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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING IN IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Speaking skill is a fundamental component of English language proficiency because it enables learners to communicate ideas, opinions, and information effectively in academic, social, and professional contexts. However, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners experience difficulties in speaking due to limited opportunities for authentic communication, lack of confidence, restricted vocabulary, and the continued use of teacher-centered and grammar-focused instructional practices. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) provides an alternative approach by emphasizing meaningful interaction, learner participation, authentic communication, and the practical use of language. This study examines the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching in improving students' speaking skills, particularly in relation to fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, confidence, and communicative competence. Recent empirical research indicates that CLT-based activities such as role-play, pair and group discussions, information-gap activities, problem-solving tasks, and real-life communicative situations can provide learners with greater opportunities to practice spoken English. Studies conducted between 2023 and 2026 have reported positive effects of CLT on learners' communicative competence and speaking performance, including improvements in fluency, confidence, engagement, and willingness to communicate. The evidence further suggests that interactive and learner-centered classroom environments can reduce students' fear of making mistakes and encourage more active participation in spoken communication. Therefore, Communicative Language Teaching can be considered an effective pedagogical approach for developing students' speaking skills, particularly when teachers provide continuous opportunities for meaningful interaction and authentic language use. The study highlights the importance of adopting communicative classroom practices and recommends appropriate teacher training and activity-based instruction to strengthen students' oral English proficiency.

KEYWORDS: *Communicative Language Teaching, speaking skills, EFL learners, communicative competence, fluency, oral proficiency, language learning.*

INTRODUCTION

English has become an essential means of communication in academic, professional, social, and international contexts. In an increasingly interconnected world, learners are expected not only to understand English grammar and vocabulary but also to use the language effectively in real-life communication. Among the four major language skills, speaking is particularly important because it enables learners to express ideas, exchange information, participate in discussions, and interact with people in different contexts. However, developing effective speaking skills remains a considerable challenge for many English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Speaking requires the simultaneous use of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, and appropriate communicative strategies, which makes it more demanding than simply acquiring knowledge about the language. Recent research emphasizes that effective speaking development requires learners to have meaningful opportunities to participate in interactive and communicative activities rather than relying exclusively on traditional language instruction (Zhang et al., 2025). Elmiwati et al. (2024)

explain that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can improve students' speaking skills by providing opportunities for learners to communicate actively and practice English in meaningful classroom situations. In many EFL classrooms, speaking instruction has traditionally been influenced by teacher-centered practices, including grammar explanation, memorization, translation, textbook-based exercises, and repetition. Although these approaches may help students develop certain aspects of linguistic knowledge, they may provide insufficient opportunities for spontaneous oral communication. Consequently, students may possess knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary but still experience difficulties when they are required to communicate orally. Problems such as limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, inadequate exposure to authentic English, and limited classroom interaction can negatively affect students' speaking performance. A recent study of EFL classrooms similarly identified limited opportunities for practical speaking activities and students' lack of confidence as important barriers to the effective development of oral communication skills.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as an important alternative to traditional language teaching approaches by placing communication at the center of language learning. Rather than treating language primarily as a collection of grammatical rules, CLT views language as a tool for meaningful communication. The approach encourages learners to use English for authentic purposes through interaction, collaboration, problem-solving, information exchange, role-play, discussions, presentations, and other communicative activities. Its primary objective is to develop learners' communicative competence, which includes not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in different social and communicative situations. Recent research continues to support the relevance of CLT for developing oral communication and communicative competence among EFL and ESL learners (Shahid et al., 2023). The effectiveness of CLT has received considerable attention in recent empirical research. Shahid et al. (2023), for example, investigated the impact of CLT on the communicative competence of 140 first-year students in Lahore, Pakistan. Their study reported positive outcomes associated with the use of CLT principles and techniques in English language classrooms. Such findings are particularly relevant to EFL contexts where students may have relatively limited opportunities to communicate in English outside the classroom. By creating classroom environments in which learners actively communicate with peers and teachers, CLT can increase exposure to spoken English and provide repeated opportunities for meaningful language practice.

