

Development of Oral Communication Proficiency through Activity-Based Learning for Grade-9 Students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar

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Abstract

This article aimed to study (1) the current condition of English oral communication proficiency among Grade-9 students; (2) the development of learning activities using Activity-Based Learning (ABL) to enhance their English oral communication proficiency; and (3) the results of implementing the developed learning activities. The sample consisted of 30 Grade-9 students from Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar, selected through purposive sampling. The instruments used for data collection included questionnaires, observation forms, interview protocols, and pre-test and post-test speaking tasks. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics and content analysis. The research results were found as follows: 1) Students initially showed low confidence and limited ability in English oral communication, especially in fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation. 2) The development of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) lessons incorporated storytelling, role-play, games, and group discussions, aligned with communicative and constructivist theories. 3) The implementation of ABL significantly improved students' oral proficiency, with noticeable progress in fluency, accuracy, and confidence as shown by the increased post-test scores.

Keywords: Activity-Based Learning; English Speaking; Oral Communication.

Introduction

Despite the growing emphasis on English communication skills, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners continue to struggle with oral proficiency. This gap is often attributed to traditional teaching approaches that prioritize grammar, reading, and writing over speaking and listening. As Harmer (2015) notes, the lack of real-life communication opportunities in many classrooms hinders students from developing fluency and confidence in oral English. In Asia, English occupies a complex role as both a foreign and a second language. Countries like Singapore and the Philippines have successfully integrated English into their education systems, promoting it as a medium of instruction. In contrast, in many Southeast Asian countries, including Myanmar, English is taught primarily as a foreign language, often through teacher-centered approaches that emphasize memorization over communication. Ellis (2003) argues that such methods limit students' ability to use English in authentic contexts, leading to low levels of oral proficiency.

The importance of English communication skills has increased significantly in today's global context. Despite the integration of English as a subject in Myanmar's education system, students often struggle with oral proficiency due to traditional lecture-based instruction and limited exposure to practical use. Studies by Harmer (2015), Ellis (2003), and Crystal

(2003) highlight the necessity of integrating active and communicative approaches to language learning. Moreover, research in Asian EFL contexts (Myint & Win, 2017) reveals the persistent gap in speaking skills despite curriculum reforms.

Tha Mae Chaung High School in Myanmar is no exception. Students face challenges in expressing themselves orally in English, leading to low performance and motivation. As a monk and experienced teacher, the researcher identified the need for an interactive and student-centered teaching method to address this issue. Activity-Based Learning (ABL) emerged as a promising approach based on its effectiveness in other EFL settings (Smith & Jones, 2018; Lee & Kim, 2021).

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of ABL in improving oral communication among Grade-9 students through a structured Research and Development (R&D) process conducted during the 2023–2024 academic year. It contributes to educational innovation in Myanmar and supports learners' real-world language use.

Research Objectives

1. To study the condition of English oral communication proficiency of Grade-9 students.
2. To develop Activity-Based Learning lessons to enhance English oral communication.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the developed ABL lessons.

Literature Review

Relevant studies have highlighted the benefits of ABL in language teaching. Harmer (2015) emphasized interaction and practice in communicative learning. Ellis (2003) supported task-based instruction, while Vygotsky's (1978) theory promoted social interaction for learning. Myint & Win (2017) found that Myanmar students lack sufficient speaking opportunities. ABL encourages participation and motivation. However, few studies focus on ABL's impact in the Myanmar context, which this study aims to address.

The integration of activity-based learning (ABL) into English language teaching has been shown to significantly enhance oral communication proficiency. Demonstrates that students who engage in Activity-Based Learning (ABL) activities exhibit notable improvements in fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and overall speaking confidence. Interactive tasks such as role-plays and group discussions create low-anxiety environments where students feel comfortable practicing spoken English, aligning with affective filter hypothesis.

Lee and Kim further highlight that Activity-Based Learning (ABL) increases student motivation and engagement, essential factors in language acquisition. Their study found that students involved in ABL-based speaking activities demonstrated higher levels of participation and enthusiasm compared to those in traditional lecture-based classrooms.

Challenges and Gaps in ABL Research

Despite its documented benefits, implementing Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts presents several challenges. Makki notes that teacher preparedness, limited resources, and rigid curricula can hinder the successful adoption of ABL strategies. Additionally, emphasizes the role of cultural attitudes, which may impact students' willingness to participate in interactive speaking tasks, particularly in non-Western educational settings.

In reviewing the literature, a notable gap is that most ABL research has been conducted in Western or well-resourced contexts, whereas evidence from non-Western EFL contexts (like Myanmar) is limited. The effectiveness of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) strategies might vary depending on local conditions. For instance, a technique proven in a

European language classroom might need adaptation for an Asian classroom with different class sizes or learner backgrounds. There is a need for more studies that examine how Activity-Based Learning (ABL) can be tailored to fit cultural and institutional constraints outside the West. This study addresses that gap by focusing on Myanmar.

