

## **Enhancing Speaking Skills of EFL Students Through Debate**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to find out whether or not using debate improved the students' speaking skill achievements and how much debate contributed to each aspect of speaking skills. This was a qualitative research design as an action study. Eleven students Faculty of English Teaching semester 5 completed the survey. The data was collected through a survey questionnaire including Yes or No questions and one question need statement. Overall, the students believed that the debate was a good learning activity. The respondents believed that the debates helped improve and build courage their speaking skills. In addition, as the students claim, other benefits of the debates included build courage with a spontaneous argument, boosting confidence, have a new vocab, and learn how to thinking in a critical way.

**Keywords:** Speaking skills, EFL students, debate

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is the expression of human communication intercultural through knowledge, belief, and behavior that can be experienced also explained and shared. This sharing is based on systematic, conventionally used signs, gestures, sounds, or marks that convey understood meanings within a group or community. English as an International language has a very great role nowadays because of the globalization era in every field those are economics, politic, social and education demanding good command of English as the means of communication. English is one of the languages that is very important to learn. In Indonesia, English is popularly enough and taught as a foreign language from low to higher education. English as an International language has a very great role nowadays because of the globalization era in every

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English has become the primary lingua franca of an increasingly interconnected globalized world in intercultural communication. English is an important language in Indonesia. It can be seen that English is the first foreign language taught from elementary school to university level and also the involvement of English as one of the important subjects in the Indonesian education curriculum. Indonesian people's awareness of the importance of English is greatly increased, it is based on the desire to continue their studies abroad, get a job, and travel. Therefore, there are so many English courses in Indonesia that offer to learn English quickly. There are four skills in learning English, listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the context of the English language, speaking skills are very important. That's because through verbal language, speaking can express one's ideas and thoughts, and being able to speak is one of the keys to learning languages (Fauzan, 2014). Self-speaking skills are productive skills in oral mode. This is more complicated than other skills. In this skill, students not only say the words but also, they have to interact well with others in order for a conversation to occur. Communication through speaking is generally done in face-to-face interactions.

Nowadays, the EFL learning process requires a great emphasis on teaching speaking skills since English is considered a global language and used for interpersonal communication. Within this context, it is the desire of many EFL learners to be fluent and to evolve their speaking skills in spite of the difficulties and fright which impede free communication.

The main activities which may reinforce the EFL learners' speaking skills are of great importance. If the EFL teachers were aware of the appropriate material and activities which would enhance the EFL learners' speaking performance, then they will certainly decrease most of the difficulties that learners face in speaking and starting a good method to teach EFL students.

### *Speaking Skills*

Speaking is a speech production that becomes a part of our daily activities (Thornburry, 2005:8). Speaking is used to express their ideas and to communicate with people in a civilized world. The ability to speak serves students to be able to communicate their opinions, feelings, and expressions without the restrictions of different languages, cultures, and countries. Teaching and learning of speaking skill should exist in language classrooms because this can truly enable the student to communicate in English, thus, speaking skill requires special treatment in the learning process. Speaking skill also plays an important role in language learners who use it for instruction, discussion, and arguments presented (Iman, 2007).

Speaking does not only knowing the linguistic feature; linguistic features of the message expanding oral communication requires more than memorized vocabulary and grammatical but understanding. One of the obstacles of learning speaking is a method between class materials and courses so that most of the teachers do not facilitate situations for real practice in speaking; Besides, the teacher should take into account learners' interests and needs.

Speaking also is a part of everyday human life that must be developed by everyone in a smooth and detailed language. One of the most important factors about language is that it relates to social and cultural contexts (Schmitt, 2012). A very large culture that includes all the institutions, attitudes and man-made features of a large group of people who are not homogeneous. Teachers cannot teach everything about the culture itself, but they are able to improve intercultural awareness through parameters: sources of information, and types of activities (Cullen & Sato, 2000). Speaking is a form of conveying information through words or sentences through spoken language. Speaking is used to express their ideas and opinions and to communicate with people in the world. The ability to speak serves students to be able to communicate their feelings, opinions, and expressions without the restrictions of different languages, cultures, and countries without thinking about the difficulty to convey them. Speaking is very important because by mastering speaking skills,

people can have conversations with others, provide ideas and exchange information with others.

