

The Effect of Debate Technique to Students' Speaking Ability

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Abstract

This research was conducted to study the effect of debate technique used in the speaking classroom. By so doing, this researcher expected that this research provided more information about the availability of using this technique to teach speaking, especially English speaking. This research involved 30 students at English Education Program in STKIP Kie Raha of Ternate. Tests (pre and posttest) were administered and also interview. Based on the data, it is found that there is significant difference between before and after the treatment. Although it is noted that most students still had less vocabulary and less self-confidence to talkative in the debate, the test scores showed that Debate Technique is available to be considered in teaching speaking.

Keywords: *English Debate, British Parliamentary Style, Teaching Speaking, Speaking Ability.*

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1. Background

As one of the international languages today, English is one of the majors taught in various courses ranged from formal to non-formal education. English also has been considered as an important complementary skill to be mastered in applying jobs in various segments. In Indonesian, although English is still categorized as foreign language, Government has tried to put this subject into university (to schools) curricula. Today, English is seen as a common skill that becomes one of the requirements to achieve “better life”.

As a language, English skills has been divided into four major types, as stated as Haycraft (1978:8), namely speaking, writing, listening and reading. The first two skills are sub-categorized into productive skills and are labeled as oral communication and the last two skills are sub-categorized into receptive skills and are labeled as written communication.

As obviously seeable that speaking is one of the four major and basic skills that is believed as a result of language production. Speaking has been becoming a crucial measurement for a learner in mastering a language, in this case is speaking. That is one of the reasons why we have term like “English speaker” or “native speaker”; speaking skill or speaking ability is the parameter.

Based on its importance, learning speaking or having good training in speaking is important. Moreover, teaching the speaking skill is also important since the success of learning speaking is also heavily determined by the way the skill is taught (or learned). Therefore, as English (or

language) teacher, finding available approach, methods, models, techniques, and strategies applicable in teaching speaking is not ignorable. Various attempts must be done to fulfill the students' need in learning speaking for the students learn things in different ways. Here, English debate is considered to be tested.

Competitive debate is a contest, or, perhaps, a game, where two or more speakers present their arguments to persuade other speakers. Debate is also carried out for educational and recreational purposes and usually associated with educational establishment. Since debate relies on the speaking ability, it is reasonable to assume that it also supports the learners to master speaking skill as the way to express their ideas.

This researcher, then, addressed the question: “does teaching speaking through debate will improve the students' speaking ability?” Based on the question, the objective of this research is clear: to know whether teaching speaking though debate will improve the students' speaking ability (or not).

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. Speaking

Speaking has been defined variously by different writers around the world. Chaney (1998) mentions that speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of context. Hornby (1995) points out that speaking also means to use a language in ordinary, not in singing. Moreover, speaking is also a skill that requires not only linguistic competences but also sociolinguistic competence including the understanding of when, why, and how to produce language to express ideas (Linguadage, 2008).

The meaning delivered through speaking is formed not only by linguistic structures but also context. In line with this, Linguadage (2008) mentions that:

Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs; including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment, and purposes of speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended, and evolving.

Based on the quoted paragraph above, it can be understood that speaking activity is more than producing meaningful utterances but also related to the social contexts.

Individually, people speak because there are reasons to speak. Harmer (2002) shares some of the reasons as follows:

- a. They want to say something: what is used here is general way to suggest that the speakers make definite decisions to address other people. Speaking may be forced upon them but we can still say that they feel the need to speak, otherwise they would keep silent;
- b. They have some communicative purposes: speakers say things because they want something to happen as a result of what they say. They may want to charm their listeners; to give some information; to express pleasure. They may decide to be rude or flatter, to agree or complain. In each of these cases, they are interested in achieving certain communicative purposes;
- c. They select from their language store: speakers have an infinite capacity to create new sentences. In order to achieve this communication purpose, they will select (from the “store” of language they possess) the language they think is appropriate for this purpose.

