Community Language Learning as a Supportive Approach to Affect EFL Learners' Speaking Skills

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of the Community Language Learning (CLL) method in enhancing the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at SMPN 11 Tarakan. Speaking ability is widely acknowledged as a fundamental component of effective communication in both academic and professional contexts; however, it is often regarded as the most challenging language skill to develop due to affective barriers such as anxiety, low self-confidence, and limited vocabulary. The CLL method was selected as an instructional intervention because it emphasizes collaboration, a sense of community, and learner-centered interaction within a supportive learning environment. Using a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design, the study involved 29 students from class VII-2. The findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking performance following the implementation of the CLL method. Specifically, the mean speaking score increased from 38.62 in the pretest to 63.45 in the posttest, indicating that the Community Language Learning method was effective in improving the speaking skills of seventh-grade students.

I.   Introduction

Speaking is one of the core language skills that students are required to develop in formal education. It functions as the primary mode of oral communication, enabling individuals to articulate thoughts, emotions, and ideas effectively. Beyond its role as a communicative tool, speaking also reflects learners' overall language competence. Speaking involves the ability to produce verbal expressions fluently and appropriately in real time [1]. From a communicative perspective, it constitutes a real-world activity that necessitates interaction and the co-construction of meaning between interlocutors [2]. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), speaking proficiency is frequently regarded as the most challenging skill to acquire because it requires the integration of linguistic competence, confidence, and fluency [3]. Effective speaking ability demands mastery of several language components, including pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and comprehension [4]. Among these components, fluency and confidence pose significant challenges for EFL learners.

Many Indonesian students have trouble in speaking English due to limited vocabulary, anxiety, and fear of making errors. According to [5], students' reluctance to speak is often associated with low self-confidence and insufficient opportunities for practice. Similarly, [6] and [7] report that linguistic constraints, low motivation, and negative emotional factors contribute substantially to students' speaking difficulties in classroom contexts. At the junior high school level, such challenges are commonly observed in Indonesian EFL classrooms. Preliminary

observations and interviews conducted with the English teacher at SMPN 11 Tarakan revealed that students encountered difficulties in both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of speaking. Linguistically, students demonstrated limited vocabulary knowledge and inaccurate pronunciation, while non-linguistically, they exhibited shyness, low confidence, and minimal classroom participation during speaking activities. These conditions often led students to remain passive, depend heavily on teacher guidance, and avoid oral interaction during instructional activities.

To address these challenges in speaking instruction, teachers are required to implement instructional approaches that foster both linguistic development and affective support. Enhancing students' confidence necessitates the use of innovative speaking activities that minimize anxiety and provide opportunities for meaningful practice[8]. Community Language Learning (CLL), developed by Charles Curran in the 1970s, emphasizes cooperation, empathy, and the establishment of a supportive learning community, positioning teachers as counsellors who facilitate communication rather than dominate instruction [9]. This approach is consistent with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which advocates student-centered and collaborative learning practices[10]. Previous empirical studies have demonstrated that CLL is effective in improving students' speaking skills by creating a communicative environment that promotes active participation, emotional security, and comfort in language use [11], [12], [13].

Based on these considerations, the present study focused on the implementation of the Community Language Learning (CLL) method to enhance students' speaking skills. The study aimed to examine the effectiveness of CLL in improving the speaking performance of seventh-grade students at SMPN 11 Tarakan by addressing prevalent affective barriers to oral communication. It was anticipated that the application of this method would foster a collaborative and supportive classroom environment that encourages student participation and enhances English-speaking proficiency.

II. **Method**

This study employed a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design to examine the effectiveness of the Community Language Learning (CLL) method in improving students' speaking skills. This design enables the comparison of learners' performance before and after instructional intervention to determine treatment effects [14] [15]. The study was conducted at SMPN 11 Tarakan during the 2025/2026 academic year and involved 29 seventh-grade students from class VII-2. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on identified difficulties in pronunciation, limited vocabulary, and low speaking confidence. Although purposive sampling allows focused intervention for learners with specific needs [16], it limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the study context.

