

Using Communicative Activities to Develop English Speaking Ability of Grade-8 Students at Htantapin Township, In Myanmar

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Abstract

This research aimed to: (1) study the current conditions of English-speaking ability among Grade-8 students at Htantapin Township, Myanmar; (2) develop and implement communicative activities to enhance their English-speaking skills; (3) evaluate the effectiveness of these activities through measurable outcomes; and (4) assess students' satisfaction with the communicative teaching approach. The study was conducted with 30 Grade-8 students using a quasi-experimental design, specifically the one-group pre-test and post-test model. The intervention was grounded in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and incorporated task-based activities such as role plays, interviews, group discussions, and information gap tasks over a six-week period. Research instruments included pre-test and post-test evaluations, classroom observation checklists, and student satisfaction surveys. The results revealed a significant improvement in students' speaking proficiency, particularly in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and confidence. Moreover, students reported high satisfaction and engagement with the communicative activities. These findings confirm that CLT-based communicative activities are effective in improving English speaking ability among middle school students in Myanmar. The study offers valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to reform English teaching practices in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Communicative Activities; English Speaking; Grade-8 Students; CLT Approach; Myanmar, Language Education.

Introduction

English speaking ability is increasingly recognized as a vital skill for academic success, international communication, and future employment. In Myanmar, English is introduced from the early years of schooling, yet many students face challenges in developing their speaking skills. Traditional teaching methods in many classrooms emphasize grammar, memorization, and written drills, which limit students' opportunities to practice real-life communication.

At Htantapin Township, English language instruction remains predominantly teacher-centered, with limited space for student interaction or speaking practice. As a result, students often struggle with fluency, pronunciation, and confidence when using English in practical contexts. To address these limitations, the present study investigates the implementation of communicative activities grounded in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. CLT emphasizes student interaction, meaningful communication, and the use of real-world tasks to foster language development.

Communicative activities such as role plays, interviews, group discussions, and information gap tasks engage students in authentic speaking situations, encouraging them to use English actively. By integrating these activities into classroom instruction, teachers can create a supportive environment where learners build both linguistic competence and confidence. This study aims to explore the effectiveness of communicative activities in improving the English speaking ability of Grade-8 students at Htantapin Township. The research findings are expected to contribute to improved English teaching methodologies in Myanmar and provide evidence-based strategies for fostering oral proficiency in middle school students.

Research Objectives

1. To study the conditions of Enhancing English Speaking skill for Grade-8 Students at Htantapin Township in Myanmar.
2. To develop Communicative Activities approach for English Speaking skill for Grade-8 Students at Htantapin Township in Myanmar.
3. To study satisfaction in the result of Communicative Activities approach towards Enhancing Speaking skill of Grade-8 Students at Htantapin Township in Myanmar.

Literature Review

Speaking is a fundamental language skill that involves expressing thoughts, emotions, and information through oral communication. Key aspects of speaking include fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. Effective speaking requires the integration of these components to communicate meaning accurately and confidently. Mastery of speaking skills is especially critical in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, where learners often lack exposure to natural language environments.

The CLT approach emphasizes language use for meaningful communication rather than mere grammatical accuracy. It is based on theories such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis, Long's Interaction Hypothesis, and Hymes' model of Communicative Competence. CLT advocates the use of real-life tasks and authentic materials, promoting student-centered learning where learners engage in conversations, role plays, problem-solving tasks, and discussions. These activities encourage learners to use language purposefully, fostering both linguistic and sociolinguistic competence.

Multiple studies have validated the effectiveness of communicative activities in enhancing speaking performance. Savignon (1991) and Nunan (2005) emphasized that learners exposed to interactive classroom environments exhibited higher speaking competence. Other research has shown that communicative tasks lead to greater student engagement, better retention, and higher motivation. However, challenges such as large class sizes and lack of teacher training have been noted as barriers to implementing CLT in some EFL contexts.

Conceptual Framework

This study applied a structured framework based on the Research and Development (R&D) process, aiming to improve English speaking ability through communicative activities aligned with the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The conceptual framework was guided by four key objectives: (1) To study the existing conditions of English speaking ability among Grade-8 students at Htantapin Township. (2) To develop communicative classroom activities grounded in CLT. (3) To evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented activities on students' speaking performance.

