

## The Development of English Speaking Skills Using Online Collaborative Learning for Myanmar Migrant Students in Thailand

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### Abstract

This study was conducted through a mixed-methods approach to determine whether implementing online collaborative learning (OCL) strategies in English-speaking classes had an effect on developing English-speaking skills and exploring the opinions of Myanmar migrant students in Thailand. A purposive sample group of 20 participants was chosen from the estimated 250 enrollments in the third semester of 2023 at the Bawaalin Myanmar Vocational Training Center in Thailand. The sample group was taught through OCL settings for a month. Its effectiveness was assessed using the three data collection instruments. The quantitative data acquired from English-speaking skills tests were evaluated using a paired sample t-test based on the mean, standard deviation, and significant value. The examination of the English-speaking skills test score revealed a significant mean difference of 14.14 (35.34%) between the pretest mean ( $\mu = 13.50$ ) and the posttest mean ( $\mu = 27.64$ ). The significance value was .000. The students' opinion questionnaires had a result of  $\alpha.90$ , indicating the excellent level of their opinions toward the method. The qualitative data obtained from a one-on-one student's opinion interview revealed that online collaborative learning has a positive impact on the overall opinions of Myanmar migrant students. The findings demonstrated that the English-speaking skills of Myanmar migrant students were developed, and their opinions toward the applied method were also at a high level. Therefore, online collaborative learning was strongly recommended for making a choice for teaching all subjects and skills in order to attain similar goals.

**Keywords:** Myanmar migrants in Thailand, Myanmar migrant students, online collaborative learning (OCL), English speaking skills, students' opinion

### Introduction

Economic globalization, which provides many business incomes and opportunities, causes many people from developing countries like Myanmar to move abroad, especially to nearby developed countries, in search of a better income, a higher standard of living, career options, and educational opportunities (Sarapirom et al., 2020). Due to internal conflicts between the military of Myanmar and ethnic armed groups as well as ethnic-to-ethnic interactions over six decades, making it the longest civil

war in history, there has been widespread violence against citizens. Human rights abuses, including land confiscation, village destruction, and the rise of interethnic hatred, among other atrocities, have contributed to poverty (Seelinger & Freccero, 2013). As a result, many of its citizens have fled and moved to Thailand for safety and work for decades, and their population has also rapidly increased (Chantavanich & Vungsiriphisal, 2012).

In addition, the current political crisis in the era of COVID-19 has created the most challenging situation in the country, leading to a high rate of migrations (World Bank Myanmar, 2023). According to annual statistics, the Myanmar migrant community has grown substantially and currently accounts for the majority of migrants in Thailand (Lwin et al., 2021). Many Myanmar migrants use illegal pathways for their migration in order to avoid difficulties and complexities (Ndegwa, 2016). Their trust and dependence on brokers and smugglers have increased, making migrants more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse (Ndegwa, 2016). Besides, insufficient abilities, poor education, language and social barriers, and a lack of legal documents restrict Myanmar migrants from pursuing social assistance, good-paying jobs, and participating in the labor market in Thailand (UNICEF, 2019). These might be connected to the political and economic difficulties they have faced, their educational attainments, inadequate access to educational resources, and related challenges in adapting to new environments, which have impeded their ability to learn and develop (Ndegwa, 2016; Rakkanam, 2022).

Thailand has rules for safeguarding and caring for these vulnerable populations; however, there are still several issues that cannot be managed by the educational authorities and the Ministry of Education alone (UNICEF, 2019). As a consequence, Burmese civil activists in Thailand constructed around 100 migrant learning centers (MLCs) to assist their citizens (Nawarat, 2012). Teenagers choose to join the non-formal education (NFE) program at MLCs because of its adaptability, emphasis on community needs, and strategies of mother tongue education (Lwin et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2019).

Education is a foundational human right. Education is a way to help solve migrant workers' problems (UNESCO, 2014). Nonetheless, helping disadvantaged people is a moral obligation. It described the practices that assist the social development of migrant workers, such as giving them access to educational opportunities, improving their language and social knowledge, and enhancing the use of technology and new skill developments (Sarapirom et al., 2020). Thus, many MLCs in Thailand are offering Thai and English language courses. This is because unskilled migrant workers certainly do confront many challenges, particularly language barriers, compared to skilled migrant workers (Srichampa et al., 2018). Besides, Cheng et al. (2021) asserted that a person is more likely to enter the labor market with greater options if they speak English proficiently. It was observed that possessing English proficiency has influenced participating in the labor force and obtaining a job with various options (Cheng et al., 2021; Nair, 2020). Hence, learning English as an alternative language or foreign language and being able to speak English is necessary in Thailand.

Due to adult learners' interest in social interaction and cognitive constructive learning, implementing the online collaborative learning (OCL) method in English-speaking classrooms is

preferable for them (Febrie Novitasari, 2019). OCL provides a framework of learning in which students are encouraged and supported to work together in pairs or groups using technology tools to create and share and to keep collective knowledge current by integrating newly gathered information into existing knowledge (Chen et al., 2021). The principle of OCL is online and active learning, flexible, and based on the concept of collaborative-constructivist approaches that foster a sense of belonging and reflect a person's capacity to interact with others (Coelho et al., 2016; Garrison, 2019). It allows learners to seize opportunities and build connections, empowers individuals to represent themselves, and develops thinking abilities (Badr, 2020). OCL enables access to plenty of websites, programs, and resources, making it easier to find and share visible information (Garrison, 2019). OCL represents the 21st-century modern learning process socially, connectively, and interactively, thereby supporting social presence and effectively developing speaking skills (Babiker, 2018). Therefore, OCL is a necessary educational theory for fostering English communication skills while learning in preparation for a better future (Badr, 2020; Babičová, 2021).

