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Objectives

The *Journal of Language and Culture Pedagogy* (JLCP) is dedicated to the dissemination of original, rigorous, and high-impact scholarly research that advances theoretical and practical knowledge at the intersection of language and cultural education. The journal serves as a premier international forum for academics, teacher educators, practicing pedagogues, curriculum developers, and postgraduate researchers engaged with the complex dynamics of linguistic transmission and cultural formation in diverse educational contexts.

JCLP is committed to publishing innovative contributions that critically examine foundational and emerging issues across its core disciplinary pillars: theoretical and applied linguistics, second-language acquisition and pedagogy, literary and cultural studies, and translation and interpreting studies. Furthermore, the journal actively encourages interdisciplinary inquiries that explore the symbiotic relationships between language, culture, identity, and power, particularly as they manifest within formal and informal learning environments. We welcome scholarship that bridges traditional philological approaches with contemporary sociocultural, cognitive, and postcolonial frameworks, thereby enriching the discourse on how languages and cultures are taught, learned, and experienced. In doing so, JCLP aims to foster a critical, reflective, and globally conscious community of practice, influencing both policy and praxis to meet the evolving challenges of multilingual and multicultural societies in the 21st century.

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Editor's Note

The *Journal of Language and Culture Pedagogy (JLCP)* is pleased to present its inaugural issue, Volume 1, Number 1 (January-April) 2026. This volume features a collection of original scholarly contributions that reflect the journal's core commitment to advancing rigorous research at the intersection of language and culture pedagogy. The works published herein engage with a range of topics central to our scope, including Language and Linguistics, Language Education, Translation Studies, and Cultural Studies.

The articles in this issue address both theoretical and applied dimensions of language and culture teaching and learning. Several contributions examine pedagogical strategies for enhancing second-language acquisition and literacy development in diverse educational contexts, while others explore the role of translation in mediating cultural meaning and fostering intercultural competence. Additional studies investigate the interplay between linguistic structures and cultural practices, offering insights into how language functions as both a vehicle and a repository of cultural knowledge. Collectively, these works underscore the breadth of inquiry that JLCP seeks to cultivate and disseminate.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the authors, peer reviewers, and editorial team members whose expertise and dedication have ensured the quality and timeliness of this publication. As JLCP embarks on its scholarly journey, we aspire to serve as a dynamic platform for interdisciplinary dialogue and innovation in language and culture pedagogy. We trust that this issue will inform, challenge, and inspire our readers—whether they be researchers, educators, or practitioners—and we look forward to receiving your continued engagement and contributions in future volumes.

The Editorial Team

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Challenges and Strategies in English Language Learning Management for International Students in Northern Thailand

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A B S T R A C T

The internationalization of Thai higher education has decentralized, positioning Northern provinces like Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai as regional academic hubs. This geopolitical shift has attracted a massive influx of degree-seeking students, primarily from China and the CLMV nations (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam). While unified under English-Medium Instruction (EMI), this paper examines the critical challenges and strategic learning management required within this distinct multicultural landscape.

The study identifies that international students navigate a complex triple-language environment, balancing academic English inside the classroom with Central Thai and local dialects (*Kam Mueang*) for daily survival. This socio-linguistic friction, combined with the cultural pressure of saving face, generates severe language anxiety and passive classroom participation. Furthermore, institutional frameworks often suffer from legacy constraints, relying on rigid, homogenous curricula and faculty lacking specialized training in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) pedagogy.

To address these systemic mismatches, this paper proposes a multi-tiered framework for language learning management. At the classroom level, educators must implement culturally responsive pedagogy and differentiated instruction, using structured translanguaging to turn students' diverse backgrounds into cognitive assets. Institutionally, these practices must be reinforced by non-remedial support infrastructure, such as peer-assisted Language Clinics and Writing Centers. Finally, the framework advocates for regional community integration through service-learning initiatives, which convert the surrounding geographical locale into immersive language laboratories. Ultimately, this article concludes that optimizing international education in Northern Thailand requires a shift toward flexible, socially integrated, and communicative-centered learning management that fosters both academic excellence and local social belonging.

Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalization, higher education institutions worldwide have increasingly prioritized internationalization as a core strategic objective. Within Southeast Asia, Thailand has emerged as a prominent regional education hub, attracting thousands of international students annually (Rhein, 2016). While historically most international programs were concentrated in the metropolitan capital of Bangkok, recent decades have witnessed a significant geopolitical and educational shift toward Northern Thailand. Provinces such as Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai have become highly attractive destinations for international scholars. Higher education institutions in this region, including Chiang Mai University, Mae Jo University,

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and Mae Fah Luang University, have aggressively expanded their international curricula to cater to a rapidly evolving global market (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation [MHESI], 2024).

The demographic profile of international students relocating to Northern Thailand is uniquely distinct from those studying in Western nations or even capital cities. The student body is predominantly composed of learners from neighboring ASEAN countries—specifically Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam (the CLMV group)—alongside a massive and steady influx of students from the People's Republic of China (Postiglione & Tan, 2023). These students are drawn to the region due to its geographical proximity, cultural affinities, relatively low cost of living, and the increasing availability of English-medium instruction (EMI) programs. However, this diverse student makeup introduces a complex matrix of linguistic backgrounds, prior educational experiences, and varying levels of English language proficiency into the Northern Thai academic landscape. Consequently, effective English language learning management has transcended being a mere administrative function; it has become a critical determinant of institutional quality and student academic success.

Despite the promise of English-medium education, international students in Northern Thailand encounter a uniquely challenging linguistic environment. Unlike students studying in native English-speaking countries, these learners navigate what scholars describe as a triple-language or multilingual friction environment (Baker & Jarunthawon, 2023). Inside the classroom, students are expected to comprehend complex academic English, write research papers, and participate in scholarly debates. Outside the classroom, however, the dominant languages of daily survival are Central Thai and the local Northern Thai dialect (Kam Mueang). This creates a profound state of linguistic isolation and cognitive overload. International students cannot easily practice their English skills in the surrounding community, nor can they fully integrate into the local society without learning Thai. This linguistic interference often induces high levels of language anxiety, a psychological barrier that directly impairs cognitive processing and oral participation in academic settings (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Furthermore, institutional frameworks within Northern Thai universities often struggle to adapt to the realities of this diverse student body. Traditional language learning management in Thai higher education has long been designed around a homogenous student model—specifically, teaching English to native Thai speakers (Khamkhien, 2010). When applied to international classrooms, these legacy frameworks manifest as rigid curricula, standardized testing, and one-size-fits-all textbooks that fail to accommodate mixed-ability and multicultural learners. Instructors are frequently forced to navigate classrooms where one student may possess advanced professional English proficiency, while another from a different rural border region lacks basic academic writing skills.

This pedagogical mismatch is compounded by challenges related to faculty readiness. While local Thai faculty members possess exceptional domain-specific expertise, many have not received specialized training in teaching English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) or managing culturally differentiated classrooms (Galloway et

al., 2020). When instructors rely on pedagogical strategies designed for monolithic student groups, international students are often marginalized, leading to passive classroom environments, underperformance, and high attrition rates.

To mitigate these systemic issues, there is an urgent need to transition from traditional, rigid teaching methods toward flexible, culturally responsive, and differentiated learning management strategies. Language management must evolve to view the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of international students not as deficits, but as valuable pedagogical resources. Practices such as project-based learning, translanguaging strategies, and peer-assisted learning have shown immense promise in multicultural contexts by reducing anxiety and fostering active engagement (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021). However, classroom-level interventions alone are insufficient. Long-term sustainability requires holistic institutional support, including the establishment of specialized writing centers, continuous faculty professional development in ELF pedagogy, and university-wide initiatives that bridge the gap between international students and the local Northern Thai community.

While extensive research exists on the challenges faced by international students in Western universities, there remains a significant empirical gap regarding the experiences of non-native English-speaking international students within non-native English-speaking Asian host countries—particularly within specific regional locales like Northern Thailand. Most existing literature in Thailand focuses on the capital city or general national trends, overlooking the unique socio-cultural and geographical dynamics of the North. This article aims to address this critical gap by critically examining the current state of English language learning management for international students in Northern Thailand. Specifically, this paper investigates the unique socio-linguistic challenges encountered by these students, analyzes the structural and pedagogical constraints faced by local institutions, and proposes a comprehensive framework of actionable strategies to optimize English language delivery, enhance student well-being, and elevate the regional standards of international higher education.

The Evolving Demographic and Educational Landscape in Northern Thailand

The internationalization of higher education in Thailand has undergone a profound geopolitical and spatial transformation over the past two decades. Historically, the pursuit of international degrees and English-Medium Instruction (EMI) was concentrated almost exclusively within the metropolitan center of Bangkok, where elite private and public universities catered primarily to Western exchange students or affluent domestic elites (Lavankura, 2013). However, under the strategic guidance of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI), recent educational policies have aggressively decentralized international education, actively positioning peripheral regions as specialized academic hubs (MHESI, 2024). Consequently, Northern Thailand—anchored by provinces such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Phitsanulok—has emerged as a dynamic and highly sought-after destination for international scholars within the Southeast Asian region (Rhein, 2016).

This geographical shift has fundamentally altered the demographic composition of the international student body in Northern Thai universities. Rather than drawing temporary short-term exchange students from North America or Europe, institutions in the North are experiencing a massive and sustained influx of degree-seeking students from across the Asian continent. This demographic is characterized by two distinct major streams, students from the People's Republic of China and learners from the neighboring CLMV nations (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam) (Postiglione & Tan, 2023). For these students, Northern Thailand offers a unique convergence of structural advantages. The region provides a significantly lower cost of living compared to Bangkok or Western nations, geographical proximity allowing for easy cross-border travel, and socio-cultural environments that feel familiar yet distinctively international.

A prime example of this landscape evolution can be observed at Chiang Mai University (CMU), the premier national research university in Northern Thailand. CMU has dramatically scaled its global outreach, now offering over 80 international programs spanning undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels taught entirely in English (Chiang Mai University, 2026). These programs—ranging from digital innovation and business administration to health sciences—have successfully attracted a highly concentrated population of Chinese students seeking alternatives to increasingly competitive domestic university entrance systems. Similarly, Mae Fah Luang University (MFU) in Chiang Rai has utilized its strategic location within the Greater Mekong Subregion to position itself as an entirely English-medium institution. MFU serves as a critical educational lifeline for students from Myanmar and Laos, who seek high-quality, internationally accredited English instruction to prepare for the regional job market (Siriwongs, 2021).

However, this rapid demographic expansion has outpaced traditional educational frameworks, introducing a highly complex matrix of linguistic heterogeneity into the Northern Thai classroom. While these international programs are unified under the banner of English-medium instruction, the actual English language proficiency of incoming students is profoundly uneven. Students arriving from urban centers in China may possess strong passive linguistic skills (such as reading and listening comprehension) due to test-heavy domestic curricula, yet they frequently experience severe deficits in oral communication and academic writing (Li & Kirkwood, 2016). Conversely, students from border regions or rural areas within the CLMV countries often enter higher education with limited exposure to formal academic English, having faced systemic educational disadvantages in their home countries.

This juxtaposition means that a single undergraduate lecture hall in a Northern Thai university can simultaneously contain advanced multilingual speakers alongside students who struggle with basic reading comprehension. This drastic variance in linguistic capital shatters the illusion of a homogenous international student profile. It presents an unprecedented challenge for language learning management, forcing local administrators and instructors to urgently reconsider how language support, curriculum delivery, and classroom pedagogy are structured to prevent widespread student marginalization (Baker & Jarunthawon, 2023).

Linguistic Interferences and Socio-Cultural Adjustment Challenges

While the pedagogical promise of English-Medium Instruction (EMI) attracts thousands of international students to Northern Thailand, the reality of their daily lived experiences reveals profound linguistic and socio-cultural friction. Unlike international students who relocate to native English-speaking countries like Australia or the United Kingdom, individuals studying in Northern Thailand enter a complex, multi-layered linguistic environment often conceptualized as a triple-language or multilingual pressure cooker (Baker, 2015). Inside the university walls, these students must read, write, and debate in academic English. However, once they step outside the classroom, they are immediately immersed in an environment dominated by Central Thai and the local Northern Thai dialect (Kam Mueang). This unique geographical and social setting creates distinct challenges where first-language (L1) interference and socio-cultural maladjustment deeply intertwine to hinder effective language acquisition.

Linguistic interference, or negative language transfer, represents a major cognitive hurdle for non-native English-speaking international students in this region. According to transfer theory, learners rely heavily on the syntactic, phonetic, and grammatical structures of their native tongue when processing a second or third language (Odlin, 1989). For instance, Chinese students, who constitute a massive portion of the international student demographic in Chiang Mai, frequently struggle with English verb tenses, pluralizations, and articles because these linguistic markers do not exist in the Chinese language (Li & Kirkwood, 2016). When these students attempt to express complex academic ideas in English, their brains naturally map the thoughts using Chinese word order. This cognitive struggle results in written and spoken English that local Thai professors—who are themselves operating under the linguistic influence of their native Thai language—may find difficult to comprehend.

This issue becomes even more complicated when looking at students from the CLMV countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam). For example, a student from Myanmar studying at a university in Chiang Rai may find themselves constantly code-switching among three entirely different language families, Sino-Tibetan (Burmese) as their cognitive foundation, Indo-European (English) for academic survival, and Kra-Dai (Thai) for community interaction. To illustrate this challenge, consider a typical daily routine. Myanmar student must write an argumentative essay on economic policy in English in the morning, navigate a local market to purchase food using basic, broken Thai in the afternoon, and communicate with family members in Burmese via smartphone at night. This continuous shifting between unrelated language systems causes immense cognitive fatigue and limits the student's ability to develop the deep, continuous immersion necessary for mastering academic English fluently.

Furthermore, these linguistic barriers do not exist in a vacuum, they directly fuel severe psychological and socio-cultural adjustment challenges. A prominent issue in multicultural classrooms in Asia is foreign language anxiety, which is closely tied to the socio-cultural concept of saving face (Horwitz et al., 1986). In many Asian educational systems, making a public mistake is viewed as a significant personal embarrassment.

When placed in a diverse classroom alongside peers from various nationalities, international students often experience severe anxiety regarding their pronunciation or grammatical accuracy. This fear of negative evaluation induces high levels of language anxiety, which acts as an emotional filter that shuts down oral production (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

As a result, rather than practicing their English through active classroom discussion, many international students withdraw into silence, adopting a passive learning posture. This silence is frequently misinterpreted by instructors as a lack of preparation or comprehension, when it is actually a defensive psychological coping mechanism against anxiety. Cut off from natural English-speaking communities outside the university and paralyzed by anxiety within it, international students in Northern Thailand face a heightened risk of socio-cultural isolation. This isolation ultimately impedes both their academic progress and their personal well-being (Ward et al., 2001).

Implementing Culturally Responsive and Differentiated Pedagogy

To overcome the structural constraints and multi-layered linguistic anxieties identified in previous sections, higher education institutions in Northern Thailand must shift from monolithic, teacher-centered methodologies toward culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) and differentiated instruction (DI). CRP recognizes that students' diverse cultural backgrounds are not impediments to learning but are rich academic assets that can bridge the gap to English proficiency (Gay, 2018). Concurrently, DI addresses the vast disparities in English readiness by tailoring the content, process, and products of learning to meet individual student needs (Tomlinson, 2014). When integrated, these approaches transform the Northern Thai English-Medium Instruction (EMI) classroom into an equitable, high-engagement space.

Culturally responsive pedagogy requires educators to deliberately connect curriculum content with the lived experiences and cultural frames of reference of their international students. For example, in an International Business or Communications course at a university in Chiang Mai, an instructor practicing CRP would move away from exclusively Eurocentric or Thai-centric case studies. Instead, the instructor might design a project-based module where multicultural teams composed of Chinese, Myanmar, and Thai students collaborate to analyze cross-border trade dynamics within the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). This choice of topic directly leverages the students' inherent geographical and cultural knowledge. By positioning international students as cultural experts in the classroom, this pedagogical framework effectively mitigates language anxiety and boosts self-efficacy, encouraging them to deploy their English skills to articulate familiar realities (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Differentiated instruction is equally crucial in managing mixed-ability international classrooms. To support students with varying levels of English proficiency, instructors can differentiate the process and product of learning. For instance, rather than administering a single, rigid written exam that may penalize a student from a rural CLMV background who possesses strong conceptual understanding but weak academic writing mechanics, educators can implement flexible, multi-modal assessments. A student could be given the

option to demonstrate mastery of an academic concept through a traditional essay, an oral podcast recording, or a visually structured infographic accompanied by a brief presentation. This allows the instructor to assess underlying critical thinking and content mastery without allowing language barriers to completely mask a student's true academic competence (Tomlinson, 2014).

Furthermore, implementing these progressive frameworks requires the intentional integration of translanguaging practices. Translanguaging rejects the traditional English-only classroom dogma, viewing a student's multilingual repertoire as an interconnected cognitive system rather than separate, competing compartments (García & Wei, 2014). In practice, an instructor in a Northern Thai university can allow international students to use their native languages (e.g., Mandarin or Burmese) during the initial collaborative brainstorming and conceptualization phases of a group task. Students can read source materials in their native language to grasp complex theories, discuss them with peers of the same linguistic background, and then systematically transition to translating, synthesizing, and presenting their final arguments entirely in academic English. This structured use of translanguaging scaffolds the language learning process, lowers the affective filter, and ultimately leads to higher-quality English production (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021).

By adopting these adaptive classroom strategies, educators in Northern Thailand can move past rigid instructional delivery models, ensuring that international students are neither left behind due to language gaps nor disengaged due to cultural disconnection.

Holistic Institutional Support and Regional Community Integration

While classroom-level interventions are essential, a truly sustainable model of English language learning management must extend beyond the physical boundaries of the lecture hall. Higher education institutions in Northern Thailand must establish a holistic institutional support framework integrated with regional community initiatives. Language acquisition is inherently tied to a learner's broader social environment (Krashen, 1982). If international students are confined to academic spaces and remain socially isolated within the surrounding community, their linguistic development will become stagnant. Therefore, universities must act as central coordinators that bridge the gap between academic language support and real-world, community-based practice (Galloway et al., 2020).

