

IMPROVING GRADE 4 STUDENTS' SPEAKING PARTICIPATION THROUGH INTERACTIVE CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

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Abstract: In recent years, students' participation in speaking activities has become both essential and challenging, as many learners struggle to express themselves orally in English. Although a number of studies have addressed this issue, some teachers still face difficulties in finding effective strategies to engage students in speaking tasks, especially in 4th and 5th grades, where learners are expected to complete more speaking exercises during lessons. The main aim of this study is to investigate the reasons behind students' low participation in speaking activities and to identify effective classroom strategies to improve their engagement. The study employed classroom-based action research. The participants consisted of 22 fourth-grade students from School No. 15 in Shahrihan district, Andijan region. Data were collected through classroom observations, student questionnaires, and informal conversations with colleagues. After data collection, all information was carefully analyzed using descriptive methods. The findings revealed that initially only a small number of students actively participated in speaking activities, while some learners did not want to do speaking exercises because of shyness, lack of vocabulary, and fear of making mistakes. However, after implementing interactive strategies such as pair work, group work, the "Find a Friend" activity, a speaking dice game, and group storytelling, the number of active participants increased significantly. The results also showed that students became more confident, motivated, and willing to speak when they were engaged in interactive and collaborative tasks. This study can be useful for teachers who face similar challenges, as it highlights effective strategies for improving students' speaking participation. In conclusion, creating a supportive and interactive classroom environment helps enhance students' confidence and develop their speaking skills more effectively.

Keywords: speaking skills, student participation, interactive strategies, pair work, group work.

INTERAKTIV SINF STRATEGIYALARI ORQALI 4-SINF O'QUVCHILARINING GAPIRISHDAGI ISHTIROKINI OSHIRISH

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Annotatsiya: So'nggi yillarda o'quvchilarning gapirish faoliyatlarida ishtiroki muhim bo'lishi bilan birga murakkab masalaga ham aylanmoqda, chunki ko'plab o'quvchilar ingliz tilida og'zaki fikr bildirishda qiynalmoqda. Garchi bu muammo bo'yicha bir qator tadqiqotlar olib borilgan bo'lsa-da, ayrim o'qituvchilar hanuzgacha o'quvchilarni gapirish mashg'ulotlariga jalb qilish uchun samarali strategiyalarni topishda qiyinchiliklarga duch kelmoqdalar, ayniqsa 4-5-sinf o'quvchilari bilan ishlashda, chunki ular darslarda ko'proq gapirish mashqlarini bajaradilar. Mazkur tadqiqotning asosiy maqsadi o'quvchilarning gapirish faoliyatlarida past ishtirok etish sabablarini aniqlash hamda ularning faolligini oshirish uchun samarali sinf strategiyalarini

belgilashdan iborat. Tadqiqot sinfda olib borilgan amaliy tadqiqot shaklida tashkil etildi. Ishtirokchilar Andijon viloyati Shahrixon tumani 15-maktabning 4-sinfida tahsil olayotgan 22 nafar o'quvchidan iborat bo'ldi. Ma'lumotlar sinf kuzatuvlari, o'quvchilar so'rovnomalari hamda hamkasblar bilan norasmiy suhbatlar orqali to'plandi. To'plangan barcha ma'lumotlar tavsifiy usullar yordamida sinchkovlik bilan tahlil qilindi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatdiki, dastlab o'quvchilarning faqat kichik qismi gapirish faoliyatlarida faol ishtirok etgan yoki ayrimlari uyatchanlik, so'z boyligining yetishmasligi va xato qilishdan qo'rqish kabi omillar sabab gapirish mashqlarini bajarishni istamagan. Biroq juftlikda ishlash, guruhda ishlash, "Find a Friend" faoliyati, gapirish uchun kubik o'yini hamda guruhiy hikoya tuzish kabi interaktiv strategiyalar qo'llanilgandan so'ng faol ishtirokchilar soni sezilarli darajada oshdi. Natijalar shuningdek, o'quvchilar interaktiv va hamkorlikka asoslangan vazifalarda ishtirok etganlarida o'zlariga ishonchi, motivatsiyasi va gapirishga bo'lgan istagi ortganini ko'rsatdi. Mazkur tadqiqot o'xshash muammolarga duch kelayotgan o'qituvchilar uchun foydali bo'lishi mumkin, chunki u o'quvchilarning gapirishdagi faolligini oshirish uchun samarali strategiyalarni yoritadi. Xulosa qilib aytganda, qo'llab-quvvatlovchi va interaktiv sinf muhitini yaratish o'quvchilarning o'ziga ishonchini oshirish hamda ularning gapirish ko'nikmalarini yanada samarali rivojlantirishga yordam beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: gapirish ko'nikmalari, o'quvchilar ishtiroki, interaktiv strategiyalar, juftlikda ishlash, guruhda ishlash.

