

# THE ROLE OF INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES IN DEVELOPING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN PRESCHOOLERS

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**Abstract.** *The development of speaking skills in early childhood plays a crucial role in second language acquisition, particularly in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts. This study investigates the effectiveness of interactive activities in enhancing English speaking skills among preschool learners. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving 30 preschool students divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group was exposed to interactive activities such as games, songs, role-play, and storytelling, while the control group followed traditional instruction. The findings revealed that 50% of learners in the interactive group demonstrated significant improvement in speaking fluency and confidence compared to 27% in the control group. The study highlights the importance of child-centered, activity-based learning environments in fostering language development. The results suggest that incorporating interactive methods into early childhood education can significantly enhance speaking skills and learner motivation. The study contributes to the growing body of research on communicative language teaching in preschool education, particularly in the Uzbek educational context.*

**Keywords:** *interactive activities, preschool education, speaking skills, English language learning, early childhood development*

## INTRODUCTION

The early stages of language acquisition are widely recognized as a critical period for developing communicative competence. In preschool education, children are particularly receptive to new languages due to their cognitive flexibility and natural inclination toward imitation and interaction. Developing English speaking skills at this stage is essential, as it lays the foundation for future linguistic and academic success.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has placed increasing emphasis on improving foreign language education, particularly English, starting from early childhood. However, traditional teaching methods, which often focus on repetition and memorization, may not effectively support the development of speaking skills in young learners. Preschool children require engaging, meaningful, and interactive learning environments that stimulate both cognitive and emotional involvement.

Interactive activities—such as games, songs, storytelling, and role-play—have been identified as effective tools in promoting language use in authentic contexts. According to Cameron (2001), young learners benefit from activities that combine language with action, as these facilitate both comprehension and production. Similarly, Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive and language development.

Jalolov (2012) emphasized that communicative and interactive approaches are essential for developing practical language skills among young learners. Likewise, Sattorov (2019) argued that

preschool education should focus on active participation and meaningful communication rather than passive learning.

This study aims to explore the role of interactive activities in developing English speaking skills among preschoolers. It seeks to compare interactive and traditional teaching methods and to determine their impact on learners' fluency, confidence, and participation.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a **mixed-methods research design**, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to investigate the effectiveness of interactive activities in developing English speaking skills among preschool learners. The selection of a mixed-methods framework allowed the researcher to combine statistical analysis with in-depth observational insights, thereby ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. As argued by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), mixed-methods research provided a more complete perspective by triangulating numerical data with contextual interpretation.

### Research Design

The study followed a **quasi-experimental comparative design**, in which two groups of preschool learners were exposed to different instructional approaches. This design was selected because it enabled the researcher to examine causal relationships within a natural educational setting without full randomization. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018), quasi-experimental designs were particularly suitable for classroom-based research where controlled experimental conditions were difficult to maintain.

### Participants

The participants consisted of **30 preschool children aged 5–6 years**, in school No.15 in Gijduvan region, enrolled in an early childhood education institution. The children were divided into two groups:

<b>Experimental Group</b>	Received instruction through interactive, activity-based methods
<b>Control Group</b>	Received instruction through traditional, teacher-centered methods

The participants were selected using **convenience sampling**, as they were readily accessible to the researcher. This sampling strategy was widely used in educational research due to its practicality and efficiency (Etikan et al., 2016). All participants had a similar level of initial exposure to English, which ensured comparability between the groups. The instructional intervention was conducted over a structured period during regular classroom sessions.

In the **experimental group**, the teacher implemented a variety of **interactive activities** designed to promote active language use and emotional engagement. These activities included:

1. Language games (e.g., naming, guessing, matching)
2. Songs and chants to reinforce pronunciation and rhythm
3. Role-play and simulation activities to encourage speaking
4. Storytelling sessions to develop narrative skills
5. Group work to facilitate peer interaction

These methods were grounded in the principles of communicative language teaching and play-based learning. Harmer (2007) emphasized that interactive activities created opportunities for meaningful communication, while Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the importance of social interaction in cognitive development.

In contrast, the **control group** followed a **traditional instructional approach**, which primarily focused on:

1. Repetition drills

2. Vocabulary memorization
3. Teacher-led explanation
4. Limited student interaction

This distinction allowed for a clear comparison between interactive and conventional teaching methodologies.

