Boosting Students' Speaking Ability through Community Language Learning

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Abstract
This study was done to find out the effect of using the Community Language Learning (CLL) Method for teaching-learning speaking English with second semester students in the English Education Study Program at a private university in West Java in an effort to improve the English speaking skills of the students. This study used an action research method where the researcher was accompanied by an observer as a collaborator. Three cycles were done for this study. Data were gathered from observations, a questionnaire, interviews and tests. In the preliminary study, the mean score of the student's speaking was 61. The percentage of students who passed the minimum criterion of 70 was 22% with only 6 out of 27 students passing the minimum score. The mean score from post-test 1 was 63 and only 7 students or 26% passed the minimum score. The mean score from post-test 2 was 76 and 89%, i.e. 24 students passed the minimum score. While from post-test 3 the mean score was 84 and all of the students (100%) passed the minimum score. Hence the results showed that the use of the CLL method was a success. The students enjoyed their lessons more, and were more motivated, interested and confident during the teaching-learning sessions.

Keywords: Community Language Learning Method, boost, speaking ability.

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an essential tool for communicating Bahadorfar and Omidvar (2014) and (Maharani, 2016). Living in the era of globalization, being able to speak English becomes a necessity (Gani et al., 2015; Muslem, 2015) in order to be able to build social relationships (Al-Auwal, 2017) and to create good communications (Puspitasari & Hanur, 2016) with other people who come from different countries (Efrizal, 2012).

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So improving the ability to speak English is very important for Indonesian students who know that the ability to speak English well will make a big contribution to their communication skills.

Nevertheless, learning to speak English is not an easy task (Alharbi, 2015; Gani et al., 2015). It needs a lot of practice and strong will-power to keep practicing (Ghiabi, 2014; Halimah et al., 2018). In line with this, Leong and Ahmadi (2017) and Akhyak and Indramawan (2013) have said that to speak English is not easy because skills like pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, plus fluency, and comprehension need to be mastered by the speakers.

Based on previous studies, speaking is considered the most difficult of the four skills, accordingly there are some problems that are encountered both by the teacher and the students during teaching-learning speaking English in the classroom. These problems can result in the students having low ability in speaking English. A study by Tuan and Mai (2015) found that low ability was due to inhibition, lack of topical knowledge, low or uneven participation and use of the L1, mother-tongue. Cook (2001), Denizer (2017) and Pathan et al. (2014) also found the same problems in getting students to talk in the classroom. Furthermore, Subandowo (2017) and Gani et al. (2015) found that students had problems with proper pronunciation, while Melendez et al. (2014) and Gani et al. (2015) found that many students lacked an adequate vocabulary and had poor skills with grammar. Next, Savaşçı (2014), Machmud and Abdulah (2017),Yalçın and İnceçay (2014), Kayaoğlu and Sağlamel (2013), and Machmud and Abdulah (2018) said that many students tend to be passive during class because they are too frightened to speak because of speaking anxiety. Lastly, Dewi et al. (2017) listed four speaking problems of EFL students:

1) Fear of making mistakes and fear of being laughed at by their friends or class-mates as they are not sure of the correct pronunciation and grammar for what they want to say,
2) EFL students are not confident enough to express their ideas and feelings and are hesitant to speak due to their lack of vocabulary;
3) They feel bored when learning English because the teaching-learning activities are provided in a conventional way.
4) They also cannot speak based on their willingness or lack of it.

Based on a number of findings, it can be concluded that there are eight factors causing the low speaking ability of EFL students, namely:

a) lack of knowledge about the topic of conversation,
b) lack of mastery of speaking aspects,
c) students tend to use their mother tongue when learning speaking,
d) fear of making mistakes, being humiliated, laughed at, and general lack of confidence,
e) lecturers lack of preparation for teaching-learning,
f) lecturers lack good material,
g) lecturers not very competent in using English during teaching-learning processes,
h) and boring methods used for teaching-learning speaking.

