

Developing Grade 3 Students' Communication and Collaboration Competence Through Speaking and Listening Instruction: A Quasi-Experimental Study in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT: This study examined whether a structured instructional sequence embedded in Grade 3 Vietnamese speaking and listening lessons was associated with stronger communication and collaboration performance. A post-intervention quasi-experimental design involved 124 students in four intact classes at two primary schools in Bac Ninh Province, Vietnam. At each school, one class received an instructional sequence combining structured small-group discussion, language games, a mini-project, role allocation, peer response, and a transparent performance rubric; one comparison class followed regular instruction. Students were observed during two curriculum-aligned lessons and rated on confidence in presenting, clarity and coherence of expression, active listening and response, and group coordination. Scores were classified as Good, Achieved, or Needs Improvement. In the first lesson, 41.9% of intervention students versus 19.4% of comparison students were rated Good; in the second lesson, the corresponding proportions were 48.4% and 22.6%. Pooled ordinal comparisons favored the intervention classes in both lessons (Mann-Whitney $U = 2512.0$, $p = .001$, rank-biserial correlation = .307; $U = 2562.0$, $p < .001$, rank-biserial correlation = .333). Classroom evidence suggested more confident participation, more specific peer feedback, and clearer division of group responsibilities. The findings provide promising evidence that speaking and listening instruction can serve as a purposeful context for developing communication and collaboration competence. Because intact classes were used and no pretest or reliability estimate was available, the results should be interpreted as associative rather than causal.

KEYWORDS: communication competence; collaboration competence; speaking and listening; Grade 3; cooperative learning; Vietnamese primary education

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication and collaboration are central to students' participation in classroom learning and to their capacity to construct knowledge with others. Vietnam's 2018 General Education Curriculum identifies communication and collaboration as a core general competence and positions Vietnamese language education as a major context for its development [1], [2]. In Grade 3, speaking and listening lessons are especially relevant because students must narrate, present, listen, question, respond, and coordinate with peers while working toward shared products.

International research likewise treats classroom talk as more than recitation. Productive dialogue gives learners opportunities to explain ideas, respond to alternative perspectives, and refine reasoning [3]. Evidence on teacher-student dialogue indicates that the quality and function of talk, rather than the mere frequency of interaction, are consequential for learning [4]. Cooperative learning research further shows that group work is most effective when positive interdependence, individual responsibility, explicit social skills, and group processing are deliberately structured [5], [6]. These conditions are particularly important for young learners, because unstructured group work may allow confident pupils to dominate while quieter pupils remain peripheral.

Vietnamese primary textbooks provide repeated speaking and listening tasks, including storytelling, discussion, presentation, and peer response. However, the presence of such tasks does not ensure sustained interaction. The thesis-based needs analysis motivating this study indicated that students were often hesitant to present, offered limited feedback to peers, and relied on a few active group members. Teachers also reported difficulty in organizing interaction so that every student had a meaningful speaking, listening, and coordinating role.

The present study therefore operationalized a focused instructional sequence within two Grade 3 speaking and listening lessons. Rather than testing six proposed measures simultaneously, the classroom experiment examined the three components that were actually implemented: structured small-group discussion combined with a language game in a storytelling lesson, and a role-based

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mini-project supported by a transparent rubric in a presentation lesson. The study asked: (1) How did performance-level distributions differ between intervention and comparison classes in each lesson? (2) What observable changes characterized students' communication and collaboration during the intervention activities? The study contributes context-specific evidence from first-language instruction in Vietnamese primary schools, a setting less frequently represented in the international literature.

II. CONCEPTUAL AND INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

A. Communication and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening

Communication competence in this study refers to students' capacity to present ideas confidently and coherently, attend to others' contributions, and provide relevant responses. Collaboration competence refers to their capacity to accept roles, coordinate actions, support peers, and contribute to a shared outcome. The constructs overlap but are not identical: clear expression enables joint work, while collaboration creates authentic reasons to speak, listen, negotiate, and revise. The four assessment criteria were therefore designed to capture both individual oral performance and participation in a social task.

