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STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE THE USE OF TARGET LANGUAGE IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Abstract. This article explores the growing importance of English proficiency in global communication, particularly in Ukraine. The 2024 law establishing English as a language of international communication has heightened the demand for English proficiency, especially in classroom settings. This study explores the challenges and strategies involved in promoting the use of English as a target language in classrooms. It identifies key factors preventing students from speaking English, including psychological factors such as anxiety and shyness, language-related issues like limited vocabulary, and socio-cultural factors such as discomfort with peers.

The literature review emphasizes various strategies that can address these issues, such as pair work, collaborative activities, and the use of visual aids and media. By implementing these strategies, teachers can create more engaging and supportive classroom environments where students are encouraged to communicate in English despite their initial hesitations.

The research conducted at Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University involved a survey of first-year students to explore the factors influencing their reluctance or willingness to speak English in class. The findings revealed that anxiety and shyness were the main factors hindering student participation. Motivational factors, including collaborative activities, games, and an English-speaking classroom environment, were also examined. The findings show that strategies emphasizing communication over accuracy, pair work, and the use of visual aids significantly improve student confidence and engagement in using the target language.

In conclusion, the research underscores the importance of a holistic approach to English language teaching. By addressing students' psychological, linguistic, and socio-cultural challenges through targeted strategies, teachers can create a more dynamic and inclusive classroom environment. This approach not only boosts

students' confidence and motivation to use English but also contributes to a more effective and enjoyable learning experience overall.

Keywords: collaboration, communication strategies, English speaking classroom environment, motivational factors, target language, visual aids.

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СТРАТЕГІЇ ЗАОХОЧЕННЯ ДО ВИКОРИСТАННЯ МОВИ НАВЧАННЯ НА ЗАНЯТТЯХ З АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

Анотація. У статті досліджується зростаюча важливість англійської мови у глобальній комунікації, зокрема в Україні. Закон «Про застосування англійської мови в Україні» 2024 року, який визначає англійську мову як мову міжнародного спілкування, посилив потребу у володінні англійською мовою, особливо у навчальному процесі. Дослідження розглядає виклики та стратегії, пов'язані з використанням англійської мови як мови навчання в освітніх закладах. Визначено ключові фактори, що заважають учням розмовляти англійською мовою. Серед них: психологічні фактори, такі як тривожність і сором'язливість; мовні фактори, такі як обмежений словниковий запас; і соціокультурні фактори, такі як дискомфорт у спілкуванні з однолітками.

Огляд літературних джерел акцентує увагу на різних стратегіях, які можуть вирішити ці проблеми. Це, зокрема, робота в парах, кооперативні види діяльності, використання наочних посібників та медіа. Впровадження цих стратегій створює в класі більш сприятливе середовище, яке заохочує учасників освітнього процесу до спілкування англійською мовою, незважаючи на їхні початкові сумніви та невпевненість.

Дослідження, проведене в Уманському державному педагогічному університеті імені Павла Тичини, включало опитування студентів-першокурсників з метою вивчення факторів, що впливають на їхнє небажання або бажання спілкуватися англійською мовою в класі. Результати показали, що тривожність і сором'язливість є основними факторами, що перешкоджають використанню англійської мови з навчальною метою в класі. Також були вивчені мотиваційні фактори, зокрема кооперативні види діяльності, ігри та англомовне середовище в класі. Результати дослідження показують, що стратегії, які акцентують увагу на комунікації, а не на точності висловлювань, робота в парах та використання візуальних засобів навчання значно підвищують впевненість здобувачів освіти у собі та їхню зацікавленість у використанні англійської мови як мови навчання.

Насамкінець, дослідження підкреслює важливість цілісного підходу до викладання англійської мови. Вирішуючи психологічні, лінгвістичні та соціо-

Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

культурні проблеми учнів за допомогою визначених стратегій, вчителі можуть створити більш динамічне та інклюзивне середовище в класі. Такий підхід не лише підвищує впевненість та мотивацію учнів до використання англійської мови, але й сприяє ефективнішому та приємнішому навчанню в цілому.

Ключові слова: співпраця, комунікативні стратегії, англомовне середовище в класі, мотиваційні фактори, мова навчання, візуальні засоби навчання.

