

**Exploring the impact of Communicative Language Teaching  
in Enhancing Grade 9 Learners' Speaking Proficiency in  
English as a Second Language in one Secondary School in  
Maseru**



**By**

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**A Dissertation submitted to the Department of Language and Social Education,  
Faculty of Education in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Education (English Language Education)**

**At the**

**National University of Lesotho**

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**September 2025**

## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation titled **Exploring the impact of Communicative Language Teaching in Enhancing Grade 9 Learners' Speaking Proficiency in English as a Second Language in one Secondary School in Maseru** is my own work and that all sources have been duly referenced. It has not been submitted before to any other university for any other degree or examination.

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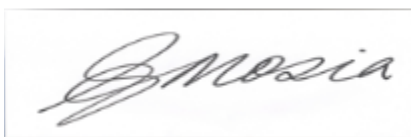
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## DEDICATION

It is to her that I dedicate this study: my beloved mother, whose unwavering support and profound personal sacrifices have rendered my educational journey possible. Throughout her own struggles, she consistently ensured my uninterrupted attendance at school, never permitting adversities to obstruct my access to learning. Moreover, she has served as my sole pillar of strength, my principal provider, and my most cherished source of encouragement, fulfilling the role of my only parent. Consequently, this academic achievement is as much a testament to her resilience as it is to my own efforts.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I wish to express my profound gratitude to God Almighty for bestowing upon me the strength, guidance, and perseverance necessary to complete this study. Without His divine grace, this academic endeavour would not have been attainable.

I also extend my sincerest appreciation to my supervisor, Dr Mahao Mahao, whose exemplary guidance, unwavering patience, and incisive feedback proved instrumental throughout the research process. Furthermore, I am deeply indebted to my former lecturers Dr Tawanda Wallace Mataka, Professor Mohaeka Raselimo, and Dr Adekunle Musa Ayanwale whose erudite instruction and steadfast encouragement laid a formidable foundation for my academic development. Their mentorship has served as a continual source of intellectual inspiration.

I must also acknowledge my study colleagues, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for their invaluable assistance, moral encouragement, and collegial camaraderie. The stimulating discussions, shared experiences, and mutual support we exchanged significantly mitigated the challenges of this endeavour whilst enhancing its overall reward.

Lastly, I extend my sincere thanks to all individuals who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the completion of this work. Your collective efforts and unwavering support are profoundly appreciated.

## ABSTRACT

*This study examined the effectiveness of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing learners' English speaking proficiency. The investigation was motivated by the persistent difficulties learners encounter in developing oral communication skills when instructed through traditional methodologies that emphasise rote learning and grammatical accuracy. The primary objective was to ascertain whether CLT activities could significantly improve learners' speaking abilities, encompassing sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, grammatical competence, and strategic competence.*

*Methodologically, the research employed a mixed-methods approach following an explanatory sequential design. Quantitative data were gathered through pre- and post-tests to evaluate learners' speaking performance prior to and following the intervention. A quasi-experimental framework was utilised, wherein a single group underwent assessment both before and after implementation of the instructional intervention. Subsequently, the test results were elucidated through systematic classroom observations and focus group interviews. The pedagogical intervention incorporated CLT-based strategies including role plays, storytelling, group discussions, and pair work specifically designed to foster active participation and meaningful communication.*

*The findings demonstrated that CLT significantly enhanced learners' speaking proficiency, incorporating improvements in fluency, grammatical accuracy, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, strategic competence, and willingness to engage collaboratively in oral activities. The study concludes that CLT constitutes an effective approach for promoting comprehensive communicative competence among secondary school learners. The interactive nature of CLT not only facilitated linguistic development but also generated opportunities for confidence building, collaborative learning, and reduced anxiety in oral communication tasks.*

*Notwithstanding these positive outcomes, the research process highlighted practical implementation challenges, such as balancing individualised attention with time-intensive oral activities and difficulties in adapting the approach for larger or more diverse classrooms. These observations underscore the necessity to tailor CLT methodologies to specific educational contexts and emphasise its potential as a transformative pedagogical strategy when thoughtfully integrated into English language education in Lesotho and comparable settings.*

**Keywords:** *Impact, Communicative Language Teaching, speaking proficiency, English as a second language, communicative competence, speaking skills.*

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
L1	First language
L2	Second Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
LGCSE	Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education
IELTS	International English Language Testing System

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the study and establishes the foundational framework for the research. It systematically addresses the contextual background, the rationale underpinning its necessity, the problem statement, research questions, principal objectives, scholarly significance, and the identified research gap. Furthermore, it delineates the methodological approach adopted and concludes with a succinct summary outlining the organisational structure of the entire report.

### 1.2 Background to the study

There exists a growing global demand for effective communicative skills, particularly among non-native speakers seeking professional advancement in international contexts where English predominates as the lingua franca. This prominence stems from English functioning as the principal medium connecting diverse cultures across various professional domains; consequently, developing speaking proficiency is deemed essential for learners of English as a second language (Rao, 2019; Murad & Jalambo, 2019). In today's globalised economy, wherein businesses increasingly transcend geographical boundaries, the capacity to express oneself effectively in English is widely regarded as a critical enabler of socio-economic opportunities for those navigating international landscapes (Agustiana et al., 2024).

As a result, as organisations expand and collaborate internationally, the communicative competence of their employees in English emerges as a key determinant of organisational success (Rao, 2019). According to Jeyaraj (2018), over the past five decades, the significance of English has substantially intensified owing to its strong association with employability. As the job market becomes increasingly globalised, positions requiring skilled graduates increasingly demand proficiency in spoken English, which is progressively adopted as the primary language of communication across both industry and academia. As a result, Wildsmith-Cromarty and Balfour (2019) stipulate that learners should be equipped during primary and secondary education to master oral communication for everyday use. Furthermore, Ghafar et al. (2023) maintain that speaking and listening constitute the foundational skills underpinning oral language development.

Moreover, speaking is widely considered one of the fundamental skills that learners must master when acquiring English, as it serves as an indispensable tool for communication (Lonkar, 2017). Supporting this, Hussain (2017) observes that human beings employed speech and listening for millennia prior to the invention of writing; hence, language is inherently a spoken rather than a written phenomenon. Among the four core language skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing speaking and listening are paramount for conveying messages and establishing global connections (Ghafar et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, Hashim et al. (2019) emphasise that speaking is frequently regarded as the most critical language skill, as it directly facilitates human interaction. Thus, the ability to speak clearly and fluently ensures smooth social and professional exchanges, enabling individuals to articulate thoughts, ideas, and emotions effectively. For instance, fluency is crucial in contexts requiring precise communication, such as business negotiations, job interviews, and daily conversations. Perks (2024) further highlights that effective speaking enhances self-confidence, strengthens personal and professional relationships, and promotes cross-cultural understanding.

However, Haider (2022) points out that speaking remains one of the most challenging language skills to master, despite being among the most frequently used in daily communication. Similarly, Mardiningrum and Ramadhani (2022) note that learners encounter significant obstacles in developing oral proficiency, as speaking is often perceived as a particularly daunting aspect of language acquisition and is consequently neglected in many educational settings, especially in ESL contexts.

The teaching of speaking is frequently overlooked in schools due to practical challenges, such as the difficulty of providing individual attention in large classes (Desta, 2019). Over time, English language teaching has evolved through various methodologies tailored to learner needs, typically outlined in syllabi based on grammatical complexity and communicative utility (Suemith, 2011). Additionally, Eryigit (2021) notes that ESL learners often lack confidence in practising speaking, primarily due to fear of making errors and associated embarrassment. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt pedagogical approaches that encourage practice and reduce anxiety.

Owing to the pervasive reliance on traditional methods such as the Grammar Translation Method and Direct Method which emphasise grammatical accuracy and rote learning, speaking practice is often neglected (Tiu et al., 2023). However, these approaches are increasingly deemed insufficient

for fostering fluency and spontaneity in authentic communication (Vireak & Bunrosy, 2024), hence necessitating the introduction of more interactive strategies, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

To address these shortcomings, CLT incorporates realistic strategies for teaching oral discourse through interactive classroom activities designed to promote meaningful communication (Aleksandrak, 2011). According to Romdoni et al. (2024), CLT focuses on developing communicative competence via oral interaction, utilising activities such as debates, role plays, and real-life simulations. This approach was introduced in the 1970s as an alternative to traditional methods that prioritised grammatical knowledge over functional language use (Yang, 2024).

In this study, CLT is adopted as a pedagogical strategy to enhance learners' speaking proficiency, which refers to the ability to use spoken English accurately, fluently, and appropriately in real-world contexts (Crowther & Gass, 2019). Proficiency is typically assessed through instruments such as the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or frameworks such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020).

This research focuses specifically on secondary school learners, mainly Grade 9 learners, who are presumed to have attained a proficiency level enabling effective communication in English. According to the CEFR, Grade 9 learners typically range from B1 (intermediate) to B2 (upper-intermediate) proficiency (Lamo, 2018), indicating a sufficient foundation for communicative practice.

Furthermore, previous studies indicate that CLT can significantly mitigate common barriers to speaking proficiency, including limited vocabulary, learner anxiety, and insufficient authentic practice. Conversely, research has highlighted the limitations of traditional methods, which often result in inadequate oral skills and diminished learner engagement. For example, Sabrina (2020) demonstrates the effectiveness of CLT in Indonesian schools, particularly when integrated with existing curricula. In contrast, Ghafar and Raheem (2023) observe that oral communication is neglected in Iraqi institutions due to an overemphasis on grammar instruction.

Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2014) report that conventional approaches in England have historically overlooked speaking proficiency, prioritising literacy skills instead. In Lesotho, Nkhi

and Lebona (2023) identify anxiety and lack of practice as major impediments to developing communicative competence among ESL learners.

Notably, the Lesotho English language curriculum emphasises writing and reading over oral skills, with the LGCSE syllabus failing to explicitly incorporate or assess speaking proficiency. This oversight underscores the need for greater emphasis on practical speaking activities to facilitate real-world language use.

Although existing research has explored CLT from theoretical and qualitative perspectives in Lesotho (Kobo, 2013; Nkhi & Lebona, 2023; Nkome, 2015), there remains a conspicuous gap in empirical studies examining its practical implementation in classroom settings. Thus, this study aims to address this gap by investigating the impact of CLT on the speaking proficiency of Grade 9 learners in Lesotho's secondary schools.

### 1.3 Problem statement

In the contemporary globalised landscape, proficiency in the English language has become an indispensable asset for individuals in the realms of academia, professional advancement, and social integration. Notwithstanding this global imperative, a significant number of learners within Lesotho's secondary education system encounter considerable difficulties in attaining oral fluency. As Hosni (2015) observes, learners of English as a Second Language (ESL), irrespective of their structural knowledge of the language, frequently struggle to express themselves with efficacy. Consequently, low speaking proficiency persists as a critical pedagogical challenge; a situation exacerbated by the well-documented neglect of systematic oral communication instruction (Lucha & Berhanu, 2015; Shabbir et al., 2024; Tavakoli & Hunter, 2018).

This neglect of oral skills engenders a cycle of interrelated obstacles that hinder the effective implementation of spoken interactions. Primary among these are learners' diminished motivation to engage orally in English and a concomitant lack of teacher commitment to fostering a supportive and conducive environment for authentic communication (Lucha & Berhanu, 2015).

Although various pedagogical strategies have been employed to ameliorate learners' speaking proficiency, research by Tiu et al. (2023) indicates that classroom practice remains dominated by traditional, teacher-centred methodologies, such as the Grammar-Translation and Direct methods. These approaches predominantly prioritise grammatical accuracy and rote memorisation.

However, they ultimately fail to equip learners with the practical communicative competence and interactive opportunities requisite for effective real-world discourse. In light of these persistent issues, Qasserras (2023) posits Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a promising alternative, principally because it emphasises practical language use and engages learners in meaningful, authentic communication.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of implementing CLT as a core teaching strategy to enhance the oral proficiency of secondary school learners in Lesotho. It seeks to address the identified gap in spoken communicative skills and to contribute novel empirical evidence that can inform both pedagogical practice and future curriculum development within the nation.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

Main research question:

- What is the impact of CLT on learners' English speaking proficiency?

Sub research questions

- To what extent does the implementation of CLT strategies enhance learners' speaking proficiency?
- How do learners perform in speaking activities during the implementation of CLT in the classroom?
- What are learners' experiences of using CLT techniques in the classroom?

#### 1.5 Purpose of the study

The principal objective of this investigation is to evaluate the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on the development of English speaking competencies amongst secondary-level Grade 9 learners. Specifically, this research seeks to gauge the extent to which CLT methodologies enhance key dimensions of oracy, namely fluency, grammatical accuracy, and self-assurance in oral expression. This will be achieved through the strategic implementation of task-based interactions, which engage participants in activities such as structured role-plays, collaborative group discussions, and other stimulating speaking exercises designed to foster authentic communication.

### 1.6 Significance of the study

This study aims to scrutinise the application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a pedagogical strategy for enhancing oral proficiency amongst English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Notwithstanding its recognised importance as a cornerstone of language acquisition, speaking presents a persistent challenge for many learners, who frequently struggle with aspects such as fluency, pronunciation, and communicative confidence (Ghafar et al., 2023).

The significance of this research is twofold: firstly, it seeks to address critical lacunae in contemporary language pedagogy; and secondly, it endeavours to generate practical benefits for key educational stakeholders. For learners, the findings will elucidate effective strategies and interactive activities designed to ameliorate their oral communicative competence. Consequently, such advancement is anticipated to bolster overall academic achievement, augment self-assurance, and enhance future career prospects within a globalised milieu where English proficiency is paramount.

