ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS THROUGH FUN-FOCUSED TEACHING: AN ACTION RESEARCH IN BANGLADESHI CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Young learners experience anxiety and fear when using English language, particularly in speaking and communication tasks. This action research examines the impact of incorporating fun activities into English language teaching for primary and secondary classroom settings. Generally, application of word games, storytelling, role-playing, educational songs, creative art projects, and interactive digital quizzes in teaching learning enhance student engagement. Therefore, following a cyclical action research model—planning, implementation, observation, and reflection—the research gathers data through classroom observations, student feedback, and short assessments. Findings suggest that the use of fun activities significantly improves student participation, vocabulary retention, speaking fluency, and overall classroom environment. The study concludes that when English is taught through enjoyable and interactive methods, students become more confident, active, and motivated learners without anxiety. The results advocate for a pedagogical shift toward learner-centered, activity-based teaching approaches in English language classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh being a part of globalized world, English serves not only as a medium of instruction but also works as a gateway to international knowledge and communication. Proficiency in English in early life enables learners to access a vast range of academic, professional, and cultural resources in future. As English becomes more integrated into early education, it is vital to ensure that children develop strong language foundations in a supportive and engaging environment.

Speaking in English in important in academia but many young learners experience anxiety and fear when using this language, particularly in speaking and communication tasks. These negative emotions can hinder classroom participation, delay their language development, and lead them to a lack of confidence that persists into adulthood. Moreover, poor English skills sometimes negatively affect the development of fundamental soft skills, such as public speaking, peer collaboration, and interpersonal communication. These are basic competencies but highly valued in both academic and professional settings.

To solve the language learning issues, educators are increasingly exploring innovative teaching methods that make learning English enjoyable and less intimidating. One

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such approach is the use of songs, joyous teaching aids, methods and techniques in the classroom. Songs offer a multisensory learning experience that can improve language acquisition. Singing a song together loudly reduces fear and anxiety of using English. Other than songs, there are many joyful methods for the development of English language skills such as word games, storytelling, role-playing, educational songs, creative art projects, and interactive digital quizzes etc.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

English is recognized as a vital skill for accessing global higher education and succeeding in modern workforce. Many young learners face emotional and cognitive barriers that limit their ability to acquire and use the language effectively. While teaching, students often experience fear, anxiety, and low motivation when engaging in English communication tasks. These issues, if unaddressed, can lead to poor language development and a lack of soft skills later in life. Therefore, there is a need to explore fun based pedagogical strategies—such as the use of songs, word games, storytelling, role-playing, educational songs, creative art projects, and interactive digital quizzes – that can reduce learners' anxiety, enhance engagement, and improve overall English proficiency from an early age.

METHODS & TECHNIQUES FOR FUN ENGLISH LEARNING

Teachers are nothing without methods and techniques. So fun learning activities in English classrooms maintains students' motivation and engagement. Those activities should not only be educational but also enjoyable, helping to create a positive emotional connection to language learning. When students find learning fun, they are more likely to participate actively and retain information more effectively. Moreover this learning will be long lasting and sustaining in memory.

Its normal for a teacher to make a lesson plan prior to a class. Innovation in lesson planning can help break away from monotonous routines and spark curiosity. A key component of fun learning is the ability to reduce cognitive and mental pressure in the classroom. A relaxed and comfortable atmosphere helps students feel more confident and less anxious. This is especially important for language learners who are close to any zone of proximal development. Here fun activities work as scaffolding.

Implementing fun-based activities are possible in student-centered learning, where lessons are designed around students' interests, strengths, and needs rather than adhering strictly to a fixed curriculum. This personalized approach ensures that learners feel valued and more invested in their education. The use of games and play-based learning in fun classrooms builds competitions, group challenges, learning outcomes, teamwork and social interaction.

Interactive learning happens when fun English instruction is applied. But it requires two-way communication between teacher and students, as well as among peers. In addition, incorporating entertainment elements such as videos, storytelling, or role-plays can make lessons more dynamic and memorable. Finally, offering a variety of activities covering listening, speaking, acting, or drawing—helps prevent boredom and keeps students engaged in learning.