According to the problems and obstacles Myanmar migrants have faced, such as education, social, and language barriers, as well as unawareness of labor rules and rights that hinders their opportunities, the OCL is one highlighted method that has the potential to cope with and assist them, into which this study effort was put. Consequently, this study was intended to provide an English language course as a viable method and was carried out to study how Myanmar migrant students' English-speaking skills developed through online collaborative learning after employing OCL. Furthermore, it aimed to explore their opinions about online collaborative learning. It was expected that their English-speaking skills would be developed.

### Research Objectives

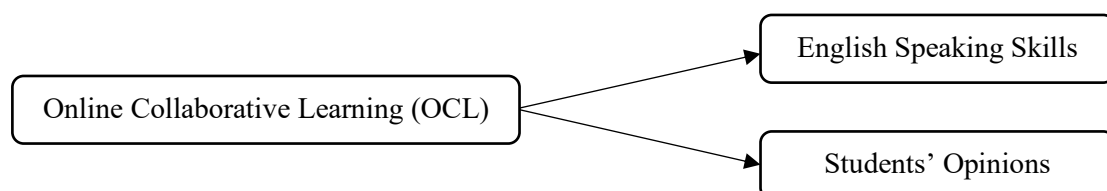
1. To compare the English-speaking skills of Myanmar migrant students in Thailand before and after implementing online collaborative learning.
2. To explore Myanmar migrant students' opinions toward online collaborative learning.

### Conceptual Framework

The study consisted of independent and dependent variables. The independent variable was the use of OCL, while the dependent variables were English-speaking skills and students' opinions toward OCL (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

*Illustration of the Independent and Dependent Variables*



## Literature Review

### Myanmar Migrants in Thailand

Myanmar (Burma) is an ASEAN-developing country bordered by India, Bangladesh, China, Laos, and Thailand. The *Union of Burma* was the official English name, which was renamed the *Union of Myanmar* by the military government in 1989. Using the time-tested strategy of divide and rule introduced by the British colonizers, the Myanmar military majority created a specious history, which erroneously promotes the contentious theory that Myanmar is comprised of over 135 ethnic groups. According to Waller (2020), these ethnic groups qualify as *taingyintha*, meaning *sons of the soil*, who have innate rights to citizenship. However, the political intent of this recognition was intended by the military regime in 1990 to splinter larger ethnic groups into smaller subcultural and linguistic centers with diminished power from the purported original eight national races: Kachin, Karenni, Karen, Chin, Burma, Mon, Arakan, and Shan, while there are many more entirely excluded. Each group speaks its language and practices its own unique culture and traditions. As most do not want to be misidentified with Burmese, they usually identify themselves as one of the ethnic nationalities in Burma. The relationship between the Burma military and ethnic armies is sensitive, with volatile impacts on the country's peace and development processes. Conflicts within the country significantly impact poverty, contributing to migration.

According to Chantavanich and Vungsiriphisal (2012), since the outbreak of political instability in 1988 caused living insecurity and restrictions on economic growth in the country, migrants from Myanmar have crossed the border to survive and work in Thailand for decades, and their population has also rapidly increased. In 1992, unskilled migrants from Myanmar were first allowed to work in Thailand. They were permitted to work in labor-intensive 3D jobs—dirty, dangerous, and difficult—that local Thais have rejected. Interdependently, low-skilled jobs also need a large number of migrant workers, such as in the fishing and seafood processing industries in Thailand (UNICEF, 2019). Hence, these unskilled individuals from Myanmar preferred to find employment in Thailand. At present, the situation of migrants is not only highly significant in driving the Thai economy, but migrants are also crucial to the Thai economy's success in the recent decade (Sarapirom et al., 2020).

In 2017, the Myanmar migrant population had increased to 79.28% of the around 3.7 million CLM migrants (Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar migrants) (Sarapirom et al., 2020) and held the largest population among the 3.9 million total CLM migrants in 2018 (Lwin et al., 2021). Also, on February 1, 2021, in the era of COVID-19, a military coup seized power in Myanmar, which led to the current political crises and the most challenging situations in the country. World Bank Myanmar (2023) reported that the poverty of the nation is steady and is expected to increase due to the current economic crisis, forcing its people to flee and migrate. As of April 2023, an estimated 2.5 million regular migrants resided in Thailand (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). In addition to documented migrants who migrated following the laws and regulations, 75% were from Myanmar

(UNDP, 2023). This indicated the stability of migrants from Myanmar, which has been holding the largest migrant population in Thailand under various circumstances.

Therefore, existing or older migrants continue to struggle with underdevelopment issues that have not been solved, while new migrants are migrating into the community, creating demanding situations and difficulties. In response, operating in and managing these disadvantaged communities is becoming increasingly complex and challenging. The more obstacles and problems individuals encounter, the greater their need for assistance and more effective methods.

### **The problems and obstacles of Myanmar migrants in Thailand.**

According to research (Sarapirom et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2019), Myanmar migrants are plagued with innumerable difficulties and obstacles. There are three major issues and challenges they encounter individually and collectively in Thailand: identity documentation, social development, and educational background and achievement.

**Identity documentation:** There are the three common work documents that the Thai government provides for migrants: (i) the memorandum of understanding (MoU), a type of two-year contract visa that was agreed upon and signed between CLM countries and Thai governments between 2002 and 2003 (Ndegwa, 2016); (ii) the pink card, which is issued within Thailand and grants permission to live and work temporarily; and (iii) the Citizen Identification (CI) green book, which is upgraded from the pink card. Legal identification documents determine migrants' access to social services and assistance and the jobs they can legally work at (Sarapirom et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2019). Despite rewards and risks, many Myanmar migrants choose illicit pathways to avoid the complexities and higher costs involved with legal migration, which leads to further abuse and exploitation (Ndegwa, 2016).

