



# Improving Students' Speaking Skills Through Contextual Teaching and Learning Model of Students' 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** This classroom action research aimed to improve the speaking ability of first-year students at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen through the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model, targeting the enhancement of student's 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The study was conducted in class VII A, involving 30 students as the sample. The research was implemented in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. Data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods, including speaking tests, observation sheets, and student interviews. The instruments employed for data collection were validated for reliability and consistency. The implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model can significantly improve students' speaking skill as well as foster their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, such as engagement, critical thinking, and communication. The results indicated a significant improvement in the students' speaking skill, as evidenced by the increased mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test in both cycles. Additionally, the students demonstrated enhanced engagement, critical thinking, and communication skills. Findings confirm that the CTL model is effective in improving student's speaking skill and simultaneously strengthening their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Therefore, the CTL model can be recommended as a valuable strategy for enhancing both linguistic proficiency and essential competencies in junior high school students.

**Keywords:** Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), Speaking ability, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, Classroom action research

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate effectively in English has become an essential skill in the globalized world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. English, as an international language, is not only a medium of instruction in many educational institutions worldwide but also a critical tool for global communication and collaboration [1]. English, as an international language, serves a dual function in the modern world. On one hand, it operates as a medium of instruction in numerous educational institutions across the globe, enabling access to knowledge, academic discourse, and cross-cultural learning [2]. On the other hand, it functions as a vital tool for global communication and collaboration, facilitating interactions among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Mastery of English equips learners not only with the ability to participate in international academic and professional settings but also with the competence to engage in meaningful exchanges within the global community [3], [4]. Thus, the role of English extends beyond linguistic proficiency; it embodies a bridge that connects people, ideas, and opportunities in an increasingly interconnected world.

Mastery of English, particularly speaking skills, is crucial for students to participate actively in various academic, professional, and social contexts [5]. In academic settings, strong speaking abilities allow students to articulate ideas clearly, participate effectively in discussions, and present their knowledge persuasively. Within professional environments, proficiency in spoken English fosters collaboration, enhances employability, and facilitates successful communication in both national and international workplaces. Furthermore, in social contexts, effective speaking skills support the development of interpersonal relationships, cultural exchange, and active participation in community life [6]. Therefore, the ability to communicate fluently and accurately in English not only strengthens linguistic competence but

also equips students with the tools necessary to thrive in an interconnected and competitive world. Despite its importance, many students struggle with speaking English fluently and confidently, particularly in non-native English-speaking countries like Indonesia.

In Indonesia, English is a mandatory subject in the school curriculum, yet the proficiency levels among students vary widely [7]. Despite this mandate, students' proficiency levels in English demonstrate significant variation, influenced by factors such as differences in teaching methodologies, availability of learning resources, exposure to authentic language use, and the socio-economic background of learners. While some students achieve a high level of competence, enabling them to use English effectively in academic and social interactions, others struggle to attain even basic communicative skills [8]-[10]. This disparity highlights the need for more effective instructional strategies and equitable access to quality language education in order to bridge the gap and ensure that all students can benefit from English as a tool for personal, academic, and professional development. Various studies have indicated that Indonesian students often face significant challenges in speaking English due to limited practice opportunities, lack of exposure to authentic language use, and insufficient interactive teaching methods [11]-[13]. These challenges are particularly evident in secondary education, where students are expected to develop advanced communication skills to prepare for higher education and the workforce. At this stage, learners are required not only to demonstrate linguistic accuracy but also to employ English effectively for critical thinking, problem-solving, and the expression of complex ideas [14]-[17]. Such competencies are essential for academic advancement, as they prepare students to meet the demands of higher education, where active participation in discussions, presentations, and collaborative projects is indispensable. Moreover, strong communication skills are increasingly regarded as a prerequisite for success in the modern workforce, where English often functions as the primary medium for professional interaction, international collaboration, and access to global opportunities [18], [19]. Consequently, the ability to achieve proficiency in English at the secondary level is a critical determinant of students' future educational and career trajectories.

SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen, like many other schools in Indonesia, faces similar challenges in enhancing students' speaking abilities. Preliminary observations and assessments in Class VII A revealed that students demonstrated low confidence and fluency in speaking English. Many students hesitated to participate in speaking activities, and their responses were often limited to short, fragmented sentences. This indicates a need for more effective teaching strategies that can engage students and provide them with meaningful practice in speaking English.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) has been proposed as a promising approach to address various educational challenges. This model emphasizes the use of real-life contexts and interactive activities to make learning more relevant and engaging for students [20]. By integrating contextual learning into the educational process, CTL aims to enhance student engagement, improve critical thinking skills, and foster deeper understanding of complex concepts. This pedagogical model is designed to increase student engagement by making learning more relevant, authentic, and applicable to their daily experiences [14]-[16]. Furthermore, CTL encourages the development of critical thinking skills, as students are challenged to analyse, evaluate, and apply knowledge in diverse contexts rather than merely memorizing information. Through active participation and problem-based learning, learners are able to construct deeper understanding of complex concepts, which in turn enhances both their academic performance and their ability to address real-world challenges [17]-[19]. Ultimately, CTL not only supports the acquisition of subject matter knowledge but also promotes the cultivation of essential 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies.

Given the potential benefits of the CTL model, this research aims to investigate its effectiveness in improving the speaking ability of first-year students at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen. Through a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, this study seeks to implement and evaluate the CTL approach in Class VII.A, with the goal of enhancing students' speaking skills and overall engagement in English learning. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights into the practical application of CTL in English language teaching and contribute to the broader discourse on effective educational practices in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Contextual Teaching learning (CTL) and Students' Linguistic Skill**

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is an educational approach that emphasizes the connection between learning materials and real-life situations. Rather than focusing solely on abstract concepts, CTL encourages students to relate academic content to their personal experiences, social contexts, and future professional needs [27]. This method promotes active learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving, as students are guided to construct knowledge through meaningful engagement with their environment.

In the context of linguistic skills, CTL plays a vital role in enhancing students' skill to use language effectively. Linguistic skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which are fundamental for communication and academic success [28]. By applying CTL, educators create learning activities that require students to practice language in authentic settings. For example, students asked to conduct interviews, participate in group discussions, analyse real-world texts, or write reflections based on personal experiences. Such practices allow learners to understand language not merely as a set of grammatical rules, but as a tool for expressing ideas, interacting with others, and solving real-life problems.

Moreover, CTL fosters a learner-centred environment where collaboration, interaction, and inquiry are highly valued. This environment provides opportunities for students to improve their linguistic competence by engaging in meaningful dialogues, articulating thoughts clearly, and interpreting information critically. Consequently, students not only develop fluency and accuracy in language use but also acquire confidence in applying linguistic skills in academic, social, and professional contexts. In conclusion, the integration of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in language education significantly contributes to the development of students' linguistic skills. By connecting classroom learning with real-life experiences, CTL ensures that language learning is purposeful, practical, and aligned with the communicative demands of the modern world.

### **Contextual Teaching learning (CTL) and Students' Speaking Skill**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this approach has become increasingly relevant, particularly in the development of students' speaking skills. The modern era demands effective communication, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities, all of which are closely tied to students' capacity to express ideas clearly and confidently through spoken language [29]. Speaking skill is one of the core components of linguistic competence. It enables students to articulate thoughts, convey messages, and engage in interactive communication. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where global communication, technological integration, and intercultural interaction are prevalent, students are required not only to speak fluently and accurately but also to use language appropriately in diverse contexts. CTL provides opportunities for learners to practice speaking in meaningful, authentic situations that mirror real-life communication, such as group discussions, presentations, role-plays, debates, and project-based activities [30]. Through CTL, learning becomes student-centre and interactive. Teachers act as facilitators, guiding students to explore ideas, share opinions, and solve problems collaboratively. Such activities encourage students to use language in purposeful ways, thereby improving both fluency and confidence. Moreover, CTL integrates critical thinking, creativity, and digital literacy—skills that are essential in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—into speaking activities [24]-[26]. For example, students may present solutions to real-world issues, create digital content, or participate in online discussions, which further enhances their communicative competence.

The application of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is highly effective in developing students' speaking skills [34]. By linking classroom instruction to authentic experiences, CTL equips learners with the ability to communicate confidently, think critically, and collaborate effectively—competencies that are indispensable for success in the modern world.

### **The Benefit of Contextual Teaching and Learning for Student's 21<sup>st</sup>**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by rapid technological advancement, global interconnectedness, and the growing demand for critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. In this context, Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) offers significant benefits for students as it equips them with the competencies needed to thrive in a complex and dynamic world [35].

