

# Integrating Inquiry and Learning Community in Teaching Speaking: An Experimental Study

Barep Sarinauli<sup>1</sup>✉, Sabirin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Mahakarya Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia,

<sup>2</sup> Public Administration Sciences, Universitas Gajah Putih, Aceh, Indonesia

✉ email: barep.sarinauli@ummah.ac.id

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## ABSTRACT

Language performance is the output of an individual's language learning. In specific, speaking may serve as an indicator of students' language skills. Second graders at a private secondary school, Maqamam Mahmuda, Takengon, Indonesia, had poor proficiency in this skill, particularly in English, with a median score of 34. The inefficient teaching and learning methods were to blame for this low achievement. As a result, it was proposed that a focused approach to the learning process be used. This study aims to determine whether integrating the inquiry and learning community may improve students' English-speaking skills. It is expected to encourage students' engagement in a learning group, predominantly speaking. In detail, the study focuses on how appropriately students perform in simple dialogue and monologues, and personal recounts following social function, general structure, and appropriate and contextual language elements. An experimental strategy using a one-group pretest and post-test design was employed to accomplish the study's objective. Twenty pupils were randomly chosen as the treatment sample from a total population of 58 students. The outcome demonstrates that the students' comprehension and pronunciation of English were significantly enhanced, from 34 to 60. The finding promotes the approach as a positive way to enhance students' interest, comprehension, and confidence to speak in classroom interactions.

**Keywords:** Aceh; English; Experiment Study; Inquiry and Learning Community; Teaching speaking.

## INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak and listen are cornerstones of effective language use. Nunan (1999) believes that the learner's prior experiences help them improve their speaking performance. Through listening, children grasp the information to speak (Cahyono & Widiati, 2015; Ivone, 2005). In some cases, adolescents need a boost to comprehend the information through visual (Kamarullah et al., 2018) and interactive supports (Kamarullah et al., 2016). Listening ability may even come first for some children before they learn to talk (Harmer, 2022; Nunan, 1999). McKay (2005) claims that listening and speaking constitute the 'foundation' of language acquisition. Children learn to read and write by listening to and talking with adults and other children.

Our preliminary study, which took place on October 14-15, 2022, in a secondary school in the Central Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia, revealed that students

were unable to develop performance English skills in straightforward dialogue and monologue within the personal recount under social function, generic structure, and language features correctly and in context. In addition, our preliminary study revealed that ineffective language teaching and learning practices were to blame for the failure of classroom language acquisition. Total Physical Response (TPR) is a method that has been used in the classroom, as the teacher admitted. Still, her application of the process was not according to the TPR procedure, reflecting her unprepared teaching integrity. This is because of the language instruction used in the class, which combined native and target languages. In addition, she also translated the instructions into the native language when the students did not, at first, understand what she had said.

A few theories may support our study. There are various sections to these theories. These are teaching speaking, teaching listening, and significant descriptions of inquiry and learning communities. Because one skill cannot be used without the other, spoken language integrates listening and speaking abilities. Without a listener, speaking in a discussion is impossible. Nunan (1999) asserts that spoken language gives learners a way to communicate because the interaction is necessary for comprehending, so having access to language speakers is crucial. Chomsky (2002) states that a person's actual use of a language consists of comprehension and production of that language.

Meanwhile, spoken language is a form of communication in which people use speech to interact with each other. According to Brown et al. (1986), spoken language is the ability to talk and listen in a (foreign) language and to communicate with speaker(s) in that foreign language. A positive impact in language learning, predominantly the result of listening-speaking learning, implies the direction of effects toward the expectation of students' performance in the teaching-learning process. Pica et al. (1987) view predictable positive stages in the research in acquiring the correct spoken forms through interaction.

Through interaction, spoken language can be constructed as the integration of listening and speaking skills will correspond to each other. It is impossible to talk in conversation if there is no listener. Nunan (1999) agrees that spoken language acts as a means of interaction for learners because they must interact to achieve understanding; thus, access to speakers of the language is essential. Contrarily, the learners' failure to understand the language they hear can be an impetus, not an obstacle, to learning interactions.