At the institutional level, universities must move past traditional, passive student support services. Instead, they should invest in specialized, non-remedial language infrastructure, such as dedicated Writing Centers and Language Clinics. These facilities should be staffed by peer-tutors and trained linguists who view English through the lens of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), prioritizing communication and comprehensibility over native-speaker perfection (Jenkins, 2015).

For example, a university in Chiang Mai could implement a peer-assisted language learning (PALL) model, pairing senior international or domestic Thai students with incoming first-year international students. These pairs would collaborate on weekly writing assignments, prepare oral presentations, and engage in low-stakes communicative exercises. Research indicates that peer-tutoring significantly lowers the affective filter,

allowing anxious non-native English speakers to practice their language skills in a supportive environment free from the pressure of formal grading (Topping, 2005).

Furthermore, institutional support must be explicitly linked to regional community integration to create authentic communicative opportunities. Northern Thailand offers a vibrant, culturally rich setting that can serve as an immersive, extended language laboratory. Universities can design service-learning programs and community-engaged research initiatives that encourage international students to step outside the campus bubble.

A practical example is an ecotourism community project in Chiang Rai, where an international university department partners with local community-based tourism enterprises. International students from China and various CLMV nations can collaborate with local Thai villagers to co-create English-language promotional materials, design informational brochures for eco-trails, or act as cultural docents for international tourists visiting the region.

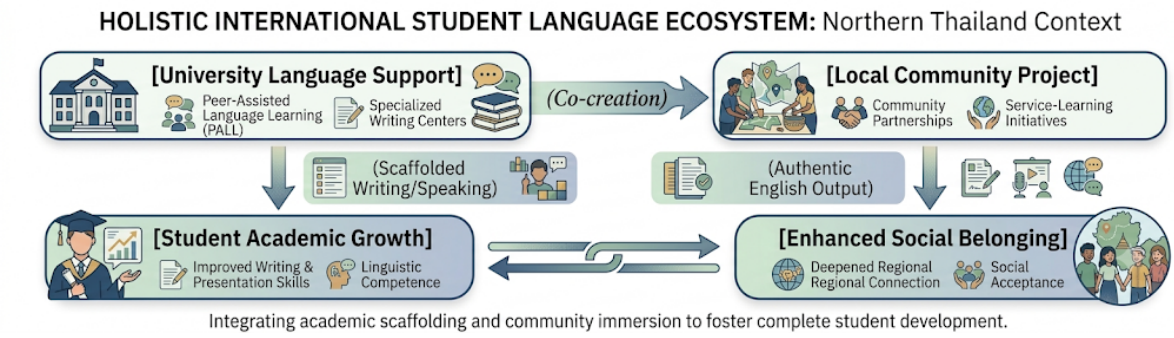


Fig. 1 Holistic Institutional Support and Regional Community Integration

This structural engagement delivers dual benefits. First, it forces international students to use English as a functional tool to solve real-world problems alongside diverse interlocutors. Second, it deepens their connection to the local Northern Thai context, transforming their educational experience from an isolated academic stay into an active social journey (Ward et al., 2001).

By embedding language learning within institutional support systems and connecting it to regional community networks, Northern Thai universities can build an ecosystem where international students feel supported academically, socially accepted, and empowered to communicate effectively in an increasingly globalized world.

Conclusion

This article presents a comprehensive examination of English language learning management for international students within the unique higher education ecosystem of Northern Thailand. The study highlights a significant geographical and demographic shift, as universities in provinces like Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai actively transform into regional academic hubs, drawing a massive influx of degree-seeking learners primarily from China and the CLMV nations (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam).

However, this rapid internationalization has introduced a complex, multi-layered linguistic environment where non-native English-speaking students face severe triple-language friction—navigating academic English inside the classroom while relying on Central Thai or local Northern dialects (Kam Mueang) for daily survival. This linguistic interference, compounded by the cultural pressure of saving face, often induces high levels of language anxiety, causing students to withdraw into passive classroom participation.

At the institutional level, the article identifies critical constraints, noting that many universities still rely on legacy, rigid curricula originally designed for homogenous Thai learners, while local faculty members frequently lack specialized training in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and multicultural classroom management.

To mitigate these systemic challenges, the paper argues for a dual-layered strategy. At the classroom level, educators must implement culturally responsive pedagogy and differentiated instruction, utilizing progressive tools like pedagogical translanguaging to turn students' diverse backgrounds into academic assets. At the institutional level, these practices must be reinforced by a holistic support ecosystem, including peer-assisted writing centers and immersive, regional community-engagement projects (such as local ecotourism initiatives).

Ultimately, the article concludes that optimizing English language learning management in Northern Thailand requires shifting away from rigid, native-speaker dogmas toward flexible, socially integrated, and communicative-centered frameworks that foster both academic excellence and local social belonging.

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Buddhism and Gender: Spiritual Equality, Institutional Challenges, and Contemporary Perspectives

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A B S T R A C T

Gender has become a significant area of inquiry in contemporary Buddhist studies, particularly in discussions concerning spiritual equality, institutional authority, and religious leadership. Although Buddhism emerged within the patriarchal social context of ancient India, its foundational teachings introduced a transformative vision by affirming that liberation (*nibbāna*) is attainable by all human beings regardless of gender, caste, or social status. Early Buddhist scriptures, especially the *Therīgāthā*, provide compelling evidence of women's spiritual accomplishments and demonstrate that female practitioners attained arahantship through ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom. Nevertheless, the historical development of Buddhist institutions has often reflected prevailing patriarchal norms, resulting in unequal opportunities for women, particularly within monastic communities. This article critically examines the relationship between Buddhist doctrine and gender by analyzing canonical teachings, the establishment of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, the controversial Eight *Garudhammas*, and the historical decline of the *bhikkhunī* ordination lineage in several *Theravāda* countries. It further explores contemporary movements for the revival of *bhikkhunī* ordination and evaluates the contributions of women in both *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* traditions. Drawing upon primary Buddhist texts and contemporary scholarship, the study argues that while the Buddha's teachings fundamentally support spiritual equality, institutional practices have frequently been shaped by historical, cultural, and social conditions rather than by doctrinal principles alone. The article concludes that the ongoing dialogue concerning gender, ordination, and leadership reflects Buddhism's dynamic engagement with modern concerns for equality, justice, and human dignity. Understanding both the liberating ideals and historical limitations of Buddhist traditions contributes to a more balanced interpretation of Buddhism as a living religion capable of responding constructively to contemporary discussions on gender and social transformation.

Introduction

Gender has become one of the most significant themes in contemporary religious studies, attracting increasing scholarly attention across disciplines such as theology, history, sociology, anthropology, and Buddhist studies. Discussions concerning gender are no longer limited to biological distinctions between men and women but also encompass the social, cultural, institutional, and religious constructions that shape human identity, authority, and opportunity. Within Buddhism, gender has emerged as an important field of inquiry because the tradition presents both inspiring ideals of spiritual equality and historical examples of institutional

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inequality. Consequently, Buddhism offers a rich context for examining the relationship between religious doctrine and social practice.

Buddhism originated in northern India during the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, a period characterized by strong patriarchal social structures in which women generally occupied subordinate positions within both family life and religious institutions. Brahmanical traditions largely restricted women's participation in religious education, public leadership, and independent spiritual practice. Against this social background, the Buddha introduced teachings that challenged many prevailing assumptions concerning birth, caste, social status, and gender. Rather than defining an individual's spiritual potential according to biological sex or social rank, Buddhism emphasized moral conduct (*sīla*), mental cultivation (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) as the essential conditions for liberation from suffering (Anālayo, 2016; Gethin, 1998).

One of the defining characteristics of Buddhist philosophy is its rejection of permanent identity through the doctrine of *anattā* (non-self). Since no permanent self exists, attachment to fixed identities—including gender—becomes another form of ignorance (*avijjā)* that binds beings to the cycle of birth and death (*saṃsāra*). From this doctrinal perspective, enlightenment (*nibbāna*) is not determined by one's sex but by the eradication of greed, hatred, and delusion through ethical living, meditation, and insight. Early Buddhist texts therefore present liberation as universally attainable, regardless of gender, social class, or ethnicity (Harvey, 2013).

The *Pāli* Canon contains numerous accounts demonstrating that women attained the highest stages of spiritual realization. The *Therīgāthā*, one of the oldest surviving collections of women's religious literature in the world, preserves poems composed by enlightened Buddhist nuns who describe their struggles, renunciation, meditation, and liberation. These verses reveal that women were not merely passive followers of the Buddha but active participants in shaping the early Buddhist community. Eminent figures such as *Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī*, *Khemā*, *Uppalavaṇṇā*, *Paṭācārā*, and *Kisāgotamī* became respected teachers and exemplars of wisdom whose achievements challenged contemporary assumptions regarding women's spiritual capacities (Blackstone, 1998; Murcott, 1991).

The establishment of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* represented one of the most remarkable developments in ancient Indian religious history. For the first time, women were provided with a formal institutional framework through which they could pursue full-time religious life independent of marriage and domestic responsibilities. The Buddha recognized four pillars of the Buddhist community—the *Bhikkhu Saṅgha*, the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, male lay followers (*upāsakas*), and female lay followers (*upāsikās*)—thereby acknowledging the importance of both women and men in preserving and transmitting the Dhamma. This fourfold community became a defining characteristic of Buddhism and reflected a broader vision of religious participation than was common in many contemporary traditions (Bodhi, 2009).

Despite these progressive developments, the historical evolution of Buddhist institutions presents a more complex picture. Shortly after the establishment of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, Buddhist texts record the introduction of the Eight *Garudhammas*, a set of disciplinary rules requiring nuns to maintain formal subordination to monks regardless of seniority. Traditional interpretations regard these regulations as protective measures designed to ensure the stability of the newly established community within a conservative social environment. However, many contemporary scholars question both the historical authenticity of these rules and their compatibility with the broader Buddhist principles of compassion, justice, and spiritual equality. Consequently, the Eight *Garudhammas* have become central to modern discussions concerning gender hierarchy within Buddhist monastic institutions (Anālayo, 2016; Tsomo, 2019).

The decline of the *Bhikkhunī* ordination lineage in several *Theravāda* countries further complicated women's participation in monastic life. Political instability, warfare, institutional dependence upon the Bhikkhu *Saṅgha*, and deeply rooted patriarchal customs contributed to the disappearance of full ordination for women in countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Thailand. Although women continued to practice as lay renunciants or members of alternative religious communities, they were frequently denied equal institutional recognition and educational opportunities available to monks. By contrast, *Mahāyāna* traditions in China, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam preserved uninterrupted *Bhikkhunī* ordination lineages, enabling women to continue full monastic practice and assume leadership roles within Buddhist education, social welfare, and religious scholarship (Gross, 1993).

During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, movements advocating the revival of *Bhikkhunī* ordination have significantly reshaped discussions of Buddhism and gender. International cooperation among Buddhist communities has led to the re-establishment of *Bhikkhunī* ordination in Sri Lanka and growing recognition of ordained women in many parts of the world. Contemporary Buddhist leaders and scholars have argued that restoring full ordination is consistent with the Buddha's original vision of the fourfold assembly and reflects Buddhism's commitment to compassion, ethical justice, and universal liberation. Nevertheless, official recognition remains contested in several *Theravāda* countries, illustrating the continuing tension between scriptural interpretation, institutional authority, and cultural tradition (Tsomo, 2019; Bodhi, 2009).

The study of Buddhism and gender therefore requires a balanced and critical approach that distinguishes between foundational Buddhist teachings and the historical development of Buddhist institutions. While canonical doctrines consistently affirm the equal potential of all beings to attain enlightenment, historical practices have often reflected the patriarchal cultures in which Buddhist communities evolved. Understanding this distinction is essential for avoiding simplistic conclusions that either portray Buddhism as entirely egalitarian or dismiss it as inherently patriarchal. Instead, Buddhism should be understood as a dynamic religious tradition whose teachings have continually interacted with changing social, political, and cultural contexts.

Against this background, this article critically examines the relationship between Buddhist teachings and gender through five interrelated themes. First, it explores the concept of gender in Buddhist studies and its relevance to contemporary scholarship. Second, it examines the doctrine of spiritual equality in early Buddhism, demonstrating how canonical teachings affirm women's capacity for enlightenment. Third, it analyzes the establishment of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, with particular attention to the Eight *Garudhammas* and debates concerning women's religious authority. Fourth, it investigates the historical decline and contemporary revival of the *Bhikkhunī* ordination in *Theravāda* Buddhism. Finally, it critically evaluates the continuing relationship between gender equality and patriarchal structures within contemporary Buddhist communities. Through an examination of both canonical sources and modern scholarship, the article argues that Buddhism contains enduring doctrinal foundations for gender equality while acknowledging that its institutions have often reflected the social realities of their historical contexts. This critical perspective contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Buddhism as a living religious tradition that continues to engage with contemporary questions of equality, leadership, and social justice.

Concept of Gender in Buddhist Studies

Gender has become a central analytical category in contemporary Buddhist studies because it provides a framework for examining how religious teachings, institutional structures, and cultural practices shape the experiences of women and men within Buddhist communities. While the term sex refers to biological differences between males and females, gender encompasses the socially and culturally constructed roles, expectations, identities, and power relations associated with being male or female (Gross, 1993). Consequently, the study of gender in Buddhism extends beyond biological distinctions to explore how religious authority, monastic discipline, education, leadership, and social participation have been influenced by historical and cultural contexts.

From a Buddhist philosophical perspective, gender is not regarded as an essential or permanent identity. One of the foundational doctrines of Buddhism is *anattā* (non-self), which teaches that no unchanging self or soul exists within any individual. Human identity is understood as a dynamic combination of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*): form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Since these aggregates are impermanent (*anicca*) and devoid of an independent self, attachment to identities such as gender, social status, ethnicity, or caste becomes another manifestation of ignorance (*avijjā*) that perpetuates suffering (*dukkha*) within the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*) (Harvey, 2013). In this doctrinal sense, gender possesses no ultimate significance in determining one's capacity for spiritual awakening.

Early Buddhist teachings consistently emphasize that liberation depends upon ethical conduct (*sīla*), mental concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) rather than biological sex. The Buddha repeatedly taught that all sentient beings possess the potential to attain enlightenment through diligent practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. This universal approach represented a significant departure from many religious

traditions in ancient India, where women's access to education, ritual authority, and religious life was often restricted by patriarchal social structures (Gethin, 1998). By placing moral and spiritual qualities above inherited status or gender, Buddhism introduced a more inclusive understanding of human spiritual potential.

Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between Buddhist doctrine and the historical development of Buddhist institutions. Although canonical teachings emphasize universal liberation, Buddhist communities evolved within societies that were deeply influenced by patriarchal values. As Buddhism spread throughout South and Southeast Asia, East Asia, and later the modern world, monastic institutions frequently reflected prevailing social norms regarding gender roles and authority. Consequently, opportunities available to women often differed considerably from those available to men, particularly in relation to ordination, education, ecclesiastical leadership, and institutional decision-making (Tsomo, 2019). This distinction between doctrinal ideals and historical practice remains one of the central themes in contemporary Buddhist scholarship.

Modern scholars therefore approach Buddhism and gender from multiple perspectives. Historical studies investigate the lives of Buddhist women in early canonical literature and examine the evolution of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*. Textual scholars analyze canonical sources such as the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Therīgāthā*, and various suttas to evaluate the authenticity and interpretation of passages concerning women. Sociologists and anthropologists explore how Buddhist women negotiate religious authority within different cultural settings, while feminist scholars critically assess the relationship between Buddhist teachings and institutional patriarchy. Rather than viewing Buddhism as either wholly egalitarian or inherently discriminatory, contemporary scholarship generally recognizes the complexity and diversity of Buddhist traditions across different historical periods and geographical regions (Anālayo, 2016).

An important methodological consideration is the distinction between normative Buddhism and lived Buddhism. Normative Buddhism refers to the ideals expressed in canonical texts and doctrinal teachings, whereas lived Buddhism examines how those ideals are practiced within everyday religious life. This distinction helps explain why Buddhist scriptures frequently affirm women’s spiritual capacity while certain monastic institutions have historically limited women’s religious opportunities. The gap between doctrine and practice reflects not only religious interpretation but also the influence of political authority, economic conditions, cultural traditions, and social expectations.

Today, the concept of gender in Buddhist studies continues to evolve alongside broader discussions concerning human rights, social justice, and gender equality. Contemporary debates surrounding the revival of the *Bhikkhunī* ordination, women's leadership within Buddhist organizations, inclusive religious education, and reinterpretations of monastic discipline demonstrate that gender remains an active and significant field of scholarly inquiry. Examining gender through both doctrinal and historical perspectives enables a more balanced understanding of Buddhism as a living religious tradition that has continually adapted to changing

social realities while preserving its fundamental commitment to the universal possibility of liberation for all beings.

Spiritual Equality in Early Buddhism

One of the most distinctive features of early Buddhism is its affirmation that spiritual liberation is attainable by all human beings regardless of gender, caste, ethnicity, or social status. Unlike many religious traditions of ancient India, which often restricted women's participation in religious life, the Buddha emphasized that enlightenment (*nibbāna*) depends on personal effort, ethical conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom rather than biological sex. This doctrinal position established a foundation for spiritual equality that remains one of Buddhism's most influential contributions to discussions of gender and religion.

The principle of spiritual equality is closely connected with the Buddhist doctrine of *anattā* (non-self). According to this teaching, no permanent or independent self exists within any living being. Human identity consists of the five aggregates (*pañcakkhandha*): form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṅkhārā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Since these aggregates are impermanent (*anicca*) and subject to suffering (*dukkha*), attachment to identities such as gender, caste, or social position is regarded as a form of ignorance (*avijjā*). Consequently, the attainment of liberation depends not on one's physical characteristics but on the cultivation of wisdom (*paññā*), morality (*sīla*), and concentration (*samādhi*) through the Noble Eightfold Path (Harvey, 2013).

The Pāli Canon provides numerous examples demonstrating that women were fully capable of attaining the highest stages of spiritual realization. The Buddha explicitly declared that women possess the same potential for enlightenment as men when they practice the Dhamma diligently. Many female disciples attained arahantship, the complete eradication of greed, hatred, and delusion, thereby achieving liberation from the cycle of rebirth. Their attainments confirm that spiritual awakening in Buddhism is based upon insight into reality rather than gender identity (Gethin, 1998).