ПОВЫШЕНИЕ УЧАСТИЯ УЧАЩИХСЯ 4-ГО КЛАССА В ГОВОРЕНИИ ПОСРЕДСТВОМ ИНТЕРАКТИВНЫХ КЛАССНЫХ СТРАТЕГИЙ

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Аннотация: В последние годы участие учащихся в заданиях по говорению стало как важным, так и сложным, поскольку многие учащиеся испытывают трудности в устном выражении своих мыслей на английском языке. Несмотря на то, что данная проблема рассматривалась в ряде исследований, некоторые учителя по-прежнему сталкиваются с трудностями при поиске эффективных стратегий для вовлечения учащихся в задания по говорению, особенно среди учеников 4–5 классов, которые выполняют больше устных упражнений на уроках. Основной целью данного исследования является выявление причин низкой активности учащихся в заданиях по говорению, а также определение эффективных стратегий для повышения их вовлечённости. Исследование было проведено в форме практико-ориентированного исследования в классе. В исследовании приняли участие 22 ученика 4 класса школы №15 Шахриханского района Андижанской области. Данные были собраны посредством наблюдений за уроками, анкетирования учащихся, а также неформальных бесед с коллегами. Все собранные данные были тщательно проанализированы с использованием описательных методов. Результаты показали, что на начальном этапе лишь небольшое количество учащихся активно участвовало в заданиях по говорению, а некоторые вообще не хотели выполнять устные упражнения из-за таких факторов, как застенчивость, недостаточный словарный запас и страх совершить ошибки. Однако после внедрения интерактивных стратегий, таких как работа в парах, работа в

группах, задание «Find a Friend», игра с говорящим кубиком и групповое составление рассказов, количество активных участников значительно увеличилось. Результаты также показали, что учащиеся становились более уверенными, мотивированными и готовыми говорить при выполнении интерактивных и совместных заданий. Данное исследование может быть полезным для учителей, сталкивающихся с аналогичными трудностями, поскольку оно подчёркивает эффективные стратегии повышения активности учащихся в говорении. В заключение следует отметить, что создание поддерживающей и интерактивной образовательной среды способствует повышению уверенности учащихся и более эффективному развитию их навыков говорения.

Ключевые слова: навыки говорения, участие учащихся, интерактивные стратегии, работа в парах, групповая работа.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, developing students' speaking skills has become a central goal in English language teaching; however, many young learners still struggle to participate actively in classroom speaking activities. Despite years of English instruction, it is common to observe that some 4th grade students are able to complete written tasks but remain silent when asked to speak. This situation raises an important question about the effectiveness of current teaching practices in promoting oral communication.

Syafrizal and Rohmawati (2017) noted that students avoid speaking due to lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes. However, working in small groups provides a safe environment for learners to practice and negotiate meaning. Other studies, such as Setiyadi, Sukirlan, and Mahpul (2016), support the use of social strategies to improve oral skills. Activities such as opinion sharing and search dynamics allow students to interact on topics of interest, which encourages communication and learning.

Furthermore, local educational authorities recommend not focusing too much on accuracy in the early years of learning, but rather allowing students to experiment. Pronunciation is also considered crucial for intelligibility (Foote, Holtby, & Derwing, 2011), while other elements such as rhythm and intonation complement effective communication (Alotaibi, 2014). On the one hand, studies such as those of Alwi and Sidhu (2013) have shown that peer assessment contributes significantly to the development of oral skills, particularly in contexts where students need to practice communicative interaction.

According to these authors, the simple act of receiving immediate feedback fosters greater awareness of aspects such as pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical structure, improving performance on future tasks. It can be concluded that working in pairs helps students overcome negative feelings that may become barriers to speaking skills. In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education (2016) highlights that collaborative learning is an essential component for the comprehensive development of students, promoting values such as empathy, respect, and shared responsibility. This approach aligns with working in groups in order to develop and improve speaking skills.

