

Improving Grade 6 Students' English Speaking Skills Through the Communicative Approach at Government High School No.1, Myitkyina, Myanmar

Ven. Agganyarni¹, Tran Thi Bich Thao²

Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University¹, Srinakharinwirot University², Thailand
Email: thu969thu77@gmail.com¹, tranthao@g.swu.ac.th²

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Abstract

This study aimed to improve the English speaking skills of Grade 6 students at Government High School No.1 in Myitkyina, Myanmar through the application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. The research was motivated by persistent deficiencies in oral English proficiency among Myanmar primary learners, where traditional instruction has been largely grammar-focused and lacking in communicative practice. A quasi-experimental one-group pre-test/post-test design was employed over six months (October 2024–March 2025). Twenty Grade 6 students (out of 45) were purposively selected as the sample.

The intervention consisted of eight weekly lessons using CLT techniques such as role-plays, pair work, group discussions, interviews, and language games, all integrated with the Grade 6 English curriculum. Speaking performance was measured before and after the intervention using an analytic rubric assessing four criteria: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and interaction. Supplementary data were collected via a student attitude survey and classroom observations to capture qualitative changes in confidence and participation.

The results showed a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking performance after the intervention (paired *t*-test, $p < 0.05$). Post-test scores were markedly higher across all four speaking aspects, indicating gains in fluency, clearer pronunciation, broader vocabulary usage, and more active conversational interaction. Survey responses also reflected increased student confidence and enjoyment in speaking activities, and observations noted greater student engagement and reduced anxiety during English speaking tasks. The findings demonstrate that the Communicative Approach is effective in enhancing young EFL learners' speaking skills in a Myanmar public school context. This study's outcomes offer practical implications for English language teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in Myanmar by providing an evidence-based model for implementing learner-centered, communicative pedagogy at the primary school level.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching; speaking skills; EFL education.

Introduction

English plays a central role as a global language of education, science, and international communication, with the majority of scientific and technical knowledge disseminated in English (Crystal, 2003). In Myanmar, English is included in the national curriculum from primary to tertiary education to support learners' access to global knowledge and international engagement (Gaynor, 2021). However, the effectiveness of English language education is strongly influenced by pedagogical approaches adopted in classrooms. In Myanmar's public school system, English instruction has traditionally relied on teacher-centered methods, particularly the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which prioritizes grammatical knowledge and reading skills while offering limited opportunities for oral communication (Lwin, 2019). Consequently, many learners complete primary education with insufficient English speaking ability and low communicative confidence (Thane, 2024).

This challenge is especially pronounced at the Grade 6 level, a critical transition stage where students are expected to begin using English more independently (Gaynor, 2021). Evidence from public schools, including Government High School No.1 in Myitkyina, indicates that many Grade 6 students exhibit low speaking proficiency, characterized by hesitation, restricted vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and limited classroom participation (Lwin, 2019). These outcomes are associated with structural and pedagogical constraints such as large class sizes, limited teacher preparation in interactive language teaching, culturally rooted anxiety about making errors, and instructional materials that remain largely textbook- and examination-oriented (Thane, 2024). As a result, students have minimal exposure to authentic communicative use of English during primary education.

In response to these limitations, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been increasingly promoted as an alternative pedagogical approach. Developed as a response to form-focused language teaching, CLT emphasizes meaningful communication, learner interaction, and the development of communicative competence rather than the mastery of grammatical rules alone (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Classroom practices associated with CLT—such as role-plays, information-gap activities, group tasks, and problem-solving exercises—provide learners with opportunities to use language in realistic contexts (Brown & Lee, 2015), thereby fostering fluency, accuracy, and confidence. The effectiveness of CLT is further supported by established theories of second language acquisition, which highlight the importance of meaningful input, learner output, interaction, and affective factors in language development.

Empirical studies conducted in ASEAN contexts, including Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia, have reported positive effects of CLT on learners' speaking performance, participation, and communicative competence (Pham, 2007; Savignon, 2018). Nevertheless, the application of CLT within Myanmar's public primary education remains limited, particularly in less urbanized regions such as Myitkyina. Furthermore, existing research in Myanmar has largely focused on secondary or tertiary education, leaving a notable lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of CLT for primary-level learners.

Aligned with the Myanmar Ministry of Education's National Education Strategic Plan (NESP 2016–2021), which emphasizes learner-centered and competency-based instruction, the present study addresses this gap by implementing a CLT-based intervention in a Grade 6 public school classroom (Ministry of Education, 2016). The study aims to examine the effectiveness of CLT in enhancing students' English speaking skills and to contribute empirical evidence to inform pedagogical practices and policy development in Myanmar's primary education context.