B. Design Principles

The intervention was guided by four principles. First, participation had to be distributed through small groups, turn-taking, and assigned roles. Second, oral tasks needed an authentic communicative purpose rather than isolated rehearsal. Third, students required visible success criteria and opportunities for peer response. Fourth, scaffolding had to be gradually reduced so that students could make decisions and take responsibility for a common product. These principles align with social interdependence theory [5], cooperative-learning research [6], and dialogic accounts of classroom talk [3], [4].

C. Proposed Mechanism of Change

The instructional sequence was expected to influence performance through a connected chain of opportunities rather than through any single technique. Structured turns first increased each student's opportunity to speak and reduced the likelihood that one confident student would control the task. Because the next speaker had to continue, question, or respond to a peer's contribution, speaking was made contingent on listening. Role allocation then converted general instructions to 'work together' into observable responsibilities, creating both interdependence and individual accountability. Finally, the advance rubric supplied a shared language for monitoring oral clarity, response quality, and cooperation. This mechanism distinguishes the sequence from ordinary group work: participation, interdependence, feedback, and reflection were deliberately linked.

The two lessons represented different levels of task complexity. Sequential storytelling provided a bounded narrative structure and short oral turns, offering a relatively safe entry point for hesitant students. The mini-project required information selection, role negotiation, product construction, rehearsal, and public presentation over a longer period. Consistent advantages across these different task types would therefore suggest that the design principles were not tied to a single topic or performance format. Classroom dialogue research has similarly shown that reasoning and learning depend on how participants build on, challenge, and clarify one another's contributions [9], while discussion-based interventions are most productive when teachers explicitly structure the quality of student talk [10].

TABLE I. COMPONENTS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

Component	Operationalization in the Lessons
Structured small-group discussion	Turn-taking, shared questions, rehearsal, and peer comments before whole-class presentation.
Language game	Sequential storytelling required attentive listening, continuity, and immediate oral response.
Role-based mini-project	Groups selected a leader, recorder, designer, information collectors, and presenter to create a shared local-area introduction.
Transparent rubric	Criteria for presentation, listening and response, and cooperation were explained before performance and used for self- and peer-monitoring.
Teacher scaffolding	Prompting, modeling, time control, and targeted support were provided without replacing students' decisions.

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III. METHOD

A. Design, Setting, and Participants

A post-intervention quasi-experimental design with non-randomized intact classes was used. The study was conducted from January to March 2026 in two primary schools in Hiep Hoa, Bac Ninh Province. At Luong Phong No. 2 Primary School, Class 3A was the intervention class ($n = 32$) and Class 3B was the comparison class ($n = 33$). At Thang Town Primary School, Class 3B was the intervention class ($n = 30$) and Class 3C was the comparison class ($n = 29$). The analytic sample therefore comprised 124 students: 62 in intervention classes and 62 in comparison classes. The classes were selected because school records and teacher judgments indicated broadly similar instructional conditions; random assignment was not feasible.

TABLE II. PARTICIPANTS BY SCHOOL AND CONDITION

School	Intervention class	Comparison class	Total
Luong Phong No. 2 Primary School	3A ($n = 32$)	3B ($n = 33$)	65
Thang Town Primary School	3B ($n = 30$)	3C ($n = 29$)	59
Total	62	62	124

B. Instructional Content and Procedure

Both conditions completed two speaking and listening lessons from the Grade 3 Vietnamese textbook series Connecting Knowledge with Life [7]. In the storytelling lesson, The Shoeshine Boy, intervention students reconstructed and retold the story through structured group discussion and a sequential language game. Students listened for continuity, took turns, and commented on voice, event selection, and narrative order. Comparison students followed the regular lesson routine centered on teacher modeling and individual retelling.

