagogically effective in improving speaking skills especially in EFL settings despite the challenges teachers face in their implementation.

However, most research tends to focus on their general benefits without thoroughly examining how these specific activities work across different learner levels. Additionally, there is limited research into how teachers can consistently implement these strategies in large or resource-constrained classrooms and how these methods can be strategically blended with digital tools to address modern educational demand. Therefore, further research should focus more on the practical implementation of strategies, adaptability, and long-term impact of traditional engaging activities in diverse EFL environments.

Innovative English Teaching Activities

As educational practices continue to advance, adopting innovative methods is vital to effectively address the needs of the digital world we live in. The innovation activities from the previous

studies emphasizes the effectiveness of integrating technology and creative strategies in English language teaching to improve student engagement and speaking language skills. According to study, Syafikah (2025) introduced vlog-based instruction that allowed university students to create and share video blogs, which significantly enhanced their speaking fluency and confidence. In the corresponding study Ali et al. (2024) demonstrated how mobile learning through the use of smartphones and messaging platforms like WhatsApp is said to improve students' grammar and vocabulary skills in a collaborative environment. The EDUTOKING study (2024) further supported this by showing that incorporating TikTok-based activities in the classroom helped increase student motivation and oral language proficiency, emphasizing the power of social media as an educational tool. These studies highlight the effectiveness of using familiar, engaging digital tools to promote learner autonomy and real-world language use.

In the study also of Syafikah (2025) another approach used to implement the fun and gamified learning strategies. Integrating enjoyable methods such as games, songs, and interactive activities into vocabulary lessons improved student pronunciation and increased enthusiasm for learning. These creative strategies help to foster a more engaging classroom environment where students are more eager to participate and absorb content.

Another study that has a significant theme involves calls for educational reform to address persistent challenges in language education. Mammadova (2024) pointed out that outdated teaching methods and a lack of technological integration hinder English instruction in Philippine colleges, urging a shift toward more modern, technology-enhanced approaches. Similarly, the study of Ikbal et al. (2024) identified issues such as student anxiety, passive behavior, and over-reliance on the mother tongue as barriers to effective learning. These findings stress the need for supportive, confidence-building classroom environments that empower learners and promote consistent English usage. These studies collectively emphasize that integrating digital tools, adopting engaging and interactive methods, and addressing systemic challenges are key to creating effective and innovative English language learning environments in today's digital age.

However, several studies discuss an educational reform such as providing concrete implementation frameworks or examining the professional development needs of teachers transitioning from conventional to digital pedagogy. There is still a lack of limited research on student challenges such as anxiety, passive participation, and mother tongue reliance in the context of using these modern tools. This indicates a gap in addressing the psychological and pedagogical support systems necessary for maximizing the effectiveness of innovative teaching methods in diverse learning environments.

Teachers Perspective Towards English Engaging Activities

Teachers' perspectives on the effective learning activities in enhancing speaking skills are distinct. Some teachers argued that modern learning activities are more effective. Other teachers

also claimed that traditional activities are more effective than the modern ones. Recent studies have indicated many innovative teaching activities, this includes artificial- intelligence- based application Quan, V. D., Bui, T., & Thanh, C. (2024), mobile-assisted project-based learning (MALL-PBL) Benlaghrissi, H., & Ouahidi, L. M. (2024), and Clustered digital materials such as TED Talks, digital posters, short films, and newspaper cartoon Salih, A. A., & Omar, L. I. (2024).

In the study of Quan, V. D., Bui, T., & Thanh, C. (2024), incorporating artificial-intelligence- based application plays a vital role in improving students' speaking skills among English major students by offering personalized, interactive, and real-time language practice. Teachers observed that these tools helped students gain confidence, improve pronunciation, and engage more actively in speaking exercises, even outside the classroom. In addition to the study of Benlaghrissi, H., & Ouahidi, L. M. (2024) the integration of mobile-assisted project-based learning (MALL-PBL) has significantly enhanced EFL students' speaking skills. The teachers discovered that the use of mobile devices allowed for real-time feedback and enhanced metacognition, which teachers found to be effective in addressing individual learner needs. Furthermore, in the study of Salih, A. A., & Omar, L. I. (2024), teachers found that using clustered digital materials such as TED Talks, digital posters, short films, and newspaper cartoons can enhance students' ability in speaking. Teachers noted these materials as it enhances students' fluency, and critical thinking by providing engaging, real-world contexts for language use. Overall, these innovative activities offer unique advantages in enhancing student's speaking skills as well as their engagement. However, there are still notable gaps in terms of these innovations like few studies exploring the long-term impacts or scalability of these approaches in diverse educational settings.

