# Implementing the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach to Enhance Speaking Ability of Grade VIII Students at SMP Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan

**Aprilia Enjelika Munthe[1], Rahmat Huda[2], Khairunnisah[3], Ayunda Sabrina Sormin[4], Rosmita Ambarita[5], Akhmad Tarmizi[6], Muhsin[7], Salma Awae[8]**

[1,2,3,4,5,6]English Education Study Program, Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan, Indonesia.
[7]Education, Universiti Muhammadiyah Malaysia, Malaysia.
[8]Ban Yaning School, Cho-Airong, Narathiwat, Thailand.

**Abstract:**

The goal of the study was to help students become more confident public speakers. The objective is to investigate the efficacy of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) technique in enhancing speaking skills among students at SMPN 3 Padangsidimpuan. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a pedagogical approach that prioritizes communication as the primary objective of language acquisition. This study employs classroom action research, encompassing planning, action, observation, and reflection. The data were acquired by observations, reflections, documentation, and assessments (pre-test and post-test). The implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) technique during the initial cycle demonstrated a gradual enhancement in the students' English speaking proficiency. Improvements were implemented during the learning process in the second cycle. In this second cycle, the English speaking proficiency of grade VIII-1 students improved through the application of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) technique across both cycles. The implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) technique enhances vocabulary mastering among Grade VIII-1 students at SMPN 3 Padangsidimpuan.

*Corresponding Author:* Huda, rahmat.huda@um-tapsel.ac.id

## 1. Introduction

English becomes the most essential language in the world. Many people use it as a medium of communication and it is easier for people who come from different countries to make interactions and communication with other using English. Moreover, in the era of globalization, English plays a key role in many areas including economics, politics, culture, communication and education. In response to this, therefore, in Indonesia, English is very important to be mastered.

Basically, English consists of four skills to be taught. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Recently, speaking has played an increasingly important role in second/foreign language settings as a means of communication in daily life.

Speaking is one of the four skills that the students should master in learning English as a compulsory subject in all levels of education. Many students regard speaking skill measurent of knowing a language. They define fluency as the ability to speak with others, much more than the ability to read, write, or comprehend oral language. By learning speaking, the students know the way to express their ideas, opinions, feelings, and emotion meaningfully. They consider speaking as the most important skill they can acquire, and they assess their progress in terms of their accomplishments in spoken communication. Besides, it also leads them to make interaction in the society by using the language.

Nunan (2003:81) says that speaking is the productive oral skill that consists of producing systematic verbal utterance to convey meaning. Speaking is an important thing for communication. The goal of teaching speaking is communicated orally. Students are expected to be able to understand and communicate in English in daily communication. It is supported by in addition, Brown (2004: 140) states that speaking as productive skill can be directed and empirically observed. The teacher can directly show the students' speaking skill through their speaking performance. It means that the teacher's has a main responsibility to assess the students' mastery on oral language that is to see whether they are able to communicate effectively and to know how far the students comprehend the teaching material by expressing it orally

As language learners who had learned English intensively, the students should be able to interact orally with each other through English. Unfortunately, in teaching and learning of speaking in SMP N 3 Padangsidimpuan grade VIII-1, most of the students have difficulty in their speaking. Based on the observation, the students often had difficulty in pronouncing English words by making some mistakes. Besides, they also had inadequate ability in mastering the English vocabulary and functional expressions for especially in describing their self. Even though describing yourself is the main and important thing if you want to be able to speaking in English.

Describing myself means introducing their self to others by sharing personal information such as name, nickname, origin, hobbies, and interests. It is an essential skill to have when meeting new people in various settings such as school, work, or social gatherings. One can use different phrases to introduce themselves, such as "I want to introduce myself," "May I introduce myself?" or "I'm here to introduce myself." It is also important to highlight positive traits and skills when describing myself, such as being detail-oriented, enthusiastic, self-motivated, creative, and reliable.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method is a method that emphasizes mastery of language structure and mastery of communication simultaneously. So, with the English speech training using the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method aims to improve abilities English to students at SMP Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan. Since the focus of the students' learning goal is the communicative competence as the target language, communicative language teaching (CLT) becomes the popular approach to be applied. Furthermore, communicative language Teaching not merely foster the students' interest in a fun way in their learning process but also can be used to teach new items and

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practice language forms to support the students' language development. As a result, they will be more confident and be more motivated to have a speaking class.