Role-Playing in Primary and Secondary English Language Classes

Role-playing is widely recognized in language education as an effective, interactive technique that supports communicative competence, particularly in young and adolescent learners. The constructivists and advocates of communicative language teaching theories, suggest the teachers to do role-playing because students can actively use English in simulated real-life contexts. Thereby meaningful language use via reinforcing both receptive and productive skills are achieved.

One of the primary benefits of role-playing is that it enhances speaking fluency and confidence. According to Ladousse (1987), role-play provides an imaginative environment in which students can try language without the fear of making mistakes. This is particularly important for primary and secondary learners, who often experience shy when speaking in front of peers. In these settings, role-playing reduces pressure by shifting focus from the speaker to the scenario, thus lowering the affective filter (Krashen, 1982) and encouraging more spontaneous language use.

Role-playing also contributes to improving contextual vocabulary learning. When students assume roles in specific real life social situations—such as ordering food, attending interviews, or visiting a doctor—they naturally use target vocabulary and phrases in context. This method helps young learners internalize language structures more effectively than rote memorization (Phillips, 1999). Moreover, role-play supports soft skills development, including turn-taking, listening, problem-solving, and empathy, as students must consider others' perspectives during interaction (Dougill, 1987).

However, skilled teachers only can do role-playing. Teachers must carefully design scenarios that are age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and aligned with learning objectives. In classrooms with mixed language abilities, some students may feel shy or overwhelmed, requiring scaffolding or differentiated support (Ur, 1996). Time constraints and large class sizes can also limit the effectiveness of role-play activities if not well-managed.

Word Games in Primary and Secondary English Language Classrooms
Word games have long been recognized as effective tools in English language education. As part of communicative and task-based learning approaches, word games serve as engaging strategies to enhance vocabulary, spelling, reading, and speaking skills in a playful, low-stress environment. Research consistently finds that word games promote active learning by making the process enjoyable, motivating, and memorable (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006).

In primary classrooms, word games cater to children's developmental need for play and repetition. Activities such as word bingo, matching games, crossword puzzles, and spelling bees not only make learning fun but also help children retain new vocabulary through repetition and pattern recognition (Cameron, 2001). These games often include practicing high-frequency words in meaningful contexts. In addition, they create phonemic awareness and basic decoding skills, which are essential for early literacy development (Read, 2007).

For secondary students, word games include more complex language goals, such as collocations, idiomatic expressions, word formation, and academic vocabulary. Games like Scrabble, taboo, hangman, and vocabulary races not only improve word retrieval but also promote critical thinking, creativity, and language fluency. According to Uberman (1998), games provide opportunities for meaningful interaction and real-time language use, which supports the communicative goals of modern language teaching.

The Use of Songs in Teaching English to Young Learners
A growing body of literature emphasizes cognitive, linguistic, and emotional benefits of integration of songs in learning English (Hamilton et al., 2024). Songs provide an enjoyable and engaging learning experience, which is particularly crucial for maintaining the attention and motivation of young learners. For this, a teacher must select a song with the consultation of curriculum experts.

Starting a lesson with a song is a common strategy to energize students and establish a positive and dynamic classroom atmosphere. This method serves as an icebreaker and transitions students into an English-speaking mindset (Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Beyond simply engaging students, songs also serve as a vehicle for vocabulary instruction. Carefully selected songs that include target vocabulary can help students acquire new words in

meaningful contexts. Teachers may pre-teach or post-teach vocabulary to reinforce comprehension (Millington, 2011).

Sing-along activities further support language learning by promoting pronunciation and rhythm. According to Sevik (2012), repetitive singing allows students to practice stress patterns and intonation, listening skills, vocabulary development. These tasks require learners to focus on specific language cues, improving their auditory discrimination and contextual inference abilities (Murphey, 1992).

Incorporating gestures and movements with songs helps to reinforce language through kinesthetic learning. Repetition of songs across multiple lessons further aids memorization and long-term language acquisition. Songs also serve as a foundation for class performances or role-plays, which can significantly boost learners' confidence and speaking skills (Shin, 2006). Additionally, the use of visual aids—such as flashcards and illustrations—paired with songs can help the auditory and visual modes of learning.

The literature affirms that songs are not merely supplementary tools but powerful pedagogical resources in English language teaching. They support language acquisition holistically—catering to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.