Problem setting. In today's global society, the use of English is increasingly important as it serves as a vital means of communication in various aspects such as business, politics, and international travel. Therefore, effective communication in English is a crucial skill for success in the modern world. Furthermore, the law "On the Use of the English language in Ukraine", signed by President Volodymyr Zelensky on June 26, 2024, establishes English as one of the languages of international communication in Ukraine [11]. This document regulates the specifics of English language use in various sectors including government agencies, local governments, education, culture, transport, and healthcare, leading to increased requirements for English language proficiency. There is a clear emphasis on communication in modern English language teaching and learning, making the use of the target language (TL) in the classroom an essential element of contemporary education. Additionally, the ability to communicate with others in their language or in a mutually understood language is a key goal for many L2 learners. Communicating successfully in the TL depends not only on the nature of the task and the message that has to be communicated, but also on the teacher's effective use of communication strategies (Littlewood & Yu, 2011) [4]. As a result, the search for effective strategies and classroom interactions has become a primary goal for English language teachers.

Literature review. There is a large body of published research on the issue. Several reasons for the reluctance to speak the target language in classroom settings have been uncovered. Giantari et al. (2023) identified three factors affecting students' reluctance to speak English in classroom interactions. Among them: *psychological factors* including lack of motivation, shyness, anxiousness, lack of confidence, and fear of making a mistake; *language-related factors* including lack of vocabulary, lack of grammatical structures, and poor pronunciation; *socio-cultural factors*, including attitudes toward the teacher and the classroom's environment [3, p. 286–288]. Furthermore, they state that due to a lack of confidence, students struggle with expressing themselves orally, especially in front of the class [3, p. 286]. Brown (2001) mentions that the teacher's lack of support is another factor causing students' low self-confidence [2]. Wei (2011) expresses opinion that students struggle with English because they don't actively participate in class activities [10]. So, motivation, self-confidence, and language ability are often viewed as separate but interconnected aspects of second language learning. The literature commonly suggests that these factors have an impact on each other.

Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

Therefore, if one of them changes, the others will also change in a similar way. In order to address this issue, Nuraini (2016) recommends helping students recognize the importance of clear communication in reaching their objectives. The teacher can boost their intrinsic motivation by concentrating on conveying the message effectively, even if there is no focus on accuracy [6].

Moreover, Nuraini (2016) considers students' native language to be the most influential factor affecting their speaking. The use of L1 in learning target language is seen as something disapproved because it is convinced as an impediment of target language development. In his opinion, the more exposure to the target language is convinced, the faster students master the target language [6, p.166].

Adrianty (2021) states that media plays an important role in assisting the learning process [1, P. 218]. A "medium" is defined by Merriam-Collegiate Webster's Dictionary (1993) as "tools" for communicating information. The goal of media is to make communication easier (instruction). The tangible object used to transport learning materials such as books, films, and videos is referred to as media. Graphics, charts, cartoons, radio, tape recorders, overhead projectors, television, and even everyday objects can be used as media in today's world. Visual aids are one of the media that can be used by the teacher [1].

Liu et al. (2021) claim that games have a potential to increase students' desire and willingness to learn and communicate in classrooms in all levels and from different interests. As a matter of fact, learners want active, fun, and interesting enough activities to get motivated to learn more. The research revealed that by using games, students learn the target language appropriately and enthusiastically. In addition, games increase their willingness to communicate when the topic of the lesson is interesting [5].

strategies that a teacher can use in the teaching and learning process namely pair work activities. In pair work,

students need to interact and require them to work together with their partners. Pair work is a way for

students to learn from their partners and get the most benefit. Pair work is a learning activity in which two or

more students work together to accomplish tasks or achieve common goals. The pair work activities is the

appropriate method that can help students learn to improve their speaking ability. Students are required to do

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Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

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Rianti et al. (2022) accentuate the effectiveness of pair work activities as one of the strategies that a teacher can use in the teaching and learning process [8]. According to Sowell (2018), pair and group work in the language classroom provide opportunities for interaction in the L2, which is important in acquiring a new language. Besides, pair and group work offer the opportunity to practice language with more comfort than speaking in front of the entire class [9].