Among the most prominent examples is *Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī*, the Buddha's foster mother and the first woman to request admission into the monastic order. After persistent requests and the intercession of the Venerable *Ānanda*, the Buddha established the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, thereby enabling women to pursue full-time religious life. *Mahāpajāpatī* later attained arahantship and became a respected leader of the community of Buddhist nuns. Her life illustrates both the challenges women encountered within ancient Indian society and the transformative opportunities made possible through the Buddha’s teachings (Anālayo, 2016).

Other eminent female disciples further demonstrate the principle of spiritual equality. *Khemā Therī*, renowned for her profound wisdom, was declared by the Buddha to be foremost among the *bhikkhunīs* in wisdom. *Uppalavaṇṇā Therī* was recognized as foremost in supernormal spiritual powers (*iddhi*), while *Paṭācārā Therī* became celebrated for her mastery of the *Vinaya* and her compassionate guidance of other

nuns. *Kisāgotamī*, whose personal tragedy led her to realize the universality of death and impermanence, became an enduring symbol of wisdom arising through suffering. These women were not merely devoted followers but influential teachers whose spiritual achievements earned the Buddha's highest praise (Murcott, 1991).

The *Therīgāthā* ("Verses of the Elder Nuns") provides some of the strongest evidence for women's spiritual authority in early Buddhism. As one of the oldest surviving collections of women's religious literature in the world, it contains seventy-three poems composed by enlightened nuns describing their struggles, renunciation, meditation, and realization of liberation. The verses reveal that women from diverse backgrounds—including queens, mothers, widows, courtesans, and ordinary householders—were able to transcend suffering through the practice of the Dhamma. Their personal testimonies challenge the assumption that religious authority in ancient Buddhism belonged exclusively to men and demonstrate that women actively contributed to the preservation and transmission of Buddhist teachings (Blackstone, 1998).

The Buddha also established the Buddhist community as a fourfold assembly (*catuparisā*), consisting of *bhikkhus* (monks), *bhikkhunīs* (nuns), *upāsakas* (male lay followers), and *upāsikās* (female lay followers). This structure acknowledged that both women and men played indispensable roles in sustaining the Buddha's dispensation (*Sāsana*). Laywomen such as *Visākhā Migāramātā* became exemplary supporters of the Saṅgha through acts of generosity, religious devotion, and community leadership. Their contributions demonstrate that spiritual progress in Buddhism was not confined to monastic life but was accessible to all sincere practitioners regardless of gender or social position.

Despite these affirmations of spiritual equality, early Buddhist literature also contains passages that reflect the patriarchal social environment of ancient India. Debates concerning the Eight *Garudhammas* and other disciplinary regulations suggest that institutional arrangements did not always correspond fully with the egalitarian implications of Buddhist doctrine. Consequently, contemporary scholars distinguish between the Buddha's fundamental teachings on liberation and the historical development of Buddhist monastic institutions. While the latter often reflected prevailing social conventions, the doctrinal foundation of early Buddhism consistently maintained that enlightenment is equally attainable by women and men through ethical living, meditation, and wisdom. This distinction remains central to modern discussions of Buddhism and gender, providing the basis for contemporary movements advocating greater equality within Buddhist communities (Gross, 1993; Tsomo, 2019).

The *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*: The Eight *Garudhammas* and Women's Religious Authority

The establishment of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* was one of the most significant developments in the history of Buddhism and represented a remarkable transformation in the religious landscape of ancient India. At a time when women's opportunities for independent religious life were severely limited, the Buddha's decision to establish an order of fully ordained nuns provided women with an institutional framework for pursuing

spiritual liberation through monastic discipline, meditation, and the study of the *Dhamma*. Although the creation of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* demonstrated the Buddha's recognition of women's spiritual potential, it also introduced complex questions regarding religious authority, institutional hierarchy, and gender equality that continue to be debated by scholars and Buddhist communities today.

According to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī*, the Buddha's foster mother and maternal aunt, was the first woman to request full ordination. Initially, the Buddha declined her request on three occasions. However, after the Venerable *Ānanda* respectfully questioned whether women could attain the four stages of enlightenment, the Buddha affirmed that women possessed the same spiritual capacity as men to achieve arahantship. Following this acknowledgement, he permitted the establishment of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, making Buddhism one of the earliest religious traditions to create a formal monastic order for women (Anālayo, 2016). This decision reflected a revolutionary recognition that liberation depended upon spiritual practice rather than biological sex.

The admission of women into the monastic community significantly expanded opportunities for female religious education and leadership. *Bhikkhunīs* devoted themselves to the study of the *Dhamma*, meditation, teaching, and the observance of the *Vinaya*. Many attained arahantship and became highly respected spiritual teachers. Distinguished nuns such as *Khemā*, *Uppalavaṇṇā*, *Paṭācārā*, and *Dhammadinnā* were praised by the Buddha for their wisdom, meditative attainments, mastery of discipline, and ability to teach profound doctrinal principles. Their achievements demonstrate that women exercised genuine religious authority within the early Buddhist community and contributed substantially to preserving and transmitting the Buddha's teachings (Blackstone, 1998).

Despite these progressive developments, the foundation of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* was accompanied by the introduction of the Eight *Garudhammas* (garudhamma literally means "weighty" or "important rules"). According to the traditional Vinaya accounts, these eight special regulations became conditions for the establishment of the order of nuns. They required, among other provisions, that even a senior *bhikkhunī* ordained for many years should pay respect to a newly ordained *bhikkhu*, that ordinations involve both the *Bhikkhu* and *Bhikkhunī Saṅghas*, and that disciplinary matters be conducted under the supervision of monks. These rules established a formal institutional relationship in which the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* remained subordinate to the *Bhikkhu Saṅgha* regardless of seniority.

Traditional Buddhist commentators generally interpret the *Garudhammas* as practical measures intended to protect women within the social conditions of ancient India. During the Buddha's lifetime, women travelling independently or living outside family protection often faced considerable social insecurity. According to this interpretation, the regulations were designed to preserve harmony within the *Saṅgha*, promote public confidence in the newly established order of nuns, and ensure its long-term stability in a

predominantly patriarchal society. Rather than expressing spiritual inferiority, the rules are understood as administrative arrangements reflecting the historical realities of the period (Bodhi, 2009).

In contrast, many contemporary scholars question both the historical authenticity and ethical implications of the Eight *Garudhammas*. Textual analysis has identified inconsistencies between different *Vinaya* traditions concerning the wording and placement of these regulations. Some scholars, including Bhikkhu Anālayo (2016), argue that at least some of the *Garudhammas* may represent later editorial additions rather than the direct words of the Buddha. Others maintain that the regulations reflect institutional developments that emerged after the Buddha's lifetime as the monastic community adapted to changing social and political circumstances. These scholarly debates suggest that the historical formation of *Vinaya* was more complex than traditional narratives sometimes indicate.

From a feminist perspective, the Eight *Garudhammas* have become one of the principal symbols of gender hierarchy within Buddhist institutions. Scholars such as Rita M. Gross (1993) argue that while Buddhist doctrine proclaims universal spiritual equality, institutional regulations frequently reinforced male authority and restricted women's leadership. The requirement that senior nuns defer to junior monks appears difficult to reconcile with the Buddhist emphasis on wisdom, ethical conduct, and seniority as the true measures of spiritual accomplishment. Consequently, feminist Buddhist scholarship distinguishes between the Buddha's liberating teachings and later institutional practices shaped by patriarchal social norms.

Nevertheless, the religious authority exercised by early Buddhist women should not be underestimated. The Therīgāthā preserves the voices of enlightened nuns who taught the *Dhamma* with profound insight and personal authority. *Dhammadinnā Therī*, for example, delivered sophisticated doctrinal explanations in the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta*, which the Buddha himself praised as entirely correct. Similarly, *Khemā* and *Uppalavaṇṇā* were publicly recognized by the Buddha as foremost among his female disciples in wisdom and meditative powers, demonstrating that women were respected not merely for their devotion but also for their intellectual and spiritual excellence (Murcott, 1991).

Today, the relationship between the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, the Eight *Garudhammas*, and women's religious authority remains an important topic in global Buddhism. Movements advocating the revival of Bhikkhunī ordination often argue that restoring full opportunities for women reflects the Buddha's original recognition of their equal spiritual capacity. At the same time, traditional communities continue to emphasize fidelity to *Vinaya* and historical continuity. These ongoing discussions illustrate the dynamic interaction between scripture, tradition, institutional authority, and contemporary understandings of gender equality. Ultimately, while the Eight *Garudhammas* continue to generate debate, the early Buddhist record provides compelling evidence that women attained the highest levels of spiritual realization and exercised meaningful religious authority within the Buddha's dispensation. The continuing challenge for contemporary Buddhism is to harmonize its institutional structures with its enduring doctrinal commitment to universal liberation.

The Decline and Contemporary Revival of the *Bhikkhunī* Ordination

The history of the *Bhikkhunī* ordination reflects both the achievements and challenges of women in Buddhist monasticism. Although the Buddha established the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* as an integral part of the fourfold Buddhist community, the continuity of the *bhikkhunī* lineage was not maintained in every Buddhist tradition. Over the centuries, political instability, warfare, social patriarchy, institutional dependence on the *Bhikkhu Saṅgha*, and differing interpretations of the *Vinaya* contributed to the disappearance of full *bhikkhunī* ordination in many *Theravāda* countries. In recent decades, however, international efforts to revive the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* have generated renewed scholarly and religious interest, making women's ordination one of the most significant contemporary issues in Buddhism.

According to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* flourished during the Buddha's lifetime and in the centuries that followed. Numerous nuns attained arahantship, taught the *Dhamma*, and contributed to the preservation of the Buddhist tradition. Historical records indicate that the bhikkhunī lineage was successfully transmitted from India to Sri Lanka during the reign of *King Devānampiya Tissa* through the efforts of *Saṅghamittā Therī*, the daughter of Emperor Aśoka. Her arrival in Sri Lanka marked a turning point in Buddhist history, as she established the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* and ordained Sri Lankan women, creating a strong monastic tradition that endured for many centuries (Anālayo, 2016).

Despite this promising beginning, the *Bhikkhunī* lineage gradually declined in South Asia. The decline was not caused by a single event but resulted from a combination of political, social, and institutional factors. Repeated foreign invasions, civil conflicts, and economic decline weakened Buddhist monasteries throughout India and Sri Lanka. During periods of warfare, monastic communities suffered significant losses, and many monasteries were destroyed or abandoned. Because the *Vinaya* requires a dual ordination ceremony conducted by both the *Bhikkhu* and *Bhikkhunī Saṅghas*, the disappearance of the community of ordained nuns made it increasingly difficult to confer valid ordination upon new candidates. Consequently, the *Theravāda bhikkhunī* lineage eventually became extinct in Sri Lanka around the eleventh century (Bodhi, 2009).

The decline of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* in Sri Lanka had profound consequences for *Theravāda* Buddhism throughout Southeast Asia. Since Sri Lanka served as the principal center for *Theravāda* monastic ordination, countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia inherited traditions in which no functioning *bhikkhunī* lineage existed. Women who wished to dedicate themselves to religious life continued to practice as lay renunciants or semi-ordained ascetics, but they generally lacked the legal recognition, educational opportunities, and institutional authority granted to fully ordained monks. In Sri Lanka, women commonly observed the *Dasa Sil Mātā* tradition, while in Thailand women entered religious life as Mae Chi, and in Myanmar as Thilashin. Although these communities have made significant contributions to Buddhist education, meditation, and social welfare, they do not enjoy the same ecclesiastical status as fully ordained bhikkhus (Gross, 1993).

Patriarchal cultural attitudes also contributed to the decline of women's monastic opportunities. In many traditional societies, religious leadership was regarded primarily as a male responsibility, and women were often expected to fulfil domestic and family roles. These social expectations influenced the interpretation and implementation of Buddhist monastic regulations. Consequently, institutional barriers rather than doctrinal principles frequently limit women's participation in religious leadership. Modern scholars therefore distinguish between the Buddha's teachings, which affirm women's capacity for enlightenment, and historical institutional practices shaped by prevailing cultural norms (Harvey, 2013).

During the late twentieth century, international Buddhist communities began to reconsider the possibility of restoring full *bhikkhunī* ordination. Scholarly research on the *Vinaya*, together with growing awareness of gender equality and human rights, encouraged renewed examination of the historical foundations of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*. Many Buddhist leaders argued that since the Buddha had established a fourfold assembly consisting of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen, restoring the Bhikkhunī order would be consistent with the original vision of the Buddhist community (Anālayo, 2016).

The most significant revival occurred in Sri Lanka during the 1990s. With the cooperation of *Mahāyāna bhikkhunīs* from East Asia and *Theravāda* monks, Sri Lankan women received full ordination, thereby re-establishing the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* after nearly one thousand years. Since then, hundreds of Sri Lankan women have entered the fully ordained monastic life and have become active in Buddhist education, meditation, community development, and humanitarian work. Although some traditional authorities continue to question the legal validity of these ordinations, many scholars and senior monastics regard the revival as both historically justified and doctrinally consistent with the Buddha's teachings (Bodhi, 2009).

The revival movement has also influenced Buddhist communities in Thailand and Myanmar, although official recognition remains controversial. In Thailand, Bhikkhunī *Dhammanandā* became the country's first modern *Theravāda bhikkhunī* and has played a leading role in promoting women's ordination and Buddhist education. Despite lacking formal recognition from the Thai *Saṅgha* Supreme Council, she has inspired many women to pursue monastic life and has become an internationally respected advocate for gender equality within Buddhism. Similarly, in Myanmar, discussions concerning *bhikkhunī* ordination continue among scholars and monastic authorities, although official acceptance has not yet been achieved. These debates illustrate the continuing tension between traditional interpretations of *Vinaya* and contemporary aspirations for greater inclusivity (Tsomo, 2019).

Prominent Buddhist teachers have also contributed to the revival movement. Ajahn Brahm, an Australian *Theravāda* monk, publicly supported the ordination of *bhikkhunīs* in Australia in 2009, arguing that women possess the same spiritual capacity as men and should therefore have equal opportunities for monastic life. His actions generated considerable controversy within traditional *Theravāda* circles but also stimulated global discussion concerning the interpretation of the *Vinaya*, institutional authority, and gender

equality. Such developments demonstrate that the revival of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* is not merely an administrative issue but also a reflection of Buddhism's engagement with contemporary ethical values.

The contemporary revival of *bhikkhunī* ordination represents more than the restoration of a historical institution; it signifies an effort to reconcile Buddhist practice with its foundational teachings on universal liberation. While differences of opinion continue among Buddhist traditions regarding the legality and procedure of ordination, the revival movement has encouraged renewed scholarly dialogue, greater educational opportunities for women, and broader participation in religious leadership. As Buddhism continues to evolve in the twenty-first century, the restoration of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* remains a significant example of how ancient religious traditions respond to changing social realities while remaining rooted in their canonical heritage.

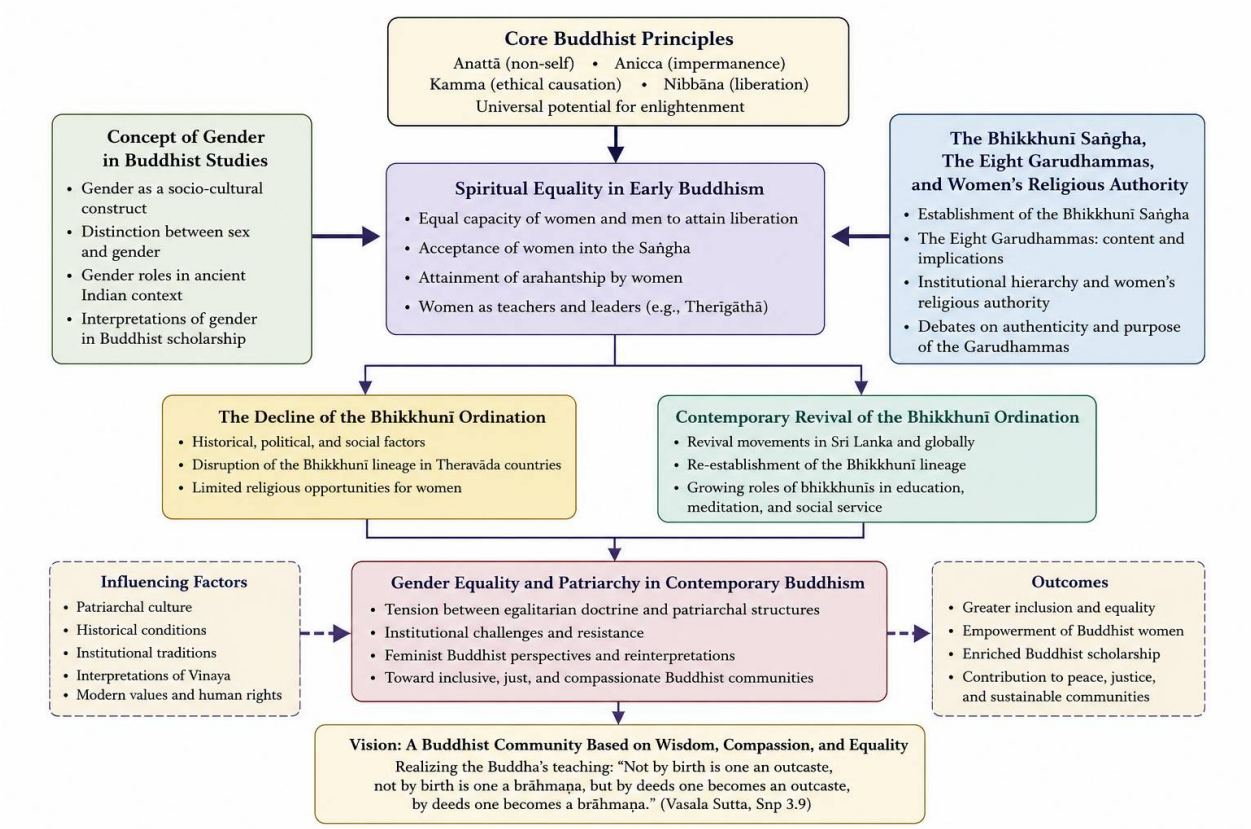


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Buddhism and Gender: Spiritual Equality, Institutional Challenges, and Contemporary Perspectives.