The production of speaking skills is included in two main categories: accuracy and fluency. Five main components in speaking skills:

1. Pronunciation includes segmental features-vowels and consonants-and pressure and intonation patterns
2. Grammar
3. Vocabulary
4. Fluency: ease and speed of speech flow
5. Comprehension

The five factors of speaking skills have an important role in speaking. By mastering all factors, people can produce good and true speech. *“the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously”* (Gower, Philips, & Walter, 1995). Bygate (1987) state that two elements: production skill and interaction skill. In production skill, speaking ability take place without time limit environment and in interaction skill, there is a negotiation between learners. Both skills help learners increase their speaking ability easier. Stuart (1989) said that learners should plan and adjust their talk, and effective speakers should be proficient by practicing. It shows that speaking is high risking activity that creates anxiety and causes learners to worry about losing face.

In speaking, students should master the elements of speaking, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. As a foreign learner in Indonesia, many students have amount vocabularies and mastering the grammatical structure, but they still have difficulty and courage in speaking. This problem also appears to the students of English Department Universitas Ibn khaldun 5th semester. The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for foreign language learners which is in that country do not use English at all. Learners consequently often evaluate by themself success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how well they have felt and improved in their spoken language proficiency and how pronounced word. Speaking is one of the basic language skills

that have to be mastered by foreign learners due to its significance and its use for communication intercultural. It is very important to be able to speak English regarding that it is the most commonly accepted language in the world so that it will be very beneficial for those who comprehend it not only to improve their knowledge and skills but also easier for them to get a job, get friends and travel around the world. More than that, they will not find it difficult to communicate and interact with people around the world when they travel.

Student problems occur when they speak English. This is caused by the limitations of students in mastering the speaking component. In addition, students rarely practice speaking English inside or outside the classroom. Students' speaking problems can be solved by giving a lot of chances to students for practicing English either in the classroom or out of the classroom. Practicing speaking English in the classroom should be interested with appropriate techniques in order to make students speaking skills can be improved and the process of learning can be enjoyable.

As Rivers (1981) argues, speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing in our communication. Many experts define speaking in different ways. Brown and Yule (1983) stated that "*speaking is to express the needs-request, information, service, etc.*" "Another definition of speaking skill " *the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non – verbal symbols into a variety of context.*" (Chaney, 1998: 13). Therefore, speaking is not an easy task, its mastery claims a lot of experience and practice. Luoma (2004: 1) argues that "*speaking in a foreign language is very difficult and competence in speaking takes a long time to develop.*"

### **Debate**

Learning about speaking English, many various ways have been used as the method of teaching and learning English process to make the students understand easily the English subject starting using traditional tools such as book, chalks, blackboard or whiteboard into the newer and modern method by using real object, pictures, music, video, etc. One of the modern methods that can be used to learn speaking skills is the form of debate. It is seen as an active learning process, and

students can learn more through the process of building and developing, collaborating in a group, and also sharing knowledge. Researchers think that there must be a way to solve students' problems.

The debate is definitely one of the most exciting and valuable experiences for college students. Those who learn to debate well learn how to research and gather a significant question in-depth and learn how to organize research or arguments into a meaningful and persuasive presentation. The debate also build critical thinking of student. The debate is definitely one of the most exciting and valuable experiences for college students. Those who learn to debate well learn how to research and gather a significant question in-depth and learn how to organize research or arguments into a meaningful and persuasive presentation. The debate based on Allison (2002:13), *“debating is the ultimate multi-task activity since it involves research, writing, speaking, listening, and teamwork”*. Othman (2013:1507), stated debate encourages students to learn course content better, since they are engaged in the course content actively, broadly, deeply and personally. It also trains them to assess the data they get on a daily basis.

The debate can be used in the EFL classroom as a tool to make student practice skills of the English language in real-life situations. Zare and Othman (2013:1506) states: Debate has the potential to improve speaking 10 ability, since the activity requires a lot of speaking practices and verbal discussions among debaters.” Krieger (2005) states that many students had obvious progress in their skills to express and defend ideas through practice in a debate.

Debate is a formal method of interactive and representational argument that aims to convince the audience of our opinions. Debates can be used to teach speaking in EFL classes. (Krieger, 2005: 1) states that debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it involves students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways and is active in the classroom. debates also provide meaningful listening, speaking and writing exercises, they are also very effective for developing argumentative skills for persuasive speech and writing and for issuing opinions about an issue.