Research Objectives

- 1) To investigate the existing problems in English speaking skill development among Grade 6 students at Government High School
- 2) To develop and implement a set of communicative English lessons tailored for these Grade 6 students – using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach and age-appropriate interactive activities – in order to provide more opportunities for students to practice speaking English in meaningful contexts.
- 3) To evaluate the effectiveness of the Communicative Approach in improving the students' English speaking skills – assessing post-intervention outcomes in terms of students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and interactive communication, and comparing them to the pre-intervention baseline.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations Language Development and Learning The ability to speak a second language effectively is supported by insights from developmental psychology and second language acquisition theory. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development indicates that 11 - 12 year-old children (the typical age of Grade 6) are in the *concrete operational stage*, (Piaget, 1952) meaning they learn best through concrete experiences and social interaction rather than through abstract rules. Language instruction for learners at this stage should thus be interactive and context-based. In other words, children will grasp and retain language more effectively if they are actively using it in realistic situations (telling a story, role-playing, etc.) instead of merely memorizing grammar rules. Complementing this, Lev Vygotsky's Social Development Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development suggests (Vygotsky, 1978) that with appropriate scaffolding and peer collaboration, children can perform at a higher level than they would independently. Applied to language learning, this means students benefit from communicative activities (like pair or group work) where they can support each other, practice dialogues, and receive feedback in real time. Such interactive practice helps learners bridge the gap between their current speaking ability and their potential ability. Additionally, Stephen Krashen's Second Language Acquisition hypotheses provide a rationale for a communicative approach: according to Krashen, language acquisition is driven by exposure to *comprehensible input* slightly above the learner's current level (his *i+1* principle), delivered in a low-anxiety setting. In a CLT classroom, students are indeed immersed in meaningful input (teacher's and peers' speech) that stretches their understanding. Krashen also noted the importance of the *Affective Filter* – emotional factors like anxiety or motivation can block or facilitate acquisition (Krashen, 1982). By fostering a friendly, game-like environment, communicative activities lower anxiety and thus help more English input “get through” to the learners. Furthermore, Merrill Swain's *Output Hypothesis* (Swain, 1985) argues that producing language (speaking or writing) is not just a result of learning but a driver of it: when learners attempt to speak, they notice gaps in their knowledge, adjust their language, and improve through practice. This underscores why ample speaking practice is essential – it pushes students to actively formulate language, leading to better fluency and accuracy over time.

Conceptual Framework

This study establishes a conceptual framework to examine the causal relationship between Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the learning outcomes of Grade 6 students in Myanmar. The framework is structured as follows:

Independent Variable (IV): The implementation of the CLT approach, utilizing learner-centered strategies such as interactive tasks and group work over an eight-week intervention period.

Dependent Variables (DVs):

- **Speaking Performance:** Evaluated across four key dimensions: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and interaction ability.
- **Affective Outcomes:** Focusing on enhanced confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate.

Theoretical Foundations: The framework is grounded in Cognitive-Developmental, Sociocultural, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories. These theories posit that a communicative environment optimizes linguistic input/output while simultaneously reducing communication anxiety.

In summary, this framework serves as a blueprint for the research design, illustrating how engaging students in meaningful communicative processes directly drives improvements in both linguistic proficiency and learner attitudes.

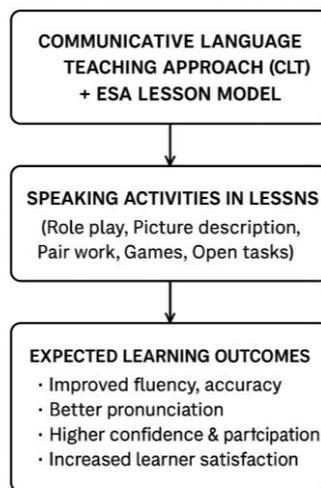


Fig.1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

Research Design: This study employed a quasi-experimental research design, specifically a one-group pretest–posttest design, to examine the effects of a communicative teaching intervention on students' English speaking skills. In the absence of a control group, the participants served as their own controls, with performance compared before and after the intervention. Methodologically, the study incorporated elements of Research and Development (R&D) combined with experimental research, involving the design of a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)-based instructional model, its classroom implementation, and subsequent evaluation of learning outcomes.

The research was conducted over approximately six months, following the school's academic schedule. Baseline data were collected in October 2024, the instructional intervention was implemented from November 2024 to January 2025, and post-intervention assessments and feedback collection were completed in February 2025.