This study aims to investigate the reasons behind Grade 4 students' low participation in speaking activities and to examine the effectiveness of interactive classroom strategies in improving their engagement. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Why do Grade 4 students feel reluctant to participate in speaking activities?

2. How do interactive strategies such as pair work, group work, and speaking games influence students' participation?

3. To what extent can these strategies improve students' confidence and speaking performance?

METHODOLOGY

This section includes information about the participants and instruments. The present study was framed as action research, since its objective was to generate changes in the current strategies for student engagement in speaking activities. Action research is characterized as an evidence-based process used to improve educational practices, whether in teaching or learning (Hunter, 2017; Norton, 2014).

The students attended a public school where the researcher worked. The participants were 22 fourth-grade elementary school students, including 8 boys and 14 girls, aged between 10 and 11 years old. To answer the first research question, classroom observations and a student questionnaire were used. The questionnaire consisted of simple multiple-choice items designed to identify factors such as shyness, lack of vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, and students' attitudes toward speaking English. Classroom observations were conducted to examine students' behavior during speaking tasks and to identify common difficulties they faced.

To answer the second research question, several interactive classroom activities were implemented, including "Find a Friend," pair interviews, a speaking dice game, and group storytelling. Students' participation levels were observed and compared before and after the intervention in order to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies.

To answer the third research question, follow-up observations and analysis of students' classroom behavior were conducted. Changes in students' willingness to speak, their ability to answer questions, and their level of engagement in activities were carefully monitored throughout the study. In order to better understand students' interest in speaking activities, their attitudes toward learning, and the importance they attach to speaking skills, a set of simple statements was provided to the learners. The aim was to explore their confidence level, motivation, and preferences related to speaking English in the classroom. Students responded to the statements using a simplified scale appropriate for their level.

The student questionnaire included the following items:

1. I speak English in class / Men darsda inglizcha gapiraman: Yes, I try; Sometimes; No.
2. I feel when I speak English / Men inglizcha gapirganda o'zimni his qilaman: Good; Okay; Bad.
3. I speak English because I am / Men inglizcha gapiraman, chunki men: Not shy; A little shy; Very shy.
4. When I do not know a word / So'z bilmaganimda men: I try to say something; I wait; I stop speaking.
5. Speaking English in class is / Darsda inglizcha gapirish: Easy; A little hard; Very hard.
6. I like speaking with friends / Do'stlarim bilan gapirishni yoqtiraman: Yes; Sometimes; No.
7. I speak English when the teacher asks me / O'qituvchi savol berganda inglizcha javob beraman: Yes; Sometimes; No.
8. I am afraid to make mistakes / Men xato qilishdan qo'rqaman: No; A little; Yes.
9. I speak more when we play games / O'yin o'ynaganimizda ko'proq gapiraman: Yes; Sometimes; No.

10. I want to speak English more / Men ko‘proq inglizcha gapirmoqchiman: Yes; A little; No.

The results indicated that a considerable number of students did not feel fully confident speaking English in front of others. Most learners selected moderate responses, showing that they were only partially confident and still experienced hesitation during speaking tasks. Similarly, when asked whether they understood themselves while speaking English, many students expressed uncertainty, suggesting limited confidence in their communicative ability.

In terms of pronunciation, the findings revealed that a significant number of students were not sure how to improve their pronunciation skills. This suggests that they lacked clear strategies or guidance for developing this aspect of speaking. However, more positive responses were observed in relation to collaborative learning. A large proportion of students agreed that working in groups helped improve their pronunciation and speaking skills. They also reported feeling more comfortable and relaxed when practicing English with classmates.

Furthermore, most students expressed a positive attitude toward peer-based learning. They indicated that they would enjoy using peer assessment in future lessons, which reflects their interest in interactive and student-centered classroom activities. Overall, the results suggest that while students have a certain level of interest in speaking activities, their confidence remains limited. At the same time, they show a clear preference for collaborative and interactive learning environments, which can play a key role in improving their speaking performance.

Teacher survey

This survey was conducted to collect teachers' and colleagues' opinions about students' speaking participation in English lessons. Teachers with different teaching experience took part in the survey, which helped to obtain reliable information.

