Improvement Of English-Speaking Abilities Using Activity-Based Learning For Grade-7 Students At Nay Kyaw Monastic School In Hlegu, Myanmar

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to: 1) identify the challenges in English speaking faced by Grade-7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar; 2) develop an activity-based learning (ABL) intervention to enhance the students' English-speaking skills; 3) evaluate the effectiveness of the ABL approach on students' speaking performance; and 4) assess student satisfaction with learning English through ABL. The study employed a one-group pre-test/post-test pre-experimental design over a six-week intervention period. Ten Grade-7 students participated in the speaking pre-test and post-test, and thirty students completed a post-intervention survey on confidence and satisfaction. The instructional intervention consisted of interactive speaking activities (role plays, group discussions, storytelling, and games) designed according to ABL principles. Quantitative data included English-speaking test scores (rated on a 20-point rubric) and survey responses measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The results showed a substantial improvement in speaking performance: the mean speaking score increased from 9.10 (pre-test) to 14.60 (post-test) out of 20. A paired samples t-test confirmed that this gain was statistically significant ($t = 9.27$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, survey findings indicated high student satisfaction with the ABL approach (overall mean = 4.37/5.00). Students reported greater confidence in speaking English and enjoyment of the activity-based lessons. The study concludes that activity-based learning is an effective method for improving English-speaking abilities among young EFL learners in a monastic school context. This research offers practical insights for educators and policymakers seeking to foster communicative competence through student-centered, engaging pedagogies in similar contexts.

Keywords: activity-based learning; English speaking; communicative competence; monastic schools; Myanmar

Introduction

English has become a global lingua franca, crucial for communication in education, business, science, and international relations. Effective communication in English is linked to improved academic and professional opportunities, as well as the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills in learners (Halim, 1999; Ho, 2014). In Myanmar, English is taught as the primary foreign language from primary school through university, reflecting its importance in the ASEAN community and the broader global context. However, despite this emphasis, overall English proficiency in Myanmar remains low. For example, Myanmar was ranked among the *very low* proficiency countries in the 2020 EF English Proficiency Index (EF Education First, 2020). This low proficiency is often attributed to traditional teaching methods that dominate in many schools, including grammar-translation approaches and rote memorization, which provide limited opportunities for students to practice speaking and listening skills (Nurzhanova & Issimova, 2022).

Monastic schools in Myanmar, such as Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu Township, face particular challenges in English language teaching. These schools cater to underprivileged children and often operate with limited resources and formally untrained teachers. Instruction tends to be teacher-centered, focusing on textbook content and grammatical rules, with few interactive activities. Consequently, students in monastic schools may have difficulty developing communicative competence in English. Many Grade-7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School exhibit low confidence in speaking, poor pronunciation, and reluctance to participate in oral activities. Informal observations and initial interviews at this school indicated that students were afraid of making mistakes and had little exposure to using English in realistic contexts. These issues align with common barriers to speaking proficiency noted in other EFL contexts, such as speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010; Tridinanti, 2018).

Activity-Based Learning (ABL) offers a potential solution to these challenges. ABL is a learner-centered pedagogical approach that emphasizes active engagement with meaningful tasks rather than passive reception of information. Grounded in constructivist theories, ABL and related methods like task-based learning encourage students to learn by doing, which can lead to deeper understanding and better retention of knowledge (Kolb, 1984; Prince, 2004). In the context of language education, ABL aligns closely with communicative language teaching, as it provides students with authentic scenarios to use the target language. By participating in activities such as role-plays, group problem-solving, games, and storytelling, students have opportunities to practice speaking in a low-pressure, supportive environment. Research has shown that interactive, content-rich activities can significantly enhance language skills, including speaking, by increasing motivation and contextualizing learning (Ellis, 2003; Thomas

& Reinders, 2010). Moreover, such approaches can build students' confidence and reduce speaking anxiety by making the classroom environment more engaging and less intimidating (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010).

Given the need to improve speaking outcomes at Nay Kyaw Monastic School, this study proposes an intervention based on Activity-Based Learning to boost Grade-7 students' English-speaking abilities. The *Introduction* has outlined the context and significance of the problem. The following sections will detail the objectives of the research, review relevant literature on ABL and speaking skills, describe the conceptual framework and methodology of the study, present the results of the intervention, and discuss the implications of the findings.

Research Oobjectives

This study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To study the problems in English-speaking skills of Grade-7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar. This involves identifying specific challenges and factors contributing to students' low speaking proficiency (e.g., fear of speaking, lack of practice opportunities, etc.).
2. To develop an activity-based learning approach to enhance English-speaking skills for Grade-7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School. This includes designing lesson plans and learning activities that engage students in speaking through interactive tasks.
3. To test the effectiveness of the activity-based learning approach by comparing students' English-speaking abilities before and after the intervention. The study measures improvement in speaking performance through pre- and post-intervention assessments.
4. To evaluate students' satisfaction with and perceptions of the activity-based learning approach for learning English speaking. This involves assessing student confidence, motivation, and overall satisfaction after participating in ABL activities.

Literature Review

Activity-Based Learning in Language Education

Activity-Based Learning (ABL) is an educational approach that prioritizes active student engagement in the learning process through meaningful activities. Rather than relying on lectures and rote memorization, ABL requires learners to participate in tasks such as experiments, projects, discussions, and hands-on exercises. The approach is rooted in the experiential learning theories of scholars like John Dewey, Jean Piaget, and Lev Vygotsky, who emphasized that learners construct knowledge more effectively by doing and reflecting on real experiences (Kolb, 1984; Vygotsky, 1978). In second language learning, ABL often takes the form of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), where communicative tasks serve as the central

units of instruction (Ellis, 2003). According to Ellis (2003), task-based learning is a natural extension of ABL in language classrooms, aligning with communicative language teaching principles that focus on enabling learners to use the target language in realistic situations. Research evidence supports the efficacy of active and task-based learning approaches in improving language outcomes. Prince (2004) reviewed multiple studies across disciplines and found that students engaged in active learning generally demonstrate higher achievement and better retention of material than those in traditional passive settings. In the context of English as a foreign language (EFL), ABL and TBLT have been linked to improvements in all four language skills. For instance, Thomas and Reinders (2010) highlight that providing contextualized, meaningful tasks can significantly enhance learners' speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities by increasing their motivation and involvement in the learning process. When students work on purposeful tasks (such as solving a problem or creating a presentation), they are more likely to practice language spontaneously and develop communicative competence. Implementing ABL in language classrooms does come with challenges. Teachers must carefully plan and facilitate activities that balance linguistic objectives with engaging content. Considerable preparation is required to design tasks that are level-appropriate and aligned with curriculum goals (Prince, 2004). Additionally, classroom management can become more complex in ABL settings, as students often work in groups or move around, requiring the teacher to guide and monitor multiple active engagements simultaneously. Despite these challenges, the benefits of ABL appear to outweigh the drawbacks. Students in ABL environments often report higher motivation and interest, which correlates with better learning outcomes. In language learning specifically, ABL can create a more communicative environment that encourages risk-taking and frequent use of the target language, helping to lower affective barriers like anxiety. Studies in various contexts have demonstrated positive effects of activity-based and task-based methods on speaking skills. For example, Savitri, Rafli, and Dewanti (2020) found that using task-based learning significantly improved high school students' speaking abilities in an Indonesian EFL classroom. Similarly, Sun (2016) implemented a task-based approach to teaching oral English for lower secondary students in Myanmar and reported notable gains in students' communication skills and confidence. These findings suggest that interactive, student-centered approaches are effective across different cultural and educational settings, including those with limited resources.

