

Enhancing Fluency Through Fun: The Role of Interactive Activities in Enhancing Adult Language Proficiency

Xinyu Zuo

University of Glasgow, Glasgow, G12 8QQ, Scotland

zuoxinyu1997@163.com

Abstract. This study assesses the influence of in-class and out-of-class speaking activities on adult learners' foreign language speaking proficiency by analyzing 49 papers. Principal findings demonstrate that in-class activities, including role play and group discussions, markedly enhance speaking skills, and out-of-class activities, such as singing, social media engagement, theatre participation, and English clubs, similarly yield beneficial outcomes. The research indicates that educators ought to implement interactive, activity-based pedagogical approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), to improve students' speaking abilities, with cooperative learning demonstrating a significant positive effect.

Keywords: Speaking proficiency, In-class activities, Out-of-class activities, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Cooperative learning

1. Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an instructional approach centered on the communicative function of language, aiming to enhance students' ability to engage in real-life language communication. This method emphasizes the practicality and contextuality of language, advocating for the use of activities such as role plays, situational dialogues, and problem-solving exercises to simulate authentic communicative contexts. By doing so, students can apply language in specific contexts, thereby improving their language proficiency. CLT has been widely recognized by scholars and professionals in the field of language learning worldwide and is regarded as one of the most effective teaching strategies in foreign and second language instruction [1].

Speaking skills are a crucial aspect of foreign language learning but are often challenging to master [2-4]. CLT activities such as talks, role-playing, and question-and-answer sessions that happens in class facilitate learners' practice of language in authentic contexts, enhance communication skills, and bolster confidence. Speaking interaction can also happen out-of-class, provide liberty, flexibility, authenticity, and collaborative opportunities [5-8]. These activities offer tailored learning experiences and authentic language exposure, facilitating the enhancement of communication skills for learners. Nevertheless, studies on in-class and out-of-class activities frequently exhibit a deficiency in subject and contextual diversity [9-11]. Broadening research to encompass diverse places, fields, and populations would enhance its relevance and efficacy.

The study aims to evaluate how in-class and out-of-class speaking activities affect adult learners' speaking skills. It addresses two questions: (1) How can in-class speaking interactive activities help adult foreign language learners improve their speaking skills? (2) How can out-of-class speaking interactive activities help adult foreign language learners improve their speaking skills? A systematic review of 49 papers was conducted to explore the effects of various activities on speaking skills.

This research holds significance in three domains, first of all, for scholars, it addresses a deficiency by assessing and contrasting various CLT activities, in contrast to prior research that concentrated on individual activities such as group discussions or role play [12-13]. It also delineates deficiencies in existing material to inform subsequent study. Secondly, it offers language students a range of speaking activities that enhance conventional classroom techniques, facilitating more engaging learning experiences. The last is that it provides policymakers with evidence advocating for reforms aimed at enhancing interaction-based foreign language teaching.

2. Methodology

The methodology chapter assesses the influence of in-class and extracurricular speaking activities on adult learners' speaking proficiency using an interpretivist, qualitative framework. It delineates the literature search methodology, ethical considerations, and study constraints. The study adopts an interpretivist paradigm, focusing on a qualitative approach to better understand learners' experiences. Interpretivism favors qualitative methods, which help provide a deep understanding of social contexts, making it suitable for exploring adult learners' speaking interactions [14]. The comprehensive literature review method was employed to critically evaluate 49 papers. The interpretivist paradigm, emphasizing qualitative insights, was used to achieve a profound comprehension of learners' experiences. The investigation identified constraints, including dependence on a restricted selection of papers and possible biases from secondary sources. Ethical considerations were acknowledged through the maintenance of academic integrity and the implementation of transparent methodologies. The technique seeks to deliver a thorough assessment of the literature to underpin the study objectives.

