

# Improving Students' Oral Communication Abilities Through the implementation of Debate Strategies

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## Abstract

Language Proficiency and communicative skills have always been a benchmark of ELT all over the world. Enhancing learners' communicative skills through stimulating and encouraging students to interact in the target language is both possible and effective and cooperative learning principles can be adopted in EFL classrooms. As David Nunan stated that language is acquired as learners actively interact with each other to communicate in target language. This article is aimed to find out how much debate can contribute significantly to improve the students' speaking skill achievements.

**Keywords:** Debate, speaking, speaking skill, critical thinking, EFL classroom.

## Introduction

Debate is a technique which used in an activity where two speakers or more be in contradiction share opinion one of another. This can be educational tool that used in teaching speaking for students to develop students' speaking skills since it allows students to share and cooperate well with each other. According to Harmer (2002) there are some speaking activities that are commonly used in the classroom and one of them is Debate. Debate is one of some technique that used to communicate. According to Akerman and Neale (2011) and Nally (2015) who gave definitions of debate technique. According to Akerman and Neale (2011) define in their research report on the effects of debate on primary school, secondary school and university students: "Broadly speaking, debate can be described as a formal discussion where two opposing sides follow a set of preagreed rules to engage in an oral exchange of different points of view on an issue.

Formal debates are commonly seen in public meetings or legislative assemblies where individuals freely choose which side of an issue to support, and also in schools or university competitions, where the participants are often assigned a particular side for which to advocate. Ryoko (2015) adds that "debate activity is very successful teaching technique which facilitates learning in a depth as the students' research and weight evidence within and across different subject and topic learn to distinguish facts from opinions, and present well considered arguments". So, debate can help the students to speak with present their arguments on an issue.

## Materials and Methods

Akerman and Neale (2011) presents four key positive effects related to active participation in debate activities:

1. considerable improvements in academic attainment (African American males who took part in debate were 70% more likely to complete school than their peers)
2. developing critical thinking: both qualitative and quantitative research prove participation in debate develops one's ability to think critically;
3. debate improves communication skills;
4. participating in debates boosts debaters' aspirations, confidence and cultural awareness.

There are some advantages by using debate in EFL classrooms as the technique of teaching Speaking, as follow:

- a) Debate allow students to share and cooperate well with one other,
- b) It educates the students' about responsibility,
- c) Encourages creativity,
- d) Deepens friendship and build rapport with the teachers,
- e) Students are motivated and enjoy the activity,
- f) It can improve students' speaking skills

### ***What is beneficial about debating?***

The presentation entitled "Teaching Debate in the EFL Classroom" by Manning and Nakamura have developed a debate course for high school EFL students in Japan. They have made the following claims:

1. Debating ability is a valuable skill.
2. Debate utilizes useful English.
3. It is a unique way to teach grammar.
4. It develops critical thinking skills.
5. It introduces global issues.
6. It develops research skills.

Dr. Alfred Snider (2008) Director of the World Debate Institute at the University of Vermont, in his book, "The Code of the Debater: Introduction to the Way of Reason" lists six answers to the question, Why debate?

They are:

1. Debating is fun.
2. Debating is a sport of the mind and voice.
3. Debating is controlled by you.
4. Debating creates the skills you need for success in life.
5. Debate can give you the power to change things.
6. Debating is not just for "geeks" or "nerds".

***Are there any disadvantages?*** Yes! There can be arguments, shouting, insults, even physical attacks if a debate is not conducted in a respectful manner. It is therefore essential to ensure that debaters are taught to "disagree agreeably". Dr. Snider lists an excellent, "Code of the Debater" in his book. (Snider, 1999) Three of his rules of conduct a debate in EFL classroom:

1. I will respect the rights of others to freedom of speech, even though we disagree.
2. I will respect my partners, opponents, judges and coaches.
3. I will be a generous winner and a gracious loser.

*So, how is debate organized in the classroom?* According to Rubiati (2010) debate is varied in use. In speaking classroom, debate can be taken such as the following procedures:

- a) Dividing the students into many groups. Each group consists of 3 students.
- b) Selecting debate topic and assigning the groups to debate topic.
- c) Ensuring that the participants have time beforehand to prepare for the arguments and to collect supporting data to present during the debate.
- d) Presenting the topic and format the debate.

There are four types of debates that are commonly used, they are:

- a) The Lincoln-Douglas type of debate is a kind of debate where there is only one speaker in the side of the affirmative as well as in the side of the negative. The speaker is in the affirmative side opens the debate then followed by the negative speech.
- b) The Rebuttal Type of debate is a kind of debate where each team from the affirmative and the negative side is composed of about two or three members. As the debate starts, the affirmative speaker opens the constructive speech and the negative speaker starts the rebuttal. Every speaker is allowed to deliver a rebuttal speech. The debate is closed with the affirmative side delivering the last rebuttal.
- c) The One-Rebuttal type of debate is considered as a modified form of the Lincoln-Douglas type of debate. However in this type of debate, there are about two or three members in both the affirmative and the negative side. In this type, all of the speakers have a chance to refute the argument of the opponent with the exception of the first affirmative speaker who is given the opportunity to close the debate in his or her rebuttal speech.
- d) The Oregon-Oxford type of debate also allows two or three speakers in both the affirmative and the negative side. In this type, the first speaker in the affirmative side delivers the entire affirmative case. After the delivery, the first affirmative speaker will be interrelated by the first speaker of the negative side. After this, the second speaker of the negative side will present the entire negative case; then the second negative speaker will be interpellated by the second or the first affirmative speaker. After the first speaker of the negative will deliver his or her rebuttal speech followed by the rebuttal of the second affirmative speaker (Varron, 2016)

## Conclusion

Based on the information above, it can be concluded that implementation of debate technique significantly improves the students speaking skills in EFL classrooms. Debate instruction is very potential to be implemented in EFL classroom context as in the debate activities the students learn not only about how to speak but also about what to speak. Debate also allows the students to think critically about the issues and to work together with the teammate in terms of searching for the information, fact, data, and so forth as well as to speak out about particular issues academically

and accordingly. This is ultimately going to make the EFL learners become well-cultivated and competent speakers in the future.

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