ผลของการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสารผ่านสื่อสังคมที่มีต่อความสามารถด้านการพูดของนักเรียนภูฏาน
The Effects of Communicative Language Teaching Activities through Social Media on the Speaking Ability of Bhutanese Students

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## บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษาครั้งนี้มีเป้าหมายเพื่อศึกษาผลของการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสารผ่านสื่อสังคมที่มีต่อทักษะการพูดของนักเรียน ชาวภูฏาน และเพื่อศึกษาความคิดเห็นของนักเรียนที่มีต่อกิจกรรมการสอนภาษาเพื่อการสื่อสารผ่านสื่อสังคม โดยศึกษากับกลุ่ม ตัวอย่างนักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 2 จำนวน 32 คน ด้วยการเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจง เครื่องมือที่ใช้ คือ แบบทดสอบก่อน เรียนในสัปดาห์ที่ 1 การศึกษาทดลองระยะเวลา 10 สัปดาห์ แบบทดสอบหลังเรียนซึ่งเป็นฉบับเดียวกัน และแบบสอบถามความ คิดเห็นและความรู้สึกที่ได้รับเกี่ยวกับการสอน ผลวิจัยเชิงปริมาณจากการศึกษานี้พบว่าค่าเฉลี่ยของการทดสอบหลังเรียนทักษะการ พูดภาษาอังกฤษสูงกว่าค่าเฉลี่ยของการทดสอบก่อนเรียน โดยมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติที่ระดับ .05 ประเด็นทักษะการพูดที่พัฒนามาก ที่สุดจากการประเมินผลภาระงานการพูดแต่ละสัปดาห์ในกลุ่มเฟซบุ๊กเพจคือ การใช้คำศัพท์และกลยุทธ์การสื่อสาร นอกจากนี้ ยังพบว่า นักเรียนมีความคิดเห็นเชิงบวกต่อกิจกรรมการสอนภาษาเพื่อ การสื่อสารผ่านสื่อสังคมในการพัฒนาทักษะการพูดและช่วย เสริมความมั่นใจในตนเอง แรงจูงใจ การมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ และสิ่งสำคัญที่สุดคือ ช่วยขจัดความกังวลการพูดในการเรียนการพูด ภาษาอังกฤษ

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Abstract

This study aimed to study the effects of CLT activities through social media on the speaking ability of Bhutanese students and to find out the student's perception towards CLT activities through social media. Thirty-two grade eight students were purposively selected for the study. A pretest was administered in the first week followed by ten weeks of treatment sessions. Students were subsequently administered a posttest and perception questionnaire. The quantitative results of the study revealed that the students' posttest mean score in the English-speaking ability test was higher than their pretest mean score at a significant level of .05, indicating that their speaking ability improved significantly after receiving the treatment. The most developed aspects of speaking ability from the evaluation of their weekly speaking tasks posted to the class Facebook page were the improvement of vocabulary and communication strategy. Furthermore, the results obtained from the Likert questionnaire and open-ended questions on students' perception towards the instruction revealed that the students held positive perceptions towards CLT activities through social media and students revealed that it enhances self-confidence, motivation, interaction, a possibility of learning from anywhere, and most importantly, eliminating speaking anxiety from learning speaking.

*Keywords:* communicative language teaching (CLT), speaking ability, secondary education

## Introduction

English as an international language plays an important role in our day-to-day life. Among all the English language skills, speaking is not only considered to be the most important but also the most sought after by all sections of the society due to the new socio-economic reforms, national development plans and better future job opportunities (Ali et al., 2019). Due to global demand for English-speaking skills, it has brought about an incredible impact on policies of English language teaching across the globe. Many nations teaching English as a second or foreign language, including Bhutan, revised their national education policy to implement communicative language teaching (CLT), as CLT based activities immensely support the advancement of the speaking ability (Littlewood, 2007). Although, the Bhutanese education system was required to implement CLT approach in teaching English and to use English as a medium of instruction, the majority of the Bhutanese children were found to be at a low level for English speaking proficiency (Gyeltshen, 2018; LaPrairie, 2014). This aspect was indicated in most results for IELTS and TOEFL in which most Bhutanese children failed due to poor pronunciation and oral fluency (LaPrairie, 2014).

The poor speaking ability of Bhutanese can be related to the methods of teaching where current practices are purely teacher centered (Gyeltshen & Chalermnirundorn, 2018). ESL teachers in Bhutan have very limited knowledge of the CLT approach and its application (Dorji, 2017). Moreover, as stated by Humphreys and Wyatt (2014), Asian students are influenced by the Confucian culture in that they are obedient and feel shy to speak, leading to low speaking ability. Realizing that employing traditional teaching methods may not be enough to develop the students' English-speaking ability, an effective English-speaking instructional method is needed.

