

IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHOD AT SMP 1 KUPANG

Priska R. B. Pajangu¹, Thersia Magdalena Tamelan² and Daniel Frengki Kamengko^{3*}

¹SD Inpres Waikajanga, Sumba Tengah

²Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana and Language and Culture Unit, GMIT Kupang

³Universitas Kristen Artha Wacana

*)Corresponding email: frengkykamengko@gmail.com

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Abstract. Speaking skills is one of the four essential skills in English. However, some students need help with their speaking ability. This research used the communicative language teaching (CLT) method to teach English, specifically by utilizing picture series to help students improve their speaking skills. This study aimed to determine whether the CLT method enhances students' speaking skills. An experimental design was employed for this research. The population of this study consisted of 353 students from grade 8 of Public Junior High School 1 Kupang. The cluster random sampling technique was employed to select a sample of 32 students. The data collection involved a spoken test, pre-test, and post-test to assess students' speaking skills. The results of the data analysis indicate that the mean score of students on the pre-test was 7.81. After the intervention, the mean score of students on the post-test was 17.34, and there was an improvement of 12.2%. The data was analyzed using a t-test; the t-test value (5.21) was more significant than the t-table value (1.69552). Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (H1) was accepted, and the null hypothesis (Ho) was rejected. The findings demonstrated that the CLT method effectively enhanced students' speaking skills.

Keywords: *communicative language teaching; picture series; speaking skills*

INTRODUCTION

English is essential as it is an international language. People use it to communicate globally (Amin, 2004). People in many countries speak English, including in Indonesia. Understanding English helps people get more information and jobs. In Indonesian schools, English is one of the essential subjects alongside other lessons. That is why English is essential in Indonesian schools. Students are expected to be able to communicate with each other fluently. However, English is challenging for Indonesian students.

The students at Public Junior High School 1 Kupang exhibited inadequate language skills, particularly in the domain of speaking. Most of them needed help to meet the minimum passing grade (KKM) in the English language subject. Several issues concerning teaching and learning speaking skills in the classroom must be addressed to contribute to this state of affairs. In the context of teaching and learning, teachers provided very few opportunities for speaking activities in the classroom. Furthermore, the teaching strategies were monotonous and lacked engagement, with students solely focused on mastering grammatical concepts. As a result, students need

more enthusiasm for speaking activities. When teachers attempted to elicit speech, most students appeared nervous and could not make utterances within the given timeframe due to a lack of practical knowledge. This situation highlighted a difficult challenge faced by students in speaking in the classroom. Additionally, teacher-centeredness in the teaching and learning process led to passivity among students, necessitating intervention to enhance the quality of their learning experience.

Evidence indicates that some students in the classroom had a negative attitude towards speaking ability or lacked confidence when speaking in public. Additionally, most students became bored due to the extreme focus on grammatical aspects of English language learning. This situation resulted in a loss of freedom in speaking, thereby preventing students from expressing themselves freely. Therefore, a change in attitude and building student confidence through specially designed activities to enhance speaking skills were needed. One way to enhance student confidence was by designing speaking activities that provided opportunities to speak freely with classmates or teachers. Through these activities, students could improve their mistakes by receiving feedback from classmates and develop their speaking skills gradually, from simple to more complex levels.

As mentioned earlier, an effective strategy was required to address these issues concerning the argument. Therefore, in this study, the use of a specific strategy known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was suggested. The CLT approach could be adapted to the context of speaking instruction in Indonesian Junior High Schools, which emphasizes freedom of speech. Speaking instruction activities for EFL students in Indonesia became very challenging as they continued to higher grades, where the materials they studied were more complex than lower grades. In speaking activities, EFL students had to comprehend the content of the conversation and put aside their concerns about grammatical errors. Hence, using the CLT approach could aid students in developing their speaking skills through activities that foster interaction and active engagement in the learning process.