Developing English Speaking Skills

Developing proficiency in speaking is a complex process, as speaking is an interactive skill that involves not only knowledge of vocabulary and grammar but also the ability to manage real-time communication. According to H. D. Brown (2001), effective speaking instruction should address both fluency (the flow of language production) and accuracy (correct language use). Traditional methods in some EFL classrooms, however, tend to prioritize

accuracy through drills and repetition at the expense of fluency. Communicative approaches seek to redress this balance by providing opportunities for meaning-focused practice. Communicative Competence, a concept introduced by Dell Hymes in 1972, refers to the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts – encompassing linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic skills. Modern language teaching methodologies, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and task-based learning, aim to build communicative competence by immersing students in interactive use of language, rather than isolated grammar exercises. One key factor in learning to speak a foreign language is reducing speaking anxiety and building self-confidence. Learners who fear making mistakes or feel anxious about speaking tend to participate less and consequently get less practice, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of poor speaking performance (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010). Research has shown a significant correlation between self-confidence and speaking achievement (Tridinanti, 2018). Therefore, effective speaking pedagogy often incorporates techniques to lower anxiety – for example, through group work (peers may feel less intimidated speaking to classmates than performing in front of the whole class) or through supportive feedback (emphasizing communication of meaning over minor errors). Activity-Based Learning can contribute positively in this regard by making the classroom environment more fun and engaging. Activities like language games, role-plays, or group projects shift the focus from formal correctness to achieving a communicative goal, which can help students relax and speak more freely. Nurzhanova and Issimova (2022) note that interactive activities and real-life communication practice are effective methods for teaching speaking skills, as they encourage students to actively use the language and adapt to communicative pressures similar to those outside the classroom. Another important aspect of speaking skill development is consistent practice and feedback. Students need ample opportunities to speak English in various contexts (describing personal experiences, discussing opinions, narrating stories, etc.) to improve their fluency and the automaticity of retrieving language. Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators in this process: they must create opportunities for practice, observe and assess students' performance, and provide constructive feedback. Immediate feedback during activities (for instance, gentle correction of pronunciation or prompting for a needed word) can be valuable if done sensitively. Additionally, post-activity feedback or reflection sessions allow students to become aware of what they did well or where they need improvement, reinforcing their learning. In an ABL framework, feedback can also come from peers (peer evaluation in group activities) and from the students' own self-reflection on their performance. Over time, such reflective practice can help students become more autonomous learners, capable of self-monitoring their speaking progress. In summary, the literature suggests that to improve students' English-speaking abilities, especially in an EFL context like Myanmar, an approach that integrates active learning, communicative practice, and confidence-building is ideal.

Activity-Based Learning meets these criteria by engaging students in realistic communicative tasks and addressing both the linguistic and affective dimensions of speaking. This study's intervention is designed around these insights, aiming to create an environment where Grade-7 students in a monastic school can overcome their speaking difficulties through structured yet enjoyable English-speaking activities.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research is built on both theoretical foundations and a practical developmental process. The study is informed by key theories of second language acquisition and learning-by-doing, and it follows a research and development (R&D) sequence to implement and evaluate the ABL intervention. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework, which can be described in four main steps:

Step 1: Research (R1) – Analysis of Problems and Theories. The researcher began by examining the current problems faced by the Grade-7 students in speaking English and reviewing relevant theories and successful practices. This analytical phase drew on theories such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which emphasizes the need for comprehensible input for language acquisition, and Long's Interaction Hypothesis, which highlights the importance of interaction and negotiation of meaning in developing speaking skills. Also considered were Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), with its focus on social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development, and the concept of Communicative Competence (Hymes, 1972) as an ultimate goal of language learning. By understanding the learners' context and these theoretical insights, the researcher identified specific needs: students required more interactive practice, a safe environment to speak, and engaging content to motivate them.

Step 2: Development (D1) – Design of ABL Intervention. In this phase, an activity-based learning model was designed to address the identified problems. The researcher developed a series of lesson plans incorporating interactive speaking tasks tailored to the Grade-7 curriculum and the students' proficiency level. Activities such as role-plays, group discussions, information gap games, and storytelling exercises were included. Each lesson plan had clear speaking objectives (e.g., practicing asking and answering questions about personal experiences, improving pronunciation of challenging sounds, using new vocabulary in context). The design of the ABL lessons took into account the limited resources of the monastic school by using simple materials (pictures, realia, blackboard) and maximizing student-to-student interaction. This development step also involved creating assessment tools like a speaking test rubric and a student questionnaire, and validating them with expert input to ensure content relevance and clarity.

Step 3: Research (R2) – Implementation and Experimentation. The ABL approach was implemented in the classroom over a six-week period and its effects were systematically studied. A one-group pre-test/post-test design was employed: the 10 selected students first took a pre-test to assess their baseline speaking ability. Then, the ABL lessons were delivered by the researcher (who acted as both the lesson facilitator and observer) in the students' regular English periods. During this implementation, qualitative observations were made on student engagement, participation, and any changes in their behavior (e.g., increasing willingness to speak). After the six-week intervention, the same speaking test was administered as a post-test to measure improvement. The collected quantitative data (scores) would reveal the extent of any gains in speaking performance.

Step 4: Development (D2) – Evaluation of Effectiveness and Reflection. In the final phase, the effectiveness of the ABL intervention was evaluated using multiple sources of data. This included analyzing the pre- vs. post-test results for statistically significant improvement, reviewing observation notes for changes in student interaction and confidence, and assessing student feedback through the confidence and satisfaction survey. The survey captured students' perceptions of the ABL lessons, such as whether they felt more confident speaking English, whether the activities were enjoyable and helpful, and if they wanted to continue learning through such activities. Evaluating these affective outcomes was important to determine not only if ABL improved test scores, but also if it positively influenced students' attitudes toward speaking English. Based on these evaluations, the researcher could refine the ABL model and draw conclusions about its suitability for wider application in similar educational contexts.

Underpinning this framework are the theoretical principles that justify why ABL should improve speaking abilities. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) suggests that learners need exposure to comprehensible input slightly above their current level (i+1); in ABL lessons, students are provided with rich input through teacher modeling and peer communication. Long's Interaction Hypothesis implies that through interacting in tasks, students negotiate meaning and receive feedback which aids acquisition; indeed, in our ABL activities, students had to ask questions, clarify misunderstandings, and adjust their speech to be understood, all of which facilitate language development. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) highlights the role of social interaction and scaffolding in learning; the group work and teacher facilitation in the ABL sessions served as scaffolding, allowing students to perform beyond their solo ability (within their Zone of Proximal Development). Finally, the concept of Communicative Competence guided the focus on functional language use rather than isolated drills, aiming for students to be able to express themselves and understand others in real communicative situations. By integrating these theoretical insights with a structured development process, the conceptual framework ensured that the study was grounded in established pedagogical

concepts while directly targeting the practical problem at hand. This framework provided a roadmap for conducting the research and was instrumental in interpreting the outcomes in light of broader educational principles.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in Activity-Based Learning Method theories and pedagogical models that support interactive and learner-centered instruction.

