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Beyond communicative tasks: Exploring teacher support and students' speaking motivation in CLT-based EFL classrooms

Muhammad Raihan

Department of English Language Education, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, Indonesia
e-mail: rayhan.nizam1998@gmail.com

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A B S T R A CT

This study explores how a teacher implements Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and how students perceive its role in motivating them to speak English in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at OHM Academy. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study draws on classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with 10 students, focus group discussions, document analysis, and a researcher's reflective journal, as reported in the study. The findings describe the use of communicative activities, including role plays, pair work, group discussions, and real-life speaking tasks. Teacher practices such as providing guidance, allowing planning time, offering constructive feedback, and creating a supportive classroom atmosphere were associated with students' reported engagement and willingness to participate. However, students also encountered challenges, including limited vocabulary, varying levels of confidence, occasional reliance on Bahasa Indonesia, and time constraints. These findings suggest that communicative tasks and supportive teacher practices may help create conditions that encourage students to speak English. Given the qualitative design and single-institution context, the findings offer context-specific insights rather than evidence of a causal effect. The study highlights the importance of considering both teacher support and learners' continuing linguistic needs when implementing CLT in EFL speaking classrooms.

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an essential component of language learning because it enables learners to express ideas, exchange information, and interact meaningfully with others. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, developing speaking skills involves more than acquiring grammatical knowledge and vocabulary; learners also need opportunities to use English for meaningful communication. Speaking proficiency encompasses several interconnected aspects, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and comprehension (Sarifudin & Setyawan, 2025). These aspects become particularly important when learners are expected to express opinions, exchange information, and solve problems through interaction. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) addresses these needs by emphasizing meaningful communication, learner interaction, and the use of language in purposeful contexts (Salam & Luksfinanto, 2024; Shahid et al., 2022). However, providing communicative activities alone does not necessarily ensure that all learners participate actively. Students may still experience difficulties expressing their ideas, particularly when they have limited linguistic resources or lack confidence in speaking English.

The implementation of CLT depends partly on how teachers organize learning activities and facilitate classroom interaction. Rather than functioning solely as providers of knowledge, teachers are expected to guide learners, provide appropriate support, and create opportunities for meaningful language use. Activities such as role plays, pair work, group discussions, simulations, and problem-solving tasks can provide opportunities for learners to practise communicating in different situations (Shahid et al., 2022). Su and Zou (2022) also emphasize the importance of collaborative language-learning tasks in supporting interaction and language practice. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these activities depends on how they are designed and implemented in relation to learners' needs and proficiency levels. Teachers need to select appropriate materials, provide clear instructions, offer constructive feedback, and establish a classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable attempting to communicate. These considerations are particularly relevant in EFL speaking classrooms, where opportunities to use English outside the classroom may be limited.

Students' motivation is another important consideration in the implementation of CLT. Learners who are reluctant to speak may miss opportunities to practise English, even when communicative tasks are available. Their participation may be influenced by their confidence, perceived competence, previous learning experiences, and perceptions of the classroom environment. Dörnyei (2019) highlights the importance of understanding learners' experiences and the motivational conditions associated with second-language learning. Similarly, Vansteenkiste et al. (2006) discuss the importance of motivational processes in educational settings. These perspectives suggest that teachers need to consider not only the communicative objectives of speaking activities but also how learners experience the activities and the support they receive. An encouraging classroom environment, relevant speaking tasks, and constructive feedback may help learners become more willing to participate. However, the presence of such practices should not be assumed to eliminate speaking difficulties, as students may continue to face linguistic and psychological challenges.

Previous research has examined different aspects of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), speaking instruction, and language-learning motivation. Shahid et al. (2022), for example, investigated the use of CLT to develop communicative competence among undergraduate learners. Salam and Luksfinanto (2024) reviewed CLT in modern classrooms, while Dörnyei (2019) examined the L2 learning experience within the L2 Motivational Self System. Related research by Arum et al. (2025) explored the integration of the Four Cs, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity, into English language teaching under Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum, highlighting the importance of communication and collaboration in classroom learning. Furthermore, Muluneh et al. (2026) investigated teacher talk and classroom interaction in tertiary EFL speaking classes in Ethiopia. Their findings revealed that although teachers employed interactive strategies, classroom discourse remained largely teacher-centred, with limited opportunities for extended student responses and meaningful dialogic engagement. The study highlights the importance of examining not only the types of teaching strategies employed but also how teachers implement them and how these practices shape opportunities for student participation. Despite these contributions, several aspects warrant further investigation. Research on CLT and communicative competence does not necessarily explain how students experience teachers' communicative practices in a particular EFL speaking classroom. Similarly, although Muluneh et al. (2026) examined the interactional functions of teacher talk, their study primarily focused on classroom discourse rather than the relationship between students'

perceptions of communicative teaching practices and their speaking motivation. Understanding this relationship requires attention to students' classroom experiences, including their opportunities to participate, their responses to communicative activities, and the challenges they encounter when speaking English. Therefore, the present study examines CLT implementation and speaking motivation at OHM Academy, focusing on how students perceive teachers' communicative practices and how these practices relate to their motivation to participate in English-speaking activities.

