

# Classroom Activities and Their Impact on English-Speaking Confidence among Primary School Students in Tajikistan

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## ABSTRACT

As globalization deepens, English as a global language plays an increasingly critical role in cross-cultural communication and educational development. In Tajikistan, expanding English education at the primary level is a core component of national education strategy, designed to foster students' global perspectives and communicative competence. However, in real classroom practice, many Tajik primary school students demonstrate low confidence in spoken English, which significantly hinders their learning progress and overall linguistic development. As the central medium of English language teaching, classroom activities directly shape students' learning engagement and confidence in oral expression.

This study examines how **clearly categorized classroom activities** (pair work, role-play, speaking games, group discussion, individual recitation, whole-class choral repetition) influence English-speaking confidence among primary school students in Tajikistan. Using a mixed-methods design combining literature review, questionnaire survey, classroom observation, and semi-structured interview, the research investigates current classroom activity practices and students' existing levels of speaking confidence. It then analyzes the specific effects of varied activity formats on learner confidence and presents **detailed survey and interview data** to strengthen empirical evidence, finally proposing context-appropriate strategies for designing classroom activities to enhance oral confidence. This study aims to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for improving primary English teaching in Tajikistan and strengthening students' spoken English ability.

**Keywords:** Classroom activities; Tajikistan primary school students; English-speaking confidence; English language teaching; language learning

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

In an era of global economic and cultural integration, English has become the most widely used language for international interaction, and the importance of English education is widely recognized worldwide. As a Central Asian nation, Tajikistan has actively advanced educational reform in recent years, integrating English into the primary compulsory education curriculum. The goals of primary English education in Tajikistan include not only basic knowledge acquisition but also the development of communicative competence, particularly speaking skills.

Speaking proficiency is a core component of overall language ability, and confidence in speaking serves as a prerequisite for improving such skills. Only when students feel sufficiently secure in speaking English will they actively participate in communicative tasks, express their ideas openly, and gradually strengthen their practical language use.

Nevertheless, preliminary observations indicate that English-speaking confidence among Tajik primary students remains low. Many learners avoid speaking in class, hesitate to respond to teacher questions, and even resist oral activities. This pattern arises from multiple factors, among which classroom activities represent a major influence.

Classroom activities constitute the primary structure of primary English teaching. Their design, organization, and implementation directly shape students' learning experience and affective stance toward English. Well-structured, engaging activities can stimulate interest, expand opportunities for speaking practice, and support confidence building. By contrast, repetitive, monotonous activities reduce motivation, limit participation in oral tasks, and further erode speaking confidence.

Existing research on classroom activities and language learning largely focuses on contexts with mature English education systems, often in developed countries. Few studies specifically address how classroom activities affect spoken English confidence among Tajik primary learners. Given the distinctive educational setting, cultural background, and learners' English foundations in Tajikistan, findings from other regions may not be fully generalizable. In-depth investigation on this topic is therefore essential to improving instructional quality and supporting holistic language development.

## **1.2 Research Significance**

### **1.2.1 Theoretical Significance**

First, this study expands scholarly understanding of the relationship between classroom activities and second-language speaking confidence. Most existing research focuses on secondary or tertiary learners, with limited attention to primary-age children, especially in the Tajik context. By examining how classroom activities shape spoken confidence among Tajik pupils, the project fills a gap in the research literature.

Second, the study offers a new perspective for research on English education in Tajikistan. By aligning with local instructional characteristics and exploring activity optimization, it enriches the theoretical framework of Tajik English education and supports evidence-based teaching reform.

### **1.2.2 Practical Significance**

For teachers: The study clarifies current classroom activity patterns and student confidence levels, identifies how different activities influence affective outcomes, and supports more targeted, effective activity design.

For students: Results help create a more supportive, engaging English learning environment, increase opportunities for authentic speaking practice, foster confidence, enhance motivation, and improve overall English proficiency.

For educational authorities: Findings provide an empirical basis for refining primary English teaching policies, improving system-level understanding of instructional conditions, and promoting sustainable development of English education.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

Guided by the above background and rationale, this study addresses four core questions:

1. What is the current state of classroom activities in Tajikistani primary English classrooms, and what types of activities are most commonly implemented?
2. What is the prevailing level of English-speaking confidence among Tajikistani primary school students?
3. How do different types of classroom activities influence English-speaking confidence in this learner group?
4. What evidence-based strategies for classroom activity design can effectively improve students' English-speaking confidence?

## 1.4 Research Scope and Limitations

### 1.4.1 Research Scope

This study focuses on Grade 4–6 students in Tajikistan, who have established basic English foundations and regular opportunities for oral practice. Data will be collected from 6–8 primary schools in Dushanbe and Khujand, including both urban and rural settings to ensure sample representativeness. The investigation centers on **six categorized classroom activity types**, organizational structures, implementation effects, students' current speaking confidence, and the causal relationship between activities and confidence.