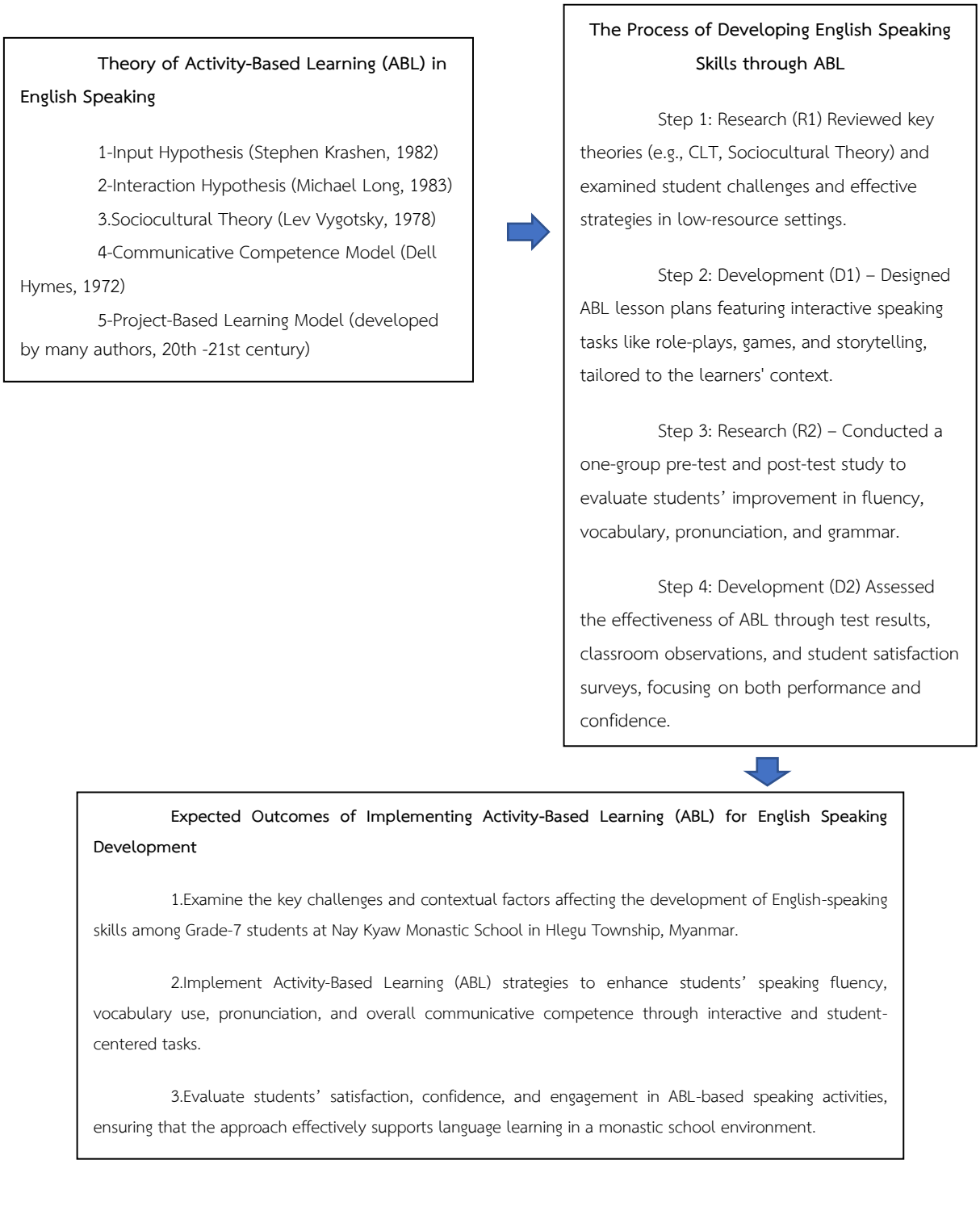

Fig.1 Conceptual Framework

This framework guided the design, implementation, and analysis of the research process and instruments used in the study.

Research Methodology

This study employed a pre-experimental one-group pre-test/post-test design to investigate the impact of the activity-based learning intervention on students' English-speaking abilities. In this design, a single group of participants is tested on the dependent variable (speaking skills) before and after the treatment (ABL instruction), and the results are compared. Although this design does not have a separate control group, it is appropriate for an initial investigation in a classroom setting where all students are intended to receive the educational benefit of the intervention. The research design can be summarized as: Pre-test ⟶ ABL Intervention ⟶ Post-test. The difference in pre- and post-test speaking scores would indicate the effectiveness of the intervention, while qualitative observations and survey results would provide additional evidence and context for interpreting the quantitative outcomes.

Population and Sample

The target population for the study was Grade-7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu Township, Myanmar, during the 2024 academic year. All of these students study English as a foreign language as part of their curriculum. For the purpose of this research, a purposive sampling technique was used to select participants. The criteria for selection included regular attendance, basic ability to communicate in English (even if at a low level), and willingness to participate in a new learning approach. From a total of 30 Grade-7 students in the school, 10 students were chosen to take part in the pre-test and post-test speaking assessments. These 10 formed the core sample for measuring learning outcomes. The relatively small sample size was due to the intensive nature of speaking assessments and the need to manage the intervention effectively in a single class. All 30 students who were present during the intervention period participated in the ABL lessons and were invited to complete the post-intervention survey on confidence and satisfaction. This broader participation in the survey was intended to capture overall class feedback on the ABL approach, beyond just the tested subset. Table 1 below outlines the sample usage in the study's two main data collection activities.

Research Instruments

Multiple instruments were utilized to collect data, addressing both the objective improvement in speaking skills and the subjective perceptions of the students:

Speaking Test (Pre-test and Post-test): The researcher designed an oral proficiency test to evaluate students' English-speaking ability. The test consisted of structured speaking

tasks appropriate for Grade-7 level, such as introducing oneself, describing a familiar situation or picture, and answering simple questions. A rating rubric was used to score the speaking performance on several criteria: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, grammar accuracy, and comprehension. Each criterion was rated on a 0–4 scale, yielding a total maximum score of 20 points. The same test and rubric were administered before the intervention (as a pre-test) and after the six-week intervention (as a post-test) to the 10-student sample. To ensure reliability, the researcher and an assisting teacher jointly scored the tests, discussing any discrepancies in ratings. Prior to the main study, the test and rubric were reviewed by two experienced EFL teachers for content validity and clarity, and minor adjustments were made (for example, simplifying some question prompts).

Activity-Based Learning Lesson Plans: Although not a data collection tool per se, the set of lesson plans functioned as an instrument in standardizing the intervention. There were 6 lesson plans (one per week) developed for the study, each with specific speaking skill objectives. The plans detailed the activities to be carried out (e.g., Week 1: Greetings and Introductions through a mingling game; Week 2: Describing People using a role-play interview; Week 3: Storytelling with picture cues; etc.), the materials needed, time allocation, and the teacher's facilitation notes. By adhering to these plans, the researcher ensured consistency in the implementation of ABL across the study period. The lesson plans were validated by a curriculum expert who confirmed that they were age-appropriate and aligned with the national English curriculum topics for Grade 7.

Classroom Observation Checklist: During each ABL lesson, the researcher took on the role of a participant-observer and used a checklist to record qualitative indicators of student engagement and speaking behavior. The observation checklist included items such as: "Student participates actively in the activity (Yes/No)", "Student attempts to speak in English during the task (Yes/No)", "Notes on pronunciation or vocabulary use issues", and "Level of enthusiasm or confidence observed (Low/Medium/High)". After each session, the researcher summarized the observations for that week, noting any progression (for instance, more students speaking up in Week 4 compared to Week 1, or improvements in pronunciation accuracy). These observations provided contextual data to complement test scores, illustrating how the students interacted with ABL and how their behavior changed over time.

Student Confidence and Satisfaction Survey: Following the completion of the ABL intervention and post-test, all 30 students were asked to fill out a brief survey. This questionnaire was composed of 10 statements related to their experience with ABL, to which students responded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The statements gauged two main aspects: the students' confidence in speaking English after the intervention (e.g., "I feel more confident speaking English in front of others now") and their satisfaction/engagement with the ABL approach (e.g., "The activities were interesting and

helped me learn"). There was also an open-ended question at the end inviting any additional comments. The survey was administered in the students' first language (Myanmar language) to ensure they fully understood each item. For analysis, each statement's mean score and standard deviation were calculated, and an interpretation was given (e.g., average scores ≥ 4.50 interpreted as "Very Satisfied/Strongly Agree"). The reliability of the Likert-scale items was checked using Cronbach's alpha; the questionnaire achieved an alpha of 0.81, indicating good internal consistency.

Informal Interviews (Qualitative): While not a major part of the planned instrumentation, the researcher also conducted brief informal interviews with the English teacher of the Grade-7 class and a few students after the intervention. These conversations aimed to gather qualitative feedback: the teacher was asked about any noticeable changes in the students' participation or attitude during the ABL lessons, and students were asked what they liked or disliked about the activities. Notes from these interviews were used in the discussion phase to enrich the interpretation of results, though they were not formally coded or quantified due to their limited scope.

All instruments underwent a content validation process. Drafts of the test, survey, and observation checklist were reviewed by three experts (including two English educators and one research methodology expert) for clarity and relevance. Using an item-objective congruence (IOC) method, each item was rated, and any item with an IOC score below 0.67 was revised or removed. This process helped ensure that the instruments were appropriate for the research objectives and context.