These problems with teaching-learning speaking EFL happened with students that the researcher was teaching in the second semester of teaching EFL in the English Department at Universitas Suryakancana in the academic year 2016/2017, who became the subject of this research study. At the start, the speaking ability of these EFL students was low. Based on the observations above there were two factors that

were mainly the causes of their low scores, namely: 1) problems related to the students' ability to learn Speaking EFL, and 2) problems related to the lecturer's ability to teach Speaking EFL. This was supported by research done by Arifin (2017), who said that the two main factors that cause the emergence of problems in speaking EFL are factors to do with the lecturer and factors to do with the students. Meanwhile, Alharbi (2015) found three main factors causing the emergence of problems in teaching-learning speaking, namely: (i) the ability of the lecturers in teaching, (ii) the methods used, and (iii) the students don't get enough or make enough opportunities to practice speaking English EFL both inside the classroom and out of it.

From these findings on the results and factors causing the low ability to speak in English, it appears that new methods need to be used to crack these difficulties in speaking and to enable the students to improve their ESL speaking ability. One such method that can be used is the Community Language Learning (CLL) method. This is in line with Fatemi and Adel (2014), who found that CLL is the most effective learning method that can be applied to learn a foreign language at the university level. CLL can be used by lecturers to explain foreign words, pronunciation and/or grammar terms in the class (Cook, 2001). Meanwhile, Anderson and Chung (2011), Chimombo (1993) and Abdullah (2017) found that CLL increased interest, creativity, and student participation in the learning processes for speaking ESL. Nurhasanah (2015) found that CLL was effective to increase the participation and motivation of students in their EFL speaking class and that, as a result their speaking ability improved.

Based on the studies above, this research was done to find out whether the CLL method could improve the EFL speaking skills of 27 students in their second semester studying English, ESL, in the English Department of a private university in West Java in the 2016/2017 academic year. The researcher used the CLL method for teaching speaking ESL to find out if it could improve the EFL speaking ability of these students.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   The Nature of Speaking

Naturally, language uses speaking. Understanding a living language is commonly defined as the ability to understand and to speak the language. Speaking is the ability to use the language for daily communication. Speaking as Gani et al. (2015) and Efrizal (2012) have defined is one of the ways to reveal what is in one's mind orally. Meanwhile, Maharani (2016) defined speaking skill as an ability to produce speech or oral language by comprehending, expressing, and sharing ideas, opinions or feelings depending on the context, the participants, the experience, the environment and the purpose. The last definition comes from Juhana (2012) who said that speaking is a process of building and sharing meaning by the use of verbal and non-verbal signals, in many different contexts. Its purpose is to communicate, either transactionally or interactionally, to send a message. Thus it can be inferred that speaking is an ability used by a person as a tool to express, share and communicate one's ideas, opinions, desires, or feelings to another depending on the context, the participants, the experience, the environment and the purpose.

2.2 Factors Influencing Learning Speaking

As English is used as a tool for international communication, mastering it both in written and spoken form, is a must especially for an English department student. There are many studies which claim that of the four language skills, speaking is considered as the most difficult skill faced by the students compared with the other three: reading, writing and listening (Ahmed & Alamin (2014); Derakhshan et al. (2016); Melendez et al. (2014); Mirhadizadeh (2016); Tuan & Mai (2015). Various factors that influence the learning of speaking include psychology, motivation, anxiety, shyness, fearfulness and lack of confidence. Some studies have shown that anxiety affects the mastery of a second language (Ariyanti, 2016; Arnold, 2011; Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013; Tuan & Mai, 2015). Meanwhile, others (Gani et al., 2015; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Melendez et al., 2014); Subandowo, 2017) found that some linguistic factors influence the learning of speaking, namely vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency and accuracy. In particular some previous studies state that there are two principal factors that influence the learning of speaking EFL namely psychology and linguistic factors.

