Improving Students' Oral Competency
Through Communicative Language Teaching Approach

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Abstrak

Tujuan utama dari penelitian ini adalah mengetahui peningkatan pengajaran Bahasa Inggris terlebih khusus dalam aspek Oral Competency dengan menggunakan pendekatan komunikatif atau Communicative Language Teaching Approach. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan kelas (Classroom Action Research). Data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan analisa persentase. Responden dalam penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa semester 1 2017/2018 kelas General English 4 parallel F di salah satu perguruan tinggi yang ada di Sulawesi Utara, yang terdiri dari 31 mahasiswa. Berdasarkan hasil analisis data, terdapat peningkatan pada kemampuan berbicara (Oral Competency) mahasiswa pada tiap-tiap cycle. Data menunjukkan bahwa pada pre-assessment (pra-penilaian) kompetensi oral mahasiswa:

Pada Pre-assesment: 0% (excellent), 45% (very good), 45% (good) 10% (needs improvement).
Pada cycle I: 3% (excellent), 68% (very good), 26% (good), 3% (needs improvement).
Pada cycle II: 10% (excellent), 48% (very good), 39% (good), 3% (need improvement).
Pada cycle III: 10% (excellent), 48% (very good), 42% (good), 0% (need improvement).
Penelitian ini mengindikasikan bahwa penggunaan pendekatan komunikatif melalui Communicative Language Teaching Approach mampu meningkatkan kompetensi oral mahasiswa General English 4 parallel F pada semester 1 2017/2018 di salah satu perguruan tinggi yang ada di Sulawesi Utara.
***Keywords:** Oral Competency, Communicative Competence.*

A. Introduction and Statement of the Problem

English oral competency is very important for people interaction where people almost speak everywhere and every day through English. In this global era, many people used English as a mean of communication and it makes people who come from different countries to be easier in interacting and communicating.

As one of international language, English is also taught in Indonesia as a foreign language.

Speaking is one way to communicate ideas and thought orally. In enabling students to communicate, we need to apply the language in real communication. According to Gert and Hans (2008: 207), speaking is speech or utterances with the purpose of having intention to be recognized by speaker and the receiver processes the statements in order to recognize their intentions. Brown and Yule (1999: 14) stated that speaking is depending on the complexity of the information to be communicated; however, the speaker sometimes finds it is difficult to clarify what they want to say. Rebecca (2006:144) stated that speaking is the first mode in which children acquire language, it is part of the daily involvement of most people with language activities, and it is the prime motor of language change.

As language learners who had learned English intensively, the students should be able to interact orally each other through English. But in fact, most of the students did not perform English in their language conversation. They would rather to use Manadonese or Indonesian language than English as a mean of communication. It because of the method in teaching English that is used by English teacher in classroom is boring method, there is no innovation in teaching English, which the teacher used traditional method that made English atmosphere in classroom seems monotone.

From the phenomenon above, the researcher is interested in analyzing some problems that make students reluctant to use English in their daily conversation and implementing Communicative Language Teaching method to improve students' oral competency.

B. Objectives of Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine the students' oral competency through the communicative language teaching approach in improving students' oral competency of the first semester students of General English 4 class academic year 2017/ 2018.

C. Research question

The research question in this research is how does communicative language teaching approach improve students' oral competency of the first semester students of General English 4 class academic year 2017/ 2018.

D. Significance of study

The present study is important as it provides insights on English language teachers'
regarding CLT as an approach to be used in the language classrooms to improve oral competency among the students. The findings will help to direct future research regarding the issue, as it helps to identify the areas of study which need further investigation, as well as to identify the categories for classification to be explored quantitatively in future research. As noted by Razmjoo & Riazi (2006, p. 346), "*few studies of how well teachers understand and use CLT approaches appear to been undertaken*". As such, the findings would serve to reveal more insights on teachers' understanding of CLT and how it is actually practiced in the classroom. In addition, it can also provide the researchers with some general outlines on what aspects to look at during classroom observation, etc. All these will provide valuable insight for various stakeholders such as language planners, curriculum designers, material developers, teacher trainers, language instructors as well as teachers, in order to make informed pedagogical decision regarding foreign language teaching. This is so, as the adoption of a communicative approach in foreign language teaching brings with it fundamental issues regarding teacher training, materials development, testing and evaluation, and so forth, which calls for further investigation, in order to help in improving the students' level of language performance, especially in oral communication.