Meanwhile, the fact shows that there were still found difficulties in deciding the teaching techniques and strategy. Monotonous tasks were often given to the students. This condition made the students get bored and felt uninterested to learn. In other words, this certainly affected their motivation to learn. In addition, the use of media in teaching and learning process was limited. Exercise book like "LKS" with brief explanation was mainly used as a medium to give materials to the students. Varied media such as hand out, video, power point, etc. were rarely used in teaching and learning process.

## 2. Speaking
### 2.1 The Nature of Speaking

Speaking is no longer viewed as a simple act of producing sounds or words; instead, it is understood as a complex process involving the construction, negotiation, and delivery of meaning. According to Huda, as cited in Safitriani & Jayadi (2021), speaking is fundamentally the act of delivering meaning through spoken language, where ideas are transmitted using sounds produced by the human speech apparatus. This definition underscores the communicative essence of speaking, emphasizing that it is not just about articulation but about making oneself understood in a social context.

Sudarmo (2021) adds a sociolinguistic dimension by arguing that speaking in a foreign language requires both skillful execution and thoughtful mindfulness. This means that speakers must not only master vocabulary and grammar but also be aware of how their speech is received and interpreted by others. The speaker's ability to tailor their message to the listener's needs—considering tone, context, and cultural norms—is crucial for effective communication. This aligns with the growing emphasis on communicative competence in modern language pedagogy, where fluency, appropriateness, and interactional skills are prioritized over mere grammatical accuracy.

Bailey (2000), as cited in the UMP Repository (2023), reinforces this view by describing speaking as a process where speakers intend to build meaning while receiving and processing information. This highlights the real-time cognitive demands of speaking: speakers must plan their utterances, monitor listener feedback, and adjust their language accordingly—all within fractions of a second. Fulcher (2003) also notes that speaking involves two or more participants who must react to each other's input, making it an inherently reciprocal and adaptive activity.

In classroom settings, these insights have led to a shift toward more interactive and student-centered approaches. Teachers are encouraged to create communicative environments where learners can practice speaking in meaningful contexts. This includes using role plays, discussions, and problem-solving tasks that simulate real-life interactions. The goal is to develop not just linguistic accuracy but also fluency, confidence, and the ability to engage in spontaneous dialogue.

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Mackey (2007: 13) defines speaking as oral expression that involves not only the use of right patterns of rhythm and intonation but also that of right words order to convey the right meaning.In addition, Harmer (2007) states that speaking is a skill which becomes the important part of daily life that it is the way for people to create social relationship as human being. From the definitions above, it can be concluded that speaking is the most important skill of language which is about expressing ideas, opinions, or feelings to others by using words or sounds of articulation in order to inform, to persuade, and to entertainment. While Huda (2018) speaking is one of four language skill, which is basic function of language as communication instrument. It is important for the students to practice their capability and their understanding, how to send idea, and how to spell word well.

In summary, speaking is a multifaceted skill that integrates linguistic knowledge, cognitive agility, and social awareness.

## 2.2 Speaking Aspects

Brown (2001) states that there are some aspects of speaking such as pronunciation, vocabulary, fluency, accent, and grammar, that should be mastered in order to be able to speak well. As a complex activity, speaking has three main aspects as;

*1) Accuracy*

Accuracy in speaking is the use of correct form of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Those three parts involve together in making accurate utterance. Pronunciation is a basic quality of language learning especially in speaking ability. It concerns the way we say, articulate, assimilate, intonate, and stress words. Having poor pronunciation skill can obscure communication and prevent us from making meaningful utterances. Harmer (2007) states that pronunciation teaching is not only making the students are able to differentiate sounds and sound features, but also improving their speaking ability immeasurably such as to concentrate on sounds and be aware of using stress when producing sound. Vocabulary is a foundation of a language. To create meaningful utterance or sentences, it needs to use appropriate vocabulary to express something.