Participants and Sampling: The target population consisted of Grade 6 students at Government High School No.1 in Myitkyina, Kachin State. The total Grade 6 cohort included 45 students aged approximately 11–12 years. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select one intact class of 20 students deemed representative of the grade level in terms of English proficiency, gender distribution, and academic background. All participants were native speakers of Myanmar language and learned English as a foreign language within the public school curriculum. None had significant exposure to English outside the classroom.

Ethical considerations were observed prior to data collection. Permission was obtained from school administrators, and verbal assent was secured from students and their parents, as all research activities were integrated into regular instructional time.

Intervention – Communicative Lessons: The independent variable introduced was a set of eight communicative English lesson plans designed by the researcher, aimed at improving speaking skills. These lessons were crafted based on content from the Grade 6 English syllabus but taught using CLT techniques. Each lesson was 60 minutes, delivered once a week as part of the English class schedule. The lesson topics included everyday communicative situations relevant to Grade 6 students, such as *introductions and greetings, describing daily routines, talking about family, asking for and giving directions, shopping and prices*, etc. These topics corresponded to units in the curriculum but were expanded into interactive activities. Key features of the lessons included: (a) pair and group activities (for example, dialogues, role-play scenarios, information gap tasks where students had to speak to complete an activity); (b) minimal use of Burmese language – English was the primary medium for communication in class to simulate an immersive environment; (c) use of visual aids and realia (pictures, maps, objects) to provide context and support understanding; and (d) a focus on student talk time – students were encouraged to speak as much as possible, with the teacher facilitating and offering prompts rather than lecturing. For instance, in one lesson on giving directions, students worked in pairs with a city map: one student asked for directions to a place and the other gave directions in English, practicing relevant phrases (“turn left,” “go straight,” etc.). In another lesson about shopping, students role-played a customer and a shopkeeper to practice a transactional dialogue in English. Throughout the intervention, the teacher took on the role of a coach – introducing language as needed (vocabulary or sentence patterns) but quickly moving to practice activities. Mistakes in grammar or pronunciation were generally not corrected on the spot unless they impeded communication; instead, feedback was given after activities to avoid interrupting the flow of conversation. This approach was intended to create a safe, enjoyable environment in which students felt comfortable speaking without fear.

Data Collection Instruments: Multiple instruments were used to gather data corresponding to both the linguistic and affective outcomes:

Speaking Skill Tests: Two equivalent speaking tests – a Pre-test and a Post-test – were developed to quantitatively assess students’ speaking performance before and after the intervention. Each test consisted of five structured speaking tasks (such as introducing oneself, describing a picture, answering simple questions, engaging in a short role-play, and telling a short story from prompts). These tasks covered a range of speaking skills from controlled to more open-ended responses. The format and difficulty of the post-test mirrored the pre-test to ensure comparability. Students’ performances were audio-recorded and scored by the researcher (and an assistant teacher for cross-checking) using a speaking assessment rubric. The rubric, adapted from standard ESL speaking rubrics, included four criteria: *Fluency* (flow of speech), *Pronunciation* (including accent and clarity), *Vocabulary and Grammar* (adequacy and accuracy of words/structures used), and *Interactive Communication* (ability to maintain conversation, respond, and clarify). Each criterion was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = very weak, 5 = very strong). Thus, each student’s total speaking score could range from 4 to 20 points. The rubric was validated by three experienced English teachers for content validity (using Item-Objective Congruence index) prior to use. Inter-rater reliability was also checked: the researcher and assistant independently scored a sample of recordings and achieved a high agreement (Pearson $r > 0.85$), indicating the scoring was consistent. These measures ensured the speaking test results would accurately reflect true improvements rather than subjective bias.

Student Attitude Survey: To capture changes in the students’ attitudes and confidence regarding English speaking, a questionnaire was administered immediately before

and after the intervention. The survey was a simple 10-item instrument with statements about the student's feelings and self-assessed abilities in speaking (for example, "I feel confident speaking English in class," "I enjoy activities like role-plays and games in English," "I can introduce myself in English," etc.). Students rated each statement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The survey was administered in the students' native language (Myanmar language) to ensure comprehension of the statements. The difference between the pre-intervention and post-intervention responses would indicate any shifts in confidence, anxiety, or enjoyment as a result of the communicative approach.

Classroom Observation Checklist: Throughout the 8-week intervention, the researcher kept a weekly observation log focusing on student engagement and behavior during speaking activities. A checklist was used to note the frequency of certain behaviors (e.g. number of students volunteering to speak, incidences of students using English spontaneously, signs of enthusiasm or boredom, instances of peer support or conversely off-task behavior). These qualitative observations were important for contextualizing the test and survey results – for example, noting whether students became more relaxed and active over time. Additionally, at the end of the program, a brief focus group discussion was held in the class (informally) where students were asked how they felt about the new activities compared to their usual English lessons. This provided some anecdotal evidence and student voice to complement the quantitative data.

