JOURNAL OF APPLIED SCIENCE AND SOCIAL SCIENCE
eISSN 2229-3113 pISSN 2229-3205

Volume 15 Issue 09, September 2025
Impact factor: 2019: 4.679 2020: 5.015 2021: 5.436, 2022: 5.242, 2023: 6.995, 2024 7.75

HOW TO HELP TEENAGERS SPEAK UP: 3 PRACTICAL METHODS FOR ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

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Abstract. This article explores practical strategies for encouraging teenagers to actively participate and speak up in English language classrooms. Adolescents often face social, emotional, or cognitive barriers that prevent them from expressing their thoughts and opinions. The study presents three effective methods—interactive group activities, role-playing exercises, and guided discussions—to enhance student engagement, boost confidence, and improve oral communication skills. The article also examines the theoretical basis for these approaches, highlights their practical applications, and discusses how teachers can adapt them to diverse classroom contexts. Implementing these strategies can create a supportive learning environment, increase students' motivation to speak, and foster meaningful language use.
Key words. Teenagers, speaking skills, English classroom, oral communication, interactive activities, role-play, guided discussion, student engagement, confidence building, communicative competence, language learning strategies, motivation, classroom participation, adolescent education, teaching methods.

Introduction. Speaking is one of the most essential skills in learning a foreign language, as it allows students to communicate ideas, express opinions, and interact meaningfully with others. However, encouraging teenagers to actively participate and speak up in English classrooms remains a significant challenge for many teachers. Adolescents often face various barriers, including shyness, fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, peer pressure, and lack of motivation, which can inhibit their willingness to engage in oral communication. These challenges not only affect language acquisition but also limit students' opportunities to develop critical thinking, collaborative skills, and overall communicative competence. Research has shown that providing structured, supportive, and interactive learning environments can significantly enhance students' willingness to speak. Teenagers, in particular, benefit from activities that combine social interaction, creativity, and practical application of language skills. By integrating methods such as interactive group activities, role-playing exercises, and guided discussions, teachers can create opportunities for adolescents to practice speaking in a safe and engaging manner. These methods not only improve oral proficiency but also foster confidence, motivation, and positive attitudes toward language learning. Furthermore, understanding the psychological and developmental characteristics of teenagers is crucial for designing effective classroom strategies. Adolescents are at a stage where identity formation, peer relationships, and self-expression are highly influential, meaning that teaching approaches must be both engaging and sensitive to their social and emotional needs. The ability to speak up in a classroom setting contributes not only to language development but also to the personal growth and academic success of students. This article aims to provide educators with three practical and adaptable methods to encourage teenagers to speak up in English classrooms. By offering concrete examples, theoretical grounding, and practical implementation tips, the study seeks to

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empower teachers to create more interactive, confident, and communicative learning environments for adolescent learners. Ultimately, these strategies aim to transform classrooms into spaces where teenagers feel motivated and equipped to use English actively, express their ideas freely, and participate meaningfully in collaborative learning.