A communicative language teaching approach is one of the most used teaching approaches in the teaching of English as a second and foreign language due to its several activities which can develop students speaking ability with the use of authentic materials (Savignon, 2008). Many studies detailed CLT activities to be very effective in improving speaking ability.

Despite its positive outcome, it has also received equal criticism from researchers. Many researchers point out that, due to its instant face to face communication in front of the class, students develop speaking anxiety and avoid speaking (Koran, 2015). Moreover, slow learners cannot cope with fast learners in communicative activities leading to low self-confidence. Furthermore, to carry out CLT activities, a large class size gives the teacher minimal individual attention or time for interaction and communication. This leads to creating a dull classroom where students are demotivated (Alharbi, 2015). Realizing the fact that employing CLT activities alone may not be enough for improving students' speaking ability, a new appropriate instructional method in combination to CLT activities was deemed to be necessary.

Therefore, by combining CLT activities with social media like Facebook and YouTube, and establishing an explicit link between the two will give students a chance to practice and learn English speaking skills both inside and outside of the classroom because as per Armstrong (2009), social media like Facebook and YouTube is a valuable platform where children can learn speaking skills outside of classroom without going through speaking anxiety and motivate them to learn. Furthermore, the students can make use of social media at anytime from anywhere to refer to the lessons learnt in the class by not having to depend on their teachers and post their opinions verbally on social media for comments and suggestions. It has the capacity to deliver the content and instructions continually and consistently as well as encourage students to participate in active communication by removing the anxiety that ascends from face to face interactions (Bikowski &

Kessler, 2002). Beyond that, it also provides the learners to freely interact and communicate with other users of social media and to gain self confidence in interacting and speaking (Krish & Wong, 2009). With these advantages of social media in achieving the full benefit of CLT activities, and due to lack of such study records in Bhutan, it was my interest to examine the effects of CLT activities through social media on the speaking ability of Bhutanese students and also to find out students' perception towards this method of teaching.

## Reach objectives

The research objectives for this study were:

1. To examine the effects of CLT activities through social media on the speaking ability of Bhutanese students.

2. To examine Bhutanese students' perception towards CLT activities through social media.

## Methodology

### Research population and participants

The population of this study was grade eight students of Samtse district, Bhutan. Thirty-two grade eight students of Peljorling High School, Samtse were purposively selected as participants. The participants included 19 females and 13 males, aged between fourteen and sixteen.

### Research instruments

*English speaking test and rubric*

The English-speaking test which was adapted from an IELTS English speaking test was used as a pre and posttest. The test consisted of three parts. The first part was general questions. In the second part the students were given a task card with a few key words. They were given a minute to prepare and another minute or two to speak on the topic. In the third part, students were asked further questions related to the topic discussed in part two. The test took about 15 minutes to complete. For this test, the English speaking rubric was adapted from English (2011).

*Task analysis rubric*

To check the development of each aspect of speaking, the role play video posted on Facebook page by students was evaluated every after four weeks, amounting to two assessments in total. The task analysis rubric was adapted from Taufiqulloh (2012).

*Learner's perception questionnaire*

The perception questionnaire was to get the student's perception of CLT activities through social media. It includes twelve Likert type items and six open ended questions. The questionnaire was validated by three experts by using Index Objective Congruence. Finally, some revisions in terms of word choice and sequence of the questions were made as per comments.

*Lesson plan*

The instructional framework for this study was teaching activities using CLT approach instructional model by Richards (2005) with integration of different types of social media at various stages of the lesson. Ten 90-minute sessions based on different functional communicative and social interactional activities through social media were integrated in order to improve speaking skills. The lesson plan was validated by three experts using IOC index and all rated above 0.5 indicating acceptable.

## Data collection

Students were engaged in a ten 90-minute sessions of treatment class based on CLT activities through social media on improving the speaking ability. To explore students' speaking ability, a pre-test and post-test as speaking assessment test were administered in the first and last week. After ten week of instruction, the students' perception towards CLT activities through social media was also investigated through five-point Likert scale and open-ended questions.

## Data analysis

To examine the effects of CLT activities through social media on speaking ability, the pretest and posttest results were statistically analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and a sample paired t-test. Furthermore, to evaluate the development of different aspects of speaking, the activities posted by students on Facebook were evaluated every four weeks. The score from the tasks were converted into mean scores and a sample pair *t*-test was performed.

