

Enhancing Students' Speaking Performance through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the English Matriculation Program

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To cite this article:

Saputri, F., Rosalia, H., Hasrul, & Ratna. (2025). Enhancing Students' Speaking Performance through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the English Matriculation Program. *ENGLISH FRANCA: Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, 9(1 May). Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.29240/ef.v9i1.May.13009>

Abstract. This study addresses the challenge of improving English-speaking skills among Room Division students at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic, crucial for effective communication in hospitality roles. Many students struggle with fluency and confidence due to limited practice and language anxiety. To bridge this gap, the English Matriculation Program (EMP) was developed, integrating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to enhance practical language skills. A pre-experimental design was employed with 60 students, who underwent pre- and post-tests, alongside a questionnaire to gather perceptions of the program's impact. Key CLT elements—social engagement, focus on meaning, and critical thinking—were emphasized, with tasks including role-plays and problem-solving exercises that mimic real-world communication. Structural equation modelling and paired t-tests indicated a significant improvement in speaking performance, with average scores rising from 39.10 to 62.87. Questionnaire results reinforced these findings, with students reporting increased confidence, reduced anxiety, and better fluency. Overall, CLT's practical, student-centred approach effectively enhances English proficiency, preparing students for successful communication in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English-speaking skills, English Matriculation Program (EMP)*

Introduction

The Room Division department in the hospitality industry requires a high level of professional communication skills, as staff members interact closely with guests and manage essential operations such as reception, housekeeping, and front desk management. Effective communication is very profitable in the hotel business because they spend most of their time communicating, as well as directing people at the hotel, giving instructions, developing, training, interviewing, hiring, and firing (Iwara et al., 2020)

For students in programs like the Room Division Study Program, effective English communication is crucial, as many guests are international, and proficiency in English enhances service quality and customer satisfaction. Rahmadana & Pammu (2023) highlighted that speaking skills are vital for students' academic and professional development, yet many vocational and hospitality students face challenges in fluency due to limited real-world practice

Article info:

<http://journal.iaincurup.ac.id/index.php/english>

Received 24 January 2025; Received in revised form 10 July 2025; Accepted 02 March 2025, Available Online 12 May 2025

Published by Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Curup on behalf of ENGLISH FRANCA: Academic Journal of English Language and Education. This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license Copyright (c) 2023 Author

and language anxiety. Zahedpisheh et al. (2017) further noted that restricted vocabulary and lack of speaking opportunities hinder students' professional communication in practical settings.

The Makassar Tourism Polytechnic (MTP), an institution under Indonesia's Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, is committed to preparing students for careers in tourism and hospitality. Through its eight study programs across three departments at the Diploma III and IV levels, MTP focuses on equipping students with the skills needed for a competitive industry. Within hospitality, the Room Division Study Program emphasizes professionalism, cultural sensitivity, and the use of accurate terminology in client-facing roles, where effective communication is key to enhancing guest satisfaction and protecting institutional reputation. (Rahayu, 2020)notes that English is a core subject in vocational higher education, with many institutions also offering other languages like Chinese, Japanese, and French. At MTP, English proficiency is prioritized to meet industry standards, leading to the introduction of an English Matriculation Program that uses the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. Running from September to November 2024, this program supports first-semester students in building the foundational English skills essential for their professional success.

However, there is a lack of focused research on how short-term English Matriculation Programs (EMPs), particularly those designed with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles, impact students in vocational hospitality programs such as Room Division. Most existing studies examine CLT in general classroom settings or over extended instructional periods, leaving a gap in understanding its effectiveness in intensive, preparatory programs tailored to industry-specific communication needs. This study addresses that gap by examining how CLT-based instruction within the EMP influences students' speaking performance in a hospitality context. This research lies in its context-specific approach—investigating the integration of CLT in a pre-sessional EMP at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic—and its emphasis on real-world communication tasks relevant to Room Division roles, offering new insights into how short-term, targeted language programs can support professional readiness.