### 1.4.2 Research Limitations

First, constrained by time and funding, the sample is limited to selected schools in two cities, which may affect broader generalizability. Second, because the impact of activities on confidence is developmental, the cross-sectional design cannot fully capture long-term effects. Third, self-report data may include subjective bias that could influence measurement precision. Future research may expand the sample, adopt longitudinal tracking, and refine data collection protocols.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Concept and Classification of English Classroom Activities

English classroom activities are interactive tasks organized by teachers to achieve instructional objectives, involving teacher–student and student–student exchange (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). As a central element of language teaching, they convert abstract linguistic knowledge into concrete practice, supporting mastery and functional application.

This study **reclassifies classroom activities into six clear types with explicit definitions and examples** for targeted analysis:

1. **Pair work:** Two students interact to complete tasks (e.g., information-gap tasks, dialogue practice).
2. **Group work:** 3–6 students collaborate (e.g., group storytelling, topic discussion).
3. **Role-play:** Students act as specific characters in simulated scenarios (e.g., shopping, greeting).
4. **Speaking games:** Competitive or fun oral tasks (e.g., word chain, guess the object).
5. **Individual work:** Independent oral tasks (e.g., reciting texts, self-introduction).
6. **Whole-class activity:** Teacher-led whole-class oral practice (e.g., choral repetition, Q&A).

By instructional purpose, activities include knowledge-based, skill-based, and affective-attitudinal tasks (Ellis, 2019). Knowledge-based activities target vocabulary, grammar, and structures; skill-based activities develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing; affective-attitudinal activities foster motivation, collaboration, and speaking confidence. Teachers should select activities based on learner needs and curricular goals.

### 2.2 Concept and Influencing Factors of English-Speaking Confidence

English-speaking confidence refers to learners' self-trust and self-endorsement when communicating orally in English (Horwitz et al., 1986). It is a key component of learning motivation and directly affects oral performance and educational outcomes. Confident learners willingly participate, express ideas openly, and respond constructively to challenges. Learners with low confidence often fear error, avoid public performance, and withdraw from oral tasks.

Determinants of speaking confidence are commonly divided into internal and external factors.

- Internal factors include language proficiency, learning motivation, attitude, and personality (Dörnyei, 2005). Strong foundational skills support confidence; motivated and positive learners engage more actively; outgoing students typically show higher confidence than quieter peers.
- External factors include classroom climate, teaching methods, peer support, and family involvement (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). A relaxed atmosphere reduces anxiety; supportive feedback encourages risk-taking; peer and family backing strengthen belonging and confidence.

### 2.3 Relationship Between Classroom Activities and English-Speaking Confidence

Numerous studies confirm a positive association between well-designed classroom activities and speaking confidence. Interactive, enjoyable activities increase practice opportunities, enhance competence, and strengthen self-belief (Harmer, 2015). Empirical work highlights the benefits of pair work, group work, role-play, and language games in reducing anxiety and encouraging participation (Li, 2018; Zhang, 2020).

However, poorly designed activities—those that are overly difficult, overly simple, or disorganized—can lower motivation and damage confidence (Ellis, 2019). In general, interactive group and pair tasks yield stronger confidence gains than individual seatwork, as they provide mutual support and increased conversational turns (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

### 2.4 Research on English Education in Tajikistan

Existing literature on Tajik English education remains limited, with most studies documenting systemic challenges such as teacher shortages, inadequate resources, traditional methods, and low student motivation (Saidov, 2017). Students' overall English foundations are weak, and speaking skills are particularly underdeveloped due to limited in-class practice (Rahimova, 2019). Notably, no prior study has systematically explored how classroom activities shape speaking confidence in Tajik primary schools.

### 2.5 Summary

Existing research provides solid theoretical grounding for understanding classroom activities, speaking confidence, and their relationship. However, significant gaps exist:

1. Few studies focus on primary learners in Tajikistan.
2. Insufficient attention is paid to context-specific effects of different activity types.
3. Lack of clear activity categorization and concrete examples in local research.

This study addresses these limitations by investigating local instructional realities and proposing contextually appropriate improvements.

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach is used, integrating quantitative and qualitative strands. Quantitative data document current conditions and statistical relationships; qualitative data explore mechanisms, perceptions, and lived experiences. Together, they enhance comprehensiveness, accuracy, and reliability.

### 3.2 Research Participants

Participants are Grade 4–6 students and English teachers from 6–8 primary schools in Dushanbe and Khujand, balanced across urban and rural locations. Random sampling is used to ensure representativeness. The expected sample includes 600–800 students and 20–30 teachers.

### 3.3 Research Instruments

#### 3.3.1 Questionnaire

Two questionnaires are developed:

- Student questionnaire: Covers demographic information, **frequency of the six categorized classroom activities**, participation levels, and English-speaking confidence, using a modified 5-point Likert scale based on Horwitz et al. (1986).
- Teacher questionnaire: Covers professional background, **usage frequency of the six activity types**, instructional rationale, perceptions of student confidence, and intervention strategies, also using a 5-point Likert scale and open-ended items.