Furthermore, this investigation offers considerable utility for educators by furnishing them with empirical insights into the practical implementation of CLT techniques, thereby enabling a more informed selection of methodologies to achieve desired learning outcomes. Simultaneously, the study provides curriculum designers with robust evidence to underscore the role of CLT in promoting oracy, which can inform the development of language programmes that prioritise communicative skills and align with modern educational paradigms.

In addition, the findings hold considerable implications for policymakers, who may leverage this evidence to advocate for and formulate policies that endorse effective, communication-focused language teaching methodologies. Such a top-down approach could potentially catalyse widespread enhancements in English language education across institutional contexts.

Finally, this research contributes to the broader academic community by establishing a foundation for subsequent scholarly inquiry. It thus serves as a springboard for future researchers to further explore the efficacy of CLT and its overarching impact on the process of second language acquisition.

### 1.7 Research gap

Despite the recognition by previous studies in Lesotho of the theoretical merits of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for developing English language competencies, the extant literature is

characterised by a heavy reliance on qualitative or desktop research methodologies. Resultantly, these investigations frequently fail to delineate how CLT can be effectively operationalised and evaluated within authentic pedagogical environments. As a result of this methodological shortcoming, empirically robust evidence elucidating the tangible impact of CLT on learners' speaking proficiency in quotidian classroom contexts remains conspicuously scarce. It is this specific lacuna within the body of literature that the present study seeks to directly address and ameliorate.

### 1.8 Chapter summary

In conclusion, this chapter has synthesised the foundational elements of the research, delineating the contextual background, articulating the problem statement, and formalising the primary research questions. Furthermore, it has elucidated the study's overarching purpose, underscored its multifaceted significance, and precisely identified the extant gap in the literature which this inquiry seeks to address. Accordingly, it has established a compelling rationale for investigating the potential of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to enhance the oral proficiency of Grade 9 learners in Lesotho, a necessity highlighted by the documented limitations of prevailing, traditional pedagogical approaches. Consequently, this comprehensive introduction provides a necessary framework and establishes a clear trajectory for the subsequent chapter, which will critically engage with the relevant scholarly literature and theoretical constructs that underpin this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the pertinent body of scholarly literature, thereby establishing the theoretical, conceptual, and empirical context for utilising Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to augment learners' oral proficiency. It principally delineates the theoretical framework of communicative competence that underpins this investigation. Subsequently, it expounds upon the conceptual framework devised for the study, before critically reviewing and synthesising findings from prior empirical research on the application of CLT.

#### 2.2 Theoretical framework

##### *2.2.1 The Theory of Communicative Competence*

The theory of communicative competence was originally postulated by the sociolinguist Dell Hymes in 1972 as a direct counterpoint to Noam Chomsky's conception of linguistic competence, which exclusively emphasised a speaker's innate grammatical knowledge. In contrast, Hymes' framework prioritises the capacity to deploy language both effectively and appropriately within specific socio-cultural contexts (Vorweg, 2015). As elucidated by Lillis (2006), Hymes contended that the mere ability to form grammatically correct sentences is fundamentally insufficient for successful real-world communication. Rather, he asserted that an individual must master the pragmatic use of language across diverse communicative situations. This encompasses a sophisticated understanding of when to speak, what to utter, to whom, and in what manner; it further entails mastering speech acts, integrating paralinguistic features, and comprehending societal attitudes towards language.

Within the context of this study, communicative competence furnishes the essential theoretical foundation for scrutinising how CLT influences learners' capacity to speak English effectively. Hymes conceptualised communicative competence as comprising several integrated components, among which Chomsky's grammatical competence constitutes merely one element (Cazden, 2011). Hymes (1972) originally proposed that this competence rests upon four key principles.

The first principle, linguistic competence, constitutes knowledge of the language's code, including its grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and phonology. In CLT classrooms, this grammatical knowledge performs a crucial role in facilitating effective communication. Although CLT emphasises fluency and appropriateness in real-life situations, a firm grasp of grammatical structures remains

indispensable for learners to convey messages accurately and to comprehend input effectively (Abdulrahman & Abu-Ayyash, 2019). However, Hymes' model critically emphasises the application of these grammatical aspects in a manner deemed suitable for specific situational contexts within social interaction (Lillis, 2020).

The second principle, sociolinguistic competence, involves the ability to utilise language appropriately in accordance with prevailing social norms, context, and cultural expectations (Nordquist, 2019). This principle acknowledges that effective communication is not solely dependent on the speaker's production but is equally contingent upon the listener's ability to infer meaning from the context (Pica, 1988). Consequently, CLT pedagogy is designed to ensure learners can comprehend and respond aptly across a spectrum of scenarios. This often involves deciphering subtleties such as tone, register, and cultural nuances that construct meaning (Liu, 2014). Moreover, CLT underscores the importance of understanding linguistic variation, relating to factors such as interlocutor relationships (formal versus informal), setting (professional versus social), and communicative purpose (persuasive versus informative) (Triwibowo, 2023).

The third principle encompasses discourse competence, which Canale and Swain (2010) define as the ability to organise and interconnect ideas in a clear, coherent, and logical manner. This competence ensures that communication is structured sensibly for the listener. It operates beyond the sentence level, enabling speakers to manage language to form unified, meaningful messages (Dara et al., 2024). Furthermore, discourse competence comprises two pivotal elements: cohesion, which denotes the grammatical and lexical linkages within a text (e.g., through conjunctions, pronouns), and coherence, which refers to the overall logical sense and relevance of a message within its context (Ahmed, 2023). In practical application, this competence empowers individuals to narrate stories, articulate explanations, and sustain conversations in a logically consistent and engaging fashion.

Lastly, the fourth principle is strategic competence, which denotes the capacity to employ various communication strategies to circumvent difficulties in comprehension or expression, thereby preventing or managing communicative breakdowns (Triwibowo, 2023). For instance, learners might utilise paraphrasing to simplify a message when a specific lexical item is unavailable, or they might resort to non-verbal strategies such as gestures, facial expressions, or mime to convey meaning when verbal resources prove insufficient (Alem, 2020).

Ultimately, Hymes' model provides a comprehensive framework for language pedagogy, advocating for a holistic approach that equips learners to communicate with efficacy and appropriateness in multifarious real-world situations. By accentuating the synergy between linguistic accuracy and contextual sensitivity, the theory promotes the development of adaptable and proficient communicators, thereby constituting the fundamental backbone of communicative approaches such as CLT.

## 2.3 Conceptual review

### 2.3.1 *Introduction to CLT in English Language Education*

Communicative language teaching (CLT) has emerged as one of the most widely adopted teaching approaches in language education across the globe (Salam & Luksfinanto, 2024). Its primary focus is to equip learners with the ability to communicate effectively in real-life situations, shifting away from the conventional emphasis on grammar and rote memorisation. CLT is a teaching approach that emphasises developing communicative competence by using language appropriately in real-life situations (Yousafzai, 2023). It also promotes experiential learning where learners actively apply grammatical rules in conversations and authentic situations instead of just memorising them. However, more emphasis is placed on fluency rather than grammatical accuracy, as the expectation is that learners should master practical engagement in real-life communication contexts (Hakim, 2025).

Moreover, Bordia (2022) emphasises that the primary aim of CLT is to help learners communicate accurately and fluently in their target language. This is achieved by involving them in various meaningful and realistic communicative activities that simulate real-life situations. The approach is learner-centred, with the teacher acting more as a coordinator and guide rather than a traditional instructor. CLT activities include sharing opinions, debates, storytelling, role-plays, picture descriptions, and more.

According to Richards (2006), CLT classrooms are designed to give learners opportunities to use language in meaningful ways, moving beyond simple memorisation of grammar rules. Learners learn how to appropriately use language in different social contexts, including the use of verbal and non-verbal cues to maintain communication. Hakami (2025) found that, unlike traditional methods, CLT promotes active engagement, with most learners responding positively to role-plays, group discussions, and interactive tasks positively

Further, since CLT focuses on developing communicative competence, it differs from the concept of grammatical competence, which refers to the ability to understand and correctly apply the language rules, including syntax (sentence structure), morphology (word formation), phonology (sound patterns), and semantics (meaning) (Nordquist, 2020). In simple terms, grammatical competence focuses on knowing how to form grammatically correct sentences and understanding how different parts of a sentence function together. However, one can master the mentioned grammatical rules but encounter difficulties in communicating effectively; therefore, CLT, through its interactive oral activities, ensures that one can use language fluently in different social contexts, with accurate interactional skills (Toro et al., 2019).

In addition, research has shown that most learners prefer CLT over conventional grammar teaching methods. Mansouri et al. (2019) reported that some learners preferred direct exposure to oral communication, explaining that listening to news and watching television helped them observe how grammar is applied in everyday speech. Similarly, other learners expressed that interacting with native speakers and experiencing authentic language use was a more effective way to learn English grammar other than relying on textbooks and memorising grammatical aspects. In addition, Mon (2019) states that teachers employing CLT in the classroom have found that learners are more interested in engaging in CLT activities, such as grammar games, rather than completing traditional grammar exercises. Also, learners have stated that when teachers employ conventional teaching methods, learning English is boring and unpleasant, concluding that English is a difficult subject.

### *2.3.2 CLT Strategies for Enhancing Oral Communication*

Scholarly consensus indicates that a range of pedagogically designed activities can substantially enhance learners' acquisition of communicative competence. According to Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019), several such activities, which are fundamentally socially constructed, yield maximum benefit; these include dialogues, problem-solving tasks, and role plays. Corroborating this, Tuan and Mai (2015) have identified and elaborated upon the advantages of numerous common speaking activities, notably discussions, role plays, simulations, information gaps, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, reporting, playing cards, picture narrating, and picture describing.

Central to the effective implementation of these activities is the instructor's role in their design and facilitation. In line with Sanako (2024), it is vital for educators to deliberately construct tasks that

stimulate genuine interaction and communication amongst learners. Methodologies such as group work, pair activities, and role plays are posited as excellent mechanisms for encouraging the meaningful use of language.

Furthermore, Sanako (2024) advocates for varying these activities to accommodate diverse learning styles, thereby maintaining engagement across the learner cohort. This perspective is reinforced by Palacio (2010), who specifically acknowledges role plays as one of the most effective techniques for rehearsing real-life scenarios, such as ordering food in a restaurant or requesting directions. By adopting specific roles within a defined scenario, learners gain hands-on experience, which provides a practical opportunity to develop discrete communication skills. Consequently, role-plays are highly effective in promoting active learning through immersion in authentic situations (Moharana, 2021).

Beyond skill practice, these communicative activities confer significant affective benefits. Ahmed (2023) states that CLT activities are instrumental in building learner confidence and promoting fluency. For instance, group discussions and debates serve as another excellent forum for fostering communication, as they encourage participants to articulate personal opinions, listen attentively to others, and engage in substantive dialogue. To optimise the efficacy of such activities, Akshaya.R (2018) recommends that educators provide prompts and topics that are directly relevant to learners' interests and lived experiences. Additionally, Mon (2019) asserts that learners themselves report thoroughly enjoying the interactive and playful nature of CLT methodologies, noting that activities like discussions facilitated the exploration of a variety of perspectives, thereby enriching their overall learning experience.

### *2.3.3 The Impact of CLT on Learners' Speaking Skills*

Notwithstanding, the extensive body of research exploring the efficacy of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), a prevailing consensus suggests that this pedagogical approach can markedly enhance proficiency, augment learner motivation, and fortify communicative skills when juxtaposed with traditional methodologies (Ghafar et al., 2023; Sabrina, 2020; Suemith, 2011; Triwibowo, 2023). As previously established, CLT strategies are fundamentally oriented towards the development of learners' communicative competence; consequently, Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019) maintain that its defining characteristics encompass classroom goals targeting the integral components of linguistic, discourse, functional, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies. A

central tenet of CLT is the synergistic cultivation of fluency and accuracy, principles deemed complementary and indispensable within communicative techniques. The implementation of CLT is therefore posited to exert a significant impact on learners' oral skills and overall competency.

Jones (2020) conceptualises fluency as the capacity to produce speech that is both smooth and natural, thereby minimising hesitation to facilitate effective communication. This construct prioritises the flow of speech and the successful conveyance of meaning over strict grammatical precision. According to Ljubas and Topalović (2024), conventional teaching methods, such as the Grammar-Translation approach and rote memorisation, frequently neglect pivotal communicative skills, including fluency, accuracy, and the adept sharing of ideas across diverse contexts. To address this deficit, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has emerged as a learner-centred paradigm that prioritises interaction and meaningful communication within authentic situations (Fauzi & Ridwan, 2025).

Furthermore, a primary objective of CLT is the concurrent enhancement of both fluency and accuracy. The latter principally concerns the correct formation of linguistic structures (Moharana, 2021). Corroborating this, Richards and Rodgers (2014) affirmed that CLT substantially improves learners' fluency and equips them to manage everyday interactions more effectively. Their research further revealed that learners enrolled on CLT-based courses demonstrate superior communicative skills and exhibit greater confidence in employing the target language.

In accordance with Zhang (2023), CLT effectively contextualises grammar within meaningful communicative exchanges. When learners engage in authentic scenarios, such as role-plays and discussions, they are compelled to utilise appropriate grammatical structures to achieve their communicative aims. This contextualised approach to grammar instruction suggests that learners are more likely to internalise and retain grammatical rules when these are practised within genuine communicative settings. Nevertheless, Qasserras (2023) contends that explicit grammar instruction can usefully complement CLT strategies to deepen learners' structural understanding. This perspective finds support in the findings of Lucha and Berhanu (2015), who noted that learners often expressed a preference for dedicated grammar and vocabulary practice over oral interactions.