This research has limitations due to the restricted number of articles (49), which may not encompass all facets of CLT. It depends on secondary literature, which may create biases. To address these concerns, stringent standards were implemented to guarantee quality, and the constraints of the current investigations were examined. The secondary research involved no direct interaction with human subjects, so mitigating ethical problems. Measures were implemented to uphold academic integrity through the paraphrasing of original content and the utilization of transparent methodologies for literature search and analysis.

3. Results

3.1. In-Class Speaking Activities and Learners' Speaking Skills

This section seeks to assess previous studies on in-class speaking activities and their impact on the speaking abilities of adult foreign language learners. This chapter analyzes in-class interactive activities within the CLT paradigm, notably role-playing and group discussions, while emphasizing limitations and research gaps.

Numerous research has investigated in-class speaking interaction activities to enhance adult learners' speaking abilities. Kodirovna discovered that games can enhance verbal engagement by engaging pupils and facilitating language retention. This study lacks participant details, undermining its credibility [4]. Ginaya et al. employed WebQuest project activities to enhance speaking engagements, demonstrating notable advancements in speaking proficiency, motivation, and engagement [3]. Murao developed an interactive English course aimed at preparing students for academic presentations, although it was devoid of empirical data and explicit promotional techniques [15]. Additional research examined the requirements for teacher intervention and resources. Maliva et al. demonstrated that speaking assessments were more effective in smaller classes, highlighting the necessity for additional teacher resources [16].

In-class speaking interaction based on CLT effectively enhances learners' speaking skills by increasing motivation and practice frequency. Nonetheless, it necessitates greater resources and educator assistance than conventional ways.

- *Role-Playing and Foreign Language Speaking Skills*

Role-playing is efficacious in enhancing speaking skills in various circumstances. Gordon and Thomas (2018) discovered that role-playing enhanced engagement and speaking abilities; however, their study relied on self-reports, which included bias [17]. Waluyo (2019) evaluated the efficacy of role-playing via theme activities, demonstrating a correlation between role-playing and enhanced speaking skills, although failed to include a control group for comparative analysis [18].

Neupane's (2019) research employed a control group to demonstrate that role-playing markedly improved speaking abilities relative to conventional approaches, yielding more robust proof [19]. Likewise, Maarof investigated role-playing and simulations among Malaysian students, determining their efficacy in enhancing verbal communication abilities. Nevertheless, the majority of these studies concentrate on single-country samples, so constraining generalizability [20].

- *Group Discussions and Speaking Skills*

Group discussions in CLT also positively impact speaking skills. Ngah and Stapa discovered that students with superior interaction skills excelled in group discussions [21]. Nonetheless, self-assessment instruments may lack objectivity. Bohari discovered that group talks markedly enhanced speaking skills; nonetheless, the study was deficient in specifics regarding discussion design [22].

Bakar et al. examined the effects of project-based group talks on speaking skills, revealing substantial enhancements among participants. Nonetheless, prejudice may arise from the exclusive usage of low-proficiency learners [23]. Namaziandost et al. discovered that cooperative group talks enhanced speaking skills in intermediate and advanced learners; however, the absence of gender diversity limited the generalizability of the findings [24].

Non-verbal elements, such as gestures and facial expressions, contribute to effective group interactions. Ngah et al. discovered that non-verbal cues were employed to augment verbal communication in group conversations [25].

Group talks are beneficial in enhancing speaking abilities when organized around specific projects, incorporating both verbal and non-verbal resources.

This section reviewed the impact of in-class speaking interactive activities on adult learners. Role-playing and group discussions have demonstrated efficacy in enhancing speaking skills; nevertheless, studies on role-playing exhibit inadequate demographic differentiation for generalizable results. Project-based group discussions are more structured and shown to enhance spoken communication abilities effectively.

3.2. Out-of-Class Speaking Interaction Activities and Learners' Speaking Skills

This chapter examines existing literature about the influence of out-of-class speaking interaction activities on the speaking proficiency of adult foreign language learners, highlighting deficiencies in the research. The objective is to address RQ2: How can out-of-class speaking interactive activities help adult foreign language learners improve their speaking skills?