Gender Equality and Patriarchy in Contemporary Buddhism: A Critical Discussion

The relationship between gender equality and patriarchy remains one of the most debated issues in contemporary Buddhism. Although Buddhist doctrine emphasizes the universal potential for enlightenment regardless of gender, historical and institutional developments have often reflected patriarchal social structures. This apparent contradiction has generated extensive discussions among Buddhist scholars, monastic leaders, and practitioners concerning the extent to which gender inequality arises from the Buddha's

original teachings or from cultural and historical influences that shaped Buddhist institutions over time. A critical examination of this issue requires distinguishing between the normative teachings of Buddhism and the lived realities of Buddhist communities.

At the doctrinal level, Buddhism provides a strong foundation for spiritual equality. Central teachings such as *anattā* (non-self), anicca (impermanence), and the Four Noble Truths affirm that all sentient beings possess the capacity to attain liberation through ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom. The Buddha consistently emphasized that enlightenment depends upon individual practice rather than birth, caste, wealth, or gender. The *Therīgāthā* and numerous discourses in the *Pāli* Canon record the spiritual achievements of enlightened women, demonstrating that female disciples attained arahantship and became respected teachers of the *Dhamma*. These canonical sources suggest that Buddhism, at its doctrinal core, recognizes the equal spiritual capacity of women and men (Harvey, 2013).

Despite this doctrinal commitment, Buddhist institutions have frequently reflected the patriarchal values of the societies in which they developed. Throughout much of Buddhist history, religious leadership, monastic administration, scriptural interpretation, and institutional authority have been predominantly exercised by men. In many *Theravāda* countries, women have historically been excluded from full monastic ordination, limiting their opportunities to receive advanced religious education, participate in ecclesiastical governance, and assume positions of leadership. Consequently, many scholars argue that institutional inequality results more from historical and cultural circumstances than from the Buddha's original teachings (Gross, 1993).

The Eight *Garudhammas* continue to occupy a central place in this debate. Traditional interpretations regard these regulations as practical rules intended to preserve harmony and protect women within the patriarchal environment of ancient India. From this perspective, the *Garudhammas* should be understood within their historical context rather than judged according to modern social values. However, feminist scholars question whether permanent institutional subordination can be reconciled with the Buddha's affirmation that women are equally capable of attaining enlightenment. Bhikkhu Anālayo (2016) and other textual scholars have also argued that some of the *Garudhammas* may have been incorporated into the Vinaya during later editorial developments, thereby inviting renewed examination of their authority and interpretation.

Contemporary Buddhist feminism has significantly influenced discussions concerning gender equality. Rather than rejecting Buddhism, many Buddhist feminists seek to recover and emphasize the egalitarian dimensions of the Buddha's teachings while critically examining institutional practices that have marginalized women. Rita M. Gross (1993) argues that Buddhism possesses rich doctrinal resources for supporting gender equality because its central teachings reject permanent identities and emphasize universal liberation. Similarly, Karma Lekshe Tsomo (2019) maintains that greater participation by women in Buddhist

education, leadership, and scholarship strengthens rather than weakens the Buddhist tradition by making it more inclusive and representative of the fourfold community envisioned by the Buddha.

The revival of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha* has become one of the most visible expressions of this movement toward gender equality. In countries such as Sri Lanka, Australia, Taiwan, and the United States, fully ordained *bhikkhunīs* now contribute to Buddhist education, meditation training, social welfare, environmental activism, and interreligious dialogue. Their growing presence demonstrates that women can exercise effective religious leadership while faithfully observing the *Vinaya*. Nevertheless, resistance remains in several Theravāda countries where questions concerning lineage, monastic legality, and institutional authority continue to shape official policies regarding women's ordination (Bodhi, 2009).

The discussion of gender equality in Buddhism also extends beyond monastic ordination. Increasing numbers of Buddhist women serve as university professors, meditation teachers, translators of canonical texts, social activists, and leaders of humanitarian organizations. Buddhist women have played prominent roles in promoting peacebuilding, education, healthcare, environmental conservation, and community development throughout Asia and the West. Their contributions illustrate that religious authority can be expressed not only through formal ecclesiastical positions but also through scholarship, ethical leadership, and compassionate social engagement. These developments reflect an expanding understanding of leadership within contemporary Buddhism.

At the same time, caution is necessary when evaluating Buddhism solely through modern concepts of gender equality. Contemporary ideas concerning human rights, democracy, and gender justice emerged within historical contexts that differ significantly from those of ancient India. Applying present-day social values directly to early Buddhist texts without considering their historical background may oversimplify complex issues. Therefore, many scholars advocate a contextual approach that recognizes both the progressive dimensions of the Buddha's teachings and the limitations imposed by historical circumstances. Such an approach allows for critical reflection without dismissing the historical significance of Buddhist institutions (Gethin, 1998).

Furthermore, the diversity of Buddhist traditions should be acknowledged. *Mahāyāna* communities in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Vietnam have maintained uninterrupted *bhikkhunī* ordination lineages for centuries, enabling women to occupy influential positions in education, administration, and religious practice. In contrast, Theravāda communities have experienced greater institutional challenges due to the historical disappearance of the *bhikkhunī* lineage. These regional differences demonstrate that the status of women in Buddhism is not uniform but varies according to historical development, cultural context, and institutional interpretation.

In conclusion, contemporary discussions of gender equality in Buddhism reveal both continuity and transformation. Buddhist doctrine continues to provide a powerful theological foundation for spiritual equality

through its teachings on non-self, compassion, wisdom, and universal liberation. At the same time, historical institutions have often reflected patriarchal social systems that restricted women's opportunities for leadership and ordination. The ongoing revival of the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, the emergence of female Buddhist scholars and teachers, and increasing dialogue concerning gender justice indicate that Buddhism remains a dynamic religious tradition capable of engaging constructively with contemporary social concerns. Rather than viewing Buddhism as either completely egalitarian or entirely patriarchal, a balanced critical perspective recognizes the interaction between timeless doctrinal principles and historically conditioned institutional practices. This understanding enables Buddhism to continue contributing meaningfully to modern discussions of equality, human dignity, and social justice while remaining faithful to its central aim of liberating all beings from suffering.

Conclusion

This study has examined the relationship between Buddhism and gender by exploring the concepts of spiritual equality, women's religious authority, the *Bhikkhunī Saṅgha*, the Eight Garudhammas, the historical decline of the Bhikkhunī ordination, and its contemporary revival. The findings indicate that the Buddha's teachings fundamentally affirm the equal spiritual capacity of all human beings regardless of gender. Core Buddhist doctrines, including *anattā* (non-self), *anicca* (impermanence), and the Noble Eightfold Path, emphasize that liberation (*nibbāna*) is attained through ethical conduct, meditation, and wisdom rather than biological sex. Early Buddhist literature, particularly the Therīgāthā, provides compelling evidence that women attained arahantship and exercised significant religious authority within the early Buddhist community.

However, the historical development of Buddhist institutions reveals a more complex reality. The Eight *Garudhammas*, the disappearance of the *Bhikkhunī* lineage in several *Theravāda* countries, and the predominance of male monastic leadership demonstrate how Buddhist institutions were influenced by the patriarchal social and cultural contexts in which they developed. Consequently, many contemporary scholars distinguish between the Buddha's original teachings and later institutional practices that reflected historical conditions rather than doctrinal principles.

The contemporary revival of the *Bhikkhunī* ordination and the increasing participation of women in Buddhist scholarship, education, meditation, and social engagement demonstrate that Buddhism continues to respond to contemporary concerns regarding equality and justice. Therefore, Buddhism should be understood as a living religious tradition that possesses both enduring doctrinal foundations for spiritual equality and the capacity for institutional renewal. A balanced and historically informed interpretation enables Buddhist communities to preserve the authenticity of the *Dhamma* while promoting greater inclusivity and equal opportunities for women in the twenty-first century.

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Development of Intercultural Communication Skills for Diploma in English Program Students at Village Education College, Myanmar

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A B S T R A C T

In today's globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively across cultures has become essential for English language learners. This article examines the development of intercultural communication skills among Diploma in English program students at Village Education College in Myanmar. The study explores the current state of intercultural communication competence (ICC) among these students, identifies the challenges they face, and proposes practical strategies for enhancing their intercultural skills. Drawing on Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, the article discusses five key components: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. The findings suggest that students at Village Education College face significant barriers in developing ICC, including limited exposure to diverse cultures, traditional grammar-focused instruction, and insufficient opportunities for authentic intercultural interaction. However, the research also reveals that both teachers and students hold positive attitudes towards integrating culture into language teaching. The article recommends curriculum reforms, teacher training programs, and the integration of technology-mediated intercultural experiences to address these challenges. By implementing these recommendations, Village Education College can better prepare its students to communicate effectively in multicultural environments, thereby enhancing their personal and professional opportunities in an increasingly interconnected world.

Introduction

Intercultural communication competence (ICC) has become increasingly important in English language teaching (ELT) around the world. As English continues to serve as a global lingua franca, learners must not only develop linguistic proficiency but also the ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries. This is particularly relevant for students in Myanmar, where English is increasingly used for educational and professional purposes. The Diploma in English program at Village Education College represents an important context for examining how intercultural communication skills can be developed among learners who may have limited exposure to diverse cultural environments.

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The concept of intercultural communicative competence was developed by Byram (1997), who proposed a model consisting of five components: attitudes (savoir être), knowledge (savoirs), skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre), skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire), and critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager). This framework provides a valuable lens for understanding how language learners can develop the capacity to navigate intercultural encounters successfully. For students in rural Myanmar, developing these competencies presents unique challenges and opportunities.

Myanmar's education system has undergone significant reforms in recent years, with efforts to modernize curriculum and assessment systems. However, English language education in rural areas continues to face challenges such as limited practice opportunities and traditional grammar-focused instruction. Research has shown that rural teachers often express cautious perspectives about innovative teaching approaches, citing concerns related to limited English proficiency, large class sizes, and insufficient training. These contextual factors significantly influence how intercultural communication skills can be developed in programs like the Diploma in English at Village Education College.

Studies conducted in the Myanmar context have revealed important insights about ICC development. Kantamas, Hsai, and Kham (2024) investigated the barriers Myanmar students faced in developing intercultural communication competence, identifying both personal and systemic challenges such as language proficiency issues, cultural misunderstandings, and limited exposure to diverse environments. Similarly, research on Myanmar EFL teachers' attitudes has shown that most teachers hold positive attitudes towards teaching culture and intercultural communicative competence, although they often employ teacher-centered approaches. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to support both teachers and students in developing ICC.

The Diploma in English program at Village Education College serves students who come from rural backgrounds and may have limited prior exposure to intercultural experiences. The program typically includes courses in grammatical studies, composition, speaking and listening, reading, and translation practicum. While these courses develop essential language skills, there is often limited explicit attention to intercultural communication competence. This gap represents a significant opportunity for curriculum enhancement.

This article aims to address the following questions: What is the current state of intercultural communication competence among Diploma in English students at Village Education College? What challenges do these students face in developing ICC? What strategies can be implemented to enhance intercultural communication skills in this context? By examining these questions, the article seeks to provide practical recommendations for educators and policymakers committed to preparing Myanmar's English language learners for successful intercultural communication.

The Concept of Intercultural Communication Competence

Intercultural communication competence refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultural backgrounds. It involves understanding cultural differences, adapting communication styles, and developing the skills necessary to navigate intercultural encounters successfully. For English language learners, ICC is particularly important because English is often used as a medium of communication between people who do not share a common first language or cultural background.

Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the components of ICC. The model includes five interconnected elements:

Attitudes (savoir être): This component involves curiosity and openness, as well as a willingness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs about one's own culture. Students must develop positive attitudes towards cultural difference and a readiness to engage with people from diverse backgrounds.

Knowledge (savoirs): This refers to knowledge about social groups and their practices in one's own country and in the interlocutor's country. It includes understanding of social interaction processes and awareness of how cultural factors influence communication.

Skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre): These skills enable learners to interpret a document or event from another culture, explain it, and relate it to documents or events from their own culture. This involves the ability to analyze cultural products and practices and make connections between different cultural contexts.

Skills of discovery and interaction (savoir apprendre/faire): These skills allow learners to acquire new knowledge about a culture and to use that knowledge in real-time communication and interaction. This includes the ability to ask questions, observe cultural practices, and adapt behavior appropriately.

Critical cultural awareness (savoir s'engager): This component involves the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries. It requires learners to develop a reflective stance towards cultural assumptions and values.

These five components are interdependent and together constitute the foundation of intercultural communicative competence. For students in the Diploma in English program at Village Education College, developing these competencies requires systematic attention across the curriculum.

Research in the Myanmar context has shown that both teachers and learners have positive attitudes towards culture learning and intercultural communicative competence. This positive orientation provides a strong foundation for developing ICC in educational settings. However, positive attitudes alone are insufficient; students also need knowledge, skills, and opportunities for practice.

Challenges in Developing Intercultural Communication Skills in Rural Myanmar

Students at Village Education College face numerous challenges in developing intercultural communication skills. These challenges can be categorized as personal, pedagogical, and contextual factors that collectively influence students' ability to acquire ICC.

Language Proficiency Barriers: One of the most significant challenges is limited English language proficiency. Research has shown that Myanmar students often face difficulties with language proficiency that significantly impede effective communication. When students struggle with basic linguistic skills, they may find it difficult to engage in the complex cognitive and social processes required for intercultural communication. This is particularly true for students from rural areas who may have had limited exposure to English outside the classroom.

Limited Exposure to Diverse Cultures: Students at Village Education College typically come from rural communities where cultural diversity may be limited. Without exposure to diverse cultural perspectives, students may lack the experiential knowledge necessary for developing ICC. Kantamas, Hsai, and Kham (2024) identified limited exposure to diverse environments as a key barrier to intercultural skill development. This limitation affects students' ability to develop the attitudes, knowledge, and skills that comprise ICC.

Traditional Pedagogical Approaches: English language teaching in Myanmar has traditionally been grammar-focused and examination-oriented. This approach emphasizes linguistic accuracy over communicative competence and may not provide sufficient opportunities for students to practice intercultural communication. Research on rural teachers in Myanmar has shown that they often express concerns about limited English proficiency and examination-oriented assessment. These concerns may lead teachers to prioritize grammar instruction over intercultural content.

Insufficient Teacher Training: Many English teachers in Myanmar have not received adequate training in teaching culture and intercultural communication. While research indicates that Myanmar EFL teachers hold positive attitudes towards teaching intercultural communicative competence, they may lack the pedagogical knowledge and skills to integrate culture effectively into their teaching. This gap between positive attitudes and practical implementation represents a significant challenge.

Resource Limitations: Rural educational institutions often face resource constraints that limit their ability to provide intercultural learning experiences. Limited access to authentic materials, technology, and opportunities for interaction with people from other cultures can hinder students' ICC development. The study by Seintita (2025) on implementing communicative language teaching in rural Myanmar highlighted the need for context-sensitive approaches that take resource limitations into account.

Cultural and Social Factors: Myanmar's cultural context also presents unique challenges for ICC development. Students may hold strong attachments to their own cultural norms and values, which can make it difficult to adopt the openness and curiosity required for effective intercultural communication.

Additionally, the historical context of English language education in Myanmar, including its association with colonialism, may influence students' attitudes towards learning about other cultures.

These challenges are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. For example, limited exposure to diverse cultures may reinforce traditional pedagogical approaches, while insufficient teacher training may perpetuate limited exposure to intercultural content. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers the interrelated nature of these barriers.

Current Practices in Intercultural Communication Education at Village Education College

The Diploma in English program at Village Education College currently offers a curriculum that focuses primarily on developing linguistic competence. The program includes courses in grammatical studies, composition, speaking and listening, reading, and translation practicum. While these courses provide essential foundation in English language skills, they may not explicitly address intercultural communication competence.

Grammar-Focused Instruction: As in many Myanmar educational institutions, the curriculum at Village Education College emphasizes grammatical accuracy. Courses cover parts of speech, relative pronouns, active and passive voice, articles, mood, and subject-verb agreement. While grammatical knowledge is important for language learning, an exclusive focus on grammar may not prepare students for the complex demands of intercultural communication.

Limited Cultural Content: The current curriculum may include limited explicit attention to cultural content. Research on English language teaching in Myanmar has shown that while teachers recognize the importance of cultural background knowledge, cultural content may not be systematically integrated into instruction. This gap means that students may not develop the cultural awareness necessary for effective intercultural communication.

Teacher-Centered Approaches: Studies have indicated that most Myanmar EFL teachers employ teacher-centered approaches to culture teaching. While teacher-centered instruction can be effective for transmitting knowledge, it may not provide students with sufficient opportunities to develop the skills of discovery, interaction, and critical cultural awareness that are central to ICC.

Limited Use of Technology: The use of technology for intercultural learning may be limited at Village Education College. Technology-mediated approaches, such as virtual exchanges and online collaborations, can provide students with opportunities to interact with people from other cultures. However, resource constraints in rural areas may limit access to such opportunities.

Assessment Practices: Assessment in the Diploma in English program likely focuses on linguistic accuracy and knowledge of grammatical rules rather than intercultural competence. This assessment focus may influence what teachers emphasize in their instruction and what students prioritize in their learning.

Despite these limitations, there are positive aspects of current practices. Research has shown that Myanmar EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards teaching culture and intercultural communicative competence. This positive orientation provides a foundation for developing more systematic approaches to ICC education. Additionally, students have been found to prefer intercultural activities and have positive attitudes towards culture learning.

The current practices at Village Education College reflect broader patterns in Myanmar's English language education. As Lall (2021) has documented, Myanmar's education system is undergoing transformation, but challenges remain in implementing communicative and intercultural approaches. The Diploma in English program at Village Education College represents an important site for innovation in intercultural communication education.

Strategies for Enhancing Intercultural **Communication Skills**

Based on the challenges identified and current practices observed, several strategies can be recommended for enhancing intercultural communication skills among Diploma in English students at Village Education College.

Curriculum Integration: Intercultural communication competence should be systematically integrated across the curriculum rather than treated as a separate topic. This integration can be achieved by incorporating cultural content into existing courses, such as using culturally diverse reading materials in reading courses and including intercultural topics in speaking and listening activities. Byram's (1997) model provides a framework for identifying appropriate learning objectives for each component of ICC.

Task-Based and Experiential Learning: Students should be provided with opportunities to engage in tasks that require intercultural communication. Role-plays, simulations, and project-based learning can help students develop the skills of discovery and interaction. For example, students could be asked to research a cultural practice from another country and present their findings to the class, or to participate in simulated intercultural negotiations.

