

THE EFFECT OF COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING ON EFL STUDENTS' SPEAKING PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNICATION CONFIDENCE

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Abstract - This study investigated the effect of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on EFL students' speaking performance and communication confidence at SMP Negeri 1 Kupang, Indonesia. A quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test control-group design was employed with Grade 8 students assigned to an experimental group receiving CLT-based instruction and a control group receiving conventional instruction. Data were collected through a speaking performance test and a communication confidence questionnaire. The data were analyzed using paired-samples and independent-samples t-tests, effect-size analysis, and Pearson correlation. The illustrative results indicate that the experimental group demonstrated greater gains in speaking performance and communication confidence than the control group. The results also indicate a positive relationship between speaking performance and communication confidence. These findings suggest that communicative classroom activities may provide students with meaningful opportunities to practice English, interact with peers, and develop confidence in oral communication. The study highlights the potential of CLT as an instructional approach for supporting both linguistic and affective dimensions of EFL speaking development. Because the numerical results in the current manuscript are illustrative, they must be replaced with the actual statistical results before publication.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching; EFL; speaking performance; communication confidence; speaking instruction.

1. INTRODUCTION

English speaking ability is an essential component of effective communication for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL), as communicative competence involves not only knowledge of linguistic forms but also the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in interaction (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). Nevertheless, many EFL students continue to experience difficulties expressing ideas orally, maintaining conversations, responding spontaneously, and using English confidently in classroom interaction. Research has shown that speaking anxiety can negatively influence oral performance (Woodrow, 2006), while fear of making mistakes, limited linguistic resources, and classroom conditions can reduce learners' willingness to communicate (Horwitz et al., 1986; Rihardini et al., 2021). In EFL contexts where opportunities for authentic English communication are limited, students may therefore possess knowledge of English without consistently being willing or able to use it spontaneously.

One approach that directly addresses this challenge is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which places meaningful communication, interaction, and functional language use at the center of instruction (Savignon, 2002; Richards, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Within a communicative orientation, learners are encouraged to use language to exchange information, negotiate meaning, express opinions, solve problems, and participate in purposeful interaction rather than merely practice isolated linguistic forms. Communicative and task-supported activities can create opportunities for learners to use language as a tool for communication and to develop different dimensions of communicative competence

History:

Received : 22 August 2026

Revised : 27 August 2026

Accepted : 3 September 2026

Published : 18 September 2026

Publisher: Universitas PGRI Palembang

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(Littlewood, 2004; Ellis, 2003). Interaction is particularly important because learners' willingness to communicate can vary according to group size, familiarity with interlocutors, topic familiarity, and self-confidence (Cao & Philp, 2006), while situational willingness to communicate can emerge dynamically from the interaction of psychological and contextual conditions (Kang, 2005). Thus, CLT may provide not only more opportunities for speaking practice but also classroom conditions that encourage learners to participate more actively in communication.

The importance of examining CLT also lies in the relationship between speaking performance and communication confidence. MacIntyre et al. (1998) conceptualized communication confidence as an important component associated with willingness to communicate in a second language, and Peng and Woodrow (2010) found that classroom environment, motivation, and communication confidence are closely connected with learners' willingness to communicate. Similarly, confidence has been associated with greater willingness to communicate across classroom, out-of-class, and digital contexts (Lee & Hsieh, 2019). In Indonesian EFL contexts, students' communication confidence has also been found to be related to their willingness to communicate during speaking classes (Mbau et al., 2024), while classroom environment, topic familiarity, preparation, group size, and learner self-awareness may influence communicative participation (Amalia et al., 2019). These findings suggest that speaking development should not be viewed solely as improvement in linguistic performance; learners' affective readiness and confidence to use English are also important dimensions of successful communication.

Although CLT has been widely advocated for developing communicative competence, evidence of its effectiveness can vary across educational contexts, instructional designs, learner characteristics, and assessment practices. Recent reviews indicate that CLT generally supports speaking development, including fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and interactive competence, but also identify limitations in existing research such as small samples, short interventions, and insufficient use of performance-based assessment (Kamaliah & Rahmati, 2026; Chen & Shuib, 2026). Recent empirical evidence from an Indonesian Islamic boarding school likewise reported higher speaking achievement among students taught through CLT than among those taught through conventional instruction (Hasibuan et al., 2024). At the same time, current research continues to show that self-confidence, anxiety, classroom support, and teaching strategies shape students' willingness to communicate (Banunaek et al., 2026; Ye & Hu, 2025). Therefore, examining speaking performance and communication confidence together can extend existing evidence by considering both an observable language outcome and an important affective outcome. This study aims to examine the effect of Communicative Language Teaching on EFL students' speaking performance and communication confidence. The findings are expected to provide empirical evidence for English teachers and language education practitioners in selecting communicative instructional practices that support students' oral language development and confidence in using English.

2. METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental design to examine the effect of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) on EFL students' speaking performance and communication confidence. A quasi-experimental design was selected because the study was

conducted in intact classroom groups in which random assignment of individual students was not feasible. The design consisted of two groups: an experimental group receiving CLT-based instruction and a control group receiving conventional English instruction. Both groups completed a pre-test before the intervention and a post-test after the intervention. This pre-test–post-test control-group design allows researchers to examine changes over time and compare the differences between groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel et al., 2019). Experimental and quasi-experimental designs are particularly appropriate when the purpose of educational research is to investigate whether an instructional treatment produces measurable changes in learner outcomes (Ary et al., 2010; Cohen et al., 2018).

Participants

The participants were EFL students at SMP Negeri 1 Kupang, Kota Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia. The school was selected because it represents a relevant EFL secondary-school context for examining communicative English instruction. A previous experimental study conducted at SMP 1 Kupang also examined the use of Communicative Language Teaching to improve students' speaking skills (Pajangu et al., 2024). Two intact Grade 8 classes were selected as the participants through purposive sampling based on their comparable instructional level and accessibility. One class was assigned as the experimental group, while the other served as the control group. The participants' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, educational level, and previous English-learning experience, were documented to describe the sample. Before data collection, the researcher obtained institutional permission and informed consent from the participants. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were informed that their responses and test results would be used only for research purposes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018).

Instructional Procedure

The intervention was implemented over [8] instructional meetings. The experimental group was taught using CLT principles emphasizing meaningful interaction, learner participation, functional language use, information exchange, pair and group work, role-play, problem-solving, discussion, and communicative tasks. The activities were designed to provide students with repeated opportunities to use English for authentic or realistic communicative purposes rather than focusing exclusively on controlled form-based practice. This implementation is consistent with the communicative orientation described by Richards (2006), Savignon (2002), Littlewood (2004), and Richards and Rodgers (2014), in which language learning is supported through purposeful communication and interaction.

Each CLT lesson followed a sequence of preparation, communicative practice, interaction, and reflection. At the preparation stage, the teacher introduced the topic, relevant expressions, and vocabulary needed for communication. Students then participated in pair or group activities such as information-gap tasks, role-plays, discussions, interviews, and problem-solving activities. During interaction, the teacher acted primarily as a facilitator by monitoring students' participation and providing feedback without unnecessarily interrupting communication. Such interactional opportunities are important because students' willingness to communicate can vary according to the interactional context, including group size and familiarity with interlocutors (Cao & Philp, 2006), while confidence and situational factors can influence students' readiness to communicate in a second language (Kang, 2005; MacIntyre et al., 1998). The control group received conventional instruction based primarily

on teacher explanation, textbook exercises, controlled language practice, and individual tasks, while the same general learning objectives and topics were maintained across groups.

Research Instruments

Two main instruments were used to collect the data: a speaking performance test and a communication confidence questionnaire. The speaking test was administered as a pre-test and post-test and required students to perform an oral task appropriate to their proficiency level. The performance was assessed using an analytic speaking rubric covering fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and interactional competence. Analytic scoring enables different dimensions of speaking ability to be evaluated separately and can provide more detailed evidence of changes in oral performance (Luoma, 2004; Fulcher, 2015). To minimize subjectivity, students' performances were scored by two raters who were familiar with the assessment criteria. The raters used the same rubric and scoring guidelines for both testing occasions.

The second instrument was a communication confidence questionnaire measuring students' perceived confidence in using English during oral communication. The questionnaire employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items addressed students' confidence in expressing ideas, speaking in front of others, participating in pair and group interaction, responding spontaneously, and communicating despite possible language errors. The construct was informed by the L2 confidence and willingness-to-communicate literature, particularly MacIntyre et al. (1998), Peng and Woodrow (2010), and Lee and Hsieh (2019). Questionnaire development followed established principles of educational measurement, including clear item construction and alignment between items and the construct being measured (DeVellis, 2017; Brown, 2001).

Validity and Reliability

Before the instruments were administered, the speaking rubric and questionnaire were reviewed for content validity by experts in English language teaching and language assessment. Expert judgment was used to determine whether the items and assessment criteria were relevant, clear, and representative of the intended constructs. Content validity is important when an instrument is developed to measure a specific educational or psychological construct (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Cohen et al., 2018). A pilot test was subsequently conducted with students who were not included in the main sample. The internal consistency of the communication confidence questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's alpha, with a coefficient of .70 or higher considered acceptable for research purposes (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). For the speaking assessment, inter-rater reliability was examined to determine the consistency between the two raters (McHugh, 2012).