According to Alastair & Ahmed (2013: 148) arguing can be used brilliantly to improve students' speaking skills in English. Using debates in EFL classes, learners will first dispel students' fears about English and foster a sense of courage in speaking English that has been held back. In addition, debates will increase their fluency, pronunciation and increase their vocabulary. They will also be familiar with Jargon and technical terms because debates cover a variety of fields and issues.

The most common kind of debate is in a class when there is the option for two trainees or two groups to develop opposite opinions for a certain issue (Tumposky, 2004). The process of the debates starting with the choice of the topic or issue, which leads the two groups either to defend it or to oppose it; in other words, the one group supports the one aspect and the other group is opposed to it and how they hold their opinions consistently in theory and practice. However, in the debate, success does not mean victory, but the interest and motivation achieved by each group.

In EFL, where students have inadequate opportunities to learn and practice in English in everyday life, debates open up opportunities for them to use language in the form of expressing opinions and raising their courage with logic and critical thinking. This is a single practice where students need to use all English skills along with skills in the delivery and development of vocabulary. Makiko Ebata (2009) states:

*“When learning a new language for global communication, students are required to confidently express their thoughts. In order for students to be vocal, critical thinking skills are essential. The use of debate has been an effective technique for strengthening my students’ speaking and critical thinking abilities.”*

English teachers and practitioners have proven debate as an effective tool in teaching English which is a powerful source of motivation for EFL teachers who have not used debate in their classrooms.

The debate in English is a practice that requires all English skills along with presentation and delivery skills especially speaking skills. Debate requires current and correct information about current issues and concepts in various fields. In addition, they need to conduct research on various problems that are happening. While presenting their logic and arguments, debates require standard delivery skills to convince judges and hearings that the arguments they present are true and cannot be broken. When practiced in EFL classes, debates make students use language and presentation skills.

In the debate technical system, we will get some items that relate to the debate process. The following are some items related to debate:

1. Motion

The topic debated is called a motion. Usually, motion participants with a word like “this house” (TH) or “this house believes that (TH) or “this house believes (THBT)”. For example, this house believes that (THBT) e-book contributes to developmental education. So, both teams need to prove or justify whether e-book really can contribute to developmental education.

2. Definition

Debaters should “down to earth” or see the current issue that happened in society and explain it with clarity. The definition can be done in two ways; word by word definition or the global definition.

3. Theme line

To agree or disagree with a motion, the reason must lie in a strong reason that can cover the entire argument. The theme line is what a team needs to prove, it is also the main reason why a team attacks an opponent's case and can break their argument.



#### 4. Argument

Debates are like a battle of arguments, where each team stands in their position, attacking opponents and defending their own arguments. Praiseworthy work can be done well by using critical and logical thinking. The argument is a fragment of thought to support the theme line

#### 5. Rebuttal

To win debates, debates not only need to build strong arguments but they must also attack opponents' arguments and provide strong defense from any attack. That is why rebuttal is one of the keys to victory. Basically, there are two types of objections, namely:

(a) Global Disclaimer: This is an attack on the main core of the opponent's case, the theme line. As a result, their argument collapses.

(b) Detailed rebuttal: this is an attack on every argument or example the opponent presents.

#### 6. Sum-up/closing

Closing only concludes the results of the debate that had already taken place. A good summary is preferred.

Debates can be used in various ways to improve students' speaking skills in English. Some of them have been discussed in this paper. The teacher will work as a moderator and will facilitate student learning and the issues to be discussed. They will provide feedback on speeches with a focus on sending more specifically to gestures, loud pronunciation, accent, intonation, stress on words, vocabulary, word choice; data and information that should be of relevance.

Debate allows students the opportunity not only to identify that there is a problem to be solved, but also to show a deeper analysis of the problem, including assessment, criticism, and the reason for the problem for a solution. Roy and Macchiette (2005) state the importance of the assessment and the feedback processes for the successful application of the debate technique. So, as a teacher, should have and learn in advance how the debate technique so that students can understand very well about the debate

All in all, research findings clearly indicate that classroom debate helps students develop speaking skills among many other skills. Students learn the to courage in speaking about their thinking, analyze, and evaluate statements and arguments. The debate also showing active learning which allows students to participate in the learning process actively. It also helps students to build up their oral communication or speaking skills. Last but not least, findings confirm that students reported to like the debating experience and identified it as a new and interesting approach, also build the characters of students to think much and speaking English in spontaneously way.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### *Survey Questionnaire*

This study is aimed at implementing the in order to solve the classroom problem in the teaching of speaking. A survey questionnaire, developed by the researcher, was administered to explore students' feedback about their experience attending classroom debate. The survey was filled by 11 semester 5S and 5K students. The instrument consisted of four items with Yes or No questions and one question need the students' statement, the items of the questionnaire were developed according to the objectives of the study. The article focused on speaking skills through debate experience; whether they liked it, Does the debate method make your speaking skills increase? What makes you like learning speaking through debate? These types of questions are very general. One of the items states that 'Because I don't only add my new

vocabulary in speaking, but also get and share something new from my debate partner.’. The completed questionnaire will be presented in the results section.