**Social development:** Understanding the legal documents required for employment is fundamental social knowledge, whereas qualifying for desirable jobs is considered social development, as referred to in this study. Fearing persecution and without full recognition of their rights, Myanmar migrants have trouble surviving and so find employment in the underground, illegal labor market (Sarapirom et al., 2020). There are no reliable estimates of how many people are victims of trafficking and smuggling because identifying victims and protecting them is not a high priority (Ndegwa, 2016).

**Educational background and achievement:** According to Ndegwa (2016), Myanmar migrants have difficulty finding accommodation and appropriate employment, as well as gaining access to healthcare services and education, due to limited skills, qualifications, and language competency. They have trouble communicating with people and organizations in their host nations, such as Myanmar embassies or consulates, residents, and NGOs, when they seek assistance. This study then concentrated on examining techniques for addressing those challenges in assisting Myanmar migrants in Thailand. It concluded that the guidelines and effective methods of aiding Myanmar migrants were also observed through providing language courses (Ratanapaskorn, 2020).

### **Guidelines and methods of helping Myanmar migrants in Thailand.**

There are a variety of approaches to aiding Myanmar migrants in Thailand. However, based on the previous research of scholars, this study focused on three effective methods to help Myanmar migrants in Thailand: approaching migrant communities, approaching education, and offering language courses.

***Approaching migrant communities:*** MLCs provide learning opportunities for marginalized out-of-school children and youths or workers to study languages and to engage in lifelong learning (Nawarat, 2012). As MLCs provide a long-term strategy for social and education services for a democratic Burma, they play an important role in supporting and helping Myanmar migrants in Thailand and after their return home (Lwin et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2019). Hence, engagement with migrant communities is a good practice for assisting Myanmar migrants (UNESCO, 2014).

***Approaching education:*** Education is the primary means through which migrants can overcome obstacles. Education is fundamental to development and growth because education is what makes personal growth enable a country's development (King, 2011). Thus, Ozturk (2008) argued that investments in human capital can produce sustainable economic development because education expands people's understanding of themselves and the world, improves the quality of life, and produces broad social benefits for individuals and society. It makes people more productive and creative. Consequently, an approach to education that aids these underprivileged Myanmar migrants is fundamental.

***Offering language courses:*** According to the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2017), *seeking employment opportunities and better futures for migrants and their families* are the most common objectives among migrants (Sakulsri, 2020). Scholars recommended that training initiatives that help new migrants acquire essential language skills be implemented to increase their opportunities to participate in the local labor market (Cheng et al., 2021). For example, language proficiency raises the self-efficacy and self-esteem of a person in a new cultural situation because it increases possibilities for positive self-evaluation and decreases negative social encounters (Cheng et al., 2021). One effective method was focusing on the requirements of migrants and their intention to develop English skills while learning at MLCs, offering online English courses using the online collaborative learning method. This is due to the OCL strategies enabling individuals to engage in new learning strategies and to expand their social knowledge and English-speaking skills through social interaction with friends and others (Harasim, n.d.; Zhang, n.d.).

### **English as an International Language (EIL)**

Language unlocks human achievement by solving problems, as precise language allows progress, dramatically improving the process (Tipirneni, 2018). English is considered a global language as a majority of people speak and comprehend it (Trimurti, 2021). Alternatively, globalization has a strong impact on English due to its role in delivering information across the world (Dewi, 2016). The



English language serves not only as the working language of ASEAN but has also become a viable international language and communication tool (Srichampa et al., 2018). Studies revealed that English proficiency has a cause-and-effect relationship with being in the labor force and getting a job (Cheng et al., 2021), with many more positions and opportunities (Nair, 2020).

Besides, non-native English speakers are learning it as a foreign or an additional language to take advantage of what comes with it (Darasawang, 2007). In this study, Myanmar migrant students are learning English as an additional and foreign language. English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to the study of English by non-native English speakers (NNES) who reside in a nation where English is neither the official language nor the official second language (Nair, 2020). As English is an official language within the ASEAN community, English is necessary for people in those regions, especially for youth, when they look at learning English as a good opportunity to participate in the labor market (Hongboontri, 2014). Mastery of an international foreign language is essential; therefore, the sooner it is studied, the more successfully it will be attained. The literature has indicated the possibility of implementing online collaborative learning (OCL) for developing English-speaking abilities. In the meantime, several related types of research have investigated the effectiveness of OCL in developing learners' English-speaking abilities, as well as their motivations for learning English and attitudes toward learning methods (Badr, 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Huang, 2021). This study, then, examines how individuals could improve their English-speaking skills to participate in the labor market, to pursue individual goals and labor rights, and to develop social lives.

### **Online Collaborative Learning (OCL)**

Online collaborative learning is rooted in the concept of using technology to engage students of different skill levels to work in small groups, solve problems through conversation, and find and share information collaboratively through discussion and interaction for a shared purpose by using information, communication, and technology (ICT) (Babičová, 2021; Zhang, n.d.). Moreover, it is a nontraditional digital educational technique (Chen et al., 2021). OCL, founded by Dr. Harasim in 2012, employed computer-mediated communication (CMC) or network-based learning as its foundation. The paradigm of OCL holds tremendous potential for student engagement due to its constructivist instructional technique and all-inclusive active learning strategy (Brindley et al., 2009). For instance, engaging students to collaborate in project-based activities increases their interest in learning a target language, which has beneficial effects on learners' attitudes and motivation (Al-Rawahi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2015). Coelho et al. (2016) demonstrated that using social networking as the main concept of a pedagogy platform is an effective tool that promotes collaborative learning. The contact that social networking provides facilitates the use of the target language in a meaningful manner, allowing learners to express themselves in an authentic setting and participate in a real-world purpose (Zhang, n.d.).