The English Matriculation Program (EMP) aims to bridge the gap between students' existing language abilities and the demands of the professional world. In this program, students take a pre-test to assess their English knowledge. Following the initial test, they undergo several days of basic English instruction aimed at enhancing their language skills. The program concludes with a post-test to evaluate their progress. The program is designed to equip students with foundational English skills, focusing particularly on listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the context of the tourism and hospitality industries.

This study examines the integration of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the English Matriculation Program (EMP) to enhance students' speaking skills. CLT prioritizes communication and practical language use over memorization and rigid grammar rules. Research by Ghafar (2023) highlights the effectiveness of CLT in improving communicative competence, especially through realistic speaking activities like role-plays and debates, which simulate real-world scenarios and enhance fluency and interaction. Furthermore, Kristiana & Ningsih (2020) CLT fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, crucial for students in customer-oriented fields such as hospitality. This approach is particularly beneficial for students in the Room Division Study Program, who must not only engage in basic conversations but also develop the confidence and competence needed for operational tasks in English. Moreover, Sri Andayani (2022) emphasizes the importance of CLT strategies in English teaching processes, highlighting that effective implementation fosters a more engaging learning environment. Ghafar (2023) also discusses how utilizing CLT methods can significantly reduce anxiety among high school students when speaking English, further supporting its relevance in educational settings.

By incorporating CLT methods like role-plays, discussions, problem-solving tasks, and peer interactions, the EMP can create an immersive learning environment that mirrors the communication challenges in professional settings, as it enables students to develop not only their English language skills but also the social competencies necessary to navigate the complex interpersonal dynamics encountered in the hospitality industry (Mendo-Lázaro et al., 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Students' Speaking Performance in Room Division

Speaking performance in language learning refers to a learner's ability to produce spoken language effectively and appropriately in communication. Masuram & Sripada, (2020) Mentioned that a multifaceted skill that includes not only linguistic accuracy, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, but also fluency, coherence, and the ability to interact in real-time with others in different social contexts. According to Effendi et al., n.d.) Speaking performance reflects both cognitive and sociocultural components. It involves cognitive processes such as memory, attention, and information processing, as well as pragmatic knowledge, which helps learners navigate conversations and adjust their speech according to the context. This definition highlights that speaking performance is not only about the accuracy of speech but also about the ability to manage communication effectively in dynamic and authentic situations.

In addition to linguistic competence, speaking performance is influenced by various internal and external factors. Psychological factors such as language anxiety can negatively impact a learner's performance, reducing their willingness to speak and inhibiting fluent speech production. (Juhana, 2023). Conversely, motivation plays a significant role in encouraging learners to engage in speaking activities, take risks, and participate in conversations without fear of making mistakes. (Altun, 2023). Furthermore, the amount of exposure to the target language and opportunities for practice also greatly impact speaking performance. Learners who are exposed to authentic language use in real-life contexts, such as interacting with native speakers, tend to develop higher fluency and greater comfort with spoken communication. (Juhana, 2023)

The development of speaking performance is also closely tied to interaction and communication opportunities in the classroom. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) and communicative language teaching (CLT) are two instructional approaches that have been shown to significantly enhance speaking performance (Eddie & Aziz, 2020). These approaches emphasize the importance of using language in meaningful, real-world situations. According to (Qasserras, 2023) Interaction hypothesis, meaningful interaction with peers and instructors in communicative tasks helps learners process language more efficiently and gain immediate feedback, which contributes to improved fluency and accuracy. Recent research by (Nggawu & Thao, 2023) Further supports this view, suggesting that tasks that require students to negotiate meaning and work collaboratively in communicative contexts lead to better speaking outcomes, as they encourage learners to move beyond structured language forms and engage in spontaneous, real-world communication.

Additionally, (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020) Speaking performance can be affected by social and cultural factors, such as a learner's understanding of the cultural norms and communicative conventions of the language they are learning. For instance, learners may struggle with speaking performance if they are unfamiliar with the social expectations of interaction in the target language, such as the level of formality or politeness required in different contexts. (Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015). The use of authentic materials, such as films, podcasts, or social media, can provide learners with exposure to these cultural nuances and enhance their ability to communicate effectively in a variety of situations.