Another gap is that much of the Activity-Based Learning (ABL) research in language learning has focused on face-to-face classroom activities, but with technological advances, there are new opportunities for ABL using digital tools. Fewer studies have explored how online or blended Activity-Based Learning (ABL) (such as using educational software, language learning apps, or virtual simulations) can be integrated into language teaching.

As technology becomes ubiquitous, understanding its role in ABL for speaking (e.g., using video calls for speaking practice, virtual reality for immersive role-plays) is an emerging area for research. In summary, while ABL holds great promises for improving oral communication skills, educators and researchers must be mindful of context-specific challenges. Proper training, resource allocation, and cultural sensitization are needed to implement ABL effectively. The literature calls for more nuanced research in diverse settings to establish how ABL can be optimally applied across different educational landscapes.

Conceptual Framework

This research was conducted under the Research and Development (R&D) framework. The researcher adopted Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory and the ADDIE model for instructional design.

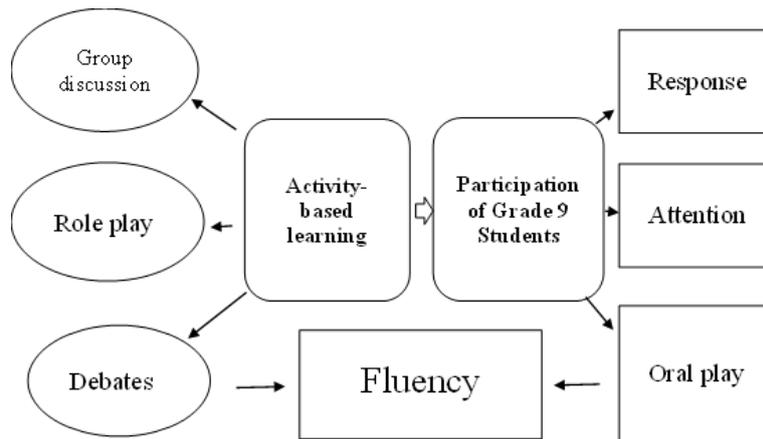


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework.

Research Methodology

The study employed a Research and Development (R&D) design consisting of four phases: (1) studying the current speaking condition (R1); (2) developing ABL lesson plans (D1); (3) implementing and evaluating the lessons (R2); and (4) improving the lessons (D2). Participants included 30 Grade-9 students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, pre-post speaking tests, and reflection. Descriptive statistics and content analysis were applied.

Research Results

Objective 1: Study the problems of English oral communication proficiency for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. General Information about Respondents indicates that the sample of the study was 12 female students, which is calculated at 60.0%, and 8 male students, which is calculated at 40.0%, respectively.

Study the problems of English oral communication proficiency for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. It was found that the overall average was 4.29, 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. 8. The teaching materials are outdated and uninteresting, which makes me feel bored and unwilling to learn English. ($\bar{x} = 4.65$, S.D. = 0.49), and the second item was no. 1. I struggle to find the right words when using English oral communication. ($\bar{x} = 4.55$, S.D. = 0.60), and the third item was no. 5. I avoid English oral communication whenever possible. ($\bar{x} = 4.50$, S.D. = 0.61), and the lowest level was no. 9. I feel shy when standing and doing English oral communication in front of a large audience. ($\bar{x} = 4.00$, S.D. = 0.56). In conclusion, the problems of English oral communication proficiency for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar, were at a very satisfactory level.

Objective 2: The score of the pre-test and post-test in the use experiment of the manual of English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. It is found that the score of the pre-test of the use experiment of the manual English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning. ($\bar{x} = 9.05$, S.D. = 2.61) are lower than post of use experiment of the manual of English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning. ($\bar{x} = 17.55$, S.D. = 1.19).

The comparison between the students' pre-test and post-test in the use of English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. It is found that the pupils who have a post-test score of use of the experiment with the English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning. ($\bar{x} = 17.55$, S.D. = 1.19) are higher than the pre-test scores of the pre-test score of use of the experiment with the English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning. ($\bar{x} = 9.05$, S.D. = 2.61), as statistically significant at 0.5.

Objective 3: It was found that the overall average was 4.36, 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. 8. The lesson encourages students to understand the content better. ($\bar{x} = 4.70$, S.D. = 0.57), and the second item was no. 4. Practicing through activity-based learning has helped me develop my English oral communication proficiency. ($\bar{x} = 4.65$, S.D. = 0.49), and the third item was no.3. Through activity-based learning, practicing speaking English was not stressful at all. ($\bar{x} = 4.50$, S.D. = 0.61), and the lowest level was no.10. The teacher is attentive in teaching, gives advice, helps, and facilitates students in doing activities. ($\bar{x} = 4.15$, S.D. = 0.88), respectively. In conclusion, the students' satisfaction with the English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. which was at a very satisfied level.