To answer the second question, the perception of students towards CLT activities through social media, was evaluated through a Likert scale questionnaire. The mean and standard

deviation was calculated and interpreted into five levels from very low to very high. The qualitative data obtained from open ended questions were analyzed qualitatively.

### Results

The results of the research can be presented as per two research objectives:

1) To examine the effects of CLT activities through social media on the speaking ability of Bhutanese students.

In response to objective 1, table 1 reveals the overall speaking score of the students.

**Table 1**

*A comparison of pretest and posttest mean scores of English-speaking skills*

| Group | N | Pretest (Total score=25) | | Posttest (Total score=25) | | Mean Difference | $t$ | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | | |
| Grade 8 students | 32 | 11.84 | 2.05 | 15.24 | 1.09 | 3.40 | 15.31 | .00* |

*$p < .05$

As indicated in Table 1, the mean score of the pretest and posttest was significantly different at the .05 level. The mean score of the posttest (*M*=15.24, *SD*=1.09) was statistically higher than the mean score of the pretest (*M*=11.84, *SD*=2.05). The t-test value of 15.31 was statistically significant at a level of .05. Therefore, this result indicated that the CLT activities through social media were effective in improving the speaking ability of the students.

**Comparison of quadri-weekly task scores to measure the development of different aspects of speaking ability.**

To further understand the gradual improvement in different aspects of speaking ability, the student task uploaded on Facebook page was evaluated twice on the 4th and 8th week. It was done to examine how effective the instruction was on developing each aspects of speaking ability. Though the overall result indicated that the students showed a significant improvement in their speaking ability, the participants apparently developed the different aspects of speaking ability unequally. The details of the results are shown below in table 2.

**Table 2**

*Student's speaking improvement considering separate aspects of speaking ability*

| Speaking Aspects | Week 4 | | Week 8 | | Mean difference | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (total score=5 in each aspect) | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | | |
| Fluency | 1.63 | 0.66 | 2.29 | 0.46 | 0.66 | 7.7 | .00 |
| Pronunciation | 1.97 | 0.4 | 2.6 | 0.5 | 0.59 | 6.7 | .00 |
| Vocabulary | 1.76 | 0.57 | 2.5 | 0.51 | 0.79 | 10.5 | .00 |
| Grammar | 1.34 | 0.55 | 1.78 | 0.55 | 0.41 | 4.9 | .00 |
| Communication strategy | 1.67 | 0.64 | 2.44 | 0.5 | 0.75 | 9.6 | .00 |

*$p < .05$

As per table 2, the improvement on vocabulary was the highest with a mean difference of 0.79 followed by communication strategy (MD= 0.75), fluency (MD= 0.66) and pronunciation (MD=0.59). The least developed aspect was grammar with a mean difference of 0.41. However, the p value of all the different aspects of speaking was significantly different at a level of .05.

Based on the results of comparative mean scores and statistical calculation of different aspects of speaking, the instruction improved speaking ability in terms of all five aspects but unequally. In other words, it can be interpreted that CLT activities through social media is an effective instructional tool in improving speaking ability of the students.

2) To examine Bhutanese students' perception towards CLT activities through social media.

In order to fulfill the second research objective, both quantitative and qualitative analysis were employed. Quantitative results were collected from a five-point Likert scale questionnaire and the qualitative results were obtained from the open-ended questions to elicit their perception. The scores collected from quantitative results were analyzed and calculated for mean and standard deviation and interpreted into five levels from very low to very high. The details are reflected in table 3 below.

**Table 3.**

*Students' perception towards the use of CLT activities through social media*

| Questionnaire items | M | SD | Level |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. learning through this instruction provides a relaxed atmosphere. | 4.7 | 0.471 | very high |
| 2. learning through this instruction helps to improve my speaking skills. | 4.4 | 0.499 | very high |
| 3. learning through this instruction increases my self-confidence in speaking English | 4.7 | 0.471 | very high |
| 4. I understand the procedure of doing this instruction clearly. | 4.3 | 0.545 | very high |
| 5. This instruction encourages learners' classroom participation. | 4.5 | 0.507 | very high |
| 6. Learning through this instruction promotes a good relationship among learners as well as between learners and teachers | 4.5 | 0.507 | very high |
| 7. Learning through this instruction activates my interest. | 4.5 | 0.508 | very high |
| 8. I realize that learning English through this instruction is easier than other forms of approach. | 3.0 | 0.74 | moderate |
| 9. Learning through this instruction encourages me to think and be creative | 4.5 | 0.507 | very high |
| 10. Learning through this instruction helps me to learn English. | 4.6 | 0.499 | very high |
| 11. I like to learn English using this instruction. | 4.5 | 0.508 | very high |
| 12. I can apply knowledge from the classroom, to use in my daily life. | 4.5 | 0.508 | very high |
| Total | 4.4 | 0.46 | very high |