Data Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques were applied. The pre-test and post-test speaking scores for each student were compared using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics. Given the one-group design, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether the improvement in speaking scores from pre-test to post-test was statistically significant. The significance level was set at 0.05. Assumptions for the *t*-test (such as normal distribution of score differences) were checked and met; with a sample of 20, the test could reliably detect a medium to large effect size. In addition to overall scores, improvements in each rubric category (fluency, pronunciation, etc.) were examined descriptively to see if any aspect improved more or less than others (though no separate significance tests were run per category due to the small sample). The survey data were analyzed by calculating the mean rating for each item pre- and post-intervention. The change in these mean ratings was used to assess gains in confidence and attitude. Because the sample was small, the survey results are presented mainly in narrative form (e.g., "the average rating for confidence increased from 2.1 to 4.0 out of 5" etc.) rather than through formal statistical tests. The observation notes and student feedback were reviewed and thematically summarized to identify trends (such as increased participation or remaining challenges). Triangulation was done by comparing the findings from the test, survey, and observations to get a comprehensive picture: for instance, a rise in test scores coupled with positive survey responses and lively observations would strongly indicate success of the intervention. All analyses were done manually and with the help of simple spreadsheet software for calculations of means and *t*-test. The results are presented in the next section with appropriate tables and commentary.

Research Results

After implementing the eight-week communicative teaching intervention, data from the pre-test and post-test, surveys, and observations were analyzed to address each research objective. The findings are summarized below.

Baseline Speaking Skills (Pre-Intervention): The initial assessment confirmed that students' English speaking skills were quite limited before the intervention, which corresponds to Objective 1 (identifying existing problems). On the pre-test, many students could only give

very brief responses or needed prompting to speak. Common issues included long pauses (disfluency), mispronunciation of basic words, reliance on a few simple vocabulary items, and minimal interaction (students tended not to elaborate or ask for clarification). Using the 5-point scoring rubric, the class's mean scores in each category were around the "Needs Improvement" level. Specifically, as Table 1 shows, the average Fluency score before the intervention was approximately 2.0 out of 5 (indicating halting, hesitant speech) and Pronunciation averaged about 1.9 (many words not clearly or correctly pronounced). Average Vocabulary use was rated 2.2 (students had very limited word choice), and Interaction ability was also about 2.2 (students struggled to engage in dialogue). These low baseline scores quantitatively illustrate the challenges noted earlier – most Grade 6 students were far from fluent, and some were nearly unable to express themselves in English beyond a few memorized phrases. In classroom terms, this meant that prior to the intervention, English speaking activities were often met with silence or one-word answers, and students rarely initiated any English conversation. This finding validated the need for a new teaching approach to boost oral skills.

Speaking Performance After CLT Intervention: Following the two-month CLT intervention, there was a marked improvement in students' speaking abilities, fulfilling Objective 3 of the study. The post-test results showed that students spoke more confidently and competently. Table 1 below presents the class average scores on the pre- and post-tests for each aspect of speaking, illustrating the gains made.

Table 1. Pre-test vs. Post-test Mean Speaking Scores by Aspect (5-point scale)

Speaking Skill	Mean Pre-test Score	Mean Post-test Score
Fluency (flow of speech)	2.0	3.9
Pronunciation (clarity & accuracy)	1.9	3.8
Vocabulary (range & usage)	2.2	4.0
Interaction (conversation skills)	2.2	4.0

As shown in Table 1, the students' mean scores nearly doubled on the 5-point scale for all four criteria after the communicative lessons. In the pre-test, most aspects hovered around 2 ("low" proficiency), whereas in the post-test they rose to approximately 4 ("good" proficiency). Fluency improved from a very halting level (mean ~2.0) to a much smoother level (mean ~3.9), indicating that by the end, students could speak in longer phrases or sentences with less pausing. Pronunciation likewise rose from about 1.9 to 3.8; students' speech became noticeably clearer, and many corrected previous mispronunciations of common words. Vocabulary usage showed one of the largest gains (from ~2.2 to 4.0) – post-test conversations revealed students using a wider range of appropriate words and even some new expressions they learned during the intervention. Finally, interaction skills (such as responding appropriately or taking turns in conversation) climbed from ~2.2 to 4.0. By the post-test, students were far more engaged; they could carry on a brief dialogue, ask simple follow-up questions, and needed less prompting to continue speaking. The improvements were quite uniform across the class: all 20 students showed some degree of progress, and most moved from "poor" to "fair/good" ability. For instance, one student who initially could barely string together a sentence was able, post-intervention, to speak in several sentences about her daily routine. A statistical analysis using a paired *t*-test confirmed that the increase in overall speaking scores (combined across criteria) was significant at the 0.05 level, meaning it is very unlikely to have occurred by chance. In fact, the average total score per student increased from about 8/20 points (pre-test) to 16/20 points (post-test) – effectively doubling their speaking performance. This provides strong evidence that the CLT approach had a positive impact. It should be noted that pronunciation, while much improved, remained slightly weaker on average than vocabulary and interaction in the post-test (3.8 vs 4.0). This is understandable, as achieving near-native pronunciation is a longer-term process; however, even in this area the progress was evident