Out-of-class speaking activities, such as language clubs, drama, and singing, have been found to positively impact students' speaking skills. Kardiansyah and Qodriani discovered that students participating in an English club had notable enhancements in speaking proficiency, primarily attributable to heightened motivation and frequency of practice [6]. The study exhibited a deficiency in participant diversity, constraining its generalizability.

Khasawneh investigated the effects of extracurricular activities across various demographics, demonstrating that female and older students derived greater benefits from these activities [8]. This underscores the need of accounting for participant variables in research. Escudero et al. performed a meta-analysis to uncover prevalent obstacles encountered by learners, including fear and insufficient vocabulary, proposing that extracurricular activities may mitigate these issues [26]. Nonetheless, the study's dependence on meta-analysis lacking rigorous selection criteria may compromise its trustworthiness.

Overall, out-of-class activities can enhance speaking proficiency by offering supplementary language exposure and practice opportunities; however, further study is required to identify the most beneficial activities and their effects on various learners.

- *Social Media and Foreign Language Speaking Skills*

Social media significantly enhances adult learners' speaking skills by offering informal learning chances. Jahromi (2020) discovered that social media had a beneficial effect on vocabulary, linguistic style, and communication abilities, while the results were subjective and influenced by demographic variables [27]. Lantz-Andersson emphasized that language games on social media facilitated the acquisition of social language skills among learners; nevertheless, the modest sample size constrained the study's external validity [28].

Zheng and Barrot indicated that social media markedly enhanced speaking skills via heightened involvement, expressiveness, and linguistic input [1], whereas Akkara et al. illustrated that informal learning in WhatsApp groups also resulted in improved speaking performance. The findings indicate that social media serves as an excellent extracurricular activity for improving speaking skills, while constraints regarding sample size and subjectivity must be considered [29].

- *Clubs, Drama, and Learners' Speaking Skills*

Language clubs and theatrical activities serve as great out-of-class speaking engagements. Demydovych and Holik discovered that speech clubs markedly enhanced speaking abilities, while the extended period of the study compromised its internal validity [7]. Sandal et al. offered recommendations for organizing language clubs, although did not formulate concepts tailored to adult learners [5]. Yulianasari and Kusriandi demonstrated that students saw language clubs as beneficial for enhancing speaking skills; nevertheless, the study depended on subjective assessments and lacked stringent measuring criteria [9].

Language clubs and theater activities significantly improve speaking skills, while there are limits in study design and participant representation.

- *Singing and Foreign Language Speaking Skills*

Singing is an effective method for enhancing verbal abilities. Passiatore et al. discovered that singing alleviated anxiety and enhanced self-efficacy, while its impact on speaking was inferred indirectly [30]. Pratiwi highlighted the beneficial effects of singing on vocabulary, prosody, and motivation [12]. However, empirical evidence was scarce.

Busse et al. demonstrated that singing-based language acquisition markedly enhanced children's speaking skills, indicating its potential applicability for adults as well [31]. Isnaini and Aminatun [32] and Ludke [2] discovered that singing significantly improved vocabulary acquisition and speaking abilities; nevertheless, further rigorous experimentation is required to validate these results.

In conclusion, singing may serve as a beneficial supplementary technique for improving speaking abilities; nevertheless, further empirical study is required to substantiate its effects on adult learners.

Out-of-class speaking activities, such as singing, social media, drama, and language clubs, positively impact learners' speaking skills by providing additional opportunities for communication and reducing anxiety. Nonetheless, current research encounters constraints such as insufficient sample sizes, inadequate diversity, and a scarcity of empirical evidence. Additional study is required to investigate the effects of these activities on various learner demographics and to identify the most effective methods for enhancing speaking abilities.