2.3 The Community Language Learning Method

Community Language Learning (CLL) is a teaching method that can be used by teachers, lecturers and other language practitioners to develop the confidence of EFL students and to motivate them as well as, in this case, help them to improve their EFL speaking ability. CLL is one of the methodologies recommended for teaching in a foreign language setting. It is labeled as a 'humanistic' methodology which involves psychological aspects with students working together to develop their skills in the language that they want to or have to learn. This method was first developed by Charles A. Curran (1976) and his associates which they characterized as the "Counseling-Learning-Theory" where the teacher functions as a counselor and the students function as the clients. This method puts emphasis on the process and on the uniqueness and wholeness of the person and on integrating the personality of the learner into the educational process. For Curran (1976), as was stated by Chimombo (1993), viewed all learning as progressing over five stages paralleling the five stages of human development, via: the first stage is called the embryo, the second stage the fetus, then comes the birth stage followed by adolescence and finally adulthood. In language learning, stage 1 is the stage when the learner (client) knows nothing and totally depends on the teacher (counselor), who knows everything. Then a little bit later she grows up to become an independent learner. In the third stage the learner is increasingly able to say what she wants using her native language with the counselor's help to translate her utterances into the target language. Then there is a basic difference between stages 3 and 4 when the client can present utterances correctly and the counselor's role is only to correct any incorrect utterances and to advise how to make better utterances.

Six steps are recommended when teaching-learning using the CLL Method, via: (i) recording the students' speaking, (ii) transcribing the students' speaking, (iii) reflections on the experiences in the learning process, (iv) reflective listening, (v)self-correction and finally (vi) small group tasks (Nagaraj, 2009).

3. METHOD

This study used a classroom action research (CAR) model that was adapted from the cycle model by Ferrance (2000). The primary reason for using a CAR model is to assist the "actor" in improving and refining "her actions" (Sagor, 2006). The 27 participants in this study were in their second semester studying EFL in the English Department of a private university in West Java in the 2016/2017 academic year. The study was aimed to reveal the students' difficulties in enhancing their speaking ability and to find solutions to those problems by applying a variety of CLL methods as stated by Creswell (2012), CAR is a type of classroom research carried out by a teacher in order to solve problems or find answers to context-specific issues and problems.

Based on these considerations, in this study, the researcher used collaborative action research in which she co-operated with one of the English lecturers from the English Education Study Program at the private university in Cianjur. The lecturer acted as the researcher and also as an observer using the CLL method while the collaborator acted as an independent observer who observed both the researcher and the participants. The lecturer was an active participant who not only functioned as an observer but also participated in taking actions by making the lesson plans and by giving assessments. Then, she collected and analyzed the data together with the collaborator. The study consisted of three cycles each of which involved six steps in this modeling method of research namely: (i) identification of the problem, (ii) gathering data, (iii) interpreting the data, (iv) acting on the evidence, (v) evaluating the result, and (vi) determining the next steps to be applied in the next cycle. Visually, the phases can be seen in Figure 1.
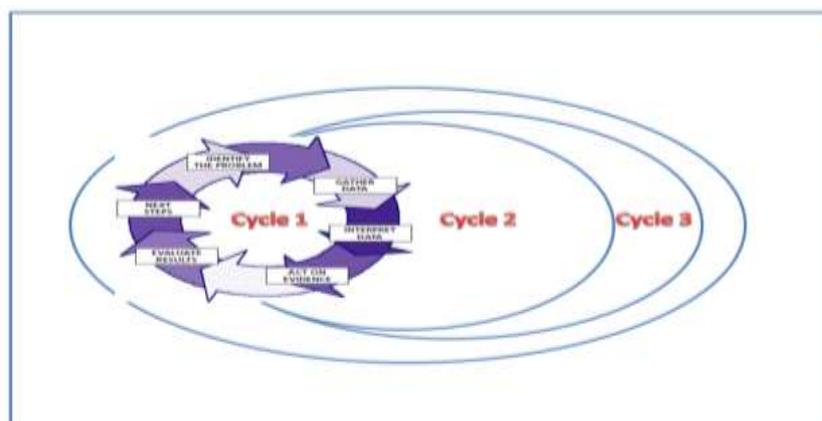

Figure 1. The phases of action.

