CHALLENGES OF USING ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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***Abstract*:** This article explores the real challenges that come with using activities in an English classroom setting. These days, activity-based learning has grown into one of the most widely used approaches to make lessons more engaging and to give students a chance to actually practise what they are learning. That said, putting activities into practice is rarely straightforward. Teachers regularly deal with issues like managing time well, keeping the classroom under control, and catering for students who are at very different levels. This article looks at those challenges more closely and offers some ideas on how to work through them.

Keywords: classroom activities, time management, teaching challenges, collaborative learning, student engagement.

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Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola sinf darslarida faoliyatlardan foydalanish va ularni amalga oshirishda yuzaga keladigan qiyinchiliklarni o’rganadi. Hozirgi kunda sinf darslarida faoliyatlardan foydalanish o‘qishni qiziqarli qilishning tobora samarali va mashhur usuli bo‘lib, u o‘quvchilarga yangi ko‘nikmalarni mashq qilishda ham yordam beradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: sinf faoliyatlari, vaqtni boshqarish, o‘qitishdagi qiyinchiliklar, hamkorlikda o‘rganish, o‘quvchilarning faolligi.

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Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается использование активных методов обучения на уроках и трудности, связанные с их внедрением. В настоящее время применение активных форм работы на уроке является всё более эффективным и популярным способом повышения вовлечённости учащихся, а также помогает им отрабатывать новые навыки. Несмотря на эти положительные стороны, учителя сталкиваются с рядом препятствий при включении активных методов в учебный процесс.

Ключевые слова: активные методы обучения, управление временем, трудности преподавания, совместное обучение, вовлечённость учащихся.

Introduction

Teaching in the 21st century looks very different from what it used to be, and using activities in the classroom has become a central part of that shift. When students take part in activities, they are not just passively receiving information — they are thinking critically, working together, and building real language skills. Activities like group tasks, role plays, and games give learners the kind of hands-on practice that traditional methods often cannot provide. Vygotsky[1] showed through his research that active participation leads to deeper understanding, stronger communication skills, and a genuine desire to keep learning. Beyond the students, this approach also gives teachers a clearer framework for planning lessons that actually work.

Literature Review

There is strong support in academic research for bringing activities into English language teaching. Vygotsky's idea of the Zone of Proximal Development points to something important: learners grow most when they are challenged just enough and working alongside others, which is exactly what well-designed classroom activities can offer. Harmer[2] also makes an important point — that activities do two things at once. They give students a chance to practise the language while also engaging in real, meaningful communication. This is particularly valuable in EFL settings where students have very little exposure to English outside of school.

Of course, the research does not ignore the difficulties. Doyle[3] pointed out long ago that classrooms are messy and unpredictable places, and this becomes even more obvious when open-ended activities are running. Harmer and Nunan[4] have both drawn attention to how noise, students going off-task, and time management crop up again and again as problems. Webb[5] found something that many teachers recognise from experience: in group work, the more confident students tend to take over while the quieter ones slowly pull back. Tomlinson[6] adds that planning activities for groups with very different ability levels takes real skill and a lot of preparation — something that is not always realistic for newer teachers who are still finding their feet.

To help teachers work through these difficulties, Burns[7] and Wallace[8] both argue that action research is one of the most useful tools a teacher can use for their own growth. By watching what happens in their own classroom, trying out new approaches, and honestly evaluating the results, teachers can make real improvements that are grounded in evidence rather than guesswork. This kind of reflective practice sits at the heart of the present study.

Teaching Context

My full name is Sobirjonova Mohinur, currently studying at Namangan State Foreign Languages University as part of group XTA-JU-23. My practical teaching experience came from my practicum at School Number 31 in the Pop district, where I carried out my personal action research project. The class I worked with was a Grade 4 group of 13 pupils, and their English levels varied quite a bit from one student to the next. My responsibilities included lesson planning, delivering the English classes, putting together the activities, and keeping students engaged from start to finish. Working in this setting gave me a genuine, up-close look at what it actually feels like to use activity-based methods with young learners in a real primary classroom.

Project Description

Activity-based learning has earned a strong reputation as one of the most effective ways to teach English at the primary level.[9] When things go well, activities like group tasks, pair work, games, and interactive exercises open up real opportunities for students to use and absorb the language naturally. But during my time at School Number 31, I quickly realised that making activities work in practice was far more complicated than anything my theoretical preparation had prepared me for. Problems kept coming up — some practical, some to do with teaching approach, and others related to managing the classroom — and these had a real effect on how well the activity-based lessons actually went. That experience pushed me to take a closer look at exactly what was going wrong and to think seriously about strategies that could make things better within my own classroom.