Nonetheless, Wen (2018) highlights a pervasive misconception that CLT neglects grammar merely because its syllabus is organised according to categories of meaning and function. This assertion

is erroneous, as these categories retain a firm grammatical foundation; indeed, the communicative functions that structure CLT syllabuses are inherently connected to their corresponding grammatical forms. Consequently, Wen (2018) also emphasises that CLT is predicated on the belief that grammar is most effectively acquired unconsciously through performance in communicative situations. Hakami (2025) reported that while learners perceive CLT as crucial for developing their speaking and listening proficiencies, they concurrently value traditional grammar lessons. This indicates a pressing need for a balanced curriculum that judiciously integrates CLT with structured grammatical instruction.

Akramy et al. (2022) state that traditional methods, such as the grammar-translation approach, not only facilitate the comprehension of grammatical rules but also bolster learners' confidence in speaking fluently before teachers and peers. Learners themselves frequently recommend a blended methodology, integrating communicative activities with traditional tasks such as reading and writing.

As postulated by Moharana (2021), CLT lessons invariably generate a more dynamic and interactive classroom environment. Communicative activities, including group discussions, were found to increase engagement, thereby fostering a more profound understanding of English and culminating in enhanced speaking proficiency. Similarly, Triwibowo (2023) discovered that CLT cultivated a more stimulating classroom atmosphere wherein learners actively participated in diverse oral activities, including role-plays, discussions, and language games. This elevated participation level strengthened their comprehension of English concepts and grammar, resulting in superior language skills.

Additionally, Triwibowo (2023) found that interactive settings facilitate the exchange of ideas, mutual support, collaborative learning, and peer collaboration throughout the language acquisition process. Salam and Luksfinanto (2024) also assert that CLT promotes heightened engagement and interaction. Its communicative activities compel learners to use the language actively, thereby elevating motivation and aiding the retention of language skills. Elhawary and Hargreaves (2023) note that sensitively implemented pair work can reduce anxiety and cultivate a stronger sense of agency, often by fostering interpersonal connections within the classroom community. However, they caution that teachers must carefully assign pairs to ensure learners collaborate with liked and trusted peers, lest classmates become a source of anxiety akin to teachers.

Furthermore, Salam and Luksfinanto (2024) confirm that CLT augments learners' intrinsic motivation. Observing the practical application of language in real-life contexts renders learners more engaged and eager to participate. Consequently, CLT fosters learner autonomy by encouraging learners to assume greater ownership of their learning through interactive tasks. Correspondingly, Triwibowo (2023) notes that the engaging nature of CLT activities correlates with reported increases in motivation and self-confidence, energising learners and fostering a sense of empowerment.

Equally important, Moharana (2021) indicates that the positive impact of CLT was evidenced by learners' comfortable interactions during activities, reflecting a growing capacity for meaningful dialogue. This newfound confidence and practical competence suggest that CLT effectively prepares ESL learners for genuine communication scenarios. According to Triwibowo (2023), learners reported feeling more confident employing English independently beyond the classroom, a development that fuelled their ongoing motivation to improve. The interactive dimensions of CLT activities, such as role-plays, have been shown to significantly boost both confidence and fluency (Wathawatthana et al., 2025).

Above all, CLT exerts a significant and generally positive influence on fluency by encouraging active and spontaneous use of the target language. This approach generates ample opportunities for learners to speak, listen, and respond in naturalistic contexts, which is fundamental to fluency development (Sabrina, 2020). Similarly, Salam and Luksfinanto (2024) conclude that learners exposed to CLT demonstrate improved fluency, heightened engagement, and a superior capacity for practical language use.

Manza (2018) found that participants expressed communicative challenges through gap markers, such as gestures, which signalled difficulties and were identifiable via direct observation. This implies that CLT enhanced learners' strategic competence, enabling them to switch to alternative communicative means during breakdowns, thereby ensuring the continuity of interaction.

#### *2.3.4 Benefits and Positive Learner Experiences in CLT classrooms*

Empirical investigations into learner experiences with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) techniques consistently report predominantly positive outcomes, although these are contingent upon individual learning preferences, classroom dynamics, and the efficacy of implementation

(Ariani & Karim, 2024; Nisha, 2024; Salam & Luksfinanto, 2024). Furthermore, Triwibowo (2023) observes that a majority of learners express a distinct preference for oral interaction as a primary classroom activity over the explicit study of grammatical forms, thereby aligning with contemporary educational trends that prioritise practical communicative skills above theoretical grammatical knowledge.

Concurrently, evidence suggests CLT contributes to linguistic development. Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019) documented a modest increase in participants' grammatical competence within spoken English, indicating some progression in grammatical abilities, albeit within a context where overall proficiency in this domain remained constrained. Corroborating this, Ho (2020) reports that participants became more cognisant of improvements in their linguistic competence, including an expanded lexical repertoire and enhanced grammatical understanding, following a period of CLT instruction.

Regarding the pedagogical balance between fluency and accuracy, Jafari (2015) found that learners perceive both as equally vital. However, they emphasised that during oral activities, such as pair or group work, instructors should refrain from interrupting communication to preserve fluency. Conversely, they advocated for immediate error correction in written tasks to prevent the fossilisation of errors. In agreement, Mon (2019) notes that learners expressed surprise at their growing fluency and confidence, which they attributed to frequent speaking opportunities and exposure to peer and teacher language during CLT sessions.

Moreover, Nisha (2024) emphasises that learners credit CLT with motivating them to take risks and experiment with novel forms of self-expression in English. This underscores the method's positive influence on learners' willingness to engage more freely with the language. By prioritising meaning over perfect accuracy and mitigating the fear of error, CLT fosters a more stimulating and supportive learning environment (Salmanova, 2025).

The efficacy of CLT in enhancing engagement and comprehension is further supported by Ariani and Karim (2024), particularly for listening and speaking skills. Their research indicates that when coupled with appropriate teacher scaffolding and corrective feedback, this approach can significantly improve fluency and the grasp of linguistic structures. Triwibowo (2023) observed that participants valued the interactive, communicative elements of CLT for providing authentic,

practical contexts for using English and engaging in meaningful dialogue, leading to heightened motivation and self-assurance. Nonetheless, Hakami (2025) indicates that while learners recognise CLT's importance for developing oracy skills, they still value traditional grammar lessons, highlighting the necessity for a balanced curriculum that integrates both approaches.

Beyond linguistic gains, CLT also facilitates the development of broader communicative competences. Ho (2020) states that learners reported enhanced discourse competence, including improved abilities in prediction, connecting ideas, and inferring meaning during conversations. They also demonstrated stronger interactional skills in practical scenarios such as lodging complaints, requesting exchanges, and offering apologies. Triwibowo (2023) affirms that L2 learners exposed to CLT exhibited significant gains in overall speaking proficiency, outperforming peers taught solely via traditional methods in speaking, listening, and interaction, thereby demonstrating a greater capacity to use English across diverse contexts. This finding is consistent with Littlewood's (2011) acknowledgement that, despite initial difficulties adjusting to its learner-centred nature, learners in contexts dominated by conventional teaching methods eventually show notable progress in oracy skills through CLT.

The pedagogical approach of CLT also promotes learner autonomy. Toro et al. (2019) established that its learner-centred nature, which promotes active participation and authentic language use, was crucial in developing learners' sense of independence. Through tasks like role-plays and discussions, learners acquired practical skills applicable beyond the classroom, thereby boosting confidence in their proficiency. Datugan (2025) asserts that learners highly valued interactions with both peers and instructors during CLT lessons, implying that such social interplay meaningfully enhanced their learning experience.

The benefits of collaborative learning are further emphasised by Jafari (2015), who found that learners consider pair and group work highly beneficial for providing opportunities to use English in realistic contexts. Notably, Qasserras (2023) reports that learners educated through communicative methods produce more spontaneous speech and demonstrate greater comprehension in real-world settings, suggesting CLT fosters transferable functional skills (Salmanova, 2025). Mukhlas and Thayyib (2025) observed noticeable fluency gains as learners participated more actively and expressed thoughts more spontaneously. This aligns with

Kawashima's (2019) argument that pre-task planning positively impacts speaking performance, particularly in retelling activities, by fostering more coherent speech and reducing anxiety.

Regarding affective factors, Ho (2020) found that participants acknowledged greater confidence and a heightened willingness to use English in the classroom, reporting reduced fear and increased comfort during conversations. Such reflections demonstrate CLT's capacity to bolster self-efficacy in speaking. Furthermore, CLT has been proven to enhance strategic competence by engaging learners in real-life communication where they practice employing strategies such as requesting clarification, paraphrasing, and negotiating meaning to prevent breakdowns (Alem, 2020). Along the same lines, Ho (2020) notes specific participant reports of increased sensitivity to interlocutor comprehension and improved skills in seeking clarification, highlighting tangible development in this competence.

In conclusion, the interactive and engaging nature of CLT, characterised by collaborative pair and group work, appears to render learning more enjoyable and effective. Consequently, as postulated by Wathawatthana et al. (2025), the very capacity for interaction within the classroom plays a central role in cultivating learners' positive attitudes towards speaking English.

#### *2.3.5 Challenges Faced by Learners in CLT Classrooms*

In spite of its pedagogical benefits, the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) presents a multitude of significant impediments that can adversely affect learners' engagement, motivation, and overall language acquisition. Chief among these challenges is a prevalent lack of motivation, which Asmari (2015) attributes to an over-reliance on the first language (L1) both within and beyond the classroom. This linguistic dependency, coupled with an overall deficiency in speaking skills, frequently culminates in a pronounced disinterest in utilising English in authentic, real-world contexts.

Furthermore, empirical findings consistently indicate that learners experience considerable foreign language anxiety, a formidable barrier to active participation. As Javid (2014) argues, the challenge of communicating in an unfamiliar language generates high anxiety levels, complicating interactions with both peers and instructors. This anxiety, often fuelled by a fear of grammatical, pronuncial, or fluency-related errors, can severely inhibit conversational engagement.

Concurrently, Rochim and Rukmini (2019) observe that learners frequently report feelings of embarrassment about making mistakes, particularly those that could cause misunderstandings or lead to awkward conversational pauses. This emotional barrier frequently manifests as social anxiety, wherein learners hesitate to speak in front of others due to performance pressure and a fear of negative evaluation (Marnani, 2022; Murad & Jalambo, 2019). Zhang and Zhong (2012) further corroborate this, noting that learner concern about appearing foolish in front of peers is a significant deterrent.

This affective filter is compounded by issues of self-confidence. Akbari and Sahibzada (2023) highlight that a lack of confidence, stemming from limited vocabulary or past negative experiences, can lead to risk-aversion, thereby preventing the experimentation with new language that is essential for acquisition. Moreover, Ghafar (2023) contends that this problem is exacerbated in unsupportive classroom environments where encouragement is lacking. Consequently, as Lucha and Berhanu (2015) revealed through observation, learners may demonstrate a marked unwillingness to share ideas openly during oral activities.

In addition to these affective factors, several logistical and pedagogical obstacles hinder CLT's effectiveness. Hosni (2015) asserts that large class sizes can severely constrain individualised participation and make classroom management overwhelming, often resulting in the dominance of more vocal learners. This concern is echoed by Jafari (2015), whose participants noted that large classes complicate group organisation and reduce motivation, particularly for those seated at the rear. Furthermore, Dizayee and Karim (2023) state that assessing speaking abilities and providing personalised feedback becomes exceptionally challenging under such conditions.

The pervasive use of the mother tongue also constitutes a major impediment. According to Kwambai and Ongeti (2023), learners who share an L1 often revert to it when struggling to express themselves, thereby reducing their exposure to and practice of the target language. This habit, as they note, hinders fluency development by fostering a reliance on direct translation rather than fostering thinking in the new language. Practical disruptions, such as excessive classroom noise during communicative activities, further disrupt communication and impede the learning process (Wathawatthana et al., 2025). Additionally, well-intentioned but poorly timed corrective feedback

can be discouraging; Lucha and Berhanu (2015) found that teacher interruptions for error correction often rendered learners unenthusiastic about future participation.

Ultimately, it is evident that these multifaceted challenges can substantially hinder the successful integration of CLT strategies. Therefore, as Sultana (2019) stipulates, instructors must not only be acutely aware of these potential obstacles but also be equipped with proactive solutions. Addressing these issues necessitates careful pedagogical planning, effective classroom management, and an unwavering commitment to cultivating a supportive, immersive communicative experience that builds learners' confidence and fosters their communicative competence.

#### 2.4 Empirical review

The role of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in enhancing second language proficiency has constituted a significant area of scholarly inquiry, particularly within the domain of English as a second language (ESL). Widely acknowledged as an effective pedagogical strategy, CLT emphasises authentic communicative interaction and learner-centred methodologies, and has been extensively associated with the development of learners' oral skills. This empirical review synthesises extant research to evaluate the impact of CLT on enhancing learners' speaking proficiency.

A substantial body of empirical work, conducted across diverse international contexts, has examined the efficacy of CLT in this regard. For instance, a study by Sabrina (2020) revealed that CLT had been implemented so extensively in Indonesia that it was proven to be an effective ESL teaching strategy, particularly when integrated with existing curricular methods to foster more robust communicative learning environments. Through observational and documentary analysis, the study concluded that scientific approaches and CLT synergise effectively.