A number of researchers have provided support for the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, including Mohamad (2015), Yuliana & Kusumaningrum (2017), Wahyuni & Budiyono (2018), Rosmah & Abdul Razak (2019), Mardiana (2019), and Lin (2020). In this approach, students were given the opportunity to express their ideas, provide comments, and correct their classmates' mistakes during speaking activities. Students could also offer suggestions and feedback for developing their classmates' speeches (Kim & Han, 2019; Nambiar & Yap, 2018). However, although students' progress may be superficial, according to Kumaravadivelu (2006), the CLT approach has been proven to be an effective alternative for improving students' speaking ability in certain situations (Munawir, 2017).

Based on the positive indications from various researchers regarding the impact of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on students' speaking ability, this study was conducted to explore further the effects of CLT on students' speaking ability and their response to the use of CLT in English language learning. Oktavia (2018) noted that students responded positively to using CLT, while Farahani and Rahimi (2018) believed that using CLT in speaking classes could be regarded as a form of positive feedback by students. Therefore, this study aims to find out whether communicative language

teaching (CLT) improves students' speaking skills. This study will also gain a clearer understanding of how the use of CLT can assist students in improving their speaking ability and how students respond to the use of CLT in the context of English language learning.

METHOD

This study adopted a pre-experimental design to determine the effect of an experimental treatment, which can be conducted in various settings, such as laboratories, classrooms, and fields. The comparison between the pre-test and post-test scores depends on the success of the treatment.

The research design is presented as follows:

Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
X1	Y	X2

Notes: X1= The result of the students' Pre-test

Y= The treatment by communicative language teaching method

X2= The result of the students' Post-test

The target population of this study was the 8th-grade students of Public Junior High School 1 Kupang, comprising 352 students. Given the relative size of the population, a single class was selected as a representative sample. The researchers employed the cluster random sampling technique to select the grade 8th A, which consisted of 32 students, 17 females, and 15 males. The data collection procedure involved administering pre-test and post-test assessments, where the former was administered before the treatment using the communicative language teaching (CLT) method, and the latter was conducted after the treatment to assess the improvement in the students' speaking skills.

The hypothesis of this research is formulated as follows:

H0	There is no improvement in students speaking skills through the communicative language teaching (CLT) method.
H1	There is improvement in students' speaking skills through the communicative language teaching (CLT) method.

Notes: H0= Null hypothesis

H1= Alternative hypothesis

The tool employed for data collection was a speaking test administered both before and after the instructional intervention. The pre-test is designed to evaluate students' speaking abilities before the treatment. At the same time, the post-test is conducted afterward to determine if the communicative language teaching (CLT) method enhances students' speaking skills.

The research procedure involved multiple stages. First, the experimental group for the study was selected. Subsequently, a pre-test was administered to assess the students' speaking skills. The instructional program was then initiated, followed by the administration of a post-test as the concluding step. Throughout the process, the

students' speaking skills were scored based on the pre-test results. Additionally, instructional materials were introduced to the students to support their learning.

Two treatments were administered to the students. The first treatment involved several steps: first, organizing the students into groups of eight members each; next, providing each group with a unique set of pictures; followed by engaging the groups in discussions and thorough examination of the pictures, encouraging the sharing of individual perspectives and insights. The groups were allotted ten (10) minutes for their discussions, after which each group presented their observations and findings to the entire class.

The second treatment involved the following steps: Initially, the researchers formed groups of eight students each. Subsequently, they introduced a game called "Guess the Name." Within each group, one member was chosen to act as the team captain. The captain was then shown the name of an animal and attempted to provide verbal clues for their teammates to guess the animal's name. Correct answers earned the team ten (10) points, while incorrect answers received zero (0) points. Additionally, the group with the lowest score faced a penalty, determined and enforced by the winning group.

The evaluation of students' speaking tests relied on the four elements of speaking skills, utilizing the criteria outlined in Table 1 from the Occupational English Test (OET, 2018).