(many students moved from very hard-to-understand speech to generally clear articulation with only minor errors). In summary, the one-group pre/post comparison demonstrates that Objective 3 was met: students' English speaking proficiency significantly increased after exposure to communicative, interactive lessons.

Student Attitudes and Engagement: In addition to test scores, the study observed notable positive shifts in the students' attitudes toward speaking English, which addresses the "satisfaction and engagement" aspect mentioned in the objectives. Before the intervention, many students felt anxious about speaking and viewed English class as difficult or intimidating. The pre-intervention survey reflected this: for example, on a statement "I feel confident speaking English in class," the average rating was only about 2.1 out of 5, indicating most students disagreed (lacked confidence). Similarly, the item "I enjoy speaking activities (like dialogues or games)" had a modest pre-test mean of ~2.8 (slightly below neutral), suggesting that prior to this study, students were not particularly enjoying the speaking elements of English lessons. After the communicative intervention, these attitudes improved dramatically. The post-intervention survey showed that confidence in speaking English rose to an average of approximately 4.0 out of 5, meaning the majority of students now agreed that they felt confident to speak. Students' self-reported enjoyment of speaking tasks also increased to about 4.2 out of 5 on the Likert scale. This represents a shift from ambivalence to clear agreement that they find such activities fun and engaging. In fact, by the end of the program, many students commented (informally) that English class had become one of their favorite classes because "we get to talk and play games, not just read and write." The survey also included items on specific speaking situations which corresponded to the lesson topics. For instance, "I can introduce myself in English" was rated quite positively even before (mean ~3.6), and it further improved to ~4.5 after the lessons – nearly every student felt fully comfortable doing a self-introduction after ample practice. More striking were gains in areas that were initially very weak. An item like "I know how to ask for directions in English" had one of the lowest pre-survey scores (~1.9, meaning most students *strongly* felt they could not do this) but jumped to ~3.5 post-survey. Similarly, ability to handle a buying/selling conversation rose from ~2.2 to ~3.8. These improvements align with the content of the communicative lessons (directions, shopping dialogues, etc.), indicating the students recognized their own skill development in those practical areas. Another noteworthy change was in the students' preference for learning methods: initially, some were unsure if learning through games or group work would be useful (pre-survey mean ~3.7 on "I like learning English through games, role-plays"), but after experiencing it, they strongly endorsed it (post mean ~4.6). This suggests that the communicative approach not only taught them language but also positively influenced their mindset about language learning – they discovered that learning English can be enjoyable and effective at the same time. Finally, motivation remained high throughout; even at the start, most students expressed a desire to improve their speaking (mean ~4.3 on "I want to improve..."), and by the end this was near a unanimous ~4.7 agreement. In other words, the intervention did nothing to dampen their intrinsic motivation – if anything, seeing their own progress made them *more* motivated to continue learning English.

These quantitative attitude changes were clearly visible in class. Classroom observations noted a transformation in student engagement from the first to the last week of the program. Initially, during the first couple of communicative lessons, many students were hesitant – a number of them were very shy to speak aloud, and activities proceeded slowly. However, as weeks went by, observers recorded that more and more students volunteered for role-plays and participated eagerly in speaking games. By Week 8, the classroom atmosphere was markedly more lively: students were observed laughing, using English phrases spontaneously (even outside of structured activities), and encouraging classmates who were speaking. The teacher's log for the final lesson noted that "nearly every student spoke up during

the group discussion, a stark contrast to the silence at the beginning.” Students who once would hide at the back to avoid being called on were raising their hands to contribute. Additionally, their *anxiety visibly decreased*: for example, mistakes that previously would have embarrassed them into silence were now taken in stride – students would often self-correct or ask “How do I say in English?” without fear. The supportive, fun environment cultivated by the CLT approach (where mistakes were treated as learning opportunities and activities had a game-like element) likely played a big role in this change. By the end of the intervention, the Grade 6 students not only could *speak* better, but they also *wanted* to speak, which is a crucial outcome for sustaining language development. In summary, the results demonstrate that employing a Communicative Approach had a multi-faceted positive impact on the Grade 6 students: it significantly improved their objective speaking proficiency (as measured by tests), and it also enhanced their subjective confidence and enthusiasm for speaking English (as evidenced by surveys and observations). These findings suggest that the CLT model implemented can be an effective strategy for similar learner groups.