In conclusion, speaking performance is a key component of language learning that reflects both linguistic proficiency and the ability to use language fluently and appropriately in communication. A variety of factors—ranging from cognitive abilities and psychological factors like anxiety to exposure to the language and cultural understanding—impact a learner's speaking ability. Approaches like CLT and TBLT, which emphasize interaction and real-world communication, have proven effective in enhancing speaking performance. By fostering opportunities for authentic communication, providing immediate feedback, and reducing anxiety, educators can significantly improve students' speaking abilities, preparing them for more effective language use in both academic and social contexts.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has evolved significantly in recent years, with a focus on enhancing students' speaking skills through interactive and meaningful communication. Recent studies emphasize the importance of engaging learners in authentic language use, where communication is not just about grammatical accuracy but about effectively conveying messages in real-world contexts. For instance, (Effendi et al., n.d.) Highlight that CLT fosters a dynamic learning environment that empowers students to develop their speaking proficiency by participating in communicative tasks such as role-plays and discussions. This approach aligns with the idea that language learning should be a social and interactive endeavour, where students actively negotiate meaning and collaborate with peers, thus improving their fluency and confidence in using the language. Moreover, the integration of CLT within various educational frameworks has shown promising results. Lestari, (2024) Discuss how the implementation of CLT within Indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka framework prioritizes communication as the main goal of language teaching.

This framework encourages student-centred learning and utilizes diverse strategies such as problem-based learning and discovery learning to address challenges like vocabulary limitations and student anxiety. Overall, the contemporary application of CLT reflects its adaptability and relevance in equipping learners with essential communication skills necessary for success in an increasingly interconnected world. Therefore, there are eight crucial characteristics for authentic communicative classroom activities within the CLT framework (Lestari, 2024; Jacobs & Farrell, 2003).

Table 1.

Characteristics of Authentic Communicative Classroom Activities

Characteristics	Description	Classroom activity suggestion
Learner autonomy	This emphasizes the importance of students taking an active role in their learning, where they are more engaged and responsible. It fosters their intrinsic motivation and empowers them to handle more significant aspects of their educational process.	Create opportunities for students to work in small groups or pairs, encourage lifelong reading habits, and use self-assessment tools to help them build confidence in managing their learning.
Social nature of learning	Learning should promote interactive experiences among students in an informal setting, facilitating a collaborative atmosphere.	Implement group-based projects or collaborative learning activities that engage students in meaningful interactions.
Curriculum integration	merges different academic subjects to enrich the learning experience.	Use content-based learning and project-oriented activities that incorporate various subjects.
Focus on meaning	Teaching should prioritize meaningful language use that contributes to long-term language retention and understanding.	Utilize task-based learning and have students engage in journal writing to deepen their exploration of language meaning.
Diversity	Acknowledges that students come from varied backgrounds and may perceive the same information differently.	Apply instructional strategies that cater to multiple intelligences and differentiated learning to address diverse student needs.

Thinking skills	Incorporate creative and critical thinking into lessons to promote higher-order cognitive skills.	Combine lessons that include complex group tasks, project-based learning, and assessments that require higher-order thinking.
Alternative assessment	Assessments should measure fluency, accuracy, and appropriateness in a way that mirrors real-life language use and encourages critical thinking.	Use competency-based learning, task-oriented activities, group or pair writing exercises, and portfolio assessments.
Teachers as co-learners	Encourages teachers to engage in the learning process alongside students, participating and sharing experiences.	Teachers can join in on student activities and use a portfolio for self-reflection and assessment.

Recognizing these factors is essential for educators and policymakers. Such characteristics highlight the importance of context-driven language use, active interaction, and the inclusion of interdisciplinary components. To successfully apply CLT, language instruction should intentionally promote and support these features. Thus, the most suitable characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) for speaking activities can be outlined as follows. First, the social nature of learning is highly relevant, as it emphasizes interaction among students in informal settings. Through collaborative learning and project-based activities, students can practice speaking in a way that enhances their fluency and builds confidence as van den Berg et al., (2024) States that social learning is crucial for cultural transmission and adaptive behaviour. It emphasizes that individual differences in reliance on social learning can evolve based on the unpredictability of its benefits. This flexibility allows students to adjust their learning strategies, which can enhance their collaborative skills and overall learning experiences.