***Principles of online collaborative learning:*** The principle of OCL is to represent the 21st-century modern learning process (Badr, 2020). Fundamentally, the principles of OCL are summarized

and classified into five categories in this study. They are online learning, communities of inquiry (Col), social presence, cognitive presence, and teaching presence. Online learning facilitates collaboration and fosters a sense of community because it allows for realistic engagement and connections between students and teachers and breaks down social obstacles (Coelho et al., 2016). A *community of inquiry* is a conceptual framework for collaborative-constructivist approaches in education (Badr, 2020). How students discuss online, develop ideas, get results, and share solutions is considered cognitive presence (Sadaf et al., 2021). Collaborative learning in an online setting enables teachers to be effective facilitators, to instruct and lead the whole learning cycle, and to construct knowledge, including planning, facilitating, and evaluating (Badr, 2020; Zhang, n.d.). Furthermore, the educational leader's role is to provide the teaching presence that structures, supports, and shapes a meaningful and worthwhile learning experience.

***The significance of online collaborative learning:*** Using online collaborative learning to develop language skills is significant due to its effective principle, which provides a variety of learning practices (Huang, 2021) and benefits students from varied backgrounds (Febrie Novitasari, 2019). It also assists students in preparing for their future jobs (Badr, 2020). The findings of Lwin et al. (2022) have indicated the significance of remote teaching or online learning in social contact for sustaining technology education for migrant communities. The OCL technique encourages active participation, decreases frustration, and increases knowledge, thus aiding students in developing self-confidence, language skills, and social relationships (Babičová, 2021). Moreover, it helps build the English language students' abilities that represent not only the achievement of content objectives but also the promotion of social developments and 21st-century skills (Huang, 2021).

## **Related Research**

Achieving success in teaching EFL requires teachers to have and improve diverse knowledge, effective teaching methods, and essential knowledge of students' EFL learning journeys. Moradi and Sabeti (2014) found in EFL students' evaluations that teaching English in Persian (the first language of learners) was one of the most important parts of effective English language teaching. Besides, Pathanasin and Jittasatian (2020) proved that the use of mother tongue instruction enhances migrant students' achievement because its practices of decentralization enable the engagement of students in a multicultural society. Collaboration between teachers and students is essential to foster a better relationship and to contribute to a greater comprehension of learning, which could ultimately increase learners' engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm (Hongboontri, 2014).

Approaches to OCL methods that enable learner-centered social interaction and non-traditional online learning perspectives permit real-life experiences and provide higher achievement for learners (Badr, 2020; Safapour et al., 2019). OCL teaching instructions across different social networking tools are effective in developing learners' achievement and English-speaking skills as well as contributing to their social, psychological, and assessment benefits (Babičová, 2021; Chen et al., 2021; Febrie



Novitasari, 2019). Moreover, putting digital tools into an English language learning environment has many potentials for language development (Coelho et al., 2016). Al-Rawahi and Al-Mekhlafi (2015) found that the project-based OCL technique creates an enjoyable, active classroom, which has affected learners' speaking skills, oral communication, discussion skills, and attitude toward EFL and methods. Using cross-cultural and problem-based OCL with real-life experience techniques can significantly impact learning beliefs and peer teaching and can develop critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills (Zhu et al., 2009). Although OCL possesses a higher potential for developing EFL learners' social and language comprehension and speaking abilities, teaching English to Myanmar migrant students using this method has not been implemented. Therefore, this study applied online collaborative learning as a necessary educational theory for fostering the English-speaking skills of Myanmar migrant students in Thailand.

### **Research Methodology**

The research for this study used a mixed method approaches to discover its impact on the English-speaking skills and opinions of Myanmar migrant students toward the online collaborative learning (OCL) method. The quantitative data were obtained through the English-speaking skills tests and the students' opinion questionnaire, while the qualitative data was collected using a one-on-one interview to strengthen the outcome of the students' opinions toward the OCL method. The researcher organized the whole study, which was carried out completely online. The researcher collected data from 20 participants purposively selected from the target population estimated to be 250 students within the age range of 18–35 who were enrolling at the Myanmar migrant learning centers named Bawaalin Myanmar Vocational (B.M.V.) Training Center, located in Bangbon district, Bangkok, Thailand. The research participants were made up of 12 female participants (60%) and eight male participants (40%). Students were of varied academic and social backgrounds and experiences and represented a diversity of ethnicities, genders, cultures, and learning capacities.

### **Research Instruments**

#### **Quantitative data collection instruments.**

##### ***English speaking skills tests (pretest and posttest).***

Following the lesson contents, the researcher designed the English-speaking skills test, which consisted of eight open-ended questions (two items from each lesson along with consistent prompts supported), each carrying five marks. A pretest was administered before the treatment, and a posttest with the same items was conducted after the treatment in the purposive sample group to determine any significant difference between the pretest and posttest for each student. In addition, the speaking tests

of individual students were recorded and used for data translation and coding based on the English-speaking skills test rubric that the researcher designed.

### ***Student opinion questionnaire.***

To examine the opinions of students toward the OCL method after the study, the researcher designed the student opinion questionnaire, which included 15 items divided into three parts (five items per part): opinions toward the teacher's instructional techniques, the classroom activities, and the effectiveness of the OCL method. It was provided to individual students after the posttest. The 20 participants were asked to select a choice that best represents their reaction to the treatment given in the questionnaires based on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree).