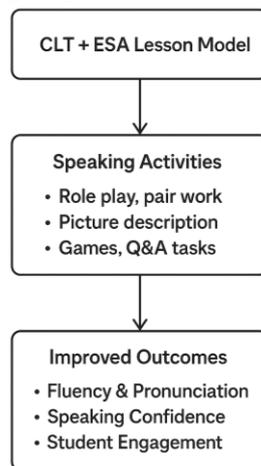


Fig.2: CLT model

Discussion

The outcomes of this study provide clear evidence that a Communicative Approach can substantially benefit young learners’ English speaking skills in the Myanmar public school context. In the discussion below, we interpret these results in light of the research objectives and connect them to the theoretical and empirical literature. We also consider implications for teaching practice, acknowledge limitations, and suggest directions for future research.

Improvement in Speaking Skills: The significant gains observed in students’ fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and interaction confirm the central premise of CLT – that engaging learners in meaningful communication leads to improved communicative competence. By the end of the intervention, students were not only performing better in structured speaking tasks, but they were also more adept at spontaneous conversation. This aligns with findings from previous research globally and regionally: communicative language teaching interventions have consistently led to more fluent and confident language use among learners. For example, in Thailand and Vietnam, similar improvements in oral proficiency were reported when traditional methods were replaced with interactive, content-based or task-based learning (Tan & Tan, 2020). Our study contributes local empirical support to these trends, demonstrating that even in a setting with historically rote learning traditions, young students can markedly improve their speaking ability when given the right pedagogical approach. The increase in mean speaking scores (from roughly 40% to 80% of the total points) is quite dramatic for an eight-week program. One likely reason for this success is the frequency and quality of speaking opportunities that students had during the CLT lessons – something notably

absent in the previous teaching model. Each student got multiple chances each week to speak English in a supportive setting, which helped convert their passive knowledge into active skills. This finding echoes Swain's Output Hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of producing language: through role-plays and discussions, students had to retrieve vocabulary and formulate sentences on the spot, thereby refining their speaking competence. Additionally, by working in pairs/groups, students could learn from each other and practice in a low-pressure environment (as opposed to speaking in front of the whole class), which likely contributed to their improved performance.

Enhanced Confidence and Lowered Anxiety: One of the most significant outcomes of this study is the boost in students' confidence and positive attitude toward speaking English. Initially, fear of making mistakes and cultural shyness were major barriers preventing students from speaking up. After the intervention, we observed a marked change: students became more willing to speak and even *enjoyed* the process of learning English through communication. This transformation can be interpreted through Krashen's Affective Filter theory – when anxiety is lowered and motivation is raised, learners can acquire language more successfully. The communicative activities in our program (games, collaborative tasks, etc.) helped create a friendly and fun classroom climate. Errors were not stigmatized; instead, students often laughed them off or corrected themselves without feeling embarrassed. This supportive atmosphere likely caused a drop in each student's affective filter, enabling them to absorb more language input and take more risks in speaking. Our observation that previously reticent students began volunteering answers and initiating English conversation by the end is a qualitative testament to this affective change. These findings are consistent with other research highlighting the affective benefits of CLT. For instance, Punthumasen (2007) noted that one reason students often “do not want to learn” in traditional classes is that the teaching methodology is not interesting or engaging. In our study, once the lessons became interactive and enjoyable, students' willingness to participate skyrocketed. This suggests that a communicative approach not only builds language skills but also can rejuvenate a classroom's learning culture, turning passive learners into active communicators. This is an important implication for educators in Myanmar: by adopting more student-centered techniques, teachers might overcome long-standing issues of student passivity and reluctance in English classes.