Similarly, Faridha (2024) conducted a quasi-experimental study to examine the effects of CLT on speaking abilities. Employing a single-group pre-test/post-test design, data collected via IELTS speaking tests indicated initially weak speaking skills characterised by prolonged silences and non-responses. However, post-test results demonstrated a marked improvement in average scores, thereby affirming the positive impact of CLT. Equally important, Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019)

utilised a mixed-methods quasi-experimental design, gathering data through interviews, observations, and proficiency tests.

Their findings indicated that, whilst teachers possessed extensive theoretical knowledge of CLT, its practical application was constrained by inadequate facilities and an excessive focus on examinations. The study also highlighted persistent deficiencies in learners' vocabulary and grammatical accuracy during speaking activities, underscoring the necessity for the teacher to act as both facilitator and corrective feedback provider.

In a comparable European context, Kasumi (2015) investigated the implementation of a CLT-informed curriculum in Kosovo. An experimental design comparing urban and rural schools revealed that both experimental groups achieved significantly superior results relative to control groups, demonstrating the generalisability of CLT's benefits across different educational settings.

Furthermore, Rochim and Rukmini (2019) conducted a qualitative descriptive study in Indonesia to analyse components of communicative competence. Their findings revealed that whilst most participant utterances were pragmatically appropriate and coherent, they often contained syntactic and morphological inaccuracies, albeit without hindering meaning. Participants effectively employed achievement strategies to maintain conversation flow, indicating strengths in discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies, yet revealing a pronounced need for enhanced grammatical competence.

Additionally, Yede (2020) carried out a comparative study in Nigeria, pitting traditional methods against CLT. Post-intervention proficiency tests demonstrated that the control group, taught via traditional methods, exhibited low linguistic performance, whereas the experimental group showed significant improvements in communicative tasks. This underscores the limitations of traditional approaches in fostering the requisite communicative competence for secondary-level ESL learners.

In Rwanda, Adrien and Andala (2024) employed descriptive and correlational designs to explore the relationship between CLT and oral skills. Their results indicated that 88% of respondents reported a strong positive impact, concluding that task-based, collaborative, and interactive activities such as discussions, debates, and role-plays—significantly enhance speaking proficiency.

Conversely, a study within Lesotho by Nkhi and Lebona (2023) utilised a qualitative case-study approach, incorporating lecturer interviews, student focus groups, and classroom observations. Findings indicated that large class sizes compelled lecturers to rely on traditional, teacher-centred methods that inhibit communicative practice. learners reported low motivation and high anxiety, exacerbated by a lack of interactive, exposure-rich activities. Consequently, the study recommended a balanced approach that integrates both fluency and accuracy activities to develop discourse, linguistic, interactional, and strategic competencies.

In summary, the collective evidence robustly supports the efficacy of CLT in enhancing speaking proficiency across varied global contexts. However, optimal implementation requires addressing contextual constraints such as class size, exam pressures, and resource limitations and adopting an integrated approach that does not neglect grammatical accuracy whilst promoting communicative fluency.

#### 2.5 Chapter summary

In conclusion, this chapter has synthesised the principal theoretical, conceptual, and empirical literature pertaining to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its role in fostering oral proficiency. Whilst the extant body of research underscores the considerable efficacy and multifaceted benefits of CLT methodologies, it concurrently brings to light significant challenges inherent in its implementation, particularly from the learner's perspective. Moreover, a conspicuous gap exists within the empirical literature specific to the educational context of Lesotho. It is this identified lacuna that substantiates and necessitates the present investigation.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework underpinning the present study. It commences by articulating the research paradigm that informs the investigation, subsequently elucidating the selected research approach and design. Furthermore, the chapter specifies the study population and expounds upon the sampling techniques employed to derive a representative sample. A detailed description of the data collection methods and procedures is then furnished, followed by an explanation of the techniques utilised for data analysis. Finally, the discussion concludes with a thorough examination of the ethical considerations that were rigorously observed throughout all phases of the research process.

#### 3.2 Research paradigm

##### *3.2.1 Pragmatism paradigm*

This chapter illustrates the methodological framework guiding the present investigation. It commences by articulating the research paradigm that informs the study, subsequently elucidating the selected research approach and design. A paradigm constitutes a fundamental belief system and theoretical framework that encompasses core assumptions regarding ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Walsh, 2023). In essence, it provides a lens through which reality is understood and investigated, thereby determining how research data are generated, analysed, and interpreted (Nicolas, 2024). These components are interrelated: ontology concerns the nature of reality, epistemology addresses how knowledge is acquired, and methodology denotes the specific research practices shaped by these underlying philosophical assumptions (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019).

Within the context of this study, pragmatism was deemed the most appropriate paradigm. This selection is justified by the research aim to explore the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on speaking proficiency—an objective that necessitates a flexible, problem-oriented approach to yield insightful conclusions. Originating from the works of scholars such as C.S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey (Cherryholmes, 1992), pragmatism emphasises practical problem-solving and action-oriented enquiry, prioritising utility and effectiveness over absolute truth (Rashid, 2023). For pragmatists, truth is not static but evolves through experience and the continual testing of ideas (Creswell, 2009). Accordingly, this study seeks not merely to

examine CLT in theoretical terms but to evaluate its practical efficacy in enhancing learners' oral competence within authentic classroom settings.

Pragmatism posits that reality exists along a continuum between interpretivism and positivism (Neupane, 2024). Positivism, which aligns with the natural sciences, investigates social phenomena through objective, observable, and controllable methods (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). In this study, elements of a positivist approach are incorporated through the measurement of learner performance before and after the implementation of CLT, using quantifiable instruments such as oral assessments. Conversely, interpretivism emphasises subjective meaning and contextual understanding, which aligns with the aim of comprehending learners' experiences and perceptions of CLT methodologies. To capture this richness, qualitative tools including focus group interviews and classroom observations are employed to generate descriptive, nuanced data.

A key tenet of pragmatism is its advocacy for mixed-methods research, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, pragmatism asserts that theory and practice are mutually reinforcing (Weaver, 2025). Thus, the theoretical principles of CLT are examined through their practical application, assessing how effectively they translate into tangible improvements in speaking proficiency. This paradigm also emphasises experiential learning as the foundation of knowledge acquisition (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). In accordance with this view, CLT facilitates active, practical engagement through tasks such as role-plays and group discussions, thereby fostering the development of communicative competence via real-life problem-solving and interaction.

In summary, the pragmatic paradigm offers a robust philosophical and methodological foundation for this study, enabling a holistic investigation into the practical impact of CLT on speaking skills while accommodating both objective measurement and subjective interpretation of educational experiences.

### 3.3 Research approach

#### 3.3.1 *Mixed-methods approach*

The philosophical paradigm underpinning this study inherently accommodates both quantitative and qualitative approaches; consequently, a mixed-methods research design was deemed most appropriate. Creswell (2009) delineates the mixed-methods approach as a methodological framework that integrates

qualitative and quantitative techniques within a single investigation to furnish a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. This synergistic approach enables the researcher to capitalise on the distinct strengths of both numerical and descriptive data (Creswell, 2014). Within the context of this inquiry, this design facilitated a multifaceted examination of CLT's impact on oral proficiency by effectively amalgamating statistical evidence with rich, contextual insights into learners' subjective experiences and perceptions.

To objectively measure the impact of CLT on learners' speaking proficiency, quantitative data were collected through a pre-test and post-test mechanism, which assessed oral competencies both prior to and following the instructional intervention. This assessment took an oral form and was evaluated utilising a standardised scoring rubric focused on key linguistic dimensions, including fluency, grammatical accuracy, lexical resource, and coherence. Furthermore, quantitative data were garnered through systematic classroom observations, wherein learners' behavioural engagement and performance were meticulously documented during the implementation of CLT strategies. These observations furnished a direct view of pedagogical practices in situ, elucidating the types of activities that most effectively engaged learners and characterising the nature of peer and teacher interactions during communicative tasks.

Conversely, on the qualitative side, focus group interviews were employed to garner in-depth insights into learners' personal experiences with CLT. These sessions explored participants' perceptions, affective responses, and any challenges encountered throughout the implementation process. Collectively, these complementary data collection methods provided methodological triangulation, thereby enhancing the robustness and validity of the findings (Bhandari, 2022).

### 3.4 Research design

#### 3.4.1 Explanatory Sequential Design

This study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, a methodological framework wherein quantitative data collection and analysis constitutes the initial phase, subsequently followed by a qualitative phase designed to elucidate and elaborate upon the quantitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach was deemed particularly suitable as it facilitates a structured and logical investigative flow: the quantitative data establishes foundational patterns concerning the research problem, while the subsequent qualitative data provides deeper, contextual insights into these emergent patterns (Creswell, 2009).

The quantitative phase employed a quasi-experimental one-group pre-test/post-test design with matched scores. Grade 9 learners participated in a four-week instructional intervention utilising CLT techniques. This design was implemented to determine whether the CLT treatment yielded

measurable improvements in learners' speaking proficiency. Quantitative data were consequently collected through pre- and post-intervention oral tests, thereby enabling a direct statistical comparison of speaking performance.

Conversely, the qualitative phase generated descriptive data through systematic classroom observations and semi-structured focus group interviews. Throughout the intervention, learner engagement and performance during CLT activities were meticulously observed. Upon its conclusion, focus group interviews were conducted to garner richer insights into the learners' subjective experiences and their perceptions of the CLT strategies employed.

### 3.5 Population

In research methodology, the population denotes the entire group of individuals, items, or data about which the researcher intends to draw conclusions (Bhandari, 2020). The target population for this study comprised all Grade 9 English Second Language (ESL) learners within the Maseru district. As Shukla (2020) maintains, investigating an entire population is frequently impractical due to constraints of time, resources, and accessibility; it is therefore methodologically sound to select a representative subset, known as a sample. This specific population was selected on the premise that learners at this level are expected to have attained a sufficient degree of speaking proficiency to express themselves in English with relative ease.

### 3.6 Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample is defined as a subset of a population selected for inclusion in a study (Cohen et al., 2018). Given the practical impossibility of collecting data from every member of a large population, researchers select a smaller, representative group (Dawson, 2007). In this instance, a single intact class of 26 Grade 9 ESL learners was selected to represent the broader population of Grade 9 learners in Maseru's secondary schools. A sampling technique refers to the specific strategy used to select these individuals from the population (McCombes, 2019).

Sampling techniques are broadly categorised as either probability or non-probability sampling (Hassan, 2024). This study employed a non-probability approach, utilising a combination of convenience and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling involves selecting participants based on their accessibility (Nikolopoulou, 2023); accordingly, a school within easy reach in Maseru was selected. Subsequently, purposive sampling was applied to choose participants based on the specific characteristic of their speaking proficiency level, which was assumed to be approximately

equivalent across the group and aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

### 3.7 Data Generation Methods and Instruments

Research instruments are the structured tools utilised to generate and collect empirical data in a systematic manner, thereby enabling subsequent analysis and the drawing of conclusions (Clark & Creswell, 2015). The present study employed tests, observations, and focus group interviews for this purpose.

#### 3.7.1 *Pre-test and Post-test*

Tests are standardised procedures designed to measure specific variables, such as skills, abilities, or knowledge (Cohen et al., 2007). To address the primary research question, an oral test was administered on two occasions: once prior to the intervention (pre-test) and once following its conclusion (post-test). The scores derived from these instruments were used to measure any significant change in speaking proficiency attributable to the CLT intervention. A pre-test specifically serves as a baseline assessment to establish participants' knowledge, beliefs, or abilities before an intervention is introduced (Waltz et al., 2023).

The theoretical framework of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) underpins this assessment. This framework posits that communicative competence comprises four principal components: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. These dimensions informed the development of an analytic scoring rubric used to assess specific speaking skills, including fluency, grammatical accuracy, contextual appropriateness, use of non-verbal cues, and coherence. An analytic rubric is an assessment tool that delineates relevant performance criteria and provides detailed descriptions of various performance levels, thereby facilitating the assignment of scores based on observed learner performance (McMillan, 2020).

#### 3.7.2 *Observations*

According to McMillan (2020), observational methods enable researchers to gather open-ended, firsthand information by systematically monitoring people and places within a research site. To this end, researchers employ observation guides to meticulously record, analyse, and interpret behaviours, events, or conditions as they manifest in their natural setting (Clapp, 2025). This study utilised participatory observation, a methodological approach wherein the researcher actively engages within a specific social environment to closely observe participants' behaviours,

interactions, and practices. This technique is particularly advantageous for investigations aiming to garner profound insights into the lived experiences of individuals or communities within their authentic context (George, 2023).

A classroom observation guide, with prerequisite themes to be observed was deployed during CLT lessons. This instrument provided a general thematic framework to direct the observation whilst simultaneously permitting flexibility and adaptation in response to emergent events (Nel, 2020). Consequently, to address the second research question, learners were observed as they engaged in CLT speaking activities, thereby facilitating an examination of how they utilise language within simulated real-life contexts. The observation guide functioned as a targeted inventory of desired behaviours, comprising criteria such as grammatical accuracy, contextual appropriateness, coherence, demonstration of confidence, participation, and collaboration.

#### *3.7.3 Post-test*

A post-test constitutes an assessment administered subsequent to an intervention to measure what participants have learned or how their capabilities have evolved as a direct result of the treatment (Waltz et al., 2023). Within the framework of this study, a post-test was conducted following the CLT intervention. The resultant scores were then rigorously compared to the pre-test results to ascertain whether a statistically significant change in speaking proficiency had occurred, thereby evaluating the efficacy of the CLT strategies employed.