Furthermore, Brown et al. (1986) argue that learning to talk in a foreign language is often considered one of the most challenging aspects of language learning for the teacher to help the students with. Additionally, they argue that in order to produce a speech, each speaker must speak for themselves and, ideally, have someone listen to and respond to what they have to say. In addition, the primary purpose of spoken language production is that students should be able to express themselves in the target language, cope with their basic needs, request information, and ask for service.

In language learning, receptive skills cannot be abandoned to advance productive skills like speaking. In this condition, listening skill serves as an 'arsenal' to convey intended messages. Nunan (1999) stresses this argument that the skill is essential in

foreign language instruction as long as it is supported by appropriate infrastructures and sources since those give students valuable inputs (Manan et al., 2020). Although children should first hear a new target language for some time before speaking, Paul (2003) details specific listening instruction methods. He corroborates the assertion of Richards (2005) that listening is of great importance in the foreign language classroom. First, we can ask the children to complete a puzzle or a picture while listening to a tape or play a game incorporating new words or patterns from the tape or any combination of these. Second, communication and comprehension skills and interactions with kids, whether we utilize classroom language, have casual verbal conversations, or play games with them. As an illustration, while constructing sentences while flinging a ball around the room, we would say something like, 'I like playing tennis,' whereas the kids might say, 'I like tennis.' We do not 'teach' the pattern; instead, we just apply it in a way we hope the kids will get. Thirdly, by dictating phrases for the kids to use when drawing a picture or a treasure map, you can help them improve their awareness of phonic sounds. Fourth, tell stories and have the kids listen to tapes of stories. The kids can hear different voices. Fifthly, one can apply TPR, in which teachers offer instructions in the target language together with actions, which turns into the final strategy that is frequently utilized in one way or another in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Without speaking, pupils may demonstrate their understanding by carrying out these instructions. This way was modeled by Sarinauli (2015) to advance language skills, which brought a positive result.

When the listening has taken part, the speaking furthers following action by delivering the received ideas—as a productive oral skill, speaking consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning (Bailey, 2005). In addition, Richards (2003) also assumed that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Speaking is inevitably a significant part of daily life, with the average person producing tens of thousands of words daily (Harmer, 2022). Richards (2003) later states that if students want to speak fluently in English, they need to pronounce phonemes correctly, use appropriate stress and intonation patterns and speak with con. In addition, Paul (2003) suggests ways of preparing children to communicate. Introducing and practicing habits in meaningful ways is the first way, in the form of games, where the children genuinely want to express themselves through personalization. Secondly, practicing new patterns in combination with other patterns the children have already learned is practical so that they can internalize them more easily. The next is giving the children many opportunities to guess how to use pattern flexibility in novel situations. Then, we encourage the pupils' confidence to speak out in front of others by talking independently with other individual children and with the whole class. This condition invites them into the interaction (Daar, 2020). The fifth is to build the students' language strengths with puzzles to overcome and solve and make sure they are finally successful. Lastly, we focus on the question forms of new patterns, so the children can ask about what they do not know.

The foundation of effective contextual education is the use of questions or inquiry. It is the dynamic process of being open to wonder and puzzlement and coming to know

and understand the world (Alberta Learning, 2004). Students may engage in their learning, develop questions, conduct extensive research, and then develop new understandings, meanings, and knowledge through inquiry-based learning (Alberta Learning, 2004). This knowledge is fresh to the students and may be utilized to answer a question, build a solution, or defend a stance or point of view. Usually, the information is shared with others and may prompt a response. Besides, Wilson et al. (2009) add that an inquiry approach to learning is based on the belief that students are powerful learners who must be actively engaged in investigating, processing, organizing, filtering, refining, and extending their knowledge within a topic. Children may gain insight into socially mediated activities' benefits and drawbacks through interactions and conversations with peers (Mutiah et al., 2020; Nufus, 2019).