First, CTL makes learning more meaningful and relevant. By connecting academic concepts with real-life situations, students are able to understand knowledge not as isolated facts but as practical tools for problem-solving. Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) emphasizes the importance of connecting academic material with students' real-life experiences, social environments, and future aspirations [20]. This approach ensures that learning is not perceived as abstract or detached from reality, but rather as directly applicable to the situations students encounter in their daily lives. Learning becomes meaningful when students are able to understand *why* they are learning certain concepts and *how* those concepts can be applied beyond the classroom. CTL achieves this by providing practical examples, real-world problems, and experiential learning activities that allow students to see the value and purpose of their studies [36]. For instance, instead of only studying grammar rules in isolation, students may practice language through conversations, interviews, or presentations related to real issues. This makes the learning process both relevant and engaging. Furthermore, by linking learning to personal and social contexts, CTL increases students' motivation and interest [21]. Learners are more likely to participate actively and retain knowledge when they recognize its usefulness in solving problems, making decisions, and communicating effectively.

in real-life situations. CTL makes learning more meaningful and relevant because it bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application [37]. Through this approach, education becomes a purposeful process that prepares students not only for academic achievement but also for success in their personal, social, and professional lives. This approach enhances motivation, as learners recognize the direct usefulness of what they study in their personal, social, and professional lives.

Second, CTL promotes the development of higher-order thinking skills [38]. It conducted by encouraging students to actively engage in analyzing, evaluating, and applying knowledge rather than relying solely on rote memorization. Through activities such as problem-solving, inquiry-based learning, and real-life application of concepts, students are guided to think critically, make informed decisions, and generate creative solutions. This approach not only deepens their understanding of academic material but also equips them with the intellectual abilities required to adapt and succeed in the complex challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century [31]. Students are encouraged to analyse, evaluate, and apply knowledge in various contexts rather than merely memorizing information. Such skills are crucial in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where adaptability and innovation are highly valued.

Third, CTL fosters communication and collaboration [27]. It conducted by engaging students in interactive activities such as group discussions, cooperative projects, and problem-solving tasks that require the exchange of ideas and collective decision-making. Through these activities, learners practice expressing their thoughts clearly, listening actively to others, and respecting diverse perspectives, which enhances their interpersonal and social skills [24]. This collaborative environment not only strengthens students' ability to communicate effectively but also prepares them to work productively in teams, a skill highly valued in both academic and professional contexts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through group discussions, project-based learning, and interactive tasks, students practice teamwork, leadership, and interpersonal communication. These skills are indispensable in modern education and the global workforce, where cooperation across diverse backgrounds is essential.

Finally, CTL builds self-confidence and learner autonomy [39]. By actively engaging in problem-solving and decision-making, students take ownership of their learning process. This not only improves academic performance but also nurtures lifelong learning habits that are necessary in a rapidly changing world. Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) provides multiple benefits for students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It makes learning relevant, develops critical and creative thinking, enhances collaboration and communication, promotes digital literacy, and fosters learner independence [24]. These advantages prepare students to meet the academic, professional, and social challenges of the modern era effectively.

## Related Findings

Many researchers and educators performing research on Contextual Teaching Learning (CTL) model in speaking skills for students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skill Firstly, the study aimed at knowing the effect English speaking material which is based on contextual teaching learning towards EFL critical thinking in speaking. To achieve this purpose, the students were taught using speaking material which is based on contextual teaching-learning before the speaking test was taken at the end. The data analysis showed that CTL had a significant effect on students' critical thinking after being treated [40].

Secondly, the objective of the research is to investigate the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) to improve students' speaking skills in the aspects of accuracy, clarity, and fluency. The results showed that the implementation of contextual teaching and learning (CTL) improved students' speaking skills in terms of accuracy, clarity, and fluency. The result of Wilcoxon showed the value of Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) for accuracy, clarity, and fluency is 0.000 which means that the resulting test is less than the minimum requirements of the statistics range (0.05). Therefore, the use of CTL in teaching and learning speaking is very beneficial for students to improve their speaking skills [41].

Thirdly, the objective of the study is to improve the grade X students' achievement in speaking at SMK Negeri 1 Setia Janji be improved through Contextual Teaching and Learning Method in school year 2020. This research was conducted in grade X of SMK Negeri 1 Setia Janji. The results average value of 71,7 with learning completeness reached 63 % or in other word as many as 22 students from 35 students and remaining 37 % or 13 students do not pass the study. Thus, activity in the first cycle should be repeated for student learning outcomes through the application of Contextual Teaching and Learning can be improved. Moreover, in terms of the relationship between pictures and communicating, the writer recommends Contextual Teaching and Learning practice as a means of enhancing students' mastery of speaking [42].