Visual Storytelling to Teach English Vocabulary to Young Learners
Visual storytelling is the integration of images, narratives, and interactive elements with English. It is an effective approach to language teaching, particularly for young learners. Visual storytelling can play a key role in vocabulary acquisition by providing meaningful contexts and fostering student engagement. However, while this method offers many pedagogical benefits, it also presents certain challenges that must be addressed to ensure effective implementation. The advantages and disadvantages are discussed below:

Advantages of Visual Storytelling
Visual storytelling is an art of communicating information through visual media like image, illustration and videos. One key benefit is contextual learning, as vocabulary is embedded within compelling narratives. Students can understand and remember through associations with characters, actions, and events easily (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). This method also leads to increased engagement, as the combination of visuals and storytelling captures students' attention and helps sustain motivation. When learners are emotionally connected to the story, they are more likely to participate actively and retain new vocabulary. In addition, visual storytelling provides multisensory input, which caters to both visual and auditory learners by reinforcing language through both images and sound (Wright, 1995). Embedding language in fun and familiar storytelling contexts helps lower affective filters and increases learners' willingness to use English (Krashen, 1982).

The customizability of visual storytelling is another advantage, as teachers can create stories to match students' proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds, and personal interests. When learners are involved in the storytelling process, they develop ownership of learning and show increased creativity and vocabulary use (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). Moreover, visual storytelling makes use of varied resources, from printed books to digital applications. Teachers are able to design diverse and stimulating lessons.

Disadvantages of Visual Storytelling
Despite its many benefits, visual storytelling as a method for teaching English vocabulary to young learners also presents several challenges. One major drawback is the time-consuming preparation required. Designing or adapting visual stories that align with specific vocabulary goals can be demanding, and even pre-made materials often require customization to suit the curriculum and students' levels (Ellis & Brewster, 2014). Another issue is resource dependency, as effective visual storytelling typically relies on access to quality visual aids,

storybooks, or digital tools, which may not always be available or affordable (Wright, 1995). Additionally, there is a risk of overemphasis on entertainment. When stories are too focused on visuals or drama, students may become distracted from the actual language objectives (Isbell et al., 2004). Classroom management also becomes more complex during interactive storytelling, particularly with younger learners, where heightened excitement can lead to distractions and off-task behavior (Shin, 2006). However, teachers must be mindful of the time and resource demands, the need for clear instructional goals, and the diverse learning styles of students. To maximize its effectiveness, visual storytelling should be carefully planned, integrated with assessments, and supported by collaboration among educators.

Speaking Skills Enhancement through Digital Storytelling
The success of digital storytelling also relies heavily on teacher readiness. Therefore, training sessions were conducted for class teachers, equipping them with the skills to use digital storytelling modules effectively and confidently. These trained educators then integrated digital storytelling into regular speaking classes, ensuring that the technique was embedded in routine instruction rather than treated as a one-time activity. The project followed a collaborative action research model, where teachers and researchers worked together throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation phases. This collaboration allowed for real-time feedback, adaptation, and improvement of the storytelling activities to meet the needs of the students more effectively. Student engagement was significantly boosted through the use of multimedia elements. Visuals, sound, and interactivity kept learners interested and motivated, creating a stimulating environment for language use. Importantly, each session provided targeted speaking practice focused on improving comprehension, expanding vocabulary, and enhancing fluency—critical components of oral communication skills in a second language.

Educational Songs in English Language Learning
Educational songs are widely recognized as effective tools for teaching English to young learners due to their rhythmic, repetitive, and melodic nature, which aids memory, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition. Songs provide a multisensory learning experience, activating auditory, linguistic, and kinesthetic channels that help reinforce language patterns in an enjoyable way (Murphey, 1992). Especially in primary classrooms, songs like chants, rhymes, and action songs support phonemic awareness and improve students' listening and speaking skills (Sevik, 2012).

Songs also help reduce learners' anxiety and promote a positive emotional atmosphere (Krashen, 1982). When paired with gestures or Total Physical Response (TPR) techniques, they become powerful tools for memory retention and comprehension (Asher, 1969). However, the success of songs in the classroom depends on careful selection. Teachers must ensure songs are level-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and aligned with learning objectives to maximize their pedagogical value.