The first question is about teachers' teaching experience to understand how experience influences their views on speaking development.

The second question asks whether teachers find it difficult to make students speak in English. The third question focuses on when children should start learning speaking.

The fourth question identifies the best way to start speaking practice, such as writing, memorizing, or short speech. The fifth question asks whether speaking activities are appropriate for Grade 4 students. The sixth question is about how much time should be given for speaking practice. The seventh question identifies the best speaking activity for young learners, including role-play, storytelling, and presentation. The eighth question explores reasons why students do not want to speak, such as fear or lack of vocabulary. The ninth question is about how to motivate students to speak in class.

The last question asks about the best way to start classroom research, including observation, interviews, or colleagues' help.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study and discusses their implications for improving students' participation in speaking activities. The results show that students' speaking participation improved significantly after the implementation of interactive classroom strategies. At the beginning of the study, most students were reluctant to speak. When they were asked simple oral questions, many remained silent, searched for answers in their notebooks, or refused to respond. Only 8 out of 22 students were able to answer basic questions confidently, while 3 students responded fully. Two students stated that they did not know English at all, and the remaining students showed minimal effort.

The findings indicate that students were more willing to participate when activities were structured, interactive, and engaging. For example, during a group-based writing and speaking activity using colored paper, all students contributed by writing at least one word or sentence. Furthermore, the use of short cartoon-based videos increased students’ understanding and encouraged them to speak more freely. After watching and discussing the video, students were able to respond to questions more spontaneously compared to previous lessons.

Another important finding is that peer interaction played a crucial role in improving speaking performance. During group and pair activities, students supported each other by correcting mistakes and explaining answers. As shown in classroom observations, participation increased from approximately 10 active students to 17 after the intervention, demonstrating a clear improvement in engagement. This can be explained by the use of low-pressure, collaborative activities that reduced students’ fear of making mistakes.

One possible reason is that students were given more opportunities to practice speaking in a supportive environment rather than being forced to answer individually. In addition, the use of visual materials such as videos and interactive games helped students understand the topic better and feel more confident. These findings are in line with previous research showing that interactive and student-centered approaches increase motivation and classroom participation.

The results support the idea that young learners are more likely to speak when they are engaged in meaningful and enjoyable activities rather than traditional, textbook-based exercises. These findings suggest that teachers should incorporate more interactive strategies such as group work, games, storytelling, and video-based tasks in primary classrooms. This has important implications for improving students’ confidence, reducing anxiety, and developing their speaking skills more effectively.

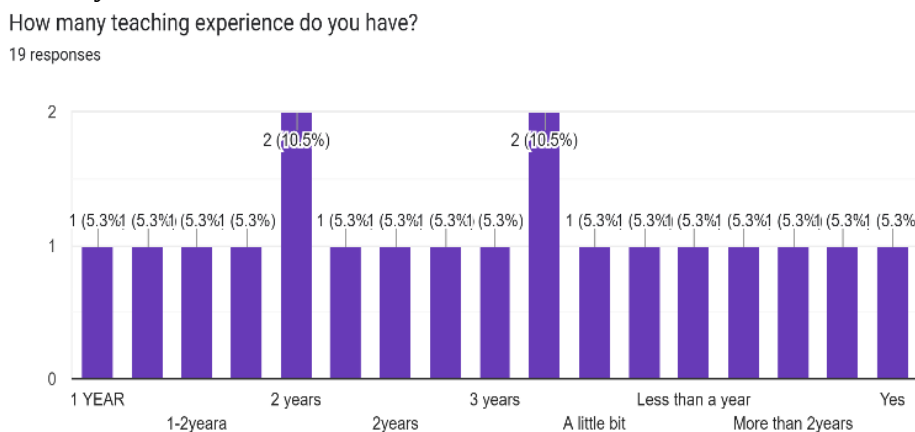


Figure 1. Teachers’ teaching experience.