In other words, the requirement for students who want to have a good speaking ability is mastering vocabulary. Harmer (2007) says that if the students have more vocabularies or at least 1000 words, they can communicate fluently. They do not take a long time in expressing what they are going to say because they know the words that describe their ideas.

Grammar is very important in speaking accuracy as sated by Nunan (2003:154) grammar usually can be thought as a set of rules specifying the correct pattern of words at sentence level. If our conversation is full of grammatical mistakes, your ideas will not get across so easily. Studying grammar rules will certainly help students speak more

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accurately. Those three parts are very important elements to accomplish the accuracy in the effort of being able to speak well.

2) Fluency

Fluency is speaking at a normal speed without hesitation, repetition and with smooth use of connected speech. It deals with how comfortable students are when they speak, how easily the words come out and whether there are great pauses and gaps in the students speaking. It is a parameter of students" speaking ability goal. It deals with the quality of the way they speak fluently.

Fluency refers to the ability to speak smoothly and effortlessly. According to Wong Foong Yoong and Harwati Hashim (2023), fluency is not just about speed but also about maintaining coherence and continuity in speech. Learners must be able to express ideas without frequent pauses or hesitation, which reflects their comfort and confidence in using the language

3) Accent

Language accent of one speaker and other is different. This is because every person has their own way in saying words depending on the cultures the speakers have. Roach (2009) states that there is no speaker who can be taken to represent a particular accent or dialect in this world.

Sarah Lee (2025) accent specifically refers to phonetic and phonological characteristics. It is shaped by a speaker's geographical location, cultural background, and socioeconomic status, and can affect intelligibility, listener perception, and social judgments. In second language acquisition, accent plays a crucial role in identity and communication. Learners may retain features of their first language phonology, resulting in a foreign accent, which can influence how they are perceived socially and professionally. While some accents are celebrated for their cultural richness, others may be stigmatized, leading to efforts in accent reduction or modification, especially in professional or academic settings.

Ultimately, accent is not merely a deviation from a "standard" pronunciation but a reflection of linguistic diversity and personal identity. Linguists emphasize that all accents are valid and natural variations of speech, and understanding them is key to appreciating the richness of human language.

4) Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the articulation of sounds in a way that is intelligible to listeners. Monib and Rahman (2023) stress that pronunciation affects both intelligibility and listener perception. Poor pronunciation can hinder communication even when vocabulary and grammar are correct. Therefore, pronunciation training is essential, particularly for learners from phonologically distant language backgrounds.

Pronunciation is defined as the manner in which speech sounds are produced and perceived, encompassing segmental elements (individual sounds) and suprasegmental features (stress, intonation, rhythm). According to Pennington (2021), pronunciation is a

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vital component of communicative competence, influencing intelligibility and listener comprehension. She notes that pronunciation was once sidelined in favor of meaning-focused instruction but has regained prominence due to its role in enhancing fluency and clarity.

Kunová (2025) emphasizes that pronunciation instruction must address both the physical articulation of sounds and the cognitive processes behind speech production. Her review highlights the integration of digital tools, mobile-assisted learning, and AI-driven feedback as emerging trends in pronunciation teaching.

Nguyen (2024) adds that pronunciation is not just a mechanical skill but a social one, shaped by learners' beliefs, exposure, and classroom practices. He advocates for communicative pronunciation teaching, which improves learners' intelligibility and confidence in real-world interactions.

5) Grammar

Grammar is the structural framework of a language, governing how words are combined to form meaningful sentences. It includes syntax (sentence structure), morphology (word formation), and usage rules. While recent sources did not provide direct grammar definitions, contemporary linguists consistently affirm grammar's role in supporting accuracy, coherence, and clarity in both written and spoken communication.