Approximately one month later, the lesson Beautiful Landscapes of the Country was organized around a mini-project entitled Introducing My Homeland. Intervention groups assigned roles, collected information and images, prepared an illustrated introduction, rehearsed, and presented their product. The rubric was shared when the task was assigned so groups could monitor both the quality of the oral presentation and their cooperation. Comparison students completed the textbook presentation task using the classroom's regular procedure. Teachers received lesson plans and implementation guidance before teaching; the researcher observed the lessons and recorded field notes.

C. Instrument and Scoring

A four-criterion observation rubric assessed: (1) confidence and initiative in presenting; (2) clarity, coherence, relevance, and focus of oral expression; (3) active listening, commenting, and responding; and (4) coordination and contribution to group work. Each criterion was rated Good (3), Achieved (2), or Needs Improvement (1). Summed scores ranged from 4 to 12 and were classified as Good (10–12), Achieved (6–9), or Needs Improvement (below 6). The classroom teacher and researcher used the rubric while observing each student. The source thesis did not report inter-rater agreement or internal-consistency evidence; this limitation is retained explicitly in the interpretation.

D. Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each performance level by school, condition, and lesson. For a concise overall comparison, data from the two schools were pooled within each lesson because both schools used the same rubric, lesson focus, and condition structure. The three ordered categories were coded 1 (Needs Improvement), 2 (Achieved), and 3 (Good), then compared with a two-sided Mann–Whitney U test. Rank-biserial correlation (r_{rb}) was reported as an association measure, with positive values favoring the intervention classes. The qualitative evidence was used descriptively to illuminate classroom participation; it was not treated as an independently coded qualitative dataset. An alpha level of .05 was used.

E. Ethical Considerations

The research was coordinated with school administrators and participating teachers before implementation. Only aggregated class-level results are reported, and no student names or personally identifiable information are included in this article. Classroom photographs or recordings used during the thesis work are not reproduced here.

F. Implementation Consistency and Analytic Safeguards

To improve consistency across the two intervention classes, teachers worked from common lesson plans specifying objectives, activity sequence, grouping, role allocation, expected products, and assessment criteria. The researcher discussed the plans with teachers before implementation and used the same observation rubric in both schools. The comparison classes studied the same

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curriculum content during the same semester but did not receive the structured sequence. These procedures reduced—without eliminating—variation in content and assessment across sites.

Three analytic safeguards were applied when preparing this article. First, percentages shown in the source thesis were converted back to whole-student frequencies and checked against each class size. Second, ordered-category tests were used instead of treating Good, Achieved, and Needs Improvement as equal-interval scores. Third, both school-specific and pooled estimates were examined. The pooled analysis provides a concise overall pattern, whereas school-specific results indicate whether that pattern is replicated rather than produced by one site. No adjustment was made for clustering because only four classes were available; accordingly, probability values are treated as descriptive support and effect estimates receive greater interpretive weight.

IV. RESULTS

A. Performance in the Storytelling Lesson

In The Shoeshine Boy lesson, both intervention classes showed more favorable distributions than their comparison classes. At Luong Phong No. 2 Primary School, 13 of 32 intervention students (40.6%) were rated Good, compared with 6 of 33 comparison students (18.2%); the Needs Improvement proportions were 9.4% and 27.3%, respectively. At Thang Town Primary School, 13 of 30 intervention students (43.3%) were rated Good, compared with 6 of 29 comparison students (20.7%). When data were pooled across schools, 41.9% of intervention students and 19.4% of comparison students were rated Good. The ordinal comparison favored the intervention classes, $U = 2512.0$, $p = .001$, $r_b = .307$.