E. Definition of Key Term

Communicative Competence

It is a linguistic term which refers to a learner's ability in using language. it not only refers to a learner's ability to apply and use grammatical rules, but also to negotiate meaning with other language speakers, to express one's views regarding certain issues, and to know what and how to use certain utterances appropriately according to certain situations. The term underlies the view of language learning implicit in the communicative approach to language teaching.

Oral Competency

It is defined as the ability to communicate orally using various oral communicative strategies for various communicative purposes in various communicative contexts with various communicative communities.

F. Literature Review

Theory of Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) stems from the socio-cognitive perspective of the socio-cultural linguistic theory, which manifests itself in the concept of 'communicative competence', Hymes (1972). Hymes coined this term in contrast to Chomsky's "*linguistic competenc*e". Chomsky (1968) indicated that underlying the concrete language performance, there is an abstract rule system or knowledge and this underlying knowledge of the grammar of the language by the native speaker is his "linguistic competence". According to Littlewod (1987), the salient feature of the communicative approach is that it links the *functional* aspects of language with its *structural* aspects. The structural view of language concentrates on the grammatical system and describes the ways through which the linguistic units are combined in a word order rules, which make us interpret the meaning.

Chomsky (1957) argues that the intuitive knowledge of such rules makes up the native speakers' *linguistic competence.* In contrast, Hymes (1972) argues that in addition to linguistic competence, the native speaker has another rule system. In Hymes' view, language is considered as a social and cognitive phenomenon; syntax and language forms are understood not as autonomous, contextual structures, but rather as meaning resources used in particular conventional ways and develop through social interaction and assimilation of others' speech. Therefore, speakers of a language have to have more than grammatical competence in order to be able to communicate effectively in a language; they also need to know how members of a speech community use language to accomplish their purposes, Hymes (1968).

Since Hymes firstly introduced the concept of 'communicative competence' in the mid-1960s, many researchers have developed theories and practices of what is referred to in the literature of ELT as communicative language teaching approach. For example, and based on Hymes' theory, Canale et al (1980) divided the communicative competence into four dimensions. These dimensions are grammatical competence, lexical competence, social competence and strategic competence. For Canale et al (1983), communicative competence is understood as the underlying systems of *knowledge* and *skill* required for communication. Whereas Knowledge refers to what one knows (consciously or unconsciously) about the language and about other aspects of communicative language use, skill refers to how well one can perform this knowledge in actual communication. In this sense, language teachers need not only to teach the linguistic competence but also the socio-linguistic competence. Canale (1983) argues "communicative competence" consists of:

- Sociolinguistic competence, which refers to mastering the ways through which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different socio-linguistic contexts.
- In addition 'discourse competence', this refers to mastering the ways of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres.
- And strategic competence which refers to mastering the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action for compensating or enhancing communication.
- Communicative competence was a term coined by Dell Hymess (1972), to refer to the social and functional aspects of our ability to convey and interpret message and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within in specific context, where the focus is not only to develop the grammatical knowledge of language, but also to know when, where and to whom to use appropriate language in a communicative event (Richards, 2003).

For the brief description, grammatical competence emphasizes the ability of students to produce accurately structured comprehensible utterances, while sociolinguistic competence points to the ability to use socially-determined cultural codes in meaningful ways. Discourse competence stresses on the ability of the language uses to shape and communicate purposely in different genres, using cohesion and coherence, and the last, strategic competence aims at the learner's ability to improve the effectiveness of communication.

In addition, according to Wilkin (1972), communicative means that a language learner needs to understand and express his or her ideas. Rather than describing the core of language through traditional concepts of grammar and vocabulary. Basically, this theory emphasizes on practice as a way of developing communicative skills.

