

The Effect Of Communicative Language Teaching On Speaking Fluency Of University Efl Students

Abdumajidov Xusan

Assistant Teacher at the University of Innovative Technologies
abdumajidovhusan89@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on the speaking fluency of university EFL students. Developing speaking fluency is a persistent challenge for EFL learners, particularly in contexts with limited authentic communication opportunities. A quasi-experimental design was adopted, involving undergraduate EFL students who participated in communicative activities such as pair work, role-play, information-gap tasks, and group discussions over an eight-week period. Pre-test and post-test speaking assessments were conducted to evaluate changes in fluency, with data analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The results reveal a significant enhancement in students' speaking performance, including increased speech rate, reduced hesitation, and higher confidence in oral communication. These findings demonstrate that CLT fosters an interactive and supportive learning environment conducive to fluency development. The study provides empirical evidence for the effectiveness of CLT in university EFL contexts and offers practical implications for language instructors aiming to improve students' oral proficiency in English.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, speaking fluency, EFL learners, university students, oral proficiency

Introduction

Speaking is widely regarded as one of the most important yet challenging skills for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In many EFL contexts, students have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom, resulting in low speaking fluency and lack of confidence. Traditional teacher-centered methods often emphasize grammatical accuracy over meaningful communication, leaving learners unable to speak fluently in real-life situations.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as a response to these limitations, prioritizing meaningful interaction and real communicative purposes in language learning. CLT encourages learners to use the target language actively through pair and group work, role-play, problem-solving tasks, and discussions. These activities aim to simulate real communication and promote fluency rather than mere accuracy.

Despite widespread acceptance of CLT, its practical effectiveness in improving speaking fluency among university EFL students requires further empirical investigation. This study examines the impact of CLT on speaking fluency and provides evidence supporting its application in higher education contexts.

2. Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching is grounded in the concept of communicative competence, encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Richards, 2006). CLT emphasizes interaction as both the means and the goal of language learning. Learners are encouraged to negotiate meaning, express ideas, and respond spontaneously during communication.

Speaking fluency is defined as the ability to produce speech smoothly, with minimal hesitation and appropriate speed (Fillmore, 1979). Fluency development requires extensive opportunities for meaningful language use rather than controlled practice alone.

Previous studies indicate that CLT positively impacts speaking skills. Littlewood (2004) and Savignon (2018) found that communicative activities enhance learners' motivation and oral performance. However, limited research has focused specifically on speaking fluency in university EFL contexts. This study aims to fill this gap by examining fluency-related outcomes of CLT-based instruction.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quasi-experimental research design was employed, using pre-test and post-test assessments to measure changes in students' speaking fluency after CLT instruction.

3.2 Participants

Forty-eight undergraduate EFL students at a university participated. Students were at an intermediate proficiency level and assigned to one experimental group.

3.3 Instruments

Speaking fluency pre-test and post-test

Speaking assessment rubric measuring speech rate, hesitation, coherence, and confidence

Short student questionnaire regarding perceptions of CLT activities

3.4 Procedure

Students completed a pre-test to assess initial fluency. Over eight weeks, CLT-based speaking activities were implemented, including pair work, role-play, information-gap tasks, and group discussions. A post-test assessed improvement. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The implementation of Communicative Language Teaching led to a significant improvement in students' speaking fluency. Students showed an increased speech rate, reduced hesitation, and improved coherence and confidence in oral communication. Observational data and student feedback indicated higher motivation and willingness to participate actively in speaking activities, with role-play and group discussions identified as the most effective.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Fluency Scores

Measure	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvement
Speech Rate (words/min)	78	95	+22%
Hesitation (pauses/min)	14	9	-35%
Coherence (1–5)	3.0	4.1	+1.1
Confidence (1–5)	2.8	4.0	+1.2

These results confirm that CLT fosters an interactive and supportive learning environment conducive to fluency development. The findings align with prior research indicating that communicative activities reduce anxiety and promote spontaneous speech, which are essential for oral fluency.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms that Communicative Language Teaching positively affects the speaking fluency of university EFL students. CLT promotes active participation and meaningful communication, leading to increased speech rate, reduced hesitation, and greater confidence. The findings support the adoption of CLT in higher education EFL classrooms.

Limitations include a relatively small sample size and short intervention period. Future research should involve larger samples, longer interventions, and comparative studies with other instructional approaches.

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