4. Findings and Discussion

This research aims to assess the impact of speaking interaction activities on the speaking proficiency of adult foreign language learners, both within and outside the classroom. This chapter summarizes the research findings, analyzes them, and addresses the research questions.

• *How Can In-Class Speaking Interactive Activities Help Adult Learners Improve Their Speaking Skills?*

For RQ1, this research finds that speaking is one of the most challenging skills for foreign language learners, and interactive speaking activities are an effective method for improvement. Research on in-class speaking engagement emphasizes group discussions, cooperative learning, role-playing, and games as effective ways for enhancing speaking abilities, motivation, and confidence [22, 23]. These strategies offer pragmatic suggestions for educators to facilitate language acquisition.

Role-playing has shown beneficial in imitating authentic language usage settings, fostering creativity, and promoting social interaction [13, 17]. It facilitates learning across emotional, cognitive, and behavioral domains, offering students practical experience that closely mirrors authentic conversation.

Group discussions also help students overcome anxiety, improve intonation, and encourage participation [22,23]. Nonetheless, obstacles include curriculum design, material selection, and technology constraints may affect student performance [3,25]. Researchers advocate that educators should construct activities with communication objectives in mind, deliver prompt feedback, and promote autonomous thinking to enhance efficacy [13].

The research provides significant insights on the design of speaking activities; yet, it is characterized by limitations including small sample sizes and dependence on surveys and studies. Subsequent study ought to utilize mixed methodologies and varied sampling to improve the thoroughness and applicability of results.

• *How Can Out-of-Class Speaking Interactive Activities Help Adult Learners Improve Their Speaking Skills?*

For RQ2, this research finds that out-of-class speaking activities, such as language clubs, singing, and drama, positively impact speaking skills and confidence.

These activities offer expanded temporal and spatial opportunities for practice, fostering learner autonomy and active participation [6]. In contrast to conventional teacher-centered classrooms, extracurricular activities provide learner-centered methodologies that promote practice beyond the limitations of the classroom [6,8].

Research on social media, clubs, and drama endorses cooperative learning, cultivates community, and enhances communication skills [10,11]. Social media, specifically, facilitates peer engagement and collaborative learning, contributing to language skill enhancement [12]. Singing, frequently regarded as indirectly influencing speaking abilities by alleviating tension and fostering cultural comprehension, has also been demonstrated to directly enhance vocabulary and pronunciation [2,31].

Although these activities are beneficial, they should complement rather than replace formal classroom instruction. Moreover, issues including limited sample sizes and the lack of control groups undermine the credibility of the findings [30]. Subsequent study ought to augment sample numbers and employ randomized experimental procedures to yield more dependable outcomes.

5. Conclusions, Suggestions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusions

This study highlights the importance of both in-class and out-of-class speaking activities for improving adult learners' speaking skills. In-class activities, such as role-playing and group discussions, are effective for simulating real-life conversations, while out-of-class activities, including social media, clubs, drama, and singing, provide additional practice opportunities that enhance fluency and confidence. The results have significant ramifications for foreign language pedagogy. Educators ought to implement activity-centered pedagogical approaches, especially CLT, which fosters verbal communication and social engagement. Cooperative learning has been recognized as a crucial element in enhancing learners' speaking abilities. The study underscores the significance of Communicative Language Teaching for adult learners, facilitating the improvement of their speaking relations. Students frequently exhibit a deficiency in confidence when utilizing a foreign language and harbor apprehensions regarding adverse responses. Integrating social media and music into language acquisition enables learners to surmount shyness and other adverse feelings, hence enhancing their comfort in speaking a foreign language.

5.2. Suggestions for Future Research

This study has some limitations, including small sample sizes and limited analysis of diverse learner groups. Future research should focus on larger, more diverse samples and provide detailed descriptions of activity implementation to ensure replicability.