#### *3.7.4 Focus Group Interviews*

As defined by Lune and Berg (2018), an interview may be characterised as “a conversation with purpose”; furthermore, Kvale (2011) elaborates that its fundamental aim is to comprehend the world from the subjective perspective of the interviewee. Focus group interviews represent a qualitative data generation technique wherein a researcher facilitates a discussion with a small group of participants to collect a diverse array of insights. Such groups typically comprise four to ten members, a size contingent upon the overall sample (McMahon, 2024).

To address the third research question, a semi-structured interview protocol was implemented to elicit insights from Grade 9 learners regarding their experiences with CLT techniques. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative instrument that incorporates both predetermined questions and the flexibility to pursue emergent themes based on participants' responses (Salomão, 2023). The

open-ended nature of these questions was designed to elicit rich, descriptive data, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the participants' subjective experiences.

### 3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity denotes the degree to which a research instrument or study accurately measures the specific construct it purports to measure, thereby reflecting the authenticity and accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014). To ensure content validity, that is, the extent to which the instruments comprehensively cover the domain of interest, the assessment tools were submitted to two English language specialists for review. Their evaluation confirmed the instruments' appropriateness and capacity to capture the intended phenomena, thereby bolstering the overall validity of the study. Furthermore, methodological triangulation was employed through the use of tests, observations, and focus group interviews. According to Bhandari (2022), utilising multiple data sources in this manner enhances the accuracy and credibility of the collected data.

In addition, reliability refers to the consistency, stability, and reproducibility of a measurement tool or research method over time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A reliable instrument yields consistent results under consistent conditions, irrespective of when it is administered or by whom. This study employed a test-retest reliability method to establish the consistency of its instrument. This procedure entails administering the same test to the same cohort of participants on two separate occasions. The scores from both administrations are subsequently compared; a strong correlation between them indicates that the test is reliable and produces stable results, assuming the underlying construct being measured remains unchanged (Hassan, 2024).

### 3.9 Data Collection Procedures

The following procedures delineate the systematic implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) techniques within the classroom to experimentally ascertain their impact on the development of learners' speaking skills. This intervention was conducted over a four-week period, comprising four hourly lessons per week, all scheduled during designated study periods.

Firstly, during the initial week, a pre-test (oral proficiency assessment) was administered to establish a baseline measure of learners' speaking competency prior to the introduction of the treatment. As Cohen et al. (2007) affirm, a pre-test is designed to ascertain whether participants possess the essential prerequisites, in terms of knowledge and skills, to commence a specific instructional programme.

Subsequently, the intervention phase was initiated within an experimental framework to examine the efficacy of CLT techniques. Learners engaged in a series of communicative activities, including debates, storytelling, interviews, role-plays, and picture descriptions. Their performance during these tasks was systematically monitored using an observation guide specifically designed to capture targeted language skills.

Following the four-week implementation period, a post-test identical in form to the pre-test was administered to evaluate the treatment's impact. According to Cohen et al. (2007), a post-test serves as a critical measure of achievement and intervention effectiveness when analysed in conjunction with pre-test results.

Finally, to explore learners' subjective experiences and perceptions of the CLT methodologies, semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted. This qualitative instrument was selected to stimulate rich discussion and shared reflection among participants, thereby yielding deeper insights into their engagement with, and responses to, the CLT activities. The open-ended nature of the questions afforded participants the flexibility to elaborate on issues most pertinent to their experiences, such as their comfort levels with various tasks. Upon completion of these procedures, all collected data underwent thorough analysis.

### 3.10 Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis constitutes a systematic process of inspecting, transforming, and modelling data to extract significant insights, inform decision-making, and address specific research problems (Hassan, 2024). It employs statistical, mathematical, and computational techniques to convert raw data into actionable information (Noah, 2025).

The analysis of quantitative data involves two primary methods: descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, as Cohen et al. (2007) affirm, serve to summarise and present data in a manageable form, enabling researchers to organise, visualise, and interpret large datasets meaningfully. In contrast to inferential statistics, which use samples to make generalisations about a population, descriptive statistics focus solely on characterising the data at hand (Hassan, 2024).

In the present study, quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 26. This software facilitated the calculation of means, standard deviations, and p-values. All statistical tests were conducted at a 95% confidence level and a 0.05

significance level. The confidence level serves as a critical benchmark for decision-making, whilst the significance level (or p-value) determines whether observed differences between pre- and post-test scores are statistically significant. A p-value greater than 0.05 indicates no significant difference, whereas a value less than 0.05 denotes a statistically significant change (Bevans, 2023).

Conversely, qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis. This method involves a meticulous examination of the data to identify recurrent themes and patterns of meaning (Caulfield, 2024). Thematic analysis follows two principal approaches: inductive coding, where themes emerge from the data itself, and deductive coding, where analysis is guided by pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Dawson, 2007). This study adopted a hybrid approach: data from observations were analysed deductively, whilst data from focus group interviews were analysed inductively, following the six-phase procedure outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarisation, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition and naming, and report writing.

#### *3.10.1 Pre-Post-test Analysis*

A paired-sample t-test was employed to analyse data from the pre- and post-tests. This inferential statistical method is used to compare means from the same group at different times, making it ideal for assessing the impact of an intervention (Bevans, 2023). Its application here allowed for a precise measurement of the extent to which CLT strategies enhanced speaking proficiency.

#### *3.10.2 Observations*

Data from classroom observations were analysed using deductive coding. Themes were pre-established based on the theoretical framework of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), encompassing criteria such as grammatical accuracy, cohesion, coherence, strategic resource use, and contextual appropriateness (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

#### *3.10.3 Focus Group Interviews Analysis*

Data from focus group interviews were analysed inductively, allowing codes and themes to emerge organically from participants' responses rather than being imposed by prior theory (Caulfield, 2024). This approach facilitated an authentic understanding of learners' perceptions and experiences regarding CLT's role in enhancing their speaking skills.

### 3.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are fundamental principles that safeguard participants' rights, dignity, and welfare throughout the research process, thereby ensuring integrity, trust, and credibility (Hassan, 2024). Key measures implemented in this study included:

**Informed Consent:** Participants and their guardians were fully informed of the study's aims, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Participation was voluntary, with the right to withdraw at any time without penalty (Cohen et al., 2007).

**Anonymity:** The identities of all participants were protected by ensuring no personally identifiable information was collected or reported. Participants were referred to using non-identifiable codes (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2) (Cohen et al., 2007).

**Confidentiality:** All data were stored securely, with access restricted to the research team to prevent unauthorised disclosure (Cohen et al., 2007; knbbs-sharer, 2023).

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:** The study adhered strictly to principles of academic honesty. All external sources were properly cited, and the manuscript was screened using Turnitin software to ensure originality and avoid plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional (George & Caulfield, 2022; Lee, 2021).

### 3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated the comprehensive methodological framework employed in this study, encompassing the research paradigm, approach, design, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, procedures, and analytical methods. The stringent ethical protocols observed were also detailed. Collectively, these components provide a rigorous and systematic foundation for investigating the impact of CLT on learners' speaking proficiency, thereby establishing a robust basis for the analysis, presentation, and interpretation of findings in the subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter detailed the methodological framework underpinning this investigation. Conversely, this chapter presents the empirical findings, subsequent analysis, and interpretive discussion of the data obtained through pre- and post-tests, systematic observations, and focus group interviews, each aligned with the specific research questions this study aimed to address. Prior to the analytical process, the audio recordings from the focus group interviews were transcribed verbatim to facilitate a comprehensive and nuanced comprehension of the dataset.

Upon the commencement of the analysis, the quantitative data derived from the pre- and post-tests were analysed utilising SPSS software, version 26. A paired-sample t-test was employed to compare learners' speaking proficiency before and after the pedagogical intervention. Subsequently, the second phase of the analysis delineates the qualitative findings gathered through observations and focus group interviews. These data were subjected to inductive thematic analysis to extract meaningful patterns and emergent themes. A semi-structured observation guide was instrumental in generating descriptive data during classroom observations, which meticulously documented learner performance throughout CLT activities.

The integration of both quantitative and qualitative data types enriches the interpretation and substantiates a more lucid and detailed discussion regarding the efficacy of the CLT approach within the classroom context. The findings are presented in direct alignment with the study's research questions, which are as follows:

1. To what extent does the implementation of CLT strategies enhance learners' speaking proficiency?
2. How do learners perform in speaking activities during the implementation of CLT in the classroom?
3. What are learners' experiences of using CLT techniques in the classroom?

The presentation commences by outlining the demographic information of the research participants. As previously stated, the study cohort consisted of 26 Grade 9 English language learners.

## 4.2 Demographic Information of Participants

Table 1 Participants' demographics

Age group	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
13-14	5	9	14
15-16	7	4	11
17-18	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>

**Table 1** presents the characteristics of all learners in this study. Out of 26 learners, 12 were male while 14 were female. The table also outlines the age distribution of these learners. Among 12 male learners, 5 were between 13 and 14 years old, 7 were between 15 and 16 years old and none were between 17 and 18 years old. In contrast, among 14 female learners, 9 were between 13 and 14 years of age, 4 were between 15 and 16 years and lastly 1 was between 17 and 18 years old.

## 4.3 Quantitative Results

### 4.3.1 *The extent to which the implementation of CLT strategies enhanced learners' speaking proficiency*

To address the first research question, the ensuing results delineate the extent to which the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) strategies enhances learners' speaking proficiency. As discussed in the preceding chapter, a paired-sample t-test was utilised to compare learners' oral performance before and after the pedagogical intervention. The resultant data, derived from learner performance scores on both the pre-test and post-test, facilitated this comparative analysis. Resultantly, key statistical measures including the mean, standard deviation, and significance level have been tabulated in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively.

Employing SPSS version 26, the analysis was conducted at a 95% confidence level and a 0.05 significance level. These parameters, as explicated in the previous chapter, serve as critical benchmarks for determining the degree to which the intervention engendered a statistically significant impact on the variable of interest: namely, learners' speaking proficiency. The ensuing findings thus provide an empirical basis for evaluating the efficacy of CLT strategies in this pedagogical context.

## Pre-post-test results presentation

Table 2 Mean difference on learners' speaking proficiency

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PRE-TEST	12.46	26	2.064	.405
	POST-TEST	14.77	26	2.122	.416

Table 2, presented above, delineates the mean scores and standard deviations pertaining to learner performance at both the pre-test and post-test stages. The results indicate that, at the pre-test stage, learners' speaking proficiency was registered at a significantly low level. However, subsequent to the pedagogical intervention, the post-test results demonstrate a notable improvement in oral proficiency. To be specific, a mean score of  $M=12.46$ , accompanied by a standard deviation of  $SD=2.064$ , was recorded during the initial assessment. Conversely, the post-test assessment yielded a heightened mean score of  $M=14.77$  with a standard deviation of  $SD=2.122$ . This data suggests a discernible advancement in proficiency, quantified by a mean score increase of 2.31 points.

For further clarification regarding the extent to which the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) intervention impacted learners' speaking proficiency, the subsequent table (Table 3) presents the associated statistical significance levels of the observed performance differential. This analysis will facilitate a more robust interpretation of the results, determining whether the recorded improvement is statistically significant.

Table 3 The significance level of learners speaking proficiency after the implementation of CLT

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRE-TEST - POST-TEST	-2.308	1.543	.303	-2.931	-1.684	-7.625	25	.000

The results delineated in Table 3 demonstrate that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) intervention exerted a positively significant impact on learners' speaking proficiency. In accordance with Mark (2020), the output values for 'Sig.' (denoting the p-value) and the 'Lower' and 'Upper' confidence interval bounds are paramount for interpreting these results authoritatively. Mark (2020) further stipulates that a p-value of less than 0.05 provides statistically significant evidence of a measurable difference in the observed behaviour. Moreover, negative values within the confidence interval columns suggest that the mean score was lower during the pre-test phase and subsequently higher at the post-test stage. As evidenced in Table 3, the recorded p-value of 0.000 is indeed substantially below the 0.05 threshold. Similarly, the negative values for both the lower bound (-2.931) and upper bound (-1.684) of the confidence interval further corroborate a statistically significant and positive intervention effect.

Consequently, the findings from this analysis suggest that active engagement in structured speaking activities precipitates a marked improvement in learners' oral performance. This assertion is robustly supported by the convergent data presented in both Tables 1 and 2, which collectively indicate a significant impact attributable to the CLT methodology. Equally important, the analytical scoring rubric employed to assess fluency revealed that, when provided with opportunities for authentic communication, learners demonstrated an enhanced capacity for spoken English. This manifested quantitatively through their improved scores and qualitatively through observed communicative behaviours, such as the ability to paraphrase effectively, employ meaningful gestures, and speak with markedly reduced hesitation and halting. It can therefore be concluded that the integration of CLT strategies within the English language classroom serves to substantially enhance learners' speaking proficiency.

#### 4.4 Qualitative Findings

##### *4.4.1 Learners' performance during CLT speaking activities in the classroom*

The second research question sought to examine how learners perform in speaking activities during the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) within the classroom. To address this objective, a structured observation guide was employed throughout the intervention, enabling the systematic monitoring of learner engagement and performance during communicative tasks. The data presented herein were gathered from four separate observation checklists, each completed during the final lesson of every week. This approach was adopted specifically to track developmental progress and identify potential improvements over the course of the intervention.

The observational criteria were organised around the following predetermined themes, which were derived from the theoretical principles underpinning this study: uses appropriate grammatical structures; uses language appropriately in different contexts; connects ideas clearly (coherence); asks for clarification or uses other communicative means; demonstrates participation and collaboration; and appears confident.