Literature review. The ability to speak confidently in a foreign language is widely recognized as a crucial component of communicative competence. Numerous studies have highlighted that adolescents often struggle with oral communication in English classrooms due to psychological, social, and pedagogical factors. According to Brown (2001), teenage learners frequently experience anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, which can significantly hinder their willingness to speak. Similarly, Oxford (1997) emphasizes that motivation, self-efficacy, and learner autonomy are key determinants of speaking participation among adolescent learners. Research has also shown that classroom practices significantly influence students' engagement in speaking activities. Harmer (2015) advocates for interactive and student-centered teaching methods, arguing that group activities, role-play, and discussions provide authentic communication contexts and encourage active participation. In addition, Nunan (2003) highlights the importance of creating a safe and supportive classroom environment where mistakes are treated as learning opportunities, which helps reduce speaking anxiety and fosters confidence. Several recent studies focus specifically on adolescent learners and practical methods to enhance speaking skills. For example, Al-Salman and Al-Kharusi (2014) demonstrated that role-playing exercises improved teenagers' fluency and willingness to communicate in English. Likewise, Nguyen (2018) found that guided discussions and structured group activities provided meaningful opportunities for language practice, promoting both oral proficiency and collaborative learning skills. Interactive group work, according to Li (2020), encourages peer feedback, negotiation of meaning, and social interaction, all of which are essential for developing communicative competence among adolescents. Moreover, the literature emphasizes the importance of adapting teaching strategies to the developmental and social characteristics of teenagers. Adolescents are highly influenced by peer relationships and self-expression needs, making it critical to incorporate methods that are engaging, collaborative, and confidence-building (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). This perspective suggests that traditional teacher-centered approaches may be less effective, and a more participatory and interactive approach is necessary to facilitate speaking. In conclusion, the literature demonstrates that overcoming barriers to speaking in English classrooms requires both psychological support and pedagogical innovation. Interactive group activities, role-playing, and guided discussions have consistently been identified as effective strategies to enhance teenagers' oral communication skills, boost confidence, and increase motivation. These insights provide a theoretical and practical foundation for implementing methods aimed at helping adolescents speak up in English classrooms.

Research methodology. This study adopts a qualitative research approach to explore practical methods for encouraging teenagers to speak up in English classrooms. The qualitative design allows for an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to oral communication. By focusing on the lived experiences of adolescent learners, the research captures the psychological, social, and pedagogical factors influencing their willingness to participate in speaking activities. The research was conducted in several secondary school English classrooms, involving a total of 60 teenage students aged 13 to 17.

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Data were collected using multiple methods, including classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and reflective journals maintained by both students and teachers. Classroom observations provided insights into students' actual participation patterns, interaction dynamics, and responses to different speaking activities. Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to express their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes toward speaking in English, while reflective journals offered longitudinal insights into changes in confidence and engagement over time. The study focuses on the implementation of three practical methods: interactive group activities, role-playing exercises, and guided discussions. Each method was applied systematically over a period of six weeks, with careful monitoring of students' participation, engagement, and oral performance. Data analysis followed a thematic approach, where recurring patterns, challenges, and successful strategies were identified and categorized. This approach enabled the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions about the effectiveness of each method in promoting speaking skills, confidence, and classroom participation. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants' consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained to ensure a safe and supportive environment for sharing experiences. The methodology emphasizes both practical application and theoretical grounding, linking classroom interventions to principles of adolescent psychology, communicative language teaching, and student-centered pedagogy. Ultimately, this research methodology provides a comprehensive framework for investigating how targeted strategies can empower teenagers to speak up, contribute actively, and develop communicative competence in English classrooms. The insights gained offer both theoretical contributions and practical recommendations for educators seeking to enhance oral skills among adolescent learners.

Table 1: Practical methods to encourage teenagers to speak up in english classrooms.

Method	Description	Purpose / Benefit	Example Activity
Interactive Group Activities	Students work in small groups to discuss topics, solve problems, or complete tasks collaboratively	Enhances peer interaction, reduces speaking anxiety, promotes active participation	Group debates on a familiar topic, collaborative storytelling
Role-Playing Exercises	Students assume roles and act out scenarios related to real-life situations	Builds confidence, develops practical language use, encourages creativity	Simulating a restaurant conversation, interviewing a classmate
Guided Discussions	Teacher facilitates structured conversations on a specific theme or question	Encourages critical thinking, provides safe space for expression, supports oral fluency	Class discussion on environmental issues, guided Q&A sessions

This table summarizes the three practical methods used to encourage teenagers to speak up in English classrooms. Each method is designed to address common barriers such as shyness, lack of confidence, or limited motivation. Interactive group activities foster collaboration and reduce anxiety, role-playing exercises provide opportunities for real-life language use and creativity, and guided discussions create structured yet supportive environments for expressing ideas.

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Implementing these methods systematically can increase student engagement, oral proficiency, and communicative competence.