Based on the information provided, effective communication in the target language is largely dependent on the teacher's implementation of communication strategies. Techniques such as pair work and group activities are highlighted as effective ways to promote communication in the target language, providing students with a supportive environment to practice English. Overall, the literature emphasizes the significance of establishing a classroom atmosphere that encourages active participation, collaboration, and regular use of the target language to enhance language proficiency.

Research goal. The purpose of this study is to explore various strategies that English language teachers can use to encourage students to actively participate and engage in the target language. The research was conducted at Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University with 27 first-year students participating.

The study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What factors contribute to students' reluctance to use the target language during activities?

2. What factors encourage students to use the target language in the English language classroom?

3. How effective are the strategies in promoting students' use of the target language in the English language classroom?

The research utilized a survey approach to investigate the factors influencing students' reluctance to use the target language, factors promoting their use of English, and the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. The research employed a descriptive quantitative method.

Key research findings. The research commenced with a survey aimed at addressing the initial research question. Participants were provided with a questionnaire to gather information on the factors contributing to their hesitation or reluctance to use English during classroom activities. The questionnaire aimed to identify specific reasons for students' reluctance to engage in spoken English activities by probing their feelings of nervousness, comfort level with classmates, and perception of time constraints. Each question played a crucial role in achieving this objective.

The opening question established a baseline by measuring the frequency of students' nervousness when speaking English, enabling us to determine whether anxiety is a widespread concern or specific to certain groups of students. A high

Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

prevalence of nervousness could indicate the need for adjustments in the classroom environment to foster a more relaxed and supportive atmosphere.

Expanding on the initial inquiry, the second question explored the specific reasons behind student nervousness. By providing closed-ended options such as “limited vocabulary” or “fear of mistakes”, along with an open-ended option, students were able to express the reasons for their anxiety. This comprehensive approach facilitated a precise understanding of their apprehension, enabling us to tailor solutions accordingly.

Shifting the focus to peer interaction, the third question evaluated the students’ comfort level in speaking English with their peers. A low comfort level indicated a lack of confidence in their English proficiency or a preference for teacher-centered activities. Understanding this aspect was crucial for developing strategies that encourage a more collaborative learning environment, where students feel at ease practicing spoken English with their peers.

The fourth question delved into the reasons for student discomfort with their classmates. The provided options, such as classmates speaking too fast or student shyness, provided insights into areas where the classroom environment needed adjustments.

The final question examined the potential impact of time constraints on student participation. Feeling rushed hindered communication, particularly for students who needed extra time to process information or formulate responses.

The result analysis of the initial student questionnaire is presented in Figure 1.