Alignment with Theoretical Expectations: The improvements in specific skill areas correspond well with the theoretical framework discussed earlier. For example, the broad improvements across all four rubric categories (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, interaction) indicate a holistic development of communicative competence, which is precisely the goal of CLT. Students learned to speak more fluently – likely because of increased *automaticity* from frequent practice, a concept H. D. Brown (2007) cites as fundamental to skill acquisition. They improved pronunciation, which can be partly attributed to the ample listening and repeating of functional phrases during activities (reflecting some natural acquisition akin to the Direct Method's philosophy of learning through use). The significant growth in vocabulary can be tied to the content-based aspect of the lessons: each week's topic introduced new thematic words (for family, shopping, etc.) that students immediately put to use, reinforcing retention. This supports Nation's (2008) emphasis that vocabulary is learned effectively when it's taught in context and used interactively. Perhaps most importantly, the students' interaction skills (turn-taking, responding, asking questions) improved markedly – a result that can be credited to the social-interactive nature of the tasks, in line with Vygotskian theory. Vygotsky's idea that social interaction drives cognitive and linguistic development was borne out by seeing students become better conversationalists after weeks of structured peer interaction. In essence, our findings illustrate how the interplay of comprehensible input, pushed output, and social engagement – as predicted by Krashen, Swain, and Vygotsky, respectively – yielded tangible improvements in speaking proficiency.

Pedagogical and Policy Implications: The success of this intervention carries several implications for English teaching in Myanmar and similar EFL contexts. Firstly, it provides a model of CLT lesson implementation that can be adapted by other teachers. The fact that one teacher with limited resources could integrate role-plays, group work, and communicative games into the regular curriculum—and achieve results—suggests that these methods are feasible in government school classrooms. Teachers may need training and support to shift from traditional methods to CLT, but this study shows that even within a constrained environment (large class, limited technology), a motivated teacher can create communicative opportunities. Education authorities and school administrators should consider providing professional development workshops on communicative teaching techniques, using lesson plans like the ones developed in this study as exemplars. Secondly, the improvement in student attitudes is particularly pertinent to curriculum developers. One consistent challenge in Myanmar’s English education has been low student engagement. Our findings suggest that revising the curriculum to include more interactive speaking tasks and reducing the overemphasis on rote memorization could greatly enhance student engagement and outcomes. This is very much in line with Myanmar’s National Education Strategic Plan (Ministry of Education, 2016), which calls for more learner-centered approaches. The positive results of this research can be used to advocate for policy changes that encourage communicative pedagogy – for instance, updating textbooks to have communicative exercises, or adjusting assessment methods to include oral performance (which would incentivize teachers to teach speaking, not just reading/writing). Additionally, the outcomes speak to broader educational goals: students who are more confident in English speaking will likely perform better in higher education and have improved employment prospects in the future (Myo Myint Thu, 2020). Thus, investing in methodologies that build speaking and listening skills early on can have long-term benefits for human capital development in Myanmar.

Comparisons with Other Studies: It is useful to compare these results with other research in similar domains. In Thailand, Darasawang (2007) documented the national shift to CLT and noted initial difficulties like teacher resistance and large class sizes – issues also present in Myanmar. However, over time Thai students’ proficiency improved as teachers gained more experience with CLT. Our study, on a micro level, mirrors that trajectory: initial challenges gave way to success as both teacher and students adapted to the new approach. In another study, Matsuda (2011) found that sustained teacher development in CLT approaches in Southeast Asia led to more effective communicative classrooms. This reinforces the idea that training and time are key – our short-term study showed impressive gains, but sustaining and scaling these gains would require continuous support. Interestingly, one difference in our findings compared to some others is that we did not find any aspect of speaking that failed to improve. For example, some research has reported that certain skills (like grammar accuracy) might lag in CLT contexts. In our case, while we didn’t measure grammar knowledge directly, the speaking rubric included an aspect of grammatical correctness within the broader criteria, and there was improvement there too. Students seemed to internalize certain patterns through use (for instance, consistently using past tense “went” correctly by the end when telling a story, which they often got wrong at the beginning). This suggests that even grammar can improve through communicative practice – a stance supported by researchers like Rod Ellis, who argue that form and meaning need not be dichotomous but can be learned together in context (Ellis, 2006). It would be interesting, however, in future research to examine writing or grammar test results to see if purely formal knowledge also benefited indirectly from the approach.

In conclusion, the discussion affirms that the communicative, student-centered approach adopted in this study was effective in achieving its aims. The positive results contribute to the growing body of evidence that communicative language teaching can be successfully applied in Southeast Asian classrooms, including Myanmar, to produce tangible

improvements in learners' speaking abilities and confidence. This addresses a crucial gap in Myanmar's EFL education by demonstrating a viable pathway to overcome the long-standing issue of poor speaking proficiency among school students. The challenge moving forward will be to sustain and scale such approaches within the education system, ensuring that more students can benefit from learning English in a way that truly enables them to communicate.

Knowledge from Research

This study contributes meaningful knowledge to English language pedagogy, educational policy, and applied linguistics. First, it provides empirical evidence that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can effectively enhance English speaking skills of Grade 6 students in a Myanmar public school context, addressing a notable gap in primary-level research. The findings support the integration of communicative approaches into basic education curricula to improve oral language outcomes.