Communicative approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence (Richard and Rodger, 1999: 69). CLT is the name which was given to a set of beliefs which included not only a re-examination of what aspect of language to teach, but also in a shift in emphasis in how to teach. The "what to teach" aspect of the communicative approach stressed the significance of language function rather than focusing solely on grammar and vocabulary. A guiding principle was to train students to use these language forms appropriately in variety of context and for a variety of purposes. The "how to teach aspect" of communicative approach is closely related to the idea that language learning will take care of its self and that plentiful exposure to language in use and plenty of opportunities to use it are vitally important for students' development and skill (Harmer, 1998: 84) CLT aims to make communicative competence as the goal of language teaching and to develop techniques and procedures for teaching language skills that are based on interdependent aspects of

language and communication. Communicative competence includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic, and strategies. Communicative language abilities include knowledge or competence and proficiency in the application of these competencies in the communicative use of language, contextual, and appropriate.

Teaching and Learning Activities in Communicative Language Teaching

During learning process of CLT, students' are hoped to communicate orally and conquer all components of communicative competence and teacher is being motivator, assessor, facilitator, and corrector during students'discussion or speaking in front of the class. In addition, the teacher also should make their lesson interesting so the students don't fall asleep during learning English (Harmer, 1998: 1). Learning activities in CLT focuses on real oral communication with variety of language without too focus on form of grammatical patterns if distinguished with non-communicative activities which only focus on how to construct the sentences that based on terms of grammatical during learning process of English (Harmer, 1998: 85).

In a communicative approach, language teaching makes use of real-life situations, i.e. situations that students are likely to encounter in real-life, that necessitate communication. Thus, students are provided with ample opportunities to be involved in communicative events in using the language. Hence, the activities are geared towards promoting self-learning, interaction in authentic situations, peer teaching, negotiation of meaning, completing task through language, etc. where the lessons focus on some operation which the students would want to perform in the target language (Littlewood, 1981). The role of teachers in the communicative approach is minimized to being a facilitator or monitor of their students' development or progress in language learning. The learners, on the other hand, will become the active participants in the learning process, where they do most of the talking and are fully responsible of their own learning.

Brown (2007) introduced four interconnected characteristics as a 'definition' of CLT. These characteristics are:

1) Classroom goals focus on all of the components communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.
2) Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for the meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather aspects of language that enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

3) Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take on more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

4) in the communicative classroom , students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively in unrehearsed context.

Larsen-Freeman (2008) summarized the principles of CLT and stated them in ten questions. The answers to these questions help understand what classroom teachers should do. The researcher attempts to review these ten points. Firstly, the ultimate *goal* of CLT is to develop the communicative competence. Therefore, the teacher facilitates communication in the classroom. In this sense, he should establish situation likely to promote communication. He acts as an adviser and sometimes a communicator. The students are above all communicators who are actively engaged in communicative activities.

In CLT, learning is considered as an interpersonal activity through which learners learn how to communicate their meanings. Moreover, this must be encouraged from the very beginning. This is normally by exposing the learners to authentic dialogues and conversations. Therefore, the students use language through communicative activities such as games, role-plays and problem solving tasks. According to Morrow et al (1981), cited in Larsen-Freeman (2008), "truly communicative activities have three features; information gap, choice and feedback."

In CLT, the teacher can present some part of the lesson, such as when working with linguistic accuracy. At other times, he is the *facilitator* and *co communicator*, but he does not always interact with the students, he often establishes situations that prompt communication between and among the students. The students interact with one another. They do this in forms of pairs, small groups and the class as a whole. In addition, since communicating in the target language needs motivation, students should be motivated to learn English. so the teachers can achieve this aim by giving the students opportunities to express their ideas and share their experiences.

As language is considered as a means of communication, the linguistic competence (knowledge of forms) is considered as a part of communicative competence. In addition, another part of communicative competence is the knowledge of the socio cultural aspect of the target language, Larsen-Freeman (2008). In this respect, language *functions* are more emphasized *forms* and a variety of forms are introduced for functions. Consequently the students work with the supra sentential or discourse level of language. Many scholars such as Widdowson (1978), Littlewood (1978), (1979) and Swan (1981) stress the connection between foreign or second language learning and culture. They believed that language is learned to be used for communication purposes.

