

# ***Improving German Speaking Skills Through Contextual Teaching And Learning***

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**Abstract.** This study aims to investigate the influence of contextual teaching and learning (CTL) in improving German speaking skills. This was an action classroom research conducted in two cycles. The data were the results of cycle 1 and cycle 2. The results of the study showed that the implementation of CTL influenced and could improve students' German speaking skills. The results suggest that CTL can be applied in German language teaching and learning, especially German speaking skills.

**Keywords:** Speaking, German, Contextual Teaching and Learning

## **INTERFERENCE**

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational process must be planned with objective and rational thoughts in order to develop students' potentials optimally. Plans play an important role in the process of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is a deliberate effort made by educators or teachers with the aim of imparting knowledge by organizing and creating a learning environment system with various methods so that students can learn more optimally (Anggraeni, P., & Akbar, A., 2018; Kirom, A., 2017; Nugraha, M. 2018).

Teaching and learning are essentially the attempts to encourage students to learn in order to achieve the learning objectives. Teaching and learning involve interactions between the teacher and students. The teacher serves as an educator and students as learners; both are involved in the teaching and learning process (Yanto, D. T. P., 2019).

Speaking is one of the language skills that German language learners must master as daily interactions are mostly done through speaking. Speaking skills deal with not only the occurrences of daily conversations, but also knowing how and when to speak using formal language and informal language (Tambunan, P., 2018; Darmuki, A., & Hariyadi, A. 2019). Only a small number of students perform satisfactorily with the teaching and learning method applied in schools, while the rest experience shyness, fear and a lack of confidence.

In regards to the German language teaching and learning process, from the high school to university levels, learning is oriented towards the mastery of language skills. This is intended to enforce students' imagination and communication skills. Language skills encompass four main skills, namely listening and reading skills which are both receptive skills, and speaking and writing skills which are both productive skills. The four skills are interrelated as they involve linguistic and communicative competence. In addition, the four skills are closely related to the process that underlies language that is language reflects thinking. The more articulate a person is, the clearer his way of thinking will be. Therefore, some language skills can only be acquired and mastered if done with numerous practices and practicing language skills can simultaneously practicing thinking skills (Ulfiyani, S., 2016; Alvionicha, F., Jufri, J., & Dalle, A. 2021; Azizah, L., & Saleh, N. 2021).

One of the language skills that is very important to develop is speaking as it allows a person to communicate fluently and directly in any situation. Both teachers and students, particularly in formal situation, are expected to be able to communicate effectively and efficiently when expressing ideas and thoughts orally (Masdul, M. R. 2018; Rahmawati, R., Saleh, N., & Mannahali, M., 2021; Putri, A., Saud, S., & Anwar, M., 2021). Speaking is the most unique, dominant and vital form of interpersonal communication in people's lives. It is unique because it is very complex and contains rules that regulate how communication between people can occur properly.

In the process of teaching and learning German, it is found that students still experience difficulties in expressing their ideas orally. This is usually caused by several factors such as lack of understanding, restricted vocabulary, difficulty producing the umlaut sounds and diphthongs, mispronouncing the sound of  $\beta$  to b,

and being influenced by English. In other cases, students lack self-confidence that leads to shyness, poor performance, timidity, hopelessness, awkwardness and silence when interacting with other people. Thus, having self-confidence is necessary to express thoughts and ideas communicatively (Sunarti, S., Asri, W. K., & Rijal, S., 2021; Nurlina, N., 2020; Ihsan, I., & Al-Ilmul, S. F., 2021). Such unfavorable conditions cause difficulties in creating a productive and dynamic teaching and learning process, which in turn will lead to poor quality of education.

One way to optimize the teaching and learning process is to apply appropriate methods. One method viewed be able to optimize students' learning abilities and outcomes in speaking skills is the implementation of contextual teaching and learning (CTL). CTL is defined as a teaching and learning method that can help students learn by making connections between their knowledge and their daily lives.

CTL is a learning concept that require teachers to associate the material they teach with students' real-world situations. In CTL, students as the members of families and society are encouraged to make connections between the knowledge they acquire and its application in their lives (Daryanto, 2013). With CTL, teachers are expected to be capable of motivating students to develop their potential and making the teaching and learning process more impactful. This is in accordance with the argument made by Johnson (2011) that CTL will make the teaching and learning process exciting and meaningful.