Forthly, the research was aimed at finding out whether: (1) Contextual Teaching Learning has better effect than conventional method towards students speaking skill; (2) the students having low anxiety have better speaking skill than those who have high anxiety; and (3) there is an interaction between CTL and anxiety towards students speaking skill. This research was an experimental study within the quantitative

approach. The result of this research revealed that the level of students anxiety that taught by CTL is lower than conventional, while students' speaking skill score that taught by the contextual method was higher than the conventional method. The level of anxiety has a significant effect on students' speaking skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that: 1) Contextual Teaching Learning method has better effect than Conventional method towards students speaking skill of the tour and travel students' class of SMKN 2 Mataram; 2) The students who have low speaking anxiety have better speaking skill than those who have high speaking anxiety at the tour and travel students' class of SMKN 2 Mataram; 3) There is an interaction between CTL and students' anxiety towards students speaking skill of the tour and travel students' class of SMKN 2 Mataram [43].

Research Question:

1. How is the improvement of speaking skill through CTL model of student's 21<sup>st</sup> century?
2. What are benefits of CTL model for the student's 21<sup>st</sup> in learning English?

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach to investigate the effectiveness of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model in improving the speaking ability of first-year students at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen. Classroom Action Research (CAR) is a cyclic process that involves four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This process enables continuous improvement and adaptation of teaching strategies to better meet the needs of students

### Research Design

The research was conducted in two cycles, each comprising four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This iterative process aimed to identify issues, implement solutions, observe outcomes, and reflect on the results to refine the approach in the subsequent cycle. The research design employed for this study at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen utilized Classroom Action Research (CAR) is a collaborative and reflective process that involves a systematic inquiry and action approach to improve teaching practices. It is structured into two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. This process allows educators to continuously refine their methods and adapt to changing student needs, leading to improved learning outcomes. CAR involves cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, which are essential for continuous improvement and adaptation in educational settings. This iterative process allows researchers and educators to identify challenges, implement targeted interventions, observe outcomes, and critically reflect on the results to inform subsequent actions and adjustments.

The first cycle involved planning lessons based on the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model, implementing these lessons in the classroom (action), observing students' engagement and progress during activities (observation), and reflecting on the effectiveness of the CTL approach based on qualitative and quantitative data collected (reflection). The second cycle followed a similar process but incorporated adjustments and improvements based on the findings from the first cycle, aiming for further enhancement in students' speaking abilities.

### Participants

The participants in this study were 30 first-year students (Class VII.A) at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen. The selection was based on preliminary assessments that indicated a need for improved speaking skills among these students. Selecting participants based on specific criteria related to the research focus ensures that the study targets a relevant and representative sample. In educational research, identifying participants who exhibit characteristics or needs pertinent to the research objectives enhances the validity and applicability of the findings.

This approach is crucial because it ensures that the participants selected are directly relevant to the research question and can provide meaningful insights. By targeting a specific population with specific characteristics, the study can avoid generalizability issues and provide more accurate and actionable results.

For instance, in a study examining the effectiveness of a new educational program for students with learning disabilities, selecting participants who have learning disabilities and are enrolled in the program would provide a more representative and relevant sample. This approach would allow the study to isolate the impact of the program on students with specific needs, enhancing the validity and applicability of the findings.

The selection of Class VII.A students was informed by initial assessments that highlighted challenges in their speaking abilities. By focusing on this group, the study aimed to implement targeted interventions

using the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model to address these identified needs and improve overall language proficiency.

## Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the CTL model.

### Qualitative Data

#### Observation Sheets

Observation sheets are a qualitative data collection tool used to systematically record and analyze students' engagement, participation, and interaction during classroom activities and lessons. They provide valuable insights into students' behaviors, attitudes, and responses in real-time learning contexts. Observation sheets are effective tools for capturing detailed observational data that can inform instructional practices and student learning outcomes. They enable researchers and educators to document specific behaviors and interactions.

#### Student Interviews

Student interviews are a qualitative data collection method used to gather in-depth insights into students' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards learning. In educational research, interviews provide researchers with the opportunity to explore students' perspectives in their own words, uncovering motivations, challenges, and reflections on their learning journey.

Student interviews are particularly valuable for understanding the nuances of student experiences and the impact of educational interventions. They allow researchers to delve into the reasons behind students' behaviors and responses, providing richer context to complement quantitative data. This approach offers several benefits:

#### Teacher's Reflective Journal:

A teacher's reflective journal is a qualitative method where educators document their observations, reflections, and insights regarding their teaching practices and students' learning experiences. This journal serves as a personal and professional development tool, allowing teachers to critically analyze their instructional strategies, classroom dynamics, and student interactions.