Recommendations for future research include:

- (1) **Sample Diversity:** Expand samples to include learners from different cultural backgrounds and language levels.
- (2) **Detailed Activity Descriptions:** Provide comprehensive descriptions of activities to facilitate replication.
- (3) **Measurement of Anxiety and Motivation:** Include measures of emotional factors to better understand their effects on speaking skills.

(4) Long-Term Impact: Assess the long-term effects of speaking activities on language development.

The following recommendations are proposed for subsequent investigation. Initially, priority must be given to choosing literature that explicitly links speaking engagement with the speaking skills of adult learners to guarantee the quality and trustworthiness of the research. Secondly, it is essential to analyze the precise effects of out-of-class speaking encounters on pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and communication techniques. Third, subsequent study should investigate the impact of extracurricular speaking activities on diverse groups, taking into account varying linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, as well as individual characteristics. Fourth, researchers want to employ experimental designs, questionnaires, and more instruments to measure the effect of extracurricular activities on speaking proficiency. Finally, subsequent study should conduct a comprehensive analysis of the disparities among studies, identify research limitations, and explore other avenues, such as assessing the applicability of CLT across various age demographics.

5.3. Practical Recommendations for Teaching

Based on the findings of this research, educators can adopt the following strategies to improve adult learners' speaking skills:

- (1) Role-Playing and Group Discussions: Use these activities to simulate real-life scenarios and improve fluency.
- (2) Social Media Integration: Leverage social media for out-of-class practice to enhance language learning.
- (3) Drama and Club Activities: Organize these activities to foster emotional engagement and enhance communication skills.
- (4) Singing as a Learning Tool: Use singing to reduce anxiety and improve pronunciation and vocabulary.

By implementing these strategies, educators can create diverse language practice opportunities that help learners use foreign languages confidently and effectively.

References

- [1] Zheng, Y., & Barrot, J. S. (2022). Social media as an e-portfolio platform: Effects on L2 learners' speaking performance, 26(1), 1-19.
- [2] Ludke, K. M. (2018). Singing and arts activities in support of foreign language learning: An exploratory research. *Innovation in language learning and teaching*, 12(4), 371-386.
- [3] Ginaya, G., Rejeki, I. N. M., & Astuti, N. N. S. (2018). The effects of blended learning to students' speaking ability: A research of utilizing technology to strengthen the conventional instruction. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, 4(3), 1-14.
- [4] Kodirovna, O. S. (2022) Using the Game as One of the Methods to Increase the Effectiveness of a Foreign Language Lesson. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 3(12), 117-118.
- [5] Sandal, J. U., Detsiuk, T., & Kholiavko, N. (2020). Developing foreign language communicative competence of engineering students within university extracurricular activities. *Advanced education*, 19-28.
- [6] Kardiansyah, M. Y., & Qodriani, L. U. (2018). English extracurricular and its role to improve students' English speaking ability. *Retorika: Journal Ilmu Bahasa*, 4(1), 60-69.
- [7] Demydovych, O., & Holik, O. (2020). Speaking club as an interactive extracurricular activity in learning English for professional aims at medical universities.
- [8] Khasawneh, M. A. S. (2021). The reality of extra-curricular educational activities from the viewpoint of students with learning difficulties in English language.
- [9] Yulianasari, A., & Kusriandi, W. (2018). Students' perception on English club extracurricular in speaking practices at Madrasah. *Academic Journal Perspective: Education, Language, and Literature*, 3(2), 305-315.
- [10] Wongsu, M., & Son, J. B. (2022). Enhancing Thai secondary school students' English speaking skills, attitudes and motivation with drama-based activities and Facebook. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 16(1), 41-52.
- [11] Mahrenholz, J. (2023). Recordings of South Asian Languages and Music in the Lautarchiv of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
- [12] Pratiwi, E. (2018, July). Using song to enhance learning in English the classroom. In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Program Pascasarjana Universitas PGRI Palembang* (Vol. 5, No. 05).
- [13] Wahyuningsih, S., & Afandi, M. (2020). Investigating English Speaking Problems: Implications for Speaking Curriculum Development in Indonesia. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 9(3), 967-977.
- [14] Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- [15] Murao, R. (2018). Cultivating reading to learn skills in fostering oral presentation competence as an essential tool for participating in an increasingly globalized society. In *Reading to Learn in a Foreign Language* (pp. 84-110). Routledge.
- [16] Maliva, W., Vuzo, M., & Kapinga, O. (2022). English Language Teachers' Classroom Assessment Practices of Oral Language Skills in Secondary Schools in Tanzania. *Journal of Linguistics and Language in Education*, 16(1), 64-90.
- [17] Gordon, S., & Thomas, I. (2018). 'The learning sticks': reflections on a case research of role-playing for sustainability. *Environmental Education Research*, 24(2), 172-190.
- [18] Waluyo, B. (2019). Task-based language teaching and theme-based role-play: Developing EFL learners' communicative competence. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 16(1), 153-168.
- [19] Neupane, B. (2019). Effectiveness of role play in improving speaking skill. *Journal of NELTA Gandaki*, 1, 11-18.
- [20] Maarof, N. (2018). The effect of role-play and simulation approach on enhancing ESL oral communication skills. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 3(3), 63-71.
- [21] Ngah, E., & Stapa, S. H. (2019). Exploring the Relationship between Interactional Competence and Group Oral Communication. *International Journal of Language Education and Applied Linguistics*, 55-65.