At OHM Academy, this study focuses on how the teacher implements CLT during speaking instruction and how students perceive the teacher's role in supporting their motivation to speak English. Particular attention is given to the organization of communicative activities, teacher–student interaction, the support provided during speaking tasks, and the challenges encountered by learners. Activities such as role plays, pair work, group discussions, and problem-solving tasks are considered in relation to the opportunities they provide for students to participate in meaningful communication. The study also considers the teacher's use of guidance, feedback, and classroom-management strategies. Examining these practices alongside students' accounts can provide a more detailed understanding of how communicative teaching is enacted and how learners experience the speaking classroom.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore how a teacher implements Communicative Language Teaching in speaking instruction at OHM Academy, how students perceive the teacher's role in supporting their motivation to speak English, and what challenges arise during communicative speaking activities. By investigating these aspects within a particular EFL classroom, the study seeks to contribute context-specific insights into the relationship between teachers' practices, classroom interaction, and students' speaking motivation. The findings may inform English language teachers who seek to develop supportive and interactive speaking lessons while recognizing that the experiences of one institution cannot automatically be generalized to other educational contexts.

2. METHOD

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the teacher's role in supporting students' motivation to speak English at OHM Academy. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on participants' experiences, perceptions, and classroom interactions within a specific educational context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rather than measuring the causal effect of CLT on speaking motivation, the study sought to understand how communicative teaching practices were implemented and how students perceived their experiences during speaking activities. OHM Academy was selected as the research setting because the study focused on the implementation of CLT in its speaking classes. The suitability of this setting should be understood in relation to the research objectives and the classroom practices examined. The manuscript should also clarify the specific criteria used to select the institution and explain whether the selection was based on purposive sampling.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved 10 students who participated in CLT-based speaking classes at OHM Academy. Purposive sampling was employed to select students with experience in communicative speaking activities and relevant insights into the teacher's role in supporting their

speaking motivation (Patton, 2015). The sample size was considered appropriate for exploring students' experiences in depth.

Data Collection Methods

A reflective journal was also maintained to record the researcher's reflections and potential biases throughout the research process. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted with students to explore their experiences of CLT-based speaking activities, perceptions of teacher support, motivation to speak English, and challenges encountered during classroom interaction. Interviews with the teacher focused on the implementation of CLT and strategies used to facilitate students' participation in speaking activities. Focus group discussions were conducted to explore students' shared and differing perspectives on communicative speaking activities. Classroom observations focused on the organization of speaking tasks, teacher–student interaction, student participation, and the guidance and feedback provided by the teacher. Document analysis examined teaching materials and relevant learning documents to understand how CLT principles were incorporated into speaking instruction. All data were analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to CLT implementation, students' speaking motivation, and the teacher's role in supporting classroom participation. Findings from the different data sources were compared to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the teaching and learning process at OHM Academy.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach. The analysis involved six stages: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for potential themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. First, the researcher reviewed the interview transcripts, focus group discussions, classroom observation notes, and relevant documents to become familiar with the dataset. Initial codes were then generated to identify meaningful patterns related to CLT implementation, students' speaking motivation, teacher support, and challenges encountered during speaking activities. Related codes were grouped into potential themes, which were reviewed and refined against the dataset to ensure their relevance to the research objectives. Finally, the themes were defined and interpreted by comparing evidence across data sources. Relevant interview extracts, observation records, and documentary evidence were used to support the presentation of findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with 10 students, focus group discussions, and document analysis, as reported in the study. The findings are organized around the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), students' participation and classroom interaction, the teacher's strategies for supporting speaking, students' interview accounts, and the challenges that remained. The discussion interprets these findings in relation to relevant literature and theoretical perspectives. Because the study used a qualitative design, the findings describe observed practices and participants' reported experiences; they should not be interpreted as establishing a measurable or causal effect of CLT.

3.1. Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching

The lesson plans and teaching materials described in the study indicated an emphasis on communication rather than memorization alone. Lessons included warm-up questions, pair work, role plays, problem-solving tasks, and the use of realia, such as meals and timetables, to situate language in recognizable contexts. Document analysis also identified tasks involving describing

events, solving problems, and conducting interviews. These activities were intended to give students opportunities to use English for communicative purposes.