Use of Technology: Technology can be used to provide students with opportunities for authentic intercultural interaction. Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects and virtual exchanges can connect students at Village Education College with students in other countries. These experiences can provide valuable opportunities for developing ICC, even when physical travel is not possible. Research has shown that virtual exchange can enhance intercultural communication skills and foster acceptance of English as a lingua franca.

Teacher Professional Development: Teachers need training in how to teach intercultural communication competence. Professional development programs should address both knowledge about ICC and pedagogical strategies for developing it in the classroom. Training should be context-sensitive, taking into account the resource limitations and specific challenges of rural educational settings.

Authentic Materials: The use of authentic materials from diverse cultural contexts can help students develop cultural awareness and knowledge. Materials such as films, news articles, literature, and social media content from different countries can expose students to diverse perspectives and practices. Textbook designers should consider the role of culture teaching as an important criterion in foreign language education.

Critical Reflection: Students should be encouraged to engage in critical reflection on their own cultural assumptions and those of others. Journal writing, discussion, and reflective essays can help students develop critical cultural awareness. This reflective practice is essential for developing the ability to evaluate cultural practices critically.

Extracurricular Activities: Extracurricular activities such as cultural clubs, language exchange programs, and cultural festivals can provide informal opportunities for intercultural learning. These activities can complement formal instruction and provide students with additional opportunities to engage with cultural diversity.

Assessment Reform: Assessment practices should be reformed to include evaluation of intercultural competence. This might include portfolio assessment, self-assessment, and peer assessment of intercultural skills. When students know that intercultural competence is valued and assessed, they may be more motivated to develop these skills.

Community Engagement: The local community can be a resource for intercultural learning. Even in rural areas, there may be opportunities to engage with cultural diversity through community members who have lived or traveled abroad, or through cultural events and festivals. Engaging with the local community can help students see the relevance of intercultural communication to their own lives.

These strategies are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. For example, curriculum integration and teacher professional development should be implemented together, as teachers need training to effectively integrate intercultural content. Similarly, the use of technology and authentic materials can support each other, as technology can provide access to authentic materials from diverse cultural contexts.

Implications for Policy **and Practice**

The development of intercultural communication skills for Diploma in English students at Village Education College has significant implications for educational policy and practice in Myanmar.

Policy Implications: At the policy level, there is a need for national guidelines for integrating intercultural communication competence into English language curricula. The Ministry of Education should consider developing standards for ICC that can be implemented across different educational contexts, including rural areas. These standards should be flexible enough to accommodate local contexts while providing clear expectations for student learning.

Policymakers should also invest in teacher professional development programs that focus on intercultural communication education. Such programs should be sustained and ongoing, rather than one-time events, to ensure that teachers develop the knowledge and skills needed to teach ICC effectively. The study by Htay and Ngonkum (2026) on implementing CLIL in Myanmar highlighted the need for systematic and context-sensitive training.

Additionally, policies should support the development and distribution of culturally diverse materials. Textbook designers should consider the role of culture teaching as an important criterion in foreign language education. This might involve revising existing textbooks to include more intercultural content or developing new materials specifically designed to develop ICC.

Institutional Implications: At the institutional level, Village Education College should consider revising its Diploma in English curriculum to explicitly address intercultural communication competence. This revision should be guided by Byram's (1997) model and should include clear learning objectives for each component of ICC. The curriculum should also include opportunities for students to practice intercultural communication through task-based and experiential learning activities.

Institutions should also invest in technology infrastructure to support intercultural learning. Access to the internet and digital resources can enable virtual exchanges and provide students with access to authentic materials from diverse cultural contexts. While resource constraints are a reality in rural areas, even basic technology can support meaningful intercultural learning experiences.

Furthermore, institutions should develop assessment systems that evaluate intercultural competence. This might involve developing rubrics for assessing ICC, training teachers in alternative assessment methods, and incorporating intercultural competence into student learning outcomes.

Teacher Implications: For teachers at Village Education College, there is a need to develop their own intercultural competence and their pedagogical knowledge for teaching ICC. Professional development should address both content knowledge (understanding culture and ICC) and pedagogical knowledge (how to teach ICC effectively). Teachers should also be encouraged to reflect on their own cultural assumptions and to model intercultural openness for their students.

Teachers can also play a role in advocating for curriculum reform and in developing locally appropriate materials for intercultural learning. Given the resource limitations of rural contexts, teachers may need to be creative in finding ways to incorporate intercultural content into their teaching.

Student Implications: For students, developing intercultural communication skills has significant personal and professional benefits. In an increasingly globalized world, ICC can enhance employment opportunities, facilitate international collaboration, and enrich personal relationships. Students should be

encouraged to take ownership of their intercultural learning and to seek out opportunities for intercultural engagement.

Research Implications: Further research is needed on intercultural communication education in the Myanmar context. Studies should investigate the effectiveness of different pedagogical approaches, the impact of technology-mediated interventions, and the long-term outcomes of ICC education. Research should also examine the specific needs and perspectives of students in rural areas, as their experiences may differ from those of students in urban settings.

The implications discussed here highlight the need for a coordinated approach involving policymakers, institutions, teachers, and students. By working together, these stakeholders can create an educational environment that supports the development of intercultural communication skills and prepares students for success in a multicultural world.

Conclusion

This article has examined the development of intercultural communication skills for Diploma in English program students at Village Education College in Myanmar. The discussion has drawn on Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence to provide a framework for understanding the components of ICC and the strategies needed to develop these competencies. The article has revealed that students at Village Education College face significant challenges in developing ICC, including limited language proficiency, limited exposure to diverse cultures, traditional pedagogical approaches, insufficient teacher training, and resource constraints. These challenges are interconnected and require comprehensive solutions that address multiple aspects of the educational system.

Despite these challenges, there are positive foundations for developing ICC at Village Education College. Both teachers and students have positive attitudes towards integrating culture into language teaching. This positive orientation provides a strong basis for curriculum reform and pedagogical innovation. The strategies recommended in this article include curriculum integration, task-based and experiential learning, use of technology, teacher professional development, use of authentic materials, critical reflection, extracurricular activities, assessment reform, and community engagement. These strategies should be implemented in a coordinated manner, recognizing the interconnected nature of the challenges and solutions.

The implications of this research extend beyond Village Education College to the broader Myanmar educational context. Policymakers, institutions, teachers, and students all have roles to play in developing intercultural communication competence. By working together, these stakeholders can create an educational environment that prepares Myanmar's English language learners for successful intercultural communication in an increasingly interconnected world.

In conclusion, developing intercultural communication skills for Diploma in English students at Village Education College is both a challenge and an opportunity. While significant barriers exist, there is

also considerable potential for innovation and improvement. By implementing the strategies recommended in this article, Village Education College can better prepare its students to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, thereby enhancing their personal and professional opportunities and contributing to Myanmar's engagement with the global community.

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English Language Learning Management for International Students in Northern Thailand: Challenges and Strategies

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A B S T R A C T

This study presents a Research and Development (R&D) initiative executed through an action research framework to design and validate an integrated scoring rubric model for assessing the literacy skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The primary objectives focused on establishing robust, observable performance criteria and verifying the empirical validity of the structural assessment model. Utilizing the Plan, Act, Observe, and Reflect (PAOR) cycle, the rubric was implemented with a target cohort of 62 EFL students. Data collection instruments measured performance across core constructs, and analytical validation was performed via descriptive statistics, Pearson Correlation Coefficients, and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The empirical results demonstrated that the evaluation criteria successfully cluster into four main dimensions: Content/Organization, Grammar, Mechanics, and Unity and Cohesion. CFA indices revealed an exceptional fit with the empirical data ($\chi^2 = 0.25$, $df = 2$, $p = .882$, $GFI = 1.00$, $AGFI = .995$, and $RMSEA = .000$), confirming high construct validity. The developed rubric offers an objective, standardized tool for educators to systematically diagnose and enhance EFL communicative competencies.

Introduction

In modern global education, proficiency in a second language (L2) serves as a primary vehicle for academic advancement, professional mobility, and cross-cultural communication. Within the matrix of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy, literacy performance—specifically the synchronized processing of reading comprehension and written production—is recognized as a foundational pillar determining overall scholastic capability. Academic settings continually require students to navigate complex paragraphs, essays, technical reports, and research articles, establishing a direct dependency between textual comprehension and linguistic output. Despite its clear importance, evaluating literacy performance presents

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major challenges within non-native educational environments, as instructors struggle to measure non-linear cognitive skills objectively.

Assessing literacy development requires evaluating a range of critical factors, including vocabulary mastery, syntactic control, rhetorical cohesion, and thematic development. Traditional assessment methods often rely on subjective grading systems, which can lead to low inter-rater reliability and inconsistent feedback. This problem is particularly acute in international and regional contexts where English is not the native language, leading to limited exposure outside institutional settings. Consequently, EFL learners often display limited proficiency and poor writing outcomes because their engagement with the language is confined to specific, disconnected classroom tasks. To bridge this pedagogical gap, researchers emphasize the systematic implementation of structured instructional guides aligned with standardized benchmarks, such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

While independent reading and writing scales exist, modern communicative approaches highlight the value of integrated literacy tasks. Developing explicit, mathematically validated scoring rubrics provides a reliable method to standardize assessment practices. This study addresses these needs by designing and validating an integrated scoring rubric tailored to the EFL context. By assessing core structural elements, this research provides an empirical framework to improve grading reliability, support diagnostic feedback, and strengthen the link between language input and output.

Research Objectives

To design objective and comprehensive scoring rubric criteria for evaluating reading-to-write and general literacy assessments among EFL students.

To validate the structural model of the developed scoring rubric against empirical data gathered from an active EFL classroom environment, ensuring its construct validity and practical utility.

Literature Review

Conceptualizing Scoring Rubrics in L2 Contexts

A scoring rubric is an explicit pedagogical guide used internationally to evaluate performance assignments through clearly defined criteria. In language testing, rubrics are generally classified into three major configurations: primary trait, holistic, and analytic scales (Weigle, 2002). Primary trait rubrics focus closely on specific rhetorical assignments, determining how well a student accomplishes a narrow communicative purpose (Weigle, 2002). Holistic rubrics evaluate the performance as a single entity, assigning a lone comprehensive score based on an overall impression of achievement (Elbow, 2000). While holistic scoring is efficient for large-scale assessments, it lacks the diagnostic detail needed to pinpoint specific student weaknesses.

Analytic rubrics break performance down into distinct operational components, offering clear advantages for second language acquisition research. L2 development occurs along a fluid border between cognitive comprehension and structural production (Silva et al., 1997). Early language programs often borrowed first-language (L1) grading methods, but contemporary applied linguistics recognizes that L2 writers face unique structural challenges (Kroll, 1998). Standardized assessment instruments are essential for accurate placement and tracking proficiency gains across curriculum levels (Ferris, 2009).

Historical Evolution of Standardized L2 Profiles

The historical basis for analytical writing assessment rests heavily on models like the ESL Composition Profile (ECP), which remains influential in language testing (Haswell, 2005). Developed from longitudinal studies of first-year university compositions, the ECP uses five distinct criteria to assess non-native writing quality (Haswell, 2005). This analytical matrix demonstrated strong internal and external validity, correlating significantly with standardized measures like the TOEFL and Michigan Test Battery (Bacha, 2001). Testing organizations rely on these rubric formats to maintain high inter-rater reliability across multiple evaluators. Although specific operational indicators vary across different testing systems, the underlying principle remains the same: complex language skills must be assessed using clear, explicit criteria.

The Integrated Role of Rubrics in Literacy Development

Recent research highlights the dual role of rubrics as both evaluation tools and instructional guides (Anderson & Mohrweis, 2008; Carson & Kavish, 2018). Academic writing requires students to process source materials and generate well-supported arguments. Analytical rubrics support this process by helping students understand assignment expectations and improve their self-monitoring strategies (Timmerman et al., 2010). By clearly defining mechanical standards and content expectations before instruction begins, rubrics bridge the gap between learning objectives and observed performance outcomes.

Research Methodology

1. Research Design and Framework

This study used an action research design following the four-stage PAOR framework (Plan, Act, Observe, and Reflect) to operationalize the R&D process:

1.1 Plan: The research team conducted an extensive review of L2 assessment literature. Preliminary rubrics were developed during collaborative sessions and evaluated by an expert panel of EFL educators to establish content validity.

1.2 Act: The developed scoring rubric was introduced into an active educational setting to assess performance on integrated literacy tasks.

1.3 Observe: Field observations were recorded during the assessment process, and numerical scores from student evaluations were systematically compiled.

1.4 Reflect: The resulting dataset was analyzed using multivariate statistical methods to assess structural validity and guide future revisions.

2. Participants and Data Collection

The target sample consisted of 62 EFL students enrolled in an intensive English program. The primary instrument was the developed analytical scoring rubric, which evaluated student performance on a 20-point scale divided across core criteria.

3. Statistical Analysis Procedures

To confirm the structural integrity of the rubric, data were analyzed using several statistical tests:

3.1 Pearson Correlation Coefficients: Used to assess the relationships between the individual rubric criteria.

3.2 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Used to verify that the dataset was suitable for factor analysis. High KMO values (approaching 1.0) indicate that variance in the underlying variables can be effectively modeled by latent factors (Srisatidnarakul, 2012).

3.3 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA): Applied to measure construct validity and ensure the overall model fit the empirical data. Model fit was evaluated using standard indices, including Chi-Square (χ^2), Degrees of Freedom (df), Probability (p), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index ($AGFI$), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation ($RMSEA$).

Research Result

1. Operational Criteria of the Developed Rubric

The developed rubric defines clear performance descriptors across five achievement tiers, evaluating four core dimensions on a maximum 20-point scale (5 marks per criterion):

Table 1: Detailed Analytic Scoring Rubric Descriptors

Criteria	5 (Excellent)	4 (Good)	3 (Fair)	2 (Poor)	1 (Unacceptable)
Content & Organization (B1)	Paragraph has topic sentence, supporting sentence, and concluding sentence with comprehensive	Paragraph has topic sentence, supporting sentence, and concluding sentence with some critical evidence.	Paragraph has topic sentence with some limited supporting sentence with limited evidence.	Paragraph is relevant to topic with topic sentence.	Paragraph is not relevant to the topic.

Criteria	5 (Excellent)	4 (Good)	3 (Fair)	2 (Poor)	1 (Unacceptable)
	and sufficient evidence.				
Grammar (B2)	Proficiency in grammar use with no errors.	Good in grammar use with minor errors, not interfere with understanding.	Some minor errors in grammar choice, interfering with understanding.	Many errors in grammar choice, interfering with understandin g.	Serious errors in grammar choice, interfering with understanding.
Mechanics (B3)	Paragraph has no errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling.	Paragraph has one to three errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling.	Paragraph has four to six errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling.	Paragraph has seven to nine errors in punctuation, capitalization , spelling.	Paragraph has ten or more errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling.
Unity & Cohesion (B4)	Well organized, logical, and critical paragraph with excellent connectors and transition.	Well organized, logical, and critical paragraph with good connectors and transition.	Fair organized paragraph with good connectors and transition.	Poor organized paragraph with connectors and transition.	Poor organized paragraph without connectors and transition.

2. Preliminary Statistical Verification

Correlation analysis revealed positive relationships ranging from moderate to high across all observed variables. The strongest correlation was found between Content/Organization (B1) and Grammar (B2), followed by Content/Organization (B1) and Mechanics (B3).

The KMO index was 0.849, meeting the standard for a “meritorious” sample distribution suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 224.065$, $df = 6$, $p = .000$), confirming that the correlation matrix was appropriate for further factor structure validation.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Factor Correlations

Variables	B1	B2	B3	B4	Mean	S.D.
B1: Content/Organization	1.000				3.242	1.126
B2: Grammar	.885**	1.000			2.919	1.106
B3: Mechanics	.833**	.798**	1.000		2.984	0.983
B4: Unity and Cohesion	.797**	.742**	.715**	1.000	2.887	0.907

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); sample size $n = 62$.

Model Fit and Construct Validity

CFA was performed to determine how well the empirical data supported the four-factor rubric structure. The model fit indices confirmed an excellent alignment with the empirical data ($\chi^2 = 0.25$, $df = 2$, $p = .882$, $GFI = 1.00$, $AGFI = .995$, and $RMSEA = .000$). All four components showed strong factor loadings, supporting the construct validity of the rubric.

Table 3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results

Variables / Observed Indicators	Standardized Factor Loading (β)	Unstandardized Estimate (b)	Standard Error (SE)	t-value	Coefficient of Determination (R2)	Factor Score Coef
B1: Content/Organization	.97	1.09	.11	10.28	.93	.51
B2: Grammar	.92	1.01	.11	9.35	.84	.20
B3: Mechanics	.86	0.85	.10	8.51	.75	.14
B4: Unity and Cohesion	.82	0.75	.10	7.86	.68	.11

Discussion

The empirical findings confirm that the developed rubric functions as a highly valid and structurally sound tool for assessing EFL literacy. The identification of Content/Organization, Grammar, Mechanics, and Unity and Cohesion as core criteria aligns with previous research by Turgut and Kayaoğlu (2015), which notes that explicit scoring domains help establish objective criteria in L2 classrooms. By evaluating these areas independently, the rubric reduces examiner bias and provides more consistent scores across different raters.

The high factor loading for Content/Organization ($\beta = .97$) highlights its central importance in literacy assessment. This outcome indicates that while grammatical accuracy ($\beta = .92$) and mechanical correctness ($\beta = .86$) are important, an L2 learner's ability to organize ideas logically is a key indicator of overall language capability. This matches the findings of Turgut and Kayaoğlu (2015), which showed that explicitly defined rubrics help students organize their academic work more effectively and perform better on language assignments.

The strong overall model fit indices ($\chi^2 = 0.25$, $p = .882$, $GFI = 1.00$) statistically demonstrate that the rubric captures the multi-dimensional nature of EFL literacy skills. This structural validity ensures that the tool can be reliably used for diagnostics, placement, and tracking learner development over time.