### **Qualitative data collection instrument.**

#### ***Student opinion one-on-one interview.***

The qualitative one-on-one interview, which lasted for 5–15 minutes individually, was conducted after questionnaire data was collected. The interview consisted of one interview question along with seven supported, consistent prompts. The interview was an open-ended question regarding what students think about the use of online collaborative learning in developing their English-speaking skills. In order to expand students' capacity to talk about their opinions, their first language was also allowed in the interview. All 20 participants took part in the interview. Individual responses to interview questions were recorded, translated using the interview template, and coded based on the students' general responses into seven parts separately.

### **Validity and reliability.**

#### ***Validity.***

All the research instruments were validated before implementation by two experts from Myanmar and one from Canada using Item Objective Congruence (IOC). The IOC score ranges from 1 to +1. Theoretically, the value of the test item between 0.5 and 1 meant it was valid, but below 0.5 signified inapplicability (Peldon & Chalermnirundorn, 2018). In this study, all the items in every instrument were rated +1 by all three validators, along with some recommendations and advice relevant to the research objectives. Thus, it indicated that all the instruments were congruent and valid for the data collection.

### ***Reliability.***

This study applied Cronbach's alpha for the consistency of measurement. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  result is a number between 0 and 1, but an acceptable reliability score is 0.7 or higher. In this study, each student's opinion questionnaire according to a 5-point Likert scale was computed and analyzed using SPSS. The reliability coefficient of the students' opinion questionnaire toward the applied method was ( $\alpha = 0.9$ ), resulting in a reliability scale that is categorized as excellent.

### ***Lesson plans.***

The lessons were conducted using the Zoom meeting social platform for in-class sessions and Facebook (FB) group chats for out-of-class connections. Facebook group chats were divided into two categories: 1. that run by the teacher and used to distribute assignments and learning materials; and 2. those run by student groups and used as a platform for meetings and work. The researcher designed a total of four lesson plans to be taught for a duration of four weeks (one week, one lesson plan for two sessions, one session = 60 minutes). Each group collaborated on a weekly assignment after class, shared their findings with peers, and uploaded their completed projects to the teacher-controlled Facebook group. In addition, the researcher concentrated on the three OCL learning perspectives: student-centered, interactive learning, and students' cooperative work-sharing environment, as well as the five steps of the in-class teaching process: introduction, implementation, classroom activities, student work sharing or presentation, and summarization. Following each class, a weekly project is given to each group. Figure 1 represents the process of in-class instruction and techniques.

Figure 1

*Five Steps of In-Class Teaching Process*

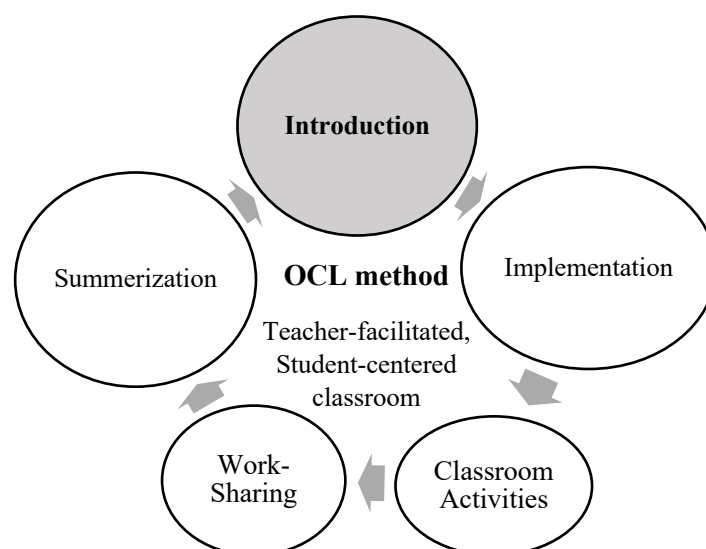


Figure 1 shows that the instructional materials were integrated using OCL approaches. Each session began with a brief introduction to the lesson's objectives and contents. The classroom activities were organized using a variety of OCL learning activities. In-class activities involved students working in pairs and groups and sharing their work with classmates. Weekly tasks or assignments were given to each group following the in-class sessions. Students worked as a team via Facebook group chat, completed their assignments, and shared their work results with the class on a weekly basis. The instructor guided the group projects and helped with summarizing and evaluating the students' learning. Students were able to reorganize their group for individual convenience while pursuing a common aim of individual accomplishment.

The four lessons were modified from *Think English, Elementary*, a book initially developed for Myanmar students by *The Curriculum Project*. They were *Meeting New People*, *Family & Job*, *People & Things*, and *Job Interview*. Pair and group works were used throughout the study. In particular, the first lesson used learning activities related to cross-cultural exchange and self-introduction, while the second and third classes used learning activities related to real-world experiments and storytelling, respectively. The final lesson made use of the self-experienced learning activity. At the end of each class, each student group chose their interested title related to the lesson subject for a weekly project-based learning activity. A weekly project was accomplished, including a video recording of each group presenting their work in English.

### **Data Collection and Ethical Consideration**

The researcher first received approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of Rangsit University with Project No. RSU-ERB2023/135.1807 and COA No. RSUERB2023-116 under the expedited ethics review. The approval was also sought from the founder of the B.M.V. Training Center, where this study was conducted, and all 20 participants. After obtaining all the above-mentioned permissions and approvals, the researcher commenced data collection.

#### **Anonymity and confidentiality of the participants.**

Although all participants were adults, individuals' willingness to participate in the data collection procedure was considered for their conventions and rights. Thus, each student's approval was directly sought since they are adults and capable of making their own decisions. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were maintained through the use of number codes. The data collected was kept confidential at all times. In adherence to ethical standards, all data were destroyed upon the completion of the study.