Modern grammar instruction emphasizes contextual learning, where rules are taught through meaningful use rather than rote memorization. This aligns with communicative language teaching principles, which integrate grammar into authentic tasks to promote both fluency and correctness. Grammar underpins sentence construction and meaning. While some communicative approaches prioritize fluency, updated research advocates for balanced instruction that integrates grammar to support both spontaneous and structured speech.

## 2.3 Descriptive Text

Descriptive text is widely recognized in language education as a genre that focuses on detailing the characteristics of a subject to create a mental image for the reader. According to Anderson & Anderson (2003), descriptive text is designed to describe a particular person, place, or thing in a way that allows the reader to visualize it as if they were seeing it firsthand. This type of text relies heavily on sensory details—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch to enrich the reader's experience and understanding.

Pardiyono (2007), cited in Sumarsih and Sanjaya (2013), defines descriptive text as a paragraph that has the specific function of giving a clear and detailed description of an object to the reader. He emphasizes that the purpose of descriptive writing is not just to inform but to paint a vivid picture using language. This involves using adjectives, adverbs, and figurative language to convey the subject's appearance, behavior, and emotional impact.

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The structure of descriptive text typically includes: 1) Identification: Introducing the subject being described; 2) Description: Elaborating on the subject's features, qualities, and attributes, 3) This genre is commonly taught in secondary education as part of writing development, helping students learn how to express observations and impressions effectively.

## 2.4 Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged in response to the limitations of traditional grammar-based methods. It focuses on enabling learners to use the target language effectively and appropriately in real-world situations. According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), CLT aims to make communicative competence—the ability to convey and interpret meaning in context—the central goal of language instruction.

David Nunan (2001) adds that CLT is grounded in the idea that communication requires not only grammatical knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in various social contexts. This means learners must develop skills in fluency, interaction, and strategic communication, not just accuracy.

Merlissa Elpedes Suemith (2017) explains that CLT is a comprehensive approach that prioritizes learners' communicative needs. It shifts the teacher's role from a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of learning. In CLT classrooms, students engage in tasks such as role plays, interviews, and group discussions that simulate authentic communication.

Richard (2006:2) can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. Meanwhile, Harmer (2001:84) defines communicative language teaching as a set of beliefs which includes not only a re-examination of what aspects of language to teach but also a shift in emphasis in how to teach. In other word, both what to teach aspects which stress on the significance of language functions and how to teach which concerns to the use of language forms take important part in communicative language teaching. From the definitions mentioned above, we know that communicative language teaching emphasizes the reaching goal of the teaching communicative competence in which the students are more actively involved to develop their ability.

Communicative Language Teaching has apects, namely 1) grammatical competence: knowledge of the sentence structure of alanguage; 2) sociolinguistic competence: the ability to use language in a given communicative context, taking into account the roles of the participants, the settings, and the purposes of the interaction, 3) discourse competence: The ability to recognize different patterns of discourse and to connect sentences or utterances to an overall theme or topic; the ability to infer the meaning of large units of spoken or written texts; also called textual competence, 4) strategic competence: The ability to anticipate imperfect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules or limiting factors in their application such as fatigue,

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distraction, and inattention. Also, the effective use of coping strategies to sustain or enhance communication.

Besides the characteristics of CLT dealing with teachers and learners roles, CLT pays less attention to the overt presentation of grammar rather than emphasizing the explicit explanation of grammatical rules, (Brown, 2007).However, CLT does not exclude grammar. CLT proposes that grammatical structure might be better understood "within various functional categories" (Brown, 2007).

## 3. Method

This research was action research study that deals with the use of Communicative games to improve the speaking skill of grade VIII-1 students of SMP N 3 Padangsidimpuan. It focused on the efforts to improve the real condition of the English teaching and learning process. This research study was implemented in the form of collaborative action research. The research was conducted collaboratively with the headmaster, the English teacher, and the students of grade VIII-1 of SMP N 3 Padangsidimpuan.