Second, focusing on meaning ensures that language use is meaningful and contextually relevant, aiding long-term retention and natural speaking development. Activities such as task-based learning and journal writing provide students with opportunities to explore language in depth and use it effectively during conversations. Afrida et al., (2019a) Mentioned that meaning-focused instruction aligns with the principles of natural language acquisition, where learners benefit from exposure to comprehensible input in context. This method promotes incidental learning, allowing students to acquire language naturally as they focus on understanding and communication rather than merely on grammatical forms.

Third, integrating thinking skills is crucial for speaking activities that require more complex responses. Encouraging critical and creative thinking through group challenges and project-based tasks helps students articulate their ideas clearly and respond thoughtfully, promoting advanced speaking abilities. Fourth, learner autonomy also plays an essential role, as it motivates students to take responsibility for their learning. This can be achieved through self-assessment and small group discussions, which build confidence and foster independent speaking practice.

English Matriculation Program

In Indonesia, English matriculation programs have become a common approach to address students' varying levels of language proficiency, especially in higher education institutions. According to Afrida et al., (2019b) These programs are designed as preparatory courses for new students, particularly those who may lack the necessary language skills to engage effectively in academic environments where English is used. The goal is to align students' English proficiency with the demands of their specific fields, enabling better comprehension of course material, communication, and participation in academic activities.

The focus of English matriculation in Indonesia varies depending on the institution and program. In fields like tourism, hospitality, and business, the curriculum often includes industry-specific vocabulary and communicative skills needed for workplace scenarios. (Kaptiningrum & Mubarak, 2017). Typically, these programs emphasize fundamental skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, with a particular focus on practical language use.

English matriculation has been tailored to meet the requirements of students in specialised study programmes, such as the Room Division, at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic. This targeted approach is designed to guarantee that the students are not only linguistically proficient but also industry-ready, capable of addressing the communicative requirements of their field. (Studies, 2017). Consequently, the MTP language centre conducts a matriculation programme as a pre-session course with the objective of evaluating students' prior English knowledge and enhancing their foundational English skills (Kaptiningrum & Mubarak, 2017). This investigation concentrates on the objectives and procedures of the EMP to assess this initiative. Furthermore, it collects data on the capabilities of students who are enrolled in this programme for ten meetings and evaluates the factors that either facilitate or impede its execution.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select 60 students from the Room Division Department at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic. These students were chosen specifically because they were enrolled in the English Matriculation Program (EMP), making them ideal participants for evaluating the effectiveness of the program. The selection was based on the participants' direct involvement in the EMP, ensuring that all respondents had similar exposure to the CLT-based intervention and reflected the target population of first-semester hospitality students.

This study investigates the effectiveness of the English Matriculation Program in improving students' speaking performance within the Room Division Study Program, using a combined pre-experimental design and quantitative analysis approach. Specifically, the study integrates pre- and post-test assessments with a structured quantitative questionnaire to comprehensively evaluate the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods on students' English proficiency.

The instruments used in this study consist of two components:

1. **Pre-test and Post-test:** These were used to measure the students' speaking performance before and after the EMP. The assessment focused on five indicators adapted from CEFR-based criteria: *fluency, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and interactive communication*. The scoring rubric was standardized and validated by two English language teaching experts to ensure consistency and objectivity.
2. **Questionnaire:** The questionnaire was designed to assess students' perceptions of the CLT elements applied during the program.

Thus, the research followed a systematic sequence. First, participants completed the pre-test to measure their baseline speaking ability. This was followed by ten sessions of CLT-based instruction, each focused on enhancing communicative competence through tasks aligned with the identified CLT constructs. Instructional strategies included group discussions, simulations, role-plays, and task-based learning activities adapted to real-world Room Division scenarios (e.g., check-in conversations, handling guest complaints).

After the final session, students took a post-test to measure improvement in speaking skills. Simultaneously, the questionnaire was distributed to capture students' perceptions of the instructional methods and their impact. The responses provided insight into how the three

core CLT dimensions supported students' language development within a short-term academic context.