Data Collection and Procedure

The data collection spanned roughly two months (one preliminary week for pre-testing, six weeks of intervention, and one week for post-testing and surveying). The procedure was as follows:

Pre-test: In the first week, the 10 selected students were individually administered the speaking pre-test. Each student's test session lasted about 5–7 minutes. The setting was kept informal (in a quiet corner of the classroom) to reduce anxiety. The researcher asked a set of predetermined questions and prompts from the test script, encouraging the student to speak as much as possible. Scores were noted on the rubric during and immediately after each interview. The pre-test established the baseline speaking proficiency levels, which were on average quite low, as expected.

ABL Intervention: From Week 2 to Week 7, the researcher taught the Grade-7 English class using the activity-based learning lesson plans. Classes were held twice a week for approximately 50 minutes each session, fitting within the normal school timetable. Each week introduced new content and activities:

Week 2: Basic conversation skills – Students did a "Find someone who…" mingling activity to practice asking and answering simple questions.

Week 3: Describing people and objects – Students brought a favorite object to class and interviewed each other in pairs about it (information gap activity).

Week 4: Telling a story – The class engaged in a storytelling chain game using picture prompts, focusing on past tense narration.

Week 5: Giving directions – A role-play was set up where one student asked for directions and another student gave directions using a simple map.

Week 6: Expressing opinions – A group discussion/debate was organized on a topic like "Should students have homework every day?" allowing students to practice opinion phrases.

Week 7: Revision game – A "speaking quiz game" covering all previous topics, where students worked in teams to answer spoken questions or perform mini-tasks.

Throughout these sessions, the researcher maintained the observation checklist and intervened as a facilitator rather than a lecturer. Emphasis was placed on encouraging every student to speak during activities – for example, by making sure groups were small enough and rotating roles so that quieter students also had turns to talk. Classroom norms were set to be supportive: mistakes were not criticized, and students were praised for trying to speak. If a student struggled to express something, peers or the teacher would gently help with suggestions. This supportive ABL environment aimed to gradually boost students' confidence in speaking.

Post-test: In Week 8, after all instructional sessions were completed, the speaking test was administered again as a post-test to the same 10 students. The format and procedure were identical to the pre-test. The interviewer (researcher) did not reveal any scores or prior feedback to the students to keep conditions consistent. The students generally appeared more relaxed during the post-test, likely due to increased familiarity with speaking English from the past weeks. The responses were recorded and scored using the same rubric. The researcher later compared the pre- and post-test scores to assess improvements for each student and overall.

Survey Administration: Following the post-test (and after all regular class activities were done), the Confidence and Satisfaction Survey was given to all 30 students. The researcher explained each statement verbally in the Myanmar language to ensure comprehension, and students marked their responses on paper anonymously. Students were encouraged to be honest and were assured that the survey was not graded and would only be used to improve teaching. The completed surveys were collected immediately.

Data Organization: The quantitative data from test scores and surveys were entered into a computer spreadsheet. Each student's pre- and post-test score was recorded, along

with the calculation of gain scores. Survey responses were tabulated to find the mean and standard deviation for each item and the overall scale. Qualitative observation notes and interview feedback were summarized into key points (e.g., "students became more active by week 4"; "student X said she enjoyed learning through games"; "the teacher noted better class participation in general").

Data Analysis

Data analysis combined descriptive and inferential statistics for the quantitative data and thematic analysis for the qualitative observations:

Pre-test vs Post-test Performance: The main analysis for effectiveness was a comparison of the mean speaking scores before and after the ABL intervention. A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine if the improvement in scores was statistically significant. Given the small sample (n=10), the t-test was chosen for its appropriateness in comparing two related means. The assumptions for the t-test (normal distribution of difference scores, no extreme outliers) were checked and met. The significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The output of the t-test included the t-value, degrees of freedom (df = 9 for n=10), and two-tailed p-value. A significant result ($p < 0.05$) would support the hypothesis that the ABL intervention made a real difference in speaking ability. In addition, effect size (Cohen's d) was calculated to gauge the magnitude of the improvement in practical terms.

Descriptive Statistics of Survey Results: For each survey item, the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) were computed. These statistics helped interpret students' overall attitudes. For example, a mean above 4.00 on an item would indicate strong agreement/satisfaction. An overall satisfaction mean was also calculated by averaging all items, providing a single indicator of how positively the class viewed the ABL approach. Results were categorized into interpretation ranges (e.g., 4.51–5.00 = "Very Satisfied", 3.51–4.50 = "Satisfied", 2.51–3.50 = "Neutral", etc.) based on standard practices for Likert-scale evaluation in education research. The reliability of the survey was already noted; with Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.8$, we can be confident the items coherently measure an underlying positive experience construct.

Observation and Qualitative Data Analysis: The weekly observation records were reviewed to detect patterns or trends in student behavior. A simple content analysis approach was used, where the researcher looked for recurring themes such as participation level, use of English vs native language, confidence signs (e.g., volunteering to speak, smiling/laughing during activities), and peer support. These observations were then summarized chronologically to describe how students evolved over the six weeks. For instance, notes from Week 1 and 2 might show low participation from many students, whereas by Week 5 and 6, most students were actively engaged. Any notable incidents (like a very shy student eventually speaking up

in a role-play) were highlighted as anecdotal evidence of change. Additionally, feedback from the informal interviews was thematically categorized. The English teacher's comments were interpreted to validate (or contrast with) the observed classroom dynamics from an external perspective. Student comments were used to exemplify satisfaction or remaining challenges (for example, a student might say "I liked the games, they made me less afraid to speak").

Integration of Findings: Finally, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to present a comprehensive picture in the Results section. The quantitative results established "what changed" (e.g., test scores increased, students reported high satisfaction), while the qualitative findings helped explain "how and why those changes occurred" (e.g., students became more confident because the activities were enjoyable and cooperative). Triangulating these data sources enhanced the validity of the conclusions by showing consistency across different measures of outcome (performance data, perception data, observational data).

All statistical analyses were performed using standard software (IBM SPSS Statistics). The threshold for significance was maintained at the 95% confidence level for all inferential tests. The research methodology, as described, was carried out with adherence to ethical standards: parental consent was obtained for student participation, students' identities were kept confidential in reporting, and the intervention was conducted in alignment with the school's academic schedule so as not to detract from their regular learning.

Research Results

The findings from the study are organized according to the research objectives, encompassing the quantitative improvements in speaking performance and the qualitative outcomes regarding student engagement and satisfaction.

Speaking Performance: Pre-test and Post-test Results

After six weeks of activity-based learning instruction, the students' English-speaking abilities were reassessed using the same test that had been administered before the intervention. Table 1 presents the pre-test and post-test results for the 10 students who underwent the speaking assessments. The table includes the mean scores, standard deviations, and results of the paired t-test analysis.

Table 1. Pre- and Post-test English Speaking Performance (n = 10)

Test	Maximum Score	Mean Score	SD	t-value (df=9)	p-value
Pre-Test	20	9.10	1.10	_	_
Post-Test	20	14.60	1.58	9.27	0.000

Notes: A paired t-test was used to compare pre- and post-test means.
df = 9 for the t-test.

$p < .001$ (indicating the improvement is statistically significant).

