

Improving English Education Department Students' Speaking Skills Through Debate Technique

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ABSTRACT

This study was based on students' expectations to have better speaking skills. However, students still had less mastery of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, the background of knowledge, etc in order to be good English speakers. In this research, the researcher implemented a debate technique to improve the English Education Department Students' speaking skills. The objective of this study is to describe the debate technique implementation in teaching and to identify the improvement of students' speaking skills after being taught by implementing the debate technique in their classroom. This research was a classroom action research that was done into two cycles. A test and observation were used to collect the data. Then data collected were analyzed quantitatively. The participants of this research were 41 students at the Class B semester V academic year of 2018/2019 of the English Education Department of FKIP UMSU. The findings of this research showed that the implementation of the debate technique improved students' speaking skills. This was proven by students' average score of 65 in the first cycle increased into an average score of 80,3 in the second cycle. Therefore, it is believed that to improve the students' speaking skill then the debate is its technique.

Keywords: Speaking skill, improvement, debate technique, classroom action research, action

INTRODUCTION

Speaking as the most important part of our daily life is a form of speech production (Thonburry, 2005:8). Speaking used by humans serves as a tool to communicate with other people in a civilized world. In the academic environment, having the ability in speaking enables students to express their opinion, feeling and information without limitation and hesitation due to different native language, culture, and country.

Based on the observation done by the researcher, students could not speak English fluently and confidently. They were not able to deliver their ideas and opinion to other students during the speaking lessons as well as passive in exchanging information. They seemed to like being too afraid of making mistakes while communicating the information they had. Hence, in order to improve students' speaking ability especially in the English Education Department of FKIP UMSU, the researcher was interested in conducting this research.

The researcher believes that through debate, students' speaking skills would be improved significantly. Rybold (2006:2) states debating will eventually shape the students to be better speakers in any given situation. In addition, Bellon, J (2000) also believes that through debate, students learn how to create a reason, to analyze it, to clarify it, and to present arguments.

1. Speaking Skills

Hornby (1987) says that speaking means making use of a language in an ordinary voice, uttering words, knowing and being able to use a language, expressing oneself in words and making a speech. Based on this theory, it is concluded that speaking is a very vital way to carry out feelings, opinions or ideas to others by using words and phrases. According to Harmer (2002) that there are four elements of English speaking should be mastered by students maximally in order to be good English speakers as follows:

1. *Connected speech*: In connected speech, sounds are then modified (assimilation), omitted (elision), added (linking), or weekend (through contraction and stress patterning).
2. *Expressive devices*: Native of English always change their pitch and stress of particular parts of utterances, vary volume and speed, and show how they are feeling by physical and non-verbal means. The use of these devices significantly influences the ability of a speaker to convey a meaning. They also use additional expressions of emotion and intensity.
3. *Lexis and grammar*: Spontaneous speech is marked by the use of a large number of lexical words and phrases in a certain language function.
4. *Negotiation language*: Effective speaking benefits from the negotiatory language used to seek clarification and to show the structure of a langue spoken.

To know what speaking is for, Wilson and Arnold (2000) explain several purposes of speaking as follows:

1. *Speaking to inform*: People are satisfied when they understand the information they hear. People who speak to inform something is called informative speaking. Thus, its goal is to make listeners understand the information the speaker conveys by creating perception and knowledge of the topic. There are particular things that can be categorized into informative speaking: a. *Accuracy*, it is true in fact both in detail and proportion, b. *completeness*, it is comprehensive enough to cover the subject talked in the specific speech or in any subject of the speech, c. *Utility*, the content of the speech must be meaningful to share with the listeners.
2. *Speaking to induce inquiry*. A speech delivered in a public forum by throwing a condition of problems and seek solutions from all attendants. Its topic was previously found by investigation and its solution should be from speakers' or listeners' ideas. This problem may need further investigation in the future.
3. *Speaking to reinforce beliefs and feelings*. The purpose of this speaking is to emphasize something to the listeners by providing sufficient evidence and explanation so that the listeners will follow the speakers' beliefs without any doubts.
4. *Speaking to entertain*. This speaking aims to entertain the listeners by bringing some humor in the speech.
5. *Speaking to persuade*. The speech delivered by the speaker is generally designed to change or reinforce the audience's beliefs or actions. This speech potentially influences people's behavior, values, beliefs or attitudes. One of the examples of this speech is in promoting certain products to the customers in various kinds of market.