Regarding the learning community, Wu et al. (2017) explain that it is a group of people actively engaged in a learning community. In recent years in the United States of America, this approach to education has been developed, and its goal is to advance collective knowledge and, in that way, to support personal knowledge growth. In this regard, Hipp et al. (2008) state that a learning community exists when a group of people commits themselves to continual learning and to supporting others in continual learning. A learning community encourages continual group research into instruction and learning. Everyone participates in superior learning experiences where they learn from each other, with each other, and for each other, share the knowledge they have learned, the thrill and difficulties that come from studying a complex subject and reap the rewards of learning. This environment may decrease the dimension of personality tackling speaking performance (Kurniasy & Susan, 2019). The following are fundamental ideas for a learning community (Hipp et al., 2008). A learning community offers the most promise for meaningful and lasting school improvement.

Two matters support its process. Firstly, supportive principals are the key to creating the proper school context for high-impact professional development and fostering a learning community's collaborative culture. Then, teacher networks may provide a vehicle to reflect on practice and improve teaching methods. In short, a learning community approach aims to foster a learning culture in which both individuals and the community learn how to learn.

Furthermore, the basic tenet of teaching utilizing a learning community approach, according to Hipp et al. (2008), is to help others create an optimal learning environment. The most critical factor in deciding whether professional development activities will affect a school is the context or the policies, practices, expectations, and routines that make up the norm for that school. Hipp et al. (2008) propose that specific guidelines for such development must adhere to the five phases.

First, it is unnecessary to send students home or spend more money to give teachers time to collaborate during the school day or the school year. Secondly, the effectiveness of making space for teachers to engage in the collective inquiry will largely depend on the nature of the question's teachers are considering, so it is essential to first identify critical questions to guide the work of the collaboration teams. The principal is responsible for assisting the team in formulating questions that address the most pressing

educational concerns in their specific community. Next, the best way to ensure that teachers make good use of their time together is to have them create and present artifacts in response to the critical questions they are discussing as a group. Examples of such work include the formulation of improvement plans based on an analysis of student achievement data, the formulation of team protocols or norms to guide team member interactions, and the articulation of statements of student outcomes by a unit of instruction. Four phase covers insisting team sets and works toward concrete goals for student achievement. Better results must motivate the effort to establish a culture of collaboration. Performance improvements can be encouraged by principals who request that teaching teams develop and work toward concrete, observable targets for student growth. Finally, the fifth step is making pertinent information and data available to groups. When every teacher knows how their students stack up against other teachers' students who are attempting to meet the same standards for valid assessment, the individual teachers and the teams are more likely to succeed.

We believe the students need to be invited into contextual learning, which triggers their willingness to speak within their circles. Wicks et al. (2015) promote this approach to enhance students' experiences and participation in the classroom, even in a blended course. To this end, we intend to integrate inquiry and learning communities in teaching speaking. Therefore, our study objective is "*Does integrating inquiry and learning community lead to developing the students' English ability?*" We would like to determine whether using the inquiry and learning community improves the students' speaking English skills.

## METHOD

In order to approach this study quantitatively, an experimental one-group pretest-posttest design was used. The one-group pretest-posttest design includes an observation of the group prior to the intervention (Schreiber & Asner-Self, 2011). Cohen et al. (2007) argue that the validity of research is compromised when one group takes part in a pre- and post-test design because of uncontrolled variables. Since the central goal of this study is to determine whether a mix of inquiry, learning communities, and total physical response approaches benefit students' spoken English performance, it can be inferred that this research methodology is in keeping with that goal.

The second-grade students at Maqamam Mahmuda, a private secondary school in Takengon, Central Aceh Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia, became the study's population. There were 29 male and 29 female students in this grade. There were 58 students in the overall population, and 35 percent were selected as the sample. Considering that a simple random sampling method was used to determine the study's sample, each member of the population under investigation had an equal chance of being included in the final analysis (Cohen et al., 2007). According to Schreiber and Asner-Self (2011), simple random sampling takes place when every population member has the same chance of being chosen. Since the fifth grade includes two courses, we enrolled in both grades (Va and Vb).