Data were collected using a picture-based speaking test administered as both a pretest and a posttest. Students were required to orally describe people, and their performance was evaluated across five speaking components: comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, adapted from[1]. Each student was given a minimum of one minute to describe each picture. All responses were audio-recorded and assessed using a standardized scoring rubric to ensure consistency in evaluation.

The instructional treatment consisted of four sessions, each lasting approximately 80 minutes, implemented using the Community Language Learning method. Students worked collaboratively in small groups of four to five members on picture-based speaking tasks focusing on basic description, physical appearance, personality traits, and combined characteristics. During each

session, students engaged in collaborative idea generation, received teacher mediation when translating ideas into English, practiced oral production, and participated in brief reflective activities. These procedures ensured the systematic and consistent application of core CLL principles throughout the intervention.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics were used to compute mean scores for pretest and posttest performance. A paired-sample t-test was employed to examine whether the observed differences between pretest and posttest scores were statistically significant. Prior to inferential analysis, the normality of the data distribution was tested using the Shapiro–Wilk test due to the sample size being fewer than 50 participants. The results indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p > .05$), thereby meeting the assumptions for parametric testing. This analytical approach enabled the study to assess the effectiveness of the Community Language Learning method in enhancing students' speaking performance within a pretest–posttest framework.

III.   Findings And Discussion

Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test Values

Based on the collected data, a total of 29 students participated in the test. Their scores from both the pre-test and post-test were gathered to measure improvement in speaking skills. To provide a clearer overview of the results, the scores were categorized and presented in the table below.

Tabel 1. Classification of Pre-Test and Post-Test

No.	Classification	Score	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
			Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very good	81-100	-	-	-	0%
2.	Good	71-80	-	-	3	10%
3.	Fair	61-70	-	-	15	52%
4.	Poor	0-60	29	100%	11	38%
	Total		**29**	**100%**	**29**	**100%**

Students' speaking scores were classified into four levels: very good (81–100), good (71–80), fair (61–70), and poor (0–60), following the assessment classification used in the Kurikulum Merdeka. Students' speaking performance was assessed using Brown's speaking rubric, which evaluates five aspects: comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Scores from these five aspects were summed and converted into a 0–100 scale. The resulting numerical scores were then interpreted using the Kurikulum Merdeka classification to describe students' overall speaking proficiency levels.

The data show a substantial improvement in students' speaking performance after the implementation of the Community Language Learning method. While all students were initially classified in the "Poor" category, more than half moved to higher proficiency levels in the post-test, with several students reaching the "Good" category. Despite this progress, a portion of students remained in the "Poor" category, indicating that improvement was not uniform across all learners. Although none achieved a "Very Good" score, the overall shift toward higher categories demonstrates that the CLL method effectively enhanced students' speaking skills and engagement

in the learning process. The SPSS version 26 was also used to analyze the data, and the results are presented as follows:

Tabel 2. Minimum, Maximum, and Mean Score (Descriptive Statistics)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Pretest	29	20	60	38.62	10.969
Posttest	29	48	80	63.45	6.478
Valid N (listwise)	29				

The descriptive statistics reveal a significant improvement in students' performance after the treatment. The mean score increased from 38.62 in the pretest to 63.45 in the posttest, while the standard deviation decreased from 10.969 to 6.478, indicating more consistent results. Additionally, the lowest posttest score was higher than the lowest pretest score. These findings suggest that the treatment effectively enhances students' learning outcomes and leads to greater overall consistency in their performance.

Classroom Treatment Using Community Language Learning (CLL)

The classroom treatment implementing the Community Language Learning (CLL) method consisted of four group-based sessions focusing on descriptive topics: basic descriptions, physical appearance, personality traits, and the combination of both. Activities involved warm-ups with pictures, vocabulary drilling, sentence modeling, and guided practice to build students' confidence and participation. Over time, students showed notable improvement in vocabulary recall, sentence construction, and willingness to speak English. Although some students initially struggled with anxiety, limited vocabulary, and hesitation to participate, the supportive group environment of CLL helped them gradually become more active. The teacher's roles as facilitator, counselor, and motivator were essential in maintaining engagement and creating a safe space for communication. Overall, the implementation of CLL led to increased participation, improved descriptive language use, reduced speaking anxiety, and greater confidence in oral communication. This demonstrates that the CLL method, when applied consistently, effectively enhances students' speaking skills and fosters a collaborative, encouraging classroom atmosphere.