### **Data Collection**

To ensure methodological rigor, data were collected using multiple instruments:

A **structured questionnaire** was administered to assess learners' engagement, confidence, and speaking ability. Given the young age of participants, the questionnaire was simplified and supported by visual cues (e.g., smiley faces) to facilitate understanding.

The questionnaire measured:

- Willingness to speak English
- Enjoyment of activities
- Confidence in communication
- Participation in classroom tasks

The use of questionnaires in language research was supported by Dörnyei (2007), who noted that they provided efficient and systematic data collection.

The researcher conducted **systematic classroom observations** throughout the intervention. Observations focused on:

- Frequency of speaking attempts
- Level of participation
- Interaction with peers
- Emotional responses (e.g., enthusiasm, hesitation)

Observation was considered a valuable tool for capturing real-time behavior in natural settings (Patton, 2015).

A structured checklist was used by the teacher to evaluate students' speaking performance, including:

- Pronunciation accuracy
- Vocabulary use
- Fluency
- Confidence

This method ensured consistent and objective evaluation across both groups.

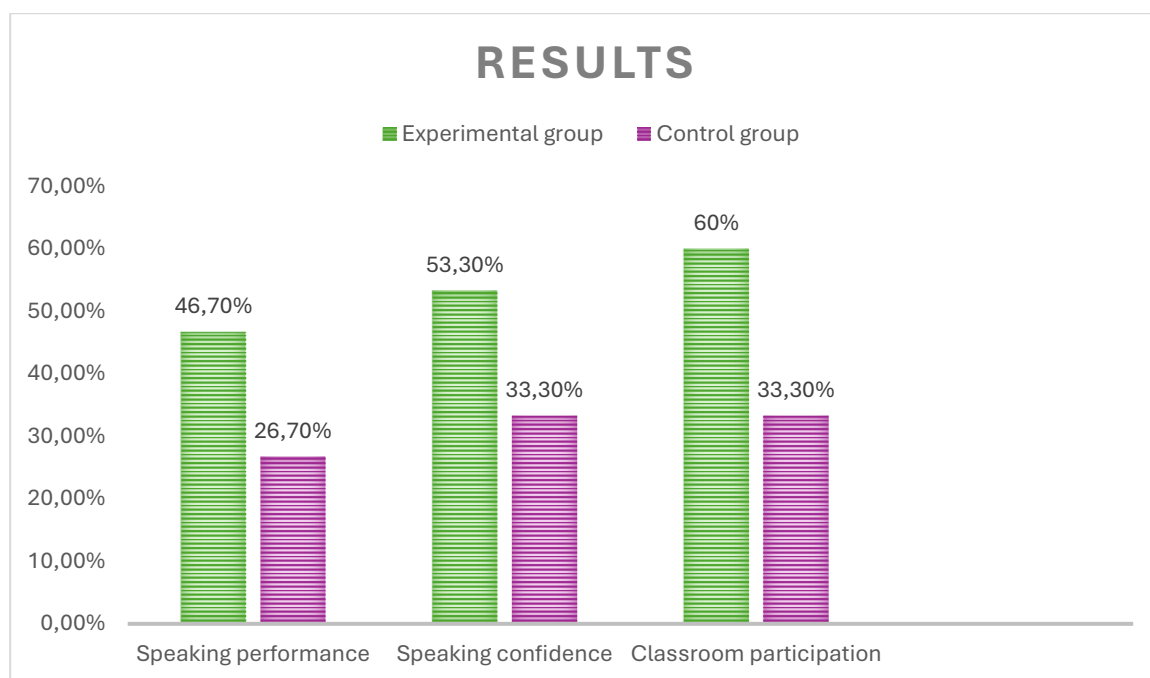
### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques:

- **Quantitative data** (questionnaire and checklist results) were analyzed using percentage distributions to identify trends and differences between groups.
- **Qualitative data** (observations) were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify recurring behavioral and emotional patterns.

### **RESULTS**

The primary objective of this study was to examine the effectiveness of interactive activities in enhancing English speaking skills among preschool learners. The results, derived from both quantitative data and qualitative classroom observations, revealed substantial differences between the experimental group (interactive instruction) and the control group (traditional instruction).



The analysis of speaking performance indicated that learners exposed to interactive activities demonstrated significantly higher levels of improvement. In the experimental group, **46.7% of students showed high improvement**, compared to only **26.7% in the control group**. Furthermore, the proportion of students demonstrating low improvement was notably lower in the experimental group (20%) than in the control group (40%).