TABLE III. PERFORMANCE DISTRIBUTIONS IN THE STORYTELLING LESSON

School and condition	Good, n (%)	Achieved, n (%)	Needs Improvement, n (%)
Luong Phong—Intervention (n = 32)	13 (40.6)	16 (50.0)	3 (9.4)
Luong Phong—Comparison (n = 33)	6 (18.2)	18 (54.5)	9 (27.3)
Thang Town—Intervention (n = 30)	13 (43.3)	14 (46.7)	3 (10.0)
Thang Town—Comparison (n = 29)	6 (20.7)	15 (51.7)	8 (27.6)
Pooled intervention (n = 62)	26 (41.9)	30 (48.4)	6 (9.7)
Pooled comparison (n = 62)	12 (19.4)	33 (53.2)	17 (27.4)

B. Performance in the Mini-Project Lesson

The second lesson produced a similar pattern. At Luong Phong No. 2 Primary School, 15 of 32 intervention students (46.9%) were rated Good and 2 (6.2%) Needs Improvement; the corresponding comparison-class values were 7 of 33 (21.2%) and 8 (24.3%). At Thang Town Primary School, 15 of 30 intervention students (50.0%) were rated Good, compared with 7 of 29 comparison students (24.1%). Across schools, 48.4% of intervention students and 22.6% of comparison students were rated Good. The pooled ordinal comparison again favored the intervention classes, $U = 2562.0$, $p < .001$, $r_b = .333$.

TABLE IV. PERFORMANCE DISTRIBUTIONS IN THE MINI-PROJECT LESSON

School and condition	Good, n (%)	Achieved, n (%)	Needs Improvement, n (%)
Luong Phong—Intervention (n = 32)	15 (46.9)	15 (46.9)	2 (6.2)
Luong Phong—Comparison (n = 33)	7 (21.2)	18 (54.5)	8 (24.3)
Thang Town—Intervention (n = 30)	15 (50.0)	13 (43.3)	2 (6.7)
Thang Town—Comparison (n = 29)	7 (24.1)	15 (51.7)	7 (24.2)
Pooled intervention (n = 62)	30 (48.4)	28 (45.2)	4 (6.5)
Pooled comparison (n = 62)	14 (22.6)	33 (53.2)	15 (24.2)

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C. Cross-Site Consistency of Ordinal Comparisons

The direction and magnitude of the ordinal associations were similar at both schools. In the storytelling lesson, rank-biserial correlations were .310 at Luong Phong No. 2 and .303 at Thang Town. In the mini-project lesson, they were .336 and .329, respectively. Thus, the pooled results were not driven by one unusually strong class comparison. The slightly larger associations in the second lesson are compatible with, but do not prove, the possibility that the more sustained role-based project created additional opportunities for coordination and shared responsibility.

TABLE V. MANN-WHITNEY COMPARISONS BY LESSON AND SCHOOL

Lesson and analytic group	U	p	Rank-biserial correlation
Storytelling—Luong Phong	691.5	.019	.310
Storytelling—Thang Town	567.0	.030	.303
Storytelling—Pooled	2512.0	.001	.307
Mini-project—Luong Phong	705.5	.011	.336
Mini-project—Thang Town	578.0	.018	.329
Mini-project—Pooled	2562.0	< .001	.333

D. Qualitative Classroom Patterns

Observation notes were consistent with the distributional results. During sequential storytelling, intervention students more often waited for a peer's turn, maintained narrative continuity, and offered specific comments about voice and event selection. Students who were initially hesitant could contribute a short segment in a small group before speaking to the class. In the comparison classes, participation was more concentrated among confident students and peer response was less specific.

During the mini-project, role allocation made collaboration visible. Groups selected coordinators and recorders, distributed information-search and design tasks, and rehearsed a common presentation. Students referred to the rubric while revising their products and deciding who would present particular sections. The resulting presentations more frequently combined speech, eye contact, gesture, and visual support. Nevertheless, unequal participation persisted in some groups, and several quieter students continued to require teacher encouragement.

V. DISCUSSION

The two lessons yielded consistent, moderate ordinal associations favoring the intervention classes. The pattern was not limited to a larger Good category; intervention classes also contained substantially fewer students in Needs Improvement. This distribution is educationally meaningful because the instructional sequence appeared to broaden participation rather than merely improve the performance of already confident speakers.