The observed sequence from controlled practice, such as vocabulary matching or pronunciation practice, to freer speaking activities is consistent with the distinction between preparatory and communicative tasks discussed by Zulkepli (2020).

Such sequencing can provide linguistic support before learners are asked to communicate more independently. The findings therefore suggest that CLT at OHM Academy was not implemented as unrestricted conversation alone; rather, communicative practice was combined with language preparation. This is an important distinction because students who have limited vocabulary may need models and useful expressions before they can participate in more open-ended tasks.

English was the main classroom language, although Bahasa Indonesia was sometimes used to clarify difficult instructions or explanations. This suggests that the teacher made practical adjustments to support comprehension. However, the available findings do not establish how frequently Bahasa Indonesia was used or whether its use affected the amount of English produced by students. The practice should therefore be interpreted as a classroom strategy observed in this setting, rather than as evidence that first-language use is always beneficial or detrimental to CLT.

3.2. Students' Participation and Classroom Interaction

Classroom observations described students participating in role plays, pair work, information-gap activities, and group discussions. In role plays based on familiar situations, such as interactions between a customer and a waiter, students had a clear communicative purpose and an assigned role. The observer reported that students appeared more engaged during some role-play and small-group activities than during individual speaking in front of the whole class. Some students who had previously participated less were also observed contributing more during communicative tasks.

These observations are consistent with the central principle of CLT that learners need opportunities to use language to convey meaning and interact with others. They also relate to the account of communicative competence developed by Canale and Swain (1980), which extends beyond grammatical knowledge to include the ability to use language appropriately in communication. Nevertheless, the observations do not demonstrate that all students participated equally or that their speaking proficiency improved. The more cautious interpretation is that task format appeared to matter for participation in the observed lessons, and that pair or small-group work provided some learners with a less public setting in which to attempt spoken English.

3.3. Teacher–Student Interaction and Motivational Support

The teacher was observed moving around the classroom, monitoring group work, asking prompting questions, and offering key vocabulary or practical expressions when students encountered difficulties. The teacher also encouraged students' attempts to speak and did not always interrupt communication to correct grammatical or pronunciation errors. Instead, some feedback was provided after activities or during reflection. These practices positioned the teacher as a facilitator who supported communication while allowing students opportunities to complete their turns.

Students' interview accounts provide a complementary perspective. Student 7 stated, "The teacher doesn't get mad if we say something wrong. She helps and gives examples." This account suggests that the student perceived the teacher as supportive and willing to provide guidance rather than respond negatively to mistakes. The finding can be interpreted in relation to Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which emphasizes the relevance of affective conditions to

second-language acquisition. It also resonates with the social view of learning associated with Vygotsky (1978), particularly the role of guidance in helping learners perform tasks they may find difficult independently.

However, a supportive teacher–student relationship should not be treated as the sole explanation for students' motivation. The interview evidence represents students' perceptions, while classroom observations describe visible practices. Together, these sources suggest a relationship between teacher support and students' comfort in participating, but they do not establish that teacher encouragement alone caused motivation to increase. The finding instead highlights the value of combining emotional support with concrete instructional assistance, such as prompts, vocabulary, and examples.

3.4. Teacher Strategies: Wait Time, Partner Rotation, and Icebreakers

The observed strategies included the use of images, short videos, role cards, and topics connected to students' lives. The teacher also allowed students time to formulate responses. In addition, the original observation account reported that group partners were rotated and that humour or icebreakers were used in some sessions. These practices were described as ways of supporting interaction and reducing tension, although the available data do not quantify their individual effects.

Rotating partners can provide opportunities for learners to communicate with classmates beyond their usual partners, encounter different responses, and practise adjusting their language to different interlocutors. Within a communicative approach, this can broaden opportunities for interaction and reduce dependence on a single familiar partner. However, the purpose attributed to partner rotation should be checked against the teacher's actual explanation or lesson plan. If the teacher did not explicitly state the rationale, the manuscript should present these points as possible pedagogical functions rather than as confirmed intentions.

Similarly, humour and icebreakers may help establish a more relaxed atmosphere at the beginning of a lesson or activity. Their potential value lies in helping students become oriented to the class and initiating low-pressure interaction. Nevertheless, humour may not have the same effect on every learner, and an icebreaker does not automatically remove speaking anxiety. The observations support reporting that these strategies were used; stronger claims about their effects would require direct evidence from students' accounts or systematic observation of their responses. Dörnyei (2019) provides a useful motivational perspective for interpreting the importance of learners' classroom experiences, but the specific effects of partner rotation and icebreakers should not be attributed to that source unless it directly discusses those practices.