### **Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL)**

CTL is not universal in that a person learns something differently from other people. What and when a person learns depends on their environment that is relevant to their everyday life. They learn something because they have the opportunity to apply what they learn in their daily lives.

CTL helps students connect the knowledge acquired in the classroom with everyday situations and seek the meaning of the lessons studied in the classroom to build on existing knowledge. In this approach, students need to understand the meaning and benefits of learning as well as their status and how to achieve it. As a result, students will realize that what they have learned in class will benefit their lives in the future. With this approach, the learning outcome is expected to be more meaningful for students. The learning outcome expected from this approach is that students can incorporate the meaning of what they learn into their daily lives (Ramdani, E., 2018; Afriani, A., 2018).

CTL is a system that enables students to build interrelationships, independence, and meaningful relationships between what is learned and the present-day reality, and personal, social, and cultural environment. In this regard, Hasibuan & Pd (2014) argue that CTL is an educational process that focuses on helping students grasp the meaning of the subject matter they study by connecting it with their everyday lives in their personal, social and cultural environment so that they can have dynamic and flexible knowledge or skills used to actively construct their own understanding. The main principle of CTL is student activities. Students do and experience, not solely watch and take notes, as well as develop social skills.

Suhartoyo, E., et al (2020) revealed that CTL promotes and contributes to Freedom to Learn, a program by Kemendikbudristek (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology). The effects of CTL on students are various and valuable, encompassing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. CTL is a teaching and learning conception that helps teachers with making associations between lessons and real-life situations and also drives students to make connections between knowledge and its application in their lives as the members of family and society. In other words, CTL will occur if students apply and experience what is being taught by referring to real world problems in relevance to their roles and responsibilities as the members of family and society.

Johnson (2011) argued that there are three scientific principles in CTL, namely interdependence, differentiation, and self-regulation. First, the principle of interdependence encourages educators to recognize their connection with other educators, their students, the society and the earth. This principle is omnipresent, allowing students to make meaningful connections and develop critical and creative thinking skills; both of which are necessary to identify relationships that will generate new understandings. When working together, students will find it easy to address a problem, design plans, and find solutions to the problem. Collaborating can raise their awareness that listening to each other will lead to success. Second, the principle of differentiation contributes to creativity, uniqueness, diversity and cooperation. The components of teaching and learning include active and hands-on practical learning that challenges students to create. Students tend to think creatively when they use academic knowledge to collaborate with their classmates, prepare plans to complete a school assignment, as well as gather and assess information about a problem in society. Student-centered active learning strongly supports the principle of differentiation to gain uniqueness. This allows students to have freedom to explore their personal talents, identify their own way of learning, and develop independently. Third, the principle of self-regulation requires educators to encourage each student to unlock their full potential. Therefore, they must be assisted in achieving academic excellence, acquiring career skills, and developing character by connecting school work with personal experience and knowledge. When all these things occur, they are engaged in self-regulating activities. They accept responsibilities for their own decisions and behaviors, assess alternatives, make choices, develop plans, analyze information, find solutions and critically evaluate evidence.

In regard to these three principles, Nari, N. (2016) mentioned the eight components of CTL, namely: 1) building meaningful relationships, 2) doing meaningful work, 3) performing self-regulated learning, 4) working together, 5) thinking critically and creatively, 6) helping individuals to grow and develop, 7) reaching high standards, and 8) undertaking authentic assessment. In addition to these eight components, CTL has the following characteristics: 1) emphasizing problem solving, 2) allowing learning to take place in multiple contexts, 3) guiding students to monitor their learning outcomes so that they can learn independently, 4) using students' diverse backgrounds as a starting point, and 5) encouraging students to learn from each other with their friends.

## Speaking Skills

Speaking is a person's ability to express opinions, thoughts and feelings to another person or group orally either in person or remotely. Putri, A., Saud, S., & Anwar, M. (2021) stated that speaking is a natural process of communication between members of the society to express thoughts and to serve as a form of social behavior. Additionally, it is the second language skill after listening that aims to convey thoughts and feelings verbally to others with confidence and responsibility for what is said.