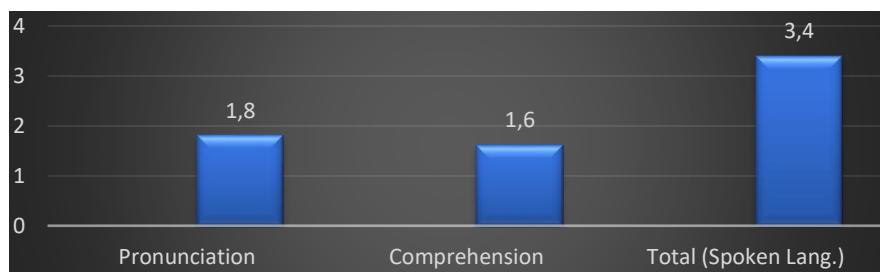
A research instrument is a tool used to gather data and has a significant role in research. It provides a more thorough explanation of a research instrument—a tool used to measure the social and natural events being examined (Cohen et al., 2007). A test was used as the research instrument for this study to acquire the data.

Students' test scores before and after receiving treatment were used to compile data for the quantitative design. According to Cohen et al. (2007), an achievement test is a systematic procedure for gauging the performance of a statistically-valid sample on a learning task. In this study, the researchers used a one-group pretest-posttest design to evaluate the progress of their sample students in both listening and speaking. In the first part of the lesson, the students focused on expanding their knowledge of nouns and verbs. The teacher provided pictures as teaching and learning media. Students learned new terminology through group discussions. The teacher also delivered verbal directions, which the pupils listened to strengthen their understanding of listening. The teacher then assessed the pupils' performance in speaking ability in part two by giving instructions to the group or their peers. Both exams covered a range of topics connected to the method creation.

Descriptive statistics were used to display the data in this study. Cohen et al. (2007) mention that descriptive statistics have no significance test. They add that if the researcher does not intend to generalize, there would be no generalization error. The data of this study were analyzed by a software program called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, prior to using Microsoft Excel to display the result.

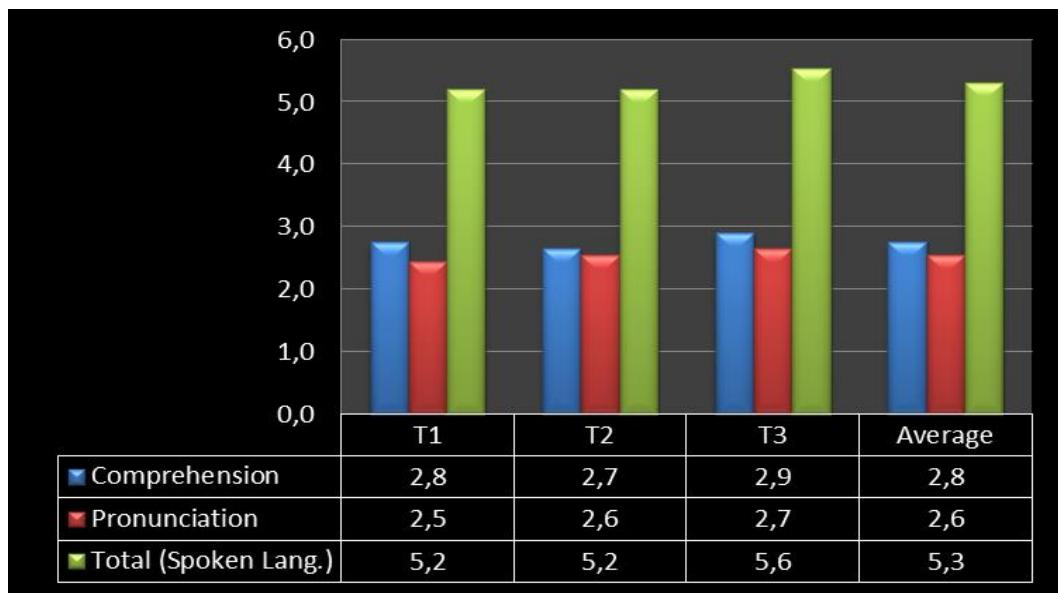
## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data from the respondents' scores are summarized in Figure 1.



