

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING DEBATE IN SPEAKING AT ONE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN JAMBI

Grace Patricia Hasibuan¹, Duty Volya², Habizar³

¹²³ Universitas Jambi, Indonesia
Email: gracehasibuan7@gmail.com

Abstract

This research aimed to determine students' perceptions of the use of debate in speaking as well as to determine students' difficulties in debate. The research participants consisted of five students who participated in the English debate club at one senior high school in Jambi City. This research used a descriptive qualitative research design that aims to provide an understanding of students' perceptions and experiences related to the use of debate and the difficulties it faces. The results showed that students gave a positive perception and felt that the use of debate was effective in improving their speaking skills because debate encouraged them to continue practicing and developing their vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. However, students also have difficulties when debating, such as: defending the arguments, controlling emotion while debating, problems in listening skills, finding or hearing unfamiliar vocabulary and composing the sentence correctly. Overall, this research reveals that the use of debate has good benefits for students' speaking skills, but still needs to be supported by adequate training and coaching to overcome the difficulties experienced by students.

Keywords: *Perception, Debate, Speaking.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a common communication tool that has many functions in human interaction and has benefits in expressing meaning. The main function of language is for interaction and communication. Language is used by people to introduce them, to interact with others, and improve their knowledge. According to one perspective, language is an instrument for communication between regions and individuals, and it is going to be used to express somebody's notion, feeling, emotion, and idea to the other person.

As a foreign language in Indonesia, English may be studied seriously by many individuals to have high chances in the global world. English has recently gained importance. Learning English involves four skills: speaking, reading, listening, and writing. Speaking is crucial for human beings and speaking has no separation. According to Ilham, et al. (2019), speaking is a significant component of second language acquisition and education. The components of speech, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency, should be mastered by students when speaking.

A lot of students who are learning English in class are not paying attention because they are not interested in the subject. Giving students lots of opportunities to practice their English in the classroom can help them solve their speaking issues. To help students enhance their speaking abilities and the learning process interesting, practice speaking English in class should be engaging and use the proper technique. Debate may be used to educate speaking. Students who participate in debates might be inspired, motivated, and influenced comfortable with speaking.

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines debate as: 1) a formal discussion of an issue at a public meeting or in a parliament; and 2) an argument or discussion expressing different opinions. Debate directs students to speak by arguing from two groups that have been arranged to always disagree. This debate learning style is highly useful for supporting and improving the abilities that students must acquire. Furthermore, the debate learning paradigm can help students improve their higher-level thinking skills, often known as HOTS.

Because of these things, teachers rarely apply debate to classroom learning activities. Debate activities are usually held outside of learning activities at school, such as in extracurricular. Therefore, the researcher thought that this topic is interesting and important to discuss further to see the perception and find out the difficulties of students in using debate to improve their speaking skills.

METHOD(S)

In this research, the researcher used a descriptive qualitative research method. According to Creswell (2018), a descriptive qualitative research design is a sort of qualitative study in which the goal is to explain the specifics and analyze the data or symptoms gathered throughout the research process. Descriptive qualitative research design is a type of qualitative research that focuses on describing a phenomenon, involves non-numerical data collection and analysis, is flexible and adaptable, aims to provide a holistic and detailed perspective on the phenomenon under study, and is conducted in a natural setting. In this research, the researcher chose the kind of descriptive qualitative research because it is in line with the research aims and appropriate for analyzing in detail students' perceptions of using debate in speaking.

This research was conducted in one of the high schools in Jambi city. Then, the researcher took participants who took part in the English debate club. This school was chosen as the research location because it has an English debate club.

Participants who participated in this research were students who were members of the English debate club. The criteria for selecting participants are the students who are members of the

English debate club. Participants who participated in this research amounted to five people. Then, all participants were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality and participants were selected according to specified criteria.

In this research, the researcher collected the data using interviews. The interview is an oral, in-person question-and-answer session between a researcher and an individual respondent (Gay, 1981). In this research, the researcher used semi-structured interviews and the researcher also used a list of questions that can clarify further from participants about the research. This research was conducted for approximately two weeks and interviews were conducted face-to-face and by voice note in WhatsApp. Each interview was conducted for 5-10 minutes and audio-recorded. Participants chose to answer questions in English or Indonesian.

In analyzing the data, the researcher used qualitative research data analysis techniques from Miles and Huberman (2014). The researcher created a list of questions for the interview, sorted the interview results and made an interview script. Then, the researcher made initial conclusions about students' perceptions of using debate in speaking. Preliminary conclusions are useful for answering research questions based on qualitative data obtained from interviews.