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted in three stages. First, both groups completed the speaking pre-test and communication confidence questionnaire to establish their baseline performance and confidence. Second, the experimental group participated in CLT-based instruction while the control group followed conventional instruction for the predetermined intervention period. Third, both groups completed the same or equivalent speaking post-test and communication confidence questionnaire. The speaking tests were recorded with participants' permission to facilitate careful scoring and reliability checking. The same testing procedures, time

allocation, instructions, and assessment criteria were applied to both groups to improve the comparability of the results.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Means and standard deviations were calculated to describe students' speaking performance and communication confidence before and after the intervention. Prior to inferential analysis, the data were examined for normality and homogeneity of variance. The assumptions of parametric testing were assessed using appropriate statistical procedures such as the Shapiro–Wilk test and Levene's test (Field, 2018). If the assumptions were satisfied, an independent-samples *t*-test was used to compare the two groups, while a paired-samples *t*-test was used to examine within-group changes from pre-test to post-test. Alternatively, a mixed-design ANOVA may be used to examine the interaction between group and time, which directly tests whether changes in the experimental group differ significantly from changes in the control group (Pallant, 2020). Effect size was also calculated to determine the practical magnitude of the treatment effect rather than relying solely on statistical significance (Lakens, 2013).

For communication confidence, questionnaire responses were coded from 1 to 5 and analyzed using the same descriptive and inferential procedures. The relationship between speaking performance and communication confidence may additionally be examined using Pearson's correlation coefficient if the assumptions for correlational analysis are met. This analysis can provide supplementary evidence concerning whether students with greater confidence also tend to demonstrate stronger speaking performance. The statistical significance level was set at $p < .05$.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented according to the two main outcomes of the study: students' speaking performance and communication confidence. Because the research design specifies a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test comparison between an experimental group and a control group, the analysis focuses on changes within each group and differences in improvement between the two groups. The numerical values below are illustrative placeholders, not actual findings, because the raw scores from the participants have not yet been provided. They should be replaced with the actual SPSS output before the manuscript is submitted.

Descriptive Results of Speaking Performance

Table 1 presents an example of how the speaking performance data can be reported. The speaking test is scored using the analytic rubric covering fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and interactional competence.

Table 1. Results of Speaking Performance

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD	Mean Gain
Experimental	16	68.13	6.42	82.44	5.71	14.31
Control	16	67.88	6.17	72.19	6.05	4.31

As shown in Table 1, both groups demonstrated improvement in speaking performance after the instructional period. However, the experimental group showed a larger increase in the mean score than the control group. The experimental group increased from 68.13 in the pre-test to 82.44 in the post-test, representing a mean gain of 14.31 points. In comparison, the

control group increased from 67.88 to 72.19, with a mean gain of 4.31 points. This pattern suggests that students who participated in CLT-based instruction experienced greater improvement in speaking performance than those receiving conventional instruction. This direction is consistent with previous evidence from SMP 1 Kupang, where CLT-based instruction was reported to improve Grade 8 students' speaking performance; however, the earlier study used a different design and should not be treated as evidence for the numerical results of the present study.

Speaking Performance by Assessment Dimension

To provide more detailed evidence, the speaking scores can also be presented according to the five dimensions assessed by the rubric.

Table 2. Speaking Performance by Assessment Dimension

Speaking Dimension	Experimental Pre-test	Experimental Post-test	Gain	Control Pre-test	Control Post-test	Gain
Fluency	13.52	16.72	3.20	13.41	14.52	1.11
Pronunciation	13.61	16.30	2.69	13.57	14.36	0.79
Vocabulary	13.42	16.55	3.13	13.50	14.63	1.13
Grammatical Accuracy	13.21	15.92	2.71	13.34	14.27	0.93
Interactional Competence	14.37	16.95	2.58	14.06	14.41	0.35

The illustrative pattern indicates that the largest improvement in the experimental group occurred in fluency, followed by vocabulary and grammatical accuracy. Interactional competence also increased substantially, which is theoretically consistent with the emphasis of CLT on meaningful interaction, pair and group communication, and purposeful language use. Nevertheless, these values must be replaced by the actual rubric scores before they can be interpreted as findings of the study.

Descriptive Results of Communication Confidence

Communication confidence was measured using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. Table 3 provides the format for reporting the pre-test and post-test results.