This study employed Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), a statistical approach that enables the simultaneous examination of multiple complex relationships among variables (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019). The analysis was conducted using SmartPLS version 4.0, which provided a robust platform for evaluating the measurement model (reliability, validity) and structural model (hypothesis testing). Additionally, the pre- and post-test scores were analysed using a paired sample t-test (via SPSS v26) to determine whether students' speaking proficiency showed statistically significant improvement after the intervention. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$ to validate any observed gains in performance.

Results and Discussion

Results

Questionnaire

Measurement Model

In this study, several constructs were assessed to evaluate the model's reliability and validity. The data is organized into three main constructs from CLT, namely, *the social nature*, *focusing on meaning*, and *integrating thinking skills* to find out the effectiveness of the *English Matriculation Program*. Each construct includes several indicators that were assessed based on factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extraction (AVE).

Table 2.

Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE	Factor Loading Range
<i>The Social Nature</i>	0.794	0.867	0.620	0.722 – 0.849
<i>Focusing on Meaning</i>	0.889	0.918	0.693	0.707 – 0.873
<i>Integrating Thinking Skills</i>	0.827	0.884	0.656	0.707 – 0.873
<i>English Matriculation Prog.</i>	0.884	0.915	0.684	0.806 – 0.854

The construct *The Social Nature* comprises indicators A1 to A5, reflecting various social aspects in the context studied. Factor loadings range from 0.722 to 0.849, confirming that each indicator contributes effectively. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.794, indicating good internal consistency, and the composite reliability (CR) is 0.867, confirming strong reliability. The average variance extracted (AVE) is 0.620, exceeding the 0.50 threshold and supporting convergent validity.

Focusing on Meaning, with indicators B1 to B5, shows factor loadings between 0.707 and 0.873, demonstrating alignment with the construct. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.889 and CR of 0.918 indicate high reliability. The AVE of 0.693 further supports convergent validity, confirming that the construct captures significant variance in its indicators.

Integrating Thinking Skills includes indicators C1 to C5, with factor loadings from 0.707 to 0.873. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.827, ensuring solid internal consistency, and the CR of

0.884 confirms reliability. An AVE of 0.656 supports convergent validity, showing that more than half of the variance is explained by the construct.

The English Matriculation Program, represented by indicators D1 to D5, has factor loadings ranging from 0.806 to 0.854. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.884, with a CR of 0.915, indicating strong reliability. The AVE is 0.684, demonstrating robust convergent validity.

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

The heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio was used to assess discriminant validity. The HTMT values between each construct pairing are as follows:

Table 3.

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

<i>the social nature</i>	0.927
<i>focusing on meaning</i>	1.020
<i>integrating thinking skills</i>	1.028

The HTMT values for the relationships between *The Social Nature* and *English Matriculation Program* (0.927), *Focusing on Meaning* and *English Matriculation Program* (1.020), and *Integrating Thinking Skills* and *English Matriculation Program* (1.028) exceed the conventional 0.90 threshold. These values, close to or above 1, suggest strong correlations among these constructs. Normally, such high values might indicate issues with discriminant validity, as they imply that the constructs may not be sufficiently distinct. However, in this research, these higher HTMT values are acceptable due to the theoretical underpinning that justifies the interrelatedness of these constructs. For instance, *the Social Nature* and *English Matriculation Program* are conceptually linked in educational settings, as social interactions often play a crucial role in language acquisition and academic integration, explaining the high correlation. Similarly, *focusing on meaning* and *Integrating Thinking Skills* are both critical in educational contexts where understanding and cognitive engagement are emphasized, which likely contributes to their strong association with the *English Matriculation Program*.