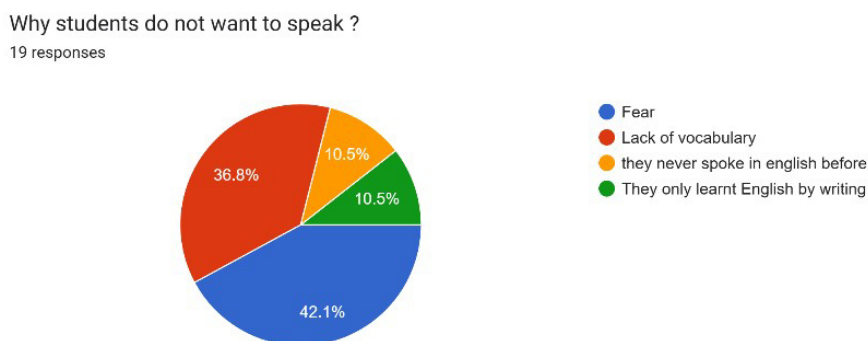


Figure 2. Teachers’ opinions on why students do not want to speak.

It is right to try speaking activities during 4th grade students?
19 responses

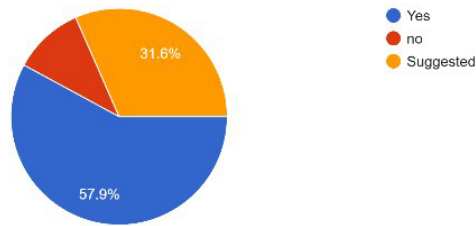


Figure 3. Teachers' views on introducing speaking activities in Grade 4.

Which activity is best for their age?
19 responses

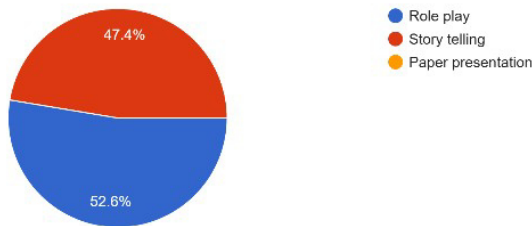


Figure 4. Teachers' opinions on the most suitable speaking activity for young learners.

what do you think how much time i should separate for their speaking lessons?
19 responses

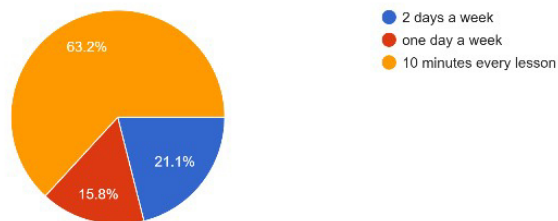


Figure 5. Teachers' opinions on the amount of time allocated for speaking practice.

Which is good to start teaching from?
19 responses

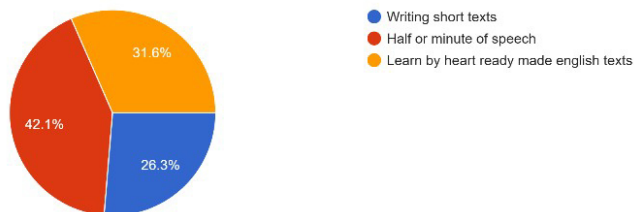


Figure 6. Teachers' opinions on how to start speaking lessons.

What do you think when exactly do school children start to learn speaking?
19 responses

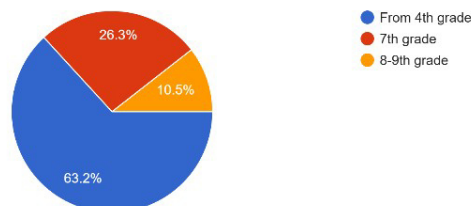


Figure 7. Teachers' opinions on when children should start learning speaking.

Do you find it difficult to make your students speak in English?
19 responses

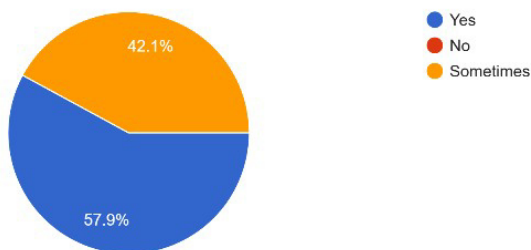


Figure 8. Teachers' responses about difficulties in making students speak English.

Do you find it difficult to make your students speak in English?
19 responses

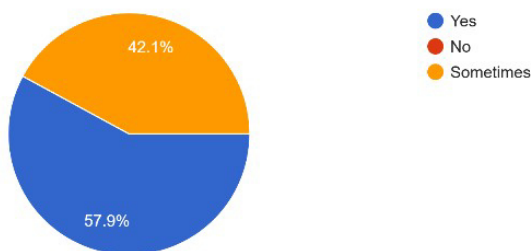


Figure 9. Teachers' opinions on motivating students to speak English in class.