Similarly, Nish (2024) examined the use of CLT for improving the speaking skills of tertiary-level EFL students in Bangladesh. The study highlighted the importance of providing learners with appropriate opportunities to develop communication skills required in real-world situations. This is significant because speaking proficiency cannot be developed effectively through passive learning alone; learners need opportunities to produce language, negotiate meaning, respond to others, and communicate their ideas in meaningful contexts. The pedagogical value of CLT is also evident in the types of activities that it promotes. Communicative classrooms typically involve pair work, group discussions, role-play, information-gap activities, interviews, debates, presentations, problem-solving tasks, and authentic conversational situations. These activities encourage students to become active participants rather than passive recipients of information. A 2025 study on teaching speaking

through CLT identified authentic materials, audiovisual resources, relaxed classroom environments, role-play, drama, and real-life communication as important instructional opportunities for promoting speaking development. Such activities can increase students' exposure to spoken English while also encouraging interaction and learner participation. Recent experimental evidence further demonstrates the potential effectiveness of CLT in improving students' speaking performance. Candadila and Puspitasari (2025) compared CLT with the Audio-Lingual Method among seventh-grade students and found that students taught through CLT demonstrated significantly better speaking performance and motivation. The researchers emphasized that communicative activities, including role-play and authentic language use, can provide learners with meaningful opportunities to practice spoken English. These findings suggest that CLT may contribute not only to linguistic development but also to learners' motivation and willingness to participate in classroom communication.

Memo, Jat, and Mirant (2025) also investigated CLT among first-year university students in Pakistan. Using an experimental design, the researchers compared students receiving CLT-based instruction with a control group and reported significantly greater improvement in communication skills among students exposed to CLT. The study provides contextually relevant evidence that CLT can be effective at the university level, particularly for learners who need stronger oral communication abilities for academic and professional purposes. Further evidence comes from Ghaghara et al. (2025), who examined the effect of CLT on the speaking skills of Kurdish EFL learners. Their research focused specifically on speaking development and investigated CLT as an alternative to teacher-centered instruction. The study adds to the growing body of evidence suggesting that communicative approaches can support learners' oral proficiency when classroom instruction provides opportunities for interaction and active language use. Despite the reported benefits of CLT, its successful implementation is not automatic. Teachers may encounter several challenges, including large class sizes, limited instructional time, examination-oriented curricula, insufficient teaching resources, students' low confidence, and teachers' limited training in communicative methodologies. Recent research in Pakistan, for instance, indicates that although teachers perceive CLT as a useful learner-centered approach for improving speaking, large and examination-focused classrooms can create practical difficulties in implementing communicative activities effectively. Therefore, investigating the effectiveness of CLT should involve not only examining whether students' speaking performance improves but also considering the classroom conditions and instructional practices through which CLT is implemented.

The importance of communicative interaction is further supported by recent research on EFL speaking development. Zhang, Fauzi, and Kasson (2025), in a systematic review, emphasized that effective speaking instruction should provide learners with structured opportunities to develop fluency, accuracy, lexical ability, and spontaneous speech. Their review also highlights the growing role of interactive and technology-supported approaches in enhancing oral proficiency. Although their study focuses on input-based instruction more broadly, its findings reinforce the importance of combining meaningful language exposure with opportunities for learners to produce and practice spoken English. Therefore, the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching in improving students' speaking skills remains an important area of educational research. Although recent studies generally report positive effects of CLT, outcomes may vary according to learners' proficiency levels,

educational contexts, teacher practices, classroom size, available resources, and the types of communicative activities employed.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Examine the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving students' overall speaking skills.
2. Determine the effect of CLT on students' speaking fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical competence.
3. Investigate whether CLT improves students' confidence and willingness to participate in English-speaking activities**.**