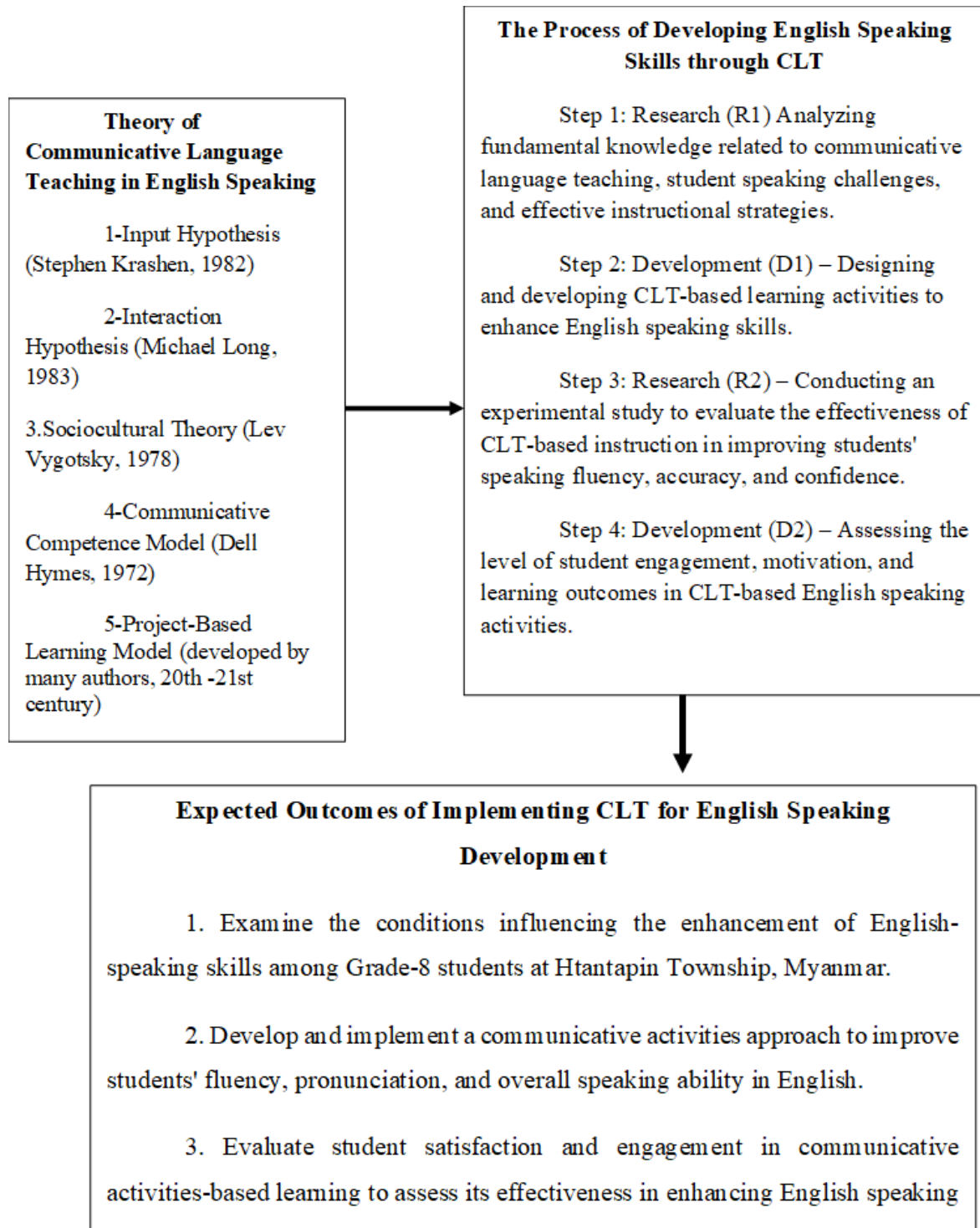


Fig.1 Conceptual Framework

This process allowed for a continuous cycle of instructional design, implementation, and evaluation, ensuring the communicative activities were responsive to students' real learning needs and effective in fostering speaking proficiency.

Research Methodology

This research employed a quasi-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test model to examine the impact of communicative activities on the English speaking ability of Grade-8 students. The study followed a simplified Research and Development (R&D) cycle including analysis, development, implementation, and evaluation.

Research Design

The study was conducted in four main phases:

Research (R1): Analyzed the current level of students’ speaking ability and identified common speaking challenges.

Development (D1): Designed and developed a series of communicative activities based on the CLT framework.

Research (R2): Implemented the communicative activities over six weeks in regular classroom sessions.

Development (D2): Evaluated the results through post-tests, observation checklists, and satisfaction surveys.

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of Grade-8 students from public schools in Htantapin Township, Myanmar. A purposive sample of 30 students was selected for the study based on availability, willingness to participate, and level of English proficiency.

Research Instruments

Pre-test and Post-test of English speaking skills: Assessed fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehensibility.

Observation Checklist: Used during class activities to monitor student engagement, participation, and interaction.

Student Satisfaction Survey: Measured students’ attitudes and feedback regarding the communicative learning experience.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected before and after the six-week intervention. Quantitative data from the tests and survey were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and paired t-tests to determine statistical significance. Qualitative data from the observation checklists were used to support and contextualize the quantitative findings.

Research Results

Pre-test and Post-test Performance

The pre-test results showed that students had low speaking proficiency, with particular weaknesses in fluency and confidence. After the intervention, the post-test revealed significant improvements across all speaking components.

Table 1: Pre-test and Post-test Performance

Speaking Component	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Improvement
Fluency	2.1	3.7	+1.6
Pronunciation	2.3	3.6	+1.3
Vocabulary	2.0	3.5	+1.5
Grammar	2.2	3.4	+1.2
Comprehensibility	2.1	3.8	+1.7

Paired t-test results confirmed that the improvements were statistically significant at the 0.05 level across all components. Instruction are shown in Table 1.