### Quantitative Data

#### Speaking Tests:

Speaking tests are a standardized method of assessing students' oral proficiency in a controlled setting. These tests are designed to measure various aspects of speaking ability, including:

**Fluency:** The ability to speak smoothly and continuously without significant pauses or hesitations.

**Accuracy:** The ability to use correct grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation in speech.

**Pronunciation:** The ability to pronounce words correctly, including intonation and stress.

**Vocabulary usage:** The ability to use a wide range of vocabulary in speech, including idiomatic expressions and technical terms.

These tests are typically conducted in a face-to-face setting, where the examiner engages in a conversation with the candidate to assess their speaking skills. This approach allows for a more natural and accurate assessment of the student's language proficiency level.

In the research conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen, speaking tests were administered as pre-tests and post-tests in each cycle of the Classroom Action Research (CAR) study. The pre-tests established baseline data on students' speaking abilities, while the post-tests measured improvements following the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model. The tests included criteria for assessing fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary, ensuring comprehensive evaluation of students' progress in speaking English.

## 3. FINDINGS

The findings of the Classroom Action Research (CAR) conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen revealed significant improvements in students' speaking abilities following the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model. Quantitative data from speaking tests and qualitative insights from observation sheets and student interviews collectively demonstrated the efficacy of the CTL approach. Quantitative results indicated a consistent increase in students' speaking scores from pre-tests to post-tests across both cycles of the study. On average, students showed improvements in fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage. For instance, mean scores rose from 60 in the pre-test to 70 in the

post-test after the first cycle, and further to 75 after the second cycle, highlighting progressive enhancement in students' oral proficiency.\

| Table 1. Findings of the Classroom Action Research (CAR) – SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen |  |                           |                                   |                                     |                   |                                        |                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Aspect                                                                          |  | Pre-Test<br>(Before CTL)  | Post-Test Cycle 1<br>(After CTL)  | Post-Test Cycle 2<br>(After CTL)    |                   | Observations & Insights                |                                 |
| Mean Speaking Score                                                             |  | 60                        | 70                                | 75                                  |                   | Steady improvement in oral proficiency |                                 |
| Fluency                                                                         |  | Limited, hesitant         | Noticeable progress, fewer pauses | More speech, flow                   | natural sustained | Students confident                     | more expressing ideas           |
| Accuracy                                                                        |  | Frequent errors           | Errors reduced                    | More accuracy                       | consistent        | Grammar scaffolding                    | improved outcomes               |
| Pronunciation                                                                   |  | Weak clarity              | Improved articulation             | Clearer, intelligible               | more              | Practice via drama/role-play           | enhanced pronunciation          |
| Vocabulary Usage                                                                |  | Limited, repetitive       | Expanded range of words           | Broader vocabulary, more use        | more appropriate  | Interactive encouraged                 | tasks richer language           |
| Confidence                                                                      |  | Low, reluctant to speak   | Increased willingness to speak    | High participation, eager to share  |                   | Students more engaged in               | pair/group discussions          |
| Engagement                                                                      |  | Passive, teacher-centered | More active interaction           | Strong collaboration and enthusiasm |                   | WhatsApp & Outside Circle              | Inside games boosted engagement |
| Communicative Skills                                                            |  | Minimal interaction       | Improved participation            | Strong communicative competence     |                   | Students initiated conversations       | more often                      |

Qualitative data provided complementary insights, revealing that students exhibited greater confidence and engagement in speaking activities. Observation sheets documented increased participation and interaction during CTL-based lessons, indicating improved communicative skills and language fluency. These findings highlight the effectiveness of using various teaching methods, such as WhatsApp and Inside-Outside Circle games, to enhance students' speaking skills and confidence. Additionally, the use of scaffolding strategies and drama performances have been shown to significantly improve students' engagement and self-esteem in speaking activities.

The discussion centers on the implications of the findings within the broader context of language teaching and learning. The significant improvements observed in students' speaking abilities underscore the effectiveness of the CTL model in enhancing language proficiency. The integration of real-life contexts and interactive learning experiences inherent in CTL contributed to students' linguistic development and 21st-century skills acquisition. The results align with previous research by Rodrigues and Bidarra (2022) which emphasizes the importance of contextualized learning environments in language acquisition.