Knowledge from Research

The structural knowledge gained from this validation study can be organized into a three-stage operational pipeline that links assessment criteria to student outcomes:

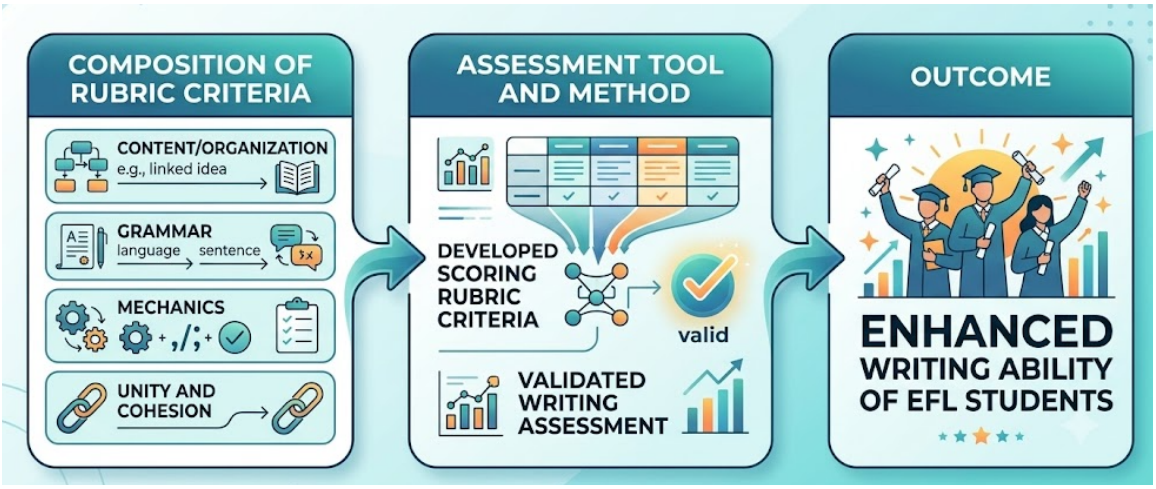


Fig. 1: Theoretical Explanation of the Model

This framework illustrates how clear rubric design translates directly into improved student performance:

1. Composition of Rubric Criteria: The foundational stage organizes the assessment into four distinct, empirically validated components. Each construct targets a specific cognitive or linguistic skill, ensuring the rubric covers all essential areas of language production.

2. Assessment Tool and Method: The criteria are applied through an active assessment process within the classroom. This provides a structured framework for grading, ensuring consistent evaluation and clear feedback.

3. Outcome: The final stage focuses on student growth. By using explicit criteria, the rubric helps reduce language anxiety, clarifies assignment expectations, and guides targeted improvements in EFL reading and writing skills.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This research successfully designed and validated an integrated analytical scoring rubric for EFL literacy assessment. The statistical analysis confirmed that the rubric's core components—Content/Organization, Grammar, Mechanics, and Unity and Cohesion—form a highly reliable and valid evaluation model. The strong model fit indices demonstrate that the tool provides an objective framework for language assessment, offering educators a dependable resource for diagnosing student needs and standardizing grading practices.

Recommendations for Application

1.1 Classroom Implementation: Teachers should share the rubric criteria with students before assignments begin to serve as a self-assessment guide during the writing process.

1.2 Diagnostic Tracking: School programs should use the individual factor scores to identify specific areas where students struggle, allowing for more targeted curriculum design.

2. Suggestions for Future Research

2.1 Quasi-Experimental Designs: Future studies should use pre-test and post-test designs with control groups to measure the long-term impact of rubric feedback on student progress.

2.2 Sample Expansion: The rubric should be tested across a wider variety of educational levels, including secondary schools and undergraduate programs, to confirm its utility in diverse teaching environments.

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The English Speaking Skills of Myanmar's Community at Pratunam Market in Bangkok, Thailand

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A B S T R A C T

The objectives of this research were 1) to describe the English speaking skills of Myanmar's community at Pratunam Market in Bangkok, Thailand, and 2) to find out the satisfaction on communicative activities and English speaking skills of Myanmar community at Pratunam Market in Bangkok, Thailand. The research methodology used a mixed-method approach with a descriptive design. Data was collected through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The population consisted of 50 Myanmar workers and vendors at Pratunam Market who regularly use English in their daily tasks. The research tools included a questionnaire with three parts: demographic information, English speaking skills, and satisfaction with communicative activities. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic analysis. The research results were found as follows:

Myanmar workers at Pratunam Market demonstrated moderate to good English speaking skills with an overall mean score of 3.60. The highest scores were for enjoying speaking (M=3.94) and being active in using English (M=3.82). However, challenges were found in using appropriate vocabulary (M=3.38) and fluency (M=3.44). Regarding satisfaction with communicative activities, the overall mean score was 4.07, which is high. The highest satisfaction was for improving English speaking skills (M=4.32) and helping them speak English (M=4.26). The qualitative findings from interviews revealed that Myanmar workers use English daily in their work and recognize its importance for business. They face challenges with vocabulary, confidence, and fluency but appreciate the opportunities for practice provided by communicative activities. They expressed interest in more structured training and pronunciation support. This study concludes that Myanmar's community at Pratunam Market has moderate to good English speaking skills and is highly satisfied with communicative activities. Additional support is needed for vocabulary development, fluency, and confidence building.

Introduction

In the globalized world of the 21st century, English has become an essential tool for communication, business, and international cooperation. As the primary language of international commerce, tourism, and technology, English proficiency opens doors to economic opportunities and social mobility. For immigrant workers in Thailand, particularly those from neighboring countries like Myanmar, English skills are increasingly important for employment in the service and retail sectors. Thailand is a major tourist destination, attracting millions of international visitors annually. Bangkok, the capital city, is a hub for shopping, with

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famous markets like Pratunam Market drawing tourists from around the world. These tourists come from diverse countries and often communicate in English. For Myanmar workers and vendors at Pratunam Market, the ability to speak English is crucial for effective communication with customers, successful business transactions, and better employment opportunities.

Pratunam Market is one of Bangkok's largest and most famous shopping districts, known for its wholesale clothing, accessories, and textiles. The market attracts both local Thai customers and international tourists from countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Europe, and the United States. Myanmar workers at the market perform various roles, including sales assistants, vendors, shop helpers, and service staff. They interact with international customers daily, making English a necessary skill for their work. However, many Myanmar workers face challenges in English speaking due to limited formal education in English, lack of opportunities for practice, and low confidence. These challenges affect their job performance and career advancement. According to Min and Aung (2021), many Myanmar migrant workers in Thailand have limited English proficiency, which restricts their employment opportunities and earning potential. This situation highlights the urgent need to understand and improve the English speaking skills of Myanmar workers.

Research has consistently demonstrated that communicative activities are effective for developing English speaking skills. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasizes interaction and real communication as the primary goals of language learning. Activities such as role-play, information gap, jigsaw, and spot the difference encourage learners to use language meaningfully and develop their speaking abilities (Angwattanakul, 1994; Harmer, 2002). Many studies in Thailand have found that communicative activities help students improve their English speaking abilities (Jupamaktha, 1996; Phuphanpet, 2004; Domesrifa, 2008; Klanit, 2010). These activities are effective because they provide learners with opportunities to practice speaking in authentic contexts, build confidence, and develop fluency.

Studies have also investigated English language learning among migrant workers in Thailand. Suwannaphan (2019) found that communicative activities helped migrant workers improve their English communication skills in workplace settings. Wongsuriya (2003) showed that using real-life situations in English instruction enhanced the speaking and listening competence of vocational students. In the context of market workers, Noom-Ura (2008) found that communicative activities promoted positive attitudes toward learning English among low-proficiency learners. However, despite this body of research, limited studies have focused specifically on the English speaking skills of Myanmar workers in Thai markets. No study has investigated the English speaking skills of Myanmar's community at Pratunam Market or their satisfaction with communicative activities. This gap in the literature highlights the need for research that examines the English speaking abilities of this population and identifies effective approaches for language development.

This study focuses on Myanmar's community at Pratunam Market, Bangkok, Thailand. The community consists of Myanmar workers and vendors who have migrated to Thailand for employment. These

workers come from various regions of Myanmar, have different levels of education, and have been living and working in Thailand for varying lengths of time. Many of them use English daily in their work, interacting with international tourists and customers. Their experience of learning and using English in the workplace provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for language development. The market environment functions as a natural context for language learning, where workers learn English through authentic communication. Understanding their English speaking skills and their satisfaction with communicative activities is crucial for developing training programs that meet their needs.

This research paper presents an investigation of the English speaking skills of Myanmar's community at Pratunam Market and their satisfaction with communicative activities. The paper aims to provide new knowledge and practical solutions that can benefit the academic community, employers, educators, and policymakers. By examining both worker perspectives and employer experiences, the study offers a comprehensive understanding of the current state of English communication at the market and identifies actionable recommendations for improvement.

Research Objectives

In relation to the problem statement above, the main objectives of the research are to find out:

To describe the English speaking skills of Myanmar’s community at Pratunam Market in Bangkok, Thailand.

To find out the satisfaction on communicative activities and English speaking skills of Myanmar community at Pratunam Market in Bangkok, Thailand.

Literature Review

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has become a dominant approach in English language teaching. According to Angwattanakul (1994), CLT is a teaching approach that encourages learners to use language in appropriate situations and social interactions. The main goal of CLT is to develop learners' communicative competence, enabling them to use language effectively for communication in real-life situations. Allwright (1978) and Nunan (1991) emphasized that CLT focuses on using language for communication rather than just studying linguistic structures and grammar rules.

The principles of CLT include the following: learners should be aware of the objectives of each lesson, communication involves strings of sentences and ideas, important elements include information gap, choice of performances, and feedback, learners need practice in doing something or learning by doing, and teachers should not criticize unimportant mistakes during communicative activities (Morrow, 1981). Davies and Pearse

(2000) stated that teachers should establish English as the main classroom language, use interesting topics and stimulating activities, and encourage learners in their efforts to communicate their ideas.

Communicative Activities

Communicative activities are activities that encourage and require learners to speak and listen to others. Harmer (2002) stated that communicative activities are aimed at developing students' ability to use language to interact with people in real situations. These activities have real purposes: to find information, break down barriers, talk about oneself and others, and learn about cultures.

There are several types of communicative activities. Information gap activities involve a transfer of information from one person to another. Students work in pairs and one student has part of the information and conveys it to the other (Richards, 2006; Thornbury, 2008). Jigsaw activities are based on the information gap concept, where each group has some information that helps to complete the activity (Harmer, 1985). Opinion gap activities involve identifying and combining personal preferences, feelings, or attitudes in response to a situation (Pattison, 1989). Role-play requires learners to take on a particular role and imagine themselves in that situation (Underhill, 2000). Spot the difference activities involve comparing two similar pictures to find differences (Richards, 2006).

English Speaking Ability

Speaking is a productive skill that seems to be the most important of all four language skills because it can distinctly show the correctness and errors that a language learner makes (Harmer, 2002). According to Bygate (1987), interactive skills involve making decisions about communication while maintaining desired relations with others. Cohen (1994) insisted that speakers should have fluency in the language and use vocabulary and structure in suitable situations.

Components of speaking include fluency, appropriateness, and accuracy. Weir (1993) wrote that fluency is smoothness of execution, appropriateness includes degree of politeness and suitability of language used, and accuracy focuses on intelligibility and grammar. Communicative competence includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1978; Murcia, 1991).

Problems with Speaking Abilities

Ur (1996) pointed out four problems with speaking abilities. Inhibition occurs when learners are worried about making mistakes, afraid of criticism, or shy to speak. Nothing to say happens when learners have no motivation to express themselves. Low or uneven participation occurs when some learners dominate while others speak very little. Mother-tongue use happens when learners share the same first language and use it because it is easier.

These problems are common among Myanmar workers at Pratunam Market. Many workers are inhibited because they are afraid of making mistakes in front of customers or colleagues. They may have nothing to say due to limited vocabulary and lack of confidence. Participation in group activities may be uneven, with more confident workers speaking more. Mother-tongue use is common when workers communicate with each other in Burmese.

Related Studies on Communicative Activities

Many studies in Thailand have investigated the effects of communicative activities on English speaking ability. Jupamaktha (1996) conducted research comparing students taught through communicative activities through information transfer and those taught through textbook activities. The study found that the experimental group had significantly higher achievement in English listening than the control group. Rasri (1996) studied listening and speaking ability for tourism using communicative activities based on Keith Johnson's principles. The study found that students taught through this approach had higher English listening-speaking ability than those taught through the teacher's manual method.

Sirikongkasakul (1996) studied the effect of communication strategy instruction on English oral communicative proficiency. The study found that students who received this instruction had significantly higher English speaking abilities than those taught through ordinary teaching. Phumsaidorn (1997) studied the development of English communication through the information gap principle. The study found that students taught through the information gap principle achieved higher English proficiency.

Kanlapapuek (1999) studied the development of English speaking skills through pair work activities. The study found that pair work activities significantly improved students' English speaking behaviors. Phuphanpet (2004) investigated the development of speaking ability using communicative activities including spot the differences, information gap activities, role play, mapped dialogues, and jigsaw activities. The study found a significant difference in learners' speaking ability at the .01 level.

Ponglangka (2007) studied whether Matthayomsuksa 5 students developed their communicative English speaking ability through role play. The findings indicated a significant difference at the .01 level. Domesrifa (2008) investigated whether students could improve their communicative English speaking ability through communicative activities including information gap, mapped dialogue, jigsaw activities, spot the difference, and role play. The results revealed a significant difference at the .01 level.

Klanit (2010) investigated whether students improved their English speaking proficiency through communicative activities: information gap and role play. The findings demonstrated a significant improvement at the .05 level. Promshoit (2010) evaluated the development of listening and speaking abilities through pair work and information gap activity. The study revealed a significant difference at the .01 level. Wongsuriya (2003) improved English speaking and listening communicative competence through real-life

situations. The study found a significant difference at the .01 level and students had excellent attitudes toward learning English.

Conceptual Framework

This study is a research-based investigation. The researcher has developed a conceptual framework to guide the study clearly and systematically. This framework is based on the concept of communicative language teaching and communicative activities, together with theories of speaking ability.

The framework helps to explain the main ideas, relationships, and directions of the research. It shows how the key concepts are connected and supports the development of research questions and objectives. The framework consists of three main components:



Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This mixed-method descriptive study was conducted at Pratunam Market, Bangkok, Thailand, with 50 Myanmar workers and vendors and 10 store managers or business owners. The participants were selected through convenience sampling based on inclusion criteria: Myanmar nationality, engagement in communicative activities involving English, and at least one year of work experience at the market. Data collection was conducted from November 2025 to March 2026.

Two research tools were utilized. First, a structured questionnaire was developed consisting of three parts: demographic information (gender, age, education, occupation), English speaking skills (10 items using a five-point Likert scale), and satisfaction with communicative activities (10 items using a five-point Likert scale). The questionnaire was adapted from Saezhong (2005). Second, a semi-structured interview guide was

prepared for in-depth interviews with key informants, covering topics such as satisfaction, challenges, and suggestions for improvement.

The questionnaire demonstrated strong validity with Item Objective Congruence (IOC) values greater than 0.67 for all items. A pilot study was conducted with 10 Myanmar workers who were not participants in the main study to check the practicality and clarity of the questionnaire. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation with SPSS. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. The integrated findings offer a comprehensive understanding of English speaking skills and satisfaction with communicative activities among Myanmar workers at Pratunam Market.

Research Results

Objective 1: English Speaking Skills of Myanmar's Community

The results showed that Myanmar workers at Pratunam Market have moderate to good English speaking skills. Table 1 presents the findings from the questionnaire.

Table 1: English Speaking Skills of Myanmar's Community

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Level
1	Learner is active to use English while drilling	3.82	0.95	High
2	Learner enjoys speaking	3.94	0.89	High
3	Learner is self-confident to make conversation between their friends	3.56	1.02	High
4	Learner provides idea in market	3.68	0.97	High
5	Learner asks some questions about the task	3.72	0.94	High
6	Learner tried to edit himself/herself during using language	3.48	1.08	High
7	Learner uses complete sentences while using language	3.54	1.05	High
8	The speed of learners seems to be slightly affected by language problems	3.44	1.12	High
9	Learner uses appropriate vocabularies and idioms to make a conversation	3.38	1.15	Moderate
10	Learner pronounces a clear pronunciation	3.42	1.10	High
	Overall Average	**3.60**	**1.03**	**High**

As shown in Table 1, the overall average mean score for English speaking skills was 3.60, which falls in the "High" level. This indicates that Myanmar workers generally have good English speaking skills.

The highest mean score was for item 2, "Learner enjoys speaking" (M=3.94, SD=0.89), suggesting that Myanmar workers enjoy using English in their daily work at the market. This was followed by item 1,

"Learner is active to use English while drilling" (M=3.82, SD=0.95), and item 5, "Learner asks some questions about the task" (M=3.72, SD=0.94).

The item with the lowest mean score was item 9, "Learner uses appropriate vocabularies and idioms to make a conversation" (M=3.38, SD=1.15), which was rated at a "Moderate" level. This suggests that Myanmar workers face challenges in using appropriate vocabulary and idioms when speaking English. Item 8, "The speed of learners seems to be slightly affected by language problems" (M=3.44, SD=1.12), also received a relatively low score, indicating that some participants experience difficulties with speaking fluency.

Table 2: Summary of English Speaking Skills

Category	Mean	SD	Level
Active Participation	3.82	0.95	High
Enjoyment	3.94	0.89	High
Confidence	3.56	1.02	High
Idea Provision	3.68	0.97	High
Questioning	3.72	0.94	High
Self-Correction	3.48	1.08	High
Sentence Completion	3.54	1.05	High
Fluency	3.44	1.12	High
Vocabulary & Idioms	3.38	1.15	Moderate
Pronunciation	3.42	1.10	High
Overall	**3.60**	**1.03**	**High**

Objective 2: Satisfaction on Communicative Activities and English Speaking Skills

The results showed that Myanmar workers have high satisfaction with communicative activities. Table 3 presents the findings from the questionnaire.