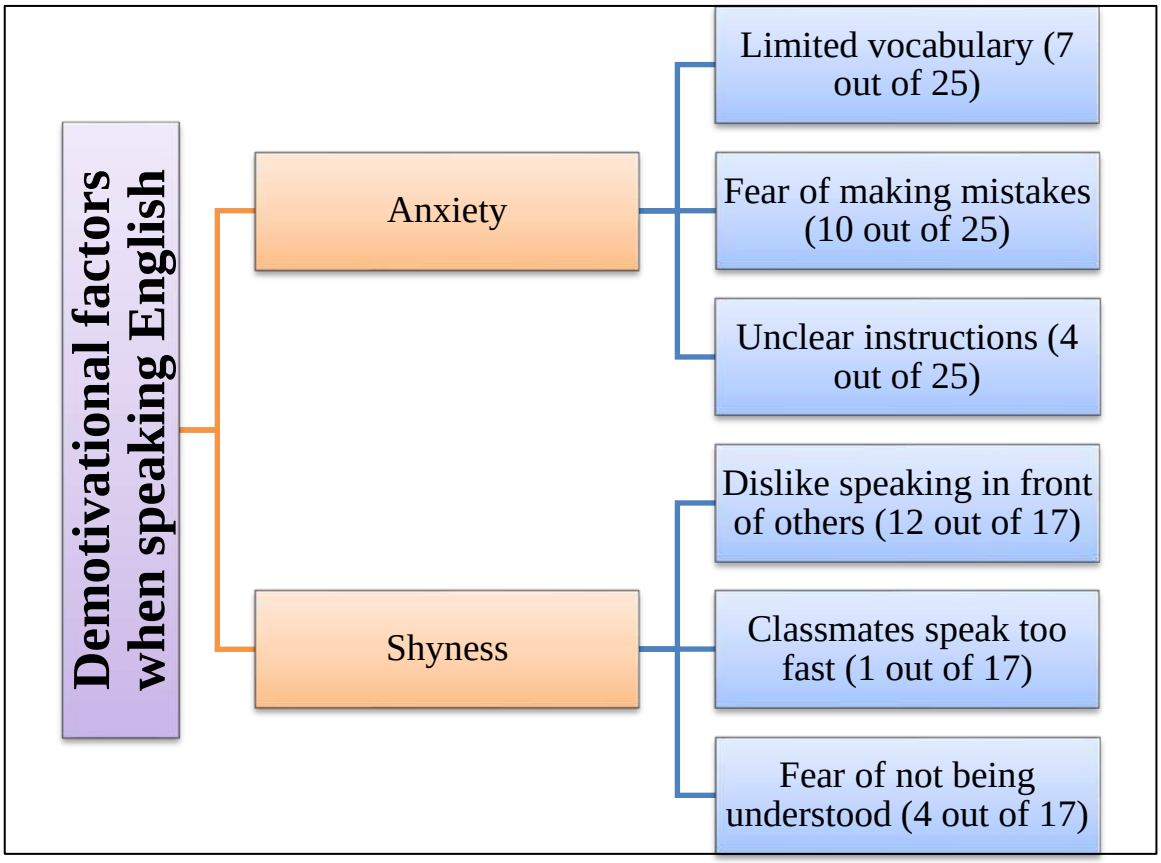


Fig. 1. Results of the initial student questionnaire

Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

The students' responses revealed the main demotivation factors hindering their English speaking in classroom situations. These factors included anxiety (such as limited vocabulary (28%), fear of making mistakes (40%), and unclear instructions (16%)) and shyness (such as fear of speaking in front of others (70.6%), difficulty keeping up with classmates' speaking speed (5.9%) and a fear of not being understood (23.5%)).

This information was used as a basis for developing targeted strategies to address these challenges and ultimately create a dynamic learning environment where all students feel comfortable and actively engaged in communication.

The second questionnaire aimed to explore the factors motivating students to actively use English in the classroom. It comprised five questions. The first question sought to establish a baseline by determining whether students found collaborative speaking activities enjoyable. A positive response indicated that these activities possessed inherent appeal and could contribute to the promotion of spoken English.

The second question delved into the specific reasons behind student preferences. Responses such as "I get to learn new words and practice speaking" or "It's fun to work together with classmates" revealed the multifaceted nature of student motivation, encompassing both integrative and instrumental aspects. The desire to acquire new vocabulary, practice communication skills, and engage in social interaction with peers could all be leveraged to design more engaging activities.

The third question focused on the teacher's role and examined the impact of language use on student confidence. A positive response could indicate that students felt less apprehensive and more supported in an English-dominant environment. This might be due to clearer comprehension of instructions delivered in English or the teacher's ability to explain concepts more effectively.

Question four provided further details about the reasons behind this feeling. Options like "It helps me understand the instructions better" or "The teacher can explain things clearly" offered specific insights. Understanding that a primarily English environment aided comprehension and fostered a sense of security during explanations.

Finally, question five explored student preferences for specific activity types. Answers like "games and role-plays" or "discussing topics in small groups" allowed them to express their preferred learning styles and activities. By incorporating student-preferred collaborative activities, the research could explore ways to make spoken English practice not only effective but also enjoyable, ultimately leading to increased motivation and participation.

Through the use of carefully developed questions, the questionnaire gained a comprehensive understanding of the factors that encourage students to use English in the classroom. It explored the attraction of collaborative activities, the impact of teacher language use on student confidence, and student preferences for specific types of activities. The obtained results are shown in Figure 2.

Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

The survey examined student attitudes toward speaking activities. The results of the first and second questions showed that the majority of students (74%) enjoyed engaging in speaking activities with their classmates. This positive response suggests that these activities create valuable learning experiences. The survey also identified common reasons for students enjoying these activities, including:

- *Language development and practice*: 20% of students appreciated the opportunity to learn new vocabulary and practice speaking English.
- *Collaboration and idea sharing*: Another significant portion (28%) enjoyed sharing their ideas with others.
- *Engagement and teamwork*: A large portion (40%) valued the fun and collaborative nature of working with classmates.