Table 1. Speaking assessment criteria

Aspects	Score	Requirement
Pronunciation	0	The student does not provide any response.
	1	Almost entirely unintelligible.
	2	Frequent errors in pronunciation/stress/intonation.
	3	Producing some acceptable features of spoken English.
	4	Errors in pronunciation at the time.
	5	Easily understood.
	6	Pronunciation is easily understood, and intonation and stress are used effectively.
Grammar	0	The student does not provide any response.
	1	Limited in all respects.
	2	Very limited resources of grammar, even in simple sentences.
	3	Limited control of grammatical structures.
	4	Inaccuracies in grammar.
	5	Occasional grammar error is not intrusive.
	6	A wide range of grammar is generally used accurately and flexibly.
	0	The student does not provide any response.
	1	Limited in all aspects.

Vocabulary	2	Very limited resources of vocabulary, even in simple sentences.
	3	Limited vocabulary except in simple sentences.
	4	Inaccuracies in vocabulary, particularly in more complex sentences, are sometimes intrusive.
	5	Occasional errors in vocabulary are not intrusive.
	6	Wide range of vocabulary used accurately and flexibly.
Fluency	0	The student does not provide any response.
	1	Impossible to follow, consisting of isolated words and phrases and self-correction, separated by long pauses.
	2	Extremely uneven.
	3	Very uneven.
	4	Uneven flow, with some repetition, especially in longer utterances.
	5	Fluent speech at normal speed, with only occasional repetition or self-correction.
	6	Completely fluent speech at normal speed.

After gathering the test results as primary data, the conclusive sets of papers were scrutinized to derive responses to the study's research questions. Employing a sample t-test for analysis facilitated the identification of disparities between the pre-test and post-test outcomes. This rigorous analysis provided valuable insights that illuminated the study's research objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To assess the efficacy of the communicative language teaching (CLT) method in enhancing students' speaking skills, the acquired data underwent analysis using the t-test formula. Before applying the T-test, two crucial steps were undertaken to derive the final scores: calculating the mean score and standard deviations for both the pre-test and post-test.

1. Pre-test and post-test scores

The scores of students in the pre-test and post-test are outlined in Table 3. The mean score for the pre-test was 7.81, whereas it increased to 17.34 for the post-test. This result indicates that students' learning outcomes, as gauged by the pre-test, were lower before the implementation of communicative language teaching instruction.

Table 3. The students' pre-test and post-test scores

Sample (n)	Pre-test of students (X1)		Sample (n)	Post-test of students (X2)	
	Pre-test (X1)	(X1) ²		Post-test (X2)	(X2) ²
1	0	0	1	11	121

2	9	81	2	24	576
3	5	25	3	14	196
4	7	49	4	16	256
5	15	225	5	24	576
6	7	49	6	22	484
7	13	169	7	24	576
8	14	196	8	19	361
9	13	169	9	19	361
10	9	81	10	24	576
11	9	81	11	18	324
12	13	169	12	17	289
13	0	0	13	13	169
14	0	0	14	12	144
15	12	144	15	13	169
16	10	100	16	15	225
17	10	100	17	16	256
18	10	100	18	15	225
19	13	169	19	24	576
20	13	169	20	24	576
21	9	81	21	16	256
22	0	0	22	13	169
23	8	64	23	17	289
24	8	64	24	17	289
25	0	0	25	13	169
26	0	0	26	15	225
27	7	49	27	15	225
28	10	100	28	23	529
29	7	49	29	17	289
30	7	49	30	16	256
31	12	144	31	16	256
32	0	0	32	15	225
Total	250	2.676	Total	555	10.213
Mean	7.81	83.62	Mean	17.34	319.15

2. Pre-test and post-test mean scores and standard deviation

The mean scores of the pre-test were calculated using the following formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

$$M = \frac{250}{32}$$

$$M = 7.81$$

The mean score (X_1) of the pre-test was 7.81. This data shows that some of the students' speaking skills are still low. After gaining the mean score of the pre-test, the standard deviation of the pre-test is calculated using the following formula:

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{SS}{N}}$$

$$\text{Where: } SS = \sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{N}$$

$$SS = 2.676 - \frac{(250)^2}{32}$$

$$SS = 2.676 - \frac{62.500}{32}$$

$$SS = 2.676 - 1.953$$

$$SS = 723$$

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{723}{32}} = \sqrt{22.5}$$

$$= 4.74$$

Thus, the test's mean score (X_1) is 7.81, and the test's standard deviation (SD) is 4.74.

Then, the mean score of the post-test was calculated with the following formula:

$$M = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

$$M = \frac{555}{32}$$

$$M = 17.34$$

The mean score (X_2) of the pre-test was 17.34. This data shows that some of the students got higher scores than others. After gaining the mean score of the post-test, the standard deviation of the post-test is calculated using the following formula:

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{SS}{N}}$$

$$\text{Where: } SS = \sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{N}$$

$$SS = 10.213 - \frac{(555)^2}{32}$$

$$SS = 10.213 - \frac{308.025}{32}$$

$$SS = 10.213 - 9.625$$

$$SS = 588$$

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{588}{32}} = \sqrt{18.37}$$

$$= 4.28$$

So, the mean score (X2) of the post-test was 17.34, and the post-test's standard deviation (SD) was 4.28.

The summary of the mean score and standard deviation of the pre-test and post-test is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The summary of the mean score and standard deviation on the pre-test and post-test

Test	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	7.81	4.74
Post-test	17.34	4.28

The results provide evidence that the use of communicative language teaching is positively associated with improvement in students' speaking skills. This conclusion is supported by the observed increase in the mean score from the pre-test (7.81) to the post-test (17.34), corresponding to a 12.2% improvement.

3. T-Test

In order to see the students' scores, the following t-test formula was statistically applied:

$$t = \frac{D}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N(N-1)}}$$

To find out D used the formula as follows:

$$D = \frac{\sum D}{N} = \frac{307}{32} = 9.59$$

To calculate the t-test value, the formula is:

$$t = \frac{D}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N(N-1)}} = \frac{9.59}{\sqrt{\frac{3,389 - \frac{(307)^2}{32}}{32(31)}}$$

$$\frac{9.59}{\sqrt{\frac{3,389 - \frac{94,249}{32}}{992}}} = \frac{9.59}{\sqrt{\frac{3,389 - 2.94}{992}}}$$

$$\frac{9.59}{\sqrt{\frac{3,386.06}{992}}} = \frac{9.59}{\sqrt{3.41}} = \frac{9.59}{1.84} = 5.21$$

So, the t-test value was 5.21

3. Hypothesis testing

To find out the degree of freedom (df), the writer used the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}df &= N - 1 \\ &= 32 - 1 \\ &= 31\end{aligned}$$

For the level, significant (α) 5 % and df is 31, and the value of the table was 1.69552 while the t-test value was 5.21. It means that the t-test value is greater than the t-table ($5.21 \geq 1.69552$). Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H0) was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H1), indicating that the communicative language teaching approach effectively improved students' speaking skills at SMP Negeri 1 Kupang. These findings provide empirical support for the potential benefits of communicative language teaching in language instruction.

CONCLUSION

The study's results reveal a noteworthy difference in speaking test scores between the pre-test and post-test after implementing communicative language teaching. These findings suggest that communicative language teaching could serve as an effective alternative method for English instruction. Such an approach may enhance students' class enjoyment, boost confidence, and promote more active expression of thoughts and ideas. Moreover, communicative language teaching has been identified as conducive to developing critical thinking skills, underscoring its potential advantages. Further investigation in this domain is warranted, and future studies are advised to incorporate more rigorous assessment procedures to comprehensively assess the impact of communicative language teaching on students' language learning outcomes.

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