Table 3: Satisfaction on Communicative Activities and English Speaking Skills

No.	Item	Mean	SD	Level
1	Communicative activities are very interesting for me	4.12	0.87	High
2	Communicative activities help me to speak English	4.26	0.79	Very High
3	Communicative activities help me develop my English pronunciation	3.98	0.92	High
4	Communicative activities help me improve my English speaking skills	4.32	0.74	Very High
5	Communicative activities help me improve my grammar and vocabulary	3.86	0.98	High

6	Communicative activities help me have fun in the market	4.18	0.82	High
7	I have more confidence to speaking English after I practice communicative activities in market	3.94	0.94	High
8	I have more chance to participate in market activities	4.08	0.88	High
9	Communicative activities help me to think more analytically in English	3.92	0.90	High
10	Communicative activities help me to speak English more fluently and correctly	4.02	0.86	High
	Overall Average	**4.07**	**0.87**	**High**

As shown in Table 3, the overall average mean score for satisfaction was 4.07, which falls in the "High" level. This indicates that Myanmar workers are generally satisfied with communicative activities and recognize their benefits for English speaking development.

The highest mean score was for item 4, "Communicative activities help me improve my English speaking skills" (M=4.32, SD=0.74), which was rated at a "Very High" level. This was followed by item 2, "Communicative activities help me to speak English" (M=4.26, SD=0.79), which was also rated at a "Very High" level.

The item with the lowest mean score was item 5, "Communicative activities help me improve my grammar and vocabulary" (M=3.86, SD=0.98), which was rated at a "High" level but received the lowest score among all items. This suggests that while participants recognize the value of communicative activities, they may feel that these activities are less effective for grammar and vocabulary development compared to other aspects of English learning.

Table 4: Summary of Satisfaction Scores

Category	Mean	SD	Level
Interest	4.12	0.87	High
Speaking Ability	4.26	0.79	Very High
Pronunciation	3.98	0.92	High
Overall Speaking Skills	4.32	0.74	Very High
Grammar & Vocabulary	3.86	0.98	High
Fun & Enjoyment	4.18	0.82	High
Confidence	3.94	0.94	High
Participation	4.08	0.88	High
Analytical Thinking	3.92	0.90	High
Fluency & Correctness	4.02	0.86	High

Overall	**4.07**	**0.87**	**High**

Qualitative Findings from Interviews

The semi-structured interview results revealed that Myanmar workers use English daily in their work and recognize its importance for business. They face challenges with vocabulary, confidence, and fluency but appreciate the opportunities for practice provided by communicative activities. They expressed interest in more structured training and pronunciation support.

Theme 1: Daily English Communication Practices

Most participants reported using English daily in their work. A 35-year-old female store owner stated:

"I use English every day. Many Chinese, Korean, and European tourists come to my shop. I need to tell prices, describe products, and answer questions in English. Without English, I cannot do business here."

A 28-year-old male general worker added: "I work as a helper in a clothing shop. When customers ask about sizes, colors, or prices, I need to understand them. I try to speak English even if I make mistakes. My boss encourages us to practice."

Theme 2: Challenges in English Speaking

Despite the need for English, many participants identified challenges they face. A 32-year-old male shop owner explained: "My biggest problem is vocabulary. When customers ask about specific things like fabric materials or fashion details, I don't know the words. I need to use simple words or show the product. Sometimes customers get confused."

A 26-year-old female worker shared: "I am shy to speak English. When customers talk fast, I get nervous. I understand the words slowly. I need them to repeat many times. Some customers get impatient. This makes me feel bad."

Theme 3: Benefits of Communicative Activities

Many participants expressed positive views about communicative activities in the market. A 45-year-old male business owner stated: "I encourage my workers to speak with customers. Sometimes I organize role-play activities during slow times. We practice how to handle different situations. This helps them feel more prepared. They become more confident and speak better."

A 29-year-old female worker added: "When I practice with other workers, I learn new words and phrases. We help each other. The activities are fun and we are not afraid to make mistakes. This is better than studying alone."

Theme 4: Suggestions for Improvement

Participants offered suggestions for improving English speaking skills. A 38-year-old female store owner recommended: "I think we need more structured training. Many workers learn English informally from customers. This is good but we need basic training on common phrases and vocabulary for our business. Maybe workshops or classes after work hours."

A 27-year-old male worker suggested: "I would like to learn more about pronunciation. Sometimes customers cannot understand me because I speak with a strong accent. If I can pronounce words clearly, I think I can serve customers better."

Discussion

This research found that Myanmar workers at Pratunam Market have moderate to good English speaking skills (M=3.60). This finding is consistent with Jupamaktha (1996) and Rasri (1996), who found that communicative activities effectively develop English speaking abilities. The strengths identified in active participation (M=3.82) and enjoyment of speaking (M=3.94) align with Kanlapapuek (1999) and Phuphanpet (2004), who found that communicative activities encourage participation and create a positive learning environment. The challenges identified in vocabulary (M=3.38), fluency (M=3.44), and confidence (M=3.56) are consistent with Ur (1996) and Brown (1994). Limited vocabulary and fluency problems are common among second language learners (Cohen, 1994; Thornbury, 2008).

Regarding satisfaction, this research found high satisfaction levels (M=4.07), consistent with Wongsuriya (2003) and Noom-Ura (2008). The very high satisfaction with improving overall speaking skills (M=4.32) and speaking English (M=4.26) supports numerous studies that found positive effects of communicative activities on speaking ability (Phuphanpet, 2004; Domesrifa, 2008; Klanit, 2010). The high satisfaction with enjoyment (M=4.18) aligns with Pojit (2004) and Ketthongkum (2005). The relatively lower satisfaction with grammar and vocabulary improvement (M=3.86) is consistent with criticism that communicative activities prioritize meaning over form (Fotos & Ellis, 1991; Swan, 2005).

The qualitative findings provide rich insights that complement the quantitative results. The daily use of English in work contexts supports the importance of authentic practice for language development (Hedge, 2000). The challenges identified in interviews confirm the quantitative findings and previous research (Brown, 1994; Ur, 1996). The benefits of communicative activities expressed in interviews align with Harmer (2002) and Davies and Pearse (2000). The desire for more structured training and pronunciation support is consistent with research recommending a combination of communicative practice and explicit instruction (Celce-Murcia & Goodwin, 1991; Thornbury, 2008).

The satisfaction levels observed in this study are similar to previous research. Ketthongkum (2005) found positive attitudes toward English supplementary materials (M=3.82). Noom-Ura (2008) found positive attitudes toward learning English (M=3.87-4.04). This study found slightly higher satisfaction (M=4.07), possibly because participants were adults with authentic and immediate needs to use English in their daily work. This suggests that meaningful context and authentic communication can enhance learner satisfaction.

Knowledge from Research

The body of knowledge resulting from this research can be synthesized as follows:

English Speaking Skills Profile of Myanmar Workers

This study identified a comprehensive profile of English speaking skills among Myanmar workers:

Category	Key Skills	Level
Active Participation	Using English during practice, asking questions	High
Communication Skills	Enjoyment of speaking, providing ideas	High
Linguistic Competence	Sentence completion, self-correction	High
Fluency	Speaking speed, minimal language interruption	High
Vocabulary & Idioms	Appropriate vocabulary and idiom usage	Moderate
Pronunciation	Clear pronunciation	High

Satisfaction Framework

The research established that satisfaction with communicative activities can be measured across four dimensions:

Dimension	Key Findings	Implications
Interest	High interest in activities	Activities are engaging and motivating
Speaking Development	Very high satisfaction	Activities effectively improve speaking
Confidence	High confidence improvement	Activities build confidence
Participation	High participation opportunities	Activities are inclusive and engaging

Conclusion

This study aimed to describe the English speaking skills of Myanmar's community at Pratunam Market in Bangkok, Thailand, and to find out their satisfaction with communicative activities. The research used a mixed-method approach with questionnaires and interviews to collect data from 50 Myanmar workers and 10 store managers.

The central conclusion is that Myanmar workers at Pratunam Market have moderate to good English speaking skills. Workers demonstrate strengths in active participation, enjoyment of speaking, questioning

behavior, and providing ideas. However, they face challenges in vocabulary, fluency, confidence, and self-correction. These challenges are consistent with previous research on problems with speaking abilities (Ur, 1996; Brown, 1994).

The study also concludes that Myanmar workers are highly satisfied with communicative activities. They recognize the value of these activities for improving their overall speaking skills, helping them speak English, making work enjoyable, and increasing participation opportunities. However, they feel that communicative activities are less effective for improving grammar and vocabulary, suggesting a need for a balanced approach that combines communicative activities with explicit instruction.

The qualitative findings revealed that Myanmar workers use English daily in their work and recognize its importance for business. They face challenges with vocabulary and confidence but appreciate the opportunities for practice provided by communicative activities. They expressed interest in more structured training and pronunciation support. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature on English speaking skills in workplace contexts and provide practical recommendations for improving English communication among immigrant workers.

Suggestions

Based on the findings from Pratunam Market, the following recommendations are proposed:

For Market Owners and Employers

Encourage and support English learning among workers by creating a positive learning environment. Provide opportunities for practice, offer incentives for learning, and recognize workers' efforts. Organize in-house training programs or workshops that incorporate communicative activities. Combine structured training with informal practice for maximum benefit.

For English Teachers and Trainers

Consider the specific needs and contexts of learners when designing instruction. Focus on practical, business-related vocabulary and phrases relevant to the market context. Incorporate authentic materials from the market, such as product descriptions and customer dialogues. Include pronunciation instruction to help workers speak more clearly. Balance fluency-oriented activities with accuracy-focused exercises.

For Future Research

Conduct studies with larger and more diverse samples, encompassing multiple markets and regions. Undertake longitudinal research to track progress over extended periods. Investigate the relative effectiveness of different types of communicative activities. Explore practical, scalable solutions to support workers in managing persistent challenges. Conduct research on the role of technology in supporting English learning.

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The Effectiveness of Communicative Approach to Improve Speaking Skills and Accuracy Using the Storytelling Method at Government Secondary School in Aglo Vidergaende Skole, Norway

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A B S T R A C T

This article aimed to study (1) the effectiveness of the communicative approach in improving students' speaking fluency using the storytelling method at Aglo Videregående Skole, (2) the impact of the communicative approach on students' speaking accuracy through storytelling activities, and (3) students' overall improvement in speaking skills when using the communicative approach combined with storytelling techniques. The instrument for collecting data was a questionnaire with 40 items measuring students' perspectives on speaking fluency, accuracy, overall improvement, and attitudes toward storytelling. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The research results were found as follows:

Students showed positive results in speaking fluency. Most students (86.6%) agreed they could speak without long pauses, and 93.3% believed storytelling helped them speak faster. Students reported feeling more fluent after storytelling activities, with an average score of 4.77 out of 5. However, some students still struggled with pausing during conversations. Students demonstrated strong speaking accuracy. Most students (90%) felt they used correct grammar and believed storytelling helped them make fewer errors. Students felt confident using prepositions and reported their accuracy was improving. However, students identified challenges with verbs and past tense usage. Students showed significant overall improvement in speaking skills. Over 90% of students agreed that storytelling made them want to speak more and that group work helped them speak better. Students overwhelmingly liked the communicative approach (mean = 4.80 out of 5), with 93.3% saying it helped them a lot. Students' confidence increased significantly from 2.1 to 4.3 out of 5 after the intervention.

Introduction

Speaking is one of the most important skills for students learning English as a foreign language. When students can speak well, they can express their ideas and feelings to others. According to Hybel (2001), speaking involves expressing factual information, ideas, and feelings using not only words but also body language and style. Speaking is considered a productive skill that allows individuals to convey meaning directly through the use of speech organs (Cameron, 2001; Brown, 2004). However, many students find speaking to be one of the most difficult skills to master compared to reading, writing, and listening (Dincer & Yesilyurt, 2017). Tuan and Mai (2015) noted that the main problem is that students often lack confidence

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when speaking in a foreign language. They fear making errors, receiving negative feedback, and feeling embarrassed when speaking in front of others.

Previous research has examined different methods to improve students' speaking skills. Uswatun Hasanah (2021) studied the use of the communicative approach to improve students' speaking fluency and accuracy at Madrasah Aliyah Ruhul Islam Anak Bangsa. The results showed that students in the experimental class improved from 73.6 to 89.05, while the control class only showed a slight improvement from 65.6 to 79.6. Dewi, Kultsum, and Armadi Ari (2017) found that communicative games significantly improved students' speaking skills, with post-test scores increasing from 60.42 to 78.77. They reported that communicative games enhanced students' enthusiasm, motivation, active participation, and confidence in speaking. Parupalli Srinivas Rao (2019) emphasized that speaking is the most important skill among all four language skills in the modern global world. He suggested that teachers should introduce group and pair activities to help English language learners develop their speaking skills.

While these studies show the effectiveness of communicative approaches, there is still a need to understand how specific techniques like storytelling can improve both speaking fluency and accuracy. Many students continue to struggle with speaking anxiety and grammatical errors. This study aims to address this research gap by examining the effectiveness of the communicative approach combined with storytelling techniques at Aglo Videregående Skole in Norway.

This research focuses on first-grade students at Aglo Videregående Skole, located in Fløanvegen 89, 7510 Skatval, Norway. The school has six classes with 194 students. The researcher chose these students because they have previous learning experience from junior high school and understand problem-solving in the learning process. The main group for this study is 30 students from Class X-4 (experimental class) and Class X-5 (control class). These students are between 14 and 18 years old. They are learning English as a foreign language and need to develop their speaking skills for their education and future careers.

The researcher has experience teaching English and observing students' difficulties with speaking. Many students in this school feel nervous when speaking English, struggle to find the right words, and make grammatical errors. Previous studies in this school have shown that students need more practice with speaking activities. The target audience for this study includes English teachers, curriculum developers, and educational researchers who want to understand how storytelling can help students improve their speaking skills. This research is important for this group because it provides evidence-based recommendations for teaching speaking in secondary schools.

The research aims to examine the effectiveness of the communicative approach in improving students' speaking fluency and accuracy using the storytelling method. The study was conducted at Aglo Videregående Skole in Norway from August 2026 to February 2027. The researcher used a quasi-experimental design with

an experimental class (Class X-4) and a control class (Class X-5). The study involved six meetings: four meetings for treatment and two for pre-test and post-test.

This research paper presents the effectiveness of the communicative approach combined with storytelling to improve speaking skills, describing its structure and the main points discussed. The paper aims to provide new knowledge about teaching speaking that can benefit teachers, students, and the academic community.

Research Objectives

In relation to the problem statement above, the main objectives of the research are to find out:

To examine the effectiveness of the communicative approach in improving students' speaking fluency using the storytelling method at Aglo Videregående Skole.

To investigate the impact of the communicative approach on students' speaking accuracy through storytelling activities.

To identify students' overall improvement in speaking skills when using the communicative approach combined with storytelling techniques.

Literature Review

Description of Findings from Previous Studies

Many researchers have studied how to improve students' speaking skills. Speaking is an important skill for language learners. According to Cameron (2001) and Brown (2004), speaking is a productive skill that allows people to share meaning using speech organs. Richard (2008) explained that speaking helps people explore ideas and connect with others. Speaking has five important components: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and comprehension (Jill & Charles, 2008).

Several studies have examined the communicative approach. The communicative approach focuses on helping students communicate in real-life situations. Brown (2001) stated that this approach motivates students to improve their English by emphasizing fluency and providing tasks that help them develop their ideas. Harmer (2007) explained that the communicative approach uses real-life situations, role-play, and simulation to make learning more authentic. The teacher acts as a facilitator rather than just giving information.

Research has shown positive results from using the communicative approach. Uswatun Hasanah (2021) studied the use of the communicative approach at Madrasah Aliyah Ruhul Islam Anak Bangsa. The results showed that students in the experimental class improved their speaking scores from 73.6 to 89.05. The

control class only improved from 65.6 to 79.6. This shows that the communicative approach successfully improved students' speaking ability.

Dewi, Kultsum, and Armadi Ari (2017) investigated communicative games at junior high schools in Jakarta. They used Classroom Action Research and found significant improvement in students' speaking skills. The mean score increased from 60.42 in the pre-test to 78.77 in the post-test. They reported that communicative games contributed a positive impact on the teaching-learning process and enhanced students' enthusiasm and motivation.

Parupalli Srinivas Rao (2019) examined the importance of speaking skills in English classrooms. He explained that speaking is the most important skill among all four language skills. He suggested that teachers should introduce group and pair activities to help learners develop their speaking skills. He also provided useful tips for teachers to introduce various activities that involve English language learners in practicing their speaking skills.

Ariza Yuliska (2018) studied the talking chip technique to improve students' speaking ability. The results showed that students improved from a total score of 1672 in the pre-test to 3052 in the post-test. The mean scores for each aspect were pronunciation 8.8, grammar 8.5, vocabulary 8.2, fluency 7.8, and comprehension 8.5. This shows significant improvement after using the talking chip technique.

Knowledge Gap

While previous studies have shown the effectiveness of the communicative approach, there are still gaps in the research. First, most studies have focused on general speaking improvement rather than specific techniques like storytelling. Second, few studies have examined how storytelling specifically affects both fluency and accuracy. Third, there is limited research on using the communicative approach with storytelling in Norwegian secondary schools. Fourth, previous studies have not fully explored students' attitudes toward storytelling and how it affects their confidence.

Most research has been conducted in Asian countries like Indonesia and Ethiopia. There is less research in European contexts like Norway. Additionally, many studies have used only quantitative methods, without exploring students' personal experiences with storytelling. This research aims to fill these gaps by examining the effectiveness of the communicative approach combined with storytelling at Aglo Videregående Skole in Norway.

Connection to Current Research

This study builds on previous research by combining the communicative approach with storytelling techniques. It uses a quasi-experimental design similar to Uswatun Hasanah's (2021) study but adds the specific element of storytelling. The research examines both fluency and accuracy, like previous studies, but

also explores students' attitudes and confidence. The study uses both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to provide a complete understanding of students' experiences.

The researcher uses the concept of communicative competence proposed by Brown (2001), which includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. The storytelling method is based on Harmer's (2007) principles of real-life communication and learner-centered teaching. The study also draws on theories of motivation and anxiety, recognizing that students often feel nervous when speaking English.

Conceptual Framework

This study is a research-based investigation. The researcher has developed a conceptual framework to guide the study clearly and systematically. This framework is based on the concept of communicative competence by Brown (2001), together with storytelling techniques by Harmer (2007). The framework helps to explain the main ideas, relationships, and directions of the research. It shows how the key concepts are connected and supports the development of research questions and objectives.

The details of this conceptual framework are presented below.