Speaking is a person's productive ability to orally express thoughts or ideas and communicate messages and to compose sentences because communication occurs through sentences that can show different behaviors among people in diverse societies (Putri, E. E., Saleh, N., & Jufri, J., 2022). Overall, it can be assumed that speaking is a productive language skill that involves the production of speech to express thoughts and feelings. Speaking is an interpersonal communication using spoken language which directly or indirectly has an effect on either one or both of the participants.

Also, speaking is a communication that involves at least two participants at a certain place in a certain atmosphere about a certain topic. In this regard, Palupi, R. E. A., Purwanto, B., & Sutriyono, S. (2022) revealed three primary dimensions of speaking as follows: 1) physical dimension, suggesting that places affect the communication process; 2) socio-psychological dimension, suggesting that communication is affected by the intensity of the relationship or emotional intimacy between the participants; and 3) temporal dimension, suggesting that communication is affected by time.

When communication is taking place, sometimes interruptions occur, resulting in distorted or even incomprehensible messages received by the recipient. In everyday life, there are many people who cannot clearly convey their ideas to others so that what is in their mind does not correspond to what is said.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The design of this study was a classroom action research with the Kemmis and Taggart model, comprised of several stages, namely preliminary study, planning, action, observation and reflection.

The planning stage involved the following steps: 1) identifying competency standards and basic competence, 2) preparing lesson plans, 3) preparing tools and items for CTL, and 4) making observation forms for teachers and students.

At the action stage, teachers implemented the plans. The action stage was conducted in two cycles and each cycle consisted of three meetings. In the first cycle, teachers implemented the plans that had been designed to overcome the problems. In the next cycle, teacher made revisions to the previous cycle. Furthermore, to determine the conformity between the quality of the activities and the plans, observations were conducted on the implementation of CTL. Lastly, the reflection stage was undertaken to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the actions taken.

The data of this study were both qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data were obtained from the observations on the activities of teachers and students during the implementation of CTL to assess the quality of the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were gathered through the speaking tests after students took part in the CTL process.

This study was conducted on 34 students at SMAN (Public Senior High School) 1 Gowa. The study was focused on the students' speaking skills through the CTL approach.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the preliminary study showed that the students had poor speaking skills. Thus, this study was conducted to examine the implementation of CTL in improving the students' speaking skills. Teaching and learning were performed in the cycles that had been designed and implemented by collaborating with German language teachers.

The data of this study were teachers' ability to design and implement CTL, obtained from the teacher observation forms given in cycles I and II. In contrast, the data on the students' speaking skills were obtained from the speaking test, which was based on the A1 Goethe Institute speaking skill assessment rubric.

The results of observation of CTL in the first cycle showed that students made some improvements in their speaking skills over the course of three meetings. In the first and second meetings, students still had difficulties in using the subject, verb and conjugation, and their average score was 71.11. In the third meeting, however, they made fewer mistakes.

Furthermore, the results of observation of CTL in the second cycle showed that students also made some improvements their speaking skills with the average score of 82.78. Their average score was already above KKM (Minimum Criteria for Completeness).

To prove conclusively that there was an increase in students' speaking skills in the first and second cycles, the t-test was carried out. The t-test aimed to verify that the implementation of CTL was effective in increasing students' speaking skills. The results of the t-test showed that the t-count (6.145) was higher than the t-table (2.690). These results suggest that CTL is effective in improving students' German speaking skills.

Based on the increase of students' average scores in cycles 1 and 2, the success rate was in a good category although some students had low scores due to poor vocabulary. Nevertheless, the application of CTL is considered effective enough to stimulate students' imagination in exploring their German speaking skills and to motivate students in learning and completing assignments because they can learn according to the real-world situations, they are familiar with. Thus, they can hopefully achieve better learning outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the implementation of CTL influenced and could improve students' German speaking skills. The average score increased from 71.11 in cycle 1 to 82.78 in cycle 2. The

indicator of performance in this study was that 80% of the students experienced an increase in their speaking skills after participating in CTL. Students' engagement in the teaching and learning activities also increased in each cycle. This is because CTL emphasizes the full involvement of students in making connections between the lessons they learn and their real-life situations.

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