## RESULT

### *Quantitative Results*

The researcher give question want to know Students' responses in learning to use the debate method. As mentioned before, the survey questionnaire consisted of three using Yes or No questions and one question need the students' statement. Table 1 below provides the answer.

1. Have you ever learned English through debate?
2. Do you like learning English through debate?
3. Does the debate method make your speaking skills increase?
4. What makes you like learning speaking through debate?

*Note :*

Q= Question

**Table 1** Questionnaire Result

No.	Class	Q 1	Q2	Q 3	Q4
1.	5S	Yes	Yes	Yes	Because in debate we are learn how to thinking in critical way
2.	5S	Yes	Yes	Maybe I would	Because I don't only add my new vocabulary in speaking, but also get and share something new from my debate partner
3.	5K	No	Yes	Yes	Dengan debat bisa membuat kita improve bahasa
4.	5S	Yes	Yes	Yes	improve speaking skills, make me talked much
5.	5K	Yes	Yes	Yes	I can tell everything in my head
6.	5K	I Would	Yes	Maybe I would	Dapat membantu menambah kosakata and meningkatkan

					kepercayaan diri.
7.	5K	Yes	No	Yes	Meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara di depan umum
8.	5K	Yes	Yes	Yes	Just interesting
9.	5K	Yes	No	Maybe I would	Saat debat siswa biasanya lebih semangat untuk menyusun dan mencari kata2 baru untuk mempertahankan argumen nya
10.	5S	Yes	No	Maybe I would	Apa ya mungkin karena di paksa ngomong jadi ngomong
11.	5S	Yes	Yes	Maybe I would	Seru

### ***Explanation***

*“Dengan debat bisa membuat kita improve bahasa“*

*“improve speaking skills, make me talked much“*

*“I can tell everything in my head“*

*“Meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara di depan umum“*

The response said that the debate can increase the meaning of their speaking skills and make them confident in public speaking. Comments and statements show that using debate in learning speaking can improve speaking skills. Their opinion debate is helpful in issuing words in English more easily and spontaneously. From the statements above, the researcher assumes that students speaking skills can be improved by using debate.

*“Because in debate we are learn how to thinking in critical way”*

Other students assume that debates can make critical thinking by issuing thoughts and opinions on an issue. Critical thinking itself is a skill to think clearly and rationally about what to do or what to believe. Critical thinking also identifies, construct and evaluate arguments then solve problems systematically Conclusion

*“Because I don’t only add my new vocabulary in speaking but also get and share something new from my debate partner.”*

The debate is also able to help students find new vocabulary and facilitate speaking their English. As we know, vocabulary is very important in learning speaking, to facilitate interaction.

*“apa ya mungkin dipaksa ngomong jadi ngomong.”*

In the debate there is also a spontaneous element, for example, this student's statement assumes that there is an element of compulsion in speaking in the debate, so those who previously felt not confident in speaking English appear a sense of courage to express their opinions using English.

*“Seru.”*

*“just interesting.”*

These students said that the debate was very interesting to be an active learning method to improve speaking skills. The debate is said to be very interesting because students can speak and defend their arguments and there is disagreement with these arguments and students should be able to break other arguments clearly

*“I can tell everything in my head.”*

As has been said, the argument helps students who were previously not confident with the ability to speak English, will be able to spend at least the courage to defend his argument

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this study to figuring out that learning to speaking using the debate method is very interesting, exciting, courageous and can develop vocabulary. The respondents said that learning speaking through debate could help them be able to speak in public and enhancing their speaking skills. Zare and Othman (2013:1506) state: *“Debate has the potential to improve speaking 10 ability since the activity requires a lot of speaking practices and verbal discussions among debaters.”* Participants also said that the debate method can help them think critically and quickly. Krieger (2005) states that many students had obvious advancement in their skills to express and defend ideas through practice in a debate.

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