Students' responses to the third and fourth questions showed their confidence levels in speaking English when the teacher primarily used English in class. 55% of the respondents felt more confident, while 45% did not.

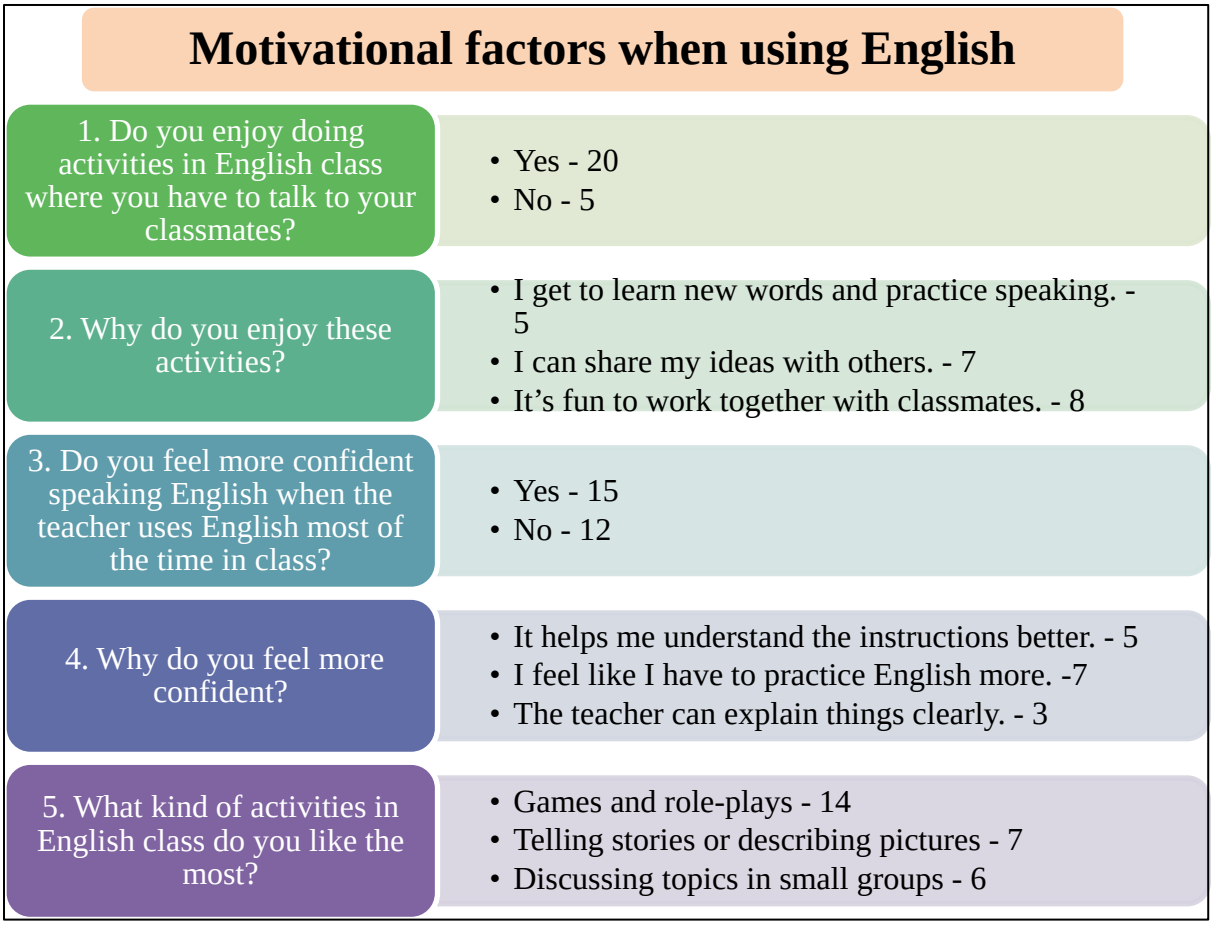


Fig. 2. Results of the second student questionnaire

Furthermore, students' responses to the fifth question revealed their preferences for specific types of speaking activities. 52% of the respondents favored games and role-plays, making it the most popular choice. Telling stories and describing pictures were also popular (26%), indicating that students appreciate activities that allow

Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

them to use their creativity and express themselves in English. Additionally, 22% of respondents expressed interest in discussing topics in small groups, suggesting that students value opportunities for focused discussions and peer interaction.