## Data Analysis

### Quantitative data analysis.

#### *English speaking skill tests (pretest and posttest).*

The data obtained from the English-speaking skills tests (pretest and posttest) were analyzed through comparative analysis using a paired sample t-test. Mean, standard deviation and significance value (p) were computed.

#### *Opinion questionnaires.*

The translation of the analyzed data obtained from the students' opinion questionnaire was based on the standard deviation and significant agreement levels. The interpretation of the questionnaire results was computerized based on the range of mean interval scale conversion to levels (5.00–4.01 = the highest, 4.00–3.01 = high, 3.00–2.01 = moderate, 2.00–1.01 = Low, 1.00 = the lowest).

### Qualitative data analysis.

#### *An Interview.*

In order to strengthen the results of the students' opinions towards the OCL method after its implementation, a one-on-one interview was conducted and recorded. The translation of the interview analyzed data was done using the interview-template and coded based on their significant overall perceptions toward OCL into seven parts individually.

## Results of the Study

This section included a presentation and interpretation of the findings of this study. The data analysis was carried out in two aspects. The first part was based on the comparison of English-speaking skills tests scores, while the second one was based on the results of the students' opinion questionnaire and the one-on-one interview.

### English Speaking Skills Tests

The obtained data from the English-speaking skills pretest and posttest was analyzed statistically using a paired-sample t-test. The result demonstrated a positive outcome, as presented in Table 1 below. According to Table 1, the paired sample statistics demonstrated that the posttest mean score ( $\mu = 27.64$ ) was greater than the pretest mean score ( $\mu = 13.50$ ), yielding a mean difference of 14.14. It denoted a significance value of .000, indicating the statistical significance of the test. The standard deviations of the pretest and posttest were 8.86 and 8.86, respectively. This quantitative data analysis directly measures and documents the students' improvement in the posttest.

Table 1

*Comparison between Pretest and Posttest of the Purposive Sample Group*

Group	Pretest		Posttest		Mean Difference	t	p- value
Purposive Sample	$\mu$	SD	$\mu$	SD	14.14	-13.734	.000
Group (N=20)	13.50	8.86	27.64	8.86			

Figure 2

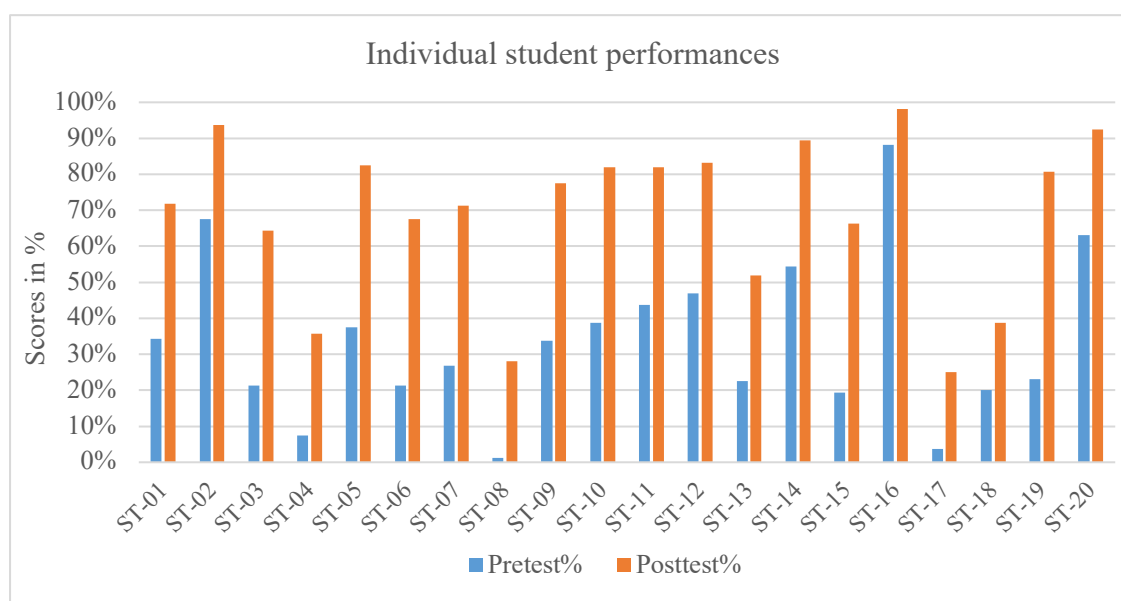
*Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores of Individual Students in Percentage*

Figure 2 illustrates the individual improvement of each student in percentage. It shows that all the students scored higher in the posttest compared to the pretest, individually, with differences of 4 (10%) to 23 (57.50%). The overall range of the pretest was 33.75, while the posttest made it to 69.09 with a difference of 35.32 in percentage. Moreover, 16 out of 20 participants scored above 20 in the posttest, while only four students scored above 20 out of a full score of 40 in the pretest. This emphasized the effectiveness of online collaborative learning strategies using multi-learning activities in developing the English-speaking skills of Myanmar migrant students.

### Students' Opinions Questionnaires

All 20 students completed the student opinion questionnaire. The data were correctly coded in Excel and analyzed using SPSS software, which revealed the mean interpretation and standard deviation in an overwhelmingly positive response. The opinion questionnaire data were evaluated and concluded in three parts. The first part addressed the reactions of each student to the teacher's instructional techniques and demonstrated that overall, the mean score was 4.79 (SD = 0.40), showing a strong degree of agreement and a favorable perspective. The second part explored the opinions of students toward



classroom activities, whose overall mean score was 4.53 (SD = 0.52), indicating a strongly agreeable level and positive opinions. The last part examined students' perspectives on the effectiveness of online collaborative learning (OCL), yielding an overall mean score of 4.66 (SD = 0.46) at the strongly agree level. OCL's initiatives clearly have a beneficial impact on the improvement of English-speaking skills among Myanmar migrant students, as each issue has earned the highest level of agreement.