Studies in the field support the idea that closely related constructs may show high HTMT values without necessarily compromising the model's validity. For example, Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) argue that HTMT values slightly above the 0.90 threshold can sometimes be acceptable if the constructs are theoretically aligned and if the high correlations contribute meaningfully to the model's explanatory power rather than merely indicating measurement overlap. Additionally, Sarstedt, Hair, and colleagues (2021) note that HTMT values in applied research can be interpreted with flexibility when the constructs are conceptually interdependent. Therefore, while values above 0.90 generally raise concerns regarding discriminant validity, the significant interrelationships observed here between *The Social Nature*, *Focusing on Meaning*, *Integrating Thinking Skills*, and *English Matriculation Program* do not detract from the study's findings but rather highlight the closely connected nature of these constructs within the context of educational outcomes.

Although the HTMT values in this study are high, they are considered acceptable due to the theoretical connections between the constructs. These values underscore the idea that, in educational frameworks, constructs like *The Social Nature*, *Focusing on Meaning*, and *Integrating Thinking Skills* are inherently related to the *English Matriculation Program*, and their close alignment enriches the model by illustrating the interconnected pathways through which these factors influence student outcomes.

Structural estimates (path analysis)

The structural model was evaluated using path analysis to examine relationships between constructs, including *the social nature*, *focusing on meaning*, and *integrating thinking*

skills in relation to the *English Matriculation Program*. The results indicate the following significant relationships:

Table 4.
Structural Estimates (Path Analysis)

	T- Statistics	P- Values	VIF	f^2	R^2
H1: A-> D	5.358	0.000	2.000	0.734	0.645
H2: B -> D	3.385	0.000		0.572	0.944
H3: C -> D	7.226	0.000		0.963	

The structural model analysis reveals significant positive effects among the constructs examined. Specifically, *the Social Nature* demonstrates a positive and significant effect on the *English Matriculation Program* (H1), with a t-statistic of 5.358 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating strong support for this relationship. Similarly, *focusing on Meaning* has a positive and significant impact on the *English Matriculation Program* (H2), as shown by a t-statistic of 3.385 and a p-value of 0.000. Additionally, *Integrating Thinking Skills* positively influences the *English Matriculation Program* (H3), with a t-statistic of 7.226 and a p-value of 0.000, further reinforcing this connection. Since all p-values are below the 0.05 threshold, these findings confirm that each path is statistically significant. This indicates that *The Social Nature*, *Focusing on Meaning*, and *Integrating Thinking Skills* are essential contributors within the research model, emphasizing their importance in shaping outcomes in the *English Matriculation Program*.

Pre-test and Post-test Descriptive Statistics

Table 5.
Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	Pretest	Post- test
Mean	39.10	62.87

Based on the analysis, the descriptive statistics indicate that the average score for the Pretest is 39.10, while the Post-test shows a higher average score of 62.87. This substantial increase suggests that there was a positive effect or improvement between the two measurement points, which could be attributed to the intervention or treatment applied between the pretest and post-test phases.

Table 6.
T-Test Significant

T-Test Significant Paired Differences	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Pretest – Post-test	23.77	- 14.99	51	2.49e-20

In this analysis, each column of the paired-samples t-test results provides important insights. The Paired Samples column identifies the two groups being compared, which in this case are the pre-test and post-test scores. The Mean Difference column shows the average difference between these two scores for each student, calculated here as 23.77. This value

suggests that, on average, students scored 23.77 points higher on the post-test than on the pre-test, indicating an overall improvement after the intervention.

The *t* (t-statistic) column provides the calculated t-statistic, which here is -14.99. While the negative sign indicates the direction of the difference, it is not the focus; the main concern is whether this value is significantly different from zero. The large magnitude of this *t*-value indicates a substantial difference between the pre-test and post-test scores.

Finally, the *p*-value column gives the probability of observing this difference by chance. In this case, the *p*-value is extremely small (2.49×10^{20}), which is practically zero. This tiny *p*-value indicates that the observed difference between pre-test and post-test scores is statistically significant.

Discussion

The analysis of the questionnaire data using Partial Least Squares (PLS) provides detailed insights into the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) elements on the speaking performance of Room Division students. The construct labelled Social Nature of Learning emerged as a significant and influential factor, demonstrated by high factor loadings and robust Cronbach's alpha values, confirming the internal consistency and reliability of social interaction's role in enhancing language proficiency. These findings align with recent studies underscoring the importance of socially supportive environments in reducing speaking anxiety and fostering communication confidence. Ghafar, (2023) Asserts that collaborative learning environments provide students with essential opportunities for naturalistic language use and real-time feedback, both of which are critical to overcoming linguistic inhibitions that often impede fluency.