Exploratory Questions

To give my investigation some direction, I came up with three questions to explore:

1. Why do I think some activities are difficult to manage in my class?

2. What challenges do students face during classroom activities?

3. How do students behave during activity-based learning? What factors affect the success of classroom activities?

Data Collection Tools

In order to build a clear and honest picture of the challenges I was facing, I used three different tools to collect information:

1. My Own Reflective Notes

Throughout the research period, I kept a personal journal where I wrote down detailed observations after each lesson. Looking back through those notes, a clear pattern started to emerge. Some activities simply did not go the way I had planned, mostly because of time pressures or difficulties keeping the class on track. I also noticed that while some students threw themselves into activities with real enthusiasm, others seemed lost or just sat on the sidelines. One thing that stood out was how often students often started off confused, were at the root of the problem — when students were not sure what to do, things quickly went off course.

2. Student Questionnaire

I gave a short written questionnaire to all 13 students to find out how they felt about classroom activities. The results brought up several interesting things:

Category	Response	Percentage
Student participation in activities	Very often	21%
	Sometimes	60%

	Rarely	19%
Enjoyment of activities	Very much	55%
	Quite a bit	30%
	Not at all	15%
Main challenges during activities	Noise and classroom control	40%
	Time management	30%
	Unequal participation	30%
Preferred type of activities	Group work	50%
	Pair work	25%
	Individual work	25%

3. Interviews with Students and Teachers

I also had informal conversations with a few of the students and spoke with the class teacher to get a deeper sense of what was happening. Students generally said they enjoyed the activities, though some found them confusing at times. A few students were quite open about feeling shy or uncomfortable when it came to working in groups. The class teacher echoed what I had been observing — that time management and

unequal participation kept coming up as problems, which lined up with what Harmer and Webb.

Exploratory Findings

Pulling together what came out of my reflections, the questionnaires, and the interviews, a few key challenges stood out clearly during group work. The most frequently mentioned issue was noise and classroom management, flagged by 40% of students. Once group activities got going, students often got caught up in the excitement and the noise levels crept up, making it hard to keep everyone focused and the classroom under control. This fits well with what Doyle has argued — that classrooms are complicated environments by nature, and that managing many different interactions at once is genuinely difficult.

Time management came up as a significant issue for 30% of respondents. Quite often, activities ran over because students needed more explanation or guidance before they felt ready to start. In some lessons, this knock-on effect squeezed out time for other planned activities. This is very much in line with what Harmer and Nunan have said about the time pressures that come with activity-based learning.

Unequal participation was another pattern that kept showing up, mentioned by 30% of students. In group settings, the more confident and higher-level learners tended to take the lead, while quieter students or those with lower proficiency often hung back and said very little. This mirrors Webb's observation that collaborative activities do not automatically mean everyone gets an equal chance to participate.

The interview conversations also revealed something worth noting: a number of students felt nervous or self-conscious **during group discussions.** Several of them said

they preferred working alone because they were worried about making mistakes in front of the others. My reflective notes pointed to another recurring issue — when instructions were not clear enough, **students often started off confused,** got distracted, and kept coming back with questions before they could even begin.

Action Plan

Simplify and stage instructions: Taking these findings seriously, I introduced a number of changes to improve how activities ran in the classroom. The first thing I worked on was how I gave instructions. I started breaking them down into smaller steps and pairing them with visual examples so that students had something concrete to refer to before getting started. This made a noticeable difference to how confident students felt going into an activity.

Implement structured roles. The second change was assigning specific roles within each group — things like speaker, recorder, and reporter. Giving every student a defined job meant that stronger students were less likely to take over, and quieter ones had a reason to get involved. Everyone had something they were expected to contribute.

Use visible time management. To help with the pacing problem, I started using a visible timer during activities. Before any task began, I would tell students exactly how much time they had. Knowing the clock was running helped everyone — including me — stay on track and use the available time more productively.

Establish noise management signals. To deal with the noise, I introduced a simple signal system — hand raising or a clap pattern — that the class came to recognise as a cue to quieten down and refocus. It was a low-key way of regaining attention without

interrupting the flow of the lesson too harshly. I also started building in a pair discussion stage before asking students to share with the whole class. This gave shyer students a chance to try out their ideas in a smaller, safer space before having to speak in front of everyone.

Findings from the Action Phase

Improved task clarity: Once the changes were in place, things started to look noticeably different. Clearer, step-by-step instructions meant students spent less time looking confused at the start of activities. They got going more quickly and were able to stay on task for longer stretches than before.

More balanced participation: Assigning structured roles made a real difference to how group work played out. Students who had previously sat back and let others do the work started to take a more active part, while the stronger learners began to understand that contributing did not mean doing everything.

Better noise control: The signal system helped bring the noise down to a manageable level and made it easier to keep the collaborative tasks running smoothly. The visible timer also proved useful — activities wrapped up closer to the planned time, and there was less of that feeling of running out of time towards the end of the lesson.

Persistent challenges: That said, not everything was resolved. A handful of students still felt hesitant about joining in group discussions, especially when it meant speaking up in front of the class. Planning activities that genuinely worked for students at very different levels also continued to take a lot of time and thought, which is something Tomlinson has written about — differentiated instruction is demanding work, and that does not change overnight.