The Result of the Normality Test

Tabel 3. The Result of The Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smimov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Pretest	.149	29	.101	.944	29	.124
Posttest	.190	29	.009	.941	29	.104

According to the table above, the significance value of the pre-test is 0.124, and the post-test is 0.104. According to the standard value of $\alpha = 0.05$, both results are greater than 0.05, which

indicates that the data are normally distributed. Therefore, it can be concluded that both the pre-test and post-test data were normally distributed.

Homogeneity of Variance

Tabel 4. The Result of Homogeneity of Variance

Result	Levene Statistic	Df1	Df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	.254	3	20	.858
Based on Median	.146	3	20	.931
Based on Median and with adjusted df	.146	3	16.281	.931
Based on trimmed mean	.228	3	20	.876

According to the data, the significance value was 0.858, which is higher than the significance level of 0.05 (0.858 > 0.05). This indicates that the sample data had homogeneous variance and fulfilled the homogeneity assumption. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted.

Hypothesis Testing

Tabel 5. T-Test

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Posttest-pretest	24.828	9.820	1.824	21.092	28.563	13.615	28	.000

The results of the paired-sample *t*-test indicate a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking performance following the implementation of the Community Language Learning (CLL) method. The analysis revealed a mean difference of 24.828 between the pretest and posttest scores, demonstrating a substantial increase in students' speaking achievement after the instructional intervention. Furthermore, the obtained Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.000 was well below the conventional alpha level of 0.05, indicating that the observed improvement was highly unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Based on these findings, the null hypothesis (H_0), which posited no significant difference between students' pretest and posttest speaking performance, was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted. This result provides strong empirical evidence that the CLL method exerted a statistically significant positive effect on students' speaking skills. The magnitude of the mean difference suggests that the instructional treatment did not merely produce marginal gains but contributed meaningfully to students' oral language development.

From a pedagogical perspective, this statistically significant improvement can be interpreted as evidence that the core principles of Community Language Learning such as collaborative interaction, affective support, and teacher mediation effectively facilitated students' willingness to engage in oral communication. By reducing anxiety and fostering a supportive

classroom environment, CLL appears to have enabled learners to transition from minimal or hesitant speech to more active oral participation. Consequently, the statistical results reinforce the argument that affective-oriented and learner-centered instructional approaches can play a critical role in enhancing speaking performance among lower-proficiency EFL learners.

In conclusion, the paired-sample *t*-test findings confirm that the Community Language Learning method was effective in improving the speaking abilities of seventh-grade students at SMPN 11 Tarakan. The statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores underscores the potential of CLL as an instructional approach for developing speaking skills in EFL contexts, particularly for learners who experience high anxiety and low confidence in oral communication.

IV.   Discussion

The study examined the effectiveness of the Community Language Learning (CLL) method in improving students' speaking skills and found that seventh-grade students in class VII-2 demonstrated a modest improvement in their English-speaking performance following the implementation of CLL. This improvement was reflected in an increase in the mean speaking score from 38.62 in the pretest to 63.45 in the posttest, representing a mean gain of 24.83 points. Although students progressed from an inability to speak to producing simple sentences, their overall fluency and vocabulary range remained limited. This pattern suggests that while CLL facilitated initial oral production, further instructional support is required to develop more advanced speaking competence. The observed improvement may be attributed to the supportive and collaborative nature of the CLL approach, which reduces affective barriers to speaking and encourages learners to attempt oral expression without excessive fear of making errors. Nevertheless, the increase in posttest scores and students' growing confidence indicate that CLL effectively supported their speaking development. These findings are consistent with [17] and [18] , who reported that CLL assists learners in overcoming vocabulary limitations and low confidence through a supportive learning environment. Similarly, [19] and [20] that CLL addresses learners' holistic development by reducing fear and anxiety while fostering motivation and active engagement.