3.5. Students' Perceptions

3.5.1. Motivation and Perceived Relevance

Students generally described communicative activities as engaging and relevant to everyday communication. Student 4 explained, "When we do role plays or group discussions, I feel more interested in speaking because it's like real life." This account suggests that the perceived relevance of an activity was important to the student's willingness to participate. Role plays and discussions can give learners a reason to communicate beyond practising isolated language forms. This interpretation is compatible with the emphasis on meaningful interaction in CLT and with the motivational perspective of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008), although the present data do not establish which specific motivational needs were met for each participant.

3.5.2. Teacher Support and Confidence

Students also described the teacher's response to errors as a factor in their classroom experience. Student 7's comment indicates that guidance and non-punitive responses to mistakes were valued. Student 9 stated, "I used to be very afraid of speaking. Now, even if I make mistakes, I try to talk." This account indicates a perceived change in the student's willingness to attempt speaking despite the possibility of making errors. It should be interpreted as an individual self-report rather than evidence that every student experienced the same change.

Taken together, these accounts suggest that motivation in this setting was associated not only with the activity type but also with students' perceptions of the teacher's response to their attempts. This adds a contextual dimension to the discussion of CLT: communicative tasks may offer opportunities to speak, while teacher support may influence whether students feel able to use those opportunities. The relationship remains interpretive, however, and cannot be treated as a causal effect established by the study.

3.5.3. Continuing Linguistic and Affective Challenges

Despite the positive accounts, students continued to report difficulties. Student 2 stated, "Sometimes I don't know what to say because I don't have the vocabulary." The comment illustrates that willingness to speak does not necessarily provide learners with the language resources needed to sustain communication. The observations also identified occasional reliance on Bahasa Indonesia, differing confidence levels, and limited time for developing ideas during discussions or presentations.

These challenges complicate any assumption that communicative activities alone are sufficient to address speaking difficulties. Students may need vocabulary preparation, functional expressions, planning time, and differentiated support before and during speaking tasks. Teachers may also need to balance the need to maintain conversational flow with opportunities to address recurring language problems. The findings therefore point to the importance of combining communicative practice with explicit language support.

3.6. Interpreting the Relationship between CLT, Teacher Practices, and Motivation

The classroom observations and student interviews revealed three main findings: communicative activities provided opportunities to practice English, teacher support helped students feel more comfortable speaking, and students continued to face linguistic and emotional challenges. These findings suggest that students' participation was influenced by the activities, the teacher's support, and their English proficiency.

First, role plays, pair work, and group discussions encouraged students to use English in meaningful situations. Students' positive responses to role plays suggest that activities related to real-life situations can make speaking more engaging. This finding is consistent with the communicative approach proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) and the use of communicative tasks discussed by Zulkepli (2020). However, students' vocabulary difficulties indicate that they still need language support to participate effectively.

Second, teacher guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback played an important role in students' speaking experiences. Student 7's account and classroom observations showed that supportive teaching practices helped students feel more comfortable trying to speak English despite making mistakes. These findings relate to Krashen's (1982) emphasis on affective factors and Vygotsky's (1978) view of learning through guidance and interaction.

Third, although students responded positively to communicative activities, several challenges remained. Limited vocabulary, low confidence, occasional reliance on Indonesian, and limited

classroom time affected students' participation. Therefore, CLT can provide opportunities for communication, but students still need appropriate support to overcome these difficulties.

This study highlights the relationship between communicative activities, teacher support, and students' speaking motivation at OHM Academy. The findings show how these factors appeared together in classroom practice. However, because the study involved only one institution and used qualitative data, the findings cannot establish that CLT directly increases motivation or improves speaking proficiency. Further research involving multiple institutions could provide a broader understanding of these relationships.

4. CONCLUSION

This study explored the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in speaking instruction at OHM Academy and students' perceptions of the teacher's role in supporting their motivation to speak English. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The findings indicate that role plays, group discussions, and real-life simulations provided opportunities for meaningful communication. Teacher guidance, constructive feedback, and an encouraging classroom environment were perceived as helpful in supporting students' willingness to speak. However, limited vocabulary, varying confidence levels, reliance on Bahasa Indonesia, and time constraints remained challenges. These findings suggest that communicative activities need to be supported by vocabulary development, adequate preparation time, and attention to students' learning needs.

This study provides a context-specific account of how communicative tasks and teacher support relate to students' speaking motivation. However, its qualitative design, single-institution setting, and interviews with 10 students limit the transferability of the findings and do not establish causal relationships or measurable changes in motivation and speaking proficiency. Future research could involve multiple institutions, longitudinal designs, and mixed-methods approaches to examine these relationships more comprehensively. Practically, the findings highlight the importance of combining meaningful communicative activities with supportive feedback and appropriate linguistic scaffolding to encourage student participation in EFL speaking classrooms.

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