Moreover, Harmer states that the ability to speak English presupposes the elements necessary for spoken production. The elements are called linguistic features including the connected speech, expressive device, lexis and grammar, and negotiating language. The second element is mental and/or social processing including language processing, interaction, and information processing.

As can be seen that speaking is a complex activity and therefore some speakers (learners) find it difficult although speaking is what we do every day. Brown (2001) implies that to speak fluently is difficult for some people. Some characteristics of successful speaking activity must be fulfilled such as the level of language acceptability, the speaking motivation, and the activity of the speaking itself. In short, the characteristics include the understanding of the language used in the speaking activity, the motivation to express ideas, and the active-speaking where the speaker can optimize the speaking activity based on the chance given to him.

2.2. Debate

Debate is a method of interactive and representational argument. Debate is a broader form of argument than logical argument, which only examines consistency from axiom, and factual argument, which only examines what is or is not the case, or rhetoric which is a technique of persuasion (Wikipedia).

In the debate, students share arguments or their view to the other students. It is assumed that this way can increase the students' knowledge. A student connects new information at his existing knowledge and reaches, in the most ideal situation, a transformation of his own knowledge (Duffy and Jonassen, 1992). It will raise their critical thinking and their knowledge will be wider. Otherwise, their communication skill will also improve.

There are several types of parliamentary debate (in educational field) such as British Parliamentary Debate, Canadian Parliamentary Debate, and American Parliamentary Debate. This research used the British Parliamentary Debate style.

Since debate requires speaking skill, the students are required to have sufficient speaking ability to achieve good scores; although the arguments they propose are the main points to be measured. The researcher saw that debate is a reasonable technique to be used in teaching speaking although winning or losing is not necessarily the case. The point to be looked was their speaking skill when training and performing the debate activity

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

This research is designed as a quantitative research by employing pre-experimental design. The idea to use this design was derived from McMillan and Schumacher (2001) that this design is appropriate to measure improvement by assign pre-test, treatment, and post-test to a single group of the students. However, this design has been considered as a weak design since it could not observe the other influencing variables that can influence the result of the test.

3.2. Participants

This research involved 30 students which were taken purposively by considering that they are English students, they are university students, and they have willed to be involved in this research. The students are from English Department of STKIP Kie Raha Ternate.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher administered oral test before and after the treatment. By treatment the researcher means the activity of English debate practice and performance in the speaking classroom by using British Parliamentary Debate Style. The researcher also interviewed the students to obtain their perception towards the use of debate technique in the speaking classroom. The data then are analyzed by using speaking rubric by Walter Bartz. Whereas, the scores obtained from the rubric will be tested by using T-Test with significance degree 0.5. The data from interview is interpreted based on content analysis procedures.

4. Finding and Discussion

As mentioned in the previous part, the researcher administered pre-test before the use or the training of debate to the students. After the treatment, the researcher also administered the post-test and in this part the result of each test is displayed. The researcher, then, compares the result of the two tests to determine the difference.

In the pre-test, the researcher used oral test by employing speaking rubric developed by Walter Bartz. The speaking aspects to be measured in this test are fluency, quality of communication, pronunciation, and also effort of communication. Based on the aspects, the scores are then divided by 4 to find the average or mean.

Here is the table of the students score in pre-test (the students are coded).

No.	Code	Scores	Average
1	R-01	11	2.75
2	R-02	10	2.50
3	R-03	5	1.25
4	R-04	14	3.50
5	R-05	15	3.75
6	R-06	12	2.40
7	R-07	9	2.25
8	R-08	7	1.75
9	R-09	12	3.00
10	R-10	10	2.50
11	R-11	11	2.75
12	R-12	15	3.75
13	R-13	9	2.25
14	R-14	7	1.75
15	R-15	12	3.00
16	R-16	17	4.25
17	R-17	13	3.25
18	R-18	7	1.75
19	R-19	5	1.25
20	R-20	9	2.25
21	R-21	12	3.00
22	R-22	9	2.25
23	R-23	9	2.25
24	R-24	14	3.50
25	R-25	8	2.00
26	R-26	10	2.50
27	R-27	10	2.50
28	R-28	6	1.50
29	R-29	13	3.25
30	R-30	13	3.25
Total		314	77.90