2. Speaking activities to improve students' English speaking skills.

Teaching speaking in to improve students' speaking skill is started by asking students to speak English actively in the classroom. Many speaking activities are currently suggested to be used by teachers during teaching speaking to their students, including

1. *Acting from a script*. The students are encouraged to act out scenes from plays, course books or movies they know. This frequently involves them to come to the front of the class.

Students are asked to act out the dialogues they have prepared previously. At the same time, teachers should consider the time for students to rehearse dialogues before they perform.

2. *Communication games.* Games based on oral activities such as describing, predicting, simplifying, and asking for feedback are good ways in teaching-learning time. The other examples of the games are *Simon says, last words, etc. Consequently*, students never feel bored in practicing English actively.
3. *Discussion.* The students always have a chance to say their opinions during discussion sessions in a small group before any of them are invited to speak in public. It is beneficial to reduce the stress level for those who are fearful of public speaking.
4. *Prepared talks.* Students are asked to make a presentation on the topic they have had chosen. Students are allowed to speak from notes to motivate them to perform in public.
5. *Questionnaires.* Some questionnaires should be prepared by teachers for some students who act as interviewers. These interviewers, then, are asked to interview other students who become respondents. The questionnaires also can be designed by the students themselves based on any interesting topics. This activity may encourage the natural use of English in the middle of students' communication.
6. *Simulation and role-play.* This activity can be used to influence students to use general oral fluency in English for a specific situation. Students are asked to simulate a real-life situation as if they were doing so in the real world.
7. *Debate.* The debate is a process of presenting ideas or opinions in which two opposing teams try to defend their own idea or opinion. Debating is very useful in the classroom to make students practice their English speaking skills in real-life situations.

3. Concept of English Debate

According to Dale&Wolf (2000), a debate is a speaking situation in which two opposite points of view are presented by assigned speakers to the audience. Littlewood (1981) says a debate is a presentation of the real issue in which the learners' roles are to ensure that they have adequate knowledge and information about it, then they may have to reach an important decision or put the issue to a vote at the end of the activity.

Further, Mellshaliah (2008) explains some terms related to debate:

1. **Motion.** Every debate has a motion and this is the issue for discussion. Motion is basically the topic being debated upon, it contains a full propositional statement that states what debate is/shall be about. A motion generally is expressed "This House....." e.g. THW, THB, this is all the people present at the debate.
2. **Case Building** is time for debaters to prepare their proposal of debate. In the classroom context, the students are given 15 minutes after the motion released to prepare their arguments before the debate started.
3. **An argument**, is the fragment of thought to support the motion. Hasibuan (2018) adds that an effective argument generally has the following structure:
 - a. **Idea**
The idea is the assertion that the debater is trying to justify.
 - b. **Analysis**
The analysis is the reason to justify the idea.
 - c. **Evidence**
Evidence is used to substantiate the analysis that debater provided, this can be case studies, statistics, or analogy.
 - d. **Sum-up/closing** is simply concluding what has been through. A nice summary is preferable.

4. Point of Information (PoI), is questions directed to the member speaking. This PoI may be asked between a first-minute mark and the six-minute mark of the members' speeches.
5. A rebuttal is a process to prove that the opponent is wrong. A rebuttal is vital in debating because rebuttal is about attacking the opponent's arguments.
6. The adjudication is a panel at least three adjudicators where this is possible. These adjudicators should confer and rank the teams and provide a verbal adjudication after debate played.