Discussion

This research on the “Development of Oral Communication Proficiency through Activity-based Learning for Grade-9 Students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar” is discussed in accordance with the research objectives as follows:

Study the problems of English oral communication proficiency for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. It was found that the overall average was 4.29, 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. 8. The teaching materials are outdated and uninteresting, which makes me feel bored and unwilling to learn English. ($\bar{x} = 4.65$, S.D. = 0.49), and the second item was no. 1. I struggle to find the right words when using English oral communication. ($\bar{x} = 4.55$, S.D. = 0.60), and the third item was no. 5. I avoid English oral communication whenever possible. ($\bar{x} = 4.50$, S.D. = 0.61), and the lowest level was no. 9. I feel shy when standing and doing English oral communication in front of a large audience. ($\bar{x} = 4.00$, S.D. = 0.56). In conclusion, the problems of English oral communication proficiency

for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar, were at a very satisfactory level. According to Pongpanich (2011) studied a study of problems in English speaking in speech communication of management sciences students, Kasetsart University, Sriracha Campus: October 2007 to September 2008. The study results revealed that the students' major problems were 1) a lack of confidence which is resulted from their inadequate knowledge of English language, insufficient amount of vocabulary, and a lack of English communicative skills in real world communication; 2) a lack of ability to express critical thinking and giving a logical reason. In addition, it is found that the students' serious and persistent practices under feedback given and supervised individually made the students feel confident and improve their speaking performance. According to Yaorm (2019) studied the English-speaking problems of undergraduate students in a public University. Therefore, this study investigates English speaking problems in the classroom and techniques or strategies that are used to overcome them. This study is conducted at the Faculty of Arts in a public university at Nakhon Pathom. The findings revealed participants agreed that limited opportunities to practice can lead to English speaking problems in the classroom, followed by grammar rules and structures, the English language learning environment and a lack of English proficiency aspect respectively. Participants mostly agreed with the use of three techniques or strategies to overcome problems with speaking English: adjusting with a clear accent, simplifying vocabulary and ellipsis or removing unnecessary words from the sentence.

Develop the English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. It is found that the pupils who have a post-test score of use of the experiment with the English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning. ($\bar{x} = 17.55$, S.D. = 1.19) are higher than the pre-test scores of the pre-test score of use of the experiment with the English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning. ($\bar{x} = 9.05$, S.D. = 2.61), as statistically significant at 0.5. According to Sararat (2021) "An Application of the four Iddhipāda to Active Learning in English Learning" The results of the research were as follows: 1. The four Iddhipādawere the paths of happiness and success which consisted of: Chanda was satisfaction, Viriya was perseverance, Citta was concentration, and Vimamsā was reasonable consideration. The Buddha had 7 qualities of virtuous friend which were, namely beloved, respected, laudable, talkative, patient with words, very profound speec and not convincing in a bad way. He also had principles in teaching, styles of teaching and various teaching methods which were the ways to apply the four Iddhipādato active learning in English learning.2. The application of the four Iddhipāda to active learning in English learning showed that the lesson plans had the efficiency at 81.75/80.33. The students' English learning achievement showed that the average score after learning was significantly higher than before learning at 0.05 level of significance. According to Wongsrita (2022) studied Development of English-Speaking Skills and Confidence in Speaking English for Communication Using the Storytelling Technique Based on The Freytag's Pyramid Structure for Grade 4 Students. The results of the research showed that 1) English speaking for communication skills of grade 4 students after learning through the storytelling technique based on the Freytag's pyramid structure were significantly higher than before learning at a statistical significance level of .05, 2) English speaking for communication skills of grade 4 students after learning through the storytelling technique based on the Freytag's pyramid structure showed no difference with the specified criteria of 75% at a statistical significance level of .05, and 3) the level of grade 4 students' confidence in speaking English for communication was at a high level.

Study the satisfaction with English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. It was found that the overall average was 4.36, 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. 8.

