

# IMPROVING SPEAKING ABILITY THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

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## ABSTRACT

*Speaking ability is very important to have good communication, especially in international communication. The English learners should have this ability and they must focus the learning on speaking skill. The learners' failures in learning speaking were caused by the inappropriateness of the strategy or method learning. It happened to them unconsciously. It means they are not aware of making inappropriateness in the method. The appropriate method should be applied in learning so that the success can be achieved.*

*To realise the success in improving speaking ability can be done by using community-based learning method. The learning communities should be made to conduct the community-based learning. In these learning communities, the process of learning speaking can be applied like it is in real communities.*

*Real-like communities makes the learning process run well, because the condition is like the reality. The good process in learning makes the learners feel in the real society and feel enjoyable and comfortable. If the learners have good feeling, they will learn speaking eagerly and spiritfully, so they will be successful in learning, especially speaking.*

**Key words:** *Speaking, community-based, and learning*

## 1. Introduction

Communication is an activity which we do in our everyday life. We use a language or some languages to have communication. There are some languages used in global communication, such as English, Mandarin, French, etc., but English is one that is very popular for communication, especially for our ears as Indonesian people. Moreover, Indonesia, as a developing country must have English as a means of communication to interact with other countries, to make good relationships, to cooperate bilaterally or multilaterally with them, so English has a very important role for Indonesia. English becomes a foreign language in Indonesia and it is taught at schools from Elementary school until university. It becomes a subject that should be given at schools.

There are four English basic skills that must be achieved by the students when they are learning English. They are speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. Those skills are very important. The learners' ability of those skills is the aim of the learning English. It means that if the learners are successful means they have speaking, listening, reading, and writing ability. In other words, we can say when they have good command on those basic skills they can communicate very well. Teaching and learning English has been

conducted for a long time in Indonesia, however the result is unsatisfied. Although the learners have been learning English for years, at least three years in Elementary School, three years in Junior High School, three years in Senior High School, and in University, not all of them have good ability in English.

There are a lot of teaching/learning methods that have been applied in teaching English, such as: grammar translation method, direct method, audio lingual, humanistic, communicative language teaching, principle eclecticism, etc. In reality, the teachers and learners do not apply only one method, but they use some methods in teaching or learning, like the Principled Eclecticism approach which is fitting the method to the learner, not vice versa. It means that they choose the techniques and activities that are appropriate for each particular task, context and learner, with a focus on motivation and helping learners become independent and inspired to learn more. Based on those statements above, there is not one single best method for everyone in all contexts, and that no one teaching method is inherently superior to the others. In this paper, the community-based learning method is a method that is applied out of the formal or regular teaching learning process.

These conditions above inspire the writer discuss "Improving Speaking Ability through Community-Based Learning". This

topic will be clarified as follows: Improving is to make something better, to increase the value or productivity of something, Speaking is the action in conveying information or expressing one's feelings in speech, Ability is possession of the means or skill to do something, Through is by means of, Community is a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common, Based is having a base, and Learning is the acquisition of know-ledge or skills through study, experience, or being taught.

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Community, in this paper, means the speech community. According to Kumar, speech community is a concept in sociolinguistics that describes a more or less discrete group of people who use language in a unique and mutually accepted way among themselves. Speech communities can be members of a profession with a specialized jargon, distinct social groups like high school students or hip hop fans, or even tight-knit groups like families and friends. Members of speech communities will often develop slang or jargon to serve the group's special purposes and priorities. On the other hand Lyons (1970), for example defines speech community as people who use a given language. Taylor (1979) defines speech community as people categorized in a social organization speaking the same language. Bloomfield (1933) defines it as a group of people who interact by means of speech.

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It can be concluded that speech community is a specific community that uses or shares the same language. It can be a small community, such as a family, or wide one, such as a nation. In this case, the speech community can be as media for the English learners to learn English like in a real condition of native speakers. The examples of learning English using community-based learning are: Kampung English in Pare East Java, Faculty of Letters University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, and Students' Boarding House. So, community-based learning is a learning method that uses a community (speech community) as a media to learn something. The speech community here is not actually the natural community, because it is build based on some conditions or requirements. The requirements are (1) the aim,

(2) the members of community, (3) the commitment, (4) the regulations and (4) the community.

The aim means the achievements that the learners get after they have learned, such as learn English. The members of community are the learners who will join to learn in the speech community. They are whoever who likes to learn, such as students and workers. The commitment is the learners' self-agreement in conducting the learning. The regulations are the rules that are constructed to support the success of learning. It can be a dean decree, and implementation rules. The community is a place that is set to conduct the learning process. It can be a campus, schools, boarding house, family, etc.

In this study, the aim is only to improve speaking ability. By focusing the speaking skill the learners also study the other skills (listening, writing, and reading) because those skills are actually inter-related each other. The members are the students of Faculty of Letters UMP. They commit to do this method. The regulations was made by the dean. The community here is only limited at Faculty of Letters area.