The total mean of the students' individual score is 77.90 whereas the group score is 314. This total score is then divided by 30 (the number of n) to find the average and the result is 10.46. When the researcher calculated this score to find the standard deviation, it found 3.07. Therefore, the pre-test data can be summed up as follows:

Mean	10.46
Standard Deviation	3.07
Highest Score	17
Lowest Score	5

The above score is about to compare with the post-test score. Here is the post-test scores:

No.	Code	Scores	Average
1	R-01	17	4.26
2	R-02	14	3.50
3	R-03	11	2.75
4	R-04	20	5.00
5	R-05	20	5.00
6	R-06	18	4.50
7	R-07	12	3.00
8	R-08	14	3.50
9	R-09	16	4.00
10	R-10	15	3.75
11	R-11	18	4.50
12	R-12	16	4.00
13	R-13	15	3.75
14	R-14	15	3.75
15	R-15	16	4.00
16	R-16	15	3.75
17	R-17	15	3.75
18	R-18	16	4.00
19	R-19	21	5.25
20	R-20	18	4.50
21	R-21	15	3.75
22	R-22	15	3.75
23	R-23	15	3.75
24	R-24	20	5.00
25	R-25	14	3.75
26	R-26	15	3.50
27	R-27	13	3.25
28	R-28	13	3.25
29	R-29	18	4.50
30	R-30	17	4.26
Total		484	105.01

The scores shown in the post-test table indicate that the students' speaking ability increased but this has to be calculated further. The total score is 484 and the average is 16.13. Meanwhile, the standard deviation is 2.56. It is also found that the highest score is 21 and the lowest score is 11. To sum up, the score in the post-test table is:

Mean	16.13
Standard Deviation	2.56
Highest Score	21
Lowest Score	11

To find the degree of difference between pre-test and post-test result, the researcher did t-test calculation. As displayed, the difference between two means is $(X_2 - X_1) = (16.13 - 10.46) = 5.67$. The last calculation is to determine the result of t-obs of the test.

$$T = \frac{\bar{D}}{\sqrt{\frac{\sum D^2 - \frac{(\sum D)^2}{N}}{N(N-1)}}$$

The difference of means (Md) is found 5.60 and so that the calculation of T-obs is as follows:

$$T = \frac{5.60}{\sqrt{\frac{1018 - \frac{(168)^2}{30}}{30(30-1)}}$$

$$T = \frac{5.60}{\sqrt{\frac{1018 - 940.80}{870}}}$$

$$T = \frac{5.60}{\sqrt{0.09}}$$

$$\frac{5.60}{0.30} = 18.76$$

It is found that the coefficient is 18.76. After getting the t-value, the researcher consulted the critical value on the t-table to check whether the difference was significant or not. Since the n is 30 and then it must be subtracted by 1, the number is 29. However, there is no definite critical value with df 29. Therefore, the researcher took the closest number which is 30 and the critical value is 2.04. Since the obtained t-value is greater than the t-table ($18.67 > 2.04$), it seems like there is positive effect of the debate technique towards the students' speaking ability.

Data from interview revealed that the students' appreciate the debate technique in the speaking classroom very much. Although they reported that this technique was never used before, they found this technique is fun and motivating. They tend to be nervous in the first time but as time goes by they were motivated to speak. Moreover, they said that not only was their speaking ability increased but also their knowledge of the motion given.

5. Conclusion

Based on the data and analysis above, the researcher took conclusion that the debate technique is a valuable technique considerable to be used in teaching speaking. The students' self-confidence is increased and their knowledge as well. Since this technique pushes the students to speak, they were very much motivated. However, the existence of the further research to validate this conclusion remains important.



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