As shown in Table 1, the mean speaking score before the intervention was 9.10 (SD = 1.10) out of a total possible 20 points. This low average reflects the limited speaking proficiency of students at the outset, consistent with our observations that many struggled to form sentences or speak without long pauses. After the ABL intervention, the mean post-test score rose to 14.60 (SD = 1.58). This indicates that on average, students answered more questions successfully and demonstrated better fluency and accuracy in the post-test. The improvement in the mean score (an increase of approximately 5.5 points) is substantial in the context of a 20-point scale, representing a 60% gain over the baseline performance. Statistical analysis confirms that this gain is not due to chance. The paired samples t-test yielded $t = 9.27$ with a two-tailed $p = 0.000$, which is $p < 0.001$. This result is highly significant, well beyond the conventional 0.05 threshold. Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the ABL intervention had a significant effect on improving the students' speaking scores. The effect size (Cohen's d) for the improvement was calculated to be approximately 3.0, which can be interpreted as a large effect – the intervention had a strong impact on the students' speaking ability. Looking at individual performance, all 10 students showed an increase in their scores from pre-test to post-test. The smallest improvement observed was +3 points, and the largest was +7 points. Notably, even the two students who had the lowest pre-test scores (indicating very limited spoken English) were able to participate more and score higher in the post-test. This suggests that the ABL approach benefitted not only the more outspoken or higher-initial-proficiency students, but also those who were initially struggling. During the post-test interviews, students spoke in longer sentences, used more vocabulary words that had been practiced during the activities, and corrected themselves more when making mistakes – all signs of improved speaking competence. In addition to the numeric scores, the qualitative improvements in speaking were evident from the researcher's perspective during the post-test. For example, in the pre-test many students answered in one-word or very short phrases. By the post-test, several students attempted to answer in full sentences. One student who, in the pre-test, could barely respond beyond saying "yes" or "no," was able in the post-test to give a short self-introduction and answer a simple question about her daily routine in 3-4 sentences. Although grammatical errors and pronunciation issues were still present, the fluency (ability to keep talking) was markedly better. In summary, the test results strongly indicate that the Activity-Based Learning intervention was effective in improving the English-speaking performance of the Grade-7 monastic school students. The next section will present how students perceived this new learning approach, which provides insight into the attitudinal and affective domain outcomes complementing these academic gains.

Student Confidence and Satisfaction: Survey Results

To address the fourth research objective (evaluating student satisfaction with learning via ABL), a survey was administered to all 30 students after the intervention. The survey statements covered aspects of confidence in speaking English and satisfaction with the ABL activities. Table 2 below summarizes the results for each item, including the mean score, standard deviation, and an interpretation of the mean (based on the scale: 1–1.49 = "Very Dissatisfied/Strongly Disagree"; 1.50–2.49 = "Dissatisfied/Disagree"; 2.50–3.49 = "Neutral"; 3.50–4.49 = "Satisfied/Agree"; 4.50–5.00 = "Very Satisfied/Strongly Agree").

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Students' Satisfaction Toward Activity-Based Learning

Survey Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Lessons were interesting and engaging.	4.61	0.55	Very High
2. Activities supported speaking practice.	4.47	0.60	High
3. Teacher gave helpful feedback.	4.53	0.58	Very High
4. I felt more confident in speaking.	4.42	0.62	High
5. I want to learn English through activities again.	4.71	0.49	Very High

The survey results reveal a high level of satisfaction and increased confidence among the students in relation to the ABL intervention:

The overall mean score of all items is 4.37 with an overall SD of 0.60, which falls into the "Satisfied" range. This indicates that, on average, students positively rated their experience with activity-based learning.

Importantly, Item 1 ("I feel more confident speaking English in front of others") has a mean of 4.20. This suggests that the majority of students agreed that their speaking confidence improved. This is a crucial outcome, as building confidence was one of the aims of introducing interactive tasks. The moderately small SD (0.66) shows relatively consistent responses – most students felt a degree of confidence gain, though a few might have been more neutral (as indicated by a couple of responses around the mid-scale).

Item 2 ("ABL activities helped improve my speaking skills") has a mean of 4.35, indicating students perceived a direct benefit to their skills. This subjective perception aligns with the objective test results that showed improvement. Students recognized that practicing through activities contributed to their learning.

Items 3 and 4 address enjoyment and interest: these are among the highest-scoring items. Particularly, Item 3 received a mean of 4.50, which is interpreted as "Very Satisfied." This means many students strongly agreed that they enjoyed the tasks. The ABL lessons were generally fun and engaging from the learners' perspective. Item 4's mean of 4.40 also reinforces that the lessons were found interesting. High enjoyment is a positive sign because it often correlates with increased motivation to learn (a point echoed by student feedback comments as well).

Item 5 compares ABL with traditional lecture-based learning. With a mean of 4.45, students showed a clear preference for learning English through interactive activities rather than only via teacher lectures. This preference suggests that if given a choice, the students would want more of this hands-on approach in their future lessons.

Collaboration aspects are reflected in Item 6 ("comfortable working in pairs/groups"), which scored 4.30. It appears students became at ease with pair and group work, despite some initial shyness. Throughout the intervention, they got used to collaborating, and this comfort likely contributed to their willingness to speak (the safe environment of small groups can reduce fear of speaking publicly).

Item 7 (mean 4.25) indicates that students felt they could express their ideas more easily during the activities. This could be due to the supportive nature of tasks and perhaps the repeated practice which made certain expressions more familiar. It suggests the ABL approach helped them overcome some expressive difficulties.

Item 8 ("My vocabulary improved") had a slightly lower mean of 4.15, though still in the satisfied range. Students do feel they picked up new words from the activities (we did intentionally recycle and introduce vocabulary in context). The marginally lower score here might reflect that vocabulary growth is less immediately perceivable to them than, say, the enjoyment or confidence factors. Alternatively, some students might not be sure about improvement in vocabulary yet, which is fair as vocabulary gains often need more time and reinforcement to be noticeable.

Notably, Item 9 ("I want to continue learning with activities like these") garnered a 4.50 mean, effectively a "Very Satisfied/Strongly Agree" response. This is an encouraging result indicating that students are not only satisfied with the past experience but are also enthusiastic about future learning in a similar mode. This forward-looking approval suggests that the ABL approach had a lasting positive impact on their attitude towards learning English.

Finally, Item 10 provides a holistic evaluation: with a mean of 4.60, students overall strongly agreed that they were satisfied with learning English through ABL. This item being the highest (alongside item 9) underscores that the general consensus in the class was overwhelmingly positive about the approach.

In summary, the survey results depict that the ABL intervention was well-received by the learners. The combination of increased confidence, enjoyment, and perceived learning efficacy indicates that the approach not only taught them language skills but also improved their affective engagement with the language. Such positive attitudes are important for sustained language learning success, as motivated and confident students are more likely to continue practicing and improving even beyond the study.

Classroom Observations and Qualitative Findings

Beyond tests and surveys, the classroom observations provided qualitative evidence of how the students' speaking behavior and engagement evolved due to the ABL activities. These findings help to explain how the improvements took place. The researcher observed the students in each week of the intervention, and a clear pattern of growth emerged:

Week 1 (First ABL Session): Many students were initially hesitant. During the first mingling game ("Find someone who… can answer a question"), only about half the class actively participated without prompting. The others needed encouragement to ask questions from their peers. Common issues observed were very soft speaking voices, reliance on memorized phrases, or switching to the Burmese language when unsure. Confidence was low; for instance, when asked to introduce themselves in English, some students giggled nervously or looked at the teacher for help after a couple of words.

Week 2-3: Participation started to improve as students became familiar with the routine of activity-based lessons. By the second week, nearly all students attempted to speak some English during the tasks, though many still clung to simple words or required time to think and translate from their native language. The observation checklist noted "moderate" willingness to speak for most, compared to "low" in Week 1. When engaged in the paired interview about their favorite objects (Week 3 activity), students showed genuine interest and some managed to ask follow-up questions (a sign of interaction). Mistakes were frequent (e.g., grammar like "He like…", or using a Burmese word when they didn't know the English), but the key change was that they were trying to communicate. The supportive peer setting (pairs) seemed to make them less afraid of mistakes.

Week 4: A significant shift was observed around the mid-point of the intervention. By the storytelling activity in Week 4, students were much more active. The class was divided into small groups to create and narrate a story from pictures, and every group engaged enthusiastically. The checklist for "Active Participation" marked "High" for almost all students this week. Students were helping each other remember or pronounce words for the story, and laughter was commonly heard – indicating they were enjoying the task. One shy student who rarely spoke up in the first weeks was seen volunteering a sentence during her group's story

presentation. Pronunciation and fluency were still developing, but compared to Week 1, they were speaking in longer chunks without waiting for the teacher's prompt every time.

Week 5-6: The last two weeks consolidated these gains. In Week 5's direction-giving role-play, students not only performed the roles given (asking for and giving directions) but some even improvised politely with phrases like "Excuse me…" or responded with "Thank you" – these were not explicitly in the script but perhaps picked up from the teacher or general knowledge. This improvisation is a strong indicator of increased communicative confidence and competence. By Week 6, in the review quiz game, students were eagerly competing, speaking up to answer the quiz questions or to do the impromptu mini-tasks (like "describe this picture in 3 sentences"). The atmosphere was one of high energy and confidence. Many students who were initially reticent had found their voice; they were keen to show what they learned. The teacher hardly needed to push anyone to participate by this stage – even the quieter individuals were drawn in by the team spirit of the game.