The importance of contextualized learning environments (CTL) in language acquisition lies in their ability to foster linguistic competence, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills. By embedding language tasks within meaningful and authentic contexts, CTL provides students with a more immersive and engaging learning experience that mirrors real-life scenarios. This approach has several benefits:

Enhanced Linguistic Competence: CTL helps students develop a deeper understanding of language by exposing them to authentic, context-specific language use. This enhances their ability to use language accurately and effectively in various situations.

Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: By presenting language tasks within real-life contexts, CTL encourages students to think critically and develop problem-solving skills. This prepares them to tackle complex, context-dependent language challenges in their future academic and professional pursuits.

Collaboration and Communication: CTL promotes collaboration by involving students in group projects and discussions that require effective communication. This helps them develop essential skills for working with diverse teams and communicating effectively in various settings.

**Academic and Professional Success:** By integrating language learning into authentic contexts, CTL prepares students for the demands of academic and professional environments. This enhances their ability to communicate effectively, think critically, and collaborate with others, ultimately contributing to their overall success.

Furthermore, the iterative nature of CAR facilitated continuous improvement and adaptation of instructional practices based on ongoing reflection and data analysis. This cyclic process enabled educators to refine teaching strategies and tailor interventions to meet students' evolving needs, contributing to sustainable educational outcomes. Then, Harrison et al (2019) argues that the iterative nature of the Continuous Assessment and Reflection (CAR) process facilitated continuous improvement and adaptation of instructional practices by incorporating ongoing reflection and data analysis. This cyclic process allowed educators to refine their teaching strategies and tailor interventions to meet students' evolving needs, leading to sustainable educational outcomes.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The findings of this Classroom Action Research (CAR) clearly demonstrate that the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen significantly enhanced students' speaking abilities. Quantitative evidence indicated consistent improvements across both research cycles, with mean speaking scores rising from 60 in the pre-test to 70 after the first cycle and 75 after the second cycle. These results highlight progressive improvements in students' fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary usage, confirming the effectiveness of CTL in fostering oral proficiency.

Complementary qualitative data provided deeper insights into students' learning experiences. Observation sheets and interviews documented marked increases in students' confidence, participation, and interaction during speaking activities. Students who were initially hesitant and reluctant to speak became more engaged and willing to participate in discussions. The integration of WhatsApp-based activities, Inside-Outside Circle games, scaffolding strategies, and drama performances was particularly effective in creating meaningful opportunities for students to practice speaking in authentic and supportive contexts. These strategies not only strengthened students' communicative competence but also boosted their self-esteem, engagement, and collaborative skills.

By embedding language tasks within real-life contexts, CTL created a more immersive and authentic environment that mirrors real-world communication. This contextualization was instrumental in improving linguistic competence, while simultaneously fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Moreover, the iterative nature of CAR proved essential in ensuring sustainable improvements. The cyclic process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting allowed teachers to refine instructional practices continuously and adapt interventions to students' evolving needs. Overall, the results of this study reinforce the pedagogical value of CTL as an effective instructional model for improving speaking proficiency. Beyond linguistic gains, CTL fosters learner autonomy, motivation, and collaborative skills, equipping students with competencies that extend beyond the classroom into academic and professional contexts. The combination of quantitative improvements and qualitative growth illustrates that CTL is not only effective in raising test scores but also in shaping confident, competent, and communicative learners.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

Action Research (CAR) conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Kebumen concludes that the application of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) model significantly improves students' speaking abilities. Quantitative findings demonstrated a consistent rise in mean speaking scores from 60 in the pre-test to 70 after the first cycle and 75 after the second cycle. This upward trend confirms that CTL effectively enhances core aspects of speaking performance, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

Qualitative evidence further reinforced these results by showing that students became more confident, engaged, and willing to participate in classroom discussions. The integration of interactive strategies such as WhatsApp-based activities, Inside-Outside Circle games, scaffolding, and drama performances successfully created supportive and authentic speaking opportunities. These methods not only strengthened students' communicative competence but also built their self-esteem, motivation, and collaborative skills.

Overall, the study affirms that CTL is a highly effective pedagogical approach for developing speaking proficiency. By situating language learning within real-life and meaningful contexts, CTL enables learners to acquire linguistic competence alongside critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. The

iterative nature of CAR further ensured sustainable progress, allowing continuous refinement of instructional strategies to meet learners' needs.

CTL not only raises students' academic achievement in speaking but also shapes them into confident, competent, and communicative individuals who are better prepared for future academic and professional challenges.

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