Creative Art Projects in English Language Learning
Creative art projects—such as drawing, poster-making, and crafting—play a significant role in English language instruction, particularly in engaging young learners and connecting language with personal expression. These activities provide students with opportunities to use English in authentic and meaningful contexts, such as labeling, describing, or presenting their work to others (Brewster, Ellis, & Girard, 2002). This integration of language and creativity helps develop descriptive vocabulary, speaking fluency, and writing skills.

In primary education, art-based tasks allow students to externalize their understanding of stories, vocabulary, and grammar structures through a non-verbal medium (Gardner, 1993). Moreover, art projects encourage a learner-centered environment by promoting autonomy and emotional connection to the content, which increases motivation

and engagement. However, teachers need to balance the artistic focus with clear linguistic goals to ensure that the activity remains effective in supporting language development.

Student Engagement in English Language Learning

Student engagement is universally recognised as a significant determinant of successful learning outcomes. It is more effective in language learning settings. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) proposed a theoretical structure of engagement in three aspects: behavioral (participation and effort), emotional (interest and enthusiasm), and cognitive (investment in learning strategies). Increased motivation and retention along with improved performance in reading, speaking, and writing tasks show a significant connection with high engagement (Appleton et al., 2008).

Considering the context of English language classrooms, students' willingness to participate in activities and respond to teacher prompts can be assessed through engagement. It also indicates their responsiveness to collaborate with peers. Those aspects are greatly nourished by interactive and student-centered teaching methods, such as games, songs, and role-play (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006; Shin, 2006). According to Skinner and Belmont (1993), students have a higher tendency to engage purposefully with learning tasks given that they consider their environment as supportive and enjoyable. Thus, fun-based activities actively reduce dropout and disengagement besides offering motivation.

Checklist for Observing Student Engagement (Adapted from Fredricks et al., 2004; Skinner & Belmont, 1993):

- Participates actively in group work and games
- Asks and answers questions voluntarily
- Shows interest (smiling, enthusiasm, eye contact)
- Accomplishes tasks on time
- Displays resilience in challenging tasks

Language Anxiety in English Language Learning

Language anxiety can be defined as the feeling of tension or apprehension which is especially linked with second language contexts. It can actively include patterns of speaking, listening and classroom performance. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) outlined foreign language anxiety (FLA) as a separate domain that can hinder the process of learning a second language.

Pupils' confidence is negatively impacted by high anxiety. Disposition to communicate also declines significantly. Furthermore, cognitive understanding needed for language comprehension and productivity is obstructed as a result of high anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Notably, performance anxiety is provoked by speaking in front of peers most of the time. It ultimately causes avoidance behavior and decreases participation largely.

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis validates this perspective as well. It states that accessible engagement may fail to reach the language learning tool due to emotional factors such as fear and anxiety. On the other hand, play, music or storytelling can effectively ensure a relaxed and stress-free environment, which ultimately decreases the affective filter. As a result, the process of language learning is further encouraged.

Checklist for Observing Reduction in Language Anxiety (Adapted from Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1982):

- Motivation to undertake speaking tasks
- No visible signs of nervousness (e.g., fidgeting, silence)
- Enjoyment during group activities
- Comfort in making errors or receiving feedback
- Increased frequency and natural responsiveness of language use

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This action research follows some major educational concepts that assist in establishing a strong base for incorporating fun-based learning in English language classrooms. They would also effectively integrate student-centered learning approaches in the process. Vygotsky's Constructivist Theory (1978) can be mentioned as a primary model, which focuses on the traits of learning as a process influenced by social dynamics. According to Vygotsky, collaborative dialogue and guided interaction assist learners effectively in building new knowledge. It occurs specifically within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In the context of learning the English language, activities like storytelling, pair work and role-play collectively support students to become more capable of developing purpose. It also helps them in scaffolding each other's language development through peer interaction. Research by Lantolf and Thorne (2006) states that internalizing linguistic forms in second language acquisition largely requires social interaction.

Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis is another notable theory, which confirms the large impact of emotional variables such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation in the process of effective language input. Perceiving presence of fear or embarrassment in speaking tasks by learners causes the affective filter to increase. As a result, any effective input fails to reach the brain's language acquisition device. Nevertheless, students more openly absorb language when exposed to learning environments that are stress-free, engaging and enjoyable. Studies by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) reinforces this model, mentioning the linkage between anxiety and poor performance observed in communicative English tasks. Affective filters are significantly lowered by classroom strategies like educational games and songs as observed and greater fluency and vocabulary usage are also promoted in the process (Young, 1991; Sevik, 2012).

Moreover, becoming proficient in all four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing actively requires student engagement and reduced anxiety. Ushioda (2011) states that greater perseverance is observed among learners who are inherently motivated. They also ought to be emotionally supported for maximum output. Besides, they are capable of obtaining better long-term language outcomes. Engagement can be improved significantly through fun and activity-based teaching since it emphasises on both affective and cognitive needs. It ultimately promotes comprehensive learning. These theories jointly support emergence of a more inclusive and motivating environment through incorporating enjoyable and interactive teaching methods. Similarly, a linguistically productive environment is also created in the process.

Our action research guides these theoretical views and evaluates with the help of verified observation checklists in the process. As a result, it becomes a revolutionary tool for refining pedagogical strategies. It is in fact highly beneficial to learners' emotional well-being. At the same time, it also continues to promote observable development in linguistic skills.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To increase participation of students in English language learning through utilizing fun-based classroom strategies.
2. To improve listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills through enjoyable and interactive techniques such as songs, games, and role-play.
3. To ensure decline in language anxiety and establishment of a positive attitude towards English among Form 3-7 students.
4. To assess the positive effects of learner-centered, activity-based English teaching methods on overall language performance.

RESEARCH APPROACH

A qualitative action research framework was adopted by the study based on Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) cyclical model:

Cycle 1: Planning → Acting → Observing → Reflecting
Cycle 2: Modified Planning → Acting → Observing → Reflecting
Cycle 3: Final Revision and Reflection
Each cycle covers approximately 4 weeks, from March to June 2025.

Research Site and Participants:
Institution: An English Version Modern Madrasah situated in Uttara, Dhaka.

Classes: Both primary and high section classes from grade 3 to grade 7.

Participants: English language teacher (researcher), approx. 40 students, 4–6 parents, and 2 co-observing teachers

Intervention Tools
Word Games
Word games are structured language activities designed to make vocabulary learning immersive and interactive. Retention, spelling, and fluency are encouraged by them through integration of cognitive challenge and play (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006).

Role-Play Scenarios
Role-play can be portrayed as students acting out real-life or imaginative situations using English. This area improves speaking fluency and reduces language anxiety. Spontaneous communication is thus promoted considering the establishment of a low-pressure framework (Ladousse, 1987; Krashen, 1982).

Educational Songs
Songs integrate rhythm, melody, and repetition to improve pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition. Listening skills are also significantly enriched through them. Anxiety also declines in the process and an enjoyable as well as emotionally positive learning environment is promoted (Murphey, 1992; Sevik, 2012).

Digital Storytelling
Digital storytelling integrates images, narration and multimedia tools to ensure immersed participation of learners in language-rich narratives. Besides highly improving listening, speaking and writing skills, creativity is further promoted and emotional connection to content is ensured by it (Ellis & Brewster, 2014).

Project-Based Creative Tasks
These tasks require students to explore visual or written projects. Some suitable examples are posters, presentations or crafts. They are supposed to actively combine language use with artistic expression. Collaboration, vocabulary use and self-directed learning are actively promoted by them (Gardner, 1993).

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS
To measure the potential success of the intervention, three primary data collection instruments were applied: a Student Engagement Checklist, a Four Skills Achievement Checklist, and qualitative observation tools such as teacher logs and parent interviews.

Student Engagement Checklist
This checklist was adopted from the multidimensional model of engagement proposed by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004). Behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects are actively included in it. Observers (teachers and peers) provided scores on students' behaviors during classroom activities. The goal was to evaluate the level of activeness and enthusiasm in their participation.

The checklist documented indicators such as:
- **Behavioral Engagement**: Participation in class tasks, attention to teacher instructions and active involvement in group work were recorded for evaluation.
- **Emotional Engagement**: Demonstration of enjoyment (e.g., smiling, laughter), excitement during fun tasks and positive attitude were areas that were considered for assessment.
- **Cognitive Engagement**: Use of strategies to complete challenging tasks, creativity in responses and perseverance during group projects were part of the evaluation.