Student Satisfaction

Students reported high satisfaction with the communicative activities. They found the lessons engaging, interactive, and helpful for improving speaking confidence.

Table 2: Student Satisfaction Survey Results

Satisfaction Item	Mean	Interpretation
Enjoyment of activities	4.5	Very High
Improvement in speaking confidence	4.4	Very High
Usefulness of pair/group interaction	4.3	High
Willingness to continue learning via CLT	4.6	Very High

Observational Findings

Classroom observations revealed that students became more active and collaborative as the lessons progressed. Initially hesitant, many learners grew more confident in expressing ideas during role plays, group discussions, and storytelling tasks.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of communicative activities in enhancing the English speaking ability of Grade-8 students at Htantapin Township. The results from the pre-test and post-test revealed statistically significant improvements across all assessed speaking components—fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and overall comprehensibility. These improvements suggest that structured, student-centered interaction can effectively support language development even in traditionally grammar-focused classroom settings.

The study's success can be attributed to the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles. Activities such as role plays, group discussions, information gaps, and storytelling allowed students to use language in meaningful, purposeful contexts. This aligns with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which emphasizes comprehensible input, and Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which underlines the importance of negotiated meaning in learning. Additionally, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory supports the notion that peer interaction and collaborative tasks help internalize language functions through social engagement.

Furthermore, the positive results from the student satisfaction survey highlight the motivational impact of communicative tasks. Learners reported increased enjoyment, greater confidence, and a preference for learning in an interactive environment. These findings are consistent with previous studies by Savignon (1991), Nunan (2005), and Harmer (2007), all of which affirm the role of CLT in building fluency and learner autonomy.

Despite these promising outcomes, several challenges were observed. Initially, students exhibited hesitation and anxiety when asked to speak in front of others. However, as the intervention progressed, they adapted to the format, indicating that regular exposure to communicative tasks can help overcome initial resistance. Another challenge was classroom management in group activities, which required clear instructions and active teacher facilitation to ensure full participation.

Overall, the integration of communicative activities created a dynamic and inclusive learning environment where students had multiple opportunities to practice speaking. The improvement in test scores and positive learner feedback underscore the potential of CLT in EFL settings like Myanmar.

Conclusion

This study confirmed that communicative activities, grounded in the CLT approach, are effective tools for developing the English speaking ability of Grade-8 students. Through the implementation of carefully designed speaking tasks, students showed significant improvements in fluency, vocabulary usage, pronunciation, and speaking confidence. Moreover, students expressed high levels of satisfaction and engagement, further supporting the value of interactive methods in English instruction.

The one-group pre-test and post-test model clearly demonstrated the positive effects of the intervention. Communicative tasks not only improved speaking performance but also fostered an active learning environment where students were encouraged to use English meaningfully and confidently. These outcomes align with both theoretical frameworks and previous research in language education.

This study contributes practical insights for English teachers in Myanmar and other EFL contexts. It suggests that shifting from traditional grammar-based instruction to communicative, task-based activities can lead to better speaking outcomes. Additionally, it advocates for teacher training and curriculum design that prioritize interaction, authenticity, and learner engagement.

In conclusion, communicative activities are a powerful instructional method for developing English speaking proficiency among middle school learners. With proper planning and implementation, they can transform the classroom into a space where language is used not just as an academic subject, but as a tool for meaningful communication and self-expression.

Suggestions

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, the following suggestions are offered for educators, curriculum developers, and future researchers:

Suggestions for Teachers

Integrate Communicative Activities Regularly: English teachers should incorporate role plays, group discussions, information gap activities, and similar tasks into their regular lessons to create opportunities for students to speak in meaningful contexts. **Focus on Student-Centered Learning:** Teachers should shift from teacher-centered grammar instruction toward student-centered, task-based learning that promotes interaction and communication. **Provide a Supportive Environment:** Students may initially feel shy or anxious about speaking. Creating a non-threatening classroom environment will help learners build confidence over time. **Offer Constructive Feedback:** During communicative activities, teachers should observe and guide students with positive feedback rather than focusing solely on errors.

Suggestions for Curriculum Developers

Incorporate CLT-Based Tasks into the National Curriculum: Textbooks and instructional materials should include communicative tasks aligned with the CLT approach. **Provide Teacher Training on CLT:** Many teachers may be unfamiliar with communicative approaches. Professional development programs should focus on training teachers in designing and implementing CLT-based lessons effectively.

Suggestions for Future Research

Use a Control Group for Comparison: Future studies may use a control group to compare the effectiveness of communicative activities with traditional methods. **Extend the Study Period:** Longer-term studies may show how sustained use of communicative activities impacts overall language development. **Apply to Different Age Groups or Contexts:** This study focused on Grade-8 students. Future research may explore similar methods with other grade levels or in rural vs. urban settings.

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