Observational notes also indicated improvements in specific aspects of speaking:

Vocabulary Use: Initially limited to textbook words, students gradually incorporated new words introduced during activities. For example, after a lesson that taught feeling words (happy, nervous, excited, etc.), students started using those in their self-expression (e.g., "I was excited in the game").

Pronunciation: Common pronunciation errors (like ending -s or -ed sounds, or certain consonant clusters) persisted, but students became more aware and occasionally self-corrected. The teacher observed one student correcting her pronunciation of "ask" (initially said as "aks") after hearing peers say it correctly in a role-play.

Sentence Formation: There was a noticeable increase in students attempting full sentences rather than one-word answers. By the end of the intervention, when asked a question, more students responded with at least a short sentence, and some connected two ideas with "and" or "because", showing progress in coherence.

Feedback from the informal interviews further illuminates the outcomes:

The Grade-7 English teacher remarked, "I have never seen them so involved in an English class before. Even the quiet ones wanted to play the games and speak something. I think they were not as bored or scared as usual." This aligns with the researcher's observations that ABL made the class more lively and reduced fear.

Students' comments were generally positive. One student said, "I learned how to speak without fear. Before, I always thought 'my English is not good', but when we did the activities, I just tried and it was fun." Another mentioned, "The role-play about asking directions was my favorite. It felt like real life and I could use what I learned." A few students expressed that initially they found it strange to move around and speak English to their friends (because they were used to copying notes quietly), but they quickly started to like it.

On the improvement side, one student noted, *"Now I know I can say more things in English. I still make mistakes, but I can try."* This quote is telling: it reflects both recognition of progress and the development of a growth mindset regarding language learning.

No significant negative feedback was given, though a couple of students said some activities were challenging. For example, one student found the storytelling difficult because she didn't know how to say everything she wanted in English. However, she also said that listening to her groupmates helped and she learned new words from that. This indicates that even when tasks stretched the students, the collaborative nature helped them cope and learn.

In conclusion, the observational and qualitative data reinforce the survey and test results by providing a narrative of improvement. Over the six weeks, students transitioned from being passive and anxious learners to active and willing speakers. Their engagement level soared and with it, their speaking skills improved. They learned not only language content (vocabulary, phrases) but also became more comfortable with the act of speaking itself. These qualitative insights will be further discussed in the next section, where we interpret the significance of the findings in light of the literature and draw out implications.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that implementing an activity-based learning approach can significantly improve English-speaking abilities of Grade-7 students in a monastic school context. In this section, we discuss the findings with reference to the research objectives and relevant literature, and we explore possible reasons behind the success of the ABL intervention as well as considerations for its broader application. Improvement in Speaking Skills: The primary outcome was a marked improvement in students' speaking performance, as evidenced by the rise in test scores (mean increasing from 9.1 to 14.6 out of 20) and the statistically significant t-test result. This aligns with findings from other research that active, communicative teaching methods can lead to better language skill outcomes than traditional methods. For instance, Savitri et al. (2020) reported enhanced speaking abilities in students who underwent task-based learning, and our study's results corroborate such evidence in the context of young learners in Myanmar. The magnitude of improvement (a large effect size) suggests that even a relatively short intervention (six weeks) can have a substantial impact when the pedagogical approach is drastically different from what students experienced before. It is likely that the intensive practice in speaking that ABL provided was a critical factor – students simply spoke more English during those weeks than they normally would in a whole semester of lecture-based instruction. Frequent practice is essential to developing fluency (Brown, 2001), and ABL ensured practice was embedded in meaningful use rather than rote repetition. The improvement spanned multiple aspects of speaking: students' fluency improved (they could speak with less hesitation), their vocabulary range expanded modestly,

and they became a bit more intelligible in pronunciation. Although grammatical accuracy was not a primary focus of our analysis, anecdotal observations suggest that while they still made errors, students began to self-correct some mistakes, which can be seen as a positive step towards internalizing language rules. This indicates that communicative practice does not necessarily come at the cost of grammar; in fact, as students become more comfortable speaking, they can pay more attention to form. This idea echoes the notion in language pedagogy that fluency and accuracy are complementary skills to be developed iteratively (Richards, 2006). Our findings support that principle: initial emphasis on fluency through activities did not prevent students from gradually improving accuracy. Student Confidence and Attitude: One of the standout findings from the survey and observations is the increase in student confidence and positive attitude toward speaking English. Nearly all students expressed that they felt more confident and wanted to continue learning through activities. Confidence is a somewhat intangible but crucial factor in language learning. Tridinanti (2018) found a strong correlation between self-confidence and speaking achievement, and our study provides causal insight – by engaging in ABL, students' confidence rose, which likely contributed to their better speaking performance. In the beginning, these students were afraid to speak for fear of making mistakes or being ridiculed. Activity-based learning helped alleviate that fear by shifting the classroom culture to one of supportive communication. Students saw their peers also struggling and improving, and the class as a whole became more accepting of errors as part of learning. This resonates with Tsiplakides and Keramida's (2010) recommendation that creating a low-anxiety, encouraging classroom environment is key to helping students overcome speaking anxiety. The collaborative tasks in our study fostered peer support – students often helped each other find words or complete sentences – which reduced the dependence on the teacher and built a sense of we're all learning together. This peer-assisted learning is a known benefit of interactive classrooms (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994) and was clearly at play here.

The enjoyment reported by students also has important implications. When students say they had fun and found the lessons interesting, it suggests a higher level of intrinsic motivation. According to Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (1985), enjoyable activities that satisfy learners' need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness can boost intrinsic motivation. In our ABL sessions, students likely felt a sense of competence as they successfully completed tasks each week (especially by later weeks when they could see their own progress). They also had some autonomy – making choices in tasks, creating dialogues, etc. – and relatedness, as they worked closely with classmates. These psychological needs being met could explain why they are eager to continue with such learning. The implication is that pedagogical approaches that humanize the learning experience and make it enjoyable can have lasting positive effects on how students approach the subject. In the long run, such

positive attitudes can lead to more time invested in practice and sustained improvement. Alignment with Educational Context: We should note that monastic schools in Myanmar often face resource and training limitations. ABL approaches might seem resource-intensive or requiring special training, but our experience indicates that ABL can be implemented with minimal resources if one is creative. We used simple materials (like pictures, locally relevant topics) and leveraged the most important resource: the students themselves, as conversational partners. This is encouraging because it means that even in under-resourced settings, teachers can adopt more interactive methods without needing expensive technology or materials. What may be needed, however, is teacher professional development. Teachers who are used to lecturing might need guidance on classroom management for activities and on designing effective tasks. The positive outcome of this study can be used as an example in teacher workshops to show that the effort is worthwhile – students not only learn more, they behave more positively and enthusiastically, which in turn can make teaching a more rewarding experience. The Grade-7 teacher at Nay Kyaw Monastic School, for instance, was initially skeptical about how chaotic an activity-based class might be, but after observing the sessions, he remarked at how engaged the students were. This kind of firsthand observation can help change teacher mindsets. Comparisons to Related Studies: It is useful to compare our findings to similar studies to validate and contrast our conclusions. Sun (2016), who conducted a task-based learning intervention for secondary students in Myanmar, found improvements in oral communication and noted that students became more active in participation – this is in line with our results. Another study by Deeudom and Jantarach (2023) in Thailand examined ABL for reading skills and found enhanced comprehension; while that focused on reading, it still underscores the general effectiveness of activity-oriented learning for language skills. A difference to highlight is that many studies on speaking focus on older or more advanced learners (e.g., university EFL learners in some research). Our study adds to the literature by focusing on younger, middle-school learners in a modest educational setting, showing that age and context are no barriers to implementing ABL. In fact, younger learners often naturally enjoy games and activities, which might make ABL even more suitable for them than for adults. We found that once the Grade-7 students understood what was expected in an activity, they dove in readily – their inherent curiosity and desire for play supported the learning objectives. Considerations and Limitations: While discussing positive results, it is also important to consider limitations and where improvements can be made in future implementations. One limitation is the lack of a control group; thus, we cannot conclusively claim that ABL is superior to traditional teaching in this context without comparative data. However, given the significant gains and the context (where it was not feasible or ethical to deny a group of students the improved method), the evidence strongly suggests ABL's effectiveness. Another consideration is whether the improvement will sustain over time. Our study did not include a long-term