Teachers evaluate the students' fluency as well as accuracy. However, Errors of forms are tolerated during fluency-based activities and are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators. The teacher may note the errors during the fluency activities and return to them later with an accuracy-based activity. Moreover, the student who has a control of the structures and vocabulary is not always the best communicator.

In conclusion, the communicative approach specifies a variety of classroom activities through which the students use language as a vehicle of communication to complete some kind of tasks. Besides the students are required to use the language that they know, and they gradually develop their communication strategies.

G. Methodology

To answer the research question, the researcher used classroom action research (CAR). Classroom Action Research is a method of finding out what worksbest in your own classroom so that you can improve student learning. We know a great deal about good teaching in general (e.g. McKeachie, 1999;Chickering and Gamson, 1987; Weimer, 1996), but every teaching situation is unique in terms of content,level, student skills and learning styles, teacher skills and teaching styles, and many other factors. Tomaximize student learning, a teacher must find out what works best in a particular situation.There are many ways to improve knowledge about teaching. Many teachers practice personal reflection onteaching; that is, they look back at what has worked and has not worked in the classroom and think abouthow they can change their teaching strategies to enhance learning. (Hole and McEntee (1999) provideuseful steps for enhancing such reflection. A few teachers (most notably Education professors) conductformal empirical studies on teaching and learning, adding to our knowledge base.

CAR fits in the center ofa continuum ranging from personal reflection at one end to formal educational research at the other. CAR ismore systematic and data-based than personal reflection, but it is more informal and personal than formaleducational research. In CAR, a teacher focuses attention on a problem or question about his or her ownclassroom. For example, does role-playing help students understand course concepts more completely thanlecture methods? Which concepts are most confusing to students?The data is analyzed by using percentages.

John Elliot (1991) defines action research as: 'Action research is the process through which teachers collaborate in

evaluating their practice jointly: raise awareness of their personal theory; articulate a shared conception of values; try out new strategies to render the values expressed in their practice more consistent with educational values their espouse; record their work in a form which is readily available to and understandable by other teachers; and thus develop a shared theory by research practice."

Action research methods were proposed by Kurt Lewin in 1946, as a research technique in socialpsychology. More recently, Donald Schön (1983) described the reflective practitioner as one who thinkssystematically about practice. Classroom Action Research is systematic, yet less formal, researchconducted by practitioners to inform their action. The goal of CAR is to improve your own teaching in yourown classroom (or your department or school). While there is no requirement that the CAR findings begeneralized to other situations, as in traditional research, the results of classroom action research can add tothe knowledge base. Classroom action research goes beyond personal reflection to use informal researchpractices such as a brief literature review, group comparisons, and data collection and analysis. Validity isachieved through the triangulation of data. The focus is on the practical significance of findings, rather thanstatistical or theoretical significance. Findings are usually disseminated through brief reports orpresentations to local colleagues or administrators. Most teachers, from pre-school through university level,can be taught the methods of action research in a single course, a series of workshops, or through extensivementoring (Mettetal, 2000).

The boundaries between these categories are not distinct. Some CAR projects may become comprehensive enough to be considered traditional research, with generalizable findings. Other CAR projects may be so informal that they are closer to personal reflection. In this essay, I will describe the prototypical CAR project.

First and foremost, classroom action research is a very effective way of improving your teaching. Assessing student understanding at mid-term helps you plan the most effective strategies for the rest of the semester. Comparing the student learning outcomes of different teaching strategies helps you discover which teaching techniques work best in a particular situation. Because you are researching the impact of your own teaching, you automatically take into account your own teaching strengths and weaknesses, the typical skill level of your students, etc. Your findings have immediate practical significance in terms of teaching decisions.

Second, CAR provides a means of documenting your teaching effectiveness. The brief reports and presentations resulting from CAR can be included in teaching portfolios, tenure dossiers, and other report sat the teacher or school level. This information

can also help meet the increasing requirements of the assessment movement that we document student learning.