The findings are compatible with dialogic accounts that emphasize explaining, listening, questioning, and responding as resources for learning [3], [4]. They also support the cooperative-learning proposition that students need positive interdependence and individual responsibility, not simply physical placement in groups [5], [6]. In the present intervention, turn-taking and assigned roles reduced ambiguity about participation, while the shared product created a reason to coordinate. The rubric functioned as formative guidance by making expectations visible before performance, consistent with evidence that formative assessment can improve learning when feedback is tied to clear criteria [8].

The study's context adds a specific contribution. Much international work examines dialogue across subject areas or oral communication in additional-language classrooms. Here, communication and collaboration were developed within first-language speaking and listening lessons aligned with a national primary curriculum. The approach did not add a separate social-skills course; it redesigned existing curricular tasks so that oral expression, active listening, peer response, and group responsibility were assessed together.

The cross-site similarity strengthens this interpretation. Each school produced rank-biserial correlations close to .30 in the first lesson and .33 in the second, despite different class sizes and school contexts. These are not large effects, but they are practically relevant because the outcome was an ordinal classroom-performance classification and the intervention was embedded in only two existing lessons. More importantly, the distribution shifted at both ends: the proportion rated Good increased while the proportion

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requiring further support decreased. This pattern is consistent with a participation-broadening interpretation rather than an effect confined to a small group of high performers.

For teachers, the findings imply that the value of speaking and listening lessons lies not only in giving students a topic to discuss. Tasks should specify how participation will circulate, what listeners must do with what they hear, and how individual contributions connect to a common outcome. Short narrative games can provide repeated low-risk turns; mini-projects can extend interaction through planning, negotiation, and presentation. Roles should rotate so that leadership, recording, information searching, designing, and presenting do not become fixed status positions. Rubrics should be introduced before the task, phrased in student-accessible language, and used for brief self- and peer-assessment. Feedback is most useful when it identifies the gap between current performance and a visible goal and suggests a manageable next action [11].

At the school level, implementation requires modest but deliberate support. Teachers need shared examples of productive prompts, procedures for monitoring several groups, and opportunities to compare judgments using sample performances. A short calibration activity before instruction could improve scoring consistency, while video or audio samples—used with appropriate permission—could support later moderation. Repeating the sequence across diverse speaking genres would also help prevent students from associating collaboration with only one project format.

Several limitations constrain interpretation. First, the study used intact classes and did not include a pretest, so baseline equivalence cannot be demonstrated statistically and causal claims are not warranted. Second, only four classes in two schools participated, and the same lessons were not repeated across a longer period. Third, teacher and researcher ratings may have been influenced by knowledge of condition, while inter-rater reliability and instrument validity were not established. Fourth, pooling students ignores possible class-level dependence. Finally, the qualitative observations were descriptive rather than independently coded. Future research should use validated measures, blinded or independently calibrated raters, pretest–posttest data, several schools, and multilevel analyses. It should also examine whether gains transfer to new speaking situations and persist over time.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

A structured sequence combining small-group discussion, a language game, a role-based mini-project, peer response, and a transparent rubric was associated with stronger communication and collaboration performance in Grade 3 Vietnamese speaking and listening lessons. Across two schools and two lessons, intervention classes showed larger proportions of students rated Good and smaller proportions rated Needs Improvement than comparison classes. Classroom observations suggested that the instructional design created more opportunities for confident presentation, coherent expression, attentive listening, relevant response, and shared responsibility.

The findings are promising but preliminary. They support the practical value of converting speaking and listening tasks into structured social-learning experiences while also indicating the need for stronger designs before claims of effectiveness are generalized. For classroom practice, the key implication is that interaction should be deliberately organized: every learner needs a role, a reason to listen, an opportunity to respond, and clear criteria for evaluating both oral performance and collaboration.

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