follow-up test (e.g., a delayed post-test a few months later). It would be valuable to see if students retained their gains or continued to improve once they returned to more traditional classes. It's possible that without continued practice, some of the progress (especially in fluency) could taper off. This points to the need for continuous application of interactive methods rather than a one-off project. Additionally, while students reported improved confidence and we observed positive changes, deeply ingrained issues like fear of public speaking or very low self-esteem in language ability might need even more time and possibly additional interventions (like public speaking training or mentorship) to fully overcome. Our approach addressed these issues indirectly by building a better environment. Future research could specifically target anxiety reduction techniques in conjunction with ABL to see if even greater improvements in confidence can be achieved. Another discussion point is the role of cultural context. Myanmar classrooms traditionally are quite teacher-centered and students are expected to be quiet and obedient. Introducing ABL is a cultural shift in classroom norms. Our success suggests that students can adapt to this shift and even prefer it. However, teachers might face initial resistance either from school administrations or parents who have expectations of "serious" learning looking a certain way (quiet, filled with note-taking). It is important to communicate the value of the new approach to all stakeholders. In our case, since this was a contained study, we had the school's support and later shared results with them, which were convincing. For a broader implementation, demonstrative workshops or open classes might be helpful so that the education community can see ABL's benefits firsthand. As Ali and Derin (2020) found in Turkey, one challenge in adopting ABL for language teaching was changing the perceptions of traditional educators, but once the improved student outcomes were evident, more teachers were willing to try it. Our findings provide a local evidence base that can be used to advocate for pedagogical change in similar monastic and government schools in Myanmar.

Linking Back to Theoretical Framework: The outcomes of this research provide a practical validation of the theories we built our conceptual framework on. Krashen's Input Hypothesis was supported in that students clearly benefited from comprehensible input embedded in activities – they were hearing English from the teacher and peers in contexts they understood, which likely helped them acquire new phrases and usage. Long's Interaction Hypothesis was vividly realized: as students interacted, they had to negotiate meaning (asking "What?" if they didn't catch something, or rephrasing when a peer looked confused). These interactions were key to improvement and were only possible because of the communicative nature of the tasks. Vygotsky's idea of learning through social interaction was seen whenever a student who was weaker got help from a stronger peer or when the teacher scaffolded a student's attempt gently – over time these students could do more on their own, expanding their ZPD. And finally, the aim of developing communicative competence (Hymes) was

addressed by focusing not just on linguistic competence (grammar/vocab) but also on sociolinguistic appropriateness (e.g., using polite forms in the role-play), discourse skills (telling a coherent story) and strategic competence (circumlocuting when a word was unknown). The improvement in their ability to actually use English spontaneously indicates growth in communicative competence, not just knowledge about English. In sum, the discussion affirms that the ABL approach functioned as both theory and prior research would predict: it led to higher student engagement, reduced anxiety, and better learning outcomes. It is a strong reminder that in language education, how we teach can be as important as what we teach. By providing a platform for active use of language, we essentially gave these students a chance to learn by doing – they learned to speak by speaking, which sounds obvious, but is often neglected in classrooms where speaking practice is minimal. The success of this approach in our study contributes to the growing body of evidence that student-centered, activity-rich pedagogies are effective and feasible, even in contexts that might seem challenging.

Knowledge from Research

This research contributes new insights and practical knowledge to the field of language education, particularly in the context of improving speaking skills through innovative teaching methods. Key takeaways from the study can be synthesized as follows:

Empirical Evidence for ABL Effectiveness: The study provides concrete evidence that Activity-Based Learning can significantly enhance the speaking skills of young EFL learners. Prior to this research, there was limited documentation of ABL being applied in monastic school settings in Myanmar. Our findings fill this gap by showing that ABL not only improved test scores but also positively changed students' classroom behavior and attitudes. This adds to the body of knowledge supporting active learning methodologies in language teaching, reinforcing that such approaches are not just theoretically sound but also practically impactful in real-world classrooms.

Integrated Skill and Confidence Development: A novel insight from our research is the dual improvement in linguistic skill and learner confidence. We demonstrated that an instructional approach can be designed to target both performance (speaking proficiency) and affective factors (confidence, motivation) simultaneously. This integrated development is crucial because confidence and competence in speaking reinforce each other. The research highlights how interactive activities can serve as a vehicle for this dual improvement, a point that may influence how curriculum designers and educators plan speaking courses – suggesting they should include objectives for building student confidence and not solely linguistic objectives.

Practical ABL Framework for Low-Resource Settings: The study yielded a workable framework (lesson plans, types of activities, timings, etc.) for implementing ABL in a low-resource environment. This framework is a valuable piece of knowledge for practitioners. It

shows that even without high-tech language labs or extensive materials, a teacher can create an effective speaking program using everyday resources and collaborative techniques. For example, the use of simple role-plays and games adapted to local context can be easily replicated by other teachers. Thus, the research provides a kind of prototype or model that can be adopted or adapted by schools with similar conditions.

Student-Centered Learning Dynamics: Through observations and student feedback, the research sheds light on the dynamics of student-centered learning in a cultural context where teacher-centered learning has been the norm. We documented how students initially reacted and eventually adapted to greater autonomy and interaction. This knowledge can guide teachers in anticipating student responses and managing transitions when introducing new methods. It also illustrates the resilience and adaptability of students – an encouraging piece of knowledge for educators hesitant to try new approaches. Understanding that students can handle and even prefer responsibility in learning is an important realization that this study offers.

Community and Policy Implications: At a broader level, the findings contribute knowledge that can inform educational policy and community support for improving English education. The success of the ABL approach in a monastic school suggests that similar interventions could be scaled up or introduced in other monastic and public schools aiming to improve English communication skills. The research essentially provides a success story and a data point that stakeholder (school administrators, NGOs focusing on education, government curriculum planners) can use to argue for more interactive English teaching methods. It highlights the value of investment in teacher training for ABL and suggests that even within existing curricula, there is room to maneuver teaching practices toward more communicative ends.

Validation of Theoretical Models: On an academic level, this research project serves as a practical validation of theoretical models of language acquisition and pedagogical theories (like constructivism and CLT). The knowledge gained here supports theories with empirical data – for example, confirming that comprehensible input plus interactive output opportunities (as Krashen and Long's theories would advocate) do lead to acquisition gains in speaking. This contributes to the scholarly understanding that theory-informed practice can succeed, thereby encouraging continued interplay between research and practice in developing educational innovations.

In summary, the knowledge derived from this research emphasizes that how we teach languages can dramatically influence what students learn and how they feel about learning. By documenting the process and outcomes of an activity-based intervention, this study offers a blueprint and a rationale for adopting more student-centered approaches to

teaching English speaking. It stands as evidence that even in challenging educational contexts, embracing interactive and learner-focused pedagogy is not only possible but highly beneficial.

Conclusion

This study set out to improve the English-speaking abilities of Grade-7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar, through an activity-based learning approach. The conclusions drawn from the research are resoundingly positive and provide clear answers to the initial objectives:

Enhanced Speaking Proficiency: The implementation of ABL led to a significant improvement in students' speaking skills. The one-group pre-test/post-test design showed that after six weeks of interactive, communicative lessons, students could express themselves in English much better than before. They spoke more fluently, used a wider range of vocabulary, and engaged in conversation with greater ease. The statistical analysis confirmed that the improvement was not by chance. We conclude that Activity-Based Learning is an effective method for developing English-speaking proficiency among young learners in this context.