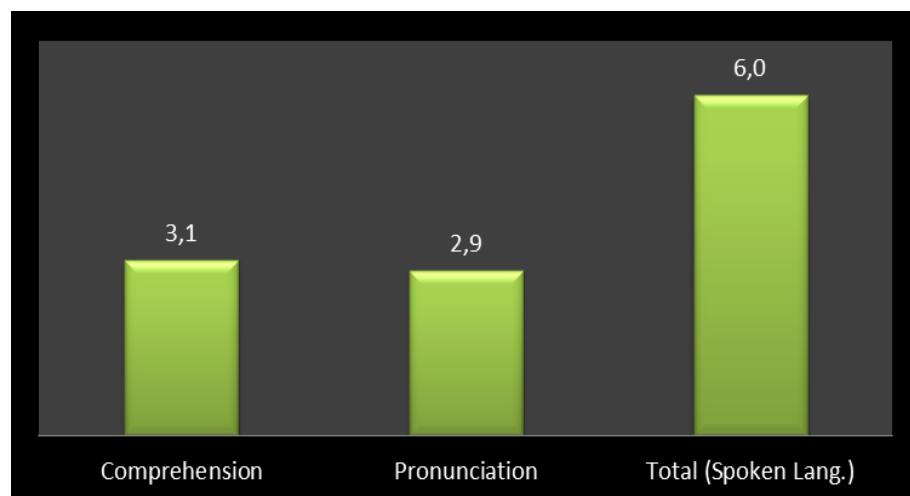
**Figure 1. Speaking competency as measured by pretest results**

Students' average spoken language scores (only measuring pronunciation and comprehension) before treatment were 1.8 and 1.6, for a total of 3.4, as shown in Figure 1. Findings like these point to subpar efficiency. Figure 2 shows, however, that it did rise over the course of treatment.



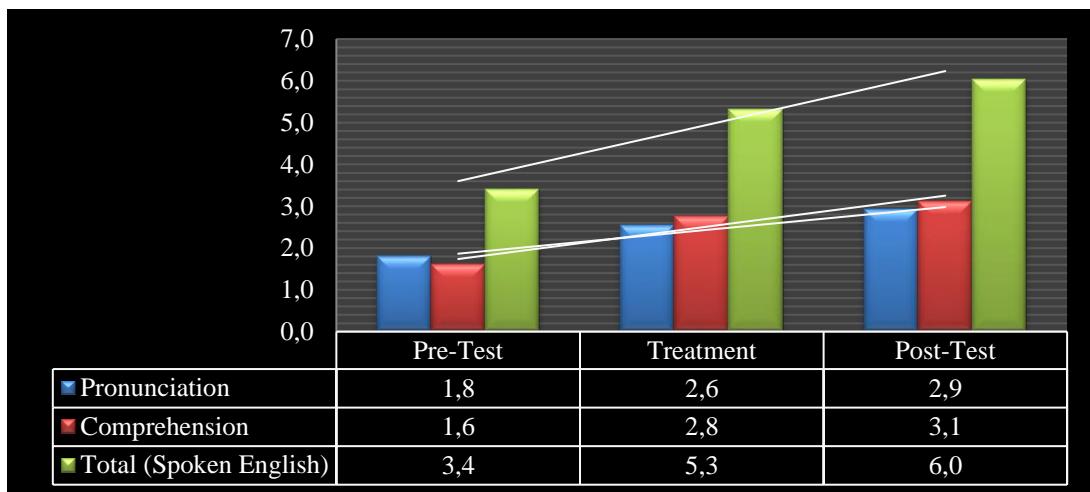
**Figure 2. Student outcomes and treatment progress**

Learners' improvement at each treatment level is shown in Figure 2. Totaling six meetings, two were held for each treatment. The exams were given after the second session of each treatment course. Students' progress in both comprehension and pronunciation was steady from one administration to the next. Although comprehension results dipped after the second treatment, they rebounded after the third treatment. The use of more challenging material after the second treatment is what caused the decline. At the end of the third treatment, the students' performance returned to normal and increased by 0.1 points because they were already well-versed in the new material. As a whole, the treatment led to an average score of 5.4 [comprehension (2.8) and pronunciation (2.6)].