- [22] Bohari, L. (2020). Improving speaking skills through small group discussion at eleventh grade students of SMA Plus Munirul Arifin NW Praya. *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, 7(1), 68-81.
- [23] Bakar, N. I. A., Noordin, N., & Razali, A. B. (2019). Improving oral communicative competence in English using project-based learning activities. *English Language Teaching*, 12(4), 73-84.
- [24] Namaziandost, E., Neisi, L., Kheryadi, & Nasri, M. (2019). Enhancing oral proficiency through cooperative learning among intermediate EFL learners: English learning motivation in focus. *Cogent Education*, 6(1), 1683933.
- [25] Ngah, E., Nor, N. M., & Ahmad, Z. (2018). Group Oral Interactional Competence of English for Specific Aim Learners in a Higher Institution Context. *Advanced Science Letters*, 24(1), 166-168.
- [26] Escudero, P., Jones Diaz, C., Hajek, J., Wigglesworth, G., & Smit, E. A. (2020). Probability of heritage language use at a supportive early childhood setting in Australia. *Frontiers in Education*, 5, Article 93.
- [27] Al Jahromi, D., 2020. Can Teacher and Peer Formative Feedback Enhance L2 University Students' Oral Presentation Skills?, in: Hidri, S. (Ed.), *Changing Language Assessment: New Dimensions, New Challenges*. Springer International Publishing, Cham, pp. 95–131.
- [28] Lantz-Andersson, A. (2018). Language play in a second language: Social media as contexts for emerging Sociopragmatic competence. *Education and Information Technologies*, 23(2), 705-724.
- [29] Akkara, S., Anumula, V., & Mallampalli, M. (2020). Impact of whatsapp interaction on improving L2 speaking skills. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 15(3), 250-259.
- [30] Passiatore, Y., Pirchio, S., Oliva, C., Panno, A., & Carrus, G. (2019). Self-efficacy and anxiety in learning English as a Foreign language: Singing in class helps speaking performance. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Researches (ECPS Journal)*, (20), 121-138.
- [31] Busse, V., Jungclaus, J., Roden, I., Russo, F. A., & Kreutz, G. (2018). Combining song—and speech-based language teaching: An intervention with recently migrated children. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 2386.
- [32] Isnaini, S., & Aminatun, D. (2021). Do you like listening to music?: Students' thought on their vocabulary mastery using English songs. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 2(2), 62-67.