Arikunto (2010) explains that sampling method is how to organize various techniques in drawing or taking research samples, how we design sampling procedures so that the samples taken can represent a larger population. Sampling techniques that can be used include random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling, and purposive sampling, and researchers chose the simple random sampling technique as research sampling because researcher chose samples based on randomization. So, the researcher chose one class to be the research sample, whose number of students is 30 students.

Data collection techniques used to obtain data research is by means of: a. Through the process, namely: (1) observation to obtaining process data collection is data collection through systematic direct observation of the problems to be studied, then making notes. then make notes. The type of observation used is direct observation, (2) through an observation sheet made by the subjects/participants involved in the research, (3) documentation (photos) are photographs taken at the time of research implementation, (4) field notes, namely field notes, namely researcher notes during implementation in the form of either shortcomings or what needs to be added and maintained through the evaluation aspect of the test result test results in the form of question items to see the extent of the level of improvement of speaking skills during the implementation of class action in each cycle.

Data collection techniques used to obtain data, there are two types of classroom research, namely tests and non-tests. Test technique for material research data in the form of the results of improving English speaking skills. English speaking skills. The test in this study was used to measure students' abilities during the given action. Tests conducted at

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the end of action as a result of the action given. In this research oral test was used as an assessment technique in improving speaking skills. (speaking test/oral test).

In addition, to using test techniques, in this study also used non-test techniques. non-test technique. This technique is to filter action monitoring data (action) i.e. data on the learning process during the action given. Data monitoring teacher and student activities will be obtained through (1) direct observation (1) direct observation when students apply Communicative Language Teaching in the learning of English speaking skills, and (2) field notes during the implementation of the research whether it is about the shortcoming or what needs to be added or about the advantages that need to be maintained, (3) through observation sheets made by the subjects/participants involved in the research, (4) documentation of the research, documentation (photos) are photographs taken during the implementation of the research.

To get the data needed in the research conducted, the researcher used written assessment as an oral assessment technique as an assessment technique in the improvement of speaking skills (speaking test/oral test) of VIII grade students in English subject. Meanwhile, to get data about the use of imperative moods in learning English speaking skills, the researcher used observation sheets as a research tool. The instruments used in this study were observation sheets, as well as documentation. Speaking ability is the score obtained through oral tests with instruments in the form, taken from the competency standards and basic competencies determined including in the linguistic aspects there are: Comprehension, Fluency, Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Grammar.

Data management in this study was carried out by: 1) field checking; 2) data tabulation and 3) data analysis. In this study, the analysis used was descriptive and percentage techniques. After analysing the data obtained, it is used as a guideline for improvement in the next cycle. To determine the achievement of English-speaking ability the research data obtained from the results of the research. The technique used in analysing the collected data is by calculating the percentage of speaking ability students in the achievement of English learning implementation. If the first action has not been successful, then it will be continued to the next action, until it appears that the achievement of speaking ability has been achieved. action, until the achievement of English-speaking abilities through the use of the speaking abilities through the use of Communicative language teaching method.

The success criteria of English-speaking ability in this study were ≥80% of the total number of students achieved an oral test score of speaking test score ≥80%. The success criteria in the process of learning process of English-speaking learning which includes teacher and student activities in activities of teachers and students in learning using the CLT method in this This research reached ≥ 80%. If the achievement of learning implementation reading comprehension learning implementation in cycle, I have not reached the set target, then cycle II and so on until it reaches the target. then cycle II is carried out and so on until it reaches the specified target. determined.

Data from students' speaking tests if the number of students who scored ≥80 has reached ≥80% of the total number of students in the class then the research is said to be

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successful. As for monitoring data for teachers and students, if the score has reached a percentage of ≥ 80% then the research is said to be successful. research is said to be successful, but if it has not reached a percentage of ≥ 80%, then the research is continued to the next cycle. then the research continues to the next cycle. Therefore, if all indicators that have been determined have met the completeness of the research. (achieving a score of ≥80) then it can be interpreted that the understanding of mastery of students' speaking skills by using the CLT method has Improve.