While implementing CAR in the second semester for these EFL students, the researcher gave the students tests: post-tests 1, 2 and 3 after each cycle. To compare the results from the pretests with those from the post-tests after each cycle, the writer calculated the mean score from the tests, the percentage of the class reaching the pass mark and the improvement in the mean score from the previous test. Interviews were also held to find out the response of the students to the implementation of the CLL. Finally a questionnaire was also used to find out the response of the students to the implementation of the CLL method. The interviews as well as the questionnaire were

done at the end of CAR. The observations were made during the implementation of the CLL processes in the classroom.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results from the Observations

Several things related to the implementation of the CLL method were found from the observation notes. There are always strengths and weaknesses. Each of them was discussed comprehensively by the researcher with her collaborator so that it could become input for future improvements. So that in the end, all the shortcomings were overcome. As an example, at the beginning of the CAR actions the teacher still had difficulties with several things such as time management and class control but then soon after that she corrected her mistakes so that they did not happen again in the next phase. From the students' side, at first they looked confused, puzzled and afraid when they were asked to speak. They still had difficulties in expressing their ideas, their opinions and their thoughts, and they still found it hard to pronounce the new vocabulary and they were also less motivated to follow the teaching-learning processes using the CLL method. Those problems were discussed and analyzed until the CLL method became the solution to those problems so they could be resolved. Therefore, the researcher can say that the CLL method gave a positive impact for the teaching-learning processes in her speaking class.

When the observations were being done during this research, the students were really busy with their activities. Firstly they had to record their speaking for the first time. Then, they had to listen to the recording of their own speech and transcribe what they had said. Afterwards, they had to listen to their recording again and correct their transcription. Next, they had to code their incorrect utterances in terms of ungrammatical utterance, incorrect collocations and mispronounced words. With their friends in their group they corrected their mistakes with guidance from their counselor (teacher). Finally, they had to re-record what they said after it had been corrected and ensure that their corrected speech was written in their notebooks for future learning and review outside of class. Through these activities the teacher-centered class time was reduced and the student-centered class time was increased.

Most of the students were motivated to participate more in the teaching-learning processes for EFL speaking since the CLL methods reduce their anxiety during the teaching-learning processes. They became more confident at speaking in English and were more active in the teaching-learning processes because the CLL method gave them more opportunity to speak during the class activities. They felt more comfortable to speak in front of their lecturer as well as in front of their classmates. They were more interested in learning speaking for they could comprehend the material given by the teacher. They could assess their own work through the recording activities and then they could improve their speaking ability as they corrected their problems. Using the CLL method had enabled them to develop social skills in the teaching-learning processes, which gave them self-esteem to show their ability in using English. It also helped them to solve their problems in learning EFL speaking because they could share with their friends as one of a pair or a group and hence they got feedback from their friends

In this research, the researcher also found some weaknesses. The teacher found it difficult to get contextual material since the material used was decided by the students themselves. The ability to translate the source language to the target language was needed for the writer as their counselor. Controlling the students was more difficult in the teaching-learning processes while applying the CLL since with group work, the students preferred to talk with their friends out of the context of what was being taught and learnt. The recording activities used with this method could also waste much time because some of the students did not have hand phones which could record, and because sometimes their batteries ran out and they did not bring a charger.

4.2 Results from the Questionnaire

Based on the responses to the questionnaire that was given to the students after the fourth action in Cycle 3, the responses are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Responses to questionnaire (in %).

No	Matter of Contention	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Students are more interested in learning EFL speaking after using the CLL method.	70	30	0	0
2	Students are more confident in speaking after teaching-learning using the CLL.	15	63	22	0
3	Students are interested in EFL speaking after teaching-learning using the CLL method.	26	56	18	0
4	Students find it easy to give and to respond to EFL expressions after teaching-learning using the CLL method.	11	63	26	0
5	Students are motivated after using CLL to get used to speaking English and to study more seriously.	56	37	7	0

4.3 Results from the Post-Test

The students' tests were scored by using the scoring rubric based on five aspects of speaking: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and content. The maximum score for each aspect was 3 and the minimum score was 0. Based on the results from their speeches, it was found that the speaking skills of the students improved further within each cycle. The scores from each student in all four tests are set out in Table 2.

