

# 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.

## 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 Objectives**

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).

### 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.

### **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.

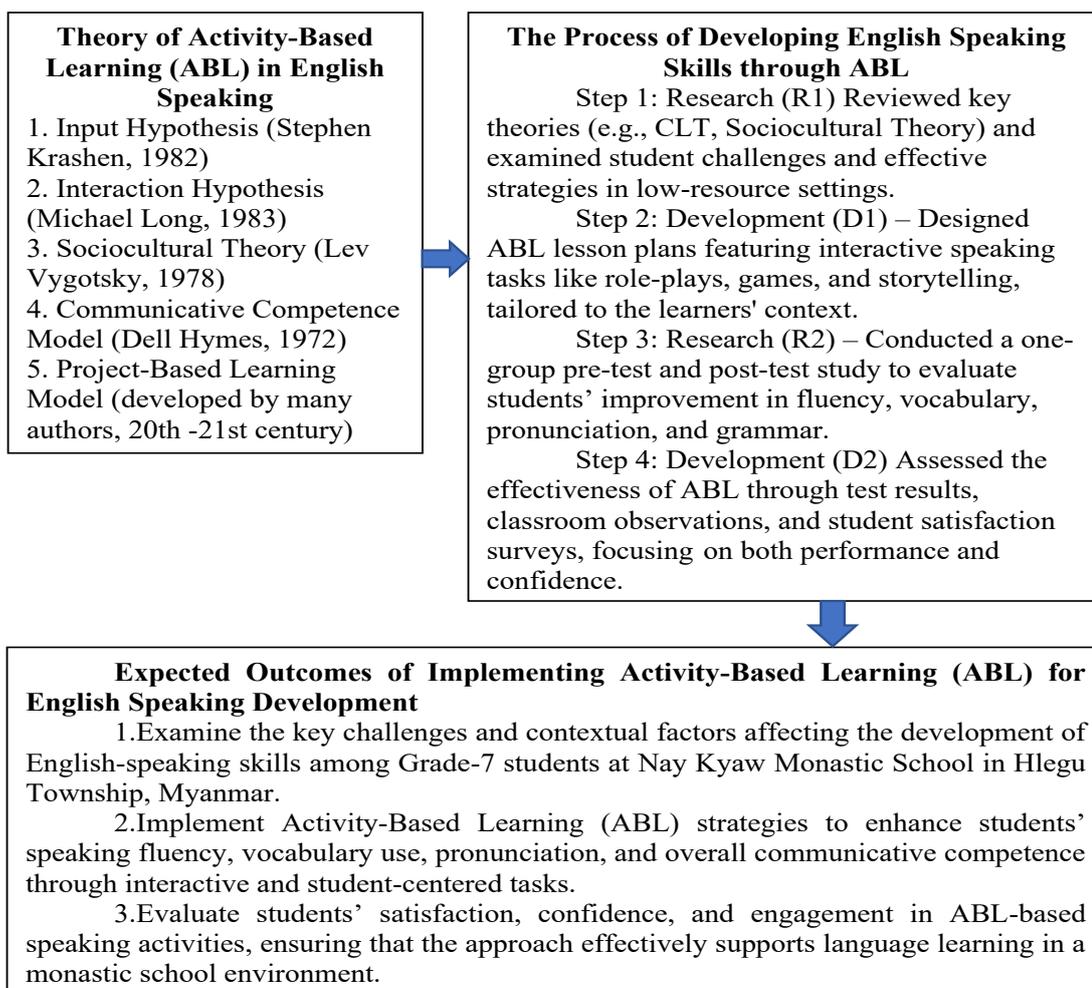
**Step 2: Development (D1) – Design of ABL Intervention.** In this phase, an activity-based learning model was designed to address the identified problems. The researcher developed a series of lesson plans incorporating interactive speaking tasks tailored to the Grade-7 curriculum and the students' proficiency 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.

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

## Research Methodology

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.

**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  $\geq 4.50$  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.

## 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.

1) Study the problems of English-speaking for grade 7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar.

General Information indicates that the sample of the study was 6 male students, which is calculated at 60.0% and 4 female students, which is calculated at 40.0%, respectively.

Study the problems of English-speaking for grade 7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar. It was found that the overall average was 4.24, which was at a very satisfied level. If it were separated individually as an aspect, it was found that the item with the highest average was item no. 6. I feel anxious when I have to start a conversation in English first. ( $\bar{x} = 4.60$ , S.D. = 0.52), and the second item was no. 2. I have trouble pronouncing words when speaking English. ( $\bar{x} = 4.50$ , S.D. = 0.71), and the third item was no. 4. I feel shy when standing and speaking English in front of a large audience. ( $\bar{x} = 4.40$ , S.D. = 0.70), and the lowest level was no. 10. I always think of words in Burmese first when I have to speak English. ( $\bar{x} = 3.91$ , S.D. = 0.30). In conclusion, the problems of English-speaking for grade 7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar, were at a very satisfactory level.

2) Development of English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning for grade 7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar.

The score of the pre-test and post-test in the use experiment of the manual of the English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning for grade 7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar. It is found that the score of the pre-test of the use experiment of the manual English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning. ( $\bar{x} = 8.60$ , S.D. = 2.17) are lower than the post-use experiment of the manual of English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning. ( $\bar{x} = 17.40$ , S.D. = 1.17).

The comparison between the students' pre-test and post-test in the use of English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning for grade 7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar. It is found that the pupils who have a post-test score of use of the experiment with the English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning. ( $\bar{x} = 17.40$ , S.D. = 1.17) are higher than the pre-test scores of the pre-test scores of the use of experiment with the English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning. ( $\bar{x} = 8.60$ , S.D. = 2.17), as statistically significant at 0.5.

3. Study the satisfaction with English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning for grade 7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar. It was found that the overall average was 4.23, which was at a very satisfied level. If it were separated individually as an aspect, it was found that the item with the highest average was item no. 1. The pedagogical lesson is well-organized. ( $\bar{x} = 4.55$ , S.D. = 0.52, and the second item was no. 7. The learning activities are fun and interesting. ( $\bar{x} = 4.50$ , S.D. = 0.71), and the third item was no.2. The content is clearly presented. ( $\bar{x} = 4.40$ , S.D. = 0.70), and the lowest level was no. 10. The learning activities encourage students to work together in groups and individually. ( $\bar{x} = 3.90$ , S.D. = 0.32), respectively. In conclusion, the students' satisfaction with English-speaking abilities using activity-based learning for grade 7 students at Nay Kyaw Monastic School in Hlegu, Myanmar, was at a very satisfied level.

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 Deedom 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

There are only two suggestions in the research study as follows:

#### 1. Suggestions that should be applied

1) Teachers should arrange the classroom to facilitate interactive learning, such as pair work, group discussions, and role-play activities that simulate real-life communication to foster active participation, collaboration, and self-directed learning.

2) Teachers should incorporate multimedia and technological resources- such as educational videos, listening materials, and interactive online tools. To provide authentic language input and stimulate speaking opportunities.

3) Teachers should offer individualized guidance and sustained encouragement, which is crucial for enhancing students' speaking abilities and maintaining their motivation to speak English.

#### 2. Suggestions for further Study

1) Further research should study a comparison group using traditional teaching methods, which could provide insights into the relative effectiveness of participatory learning.

2) Further research should include qualitative studies that explore student reflections, classroom discourse, and teacher perspectives, which will help deepen our understanding of the learning process.

3) Further research should expand the scope of the study to include a larger sample size and diverse school environments, which will allow for more generalizable research findings.

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