In this research, the researcher used the member-checking technique. Member checking is used in this study as a process of checking the correctness of data obtained by researcher from subjects or participants and is useful for strengthening the validity of the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

1. Students' perceptions of using debate in speaking

Students have a positive perception of the use of debate in speaking. The students admitted that they experienced an improvement in their speaking skills after participating in the debate.

Debate improves students' vocabulary

In this component, almost all participants admitted and said during the interview that their understanding and mastery of vocabulary improved. This is because to speak, students must master a lot of vocabulary. Debate is an activity that requires students to speak continuously based on predetermined rules. In debate, students must also read or understand a lot of articles related to the topic of debate. Therefore, mastery of vocabulary is very necessary in understanding the articles or books read by students.

Debate improves students' pronunciation

Pronunciation is one of the components of speaking that is no less important to master. Almost all participants had enough perception. Previously, they said that their pronunciation was not good enough, but after joining the debate, they improved. This is because when they make a mistake in their pronunciation, they will be corrected and given justification by friends or teachers.

Debate improves students' fluency

In this component, all participants revealed also that their fluency increased. In debate, fluency also plays a very important role. Fluency in speaking can also indicate that they master all the topics or debate material given. This is because they have to practice continuously so that they feel comfortable using English and they become confident in speaking English.

Debate improves students' comprehension

Almost all participants had a positive perception. They admitted that their comprehension increased after participating in the debate. They said that to strengthen or convey an opinion or argument, they must have the ability to choose sources related to the topic of debate.

2. Difficulties in Debate

Defending an arguments

Debate is an activity to convey opinions or arguments based on a predetermined motion. In debate, there are pro teams and contra teams, where each team has its own opinion or argument. However, one of the participants found it difficult to defend an argument. This is because participating in the English debate club is new to her.

Control emotion while debating

Debate requires mastery of speaking components, one of which is pronunciation. Pronunciation is needed or has an important role in speaking, especially in debates. To understand the arguments given, the pronunciation used must be good and understandable to everyone. However, emotions that are unstable or unable to control the state within them will give off a bad pronunciation. This will greatly disturb participants when presenting the arguments.

Find unfamiliar vocabulary

Some participants admitted that they found it difficult to hear unfamiliar vocabulary. One of the participants said that when she got an unfamiliar vocabulary, the participant had difficulty understanding other people's arguments and her performance in debating was not good. Other

participants said that their listening skills were not good, making it difficult to understand other people's opinions.

Compose the sentences correctly spontaneously

In debate, all students must be able to structure sentences correctly and correctly to convey their arguments. However, there was one participant who said that she still had difficulty in making sentences correctly spontaneously. This can happen due to a lack of vocabulary mastery, not concentrating on arguing, feeling nervous, etc. This made the participant feel insecure and nervous when arguing.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of this research is prepared based on the research questions stated in Chapter 1, namely 1.) How are students' perceptions of using debate in speaking? 2.) What are students' difficulties of using debate in speaking?

1. Students' perceptions of using debate in speaking

Debate improves students' vocabulary

Students have responses and feel that debate improves their vocabulary because to argue, they must master the material and understand every word. Hasyim in Asyifa, H (2022), during that process, they can expand their vocabulary. In addition, Jill (2008) stated that mastering vocabulary will help students to be better speakers and listeners since we will be able to construct sentences when the students have abroad vocabulary. Therefore, students who experience an improvement in vocabulary after participating in debates, feel that they are easier to convey their arguments and more confident in speaking in English.

Debate improves students' pronunciation

Furthermore, the researcher also found that not only did their vocabulary increase but their pronunciation also increased after joining and practicing in English debate club. According to Alasmari, A (2013), debates can be well used to improve students speaking of English. Participants also said that when practicing debates, their teachers or friends would help them correct or justify their pronunciation. This is related to Wulandari in Asyifa, H (2022), saying that students also make mistakes while speaking English. Then, if some friends or opponents who have good pronunciation, this will be a motivation for students to continue practicing so that their pronunciation improves.

Debate improves students' fluency

From the findings of this research, participants stated that they experienced and felt that their fluency in speaking English increased. Asyifa, H (2022), stated in her research that the frequent practice in debates made the students more comfortable speaking and improved their fluency. Based on that statement, the students in this research stated that their fluency in speaking English increased because they often practiced when participating in extracurricular debates regularly. Bai (2018) also said many students pay more attention to words that are often heard and used frequently. Based on that statement, students feel more confident. Then, they feel enjoy and comfortable when speaking in English.