To compare the test results between the pretest and between each test, the mean scores from each test, the percentage of the class achieving the passing score, and the improvement in the mean score from one test to the next were calculated and are set out in Table 3.

Table 2. Students' scores from all four speaking tests.

Student Code No	Scores			
	X	X 1	X 2	X 3
S1	53	67	73	87
S_2	80	80	87	93
S3	53	73	73	93
S4	47	67	67	80
S5	87	87	80	80

Table 2 continued…

S6	80	80	60	93
S7	60	60	80	73
S8	60	60	87	80
S9	53	60	87	93
S10	53	60	93	87
S11	53	60	93	87
S12	53	67	60	93
S13	53	60	93	93
S14	60	60	87	87
S15	53	53	80	80
S16	87	87	80	87
S17	67	67	73	80
S18	80	80	87	93
S19	47	60	73	80
S20	47	60	73	80
S21	87	87	93	93
S22	60	67	87	80
S23	60	60	80	80
S24	47	67	87	87
S25	67	67	80	87
S56	60	60	93	73
S27	60	67	87	80
Totals	1654	1695	2057	2272
Averages	61	63	76	84
Maximums	87	87	93	93
Minimums	47	40	60	73
Percentage (%) of class reaching the passing score (DSK)	22	26	89	100

Table 3. The improvement in scores from one test to the next.

Scores	*Pretest*	*Test 1*	*Test 2*	*Test 3*
Totals	1654	1695	2193	2272
Mean scores	61	63	81	84
Improvement in mean scores		2	18	3
Percentage of students (%) reaching DSK	22	26	89	100
Improvement (%) from one test to the next		4	63	11

The following figures show the improvements in the mean scores and percentage of students passing in each test.
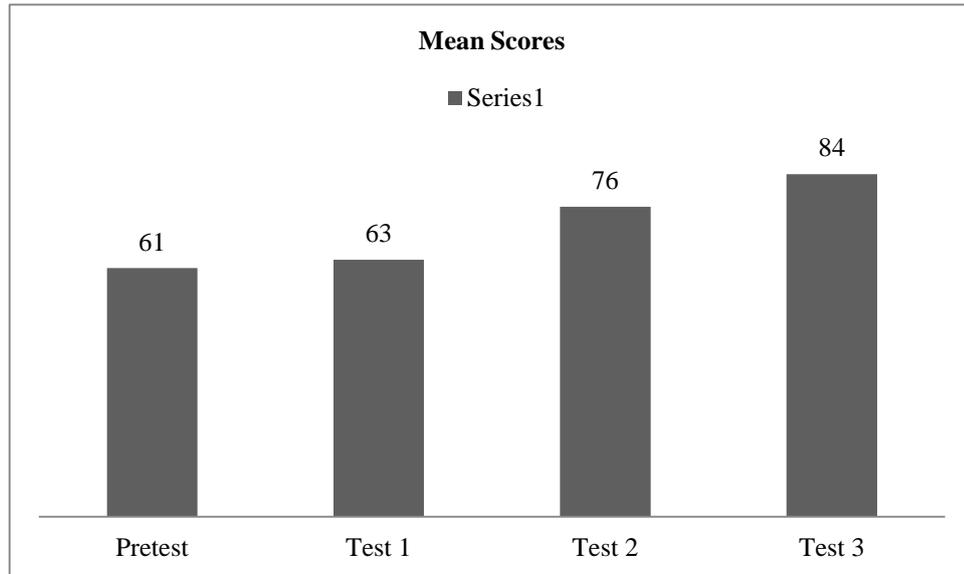
Mean Scores

■ Series1

Figure 2. Mean scores.