The implementation of CLL also contributed to the creation of a supportive and collaborative classroom atmosphere. Group-based activities facilitated peer interaction, reduced speaking anxiety, and increased participation, particularly among students who were initially reluctant to speak. These findings align with [21] and [22], who reported that student engagement and confidence improve when teachers adopt facilitative rather than authoritative roles. In addition, [23] highlighted that the effectiveness of CLL is closely linked to the teacher's role in demonstrating warmth, empathy, and guidance to help learners overcome emotional barriers. In the present study, the teacher's multiple roles as facilitator, motivator, counsellor, and guide played a significant role in promoting students' active involvement and increasing their confidence in speaking activities.

Despite these positive outcomes, some students remained passive due to limited vocabulary knowledge, fear of making mistakes, and low self-confidence. Addressing these challenges requires sustained teacher encouragement and scaffolding. Similar observations were reported by [24], who found that certain learners continued to experience participation difficulties despite the collaborative nature of CLL. In contrast, the findings of [25] and [26] indicated smoother student engagement and faster adaptation to communicative activities. This discrepancy may be explained by differences in learner characteristics and instructional contexts,

particularly regarding students' age and initial speaking proficiency. As the present study involved lower-proficiency for seventh-grade learners, a longer adjustment period and more intensive teacher support were necessary. These findings suggest that the application of CLL with younger or lower-level learners may require extended implementation and stronger instructional scaffolding.

The study also has several limitations. The absence of a control group restricts the ability to attribute observed improvements solely to the CLL method. Furthermore, the short treatment duration, limited sample size, and focus on general speaking ability constrain the generalizability of the findings [27]. In addition, students' participation and confidence were assessed primarily through classroom observation, without the inclusion of qualitative data from interviews or learner reflection tools. Future research is therefore recommended to employ a true experimental design with control and experimental groups, a larger sample size, and a longer intervention period, as well as to focus on specific components of speaking skills. The inclusion of qualitative instruments, such as interviews or reflective journals, would also provide deeper insights into learners' affective responses and experiences with CLL.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that the Community Language Learning (CLL) method positively influenced students' speaking skills. Although the improvement was modest, the statistically meaningful difference between pretest and posttest scores demonstrates the potential of CLL in supporting students' oral development. Consistent with previous studies, this research suggests that CLL fosters a collaborative, low anxiety learning environment that encourages learner participation in speaking activities. For future classroom implementation, teachers are encouraged to apply CLL more consistently over a longer period, integrate richer vocabulary input, and provide structured speaking scaffolds to support fluency development. Additionally, combining CLL with other communicative instructional strategies may further enhance students' speaking progress, particularly for learners with low initial proficiency.

V. Conclusion

The research findings revealed that the Community Language Learning (CLL) method was effective in enhancing the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at SMPN 11 Tarakan. The comparison between pre-test and post-test results showed a significant improvement, with the average score rising from 38.62 to 63.45. This notable increase indicates that CLL successfully supported students in developing their ability to express ideas orally in English. Using collaborative and student-centered activities, learners became more involved in speaking practices, which in turn improved their fluency and confidence. In addition to the measurable improvement in test scores, the CLL method also had a positive impact on students' motivation and attitude toward speaking English. The approach encouraged learners to communicate without fear of making mistakes, as the classroom environment was designed to be supportive and non-threatening. This reduction in anxiety allowed students to take more risks in speaking, participate more actively, and engage in meaningful communication with peers and the teacher. As a result, students not only improved their linguistic competence but also gained greater self-assurance in using the language.

Furthermore, CLL nurtured a cooperative and empathetic learning atmosphere where students learned from one another through group discussions and shared experiences. Such interactions helped them overcome hesitation and develop a stronger sense of community, which is essential for sustaining language learning motivation. The teacher's role as a facilitator and counselor also contributed to maintaining a positive classroom climate, ensuring that students felt

both emotionally and academically supported. In conclusion, the findings indicate that the Community Language Learning (CLL) method effectively enhances students' speaking ability while simultaneously fostering motivation, confidence, and classroom collaboration. This method not only develops students' linguistic competence but also promotes psychological readiness to use the language in real communication. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to integrate CLL techniques into their speaking lessons to create interactive, enjoyable, and supportive learning experiences that strengthen students' oral proficiency and self-confidence in using English.

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