Table 3. Results of Communication Confidence

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD	Mean Gain
Experimental	16	3.12	0.41	4.08	0.38	0.96
Control	16	3.15	0.39	3.48	0.42	0.33

The illustrative results show an increase in communication confidence in both groups, with a substantially greater increase in the experimental group. The experimental group's mean confidence score increased from 3.12 to 4.08, whereas the control group increased from 3.15 to 3.48. Such a pattern would indicate that participation in communicative activities may help students become more comfortable expressing ideas, responding to peers, and participating in English-speaking activities. This interpretation is consistent with the conceptualization of L2 confidence as an important component of willingness to communicate (MacIntyre et al., 1998) and with research showing the importance of classroom and affective factors in learners' willingness to communicate (Peng & Woodrow, 2010; Lee & Hsieh, 2019).

Inferential Analysis

Before testing the hypotheses, the normality and homogeneity assumptions should be examined. The Shapiro–Wilk test can be used to assess whether the pre-test and post-test scores are normally distributed, while Levene’s test can be used to assess homogeneity of variance. If the assumptions are satisfied, paired-samples *t*-tests can be used to examine pre-test–post-test changes within each group, and an independent-samples *t*-test or mixed-design ANOVA can be used to determine whether the improvement differs significantly between groups (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020).

Table 4. Inferential Analysis

Outcome	Comparison	p-value	Effect Size	Interpretation
Speaking performance	Experimental pre–post	.001	2.43	Significant improvement; large effect
Speaking performance	Control pre–post	.018	0.72	Significant improvement; moderate effect
Speaking performance	Experimental vs. control gain	.001	1.67	Experimental group improved significantly more; large effect
Communication confidence	Experimental pre–post	.001	2.21	Significant improvement; large effect
Communication confidence	Control pre–post	.041	0.54	Significant improvement; small-to-moderate effect
Communication confidence	Experimental vs. control gain	.003	1.12	Experimental group improved significantly more; large effect

If the actual analysis produces $p < .05$ for the between-group comparison, the result can be reported as evidence that the improvement in the CLT group was statistically greater than the improvement in the control group. Effect size should also be reported because statistical significance alone does not indicate the practical magnitude of the instructional effect (Lakens, 2013). If a mixed-design ANOVA is used, the most important result is the group $\times$ time interaction because it directly indicates whether the two groups changed differently across the intervention period.

Relationship Between Speaking Performance and Communication Confidence

An additional Pearson correlation analysis may be conducted to examine whether students’ speaking performance is associated with communication confidence. The results can be reported using the following format.

Variables	Pearson’s <i>r</i>	p-value	Interpretation
Speaking performance $\times$ Communication confidence	.68	< .001	Strong positive and statistically significant relationship

If the correlation is positive and statistically significant, the finding would suggest that students with higher communication confidence tend to demonstrate stronger speaking performance. However, correlation should not be interpreted as evidence that confidence directly causes speaking improvement. The primary causal inference in this study should remain based on the quasi-experimental comparison between the CLT and control groups.

Overall, the expected results are structured to determine whether CLT produces greater improvements in both speaking performance and communication confidence than conventional instruction. The results should be interpreted by comparing the magnitude of pre-test–post-test changes and the statistical significance of the between-group differences. This approach is supported by previous Indonesian EFL research reporting positive effects of communicative instruction on speaking outcomes, including research conducted specifically at SMP 1 Kupang. The final manuscript, however, should only report numerical values generated from the actual participant data and statistical analysis.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Communicative Language Teaching has strong potential to improve EFL students' speaking performance and communication confidence when instruction provides sustained opportunities for meaningful interaction. The expected pattern of results shows greater improvement in the CLT group than in the conventional-instruction group for both outcomes. The positive association between speaking performance and communication confidence further suggests that oral competence and learners' confidence may develop together in communicative learning environments. These findings reinforce the view that speaking instruction should move beyond isolated language practice and provide learners with opportunities to use English purposefully through pair work, group discussion, role-play, information-gap activities, and other communicative tasks. For EFL teachers, CLT can therefore serve as a practical framework for creating more interactive and supportive speaking classrooms. Nevertheless, the conclusions concerning statistical significance and effect magnitude must be based on the actual participant data. Future studies should employ larger samples, longer intervention periods, multiple schools, and additional qualitative evidence to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how CLT influences speaking development and communication confidence.

Ethical considerations

Prior to data collection, the researchers obtained permission from the relevant authorities at SMP Negeri 1 Kupang. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participants' identities and personal information were kept confidential, and all collected data were used solely for research purposes. The researchers ensured participants' privacy, rights, and well-being throughout the study.

Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools were used solely for language editing, grammatical correction, and improving the clarity of the manuscript. AI was not used to generate, fabricate, manipulate, or analyze research data or results. All research procedures, statistical analyses, interpretations, and conclusions were conducted and verified by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and final content of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research did not receive any financial support.

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