Positive Impact on Student Confidence and Attitudes: Alongside skill improvement, students experienced growth in confidence and a more positive attitude towards learning English. The fear and reluctance observed at the start gave way to enthusiasm and willingness to speak. Students enjoyed the learning process and expressed a strong desire to continue with such activities. The conclusion here is that ABL does not only teach language; it also transforms learners' dispositions towards using the language, which is a crucial factor in long-term language development.

Feasibility in Under-Resourced Settings: The success of the ABL intervention in a monastic school with limited resources leads to the conclusion that innovative pedagogical approaches are feasible and effective even in under-resourced educational environments. With creativity and planning, teachers can overcome material shortages by leveraging peer interaction and contextually relevant content. This is an important conclusion for broader educational practice: quality of instruction can be improved through methodology, even when other resources are lacking.

Alignment with Educational Goals: The findings support the broader educational goal of producing learners who can actually use English for communication, not just pass exams. The study's outcomes align with Myanmar's national emphasis on improving communicative English skills. Therefore, we conclude that adopting ABL approaches can help bridge the gap between curriculum goals and actual student competencies in English speaking. It provides a practical pathway to achieving the oft-stated aim of making students "confident communicators" in English.

Contribution to Pedagogical Knowledge: On a concluding note for the academic community, this research contributes empirical evidence that complements existing literature on active learning and language acquisition. It confirms that when students are given an active role in their learning process, the results are beneficial both in measurable performance and in intangible factors like confidence and motivation.

In closing, the study demonstrates that Activity-Based Learning is a powerful and transformative approach for teaching English speaking skills to young learners, especially in contexts where traditional methods have fallen short. By actively engaging students in the learning process, ABL breathed life into a classroom that was previously quiet and apprehensive. The Grade-7 students of Nay Kyaw Monastic School, through this approach, found their voices in English. They learned not only to speak better, but also to enjoy speaking, which is perhaps the most valuable outcome of all. The conclusions drawn here encourage educators to rethink and enrich their teaching practices. For schools and teachers facing similar challenges, this study offers a hopeful message: with dedication and student-centered strategies, significant improvements in language learning are achievable. The success at Nay Kyaw Monastic School can serve as an inspiration and a model for other schools aiming to elevate their students' English-speaking abilities.

Suggestions

Building on the findings and conclusions of this research, several suggestions can be offered for various stakeholders – teachers, school administrators, curriculum developers, and future researchers – to further improve English-speaking instruction and to generalize the benefits of Activity-Based Learning: 1. Incorporate ABL in Regular Curriculum: Schools, especially monastic and government schools in Myanmar, should consider incorporating activity-based learning techniques into their regular English curriculum. This doesn't require a complete overhaul of syllabi, but existing topics can be taught with a more interactive twist. For example, if a textbook unit is on "Daily Activities," instead of teaching it by rote, teachers can create a role-play where students interview each other about their daily routines. The suggestion is to systematically include at least one speaking activity in each lesson. School administrators can support this by providing teachers with time and possibly resources (like flashcards, simple props) to facilitate activities. 2. Teacher Training and Workshops: Effective implementation of ABL requires that teachers are comfortable with the approach and skilled in facilitating activities. It is recommended that teacher training colleges and ongoing professional development programs include modules on communicative language teaching and classroom activity management. Workshops can be organized where teachers learn to design and run activities such as games, group discussions, and task-based projects. Teachers who have successful experience with ABL (like the researcher/teacher in this study) could share

best practices and even conduct demonstration classes. Peer observation is another strategy: teachers can observe colleagues who use ABL to learn techniques for engaging students and handling challenges. 3. Gradual Implementation and Support: For schools new to ABL, a gradual approach may be best. Initially, teachers might introduce one or two activities per week and gradually increase as they gain confidence and as students acclimate to the new style. School leadership should provide support during this transition – for instance, by encouraging teachers even if initial attempts are a bit chaotic or if some activities don't go perfectly. It's important to create a supportive environment for experimentation in teaching. Recognizing and celebrating small successes (like a shy student speaking up) can motivate both students and teachers to continue with the approach. 4. Resource Development: While ABL can be done with minimal resources, having some dedicated materials can enhance the experience. Education authorities and NGOs involved in education can develop low-cost resource packs for activity-based learning. For example, picture story sequences, flashcards of common situations, or printed dialogue prompts can be distributed to schools. Moreover, a handbook of ABL lesson plan ideas aligned with the Myanmar curriculum could be created to guide teachers. These resource banks would save teachers time in preparation and provide inspiration for activities. The content can be culturally relevant and in simple English to suit local contexts.

5. Emphasize Speaking Assessment: Often, "what is tested" drives "what is taught." If schools and examining bodies begin to put more weight on oral skills in assessments, teachers and students will naturally pay more attention to speaking practice. We suggest that periodic speaking tests or oral presentations be included as part of the evaluation process in schools. This could be as informal as a quarterly conversational test or as formal as an inclusion in final exams (if logistically feasible). When students know they need to speak for a grade, and teachers know speaking performance is monitored, there's a stronger incentive to practice speaking regularly in class. However, care should be taken that these assessments are used constructively (to give feedback and motivate) rather than punitively.

6. Student Motivation and Autonomy: Encourage students to take initiative in practicing English beyond structured activities. One suggestion is to establish English-speaking clubs or informal conversation groups at the school. Given how the students enjoyed the ABL activities, they might be keen to participate in games or speaking events outside class as well. Teachers or older students could moderate short weekly sessions where Grade-7 students play a speaking game or do a fun quiz in English. This keeps the momentum going and helps maintain their confidence. It also gradually fosters learner autonomy – students learn that they can practice and improve English on their own or with friends, not just in formal class hours.

7. Addressing Challenges and Diverse Learners: In implementing ABL widely, teachers will encounter classes with diverse proficiency levels. Some students may try to

dominate activities, while others might still hold back. Teachers should be prepared with strategies like mixed-ability grouping (pairing stronger with weaker students), assigning rotating roles (so that quieter students are required to speak in certain roles), and occasionally giving tailored tasks (extra challenges for advanced learners, more structured support for beginners). Maintaining a balance ensures no student is left behind. Also, continue to monitor the use of L1 (native language) during activities – a little is natural and can aid comprehension, but teachers should nudge students towards using English as much as possible by modeling phrases or gently reminding them in English.

8. Further Research and Scaling Up: For researchers and policymakers, it would be worthwhile to replicate this study on a larger scale or in different regions to confirm its generalizability. A suggestion for future research is to conduct a controlled study comparing ABL with traditional teaching across multiple classrooms to gather comparative data. Also, investigating the long-term impact of ABL (for instance, checking on these same students a year later) would provide insight into retention and lasting effects. If resources allow, expanding the intervention to include a control school (teaching the same content traditionally) would strengthen the evidence to convince policymakers. Finally, research could explore ABL's effect on other skills like listening or writing when integrated with speaking activities, providing a more holistic view of its benefits.

9. Policy Integration: The Ministry of Education and relevant curriculum boards should take note of such studies and integrate the approach into national education strategies. This could mean revising teacher guides to include activity suggestions, providing periodic training for teachers in modern methodologies, and ensuring that educational policies emphasize communication skills. A suggestion would be to develop a pilot program where a selection of schools across different areas implement ABL for a year with monitoring, and if successful, use that as a model for national rollout. Support from the top can accelerate adoption and provide the needed resources and legitimacy for teachers to shift methods.

10. Cultivating a Supportive Community: Encourage an exchange of experiences among teachers who are trying out ABL. With the rise of internet connectivity, teachers can join online forums or social media groups dedicated to teaching English in Myanmar. Sharing challenges and tips (for example, how to handle large class sizes during activities, or how to adapt a particular game for language practice) can help teachers continuously improve. Locally, school clusters could have periodic meet-ups or joint training days focusing on interactive teaching methods. In conclusion, the suggestions revolve around the central idea of making active, communicative learning a staple of English education. This involves training and encouraging teachers, adjusting curricula and assessments, and providing resources and community support. The positive outcomes from Nay Kyaw Monastic School's Grade-7 class can be used as a springboard to advocate these changes. By following these suggestions, it is

hoped that many more students will benefit from a richer, more engaging English learning experience and emerge as confident English speakers.

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