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How effective is communicative language teaching in improving students' overall speaking skills?
2. What effect does communicative language teaching have on students' speaking fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical competence?
3. To what extent does communicative language teaching improve students' confidence and willingness to participate in English-speaking activities?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a learner-centered approach that emphasizes the use of language for meaningful and purposeful communication. Unlike traditional approaches that often prioritize grammar rules, translation, memorization, and teacher explanation, CLT encourages learners to actively use the target language through interaction and authentic communicative situations. The central goal of CLT is the development of communicative competence, which involves learners' ability to use language accurately, appropriately, and effectively in different contexts. In speaking instruction, this approach is particularly relevant because oral proficiency develops through opportunities to produce language, interact with others, negotiate meaning, and respond to communicative situations. Recent research continues to identify CLT as an effective approach for developing students' speaking abilities. Ghaghara, Sawalmeh, and Mohamed Amin (2023) reviewed the impact of CLT on speaking and listening skills and emphasized that communicative approaches provide learners with greater opportunities to use English in meaningful situations. Their review indicates that CLT can support the development of communicative competence by moving classroom instruction away from passive learning toward active participation and interaction. A major theoretical foundation of CLT is communicative competence. Successful learning involves more than knowing grammatical structures; learners must also know how to use language appropriately according to the purpose, context, and participants involved in communication. Ghafar et al. (2025) found that Communicative Language Teaching has a positive effect on EFL learners' speaking skills by encouraging students to participate in interactive communication and develop their confidence in using English.Junkhoonthod et al. (2023) explain that combining communicative language teaching with flipped classroom

strategies and role-play activities can improve students' English speaking ability and learning achievement.

Ghafar et al. (2025) found that Communicative Language Teaching has a positive effect on EFL learners' speaking skills by encouraging students to participate in interactive communication and develop their confidence in using English.Junkhoonthod et al. (2023) explain that combining communicative language teaching with flipped classroom strategies and role-play activities can improve students' English speaking ability and learning achievement.Ilyas et al. (2023) found that the Communicative Language Teaching method is effective in improving students' speaking skills because it provides learners with more opportunities to practice communication and use English actively.Isaeva et al. (2026) highlight the importance of understanding the structural features of English and other languages, which can support learners in developing more accurate and effective language use.Bashir et al. (2025) explain that active and meaningful learning approaches can encourage learners to participate in practical activities and develop greater awareness and responsibility toward their learning environment.Ilyas et al. (2023) found that the Communicative Language Teaching method is effective in improving students' speaking skills because it provides learners with more opportunities to practice communication and use English actively.Isaeva et al. (2026) highlight the importance of understanding the structural features of English and other languages, which can support learners in developing more accurate and effective language use.Bashir et al. (2025) explain that active and meaningful learning approaches can encourage learners to participate in practical activities and develop greater awareness and responsibility toward their learning environment.

CLT therefore integrates linguistic knowledge with practical communication. Students are encouraged to express opinions, ask and answer questions, negotiate meaning, solve problems, and participate in social interactions. Shaded et al. (2023) examined the impact of CLT on the communicative competence of ESL/EFL learners and reported positive effects of communicative teaching practices. Their findings suggest that interactive classroom activities can provide learners with opportunities to develop communication abilities that may not develop adequately through grammar-focused instruction alone. This evidence is particularly important for EFL contexts, where learners may have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. A systematic review published by Kasseris (2023) also presents CLT as an approach with substantial potential for promoting meaningful language use. However, the review provides a balanced perspective by noting that successful implementation depends on contextual factors, teacher practices, curriculum requirements, and classroom conditions. Thus, the effectiveness of CLT should not be considered independent of the environment in which it is implemented.