Additionally, Das, (2020) Emphasizes that structured group-based activities, such as peer interactions and cooperative problem-solving tasks, significantly reduce anxiety and bolster students' communicative competence by encouraging practical engagement with language in a less intimidating setting. In the current study, these social aspects within CLT methods allowed students to engage in informal interactions, where they could comfortably make errors and experiment with language. This created a supportive learning environment, which students identified as instrumental in their language development, reflecting the findings of Suryanto & Nikmatillah, (2020) , who highlighted that CLT fosters a non-threatening atmosphere conducive to language exploration and increased willingness to communicate. They found that students who practiced language in socially supportive, interactive settings exhibited greater improvements in fluency and overall confidence compared to those in traditional lecture-based classes.

Furthermore, studies by Qureshi et al., (2023) Highlight the positive impact of social learning on language acquisition. Their research suggests that when students engage with peers in informal and supportive settings, they experience a reduction in performance pressure and an increase in motivation. This, in turn, can lead to greater enjoyment and commitment to the language learning process. (Li, 2022). This combination leads to improved student engagement, contributing to better learning outcomes, particularly in language acquisition. In the context of the Room Division program, the concept of the "Social Nature of Learning" was particularly instrumental in facilitating these advantages. By creating a dynamic environment where students could interact in low-pressure, realistic scenarios that resemble those they might face in the hospitality industry, learners were able to apply their language skills more effectively. This type of social interaction allowed them to practice essential conversational skills while becoming familiar with the professional vocabulary and social norms they would need in the workplace.

These findings align with other research that emphasizes the importance of social interaction in language learning. For instance, a study supports the idea that language acquisition is inherently social, with meaningful interactions playing a key role in learners' success (Qiu et al., 2023). They also have long recognized the importance of social context

in language learning, as it provides learners with the necessary input, feedback, and opportunities for practice.

Supports the idea that language acquisition is inherently social, with meaningful interactions playing a key role in learners' success. In a similar Alshammery, (2020) Suggests that language learners who are exposed to real-world social settings have a greater chance of developing fluency and confidence, as they practice language in authentic, communicative contexts. These studies underscore the importance of incorporating social elements into language learning programs, as such interactions can help reduce anxiety, foster a sense of confidence, and ultimately improve speaking proficiency in professional settings, particularly in fields like hospitality, where communication plays a critical role.

The "Focusing on Meaning" construct, which includes communicative tasks emphasizing real-life relevance and functional language use, also demonstrated strong factor loadings and high reliability scores. The emphasis on contextually meaningful language tasks, such as role-plays simulating front-office interactions or complaint resolutions, enables students to practice vocabulary and phrases specific to the hospitality industry, increasing the likelihood of language retention. This focus on meaning aligns with Lestari, (2024), who argued that CLT's context-driven approach directly supports students' engagement by connecting language skills to practical situations they are likely to encounter in their careers.

Moreover, the high Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value for this construct suggests that students find these authentic, role-specific exercises to be directly beneficial for their skill development. Qasserras, (2023) Further supports this by asserting that meaning-based activities within CLT are crucial for boosting learners' communicative competence, as these tasks provide the structure for spontaneous responses, allowing students to adapt learned language structures in flexible, realistic scenarios. In the present study, students' responses in the questionnaire reflect a significant appreciation for these functional exercises, emphasizing that they felt more prepared to use English effectively in customer-facing interactions because of these tasks.

The "Integrating Thinking Skills" construct also yielded high reliability scores, indicating that tasks requiring problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making have a positive impact on speaking performance. Through activities such as role-play negotiations and scenario-based problem-solving tasks, the program challenged students to articulate responses thoughtfully and navigate complex linguistic and social interactions, skills that are essential in the hospitality sector. This aspect of the program supports recent findings by (Yan, 2021) Who emphasizes that integrating critical thinking in language instruction not only improves linguistic agility but also prepares students for dynamic, real-world communication. Furthermore, Rahmadana & Pammu, (2023) Found that these higher-order thinking tasks promote active engagement and deeper cognitive processing, which are essential for developing a robust communicative ability. In the current study, the high AVE for this construct confirms that students highly valued these integrative tasks, perceiving them as beneficial for enhancing both language accuracy and adaptability.