### **Students Opinions One-on-One Interview**

In this part of the qualitative data analysis, the open-ended one-on-one interview was organized in one question with seven supportive consistent prompts for all. The interview question was: What do you think about the online collaborative learning method for developing English speaking skills? All 20 participants took part in the interview, which actually lasted for 5–15 minutes each. The data were interpreted as students' opinions being negative or positive based on their responses toward the use of OCL. Together with the seven supportive, consistent prompts, the interview data were analyzed and coded into seven parts, which were also based on the overall responses of students. Each part was presented accordingly below.

#### ***Part 1: Do you think the lessons are helpful? Why?***

All of the students thought that the lessons were very helpful.

*The lessons being taught bilingually made it easier to understand and were more interesting and attractive. As we learned more about the varied facts and practicums from the lessons, we became more motivated to speak and use the language. (Participant no. 11)*

#### ***Part 2: Which of 4 lessons are the most important for you? Why?***

Reactions varied to this question. The majority of students are particularly interested in the job interview lesson due to its usefulness in applying for jobs and participating in the labor market.

*All four lessons are basically asked about and used in our daily lives. They were beneficial and significant because we were learning English as a foreign language and are using these concepts in our daily lives, which gave us excitement and ideas to integrate into our daily lives. (Participant no. 2)*

#### ***Part 3: Do you think working in pairs is useful? Why?***

The majority of students said working in pairs proved to be useful and beneficial.

*When compared to learning alone, we improve more learning in pairs because we have partners to talk to and to practice with. (Participant no. 15)*

*We can ask our partners what we don't know and share what they don't know with them. Working in pairs is a lot of fun; we also made new friends with whom we can study and share knowledge. Without a partner to work and study with, learning can become tedious. (Participant no. 19)*

***Part 4: Do you think working in groups is useful? Why?***

According to the majority of students, learning and working in groups is very joyful, exciting, and useful. When varied views and understandings of English from individuals were shared and collected in a group, it led to more information and a more fruitful outcome. It also improved their leadership skills.

*The more people who engage in the group, the more thoughts and knowledge we can have and acquire. It presented us with new ideas and ways of learning and practicing English. It also taught us how to deal with problems and overcome obstacles. (Participant no. 17)*

*When I realized some of my friends in the group are talented and their new learning tactics, I got much motivation to learn and continue to study. (Participant no. 12)*

*Sometimes I could not speak English and made a lot of mistakes. However, my groupmate assisted me, for which I was quite grateful. Not only did I listen to them, but they also listened to my speaking and helped me with my learning; we respected each other in the group, which gave me the courage to talk and continue to learn. (Participant no. 4)*

***Part 5: Do you think OCL is useful? Why?***

Every student agreed that OCL is very useful. They explicitly stated that OCL creates a big team for knowledge exchange and helps them form a society for their future needs.

*Although we have little time for ourselves, OCL allowed us to study English and make new friends online in just a few hours. It was rather convenient for us. It also saved us money and time. Because we need to improve speaking skills and teamwork abilities, OCL is needed. (Participant no. 5)*

*This was my first experience with the online face-to-face learning method. I used to think that online studying was tedious. However, this OCL approach produced incredibly beneficial and successful learning when the teacher supported and facilitated it. After experiencing this, I even enrolled in more online classes. (Participant no. 7)*

***Part 6: Do you think OCL is helpful? Why?***

All of the students thought the OCL was helpful. It helped them a lot to improve their English-speaking skills; for example, when they studied, they had to practice the lessons hands-on with friends. It encouraged them to express their opinions and to share their work with friends confidently.

*Nowadays is the IT era; online education would be essential onwards; however, with OCL approaches, we can create new connections while also practicing and applying them to our daily lives. (Participant no. 16)*

*We had no confidence in speaking and using the language prior to this class, but after this class, we developed confidence and were able to talk. Since we have phones, we can communicate and discuss about English with friends anywhere at our convivences. (Participant no. 9)*

#### **Part 7: Do you have more opinion to share?**

Most of the students believed that OCL is essential and that all English learners should experience this kind of learning method. Generally, students shared that respect for each other, providing opportunities in the classroom and within the groups, and paying attention to each other also enabled their abilities to speak English and increased their potential to develop.

### **Discussion**

The study identified two significant findings. The first research revealed that using online collaborative learning to improve the English-speaking skills of Myanmar migrant students in Thailand had resulted in enhanced outcomes. The second conclusion was that after experiencing the OCL technique for developing English-speaking skills, students felt it advantageous for their daily and future lives. They were enthusiastic about the method. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that the students have the excellent level of opinion towards the method of OCL, which enlightens the effectiveness of OCL in developing English-speaking skills and further relevant skill development.

The results of this study showed an overall increase of 14.14 (35.34%) from a pretest mean score of 13.50 (33.75%) to a posttest mean score of 27.64 (69.09%). Compared to the pretest, all of the learners improved on the posttest, individually, from a minimum 10% to a maximum 57.50%. This ensured that implementing OCL in an effective way using multi-learning activities with high effort resulted in high achievement. Similarly, Febrie Novitasari (2019) discovered that OCL successfully improved students' English-speaking achievement due to its capacities to enable group work, assist and motivate each other, and exchange and construct knowledge. Babiker (2018) discovered that 89% of his English learners thought the OCL technique was useful in EFL classrooms and helped in building oral communication abilities. It demonstrated the dependable efficacy of OCL for English learners.