## 4. Results

The results of the pre-test conducted before the researcher implemented the action and communicative language teaching approach which became the core of the study. Based on the results, there were only 7 students who were able to obtain a good score with a score of 17-22. However, there were 25 students who still belonged to the low score criteria with a score of 5-16. The highest score achieved was 22 while the lowest score reached 5.

The implementation of CLT approach in improving English speaking was conducted in 2 cycles of classroom action research. This action was carried out to measure students' ability to master English speaking. in addition, this action was carried out to prove that the CLT method is one of the effective language teaching approaches to be used by teachers/tutors. to find out the achievement of students' scores after learning for 2 learning cycles, the following are the results of the post-test conducted.

Based on the applying of the Communicative language teaching method carried out with two cycles, the Pre-test is an initial test conducted by researchers to determine and measure students' ability to speak English and the Post-test is the final test conducted by researchers to measure students' development in speaking English after applying the communicative language teaching method. After seeing the results of the analysis found, it can be compared between students' achievements through pre-test and post-test scores. In the pre-test results, there were no students who reached the expected criteria of very good with 87% achievement. The pre-test results only reached 10% while the post-test results showed a very rapid increase. The results of the student post-test after learning through 2 cycles have reached the expected criteria of 87%. Thus, it is evident that there is an increase in student scores after learning using the CLT method.

## 5. Discussion

The implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method in Grade VIII at SMP Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan demonstrated significant progress in enhancing students' English-speaking abilities. CLT, as a learner-cantered approach, emphasizes interaction, real-life communication, and the development of communicative competence. This study applied CLT across two instructional cycles, with measurable improvements in student performance and engagement.

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In Cycle I, students showed moderate achievement, with only 50% meeting the expected speaking criteria. This initial phase revealed several challenges, including limited vocabulary, low confidence, and hesitation in expressing ideas orally. However, the introduction of CLT activities—such as role plays, group discussions, and interactive games began to shift the classroom dynamic from teacher-centred to student-centred. These activities encouraged learners to use English in meaningful contexts, fostering both fluency and motivation.

By Cycle II, student performance increased by 37%, reaching the target of 87% proficiency. This improvement can be attributed to the consistent use of CLT strategies that prioritized communicative tasks over rote memorization. Students became more confident, actively participated in speaking exercises, and demonstrated greater willingness to take risks in using the language. The use of authentic materials and contextualized instruction helped bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication.

The application of CLT also had broader cognitive and affective impacts. Students were stimulated to think creatively, as they were encouraged to express personal opinions, narrate experiences, and solve problems collaboratively. Their attention to the learning process increased, as CLT activities were engaging and relevant to their interests. Moreover, students began to organize their own learning strategies, showing improved self-regulation and confidence in speaking. The imaginative nature of CLT tasks—such as storytelling and scenario-based dialogue—also contributed to vocabulary growth and enhanced expressive ability.

These findings align with recent research that supports CLT as an effective method for developing speaking skills. According to Wang et al. (2022), communicative approaches foster interactional competence and fluency, while Nguyen (2024) emphasizes the role of learner autonomy and contextual learning in pronunciation and oral proficiency. The results from SMP Negeri 3 Padangsidimpuan affirm that CLT not only improves linguistic outcomes but also nurtures critical thinking, engagement, and learner independence.

In conclusion, the efforts to apply CLT in this study proved successful in transforming the speaking abilities of Grade VIII students. The method's emphasis on meaningful communication, learner interaction, and contextual relevance makes it a powerful tool in language education. Future implementations may benefit from integrating technology-enhanced CLT activities and expanding the approach to other language skills such as listening and writing.

## 6. Conclusion

The implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach was conducted across two instructional cycles. In the first cycle, student achievement reached 50%, while in the second cycle, scores improved by 37%, successfully meeting the target criterion of 87%. These results demonstrate that CLT is an effective method for enhancing students' English-speaking skills. Its application significantly contributes to the

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development of learners' oral proficiency by fostering creative thinking, increasing engagement in the learning process, encouraging self-management and confidence, and stimulating imagination to support vocabulary expansion.

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