*Note.* This instruction = CLT activities through social media

As per table 3, the results from the score confirmed that the student's perception was positive with a total mean score of 4.4, which falls under the very high category. The mean score of all the items were higher than 4.0 except for statement 8, which showed a mean score of

3. This low score as reflected by students can be due to some problems like poor internet connection and a lack of resources, which caused some inconvenience.

*Results from the open-ended questions*

To further understand the student's perception towards this instruction, the answers from six open ended questions were analyzed using content analysis. The students were required to write their perceptions towards this instruction. The data derived from the first question revealed students' learning experiences. All the students reported that they felt excited, lively, happy, and eager to participate in this instruction. For instance, students wrote:

Student 3: *"When I learn English with the use of social media, it makes me happy and lively because, I can learn easily from social media and watch English videos."*

Student 11: *"With many new activities, I feel eager to learn. The activities are lively and makes me feel more relaxed."*

Students felt that they were able to enjoy relaxed, lively and interesting sessions which made learning easy and lively.

The questions (2, 3 and 4) elicits the students' perception on advantages, disadvantages and whether they would discourage or encourage the use of this instruction for the development of English-speaking ability, respectively. The students' responses were varied and the most frequently mentioned advantages by the majority of the students were as follows: the ability of the social media to help students to learn speaking, to gain confidence, to create interaction, motivate students, to help students to learn without teachers, and to minimize their stress level. The following statements show the advantages of this instruction through the lens of the students.

Student 9: *"The use of social media in all the activities helps me to make contact with my friends and teachers very quickly and easily."*

Student 23: *"I am afraid to speak in front of my friends and teacher in the class. I can speak better when I record and send the video to my teacher."*

The disadvantages mentioned by some of the students were mostly about poor connectivity of the internet, uncooperative friends, lack of vocabulary, time consuming, and unaffordability of the resources. The following sentences from the students revealed some limitations of instruction.

Student 24: *"Most of our activities should be done online and school Wi-Fi is very weak. I cannot buy an internet package. It is expensive."*

Student 31: *"When we do pair and group work, our friends sometimes do not cooperate."*

However, the students still felt that it is best to encourage the use of this instruction in our class because the benefits outweighed the drawbacks. The following quotes support this finding.

Student 6: *"I would encourage the use of this instruction in the future because, we don't have to depend on teachers too much. We can study from anywhere and interact easily."*

Student 23: *"I am afraid to talk in front of my friends because they laugh. I like recording and uploading to Facebook because I can check the mistakes myself and correct them."*

The last two questions were used to reveal their perception about the most learnt aspect from this instruction and how they will be able to use those learnt aspects in their daily lives. Students believed that the most developed aspects from this instruction were their development in speaking ability, vocabulary, gesture and pronunciation. They thought that these skills will help them in pursuing better jobs, helping others, and communicating with international friends and tourist. The following phrases summarize the perception of the students.

Student 15: *"I think the most developed aspect after attending this session for me would be my self-confidence and speaking ability."*

Student 1: *"When I watch YouTube and also make my own videos, I feel that I develop more vocabulary, pronunciation and my gesture improves."*

Student 19: "The things that I learnt from these classes will help me in getting a better job in the future and *interact with international friends and tourist*."

## Discussion

### Discussion on the effects of instruction

As per the statistical analysis of the pretest and posttest of the English-speaking ability test, the students' speaking ability improved significantly after attending ten weeks of CLT activities through social media. This implies that the CLT activities through social media are effective in improving the speaking ability of the students. The improvement of the speaking ability of the students could be mainly due to the systematic use of social media at various levels of the instruction. The advantage of using social media is that it is flexible, allowing the students

to carry out their task at their own convenience from outside classroom. Recording of their speaking task video and uploading to their class Facebook page was well perceived by the students because they did not have to go through mass speaking anxiety, and they reflected that the use of social media has really improved their self-confidence in speaking due to the easy interaction and discussion. Moreover, no students were left out and all the students were actively engaged in pair or group activities since the activities could be posted online for evaluation. This result is congruent with the previous studies of Hasan Dirjal and Ghabanchi (2020), Ilyas and Putri (2020), Muna (2011), Safitri (2014), and Shan (2019) in which the use of social media in the teaching of English speaking was found to be effective and promoted the speaking ability of the learners because they could watch and listen to the videos as a model. This result is further supported by the study of Yen et al. (2015) in which their study indicated that role play activities through Facebook improved the learner's speaking ability due to increased interaction and participation.