The analysis emphasized the importance of speaking activities in English class for enhancing language development, fostering collaboration, and boosting student engagement. It also indicated that while some students thrive in a teacher-centered English environment for clarity and increased practice, it is crucial to incorporate a variety of collaborative activity types to accommodate diverse learning styles and preferences.

Upon reviewing the results of two student questionnaires on demotivation and motivational factors, we have identified strategies to address classroom-based challenges. These include:

1. Utilizing English as the primary language in the classroom for instructions, explanations, and overall classroom management.

2. Emphasizing communication over perfection, encouraging students to use English in activities, even if their grammar is not perfect.

3. Incorporating visuals and real-world examples to aid students in understanding tasks and communicating in English.

4. Introducing collaborative and project-based activities to create a supportive environment for students to practice and become more confident in using the language.

To assess the effectiveness of the implemented strategies, a 15-minute student interview was conducted. Students were asked to share their experiences by answering 5 open-ended questions. Question 1 inquired about their comfort level with using English in class after the strategies were implemented. Question 2 aimed to identify specific effective strategies such as the English-speaking zone, collaborative activities, and visuals/realia. Question 3 focused on the effectiveness of collaborative activities, particularly group work, in encouraging students to speak about their personal preferences. Question 4 assessed the effectiveness of graphic organizers as visual tools in assisting students with writing tasks. Question 5 gathered feedback on the overall impact of the strategies on student interest in using English in class.

The interview findings are presented in Figure 3.

The data gathered from the interviews shows the impact of the strategies used on different aspects of students' speaking experience. A large majority of students (74%) reported feeling more comfortable using English to communicate with their teacher and classmates in class. This indicates that the strategies, such as the teacher exclusively using English and promoting group activities, were successful in creating an environment that encouraged student participation in the English language. However, a smaller percentage of students (26%) still lacked confidence in using English due to shyness, difficulty understanding classmates, and needing more time to adapt to increased English use.

Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

The strategy of the teacher using only English in the classroom was cited as a significant factor for student comfort by 55% of respondents. This English-speaking environment improved the learning experience, reduced reliance on students' native language, and encouraged them to think and communicate in English. Additionally, 44.4% of respondents highlighted that collaborative activities helped them feel more at ease using English. Working with classmates provided peer support and the opportunity to practice speaking in a less intimidating setting. Furthermore, 30% of students found visual tools such as pictures and realia to be helpful for task comprehension and vocabulary retention, promoting English communication.