Third, CAR can provide a renewed sense of excitement about teaching. After many years, teaching can become routine and even boring. Learning CAR methodology provides a new challenge, and the results of CAR projects often prompt teachers to change their current strategies. CAR projects done as teams have the added benefit of increasing peer discussion of teaching issues. Classroom action research follows the same steps as the general scientific model, although in a more informal manner. CAR methods also recognize that the researcher is, first and foremost, the classroom teacher and that the research cannot be allowed to take precedence over student learning. The CAR process can be conceptualized as a seven-step process. (For more detailed information about conducting CAR research, see authors such as Bell, 1993; Sagor, 2000; and Hubbard and Power, 1993)

- Step one: Identify a question or problem. This question should be something related to student learning in your classroom. For example, would a different type of assignment enhance student understanding? Would a strict attendance policy result in better test scores? Would more time spent in cooperative learning groups help students understand concepts at a higher level? The general model might be "what is the effect of X on student learning?" Since the goal of CAR is to inform decision-making, the question or problem should look at something under teacher control, such as teaching strategies, student assignments, and classroom activities. The problem should also be an area in which you are willing to change. There is no point in conducting a CAR project if you have no intention of acting on your findings. Larger institutional questions might be tackled, if the institution is committed to change. Finally, the question or problem should be feasible in terms of time, effort and resources. In general, this means to think small--to look at one aspect of teaching in a single course. Angelo and Cross (1993) suggest that you NOT start with your "problem class" but rather start with a class that is progressing fairly well. As you become more comfortable with CAR methods, you may attempt more complicated projects.

- Step two: Review Literature.
  You need to gather two types of information, background literature and data. The literature review may be much less extensive than traditional research, and the use of secondary sources is sufficient. Sources such as Cross and Steadman (1996) or Woolfolk (2000) will often provide background information on learning, motivation, and classroom management topics.

- Step three: Plan a research strategy.
  The research design of a CAR study may take many forms, ranging from a pretest-post-test design to a comparison of similar classes to a descriptive case study of a single class or student. Both quantitative and qualitative methods are appropriate. The tightly controlled experimental designs of traditional research are rarely possible in a natural classroom setting, so CAR relies on the triangulation of data to provide validity. To triangulate, collect at least three types of data (such as student test scores, teacher evaluations, and observations of student behavior). If all data point to the same conclusions, you have some assurance of validity.
- Step four: Gather data.
  CAR tends to rely heavily on existing data such as test scores, teacher evaluations, and final course grades. You might also want to collect other data. See Angelo and Cross (1993) for a wonderful array of classroom assessment techniques.(Be sure to check with your Institutional Review Board for policies regarding the use of human subjects. Most CAR with adult students will be exempt from review as long as you do not identify individual students.)
- Step five: Make sense of the data. Analyze your data, looking for findings with practical significance. Simple statistical analyses of quantitative data, such as simple t-tests and correlations, are usually sufficient. Tables or graphs are often very helpful. Qualitative data can be analyzed for recurring themes, citing supporting evidence. Practical significance, rather than statistical significance, is the goal.
- Step six: Take action. Use your findings to make decisions about your teaching strategies. Sometimes you will find that one strategy is clearly more effective, leading to an obvious choice. Other times, strategies may prove to be equally effective. In that situation, you may choose the strategy that you prefer or the one that your students prefer.
- Step seven: Share your findings.

H. Participants

The participants consisted of 31 students of the first semester of General English 4 class, parallel F, academic year 2017/2018.

I. Research procedure

The procedures of this research were pre-assessment, cycle I, cycle II, and cycle III. Each cycle consists of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and evaluating. The researcher asked each student to have an oral test which the topic has given based on what is taught in a particular unit. The students assessed based on some

aspects of language, such as: comprehension, fluency, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

J. Data analysis procedure

First researcher collected individual score at the end of cycles counted the students score into percentages by following students' score interval. The scores were gotten from the oral test result of the first semester students of General English 4 class academic year 2017/2018 at one university in North Sulawesi.