Which is better to start researching?
19 responses

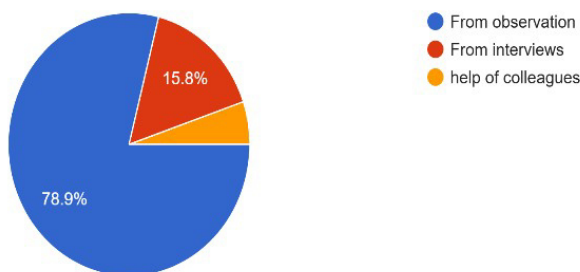


Figure 10. Teachers' opinions on the best way to start classroom research.

Data analysis

Before analysis, all the collected data were checked to make sure they were complete and usable. The students' and teachers' questionnaire results were analyzed using simple percentages to show how many learners gave similar answers about speaking activities. The classroom observations and teacher notes were analyzed by looking for common patterns, for example, how students behaved during speaking tasks, whether they were confident or shy, and how they reacted to pair work, group work, and speaking games.

To make the results more reliable, information from different sources, including questionnaires, observations, and teacher feedback, was compared. This helped the researcher to see whether the same ideas and problems appeared in different data. In this way, the findings became clearer and more trustworthy.

The results show a clear improvement in students' speaking participation after the intervention. Initially, only 10 out of 22 students actively participated in speaking activities. After

applying interactive strategies, this number increased to 17 students. In addition, classroom observations revealed that students became more confident and willing to speak during pair and group activities. The “Find a Friend” activity was particularly effective in encouraging shy students to participate. The speaking dice game increased motivation, while group storytelling improved collaboration and vocabulary use.

Overall, students showed higher engagement, more frequent participation, and reduced anxiety during speaking tasks. This section presents the results of the study and discusses their implications for improving students’ speaking participation and confidence in English lessons. The results show that students’ speaking participation and confidence improved after the intervention. In addition, the number of active students increased from 10 to 17 out of 22 learners, which shows a clear improvement in classroom engagement.

Students also became more willing to take part in speaking activities, especially during interactive tasks. Furthermore, shy students showed gradual progress in their participation. As shown in the classroom observations and questionnaire results, students initially reported low confidence in speaking due to shyness and fear of making mistakes. However, during game-based and group activities, their participation increased significantly. Group work was more effective than pair work in encouraging overall participation, while pair work helped students practice speaking individually. Activities such as “Find a Friend” were especially successful in improving engagement.

This can be explained by the use of interactive, game-based, and group activities during lessons. One possible reason is that students felt less pressure and more support when speaking with classmates. Structured activities also helped students prepare their answers before speaking, which reduced anxiety. Another reason is that writing simple questions before speaking helped students organize their ideas more easily. These findings are in line with previous studies showing that interactive and collaborative learning improves students’ speaking confidence and participation.

This supports the idea that young learners perform better in supportive and low-stress classroom environments. These findings suggest that speaking activities should be designed in a structured and interactive way for primary school learners. This has important implications for English teachers, as using games, group work, and guided speaking tasks can significantly reduce students’ fear and improve participation. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the intervention was effective in improving students’ speaking participation and confidence in English lessons.

DISCUSSION

The improvement in students’ speaking participation can be explained by the use of interactive and student-centered learning strategies. These activities created a low-anxiety environment where students felt more comfortable speaking. Pair and group work allowed students to support each other, which reduced fear of making mistakes. Game-based activities such as the speaking dice increased motivation and made learning more enjoyable.

These findings are consistent with previous research that emphasizes the importance of interactive learning in developing speaking skills. The results also show that traditional textbook-based teaching alone is not sufficient to improve speaking ability in young learners. Therefore, teachers need to provide activities that encourage communication, cooperation, and repeated practice in a supportive classroom atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that interactive classroom strategies significantly improve Grade 4 students' speaking participation. Activities such as "Find a Friend," pair interviews, speaking dice games, and group storytelling increased students' confidence and engagement. The study suggests that teachers should integrate more interactive and communicative activities into English lessons to improve students' speaking skills. Creating a supportive and enjoyable classroom environment is essential for reducing anxiety and encouraging active participation.

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