Improvement was found in all the aspects of speaking ability after this instruction. However, the most improved aspect of speaking ability was vocabulary and communication strategy. This could be mainly due to the opportunity to watch model YouTube videos, imitating the model video and making their own videos for the class activities. Before preparing their own videos, students had to go through much preparation and interaction. This led to better development in those two aspects compared to others because speakers in the video used a wide variety of vocabulary and as per Harmer (2015), opportunity to watch English programs can help students observe how certain phrases accompany what gesture and what facial expression matches with intonation. Similar results were indicated in the studies by Arndt & Woore (2018), Heriyanto (2015), and Hussin et al. (2020). They indicated that the integration of a YouTube video in English speaking lessons led to the students' greater mastery of vocabulary. Furthermore, Wongsa (2018) also noted that integration of social media in English language teaching enables the learners to develop communication strategy. Although all the aspects developed significantly, the least developed aspect of speaking was grammar. This can be mainly explained by the fact that the teacher did not focus on correcting the student's grammatical errors since the activities were designed to promote and maintain an environment where the learners could talk freely. Moreover, communicative activities are planned around some principles which focus on fluency rather than simply accuracy focused (Littlewood et al., 1981). Thus, the teacher overlooked the

errors to avoid uncomfortable and threatening situations, which would hinder the students' fluency, and fluency was rated the third best developed aspect in this instruction.

### Discussion on the perception of students

The analysis of the responses on the Likert scale questionnaire on student's perception was rated at a very high level ($M$=4.34) indicating that all the students have a positive perception towards CLT activities through social media. The students indicated that the instruction has helped them improve dramatically in terms of their speaking ability, self-confidence, motivation, participation, interaction and minimizing their anxiety level. The dramatic development of these aspects was hugely dependent on the use of social media. Students used social media to connect with others, look for information and publish their task. This result is consistent with Kabilan et al. (2010) claiming that students' confidence, motivation and attitudes improved significantly using Facebook in English language teaching. Furthermore, in this study, the students mentioned that the integration of CLT activities through social media provides interactive and better learning environment. It also enables them to gain better knowledge more easily from social media without having to depend on teachers. These reflections of the students are similar to the findings of Heldenbrand (2003) and Wongsa (2018) showing that the integration of drama based activities and Facebook provided the students with an interactive and flexible learning platform which enables them to greatly enhance their learning. Their studies further stated that activities related to making videos and posting on Facebook encouraged and motivated the students to communicate in English, which was also found in this study through their work and participation. All the students were actively engaged, and they took extra initiative in preparing videos beyond the requirement of the class. The students also mentioned that it gives them freedom to learn from wherever convenient with the use of social media, be it in or out of the class without having to depend on teachers, which is consistent with the findings of Lear (2014) and Sharma and Barrett (2008). Their studies stated that students can review the lessons from anywhere using social media, which they could not understand in the class. Most importantly, the students mentioned that, with the use of social media as a communication platform in and out of the classroom, it helps them in reducing speaking anxiety since they do not have to engage in instant face to face communication. This claim supports the previous studies of Alm (2015), Mitchell (2012), and

Terantino (2013).  They stated that the use of social media in the teaching of learning language lowers the stress level of students since it is informal and interesting.

However, some limitations like a poor internet connection, uncooperative friends, and time-consuming activities were reflected by the participants. Despite those limitations, the participants were not really frustrated or annoyed and still developed a positive perception towards this instruction because it can be validated from their statements. All the participants mentioned that, it is best to use social media in teaching speaking and they would genuinely encourage its use in teaching speaking, because it develops self-confidence, creates better interaction, enhances language learning outside the classroom, it is lively and eliminates speaking anxiety from learning speaking.

## Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made for the future researchers. Firstly, a similar study could be conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the treatment on other English skills like listening, writing and reading with gender consideration. Furthermore, it is recommended to study how teachers perceive the use of social media as a teaching tool in ESL/EFL classes. Finally, the result from this study could be a useful reference while designing curriculum.  The curriculum designers and textbook developers should include some sections in their framework where students need to use social media inside and outside of the classroom in learning language.

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