## **2. Discussion**

Implementing the community-based learning method is very enjoyable, because the learners study the language like in real community. At first, it looks a bit complicated because of the word community. As if, the word community covers a wide range area and it will be difficult to manage. Remember that a speech community can refer a small community such as a family, a boarding house, classroom, school, campus, etc. The process of leaning will run very well by applying all the requirements as mentioned above. If there is one requirement that is not done, of course the method cannot work. The community-based learning method formerly began with trial and error of the requirements.

Making the learners are able to speak English fluently was the aim of Faculty of Letters since it was first founded. Some activities to support their success in learning English have been conducted, such as English Day, Everyday is English Day, Students' Discussion Forum, Study Club, Speaking English Area, etc. It seems that all those activities formerly do not run very well. It works only temporarily. In fact,

the failures of those programs are caused by no regulation or if there are some, the regulations do not work well. Those programs were only made without strict regulation. Finally, a regulation must be formulated. The dean made a decision letter about the use of English for everyday communication in Faculty of Letters by all civitas academica (the lecturers and the students).

This decision letter is a gate for the civitas academica to conduct the activities in English, such as meeting, lecturing, everyday communication, etc. This condition means that as if there is a new community (speech community) that exist at Faculty of Letters that small community that use English as a means of communication. As if the learners live in a native English country. So it can be said that in learning English, they use a community-based learning method. The requirements are (1) the aim, (2) the members of community, (3) the commitment, (4) the regulations and (4) the community.

The steps of using the community-based learning method are (1) making the requirements, (2) implementation, and (3) supervision.

The requirements must be as complete as possible, as if there is no chance to break. It should be like a law. For community-based learning method, the contents of aim, members, and regulations can be different but not for commitment and community, because both are the compulsory condition for the speech community. It seems that the commitment is very important here whether it is in small or wide community.

The implementation step is a real condition of the method which, at first, there will be a lot of problems but then it will run as usual. The problems may be a feeling of shy, afraid of supposed of being boastful, lack of vocabulary, and bad grammar. Shyness and afraid of supposed of being boastful problems will not last very long. The shyness can be solved if the learners practice speaking English often. Afraid of supposed of being boastful can be omitted by thinking positively to everyone and be self-confident that the use of English in speaking because of learning only.

The lack of vocabulary and bad grammar can make the learners feel shy and reluctant to speak so they will become silent learners. It can be anticipated as long as the learners consistent in learning. The more they communicate with other members, the sooner they improve, and

the better their English will be. It is because they will use more and various vocabulary. They also study diction or how words choose to match appropriate utterances. The more they make mistakes in grammar, with the help of other members' correction, the more they learn grammar.

There will be some silent learners in this community. If it is, so other member should be more active to invite them to speak or to make conversation with them. Maybe, they are silent because they are lack of vocabulary, or maybe they are not really self-confident to speak. So, the learners should be helpful each other. Active learners must always help the silent learners. Interpersonal relationship is very necessary here. It is actually like in the real society.

The other problem is that the learners often speak dialect/mother tongue such as Javanese and Indonesian language secretly. But this problem will not happen if the other members do not like to do so, or reluctant to do so, or scold them who speak unintended language. There are also some fines for the learners who do not obey the rules.

Supervision plays an important role in implementing this method. It also determines the success of this method. It can be done by an individual, team, or all members of the community. It depends on the number of the learners and how wide the area is. Small community is enough to be supervised by one person, and the large one needs more supervisors. It can be done by a team or all members can be as supervisors. However, if the learners have strong commitment in doing this method, the supervision step as if does not function because every learner certainly try to do the best and will control themselves. The supervision will really work if the learners do not have good commitment or if there are a lot of learners.

The supervision is done in the implementation step to know how good the process of learning takes place and how good the requirements are implemented. It also functions to check the learning materials which are not applied correctly, especially the grammar, pronunciation, and diction. Those mistakes can be revised directly in the time of speaking or in the regular teaching-learning process, or in the discussion forum.

The community-based learning can increase the learners' motivation to learn the materials they want to know and create some

activities that support the learning materials and the learning success. Increasing the learners' motivation makes the learners find as many as materials that they need in communication, such as trying to find the vocabulary that often used in conversation or to find the ones that are very typical. Motivation can also make them create some more activities, such as making writing club, translation club, or even speaking club.

Applying this method, the learners feel enjoyable because they behave like in the real native community. As if they live in a native speaking country. The result of applying this method is that in fact the students of English Department of Faculty of Letters University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto mostly use English as a means of communication in the campus area.

### 3. Conclusion

Community-based learning method is a method of learning that can be applied to learn language. It is very functional because the learners learn the language like in real community. It is conducted out of the formal or regular teaching learning process that usually done in the classroom. It will run as naturally as possible like the learners live in the society.

There are some requirements in using this method, they are the aim, the members of community, the commitment, the regulations and the community which should be done to realize the method. Those requirements are interrelated so the method should have at least those requirements.

There are three steps in implementing this method, they are making the requirements, implementation, and supervision that must be applied relatedly to function well and to achieve the learners' success. When the commitment has worked very well then then supervision has less function.

Some learning problems such grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation can be solved in this method. It also increase the learners' motivation which is needed in learning.

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