However, other studies revealed that traditional learning activities are more effective than modern activities. Recent studies have indicated many traditional teaching activities, this includes role-playing activity Awawd, J. (2024), the use of oral reading activities such as reading aloud Lee, J., & Kim, H. (2023), and the use of traditional games like Declan Ruki: Similar to "Simon Says," Charades, and Bingo Hikmawan, I., Damayanti, I. L., & Setyarini, S. (2023). In the study of Awawd, J. (2024), Incorporating role-playing activity in teaching helped transform passive learners into active speakers, improved confidence, fluency, and collaboration. It does not only improve speaking abilities but also the confidence of the students. Similarly, Lee, J., & Kim, H. (2023), have found that the use of oral reading activities such as reading aloud can also enhance students' overall English proficiency, particularly in pronunciation and fluency. Teachers observed that regular oral reading not only improved learners' speaking and listening skills but also fostered greater peer interaction, collaboration, and confidence in using the language. Complementing these studies, Hikmawan, I., Damayanti, I. L., & Setyarini, S. (2023), demonstrated the use of traditional games like Simon Says, Charades, and Bingo created an enjoyable and low-anxiety learning environment, motivating students to speak more comfortably in English.

Overall, the integration of traditional activities clearly demonstrates positive outcomes in enhancing students' speaking skills as well as their engagement inside the classroom. However, despite these promising results, gaps remain in understanding the long-term effects of these strategies, their effectiveness across different age groups and proficiency levels, and how they can be systematically incorporated into standardized curricula.

Student's Perspective Towards English Engaging Activities

The students' perspectives across the studies reveal a strong preference for engaging, interactive, and flexible learning environments, with many students expressing a desire for more active involvement in their language learning process. These studies have presented some engaging activities preferred by the student in learning English such as group discussion and peer interaction (Xiaoyu and Xinyue, 2024), language clubs, film screenings, and conversation (Alice and Zuraidah, 2020), technology-based activities (Chuong, 2022) and using TikTok to learn English (Fauziah et. al., 2025).

In Xiaoyu and Xinyue (2024) study, students emphasized the importance of activities that allowed them to participate actively, such as group discussions and peer interactions. Their study shows that students want to be active and learn by talking with others rather than just to sit and listen to the teacher. They get more chances to speak, listen, and think in English when students work together. This helps them become more confident and fluent in using the language. In group discussions, students learn to take turns, ask questions, and explain their ideas which are all important skills for real-life conversations. Additionally, activities such as language clubs, film screenings, and conversation partners were seen as enjoyable and motivating, as they allowed students to practice English in informal, social contexts (Alice and Zuraidah, 2020). Students felt that these activities helped them connect with the language in a more authentic way and provided opportunities for real-world application, which they found more motivating than traditional classroom tasks. In this study, many students prefer these social activities as it makes them look forward to using English, instead of seeing it as just another subject to pass. This shift in attitude is important because motivation is one of the biggest factors in successful language learning.

On the other hand, many students preferred technological activities that were interactive and aligned with their specific learning goals, rather than passive or overly repetitive exercises. This suggests that students are more likely to engage with technology as it offers an opportunity for active learning and provides immediate, relevant feedback. Speaking of technological activities, the study of Fauziah et. al., (2025) revealed that most students had positive perceptions of using TikTok to learn English. TikTok improved students' English language skills, particularly pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking. Students noted that TikTok provides diverse English content, allowing them to learn interactively through features such as duets and stitches. Additionally, in the study of Chuong (2022), students reported higher levels of motivation and engagement when technology was incorporated into

the classroom. They found that digital tools like educational apps, online quizzes, and videos made the learning process more interactive and allowed them to engage with the content at their own pace.

From the students' perspectives, there is a clear preference for learning environments that encourage active participation, offer flexibility, and incorporate technology in a way that enhances engagement rather than detracts from it. However, these studies focus only on students' immediate engagement and motivation. There is a lack of longitudinal research examining how these interactive methods influence long-term language development, retention, and fluency over time.

Conclusion

This review shows that both traditional and modern teaching activities help students improve their English-speaking skills, increased motivation and engagement. Traditional activities like group discussion, peer interaction, storytelling, and role-playing remain effective and greatly help build students' confidence and fluency. However, teachers often face challenges like limited time and large classes when using them. On the other hand, new teaching methods like the integration of videos, mobile apps, TikTok, and AI tools connect well with students' digital habits and make learning more fun and interactive. Teachers see benefits in both types of activities, but opinions differ on which works best.

Across various perspectives, it is clear that no one specific activity stands out as the most effective for sustaining long-term student learning, motivation, and engagement in English. Each teaching method offers particular benefits but also comes with certain drawbacks that are not present in other approaches. This indicates the need for a balanced combination of different activities to meet diverse learner requirements and maximize overall effectiveness.

Thus, future research should focus on exploring the long-term effects of both traditional and modern English teaching activities on students' speaking skills, motivation, and confidence. More research is needed to find practical ways to blend these teaching methods, help teachers apply them well, and support students in different learning environments. This will improve English learning for a wider range of students

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