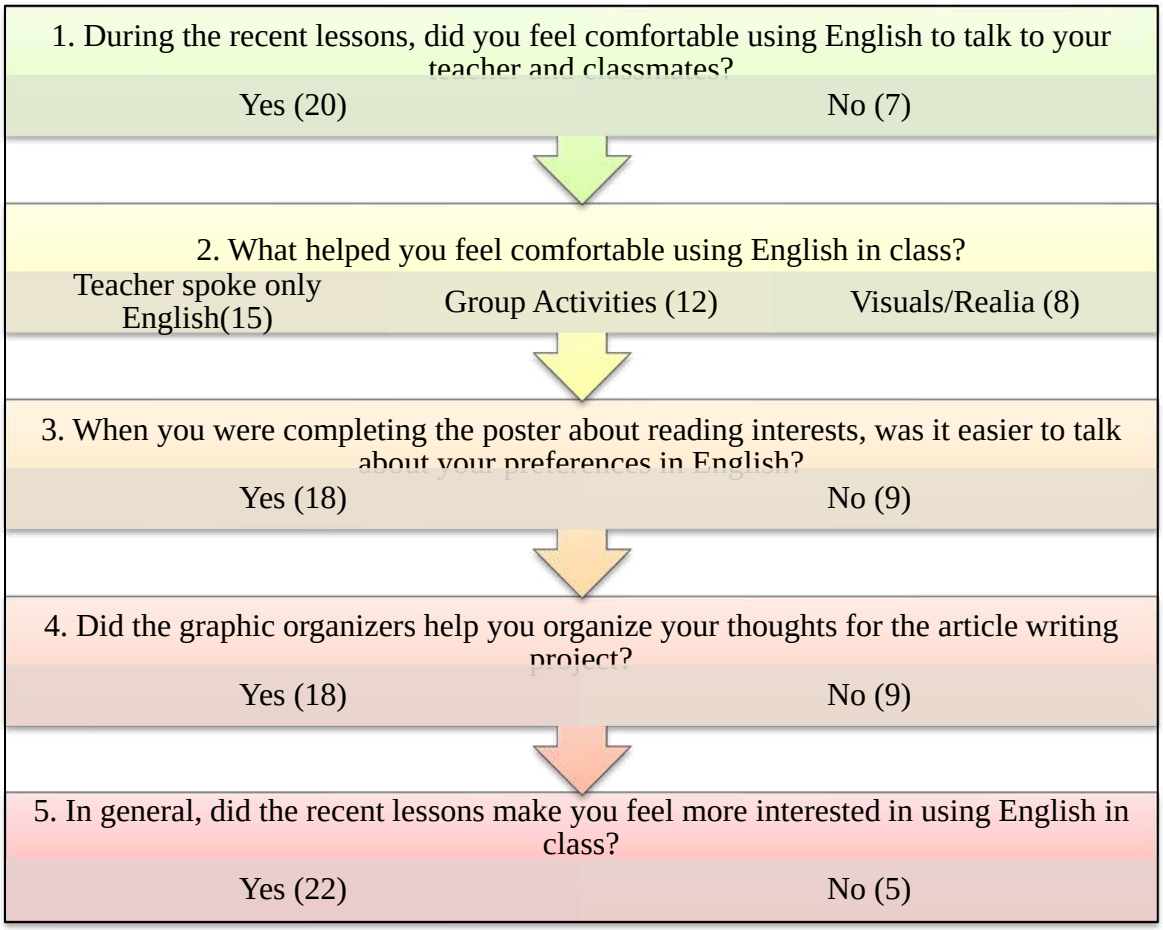


Fig. 3. Findings of the Student Interview

During recent activities, collaborating on a poster about reading interests positively impacted 67% of students, making them feel more comfortable when speaking English. Engaging in group discussions about preferences cultivated a sense of shared experience and reduced the pressure of individual performance. However, 33% of students faced challenges during group discussions, particularly when peers spoke quickly or when they struggled with comprehension. This highlighted the importance of employing differentiated instruction and scaffolding strategies to ensure all students feel included and supported during collaborative activities.

Журнал «Перспективи та інновації науки»
(Серія «Педагогіка», Серія «Психологія», Серія «Медицина»)
№ 10(44) 2024

Furthermore, 67% of students found the graphic organizers provided for the article writing project to be beneficial for organizing their thoughts. However, 33% of students found the graphic organizers perplexing and preferred their own methods for organizing thoughts. This underscores the significance of accommodating diverse learning styles and providing flexibility in their approach to tasks.

The implemented strategies appeared to have made English classes more engaging for the majority of students (81.5%). The focus on communication, collaboration, and practical use of English for tasks created a more dynamic learning environment. However, a small percentage of students (18.5%) did not perceive the lessons as significantly different from before. These students preferred a more traditional approach with explicit grammar instruction or a greater emphasis on reading and listening comprehension skills.

Conclusions. In conclusion, the research findings suggest that implementing strategies such as creating an English-speaking environment, promoting collaborative activities, and utilizing visual aids significantly promotes comfort and participation among students in using English. The majority of students reported increased confidence in communicating in English, attributing it to the immersive language experience and peer support. However, the data also highlights the importance of recognising individual learning preferences and challenges. Adapting instruction to meet diverse needs through differentiated strategies and providing flexibility in learning approaches are essential to ensure that all students feel supported and included in the English language classroom. This holistic approach does not only enhance student engagement but also fosters a more inclusive and effective learning environment. Nevertheless, further exploration is needed to understand the implementation of other motivational strategies, such as gamification and media utilization, which hold great potential.

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