These debating terms bring clear ways to run a debate activity in the classroom, where students must recognize them in the first place. Conversely, students may have problems during the debate if they don't recognize the arguments and rebuttals and others. From the above terms, it is concluded that arguments are not merely statements but added by explanations or elaborations which then be supported by evidence in the form of examples, facts or statistic data.

Before the debate started, these terms should be explained by teachers to the students in order to run the debate activity successfully in the classroom. There are some debate parliamentary systems commonly used in Indonesia for varsity level, but this tends to be British Parliamentary Debate System which referred to NUDC (National University Debating Championship) and WUDC (World University Debating Championship). Based on this debate system, there are four teams are competing with two members for each team. In addition, each member is given seven minutes and twenty-second time duration to deliver a speech. While some students are becoming debaters, then the rest will be the adjudicators.

The debate technique is believed will help the students to overcome their fear problems as well as developing students' oral English skills. Rybold (2006) says that debating form students to be a better speaker in any situation. Moreover, Bellon, J (2000) adds through debate, students learn the way how to use the library for ideas, reasons, and arguments.

METHOD

Classroom Action Research was the research design for this study. Harmer (2000) states that lecturers are allowed to engage in a series of research procedures in order to improve the quality of their teaching or because they want to do evaluation toward the success and appropriacy of certain procedures and activities. In addition, Arikunto (2008) adds that action research is a kind of investigation that has characteristics of reflective participative, collaborative, and spiral aiming to repair, increase and improve the system, method, process, substance, competence, and situation. Finally, Nunan (1993) also explains that action research is a series activities and a piece of descriptive research carried out by the lecturers in the classroom without involving others, which is aimed at interesting our understanding rather than changing the phenomenon under the investigation that would not be considered to be action research, then the important impacts for carrying out action research is to change the system. From the definition given, the researcher concludes that classroom action research is a classroom action in research, which can be done by lecturer or researcher with their colleagues and involving a group of students. There are four stages in Classroom Action Research for one cycle namely planning, observing, acting, and reflecting (Arikunto: 2008).

This Action Research was conducted at the Class B semester V academic year of 2018/2019 of the English Education Department of FKIP UMSU. University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara is located in Jl. Kapten Muchtar Basri No. 3, Glugur Darat II, Kec. Medan Timur, Medan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia.

The data source was the students' activities related to this research from observation and test which was conducted in all cycles.

There were some ways to collect the data in classroom action research like questionnaires, observation, field notes, interviews, documentation, test, et cetera. In this research, the technique of collecting data was observation and test. Classroom observation is focused on the understanding of how social event is enacted (Nunan: 1993). The researcher used the observation checklist containing a list of students' activities and their response, attitude or behavior that happened in the classroom. These observation lists were adapted from Rubiati, R (2010)

Table.1. Description of Students' Involvement from Observation Checklist

No.	Activities	Grade				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Students pays attention to lecturer's explanation					
2	Students give the opinion by using the expression					
3	Students give opinions with clarity and appropriate volume					
4	Students respond to another opinion					
5	Students are active and enthusiast in debating					

Meaning:

1. Very Poor with less than 20% of the students do the activity
2. Poor with 20%-40% of the students do the activity
3. Fair with 41%-60% of the students do the activity
4. Good with 61%-80% of the students do the activity
5. Very Good with 81%-100% of students do the activity

Then, the test is constructed by researchers as devices to reinforce learning and give motivation to the performance of students (Heaton: 1975). Then the researcher used an achievement test in the form of debate performance to measure the students' speaking progress. The aspects of assessment in speaking used by the researcher were vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, comprehension and background knowledge. This rubric was adopted from International Language Foundation (ILF) Scoring Rubric For Speaking Test on <https://www.scribd.com/document/324973046/Scoring-Rubric-for-Speaking-Test>. Finally, in data analysis, the researcher used descriptive statistics to describe the condition in every cycle.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The whole research process runs very well. The findings of this research would be described as follows:

In the first cycle, the lecturer introduced the debate with the British parliamentary system to students in teaching speaking. Below here was the description of the phenomenon occurred in the classroom, see table 2.