**Figure 3. Post-test results for the spoken language subcomponent**

Post-test results are shown in Figure 3; this test was administered after the sixth treatment session as a formative assessment to gauge the efficacy of the treatment thus far.



**Figure 4. The comparative score of achievement between the pretest, treatment, and post-test**

Figure 4 shows the results of a comparison between the pre-and post-treatment test scores. Students' scores on assessments of their spoken language proficiency rose dramatically after instruction based on the principles of the Integration of inquiry and learning community was completed.

Based on test results, it was discovered that after using the approaches for integrating inquiry and learning community, the students' spoken language performance improved with the average pretest 3.4, which was increased to 6.0 in the post-test. Three students who performed well on the pretest also performed well on the post-test, bringing the total number of students who improved their pronunciation to 18, with only two failings. There was an increase in comprehension from nearly all of the 20 students. This condition suggests that using various strategies in the classroom, particularly combining inquiry and learning community methods, can improve English ability. As promoted by Wicks et al. (2015), the students had less successful when they initiated a dialogue. We believe that the interaction's impact influenced their comprehension of the speaking performance. Pica et al. (1987) confirm in their study that interactional modifications facilitate second language comprehension. Language learners cannot be separated from inputs from their peers or teachers to demonstrate their comprehension in terms of oral performance.

Furthermore, inquiry and learning community approaches successfully improved the students' pronunciation and comprehension. As a result, the study has demonstrated the approach's effectiveness, which may translate to successful speaking of English in the future. In his research, Daar (2020) has evaluated that several classroom interactions may be ideal for teaching speaking. One is the responding and asking questions activity mainly involves students with a teacher. Nonetheless, studies show that when inquiry is combined with learning communities, students improve their command of the English

language, both in terms of their ability to follow explicit directions and their command of specialized forms of expression (giving examples to do something, gesticulation, and giving directions). We argue that Daar's (2020) finding is due to the teacher's position as the superior in the classroom, which causes the students to be 'forced' to react. That is why Brown et al. (1986) reveal that speaking is more challenging in language learning, predominantly when we talk about the teachers' task to deal with the classroom condition.

Students' self-assurance and sense of agency in the learning process were found to contribute to their oral solid performance in this study, which focused on their interactions with their classmates. Besides, these strategies boost students' collaboration and accountability in terms of mastering course materials for oral language performance. Wicks et al. (2015) regard this positive vibe as a way to increase student satisfaction in learning. This finding shows that the data are consistent with the study's hypotheses. Furthermore, the hypothesis has moved from the 'hypothetical' to the 'theoretical' stage, suggesting that using the inquiry and learning community approach contributes positively to students' development of English language skills.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that incorporating inquiry and learning community approach can provide students with fresh opportunities for spoken language expression and is suitable for second-language speech training. The findings of this study appear to apply to both adults and young learners, suggesting that both groups should enjoy themselves to lessen the stress that some individuals experience when learning a second language. Then, the treatment can encourage students to engage more actively in learning vocabulary, which will help them develop self-confidence, especially when expressing desired spoken language terms and directions.

Nevertheless, our study also has a shortage. More respondents from various groups can be compared to showcase the effectiveness of the inquiry and learning community approach if different circles are blended. A research action can also be conducted if this approach does not meet expectations, predominantly for students' speaking performance. More extended treatment periods, incorporating additional learning resources and entertaining spoken language performances, are recommended when using a multimodal approach.

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