This all-inclusive approach assisted in the evaluation of the possibilities of integration of fun-based methods in significantly impacting student attentiveness and intrinsic motivation (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Four Skills Achievement Checklist
Studies of Brown (2004) and Read (2007) provided a checklist to monitor developments in major language skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each skill demonstrated connections with CEFR-related micro-skills. Interactive classroom activities apparently provided the ground for their evaluations.

The skill areas and their indicators were:
- **Listening**: Ability to follow instructions, identify key vocabulary from audio and response to classroom songs were monitored.
- **Speaking**: Fluency in expressing ideas, correct pronunciation and confidence during role-play were evaluated.
- **Reading**: It's assessment areas involved the ability to decode written texts, comprehend meaning and answer follow-up questions.
- **Writing**: It focused on sentence construction accuracy, grammar usage, creativity in storytelling and composition tasks for proper evaluation.

This checklist provided clear understandings of students' balanced development across all four language aspects, focusing on the context of fun-based learning (Brown, 2004; Read, 2007).

Observation Notes and Interviews
Besides the checklists, qualitative instruments were applied to record rich and contextual data. These included:

- **Teacher Reflection Logs**: Teachers recorded their daily observations, noting changes in participation, comprehension and learners' confidence levels.
- **Peer Teacher Observations**: Fellow instructors supplied external observations during lessons to support the researcher's findings.
- **Parent Interviews**: Informal interviews with 3–4 parents per cycle assisted in the evaluation of students' language use, confidence, and attitudes at home.

Triangulation of data was possible due to these methods and they further promoted the action research process through iterative reflection and refinement (Creswell, 2014).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS
The goal of the study was to assess the success of fun-based English instruction in improving student engagement and the achievement of language skills. It utilized a mixed-methods qualitative approach in the process. Three action research cycles took place from March to June 2025 at Maharat Model English Version Modern Madrasah in order to gather data. Students of Form 3 and 7 were targeted by them. The data collection tools consisted of structured observation checklists and teacher reflection logs. Peer observations and semi-structured interviews with selected parents were also included. Rich and contextual

understandings of the learners' responses to interactive learning strategies were supposed to be produced by the instruments through the nature of their structures. Storytelling, role-play, songs and games were some of the common approaches used.

The framework included The Student Engagement Checklist developed by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004). It states that engagement can be classified into three major aspects: behavioral (e.g., participation, attentiveness), emotional (e.g., enthusiasm, enjoyment), and cognitive (e.g., persistence, creativity). This checklist was utilised by teachers and peer observers to record visible indicators of engagement during each lesson. At the same time, students' progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing was monitored through the Four Skills Achievement Checklist—derived from Brown (2004) and Read (2007). Observable behaviors were successfully measured in numbers due to these checklists. Meanwhile, an organized method to detect improvements in English proficiency was also supported by them.

Besides the structured tools, daily teacher logs were utilized to gather qualitative reflections. Anecdotal observations, classroom dynamics were recorded by these reflective notes. They also happened to successfully track teacher insights on students' verbal and non-verbal cues. Peer teachers were also invited to monitor selected sessions. External feedback was also collected from them through requests. Additionally, 3–4 parents at the end of each action research cycle were involved in semi-structured interview processes. The objective was to collect views on students' language use, confidence levels and engagement at home. A more all-inclusive understanding of the intervention's effect was achieved because of these diverse data sources.

Strategies as thematic coding and triangulation were used in data analysis. First, all observation checklists and field notes were reviewed in an organized manner. They were also coded in the process, all based on major engagement and achievement indicators. Codes such as "active participation," "reduced hesitation," "creative output," and "oral fluency" were created and applied across the data set. Categories such as "increased vocabulary use," "homework confidence," and "positive attitude" were introduced and interview transcripts were thematically classified into them. Patterns were drawn and perspectives were compared with the help of these themes across students, teachers, and parents. Ultimately, the findings from teacher reflections, student observations, and parental interviews were cross-referenced in order to apply the triangulation. The validity of the data was thus improved and a more enriched and consistent narrative of the results was ensured (Creswell, 2014).