The lesson encourages students to understand the content better. ($\bar{x} = 4.70$, S.D. = 0.57), and the second item was no. 4. Practicing through activity-based learning has helped me develop my English oral communication proficiency. ($\bar{x} = 4.65$, S.D. = 0.49), and the third item was no.3. Through activity-based learning, practicing speaking English was not stressful at all. ($\bar{x} = 4.50$, S.D. = 0.61), and the lowest level was no.10. The teacher is attentive in teaching, gives advice, helps, and facilitates students in doing activities. ($\bar{x} = 4.15$, S.D. = 0.88), respectively. In conclusion, the students' satisfaction with the English oral communication proficiency through activity-based learning for grade 9 students at Tha Mae Chaung High School, Myanmar. which was at a very satisfied level. According to Chinsorn (2018) studied the satisfaction of students in studying fundamental English subject at Rajamangala University of Technology Thanyaburi. The findings of the research were as follows: 1. Satisfaction of students towards on contents; teaching methods and activities; media and facilities as a whole is at a moderate level ($\bar{x} = 3.19$). When considered in each aspect, it is found that their satisfaction is at a high level on contents ($\bar{x} = 3.77$), teaching methods and activities ($\bar{x} = 3.78$), media and facilities ($\bar{x} = 3.54$) on respectively. 2. The overview result of student's satisfactory level is in a high level ($\bar{x} = 3.82$). According to Mattananan (2022) studied The Development of English Speaking Skills by Using the Cooperative Learning Technique for Grade 9 Students in Prankrataipittayakom, Kamphaengphet. The results showed that the student's speaking skills by using cooperative learning technique according to Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) in level A2 and the student's satisfaction towards the develop of speaking skills by using cooperative learning technique was at high levels of satisfaction.

Knowledge from Research

This study contributes a set of structured ABL lesson plans tailored for Grade-9 learners in Myanmar. It shows that ABL is effective in low-resource contexts for developing communication skills.

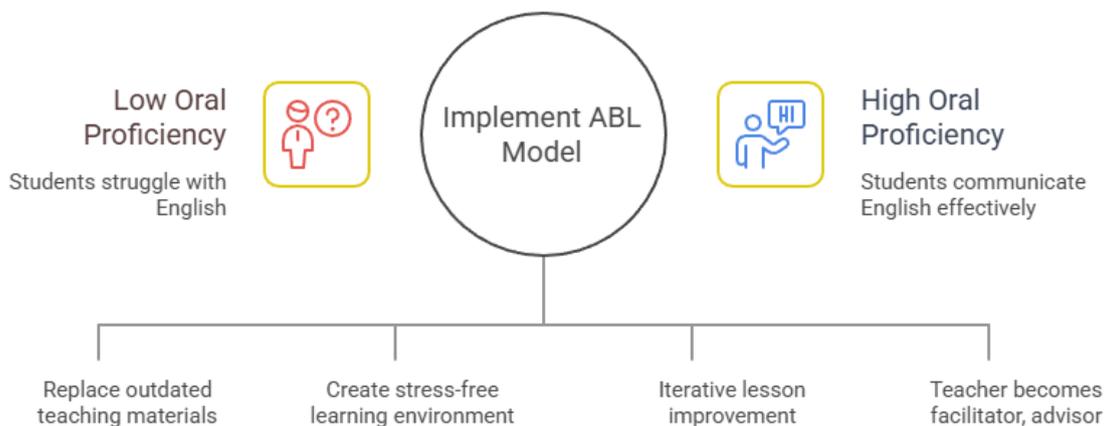


Fig.1: Knowledge from Research.

Conclusion

Media-Driven Motivation: The research reveals that teaching materials are the primary catalyst for student engagement. By replacing outdated resources with interesting, activity-oriented tools, the boredom barrier is removed, directly addressing the highest-rated problem.

The Low-Affective Filter Effect: ABL creates a stress-free learning environment. By shifting the focus from formal performance to active participation, students naturally

overcome the tendency to avoid English communication and reduce the anxiety associated with finding the "right words."

Significant Proficiency Leap: The methodology proves that a structured R&D process-moving from problem identification to iterative lesson improvement-leads to a statistically significant doubling of proficiency scores (from 9.05 to 17.55). This validates ABL as a high-impact intervention for Myanmar high school students.

Pedagogical Shift: The New Knowledge emphasizes that a teacher's role should evolve into a facilitator and advisor. While students value teacher attention, they find the greatest cognitive growth through the lessons' ability to encourage self-understanding

Summary Statement: Effective oral communication development is not achieved through rote memorization, but through a synergy of modernized teaching materials and low-stress activity-based tasks that prioritize student engagement over formal accuracy.

Suggestions

1. Suggestions for Organizing

- 1) The teacher should offer individualized guidance and sustained encouragement is crucial for enhancing students' English oral communication proficiency abilities and maintaining their motivation to learn English.
- 2) The teacher should monitor each student's progress closely to pinpoint specific areas requiring improvement, such as pronunciation, fluency, and confidence.
- 3) The teacher should provide consistent, constructive feedback along with positive reinforcement to help students overcome anxiety and build self-assurance in English oral communication proficiency.

2. Suggestions for Further Study

- 1) Future research should consider exploring additional components of English oral communication proficiency, including aspects such as connected speech, fluency, intonation patterns, and stress.
- 2) Future research should studies are recommended to classify learners according to their English proficiency levels (e.g., beginner, intermediate, advanced).
- 3) Future research continues utilizing Activity-based Learning in conjunction with multimedia and interactive learning tools.

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