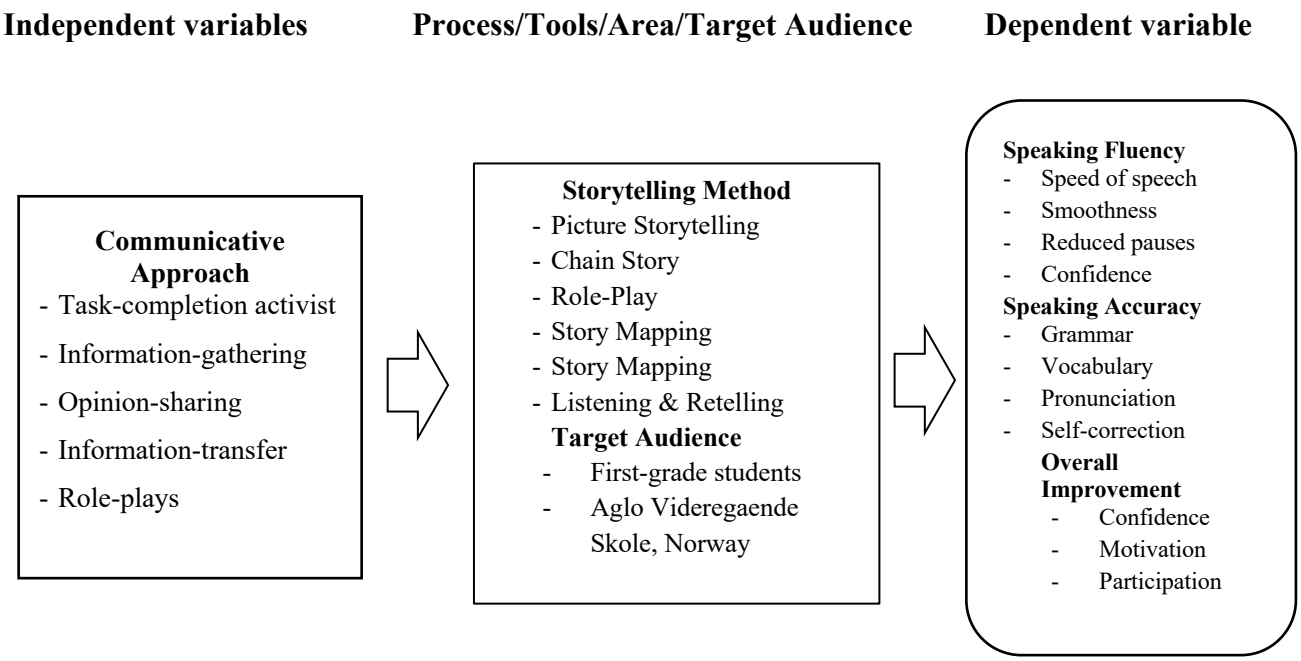


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

Research Methodology

This research is quantitative research with a quasi-experimental design. The research area is Aglo Videregående Skole in Fløanvegen 89, 7510 Skatval, Norway. The research process is divided into 3 steps as follows:

This research had three steps. First, the researcher gave a speaking test to two groups of 30 students. One group was the experimental class, and the other was the control class. Students talked about a familiar topic for 2–3 minutes. The researcher recorded them and used a rubric to score five skills: fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and comprehension. Then, they calculated average scores.

Second, the experimental class learned with storytelling activities, such as role-play and story maps. The control class did tasks like dialogues and grammar exercises. Both groups had four lessons of 45 minutes. After that, students answered a questionnaire about their progress. Third, both groups took a final speaking test. They told a short story for 3–4 minutes. The researcher also interviewed some students. They compared the test results to see improvement. Experts checked the questions and confirmed they were good. The questionnaire was reliable, with a score of 0.85.

Research Results

This research looked at how a teaching method called the "communicative approach" (using storytelling) helped students improve their English speaking skills. We focused on three main areas: how smoothly students spoke (fluency), how correct their English was (accuracy), and their overall improvement. Here are the results.

Objective 1: Speaking Fluency

The results showed that using storytelling was a good way to help students speak more fluently. Students felt they made good progress in most areas.

Table 1 below shows students' answers about their fluency. They rated their agreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Table 1: Speaking Fluency Results

Item	Statement	Average Score (out of 5)	Level
1	I can speak without long pauses.	4.43	Very High
2	I find the right words quickly.	3.67	High
3	My speaking feels smooth, not slow.	4.13	High
4	I don't stop many times when I talk.	3.47	Moderate
5	I can tell a short story in English easily.	4.77	Very High
6	My speaking speed is good.	4.90	Very High
7	I finish my sentences without trouble.	4.80	Very High
8	I repeat words less than before.	4.37	High
9	I speak without thinking too much.	2.57	Moderate
10	I can keep talking even with small mistakes.	4.67	Very High

11	Storytelling helps me speak faster.	4.87	Very High
12	I feel more fluent after storytelling.	4.77	Very High

What this means: Students generally felt very positive. Most students (86.6%) said they could speak without long pauses, and almost all (96.7%) agreed that storytelling helped them speak faster. They felt very confident about their speaking speed (score of 4.90) and their ability to finish sentences (score of 4.80).

However, some parts were harder. Half of the students (50%) still felt they thought too much while speaking, and many (53.3%) admitted they still stopped talking sometimes. This shows that while students feel more fluent, they still struggle with hesitation.

Fluency Improvement Over Time

We also compared students' fluency before and after the storytelling activities. The results are in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Improvement in Fluency

Aspect	Before	After	Improvement
Fluency Score (out of 5)	2.8	4.2	+1.4
Confidence Level (out of 5)	2.1	4.3	+2.2
Students Reporting Fluent Moments	30%	83%	+53%

This figure shows clear improvement. Students' fluency scores went up from 2.8 to 4.2, and their confidence increased a lot, from 2.1 to 4.3. Also, many more students (83%) felt they could speak fluently at least some of the time, compared to only 30% before.

Objective 2: Speaking Accuracy

The results also showed that the storytelling method helped students improve their speaking accuracy. Students reported feeling more confident about using correct English. Table 2 shows the results for accuracy.

Table 2: Speaking Accuracy Results

Item	Statement	Average Score (out of 5)	Level
13	I use correct grammar when I speak.	4.63	Very High
14	I make few mistakes with verbs (like go/went).	4.50	Very High
15	I use the right prepositions (in, on, at).	4.60	Very High
16	My sentences are usually correct.	4.37	Very High
17	I pronounce English words clearly.	4.40	Very High
18	Storytelling helps me make fewer errors.	4.80	Very High
19	I can correct myself when I make a mistake.	4.10	High
20	I use singular and plural correctly.	4.50	Very High

21	I choose the right tense (present/past).	4.10	High
22	My word order is correct.	3.80	Very High
23	I feel my accuracy is improving.	4.63	Very High
24	The teacher corrects my errors and I learn.	4.10	High

What this means: Students felt they were more accurate. Most students (90%) agreed they used correct grammar and believed storytelling helped them make fewer mistakes. They were also very confident about using prepositions (score of 4.60) and singular/plural forms (score of 4.50), and they strongly felt they were improving.

However, some areas were still challenging. Many students admitted they had trouble with verbs (83.3%) and choosing the correct tense (76.7%). Self-correction and learning from teacher correction were not as strong, with about 25-30% of students saying they were not confident in these areas. Some students (26.6%) also felt unsure about word order. **Figure 3** summarizes the areas where students felt most and least confident.

Figure 3: Confidence in Speaking Accuracy

Most Confident Areas	Average Score	Least Confident Areas	Average Score
Storytelling helps me make fewer errors	4.80	Word order	3.80
I use correct grammar	4.63	Self-correction	4.10
I feel my accuracy is improving	4.63	Choosing right tense	4.10
I use right prepositions	4.60	Learning from teacher correction	4.10
I use singular/plural correctly	4.50	Verbs	4.50

The figure shows that students feel best about storytelling's positive effect on their accuracy. They are least confident about word order and their ability to correct themselves.

Objective 3: Overall Speaking Improvement

The research found that students improved their speaking skills significantly by using storytelling. **Table 3** shows the overall results.

Table 3: Overall Speaking Improvement

Item	Statement	Average Score (out of 5)	Level
25	My speaking is better now than before.	3.93	High
26	I feel more confident to speak English.	4.13	High
27	I enjoy speaking activities in class.	4.60	Very High
28	Storytelling makes me want to speak more.	4.87	Very High
29	I understand stories told by classmates.	4.73	Very High

30	I can retell a story in my own words.	4.23	Very High
31	I remember new words from storytelling.	4.27	Very High
32	Working in groups helps me speak better.	4.80	Very High
33	I am happy with my speaking progress.	4.37	Very High
34	The approach helped me a lot.	4.80	Very High

What this means: The results were very positive. Almost all students (96.6%) agreed that storytelling made them want to speak more, and 93.3% said the approach helped them a lot. Students strongly agreed that group work helped them improve (score of 4.80) and that they could understand stories told by others (score of 4.73).

Most students (86.6%) enjoyed speaking activities and 83.3% were happy with their progress. However, the result for item 25 was less clear. Only 66.7% of students felt their speaking was definitely better than before, while 30% disagreed.

Student Attitudes Toward Storytelling

Finally, we looked at how students felt about the storytelling method itself (**Table 4**).

Table 4: Attitudes Toward Storytelling

Item	Statement	Average Score (out of 5)	Level
35	I like learning English through stories.	4.37	Very High
36	Storytelling is fun, not boring.	4.30	Very High
37	I prefer speaking activities to grammar exercises.	4.57	Very High
38	The teacher's method is useful.	4.67	Very High
39	I want more storytelling in future lessons.	4.80	Very High
40	I would recommend this method to other students.	4.63	Very High

What this means: Students had very positive feelings about storytelling. Most (93.3%) wanted to do more storytelling in the future, and 90% would recommend this method to other students. They strongly preferred speaking activities to grammar exercises (90%). They also found the teacher's storytelling method useful (90%) and enjoyed learning through stories (83.3%).

The most popular activities were picture storytelling (26.7%) and chain stories (23.3%). The main difficulties for students were vocabulary (30%) and using past tense correctly (23.3%). For activities, most students preferred working in groups (46.7%) over working in pairs (33.3%) or alone (20%).

In summary, the storytelling method was very successful in helping students feel more fluent and accurate in their speaking. Students enjoyed the lessons and felt more confident. While some challenges remain, the overall results are very encouraging.

Discussion

This research found that the communicative approach combined with storytelling is effective in improving students' speaking fluency. Students reported feeling more confident, speaking more smoothly, and experiencing fewer pauses after the storytelling intervention. This finding is consistent with the concept of the communicative approach by Brown (2001), which emphasizes that the approach motivates students to improve their English by focusing on fluency and providing meaningful tasks. The result also matches the research of Uswatun Hasanah (2021), who found that students in the experimental class showed significant improvement (from 73.6 to 89.05) compared to the control class. The current study confirmed that storytelling specifically helps students speak faster and feel more fluent, with 93.3% of students agreeing that storytelling helped them speak faster.

The finding that students feel more fluent after storytelling is also consistent with the research of Dewi, Kultsum, and Armadi Ari (2017), who found that communicative games improved students' fluency and active participation. Their study showed significant improvement in post-test scores from 60.42 to 78.77, demonstrating that interactive methods create enjoyable circumstances and reduce boredom. The present study found that 83% of students reported at least one moment of fluent speaking during storytelling activities. The students' confidence increased significantly from 2.1 to 4.3 out of 5, which is similar to the findings of Dewi et al. about enhanced student participation and confidence.

Regarding speaking accuracy, this research found that students feel confident about their grammar and believe storytelling helps them make fewer errors. Students strongly agreed that storytelling reduced their errors (mean = 4.80). This result aligns with Brown's (2001) concept of communicative competence, which includes grammatical competence as a key component. The finding is also consistent with Uswatun Hasanah's (2021) research, which showed that the communicative approach successfully improved both fluency and accuracy.

However, students also identified specific challenges with verbs and past tense. This finding is similar to Ariza Yuliska's (2018) research, which found that grammar (mean score 8.5) and vocabulary (mean score 8.2) were areas needing improvement. The current study found that 83.3% of students admitted making mistakes with verbs, and 76.7% struggled with tense choice. This suggests that while the communicative approach is effective overall, certain grammar areas need targeted instruction.

The mixed results for self-correction, word order, and learning from teacher correction are notable. Around 25-30% of students did not feel confident in these areas. This finding is consistent with Parupalli Srinivas Rao's (2019) observation that teachers need to understand the problems of English language learners and implement various teaching strategies. The study confirmed that group work (preferred by 46.7% of students) and pair work (33.3%) are effective ways to practice.

The overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward storytelling found in this study are noteworthy. Over 93% of students wanted more storytelling in future lessons, and 90% would recommend this method to other students. This strong positive response is similar to Dewi, Kultsum, and Armadi Ari's (2017) finding that communicative games contributed a positive impact on the teaching-learning process and enhanced students' enthusiasm and motivation. The high motivation level (93.4% of students like English class) and positive attitudes are important strengths.

However, the study also found that 93.4% of students feel nervous when speaking English. This anxiety issue is a concern that teachers should address. Parupalli Srinivas Rao (2019) noted that the classroom is the ideal platform to acquire good communication skills, and teachers should create supportive environments where students feel comfortable practicing. The storytelling method appears to help with this, as it creates a fun and engaging atmosphere. Students reported that picture storytelling (26.7%) and chain story (23.3%) were the most popular activities.

The finding that 80% of students are willing to use storytelling outside school is encouraging. Students want to tell stories to family and friends, showing that learning extends beyond the classroom. This aligns with the finding that 90% of students practice English outside school, demonstrating their motivation and active engagement with the language.

In conclusion, the communicative approach combined with storytelling is an effective method for improving students' speaking skills. The findings support previous research while providing new insights into the specific benefits of storytelling for both fluency and accuracy. The high level of student motivation and positive attitudes suggests that storytelling should be continued and expanded in the classroom.

Knowledge from Research

The findings of this research reveal a body of knowledge about the effectiveness of the communicative approach combined with storytelling for improving speaking skills. The following diagram presents the knowledge gained from this study.

Fig. 4: Research Knowledge: The Storytelling-Communicative Approach Model

Key Component	Process	Outcome
Communicative Approach	Storytelling Activities	Improved Speaking Skills
- Task-completion	- Picture Storytelling	Fluency:
- Information-gathering	- Chain Story	- Faster speech
- Opinion-sharing	- Role-Play	- Fewer pauses
- Information-transfer	- Story Mapping	- More confidence
- Reasoning-gap	- Listening & Retelling	- Smooth communication
- Role-plays	- Story Completion	

		Accuracy:
		- Better grammar
		- Improved vocabulary
		- Clearer pronunciation
		- Self-correction skills
Teacher Role:	**Student Role:**	**Overall Benefits:**
- Facilitator	- Active participant	- Higher motivation
- Researcher	- Collaborator	- More confidence
- Learner	- Storyteller	- Less anxiety
- Guide	- Listener	- Enjoyment of learning

Conclusion

This study examined the effectiveness of the communicative approach in improving students' speaking fluency and accuracy using the storytelling method at Aglo Videregående Skole in Norway. The research used a quasi-experimental design with an experimental class (Class X-4) and a control class (Class X-5), with 30 students in each class. The conclusion is based on three main research objectives. First, the study examined how the communicative approach improved students' speaking fluency through storytelling. Second, it investigated the impact on speaking accuracy. Third, it identified overall improvement in speaking skills.

The findings show that students have very positive attitudes toward English. Most students (93.4%) like English class, and 93.3% speak English at home. However, many students (93.4%) feel nervous when speaking English. This shows that while students are motivated, they need support to feel more comfortable. Regarding fluency, the results are encouraging. Most students feel they can speak without long pauses and finish their sentences easily. Students strongly believe that storytelling helps them speak faster and feel more fluent. However, some students still stop many times when speaking, showing that fluency practice remains important. For accuracy, students feel confident about their grammar in general. They strongly agree that storytelling helps them make fewer errors. Students feel confident using prepositions and believe their accuracy is improving. However, students admit to making mistakes with verbs and using the correct tense. These areas need more attention.

The overall improvement results show that students enjoy speaking activities and find them helpful. Over 90% of students agree that storytelling makes them want to speak more and that group work helps them speak better. Students also feel positive about the communicative approach, with 93.3% saying it helped them a lot. Students have very positive attitudes toward storytelling. Over 83% enjoy learning through stories and find it fun. Almost all students (93.3%) want more storytelling in future lessons, and 90% would recommend this method to other students.

The central conclusion is that the communicative approach combined with storytelling is effective in improving students' speaking skills. Students showed significant improvement in confidence (from 2.1 to 4.3

out of 5) and reported moderate to great improvement in grammar. The most popular activities were picture storytelling (26.7%) and chain story (23.3%). Vocabulary (30%) and past tense (23.3%) were the most challenging areas.

This study confirms that the communicative approach through storytelling is a valuable teaching method. Students overwhelmingly liked this approach (mean = 4.5 out of 5), with 83% reporting at least one moment of fluent speaking. The findings suggest that this method should be continued and expanded in the classroom.

Suggestions

This research shows that using storytelling with a communicative approach helps students speak better. Students improve their fluency and accuracy when they take part in storytelling activities. Here are some suggestions for different groups.

For Teachers

Teachers should keep using storytelling because students like it and learn from it. Activities like picture stories and chain stories are very popular. Teachers should also give more practice with verbs and tenses, as students find these difficult. They can do grammar exercises before or after storytelling.

Teachers should help students feel less nervous about speaking. Group work (liked by 46.7% of students) and pair work (33.3%) are good ways to reduce fear. Teachers can give more time to prepare and let students choose topics they enjoy. They should also give helpful feedback that builds confidence.

For Future Researchers

Researchers should do studies with more students and from different schools to get better results. Long-term studies could show if improvements last over time. Interviews and observations could help understand students' feelings about storytelling.

Researchers could also study digital storytelling or video activities. Comparing storytelling with other methods, like role-play, would show which works best. More research on reducing speaking anxiety would also be helpful.

For Students

Students should join storytelling activities and practice speaking in and out of class. Many students (80%) want to tell stories outside school. They can tell stories to family and friends to improve. They should also listen to teacher feedback and work on difficult areas like verbs and tenses.

Students should not be afraid to make mistakes. Many feel nervous, but storytelling makes speaking fun and less scary. They should use group and pair work to practice with classmates in a safe environment.

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