#### *4.4.1.1 Uses appropriate grammatical structures*

Learners' ability to employ appropriate grammatical structures was monitored throughout the lessons to evaluate their proficiency in forming grammatically correct sentences during CLT speaking activities. In the first week of the intervention, learners predominantly relied on basic sentence patterns, frequently omitting auxiliary verbs or misusing verb tenses. Common examples included utterances such as *"He go to shop yesterday"* or *"She don't like apples."* These errors were pervasive and indicated a developing, yet incomplete, grasp of English grammar. Nevertheless, learners were generally able to communicate their intended meanings despite these inaccuracies.

By the second week, grammatical accuracy remained a persistent challenge; however, a slight improvement was observed, particularly in familiar contexts. During the third week, learners demonstrated a more noticeable command of grammar, often self-correcting during speaking activities. Teacher-led corrective feedback was also well received and appeared to facilitate learning. Although errors still occurred, they were less frequent and seldom impeded communication.

In the final week of the intervention, learners exhibited greater confidence and control over grammatical structures during spontaneous speech. A majority used present and past tenses more accurately and began incorporating modal verbs and conjunctions more effectively. For instance, one learner stated during a role-play activity: *"We should bring our college exercise books because the teacher said we are writing a test."* These findings suggest that consistent engagement in communicative tasks supported the gradual development of grammatical competence, even in the absence of explicit grammar instruction.

#### 4.4.1.2 Uses language appropriately in different contexts

The ability to use language appropriately across varying contexts was also closely observed. Initially, during the first week, many learners struggled with register selection. For example, in a role-play involving a student and a principal, several participants used inappropriately casual phrases, reflecting a limited awareness of context-specific language norms.

By the second week, learners began to demonstrate an improved sensitivity to context. In simulated dialogues, such as a restaurant conversation, some learners adopted polite expressions like *“excuse me”* and *“may I have more juice, please?”* Conversely, during informal tasks like peer interviews, language use remained predominantly casual and occasionally inaccurate, indicating that learners were still internalising the distinctions between formal and informal registers.

In the third week, a discernible shift occurred: learners increasingly adapted their register and vocabulary to suit specific communicative situations. During debates, for instance, phrases such as *“I agree with... because...”* and *“in my opi/*

*nion...”* were utilised, reflecting more appropriate discourse strategies. By the fourth week, most participants demonstrated a competent ability to adjust their language according to context. In a job interview role-play, learners used formal phrases such as *“Thank you for your time”* and *“I would like to apply for this position,”* indicating a developed understanding of context-appropriate communication.

#### 4.4.1.3 Connects ideas clearly (coherence)

Learners’ capacity to connect ideas in a clear and logical manner was evaluated throughout the CLT activities. During the first week, responses during tasks such as picture descriptions were often fragmented and disjointed, with ideas presented without clear transitions.

By the second week, modest improvements were observed, particularly in structured tasks like storytelling. Learners began using sequential discourse markers such as *“then,” “after that,”* and *“because”* to link ideas. For example, one learner narrated: *“I wake up, then take a bath, after that I eat my breakfast and go to school.”* This indicated a growing awareness of how to structure connected speech.

In the third week, a majority of learners exhibited greater control in organising their speech coherently. Their responses featured more purposeful transitions and clearer topic development.

For instance, during a paired interview, one learner stated: *“I like weekends because I spend time with my family. My mother cooks for us and we eat delicious food while we watch TV.”* This demonstrated an ability to elaborate on ideas and maintain a logical thread.

By the final week, coherence had improved notably, especially during extended speaking tasks. Learners were better able to structure narratives and arguments, using a wider range of cohesive devices to enhance the clarity and flow of their communication.

#### *4.4.1.4 Asks for clarification or uses other communicative means (strategic competence)*

Strategic competence, observed through learners' ability to employ clarification requests or alternative communicative strategies, was meticulously monitored during speaking activities. In the first week, this skill was demonstrably underdeveloped amongst the majority of learners. When confronted with communication breakdowns or lexical gaps, a significant number either resorted to silence or defaulted to their first language, rather than attempting to negotiate meaning through paraphrasing or requests for assistance. This was frequently evidenced by learners halting mid-utterance and struggling to continue.

However, by the second week, modest progress was noted. A number of learners began to utilise basic strategies such as gestures or simple phrases like “What?” or “Please repeat that” to mitigate misunderstandings, although these approaches remained limited in scope. This shift indicated a growing awareness of the imperative to sustain interaction, even amidst linguistic limitations. During the third week, the application of communication strategies became more proficient as learners increasingly recognised the utility of non-verbal cues in aiding comprehension. By the conclusive fourth week, learners exhibited markedly greater confidence and flexibility in deploying a variety of strategies to facilitate communication. The majority were able to maintain conversational flow by effectively integrating spoken language with gestures, pointing, and facial expressions to convey meaning.

#### *4.4.1.5 Participation and Collaboration*

Initially, during the first week, learner engagement was markedly uneven. Several participants appeared hesitant to contribute actively to group tasks, often relying on more confident peers to lead discussions whilst contributing minimally. Avoidance of speaking was common, and significant imbalances in turn-taking and shared responsibility were evident within groups.

In the second week, a modest improvement in collaborative dynamics was observed. Learners demonstrated an increased willingness to engage with their peers, often by posing questions or explicitly encouraging quieter members to contribute. This emergent sense of shared responsibility represented a positive development from the previous week. The third week witnessed a noticeable enhancement in group collaboration; learners were observed working more cooperatively, negotiating roles effectively, and demonstrating respect for speaking turns. Peer support was frequently evidenced through lexical assistance, particularly when classmates reverted to Sesotho. Consequently, this supportive atmosphere reflected both growing confidence and the collaborative ethos intrinsic to CLT. By the fourth week, participation and collaboration were robust within most groups. Learners consistently engaged in meaningful interactions, demonstrating attentive listening and mutual encouragement. Furthermore, inclusive behaviours such as respectful turn-taking, providing constructive responses, and exhibiting patience with less proficient participants were clearly observable. These interactions not only indicated enhanced social skills but also underscored learners' developing capacity for communicative and cooperative engagement.

#### *4.4.1.6 Appears Confident*

In the initial week of the intervention, the majority of learners exhibited pronounced signs of low self-confidence when speaking. Reluctance to address the class, avoidance of eye contact, and speaking in a low volume were commonplace. Hesitation, frequent pauses, and a dependence on teacher reassurance were particularly prevalent during open discussions or spontaneous speaking tasks.

By the second week, a gradual improvement in learners' willingness to participate was discernible. Although apprehension persisted, a number of learners began to volunteer contributions voluntarily. It was evident that confidence, whilst still fragile, was developing as participants grew more accustomed to the classroom routines and perceived a reduction in peer judgement. During the third week, a greater number of learners began to take initiative in speaking activities. Many demonstrated increased ease in self-expression, with several incorporating humour or personal anecdotes into discussions, behaviours suggestive of greater comfort amongst their peers. Non-verbal indicators, such as improved posture and sustained eye contact, further reflected this growing self-assurance. By the termination of the fourth week, a significant majority of learners appeared notably more confident; they participated actively, with previously reticent individuals

initiating conversations and voicing opinions without prompt. This marked increase in confidence constitutes one of the most salient outcomes of the CLT approach, thereby suggesting that regular immersion in a supportive, communicative environment plays a critical role in ameliorating anxiety and fostering self-assurance in L2 speaking.

#### 4.4.2 Learners' Experiences of Using CLT Techniques in the Classroom

The third research objective sought to explore learners' lived experiences regarding the use of CLT activities within the classroom. To address this, semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted, employing a series of probing questions to elicit detailed responses. Participants conveyed a spectrum of opinions and personal experiences related to the impact of CLT on their speaking proficiency. Through an inductive analytical process, the following thematic categories were derived from their responses:

##### 4.4.2.1 Learners' Feelings about Speaking English

During the focus group sessions, participants were invited to articulate their feelings concerning speaking English in lessons. Consequently, they expressed a diverse range of emotions, spanning from excitement and pride to fear and discomfort. A majority reported positive affective responses, associating effective communication with feelings of joy, excitement, and a sense of accomplishment. Their descriptions frequently employed terms such as "good", "proud", "excited", and "happy", thereby indicating that the act of speaking English was not only enjoyable but also personally fulfilling.

*Participant 1: "I feel good, because I learn a lot."*

*Participant 4: "Excited, Madam, because the activities were fun."*

*Participant 7: "I feel happy madam, because activities such as acting were exciting, I enjoyed performing."*

*Participant 9: "They were fun and made learning more interesting."*

*Participant 5: "I loved that I was enjoying myself and speaking more naturally."*

*Participant 2: "I feel proud of myself that I can speak without fear."*

*Participant 10: "I liked that I could talk freely with my classmates."*

*Participant 12: "I liked that we were all given an opportunity to speak."*

Conversely, a minority of participants described speaking English as an intimidating experience. Their responses further suggested that perceived peer judgement and the pressure of public speaking were significant factors contributing to their anxiety, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

*Participant 3: “Scared, because people are watching me.”*

*Participant 6: “It depends on the activity, but if I have to speak alone in front of the whole class, I get really scared.”*

*Participant 8: “Madam, they made me feel nervous because when we get the grammar wrong, they laugh at us.”*

*Participant 11: “I do not like frequent debates, madam, because some people laugh at us when we speak.”*

In summary, these findings indicate that whilst a majority of participants reported positive affective engagement, underscoring the benefits of enjoyable and participatory CLT activities, a salient minority continue to experience apprehension, primarily driven by sociocultural factors within the classroom environment.

#### *4.4.2.2 Impact of CLT activities on learners’ speaking skills*

When prompted to reflect on the pedagogical efficacy of CLT activities, participants reported substantial improvements across multiple domains of their speaking proficiency and self-confidence. The communicative tasks implemented during the intervention were perceived as highly beneficial in facilitating development in areas such as lexical resource, phonological accuracy, fluency, grammatical range, confidence, and pragmatic appropriacy. The following excerpts from participant responses illustrate these perceived gains:

Regarding lexical expansion, participants noted:

*P7: “Yes, I’ve learned many words.”*

*P1: “The activities helped me learn new words and practice using them when I speak.”*

Furthermore, several participants indicated that the activities contributed to improved pronunciation:

*P10: "I think my pronunciation got better because I listen to other learners say words."*

*P9: "Yes, madam, I improved my pronunciation, and I don't pause as much when I speak now."*

In addition, enhancements in fluency were also reported:

*P8: "They helped me speak faster because I don't pause as much as I used to."*

Similarly, some participants highlighted a growing ability to construct grammatically correct sentences:

*P11: "Yes, I learned how to make proper sentences during the activities."*

Moreover, a significant portion of learners attested to a marked increase in confidence, attributing this development directly to their engagement with CLT activities. Their responses indicated that repeated practice within a fluency-focused environment was instrumental in reducing nervousness and building self-assurance. For instance:

*P3: "The activities helped me be confident when speaking."*

*P2: "yes, now I'm not shy like before and I can speak in class without fear."*

*P6: "At first, I was nervous because I didn't know what to say, but after doing the activities many times, I became more confident."*

Lastly, the contextualisation of language within relatable, school-based scenarios was identified as particularly valuable for pragmatic development:

*P4: "I liked the principal and student role-play that we performed because it helped me learn how to use language in different situations."*

#### *4.4.2.3 The Effect of Peer Collaboration*

During the interviews, participants were also probed on their experiences of peer collaboration during CLT tasks. Consequently, their responses indicated that collaborative work provided a supportive environment for practising and improving oral skills. For the majority, it facilitated easier learning, fostered a sense of shared responsibility, and offered crucial support during

communicative challenges, such as lexical retrieval or difficulties in self-expression. Representative responses include:

*P2: "Working with classmates made it easier because we were all involved in learning together."*

*P3: "It helped me because when I forgot a word, my classmate would help me."*

*P6: "It helped a lot because we corrected each other nicely."*

*P10: "Easy madam, because we were able to help each other during activities."*

However, conversely, not all experiences were uniformly positive. A minority expressed discomfort, particularly when interacting with more proficient peers or in situations where they felt ridiculed, which consequently hindered their full participation:

*P7: "Sometimes it was hard because I felt uncomfortable when speaking with someone who speaks faster than me."*

*P9: "It wasn't easy when some classmates spoke too fast."*

*P12: "Hard, madam because they laugh at us when we speak."*

*P5: "It was harder when they were making noise."*

#### *4.4.2.4 Methodological Preferences: CLT versus Traditional Approaches*

An examination of learners' preferences between CLT and traditional teaching methods revealed a divergence of opinion, suggesting that each approach caters to different affective and cognitive needs. A number of participants expressed a clear preference for CLT activities, citing their practicality and engagement:

*P2: "I prefer CLT activities because they help me speak more and understand how to use English in real life."*

*P5: "Yes, Madam, I prefer these activities because they made it easier to learn English."*

*P4: "I prefer CLT activities because we learn how to speak using real-life situations."*

In contrast, other learners favoured traditional methods, associating them with a greater sense of psychological safety, or expressed a desire for a blended approach:

*P7: "I prefer the normal way of being taught because I don't have to speak in front of the class."*

*P12: "I like traditional methods like reading aloud because they feel safer. I don't feel as nervous when I read from a book."*

*P9: "Yes, madam, I prefer both ways because I also like writing and reading."*

#### *4.4.2.5 Perceived Challenges in CLT Implementation*

Investigation into the challenges associated with CLT activities identified a primary obstacle: the fear of peer judgement. Participants reported significant anxiety about speaking in front of their classmates, driven by a concern over being outperformed or mocked for making errors. This apprehension often inhibited their willingness to participate fully. Illustrative comments include:

*P1: "Madam, standing in front of people and speak."*

*P4: "It was difficult speaking in front of the whole class because they laugh at us."*

*P3: "Yes, sometimes I didn't know the right words to use. I wanted to say something, but it was difficult."*

*P6: "I was frustrated when I made mistakes and others laughed. It made me scared to try again."*

*P10: "I feel scared when I have to answer questions because my sentences might be wrong."*

*P11: "Yes, I feel frustrated when others speak better than me, I feel like I am not good enough".*

#### *4.4.2.6 Suggestions for Improvement*

Participants offered constructive feedback for refining the implementation of CLT activities. Their suggestions primarily centred on four areas: increased preparation time, topic simplification and relevance, adjustments to group dynamics, and modifications to feedback delivery.