Speaking fluency is one of the most important indicators of oral proficiency. It refers to learners' ability to communicate ideas with an appropriate degree of speed, continuity, and naturalness without excessive hesitation. Traditional teacher-centered instruction may provide students with knowledge about English without giving them sufficient opportunities to practice spontaneous communication. CLT addresses this problem by increasing students' exposure to speaking activities. Recent research provides evidence that communicative activities can contribute to improved fluency. Role-play, pair work, group discussion, interviews, debates, presentations, and problem-solving tasks require learners to produce

spoken language for meaningful purposes. A 2025 literature review examining 30 studies reported that CLT generally supports improvements in fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and confidence through interactive activities such as role-play and discussion. In addition, a 2025 systematic review of EFL speaking instruction found that structured opportunities for meaningful language use can support improvements in fluency, accuracy, and spontaneous speech. Although the review examined input-based approaches more broadly, its findings reinforce the importance of combining meaningful language exposure with opportunities for oral production.

Effective speaking requires learners to integrate several linguistic components, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and interactive competence. CLT does not necessarily eliminate explicit attention to grammar or pronunciation; instead, these components can be developed within meaningful communicative contexts. For example, learners may practice grammatical structures while participating in conversations, or develop pronunciation through role-play and oral presentations. The 2025 systematic review by Kamaliah and Ramadi found that CLT generally has positive effects on students' speaking skills, including fluency, vocabulary development, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and interactive competence. However, the authors also identified methodological limitations in existing research, including small sample sizes, short intervention periods, and frequent dependence on perception-based instruments rather than direct performance assessments. These findings suggest that CLT can contribute to several dimensions of speaking proficiency simultaneously. Nevertheless, future research should employ stronger experimental designs and standardized speaking assessments to establish the magnitude and consistency of these effects.

Students' psychological readiness to communicate is another important dimension of speaking development. Learners who are afraid of making mistakes or being criticized may avoid speaking even when they possess sufficient linguistic knowledge. CLT can create opportunities for students to communicate in pairs and groups, potentially reducing the pressure associated with speaking in front of the entire class. Recent literature indicates that students generally respond positively to communicative activities because they provide opportunities to use English in realistic and meaningful situations. A 2026 systematic review of teachers' and students' perspectives found that learners generally have positive attitudes toward CLT, particularly when activities involve group discussions and real-life communication. At the same time, the review identified time limitations, insufficient teaching materials, and inadequate teacher training as important barriers to implementation. Thus, CLT may influence speaking performance not only through increased language practice but also through increased engagement, confidence, motivation, and willingness to communicate.

Recent empirical studies provide further support for the effectiveness of CLT. Memo, Jat, and Mirant (2025) conducted a true experimental study involving 40 first-year university students. The participants were divided into an experimental group receiving CLT-based instruction and a control group. The researchers reported significantly greater improvement in communication skills among students exposed to CLT, suggesting that communicative instruction can be more effective than conventional instruction for developing university students' speaking abilities. Similarly, recent research has examined CLT specifically within EFL contexts and found that communicative activities can improve learners' oral

communication. These findings are important because EFL learners frequently experience limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Consequently, the classroom may represent one of the primary environments in which learners can practice authentic English communication. The growing body of evidence is further supported by Chen and Squib (2026), who conducted a systematic review of CLT implementation in EFL classrooms. Their review analyzed empirical studies retrieved from Scopus and Google Scholar and examined both the effectiveness of CLT and the contextual factors affecting its implementation. The review concludes that CLT has considerable pedagogical potential but that its outcomes depend on classroom conditions, teachers' implementation practices, and contextual constraints. Although recent research provides substantial evidence supporting CLT, several gaps remain. First, some studies rely heavily on students' or teachers' perceptions rather than objective measures of speaking performance. Second, many interventions are conducted with relatively small samples and over short periods, making it difficult to determine the long-term effectiveness of CLT. The 2025 systematic review specifically identifies small sample sizes, short intervention periods, and perception-based assessment as recurring methodological limitations in the existing literature.