This multi-source as well as iterative process allowed the study to capture observable achievement in language proficiency. Meanwhile, more fundamental shifts in learner attitude and classroom engagement were also successfully recorded by the process. The revolutionary potential of using fun-based and student-centered pedagogies in English language teaching was thus supported by the collective analysis of student behavior in class and feedback from home.

Increasing student engagement

Fun-based strategies—such as games, storytelling, songs, and role-play were actively applied. Student engagement in English classes was successfully increased due to their effects. As teacher reflection logs and checklist observations reports, increased amounts of enthusiasm and attentiveness were observed among learners. Their spontaneity to participate in both individual and group tasks also improved significantly. Active learning was promoted through activities like Vocabulary Bingo, Charades, and Comic Strip Creation. Students were more eager to engage in English lessons as a result of their contributions. A dynamic classroom environment was established on interaction and creativity. It had a large impact in sustaining engagement across multiple sessions.

"Students showed a heightened level of interest and enthusiasm during lessons... They became more willing to participate actively and confidently in both individual and group activities."

Improving listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills

Measurable improvement in all four English language skills was suggested by observations and student work. Fluency and confidence in speaking were successfully obtained by role-plays and storytelling. Classroom debates also actively contributed to the process. Musical activities and verbal instructions incorporated in games helped in the development of listening skills. Creative tasks like picture-based storytelling and poster-making contributed to improve reading and writing skills significantly. Students were supposed to decode text and comprehend content as required by those tasks. They were also expected to build meaningful sentences in the process. Vocabulary retention and sentence structure accuracy were further encouraged by these strategies.

"There was a noticeable improvement in students' spoken English, vocabulary usage, and willingness to communicate in English... Students demonstrated a greater ability to retain grammar rules, vocabulary, and sentence structures."

Reducing language anxiety and building a positive attitude

Language anxiety significantly declined as reported by both teachers and parents. A safe and low-pressure environment for language use was ensured through fun-based activities. Students were thus able to make mistakes without fear. and reduced The stress related to formal speaking or writing decreased significantly due to techniques such as singing in groups and acting in role-play. Strategies as participating in group games also contributed largely. They allowed previously apprehensive students to become more expressive and emotionally comfortable during English sessions. A more cheerful, inclusive and inspiring classroom environment was thus established.

"The overall classroom atmosphere became more positive and energetic. Students, including those previously disengaged, started to express enjoyment in learning English."

Evaluating the impact of learner-centered, activity-based English

The positive effects of learner-centered instruction were significantly observed across cognitive, linguistic, and behavioral aspects. Academic performance of students was highly improved. Necessary soft skills such as collaboration, peer communication and problem-solving skills were acquired by them. Feedbacks from teachers actively included better comprehension and increased class participation. English was also increasingly used by students in natural as well as meaningful contexts. Besides, reports of improved confidence and willingness to speak English at home were obtained from parents. The extensive benefits of the teaching method beyond the classroom was thus confirmed.

"I observed increased student motivation, improved comprehension, and greater willingness to use English communicatively... The use of fun activities created a positive and inclusive classroom environment."

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study suggest that fun-based, learner-centered strategies in English language classrooms in fact have a revolutionary effect. Here the context of Maharat Model English Version Modern Madrasah is especially considered. The strategy significantly improved the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. At the same time, student engagement was largely developed and language anxiety experienced a sharp decline due to its effectiveness. These results support the view of the existing literature. The necessity of emotional safety, active participation and meaningful language use in second language acquisition is focused on by it (Krashen, 1982; Fredricks et al., 2004).

A dynamic and interactive classroom environment was established through the use of word games and role-play. Songs and digital storytelling also actively helped while authentic communication was promoted in the process. More willing and confident participation from students was achieved. In addition, they more frequently engaged in speaking and collaborating with peers. According to Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004), behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions are components of student engagement. It further states that the applied intervention strategies effectively inspired all of the above. The classroom culture was transformed from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered learning due to these strategies. It continued to increase enthusiasm besides significantly developing comprehension and retention (Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

Improvement in speaking fluency and contextual language use was very effectively achieved through especially role-playing. As observations of Ladousse (1987) and Dougill (1987) suggest, language can be effectively used in simulated real-life contexts through role-playing. Spontaneous expression is encouraged in the process while the fear of making mistakes is minimised. This actively supports Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which asserts that language acquisition can be obstructed by anxiety. On the other hand, it is encouraged by a low-anxiety environment. Information from observations and interviews with parents showed that a more relaxed attitude and openness to speaking English was achieved by students both in class and at home. A significant decline in performance anxiety was thus interpreted.