In terms of **speaking confidence**, more than half of the students in the experimental group (53.3%) exhibited high confidence levels when speaking English. In contrast, only 33.3% of students in the control group reached a similar level, while the remaining participants displayed either moderate or low confidence.

The results also revealed differences in **classroom participation**. A majority of students in the experimental group (60%) actively participated in speaking activities, whereas only 33.3% of students in the control group demonstrated similar engagement. The control group showed a higher percentage of passive learners, indicating limited interaction and reduced opportunities for language use.

The observational data provided deeper insight into the behavioral and emotional aspects of learning. Students in the experimental group were more enthusiastic, responsive, and willing to participate in communicative tasks. They frequently initiated speech, used learned vocabulary spontaneously, and interacted more confidently with peers and the teacher.

Interactive activities such as games, songs, and role-play created a supportive and enjoyable learning environment. As a result, learners appeared less anxious and more motivated to experiment with language. In contrast, students in the control group often relied on repetition and showed hesitation when asked to produce spoken responses.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study strongly supported the hypothesis that interactive activities play a crucial role in developing English speaking skills among preschool learners. The observed improvements in fluency, confidence, and participation can be interpreted through established theories of language acquisition and early childhood development.

The superior performance of the experimental group aligned with **Vygotsky's (1978)** sociocultural theory, which emphasized the importance of social interaction in cognitive and

linguistic development. Interactive activities provided opportunities for meaningful communication, allowing learners to construct knowledge collaboratively within their zone of proximal development.

Similarly, the findings supported **Krashen's (1982)** input hypothesis, which suggested that language acquisition occurred when learners were exposed to comprehensible and engaging input in low-anxiety environments. The playful and supportive nature of interactive activities reduced learners' fear of making mistakes, thereby facilitating more effective language acquisition.

The increased participation and confidence observed in the experimental group highlighted the importance of emotional engagement in learning. As noted by **Dörnyei (2005)**, motivation and positive emotional experiences significantly influence language learning outcomes. The interactive classroom environment appeared to foster intrinsic motivation, encouraging learners to actively use English.

The findings were consistent with **Harmer (2007)**, who argued that communicative activities such as games and role-play enhanced speaking skills by promoting authentic language use. Likewise, **Slattery and Willis (2001)** emphasized that young learners benefited from varied and engaging activities that maintained attention and interest.

From an Uzbek perspective, the results supported the views of **Jalolov (2012)** and **Sattorov (2019)**, who advocated for the implementation of communicative and student-centered approaches in language teaching. Their research highlighted the limitations of traditional methods and the need for innovative strategies in early education.

The lower performance of the control group underscored the limitations of teacher-centered instruction. While repetition and memorization may support vocabulary acquisition, they do not provide sufficient opportunities for meaningful communication. As a result, learners in the control group demonstrated lower confidence and reduced ability to use language spontaneously.

The findings suggested that early language education should prioritize interactive, play-based learning environments. Teachers should incorporate:

- Games and role-play activities
- Songs and storytelling
- Group interaction and peer communication

Such approaches not only improve speaking skills but also support overall cognitive and emotional development.

Despite its contributions, the study had certain limitations. The sample size was relatively small, and the duration of the intervention was limited. Future research should involve larger participant groups and longer study periods to examine long-term effects.

## CONCLUSION

This study provided compelling evidence that interactive activities significantly enhance the development of English speaking skills among preschool learners. The findings demonstrated that learners exposed to interactive, communicative methods showed higher levels of fluency, confidence, and classroom participation compared to those taught through traditional approaches.

The results emphasized that language learning in early childhood should not be limited to memorization and repetition. Instead, it should involve meaningful interaction, emotional engagement, and active participation. Interactive activities such as games, songs, and role-play created an environment in which learners felt comfortable experimenting with language, thereby facilitating more effective learning.

Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of aligning teaching practices with the developmental needs of young learners. Preschool children learn best through play and social interaction, and language instruction should reflect these natural learning processes.

From a broader perspective, the findings contributed to ongoing educational reforms in Uzbekistan, where there is a growing emphasis on improving foreign language education. By adopting interactive and student-centered approaches, educators can better prepare young learners for future academic and communicative success.

In conclusion, interactive activities are not merely supplementary tools but essential components of effective language teaching in early childhood education. Their integration into preschool curricula can significantly enhance both linguistic and emotional development, ultimately leading to more confident and competent language users.

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