K. Findings and discussion

1. Findings

a. Pre-assessment
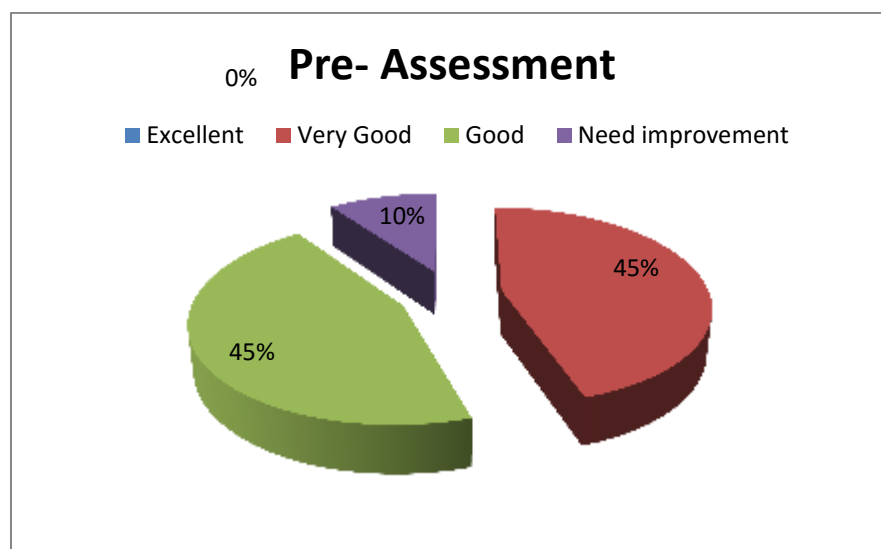
		Pre-assessment	
Interval	Qualification	Number of Students	percentages
23 – 25	A or Excellent	0	0%
20 – 22	B or Very Good	14	45%
17 – 19	C or Good	14	45%
16 – or below	Needs improvement	3	10%