What I Learned

This research ended up teaching me quite a lot about what it really means to be a teacher. Going into my practicum, I had a fairly simple assumption: if the activity was interesting enough, students would naturally want to join in and the lesson would take care of itself. Real classroom experience quickly showed me how incomplete that thinking was. Making an activity engaging is just one piece of the puzzle. Teachers also have to think about how to keep the room under control, how their students are feeling, and how to organise everything so that it actually runs the way it was planned.

If I had to pick one thing that made the biggest difference, it would be how I gave instructions. Early on in my practicum, I had a habit of rushing through explanations or making them more complicated than they needed to be. The result was predictable — students got confused, lost interest, and started chatting about other things. Once I slowed down and started presenting instructions one step at a time, with examples to make things concrete, the whole atmosphere of the activity changed. Students felt more ready and more confident before they even started. It was a good reminder that a well-designed activity can still fall apart completely if students do not understand what they are supposed to do with it.

Perhaps the most important thing this research taught me is that teaching never really stops being a learning process. Every single lesson brought something new — sometimes a success, sometimes a moment that made me cringe a little looking back. But each one helped me get a clearer picture of what I am good at and where I still have room to grow. I have come to see mistakes not as setbacks but as part of the job. They push you to look honestly at your practice and find better ways of doing things.

Conclusion

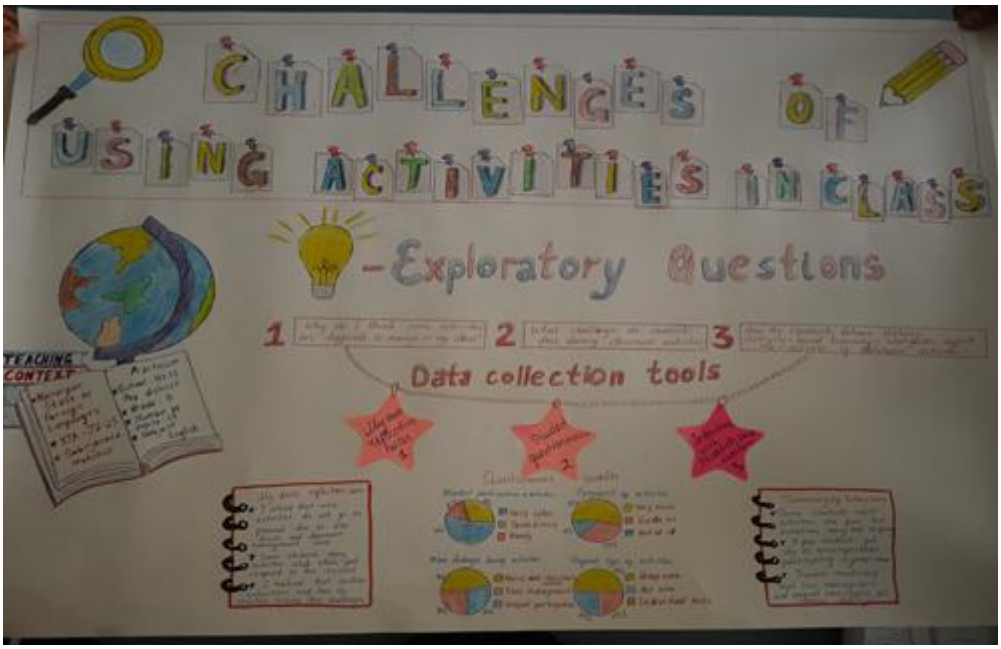
To bring this all together, using activities in English lessons is genuinely one of the most effective ways to make learning feel more alive and relevant for students. Activities push learners to communicate, collaborate, and take an active role in their own learning — and when done well, they can turn a fairly ordinary lesson into something students actually look forward to. This is especially true in classrooms with young learners, where keeping motivation high matters a great deal.

At the same time, this study made it clear that none of this comes without its complications. The challenges I kept running into — excessive noise, time slipping away, some students doing all the talking while others stayed quiet, and the lingering shyness some learners felt during group work — are very real and not easy to solve. In quite a few cases, the root of the problem came back to instructions that were not clear enough, which then caused a chain reaction of confusion and off-task behaviour.

Working through these issues, I introduced several practical strategies — breaking instructions down into clearer steps, giving each student a role during group work, using a visible timer, and trying to build a classroom atmosphere where students felt safe to make mistakes. These changes did make a real difference. Participation improved, the classroom felt easier to manage, and lessons ran more smoothly. Some challenges lingered, but the overall environment shifted in a way that felt genuinely better for everyone in the room.

Looking back, this action research project was one of the most valuable things I have done as part of my teacher training. It gave me a chance to take ideas I had read about in books and actually test them against the reality of a classroom. More than

anything, it helped me understand that good teaching is not something you arrive at — it is something you keep working towards. It takes patience, solid preparation, the willingness to adapt on the spot, and a habit of honest reflection. Going forward, I want to keep developing as a teacher and to design lessons where every student — no matter their level or confidence — feels that they have a real place in the learning.



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