Improvement in listening and pronunciation skills can be also effectively achieved through the integration of music and songs. Music-based activities were especially helpful in lower secondary classrooms. Auditory discrimination, rhythm and vocabulary development was actively supported by them besides making the process of learning enjoyable (Murphey, 1992; Sevik, 2012). This finding aligns with the observation of previous research by Hamilton et al. (2024). It effectively pointed out the linguistic and emotional advantages of musical input in second language learning.

Learning experience was further promoted by project-based tasks and storytelling. Combining creativity with structured language use was the main strategy that assisted in the process. According to the findings of Gardner (1993) and Brewster, Ellis, and Girard (2002), learners are able to personalize their language learning process through the collective application of multiple intelligences and creative expression. Ownership was actively encouraged besides establishment of confidence by these tasks. They also provided ample opportunities for authentic written and spoken output. Besides, as mentioned by Ellis and Brewster (2014), engagement of students through multimedia was maintained by digital storytelling. Vocabulary development and oral fluency was thus encouraged in a visually supported and low-stress format.

The action research model that was implemented comprises components such as planning, implementation, observation and reflection. As a result, instruction strategies were continuously improved and adapted. Real-time classroom dynamics was focused on when researchers and co-observers refined strategies through the iterative process. The credibility was strengthened and the findings were enriched due to the triangulation of data sources. It actively included teacher logs, peer observations and parent interviews (Creswell, 2014)

To conclude, the joyful, interactive form of English instruction which successfully satisfies academic objectives was demonstrated by this study. Besides, it also actively addresses socio-emotional needs. Some examples of clear consistency between the research outcomes and theoretical contexts are Vygotsky's social constructivism and Krashen's affective theory. They actively highlight the value of incorporating pedagogical strategies that ensure participation of the whole learner. Language proficiency, classroom behavior, and

learner attitude demonstrated several sustained gains. They clearly support the interpretation that such approaches are not simply supplementary. Effective language education in primary and secondary contexts in fact depends largely on them.

CONCLUSION

This action research supports the significant effect of integrating fun-based, student-centered activities in improvement of English language learning in secondary classrooms. Students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills were positively impacted by the collaboration of role-playing, word games, songs, digital storytelling and project-based learning. It further increased their classroom participation and caused language anxiety to decline. Confidence and collaboration was observed in learners who had initially been hesitant. Meaningful, they were also more dedicated towards using English communicatively. The findings confirm that conceptual models such as Vygotsky's constructivism and Krashen's affective filter hypothesis are significantly relevant. The importance of emotional safety and social interaction in language acquisition is thus underscored. By applying joyful strategies, effectiveness and inclusiveness of English instruction escalates. It also becomes more sustainable in the process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Curriculum Designers** might take considerable steps to incorporate playful and creative activities into English syllabi to become more relevant with students' cognitive and emotional needs.
2. **Teachers** are inspired to apply a diverse range of student-centered instructional strategies such as role-play, music and storytelling to promote participation and motivation.
3. **School Administrators** should provide training and resources to empower teachers with the tools and confidence to apply activity-based teaching strategies.
4. **Policy Makers** may support the development of the use of action research as a continuous professional development model to refine teaching practices instantaneously.
5. **Future Researchers** can extend the scope of the study by utilizing similar fun-based strategies in diverse school settings and age groups to support more extensive usefulness.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies may investigate the long-term impact of fun-based strategies on language retention and academic performance. The assessment would potentially include different educational settings. Findings would be generalized more effectively through comparative research across various age groups, school types, or cultural frameworks. Furthermore, more enriched analysis could be provided by mixed-method or longitudinal designs. It would successfully reveal how sustained activity-based teaching supports the increasing development process of engagement and reduction of anxiety over time.

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