Furthermore, out of 20 students, 16 scored above 20, 10 achieved above 30, and four scored above 35.25 out of a maximum of 40. Student-16 achieved the highest score of 39.25 in the posttest

with the smallest improvement score of 4 (10%); yet, it can be claimed that the student improved consistently because the student's pretest score was already 35.25, which was almost full marks and higher than the posttest scores of 16 students. In addition, Student-19 received the most improvement with a score of 23 (57.50%), which was more than double the pretest score of 9.25. This student demonstrated the OCL method's capabilities of enhancing proficiency in English in a short period of time for higher development. Three students gained the lowest pretest score under 5, which were 0.50, 1.50, and 3.00, respectively. However, they improved their posttest scores to 11.25, 10.00, and 14.25, respectively. These findings demonstrated that OCL has the capacity to assist all levels of English learners in developing their English-speaking abilities. Similarly, the British Council reports that 69% of students worldwide learn and perform better when they collaborate with others (Coelho et al., 2016). Using OCL methods in developing Myanmar migrant students' English-speaking skills made a higher improvement depends on the effectiveness of OCL, which encourages students to keep in touch and practice and enables their speaking improvement in progress. Moreover, the OCL provides an effective learning platform, encourages and supports learners, and enables possibilities for knowledge exchange (Chen et al., 2021). Besides, it has been used and has proven beneficial in both short-term and long-term courses (Chen et al., 2021). Hence, this study recommends that applying OCL to effective online learning platforms with various learning activities leads to a higher improvement in Myanmar migrant students' language and skills development studies.

In addition, the results of students' opinion questionnaires indicate that students have a high level of opinion towards the OCL. The data obtained from Part 1 represented students' opinions towards the lesson contents, plans, and instructions designed, resulting in a mean score ranging from 4.65 to 4.90, with an overall mean score of 4.79 (SD = 0.40) representing the strongly agree level. The item that discussed *the lessons are useful in my daily life* got the highest mean score of 4.90. This demonstrated the success of the OCL technique by incorporating a variety of learning activities that stimulated students' interest in the lesson concepts. The results from Part 2: students' opinions toward classroom activities revealed a mean score ranging from 4.50 to 4.65, with an overall score of 4.53 (SD = 0.52) indicating that students have positive opinions. The item discussed, *my group in class helps me practice and think*, had the highest average score of 4.65. This item extensively utilized the OCL concept, and the findings demonstrated the method's usefulness in improving students' real-world English communication and thinking abilities. Correspondingly, Al-Rawahi and Al-Mekhlafi (2015) evaluated the impact of online collaborative learning with project work activities on learners' language performance and attitude. Moreover, it has a substantial impact on learning beliefs and attitudes regarding English as a foreign language, teamwork, social, psychological, and assessment benefits (Febrie Novitasari, 2019; Zhu et al., 2009). Using multi-learning activities followed by OCL strategies such as cross-cultural, self-introduction, and real-life experiences can result in a fun and dynamic classroom and students. Furthermore, the data gathered from Part 3: students' opinions toward the effectiveness of OCL resulted in a mean score of a minimum of 4.45 to a maximum of 4.85 with an

overall mean score of 4.6 (SD = 0.46), interpreted at the strongly agree level. The item identified, *OCL builds connections with other students and teachers*, received the highest mean score of 4.85, suggesting OCL's capacity to sustain the connection and consistency in their learning. This method of learning motivates students to continue learning. Similarly, Zhu et al. (2009) investigated that the more students encounter the online environment, the more their attitude changes. Besides, the OCL enables teachers to be successful facilitators, reflecting the favorable input and successful outcomes it achieves; additionally, it decreases discouragement in pursuing the targets (Badr, 2020; Garrison, 2019).

Furthermore, this study revealed from the one-on-one interview that all of the participants thought OCL was a tool that formed a big group, created a community between learners, and was an effective method English learners should experience. Students also shared that OCL encouraged all to participate and take responsibility in group works, allowed them to study face-to-face online and at their convenience with friends, which attracted their interest and motivated them to continue learning. Equivalently, Chen et al. (2021) study on a project-based OCL reveal that their students evaluated themselves and expressed that those methods enhance their English-language speaking abilities, as well as their teamwork skills. The more opportunities individuals had to express themselves in a classroom or group setting, the higher their sense of belonging to the community and willingness to speak and represent themselves (Pozzi, 2010), notably, more improvement to their English oral communication abilities and discussion skills (Al-Rawahi & Al-Mekhlafi, 2015). Thus, applying OCL in developing English-speaking and further relevant skills are recommended.

### Conclusion

The study demonstrated that using online collaborative learning developed the English-speaking skills of Myanmar migrant students in Thailand. It was also discovered that all the students have a positive and high level of agreement toward the OCL. Most of the students shared about their experiences with organizing and reforming groups and having flexible teaching and instruction techniques with various learning activities offered by OCL that reflected their studies and had better outcomes. Therefore, OCL is an effective method for assisting Myanmar migrant students in pursuing their goals and fulfilling their needs.

### Limitations and Future Research

The study was carried out with a purposive sample size of 20 Myanmar migrant students selected from a single Myanmar MLC in Thailand, which may limit the findings' application to students from other MLCs in Thailand and beyond. To address this limitation, future researchers could examine a more extensive sample size from various migrant learning centers and a longer research duration to capture a more diverse range of perspectives on the effectiveness of OCL. Due to time constraints, the study scope for OCL was limited to one month. The lessons were delivered on four consecutive Sundays for only four lesson plans, with each lesson lasting two hours. However, if the technique had been used

over a longer period, the study's findings would be more comprehensive and would have further similar outcomes in measuring the expected improvement. Moreover, the results of this study recommend that the alternative technique approach to the OCL method be used in the future to teach English learners at all levels and for other purposes such as social knowledge, confidence, and job opportunity development.

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