The research offers a practical CLT-based instructional framework through a set of structured, curriculum-aligned lesson plans that demonstrate how communicative activities can be implemented within typical classroom constraints and without extensive resources. This framework serves as a replicable model for teachers and teacher education programs in similar EFL contexts.

Beyond linguistic gains, the study highlights the role of affective factors in language learning, showing that interactive instruction can significantly increase students' confidence, engagement, and willingness to communicate. These findings reinforce the importance of learner-centered and low-anxiety environments in achieving sustainable language development.

In summary the study contributes theoretically by contextualizing CLT within Myanmar's educational and cultural setting, demonstrating that core principles of communicative language learning are transferable when appropriately adapted. At the policy level, the results align with national goals for learner-centered and competency-based education, offering practical insights for bridging the gap between educational reform policy and classroom implementation.

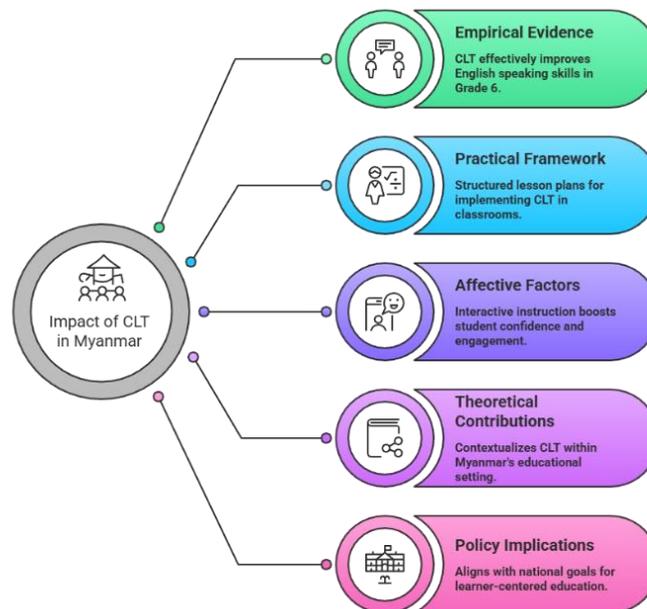


Fig.2: Knowledge from Research

Conclusion

This study set out to improve and evaluate Grade 6 students' English speaking skills through a Communicative Approach at a government school in Myitkyina, Myanmar. The results were resoundingly positive. After an eight-week intervention featuring interactive, learner-centered activities, the students demonstrated significantly higher speaking proficiency across multiple dimensions, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and interactive communication. They moved from being mostly hesitant, one-word responders to being able to express themselves in extended speech with reasonable clarity and confidence. These improvements were statistically significant and practically meaningful. Moreover, the students developed a more positive attitude towards learning English: they became more confident, motivated, and actively engaged in speaking tasks. In effect, the classroom was transformed from a traditionally quiet, teacher-led environment into a vibrant learning community where students were eager to communicate in English.

The success of the intervention confirms that Communicative Language Teaching is not only theoretically sound but also practically effective in the Myanmar public school context. It addresses the initial research problem of low speaking skills by providing an evidence-based solution that directly tackles the root causes (lack of practice, high anxiety, unengaging methods). Through this study, the researcher achieved the stated objectives: the existing speaking problems were identified (low baseline skills and various inhibiting factors), a targeted CLT program was designed and executed, and its effectiveness was validated through improved post-test performance and positive learner feedback.

In concluding, it can be stated that a communicative, student-centered approach is highly beneficial for developing English speaking skills among young EFL learners in Myanmar. The findings encourage a re-thinking of how English is taught in primary schools – moving away from an exclusive focus on grammar and textbooks, and towards an interactive model that emphasizes real communication. For educators and decision-makers, this research provides a hopeful message: with relatively simple shifts in methodology, we can produce learners who are not just test-passers but actual communicators in English. Such learners are better equipped for further education and for participation in an increasingly English-connected world.

Suggestions

1. Suggestions for Organizing.

- 1) Institutionalization of CLT: Formally adopt Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the core pedagogical pillar within the national basic education system.
- 2) Systemic Alignment: Ensure a unified integration between curriculum design, classroom instruction, and teacher professional development.

2. Suggestions for Further Study.

- 1) Scalability Studies: Investigate how positive outcomes observed in individual classrooms can be effectively scaled to a national level across diverse regional contexts in Myanmar.
- 2) Long-term Impact Assessment: Conduct longitudinal research to track the sustainability of proficiency gains, confidence, and engagement as students progress through higher levels of education.

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