Research discussion. The results of this study indicate that implementing interactive group activities, role-playing exercises, and guided discussions can significantly enhance teenagers' willingness to speak up in English classrooms. Classroom observations showed that students participating in interactive group activities were more engaged and exhibited increased collaboration and peer support. The use of small groups allowed students to practice language in a less intimidating environment, which reduced anxiety and encouraged risk-taking in speaking. Students reported that group activities made them feel more confident and motivated to contribute ideas. Role-playing exercises proved to be particularly effective in developing practical communication skills. By simulating real-life scenarios, students were able to practice vocabulary, sentence structures, and conversational strategies in context. The study found that students who engaged in role-play demonstrated higher levels of fluency, creativity, and self-expression. Role-playing also encouraged peer feedback and reflection, which further reinforced language learning and boosted self-confidence. Guided discussions, facilitated by the teacher, provided a structured environment in which students could express opinions and respond to prompts. These discussions encouraged critical thinking, active listening, and turn-taking. Students reported feeling more comfortable sharing ideas in a safe, supportive setting where mistakes were treated as learning opportunities. Teachers noted that guided discussions helped identify students' strengths and weaknesses in oral communication, allowing for targeted feedback and support. The discussion also highlights the importance of considering adolescent psychological and social factors. Teenagers' reluctance to speak is often influenced by self-consciousness, peer pressure, and fear of making errors. The study's findings suggest that methods emphasizing collaboration, creativity, and supportive feedback can effectively address these barriers. By combining interactive, role-play, and discussion-based strategies, teachers can create a dynamic classroom environment that fosters both confidence and communicative competence. Furthermore, the study's results align with previous literature emphasizing student-centered approaches. Harmer (2015) and Nunan (2003) argue that interactive and participatory methods enhance engagement and learning outcomes, while Al-Salman and Al-Kharusi (2014) highlight the effectiveness of role-play in adolescent classrooms. The findings also confirm that adolescents benefit from activities tailored to their developmental needs, combining social interaction, creativity, and structured guidance.

Table 2: Effects of practical methods on teenagers' speaking participation.

Method	Observed Effects on Speaking	Student Feedback / Outcome
Interactive Group Activities	Increased engagement, collaboration, reduced anxiety	"I felt more comfortable sharing ideas with my group."
Role-Playing Exercises	Enhanced fluency, creativity, practical communication skills	"Acting out real-life situations helped me speak more confidently."
Guided Discussions	Improved critical thinking, structured turn-taking, confidence	"I liked that the teacher guided the discussion; I knew when it was my turn to speak."

This table summarizes the observed effects of the three practical methods on teenagers'

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participation in English classrooms. Interactive group activities allowed students to engage collaboratively in a supportive environment, reducing speaking anxiety. Role-playing exercises provided opportunities for practical language use and encouraged creativity and self-expression. Guided discussions offered a structured format, helping students practice turn-taking and critical thinking while gaining confidence in expressing ideas. Collectively, these methods contributed to increased oral proficiency, motivation, and overall communicative competence among adolescent learners.

Conclusion. This study demonstrates that implementing interactive group activities, role-playing exercises, and guided discussions can significantly enhance teenagers' willingness and ability to speak up in English classrooms. The findings indicate that these methods not only improve oral proficiency but also foster confidence, motivation, and active participation. Interactive group activities create a collaborative and supportive environment that reduces speaking anxiety, while role-playing exercises allow students to practice language in real-life contexts, enhancing creativity and fluency. Guided discussions provide structured opportunities for critical thinking, turn-taking, and safe expression of ideas. The research also highlights the importance of addressing adolescent psychological and social factors. Teenagers' reluctance to speak is often influenced by self-consciousness, peer pressure, and fear of making mistakes. By using student-centered and interactive methods, teachers can effectively overcome these barriers and create a classroom atmosphere that encourages active oral participation. Overall, the study provides practical strategies and theoretical insights for educators aiming to promote communicative competence among adolescent learners. By integrating these methods into classroom practice, teachers can create engaging, supportive, and effective learning environments where teenagers feel empowered to express themselves, develop language skills, and participate meaningfully in collaborative learning.

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