In addition to the structural model insights, the T-test analysis of the pre- and post-test scores provides quantitative evidence of the program's effectiveness. The statistically significant improvement in speaking scores from pre-test ($M = 39.10$) to post-test ($M = 62.87$), with a mean difference of 23.77, reinforces the positive impact of the CLT-based approach. The low p-value ($p < 0.05$) indicates that this improvement is unlikely to be due to chance, corroborating the self-reported progress seen in the questionnaire. This increase in scores aligns with findings from a study by (Nggawu & Thao, 2023), who reported similar gains in speaking fluency and accuracy among students exposed to CLT activities, particularly in structured programs that focus on meaningful language use and social interaction.

The T-test findings analysed by SPSS 26 version, coupled with the structural model analysis, demonstrate that CLT's emphasis on socially interactive, meaning-focused, and cognitively challenging tasks is highly effective for enhancing the speaking skills of students in the Room Division Study Program. Together, these results suggest that CLT not only improves linguistic proficiency but also builds communicative confidence, fluency, and adaptability—skills that are crucial for professional success in hospitality. The high correlations observed in the structural model, particularly between "Social Nature" and "Focusing on Meaning," highlight the interdependent nature of these CLT elements. This interdependence is consistent with Shao et al., (2022), who note that while high correlations between constructs can indicate measurement overlap, they may also reflect the conceptual alignment of constructs in closely related domains, particularly when justified by the theoretical framework. Consequently, the intertwined nature of these constructs suggests that CLT's holistic approach—integrating social, meaningful, and cognitive components—contributes comprehensively to students' speaking improvements in a way that isolated techniques might not achieve. Overall, these findings advocate for the continued use of CLT in vocational and hospitality education, particularly for programs like the English Matriculation Program at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic. By addressing both linguistic and socio-cognitive dimensions of language learning, CLT appears well-suited for equipping students with the essential speaking skills needed to navigate diverse and dynamic communication demands within the hospitality industry.

Conclusion

The study investigated the impact of the English Matriculation Program (EMP), which integrates Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles, on enhancing the speaking skills of Room Division students at Makassar Tourism Polytechnic. Findings indicated a significant improvement in speaking proficiency, as evidenced by a substantial increase in scores from the pre-test (average score of 39.10) to the post-test (average score of 62.87). This improvement, confirmed by t-test analysis with a highly significant p-value, highlights the effectiveness of CLT methods. The study's structural model analysis identified three core CLT constructs—The Social Nature of Learning, Focusing on Meaning, and Integrating Thinking Skills—as pivotal to students' progress. Each construct demonstrated high reliability and validity, affirming its role in supporting language learning. Specifically, the Social Nature of Learning construct, which involved activities like group discussions and cooperative tasks, enabled students to interact within a supportive environment, reducing anxiety and boosting confidence. The Focusing on Meaning construct emphasized practical exercises, such as role-plays simulating front-office interactions, which allowed students to practice industry-relevant vocabulary, enhancing retention and fluency. Lastly, the Integrating Thinking Skills construct, involving problem-solving and critical thinking tasks, prepared students for complex conversational skills required in hospitality settings. Path analysis further showed significant positive relationships between these CLT constructs and students' speaking outcomes. For instance, the T-statistics for constructs like Social Nature ($t = 5.358$) and Integrating Thinking Skills ($t = 7.226$) confirmed that each aspect of CLT positively impacts students' English-speaking abilities. Altogether, these findings suggest that integrating CLT into EMP is highly effective in improving students' confidence, fluency, and ability to handle customer-facing roles in the hospitality industry.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to extend their sincere appreciation to everyone who supported this study, particularly the students of the Room Division Study Program who participated as respondents.

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