Table.2. Description of Students' Involvement from Observation Checklist

No.	Activities	Grade in Cycle I					Grade in Cycle II					
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
1	Students pay attention to lecturer's explanation				✓							✓
2	Students give the opinion by using the expression			✓								✓

3	Students give opinions with clarity and appropriate volume		✓						✓	
4	Students respond to another opinion			✓					✓	
5	Students are active and enthusiast in debating				✓					✓

In the first cycle, all students attended the class, then they paid attention to the lesson and tried to engage in the discussion by giving some response to the lecturer. However, some of them were still confused and nervous in making opinions with clarity and respond to another opinion in the time of small debate practice. This happened because they had not had any debate exposure previously. At this point, the average score of students' English speaking skill was 65.

In the second cycle, the process of teaching-learning was much better than the previous one. The researcher found that the majority of these students enjoyed the debate lesson and its practice. They were so enthusiastic and active to give responses and feedbacks for every statement given by the lecturer or their classmates. At this time, they also tried to spend the assigned time given up to 7 minutes for the speech and spoke English fluently with full expression. Eventually, the researcher found that the average score of students' English speaking skills was 80,3 as a whole.

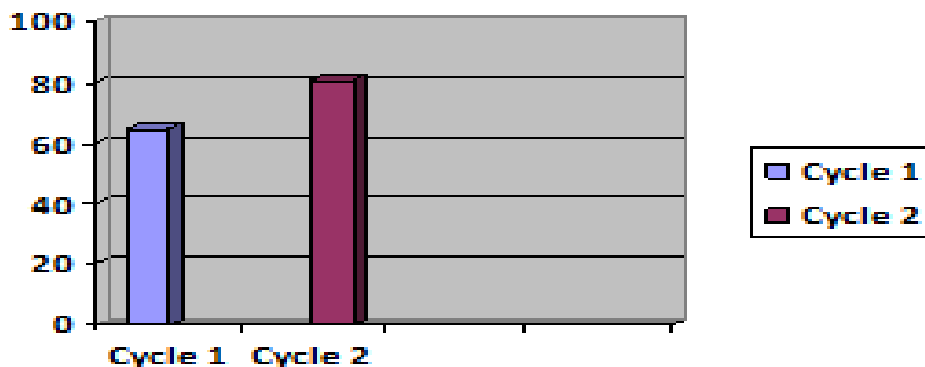


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The researcher believed that the debate technique significantly improved students' ability in English speaking. Debate lessons allowed students to express themselves freely using English they had during the speaking. They were also indirectly forced to find various vocabularies related to the motions given and practice them directly in public. The researcher found that students felt a serious challenge to convince different people about ideas they proposed in English fluently. In conclusion, the researcher found that the debate approach is an appropriate technique used in improving students' English skills in the English Education Department of FKIP UMSU.

CONCLUSION

The research conclusion presented here was relevant to the result of data analysis in the previous chapter. This research on teaching approach through debate technique to improve Students' Speaking Skills in English Education Department of FKIP UMSU can be concluded as follows:

1. The debate technique in teaching especially speaking class was proven to succeed in improving students' attitudes and motivation in learning English and practicing speaking. Students in two cycles looked enthusiast, enjoyable, and fun in learning English through

debate. They were given large opportunities to speak up, express themselves, and deliver their opinion in the form of arguments and rebuttals and work collaboratively in a team. The students and the lecturer enjoyed the process of English learning without feeling bored and burdened situation.

2. Improving students' speaking skills can be successfully done through debate technique in the classroom. Based on the speaking test, students' speaking ability was improved significantly from the first cycle to the second cycle after being taught by using the debate technique. In the first cycle, the average score of the speaking test was 65, then it improved in the second cycle into 80,3. The result of this test showed that students improve their speaking skills significantly through debate activity in their classrooms. Therefore, educators or lecturers are encouraged to implement debate technique in the speaking class frequently in order to achieve the final goal of education to improve students' speaking skills at the end.

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