Regarding preparation and topics, learners suggested:

*P4: "I would like more time to prepare before speaking so I don't feel rushed."*

*P3: "Some topics were too difficult to talk about..."*

*P7: "I wish we could choose our own topics so we talk about things that interest us."*

*P11: "I would like the teacher to give more examples before we start."*

Concerning group composition, recommendations included:

*P1: "I think smaller groups would help because sometimes big groups are noisy and confusing."*

*P5: "It would help if we did more pair work instead of big group work."*

*P8: "I think it would be better if everyone was forced to talk because some people just sit quietly."*

Pertaining to feedback, learners expressed a preference for:

*P[Anonymous]: "I would prefer if the teacher didn't correct us while we are speaking."  
(Corrections after speaking to maintain flow).*

*P[Anonymous]: "I'd like more feedback from the teacher after we speak." (Detailed post-task feedback).*

#### *4.4.2.7 Overall Perceptions of CLT Activities*

In summary, the majority of learners expressed positively valenced overall perceptions towards CLT methodologies, recognising their value for developing communicative competence despite the associated challenges. Participants highlighted the interactive, engaging, and inclusive nature of these activities, which contrasted favourably with more traditional, teacher-centred approaches.

*P1: "I feel like practicing will make it easier for me to speak English."*

*P3: "These activities made it easier for me to speak in front of the class without being scared."*

*P4: "They are fun and not boring like reading or writing."*

*P5: "In other lessons, only the smart ones answer, but here we all given a chance to talk."*

*P8: "I want more speaking activities because they are fun and I learn more when I talk with my classmates."*

*P12: "The speaking activities make learning English easier. I remember more when I use the language, not just study it."*

Nevertheless, it is important to note that a minority of participants continued to experience affective barriers:

*P11: "I prefer quiet work like reading and writing. Speaking activities make me feel scared."*

*P7: "I get scared to talk sometimes, I would do more if there was less pressure to be correct."*

Thus, in conclusion, whilst CLT activities were broadly appreciated for fostering an interactive and memorable learning environment, these findings underscore the imperative of implementing such strategies within a carefully scaffolded and supportive classroom climate that sensitively addresses learners' affective needs.

#### 4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has delineated and analysed the empirical findings of the study, synthesising data derived from pre- and post-intervention assessments, systematic classroom observations, and semi-structured focus group interviews. The results demonstrate that the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) exerted a positively significant influence on learners' speaking proficiency, principally through the enhancement of their communicative competencies and strategic skills. Notwithstanding certain implementation challenges, which were also identified, the overall outcomes indicate a meaningful pedagogical impact. These empirically-grounded findings will subsequently form the substantive basis for the detailed discussion and broader implications to be elaborated in the ensuing chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The present study investigates the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on the enhancement of speaking proficiency in English as a Second Language (ESL) among Grade 9 learners. The primary objective of this investigation is to ascertain whether the implementation of CLT strategies can significantly improve learners' capacity to utilise language effectively within simulated real-life contexts, thereby facilitating more proficient everyday communicative performance. This chapter critically examines and discusses the empirical findings of the study, situating them within the broader context of existing scholarly literature and evaluating their correspondence with the following research questions:

1. To what extent does the implementation of CLT strategies enhance learners' speaking proficiency?
2. How do learners perform in speaking activities during the implementation of CLT in the classroom?
3. What are learners' experiences of using CLT techniques in the classroom?

#### 5.2 The extent to which the implementation of CLT strategies enhanced learners' speaking proficiency

The first research question sought to ascertain the extent to which the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) strategies enhanced learners' speaking proficiency. In order to address this question, both a pre-test and a post-test were administered, as outlined in the preceding chapter. The empirical findings demonstrated that learners' speaking proficiency was considerably lower prior to the introduction of the CLT intervention. Specifically, only 13 of the 26 participants attained the minimum passing threshold of 50 per cent in the pre-test, whereas 23 participants achieved this benchmark in the post-test. This outcome indicates that the mean score in the pre-test was markedly low at the outset of the study. These findings corroborate those of Kasumi (2015), who similarly reported that learners' pre-test scores were substantially low in both the experimental and control groups prior to the introduction of CLT.

Furthermore, the study by Faridha (2024) lends further support, observing that learners' weak pre-test performance stemmed from their limited comprehension of short English questions. This was

manifested in their hesitancy, characterised by prolonged silence before responding, or, in some cases, by complete non-response. Complementarily, Fauzi and Ridwan (2025) contend that traditional teaching methods frequently employed in classrooms fail to cultivate communicative dimensions of language learning, such as fluency, accuracy, and the appropriate deployment of language across diverse contexts. Consequently, the diminished speaking proficiency observed in the pre-test of the present study may be reasonably attributed to the inadequacies inherent in such conventional pedagogical practices.

By contrast, the post-test results exhibited a substantial improvement across a range of speaking components, including fluency, coherence, and grammatical accuracy. This marked progress underscores the efficacy of CLT in fostering enhanced oral performance. These findings are consonant with those of Kasumi (2015) and Ho (2020), both of whom documented significant post-intervention improvements in learners' speaking proficiency following the adoption of CLT strategies. In a similar vein, Faridha (2024) reported that post-test mean scores exceeded those of the pre-test, thereby providing further empirical confirmation of the positive effect of CLT in augmenting learners' speaking skills.

In summation, the comparative analysis of the pre-test and post-test mean scores reveals a discernible and statistically significant improvement in learners' speaking proficiency. The results of the paired t-test confirm that there were significant differences across the means of each assessed component, thereby validating the sustained progress achieved by learners throughout the intervention period.

### 5.3 Learners' performance in speaking activities during the implementation of CLT in the classroom

To address the second research question, learners were systematically observed as they participated in a range of activities throughout the implementation of the CLT intervention. Observational data were collected at the end of each week in order to monitor and document incremental progress. At the outset, it became apparent that the majority of learners encountered considerable difficulties in adapting to the new instructional approach. Nevertheless, as the intervention unfolded, learners gradually developed the capacity to align with the pedagogical expectations and to engage more confidently with the communicative tasks.

The findings revealed that learners demonstrated discernible progress in their grammatical competence and lexical repertoire during spontaneous speech. For instance, they increasingly employed present and past tenses with greater accuracy, while also making more effective use of modal verbs and conjunctions, notwithstanding the persistence of occasional errors. Importantly, such errors were infrequent and did not significantly impede communication. These results resonate with the findings of Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019), who observed modest yet tangible improvement in learners' grammatical competence, albeit with overall proficiency remaining relatively low.

Collectively, these gains suggest that sustained participation in communicative tasks can facilitate grammatical development, even in the absence of explicit grammar-focused instruction. This interpretation aligns with Salam and Luksfinanto (2024), who emphasised that although learners often appear to excel in communicative tasks, they may continue to struggle with complex grammatical structures such as verb conjugations and sentence formation. It may therefore be inferred that the integration of CLT with explicit grammar instruction could yield a more balanced advancement in both fluency and accuracy.

Supporting this position, Qasserras (2023) asserts that explicit grammar instruction can complement CLT strategies by strengthening learners' comprehension of grammatical structures. Similarly, the theory of communicative competence recognises grammar as an indispensable component of effective communication, whilst underscoring that grammatical knowledge must operate in concert with other competences for authentic language use to occur (Lillis, 2020).

In relation to learners' pragmatic competence, the observations revealed a steady improvement in their ability to deploy language appropriately across different contexts. Through repeated engagement with CLT activities, learners acquired the capacity to employ suitable jargon in varied communicative situations. This finding corroborates Toro et al. (2019), who highlighted the role of CLT's learner-centred orientation in cultivating autonomy and enabling learners to apply their skills flexibly. Similarly, Triwibowo (2023) reported that learners experienced enhanced confidence in using English independently in real-life contexts beyond the classroom. In keeping with the theory of communicative competence, Pica (1988) emphasises that effective

communication depends not only on the speaker's production but equally on the listener's interpretative capacity within a given situational frame.

The findings further demonstrated that, towards the latter stages of the intervention, learners exhibited notable improvement in structuring their oral discourse with coherence and cohesion. Their spoken responses evidenced logical progression, topical development, and more deliberate use of transitional markers. For instance, learners were increasingly capable of expanding on central ideas whilst maintaining a consistent thematic thread throughout extended utterances. These outcomes correspond with Kawashima (2019), who found that pre-task planning positively influences speaking performance, particularly in retelling tasks, by promoting coherence and reducing anxiety. From a theoretical perspective, Canale and Swain (2010) underline that coherence and cohesion constitute key principles of communicative competence, ensuring that messages are logically organised and intelligible to interlocutors.

By the conclusion of the intervention, learners had also developed a wider repertoire of communication strategies. They displayed enhanced confidence and adaptability by effectively combining verbal expressions with paralinguistic cues such as gestures and facial expressions to maintain conversational flow and repair breakdowns in understanding. This marked a departure from their earlier reliance on limited linguistic resources, indicating greater strategic awareness and communicative resilience. Such findings are consistent with Ho (2020), who reported that learners demonstrated heightened sensitivity to their interlocutors' comprehension and employed strategies such as repetition requests to sustain interaction. Similarly, Alem (2020) observes that learners often resort to paraphrasing or non-verbal strategies when lexical retrieval poses difficulties. Complementarily, Manza (2018) identified gestures as salient markers of communicative gaps, further illustrating how learners compensate for linguistic limitations.

Another salient outcome was the strengthening of group collaboration. Learners consistently engaged in cooperative exchanges characterised by attentive listening, equitable turn-taking, and mutual scaffolding. Notably, they provided encouragement and assistance to peers experiencing communicative challenges, thereby fostering a classroom ethos of solidarity and collective progress. Such findings underscore the social dimension of communicative competence and reaffirm the capacity of CLT to promote collaborative learning. Salam and Luksfinanto (2024)

similarly observed that CLT enhances learner engagement and interaction, while Hakami (2025) reported that role-plays, group discussions, and interactive tasks generated high levels of participation compared with traditional approaches.

Finally, learners' confidence levels demonstrated marked growth throughout the intervention. They exhibited increased willingness to experiment with new linguistic forms and to engage in oral tasks without apprehension. This trajectory suggests that sustained exposure to CLT activities within a supportive learning environment plays a critical role in bolstering self-efficacy in spoken English. These findings concur with Hakami (2025), who observed that CLT participants reported significant improvements in confidence, particularly valuing its emphasis on oral communication and role-playing. In a similar vein, Nisha (2024) highlights learners' perception that CLT encouraged them to take risks and to explore novel modes of expression. By contrast, Lucha and Berhanu (2015) documented markedly lower levels of learner confidence under more traditional pedagogical conditions, wherein learners were reluctant to share their views openly.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the CLT intervention facilitated progressive improvements in grammar, vocabulary, coherence, pragmatic use of language, strategic competence, collaborative engagement, and learner confidence. The results thereby underscore the multidimensional benefits of CLT, particularly when complemented with explicit grammar instruction, in enhancing both the linguistic and affective domains of learners' speaking proficiency.

#### 5.4 Learners' experiences of using CLT techniques in the classroom

This section presents a discussion of the findings generated from the focus group interview, thereby addressing the third research question, which sought to investigate learners' lived experiences of using CLT techniques in the classroom. For clarity and analytical rigour, the discussion is organised thematically, with each theme interrogated in relation to the perspectives voiced by participants and situated within relevant scholarly literature.

At the affective level, the findings revealed that participants generally associated CLT sessions with positive emotions when speaking English. Learners described their experiences with terms such as "*good*," "*proud*," and "*excited*," signalling that the practice of English within interactive

contexts was not only enjoyable but also personally rewarding. These outcomes are consistent with Mon (2019), who found that participants greatly appreciated the interactive and playful nature of CLT activities, which encouraged enjoyment and engagement. In a similar vein, learners in the present study reported that participation in group discussions afforded opportunities to engage actively and to consider multiple perspectives, thereby enriching their learning experience.

Nevertheless, despite the predominance of positive emotions, a minority of learners expressed feelings of intimidation. Contributory factors included fear of peer judgement and the anxiety associated with speaking in front of the class. Comparable findings were reported by Murad and Jalambo (2019), whose participants identified language anxiety and shyness as significant barriers to oral participation, with nearly half reporting feelings of embarrassment that inhibited their engagement.

Similarly, Lucha and Berhanu (2015) observed that learners often experienced fear and reticence when required to communicate in English, even with their peers. In addition, Zhang and Zhong (2012) documented learners' apprehension about being perceived as "foolish" by classmates, further corroborating the role of peer evaluation in shaping negative emotions. Overall, while a minority reported fear, the majority associated CLT activities with excitement and meaningful participation. This supports earlier findings by Ahmad and Rao (2012), Albahri et al. (2018), and Jafari (2015), who collectively emphasised that CLT cultivates positive attitudes towards English learning by strengthening communication skills and building learners' confidence.