From the result above, it can be seen that the students really need some improvement in oral competency. The data shows that no one in excellent category or 0%, 45% are very good, 45% are good and there are 10% students who need some improvements. Based on the result above, the researcher concluded that students need more improvement in their oral competency and decided to do more action to improve their oral competency better.
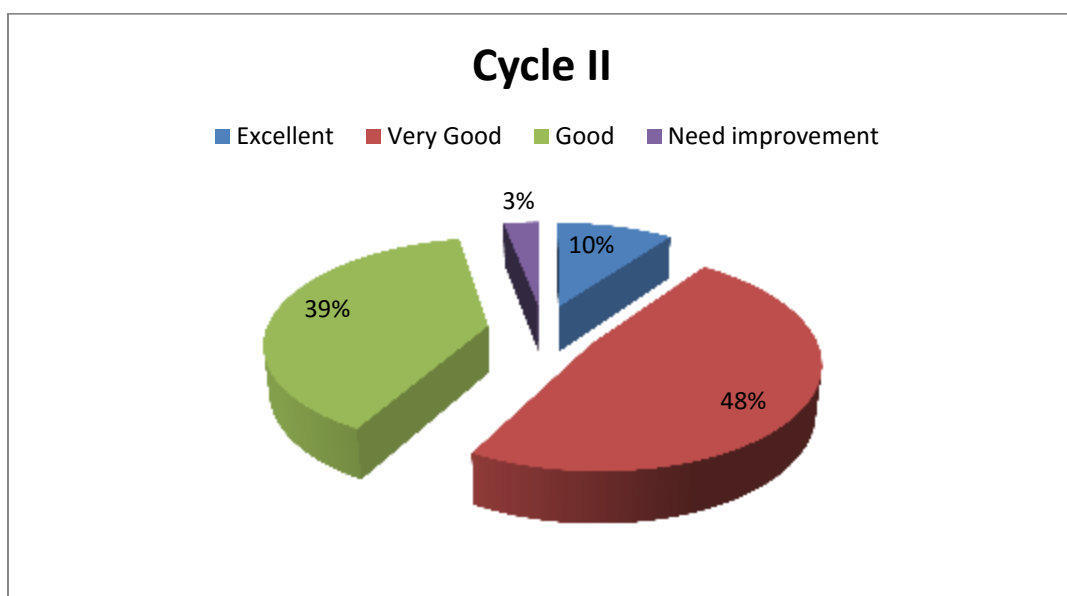
b. Cycle I
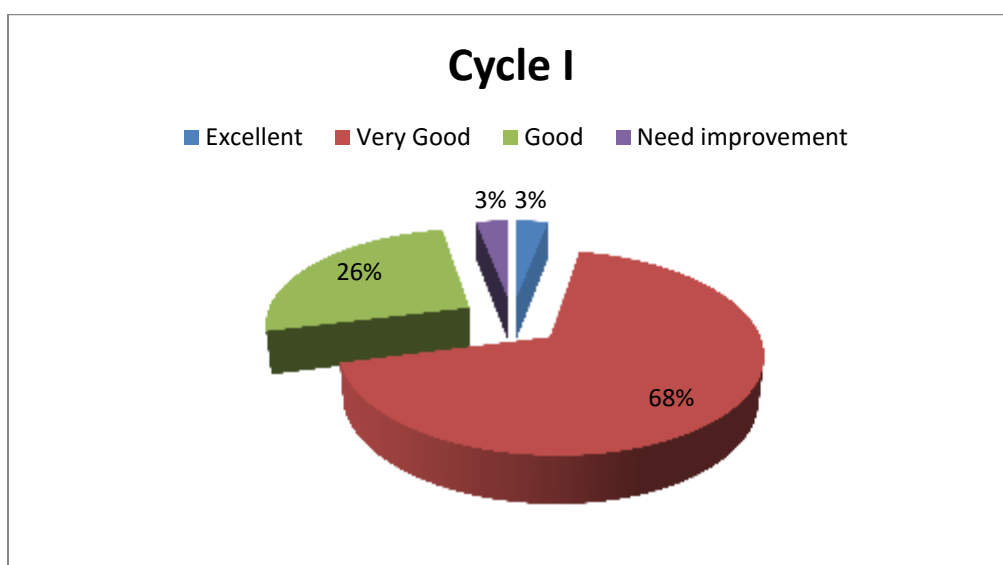
		Cycle I	
Interval	Qualification	Number of Students	Percentages
23 – 25	A or Excellent	1	3%
20 – 22	B or Very Good	21	68%
17 – 19	C or Good	8	26%
16 – or below	Needs improvement	1	3%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there is improvement in students' oral competency than in pre-assessment. The data shows that 3% of students are excellent categories, 68% are very good, 26% are good categories and 3% needs

improvement. Based on the evaluation and reflection, the researcher concludes that there is improvement in students' speaking ability. However, researcher feels that it is important to improve students' oral competency because the indicator of success has not been reached yet. Some students have several problem in speaking such as low motivation in speaking, they don't have enough vocabularies to express their ideas, feeling shy when they are speaking in front of the teacher, still rigid to express their ideas through oral communication, unfamiliar with good techniques to speak easily, unable to speak well that caused of difficulties in expressing their ideas. Besides that, the method that applied before was not interesting enough. Therefore, the researcher needs to do action again.
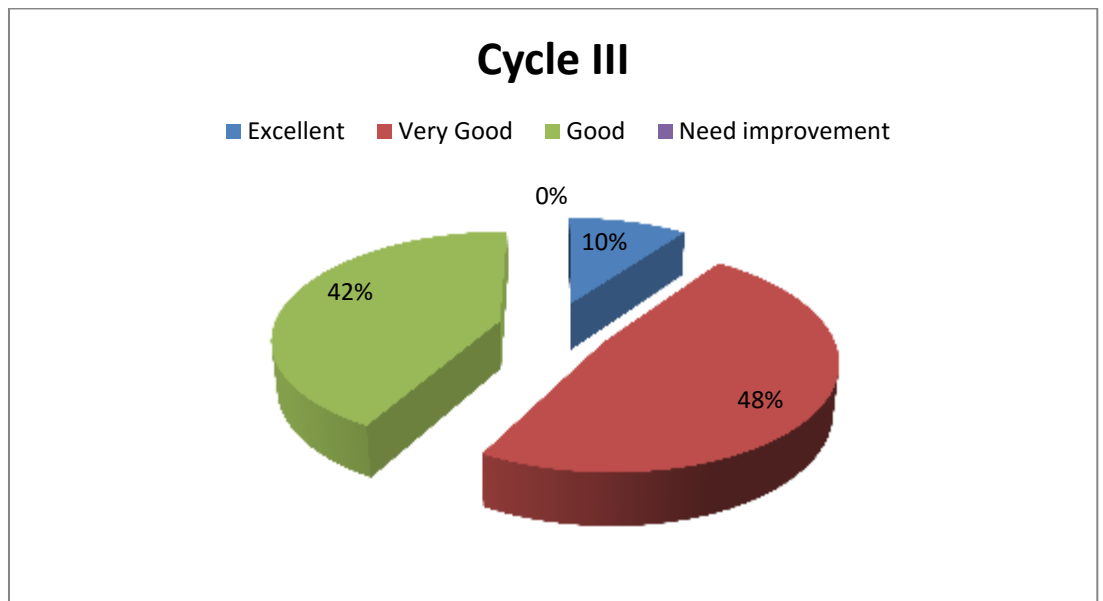
c. Cycle II