METHODOLOGY

This study will adopt a quantitative research approach to examine the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in improving students' speaking skills. A quantitative approach is appropriate because the study will collect numerical data through speaking assessments administered before and after the implementation of CLT. The study will focus on measurable dimensions of speaking performance, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and overall communicative competence. The quantitative approach will enable the researcher to determine whether students demonstrate significant improvement in speaking performance after receiving CLT-based instruction. The study will use a structured and systematic procedure in which students' speaking performance is assessed before and after the intervention. The results obtained from the pre-test and post-test will provide objective evidence regarding changes in students' speaking skills. This approach will allow the researcher to statistically determine the effectiveness of CLT and provide empirical evidence for the research questions.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study will employ **a** quasi-experimental research design**,** specifically a pre-test–post-test control group design**.** This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to compare the speaking performance of students who receive Communicative Language Teaching with students who receive conventional English language instruction. Two groups will be involved: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group will receive CLT-based instruction through communicative activities such as pair work, group discussions, role-play, presentations, interviews, information-gap activities, and problem-solving tasks. The control group will continue to receive conventional teaching practices. Before the intervention, both groups will complete a speaking pre-test to establish their initial level of speaking proficiency. The CLT intervention will then be implemented for an

appropriate instructional period, such as 6–8 weeks. Following the intervention, both groups will complete a speaking post-test. The pre-test and post-test results will be compared to determine whether students exposed to CLT demonstrate greater improvement than students receiving conventional instruction. A standardized speaking rubric will be used to assess fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and communicative competence.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences **(SPSS)**. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, will first be calculated to summarize students' speaking performance. The mean scores of the experimental and control groups will be compared at the pre-test and post-test stages to identify changes in speaking performance. An independent-samples t-**test** will be used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the speaking performance of the experimental and control groups. A paired-samples t-test will also be used to examine whether there is a significant improvement in the experimental group's speaking performance from pre-test to post-test. To provide a more comprehensive analysis, the speaking scores may also be analyzed according to the major dimensions of speaking proficiency, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and communicative competence. The level of statistical significance will be set at $\mathbf{p < .05}$. Effect size may also be calculated to determine the practical magnitude of the effect of CLT on students' speaking skills. The findings will be presented using tables and appropriate statistical descriptions and will be interpreted in relation to the research questions and objectives.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicate that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can be an effective approach for improving students' speaking skills. The comparison between the pre-test and post-test results is expected to show an improvement in the speaking performance of students who receive CLT-based instruction. Students in the experimental group are expected to demonstrate higher post-test scores than their pre-test scores, indicating positive development in their oral communication abilities. In comparison, students in the control group receiving conventional instruction are expected to show relatively smaller improvement. The findings further indicate that CLT can positively influence different dimensions of speaking proficiency, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and communicative competence. Through activities such as role-play, pair work, group discussions, presentations, interviews, and problem-solving tasks, students receive frequent opportunities to practice English in meaningful situations. Such activities can help learners produce spoken language more naturally, expand their vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and apply grammatical structures during actual communication. The study also suggests that CLT can contribute to students' confidence and classroom participation. Learners involved in collaborative speaking activities may become more willing to express their opinions and communicate with their classmates in English. Regular interaction can reduce fear of making mistakes and encourage students to participate actively in classroom discussions. These findings are consistent with recent research reporting positive effects of

communicative approaches on speaking development and communicative competence (Shahid et al., 2023; Nisha, 2024; Memon et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Communicative Language Teaching has considerable potential for improving students' speaking skills. By shifting the classroom from teacher-centered instruction toward meaningful interaction and learner participation, CLT provides students with greater opportunities to practice spoken English in realistic and purposeful situations. Communicative activities such as role-play, group discussion, pair work, presentations, interviews, and problem-solving encourage learners to use English actively rather than simply memorize vocabulary and grammatical rules. The study further concludes that CLT can contribute to the development of important components of speaking proficiency, including fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and communicative competence. Regular opportunities to communicate with peers can also strengthen students' confidence, motivation, and willingness to speak English. These benefits are particularly important in EFL contexts where students may have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. However, the successful implementation of CLT depends on appropriate classroom conditions and teacher preparation. Large classes, limited instructional time, inadequate resources, examination-oriented curricula, and insufficient teacher training may create challenges for communicative instruction. Therefore, English language teachers should receive appropriate professional development and should be supported in designing interactive activities that provide students with meaningful opportunities to communicate.

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