Percentage Reaching Passing Score
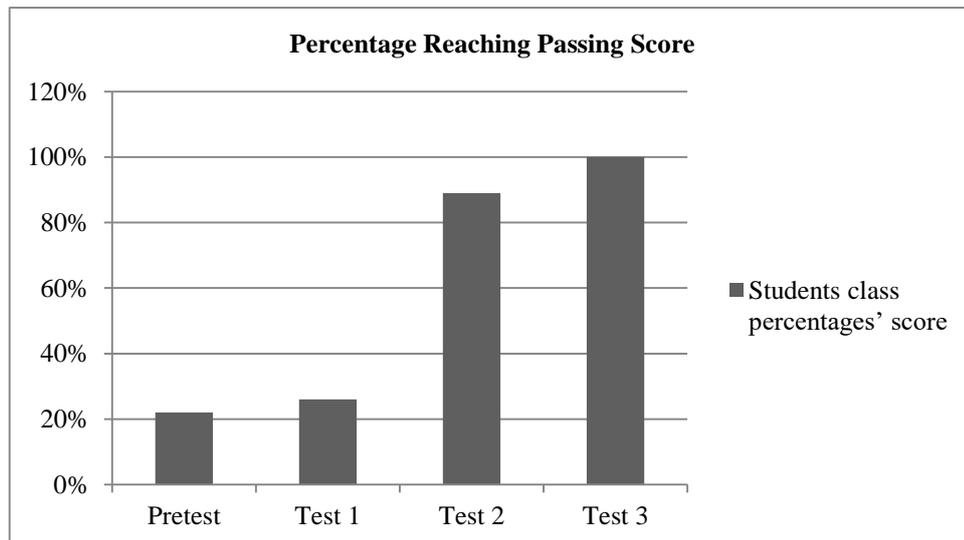
■ Students class percentages' score

Figure 3. Percentages reaching passing score

To wrap up the results, in the pre-test, the mean score for speaking was 61. The percentage of the class who reached the minimum passing score was 22%, i.e. only 6 students reached the minimum pass score of 70. The mean score from post-test 1 after the first cycle was 63 and the percentage passing was 26%. i.e. 7 students passed this time. The mean score from post-test 2 after the second cycle was 76 and the percentage that passed was 89%, i.e. 24 students passed this round. The mean score from post-test 3 after the third cycle was 84 and the percentage that passed was 100%, i.e. all 27 students passed the minimum score this time. Thus, the final results showed that using the CLL method was a success.

4.4 Results from the Interviews at the End of Cycle 3

The researcher carried out post-interviews with the students about the implementation of the CLL method at the end of the third cycle. The aim was to find out the students' views towards the teaching-learning activities using the CLL method. In this case, the researcher divided the questions into three groups, namely: (i) the conditions for the students in the speaking English class during CAR, (ii) the difficulties the students had in implementing the CLL method during CAR and (iii) the opinions of the students about the effectiveness of the CLL method for learning speaking EFL. According to the answers from the interviews, it was found that the conditions of the students after implementing the CLL method were better than before in terms of confidence, participation, enthusiasm, fluency, and understanding the content of EFL speech. They said that the CLL method can create good conditions in which they can learn within their community. It made the students feel comfortable during the teaching-learning and also reduced their boredom and stress.

However, the students further informed that this technique needs good preparation. The more the teacher prepares the more it will lead to success. It also depends on the creativity of the teacher in conducting the phases in the CLL method; the way the teacher translates the speeches, the way the teacher controls the class and the way the teacher manages the time available. In their opinion, the CLL method was very beneficial and had had a good impact on the EFL speaking activities in their classroom.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study showed that using the CLL method as a means of organizing learning activities for speaking resulted in improving the EFL speaking ability of the students. The students enjoyed their lessons more and were more motivated, interested and confident during the teaching-learning sessions. Therefore, the CLL method should be applied in activities designed for teaching-learning EFL speaking. It is recommended that the CLL method should be extended for teaching-learning other language skills, such as phonology, conversation skills, interpreting, and drama.

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