		Cycle II	
Interval	Qualification	Number of Students	percentages
23 – 25	A or Excellent	3	10%
20 – 22	B or Very Good	15	48%
17 – 19	C or Good	12	39%
16 – or below	Needs improvement	1	3%

It can be seen from the table above that students' oralcompetency is increasing. It shows that 10% of students are in

excellent categories, 48% are very good, 39% are good and 3% of them need improvement. From the data above, the researcher considered that the indicator of success has not been reached yet, for there are 3 % students who still need improvement in their oralcompetency. That is why; the researcher needs to do the next cycle in order to overcome the problem in improving students' oral competency.

d. Cycle III

		Cycle III	
Interval	Qualification	Number of Students	percentages
23 – 25	A or Excellent	3	10%
20 – 22	B or Very Good	15	48%
17 – 19	C or Good	13	42%
16 – or below	Needs improvement	0	0%

From the table above can be concluded that any significant progress on students' oralcompetency. It shows that 10% numbers of students are excellent, 48% are very good, 42% are good and 0% needs no any improvement. From the result above, the researcher

conclude that the indicator of success is completed. Therefore, the researcher decided to stop the action.

2. Discussion

Based on the results which found by researcher in each cycles of this research, we could see that most of students were interested in learning English speaking through Communicative Language Teaching Approach. They selves-confidence to express their ideas in speaking activity inside classroom, most of them could minimize their fears and shy to speak, the frequency and percentage of students' speaking ability were increased well in each cycles. In addition, Communicative Language Teaching method could motivate the students to be active and had a great participation in speaking activity during teaching and learning process in classroom. Another aspect that found by researcher in this study that Communicative motivate students and minimize students' problems in their oral competency such as low motivation to speak, don't have enough vocabularies to express their ideas, feeling shy when they spoke in front of their friends, still rigid express their ideas through oral communication, unfamiliar with good techniques to speak easily, well that caused of difficulties in expressing their ideas, etc until there is no student who was not active in oral activities.

L. Conclusion

Method is one of important things that must be applied during teaching and learning process in order the purpose of teaching can be reached. One of the method can be applied in teaching English speaking is language teaching because by applying the method, teaching speaking can be more effective, and it is able to improve students' oral competency. From the findings above, it is proved that CLT approach helps to improve the students' oral competency as this approach encourage communication in the target language. the significant improving results from pre-assessment, cycle I, II and III have stated that CLT approach is effective to be used in the language classroom. As CLT doesn't focus entirely on grammatical accuracy, it encourages participations from low proficiency students. Teachers and lecturers should adopt and implementing CLT approach in their teaching practice as it was proven to be an effective teaching method in improving students' oral competency at one university in North Sulawesi.

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