Debate improves students' comprehension

Furthermore, the last component that experienced improvement was comprehension. Students argue that to give questions or answers during debates, they must have a good understanding of a topic being discussed. According to Chan in Sanjaya, R (2014), there are several advantages of debate, one of which is that debate may increase abilities for obtaining, assessing, and synthesizing material from many sources to build arguments, as well as ways for discovering information. Also, Jill (2008) stated that comprehension is an element of speaking that minimizes misunderstanding between speaker and listener. Students who have good comprehension skills will easily understand the arguments conveyed by the opposing team.

2. Difficulties in Debate

Defending an arguments

In debate, students must be able to strike a balance between affirming their point of view and being open to opposing points of view (Putri, Y. 2023). Based on that statement, students are expected to be able to defend their arguments and accept the arguments of others. Somjai (2015) also stated that a lot of students have no way to handle their emotions when defending their argument. This is because when they can't control their emotions, they also have difficulty defending their arguments.

Control emotion while debating

In addition, students must be able to control or control themselves. If not, then his or her performance in debating will not be good. Putri, Y. (2023) in her research, said that the high-pressure nature of debates, the desire for one's own point of view, and the intensity of opposing arguments can cause strong emotions. Controlling emotions during debates is essential to be able to think critically, communicate effectively, and argue persuasively. The effort that can be made is to think before responding and focus on logical reasons.

Find unfamiliar vocabulary

Another difficulty of using debate in speaking is finding or hearing unfamiliar vocabulary. Students said that they had difficulty listening and recognizing new vocabulary, so they found it difficult to understand the other person's opinion. In debate, students need active listening and critical thinking skills right then and there (Putri, Y. 2023). When students' listening skills are not good, they will have difficulty understanding other people's arguments. According to Penny Ur (1996), said that in learning English, many students are less motivated to read, listen, and write. Therefore, this can make them less proficient in vocabulary. When they lack vocabulary, they will have difficulty understanding other people's opinions or arguments because they hear unfamiliar vocabulary or new vocabulary.

Compose the sentences correctly spontaneously

Moreover, the difficulty that students face when arguing is to compose the sentence correctly. This is related to their grammar and vocabulary skills. According to Bygate (2008), linguistic obstacles are difficulties with language such as grammatical mistakes when speaking English. Therefore, students will have difficulty in structuring English sentences or the sentence structure they make does not sound good. Also, Bygate (2008) stated that the negative impact is that students might be worried when they want to speak, as well as experiencing significant anxiety if they think negatively about grammar. Therefore, most students become hesitant and unconfident to express their arguments because they have negative thoughts and are afraid of being wrong with their grammar.

CONCLUSION

Students respond positively to the use of debate in speaking. Students' perceptions of the usage of debate are good, and their English speaking abilities increase. Therefore, English debates are useful and have a fairly good chance in improving students' speaking skills. This is based on the findings of this research which states that debate has an important role in increasing student vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension. However, in participating in debates, students will also get their own difficulties. The difficulties that students will face are constructing sentences spontaneously, difficulty in listening and recognizing some new vocabulary so that they do not understand the arguments given by the opponent of the debate, lack of confidence in defending their own arguments, and difficulty controlling them. However, this does not reduce the important points contained in the debate to improve students' speaking skills in English.

REFERENCES

- Alasmari, A. & Ahmed, S. (2013). Using debate in EFL classes. *English Language Teaching*, 6(1).
- Asyifa, H. (2022). Students' perception on the use of British Parliamentary Debate method to improve speaking ability of flat debate center student at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. Skripsi. Unpublished.
- Bygate, M. (2008). *Oral second language abilities as expertise. in expertise in second language learning and teaching*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Creswell. (2018). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications, inc.
- Gay, R.L. (1981). *Educational research*. New York: Prentice Hill, inc.
- Ilham, I. et al. (2019). An analysis of students' speaking ability on specific purpose of learning. *Linguist ELT J*. 7(1)
- Jill, H. J (2008). *Introduction to teaching English*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Miles, B. et al. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis A Methods Source Book*. SAGE Publications, inc.
- Putri, Y. (2023). Efl students' perception on the use of debate as a strategy in learning speaking. *Aleph*. 87
- Sanjaya, R. (2014). *The Implementation of Asian Parliamentary Debate Technique in Teaching Speaking at the Second Grade Students of SMA Negeri 5 Bandar Lampung*. Diploma Thesis. Unpublished.
- Somjai, M. S. & Jansen, A. (2015). *The use of debate technique to develop speaking ability of grade ten students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School. Srinakarinwirot University*. Bangkok, Thailand.
- Ur, Penny. (1996). *A Course in Language Learning: Practice and Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.