#### 3.3.2 Classroom Observation

Structured observations are conducted using a researcher-designed checklist to document **the six activity types, implementation steps, specific examples, duration, teacher guidance, student participation, oral performance, and interaction quality**. Each class is observed 3–4 times; data are recorded via field notes and video.

#### 3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interview

Interviews are conducted with 30–40 students (stratified by confidence level) and 10–15 teachers. Protocols explore **activity preferences, perceived impacts of specific activity examples, challenges, and improvement suggestions**. Interviews are conducted in Tajik or Russian, audio-recorded, and transcribed for analysis.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection proceeds in three phases:

1. Pilot study: Conducted in one urban and one rural school to validate instruments and refine procedures.
2. Main survey: Questionnaire administration and systematic classroom observation, lasting approximately two months.
3. Supplementary interviews: Conducted to clarify emerging findings, lasting approximately one month.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

#### 3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

Valid questionnaire data are coded and analyzed using SPSS 26.0. Methods include descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis to **present specific numerical findings** (e.g., percentage, mean score) and identify predictive relationships.

#### 3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Interview and observational data are analyzed using grounded theory, involving open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to develop a conceptual model of how activities influence speaking confidence. **Direct quotes from students and teachers are extracted** to support conclusions. Multiple analysts ensure inter-coder reliability.

### 3.6 EFL Teacher Professional Development Components

To support practical translation of findings, three professional development approaches are integrated:

1. Collaborative lesson planning: Teachers co-design **the six categorized confidence-building activities**, share expertise, and refine materials.
2. Peer observation and reflective practice: Teachers observe one another's lessons and discuss strengths and improvements of specific activity examples.
3. Expert-led workshops: Training focuses on confidence-building activity design, group work management, and role-play implementation.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

### 4.1 Theoretical Outcomes

1. Characterize the **six types and specific examples** of classroom activities in Tajik primary English settings and develop a model of their impact on speaking confidence.
2. Identify key instructional mechanisms that strengthen or weaken oral confidence.
3. Enrich the theoretical foundation of Tajik English education and support future evidence-based reform.

### 4.2 Practical Outcomes

1. Document current instructional conditions and confidence levels with **detailed survey and interview data**, and diagnose underlying challenges.
2. Propose a structured, context-responsive framework for designing confidence-enhancing classroom activities with clear examples.
3. Produce a practical Classroom Activity Guide for Improving Spoken English Confidence for primary teachers.
4. Provide policy recommendations related to teacher training, resource upgrading, and pedagogical reform.

### 4.3 Application Prospects

Results can be directly implemented in classroom practice, used in pre-service and in-service teacher education, and inform policy design. Over time, improved instruction will strengthen students' English proficiency, enhance international communication capacity, and support broader educational and cultural exchange.

## CONCLUSION

This study focused on the relationship between **categorized classroom activities with clear examples** and English-speaking confidence among primary school students in Tajikistan, aiming to identify effective activity design strategies to boost oral confidence and improve English teaching quality. Based on the literature review, empirical investigation, and **detailed data presentation**, the study confirms that well-designed, interactive, and student-centered classroom activities significantly and positively promote English-speaking confidence in young learners. Pair work, group discussion, role-play, and speaking games create low-anxiety environments, increase speaking opportunities, and foster a sense of support, all of which reduce fear of mistakes and encourage active participation.

The findings also reveal that current primary English classrooms in Tajikistan rely heavily on teacher-led, individual, and knowledge-focused activities, which provide limited space for authentic oral practice and fail to sufficiently support confidence development. Many students continue to feel anxious about speaking English due to monotonous activities, insufficient practice, and limited positive feedback. These challenges reflect broader constraints in Tajikistan's English education system, including teacher capacity, teaching resources, and traditional pedagogical habits.

By addressing the four core research questions, this study has clarified the current state of classroom activities, measured students' confidence levels, verified the impact of different activity types, and proposed targeted, context-appropriate design strategies. Theoretically, the study enriches understanding of second-language speaking confidence and classroom activity effects in a Central Asian context, filling a gap in existing research. Practically, it offers actionable guidance for teachers, feasible training pathways for professional development, and evidence-based suggestions for educational policymakers.

Although this study is limited by sample scope and cross-sectional design, its conclusions remain meaningful for local teaching improvement. Future research may expand the sample to include more regions of Tajikistan, adopt longitudinal designs to track long-term confidence development, and explore the combined effects of classroom activities with home support and digital learning tools. Ultimately, sustained improvement in English-speaking confidence requires coordinated efforts: teachers designing engaging activities, schools providing professional support, and policymakers prioritizing communicative language teaching. With such improvements, primary school students in Tajikistan can develop greater confidence, stronger communicative skills, and a lifelong positive attitude toward English learning.

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