Beyond affective responses, participants also reported that CLT activities contributed tangibly to linguistic development. Learners noted improvements in vocabulary expansion, pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical accuracy. These observations align with Zhang (2023), who confirmed that engagement in authentic tasks such as role-plays prompted learners to apply appropriate grammatical structures with greater confidence. Similarly, Mangaleswaran and Aziz (2019) found modest gains in learners' grammatical competence, while Ho (2020) reported heightened metalinguistic awareness, with learners acknowledging progress in vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Consistent with these accounts, the present study revealed that participants became more fluent during CLT sessions, speaking faster, pausing less, and sustaining conversation with greater ease. These findings are reinforced by Salam and Luksfinanto (2024), who observed

enhanced fluency and participation among learners exposed to CLT, as well as by Wathawatthana et al. (2025) and Mukhlas and Thayyib (2025), who documented significant gains in fluency and confidence resulting from role-plays and interactive speaking tasks.

A further theme emerging from the data concerned peer collaboration. The majority of participants characterised group work as supportive, noting that it provided greater opportunities for practice, promoted shared responsibility, and facilitated learning through cooperation. Such findings echo Datugan (2025), who highlighted learners' appreciation of peer and teacher interaction in CLT activities, as well as Triwibowo (2023), who emphasised CLT's capacity to foster an interactive classroom environment conducive to free participation. However, some learners described collaboration less positively, particularly when paired with faster peers or when laughter and disruptive noise caused discomfort. Elhawary and Hargreaves (2023) similarly found that peer interactions could exacerbate anxiety when learners felt exposed to ridicule. These mixed perceptions suggest that peer collaboration, although broadly beneficial, is contingent upon a supportive classroom climate and the sensitivity with which groupings are organised.

In relation to pedagogical preferences, participants expressed divergent views when comparing CLT with more traditional methods. A considerable number favoured CLT, perceiving it as engaging, practical, and enjoyable, particularly because it allowed them to use English in real-life communicative contexts. These findings are supported by Mansouri et al. (2019), who reported learners' preference for direct exposure to authentic oral communication, and by Mon (2019), who noted that learners expressed disinterest in traditional grammar drills and instead preferred interactive, game-like activities. Conversely, a minority indicated a preference for traditional approaches, which they perceived as safer and less pressurised, particularly in contexts where they were not required to speak before their peers. This mirrors Akramy et al. (2022), who argued that the grammar translation method not only supports grammatical knowledge but also fosters confidence in speaking. Several participants suggested a blended approach, advocating for a curriculum that integrates CLT activities with structured grammar instruction. This perspective is corroborated by Hakami (2025) and Lucha and Berhanu (2015), who noted learners' preference for combining oral practice with grammar-focused tasks.

Despite the overall enthusiasm for CLT, participants highlighted a range of challenges. Prominent among these were nervousness, performance anxiety, and the frustration of making mistakes under peer scrutiny. Such challenges are consistent with Wathawatthana et al. (2025), who reported shyness and self-consciousness as significant barriers. Participants also noted difficulties retrieving appropriate vocabulary, understanding instructions, and coping with disruptive group dynamics such as dominance by outspoken peers or excessive classroom noise. These obstacles underscore the extent to which contextual factors can impede the effectiveness of CLT activities.

Learners also proposed constructive recommendations to enhance the efficacy of CLT. These included allocating more preparation time before speaking tasks, reducing group sizes, and assigning peers more sensitively to foster trust and minimise anxiety. Elhawary and Hargreaves (2023) similarly argued that carefully managed pair work reduces anxiety and promotes connectedness within the classroom community. Importantly, learners also expressed preferences regarding teacher feedback, advocating for delayed correction rather than immediate interruption, which they perceived as discouraging and disruptive to their confidence. This concern resonates with Lucha and Berhanu (2015), who found that frequent corrective interruptions dissuaded learners from participating in subsequent tasks.

In conclusion, learners' perceptions of CLT were predominantly positive, with most participants describing CLT activities as enjoyable, interactive, and engaging in comparison to conventional methods. These activities were regarded as more effective in supporting oral communication, enhancing confidence, and reducing monotony through active participation. At the same time, however, some learners continued to experience anxiety, fear of judgement, and frustration over mistakes, underscoring the affective barriers that can constrain full engagement. Overall, these findings highlight the potential of CLT to create inclusive, interactive, and supportive learning environments, while simultaneously pointing to the need for sensitive implementation, balanced integration with explicit instruction, and careful attention to learners' emotional and social needs.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The overarching aim of this study was to investigate the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on the speaking proficiency of Grade 9 learners of English as a second language. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of communicative competence and employing a mixed-methods research design, the study critically examined the extent to which CLT could enhance learners' grammatical accuracy, fluency, and confidence.

The findings demonstrated that CLT had a significant and positive effect on learners' speaking performance. Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests revealed marked improvements in fluency, coherence, and grammatical accuracy, while qualitative evidence drawn from classroom observations confirmed that learners became more engaged, collaborative, and confident when participating in debates, role-plays, and interactive discussions. Focus group interviews further corroborated these results, indicating that learners perceived CLT as both motivating and enjoyable, particularly because it reduced their anxiety and provided opportunities for authentic oral practice.

Taken together, these findings underscore the pedagogical value of CLT as an approach that moves beyond traditional grammar-centred instruction, positioning oral communication at the heart of language learning. In the context of Lesotho, where communicative competence is often neglected in favour of reading and writing, this study provides compelling evidence that CLT can play a transformative role in improving learners' speaking proficiency.

## 5.6 Recommendations

In light of the evidence presented, several recommendations are advanced for teachers, learners, curriculum developers, and policymakers:

### **For Teachers**

Teachers should systematically adopt CLT as a core instructional strategy, engaging learners in activities such as debates, role-plays, and storytelling that promote fluency, interaction, and confidence. They should endeavour to cultivate inclusive, supportive, and non-judgemental classroom environments that reduce learner anxiety and encourage risk-taking in oral communication.

A judicious balance should be maintained between fluency and grammatical accuracy by integrating CLT with explicit grammar instruction to ensure comprehensive language development.

### **For Learners**

Learners should be encouraged to extend their communicative practice beyond the classroom through peer discussions, English clubs, and participation in authentic speaking opportunities. They should be supported in building self-confidence by normalising error-making as an inherent and valuable part of the language learning process.

### **For Curriculum Developers**

The Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) English syllabus should explicitly integrate oral communication as a central component of teaching and assessment, rather than privileging reading and writing. CLT strategies should be embedded within curriculum guidelines to ensure that speaking proficiency is given sustained and systematic attention across grade levels.

### **For Policymakers**

The Lesotho Education Language Policy (LELP) should incorporate professional development initiatives aimed at equipping teachers with the methodological expertise and resources necessary to implement CLT effectively. Adequate resourcing should be prioritised, including teaching materials and smaller class sizes, to maximise interactive participation. Assessment frameworks should be revised to include oral communication as a key dimension of learner evaluation at secondary level.

### **5.7 Limitations of the Study**

Although this study offers valuable insights into the pedagogical efficacy of CLT, certain limitations warrant acknowledgement. The research was conducted with a relatively small sample drawn from a single school, a deliberate methodological choice that facilitated intensive attention to individual learners during oral activities. However, this limited scope constrains the generalisability of the findings, as outcomes may vary across larger or more diverse educational contexts. Moreover, the four-week intervention period, while sufficient to capture short-term

gains, did not allow for an exploration of the long-term sustainability of improvements in speaking proficiency.

#### 5.8 Possible Areas for Further Research

The findings of this study open several promising avenues for further inquiry. First, future research could investigate how CLT might be effectively integrated with digital platforms and mobile applications, thereby expanding opportunities for oral practice beyond the classroom, particularly in contexts where the first language dominates outside school. Second, longitudinal studies could track the long-term effects of CLT interventions, providing insight into whether improvements in speaking proficiency are sustained over multiple academic years. Third, further investigation is warranted into teacher training, particularly in relation to equipping educators with advanced CLT methodologies and examining the subsequent impact on learner outcomes. Finally, studies might explore differentiated CLT interventions tailored to learners with specific needs, such as those who are shy, anxious, or experience learning difficulties, thereby promoting inclusivity and equity in language learning.

#### 5.9 Reflections on the Study

Conducting this study has been both intellectually rigorous and personally enriching. It has deepened my understanding of the practical application of CLT and highlighted the complexities of implementing oral activities within authentic classroom environments. A key reflection concerns the need to balance research ambitions with practical constraints. While working with a small group allowed for close learner attention and meaningful oral practice, it also underscored the challenges of applying similar interventions in larger classes.

Furthermore, the study reinforced the importance of learner voice in shaping effective pedagogy. Through focus group interviews and observations, it became evident that learners respond positively when granted opportunities to speak, collaborate, and exercise agency over their learning. These insights underscored that language learning extends beyond grammar and vocabulary acquisition to encompass confidence, motivation, and the willingness to take communicative risks.

On a personal level, the research process enhanced my competencies in planning, classroom management, and scholarly inquiry. It also illuminated the need for ongoing professional development, particularly in designing learner-centred activities and managing time within CLT

interventions. Overall, the study has confirmed my conviction in the transformative potential of CLT and has inspired me to pursue further exploration into innovative approaches that can foster communicative competence among learners of English as a second language.

#### 5.10 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the study's findings, conclusions, and implications regarding the impact of CLT on learners' speaking proficiency in English. It addressed learners' improvements during CLT activities and explored learners' experiences and perceptions of using CLT techniques in the classroom, highlighting both positive outcomes and challenges faced by learners during the intervention. The chapter also provided recommendations, acknowledged study limitations, suggested areas for further research, and offered reflections on the researcher's experiences and insights gained from implementing CLT in the classroom.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Introductory letter from the University (Faculty of Education)

**LASED Faculty of Education**  
National University of Lesotho  
P.O. Roma 180  
Lesotho

**Date:** 09 May 2025

**The Principal**  
Sefika High School  
Maseru, Lesotho

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION**

I am writing to you in my capacity as the Acting Head of Department, LASED Faculty of Education, at the National University of Lesotho, to kindly request your permission for one of our Master's students, **Ms. Relebohile Hoody**, to conduct research data collection at Sefika High School.

Ms. Hoody is currently conducting a research study entitled:  
**"Exploring the Impact of Communicative Language Teaching in Enhancing Grade 9 Learners' Speaking Proficiency in English as a Second Language in One Secondary School in Maseru."**

This study forms part of her Master's degree requirements. We respectfully request that she be allowed to engage with Grade 9 learners and relevant staff at your school to collect the necessary data for her research. Please be assured that the study will adhere strictly to ethical research principles, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and minimal disruption to school activities.

We would greatly appreciate your cooperation in supporting our student's academic work. Should you require further details or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact the office of the Acting Head of Department, LASED Faculty of Education, at the National University of Lesotho.

Thank you very much for your attention and support.

Yours faithfully,



**Rasebate Isaac Mokotso**  
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**ORAL TEST**

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**Role-play**

You arrive late to school and you are called to the principal's office.

**Roles:**

Student: Explain why you were late and ask not to get a punishment.

Principal: Ask what happened, express concern, and give advice or consequences.

**Focus:** Explaining, apologizing, asking for understanding, authority tone.

# Oral Test Scoring Rubric

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Fluency	Speaks smoothly with little to no hesitation or pauses.	Some hesitation but generally maintains flow of speech.	Frequent pauses and hesitation disrupt communication.	Halting, broken speech that is hard to follow.
Accuracy (Grammar & Pronunciation)	Almost no errors; speaks clearly and correctly.	Occasional errors that do not interfere with understanding.	Several noticeable errors, meaning sometimes unclear.	Many errors that seriously affect understanding.
Coherence & Organization	Ideas are well organised and logically presented.	Mostly organised; minor lapses in structure.	Some ideas are unclear or poorly connected.	Ideas are disorganised or hard to follow.
Interaction & Communication Strategies	Initiates, responds, paraphrases or uses gestures.	Minor gaps in interaction and communicative strategies.	Struggles to maintain conversation, uses limited communicative strategies.	Rarely engages; needs prompting to speak, no use of communicative strategies
Context	Fully understands the context and responds appropriately.	Shows a good understanding of the context, with minor lapses in formality, tone, or appropriateness.	Partial understanding of the context. Some responses are inappropriate or mismatched.	Little or no awareness of the context. Responses are inappropriate.

Total Score (Out of 20): \_\_\_\_\_

# Classroom Observation Guide

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**Research question 2:** How do learners perform in speaking activities during the implementation of CLT in the classroom?

**Observe learners' engagement and performance.**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Observation criteria

## Notes/ Examples

Uses appropriate **grammatical** structures.

Uses language appropriately in different

**contexts.**

Connects ideas clearly (**coherence**)

Asks for clarification or uses other

communicative Means (strategic competence)

Participation and collaboration

Appears confident

## Focus Group Interview Guide

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**Research question 3:** What are learners' experiences of using CLT techniques in the classroom?

### Questions

1. How do you usually feel about speaking English in class?
2. What kinds of speaking activities have you done in class recently using CLT techniques (e.g., role plays, group discussions)?
3. How did you feel during those activities? Were you nervous, excited, or confident? Why?
4. Did working with classmates help or make it harder to speak English?
5. Do you think these activities helped you improve your speaking? In what way?
6. What did you like most about the CLT activities?
7. Were there any parts you found difficult or frustrating? Why?
8. Do you prefer CLT activities or more traditional teaching methods (like reading aloud or answering questions)? Why?
9. If you could change something about these speaking activities, what would it be?
10. Would you want to do more of these kinds of activities in the future? Why or why not?

## Appendix 5: Similarity index (Turnitin plagiarism checker)



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