THE USE OF DEBATE TECHNIQUE TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract. The paper investigates the efficacy of debate techniques in enhancing students' speaking skills within the context of English language education. Speaking proficiency is a fundamental aspect of language learning, crucial for effective communication in academic, professional, and social settings. Debates offer a structured and interactive approach to language instruction, requiring students to formulate arguments, present opinions persuasively, and engage in spontaneous dialogue. Through a review of relevant literature and empirical evidence, this study explores how debate techniques contribute to language proficiency and overall communicative competence as well. The research methodology involves quantitative analyses, including student surveys, and speaking assessments, to assess the impact of debate activities on students' speaking abilities. The participants of this study were 60 students at B1 level. Findings indicated that integrating debate into language instruction improved students' fluency, vocabulary expansion, critical thinking, and confidence in using English.

Keywords: debate technique, speaking skills, action research.

1. Introduction

Background to the study: Utilizing debate techniques in teaching English holds significant educational value as it actively involves students in constructive and dynamic language practice. Engaging in debates requires students to formulate arguments, present their ideas coherently, and respond to counterarguments - all of which enhance their speaking and listening skills. Furthermore, debates encourage students to expand their vocabulary, as they must employ precise language to effectively communicate their points. The structured format of debates also promotes critical thinking, as students analyze information, evaluate different perspectives, and develop logical reasoning skills. Beyond linguistic proficiency, debating fosters confidence in expressing oneself in English, prepares students for academic and professional discourse, and nurtures their ability to engage in meaningful dialogue across cultural and social contexts. Thus, integrating debate techniques into English language instruction not only enriches language learning but also equips students with essential skills for success in both their academic and professional lives.

Research Questions: To what extent does the use of debate techniques improve learners' speaking skills?

This question aims to investigate the impact of integrating debate techniques into language instruction on students' speaking proficiency. Specifically, the study sought to measure

improvements in fluency, accuracy, complexity of language use, and overall communicative effectiveness following exposure to debate activities. By analyzing quantitative data such as pre- and post-test assessments, and progress tests of speaking skills, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of debate as a pedagogical tool.

Understanding students' attitudes and perceptions toward the use of debate techniques is crucial for evaluating the acceptability and effectiveness of this instructional method. This question explored students' experiences, motivations, challenges, and perceived benefits associated with participating in debates. Qualitative data from student surveys was analyzed to uncover the factors that influenced student engagement, motivation, and overall satisfaction with using debates to develop speaking skills.

Previous studies on using debate techniques to develop students' speaking skills: Richa Rubiati (2010) conducted classroom action research to explore the effectiveness of debate techniques in enhancing students' speaking skills. In her study, data were collected through observations and tests. Observational data from each cycle were analyzed descriptively, while quantitative analysis was applied to the test results. Rubiati's findings indicated a positive impact of debate techniques on students' speaking abilities, as evidenced by consistent improvements in test scores across each cycle. [1]. Richa Rubiati's research only underscored the positive impact of debate techniques on improving students' speaking skills through structured practice and engagement while debates offer significant benefits in enhancing communication abilities and critical thinking. So this study did not mention challenges such as preparation time and student anxiety. By balancing these considerations and adopting effective instructional strategies, the benefits of debate techniques in fostering comprehensive language learning outcomes could be maximized.

Fauzan & Umar (2016) highlighted that debate techniques could effectively enhance the speaking abilities of EFL students. The research demonstrated that by cycle 2, the study had successfully achieved its defined criteria for success: significant improvements in both scores and classroom atmosphere. Specifically, speaking test results showed noticeable progress, with average scores increasing from 60 in the pre-test to 69 in cycle 1 and 75 in cycle 2, indicating a clear advancement from 'fair' to 'good' proficiency levels [2].

One positive aspect of the study was the observed improvement in classroom dynamics, where students increasingly felt comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions during debate sessions. This not only fostered a supportive learning environment but also encouraged creativity in language exploration, as students developed arguments based on familiar motions. However, a potential limitation could be the time and resources required for effective debate preparation, which may vary depending on classroom size and student proficiency levels.

Farisha Andi Baso (2016) validated the effectiveness of debate techniques in enhancing students' speaking skills. The study employed a pre-experimental design, utilizing pre-test and post-test comparisons to assess the outcomes. The t-test data analysis indicates that debate significantly improved students' speaking abilities in the Eleventh Grade of SMA Perguruan Tinggi Islam Makassar [3].

One positive aspect of the study was its rigorous methodology using statistical analysis to demonstrate the effectiveness of debate techniques. By providing empirical evidence through pre-test and post-test comparisons, the study substantiated the impact of debates on students' speaking skills in a structured educational setting.

However, a potential limitation could be the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific context of eleventh-grade students at SMA Perguruan Tinggi Islam Makassar. Variations in student demographics, classroom dynamics, or teaching methods could influence the results in different educational settings.

Fernandes Arung, (2016) conducted action research on the effectiveness of using debate techniques to enhance students' speaking skills in the second year of SMA Negeri 1 Lasusua. The study conclusively demonstrated that employing debate techniques led to improvements in students' speaking abilities [4].

One positive aspect of the study was its practical application of debate techniques within a specific educational setting, SMA Negeri 1 Lasusua. By implementing action research, Fernandes Arung provided firsthand evidence of the benefits of debates in enhancing students' oral communication skills. This approach not only validated the effectiveness of debate as an instructional strategy but also offered actionable insights for educators looking to implement similar practices.

However, a potential limitation of the study could be related to the scope and generalizability of its findings. The effectiveness of debate techniques may vary across different schools, student populations, and teaching contexts. Factors such as teacher expertise, student motivation, and resource availability could influence the outcomes of using debates to improve speaking skills.

Firnantia Lara Lestari, (2018) characterized debate techniques as effective strategies employed by teachers to enhance higher education students' English speaking skills. This article utilized a descriptive qualitative method to systematically and accurately describe the phenomena under investigation using words rather than statistical analysis [5].One positive aspect of the study was its emphasis on the practical application of debate techniques in higher education settings. By employing descriptive qualitative methods, the research provided a rich, detailed understanding of how debates contribute to improvements in students' vocabulary and overall speaking abilities. This qualitative approach allowed for a nuanced exploration of the effectiveness of debate techniques beyond mere numerical measurements. However, a potential limitation of the study lies in the focus on descriptive qualitative data, which may not provide quantitative evidence of the extent of improvement in speaking skills. While descriptive methods offer insightful descriptions of phenomena, they may lack the statistical rigor needed to generalize findings across broader educational contexts or to compare the effectiveness of debate techniques against other instructional strategies.

In conclusion, while the studies reviewed demonstrate the positive impact of debate techniques on enhancing students' speaking skills, several potential limitations should be considered. Firstly, some studies did not explicitly address challenges such as preparation time and student anxiety, which are crucial factors in implementing effective debate practices. Secondly, the time and resources required for debate preparation can vary significantly based on classroom size and student proficiency levels, potentially affecting the feasibility of widespread adoption. Thirdly, the generalizability of findings across different educational settings may be limited, as variations in student demographics, classroom dynamics, and teaching methods could influence outcomes. Moreover, the focus on descriptive qualitative data in some studies may provide valuable insights but may not offer quantitative evidence necessary for broader generalizations or comparisons with alternative instructional strategies. This study explored how debate techniques contribute to linguistic fluency, vocabulary expansion, critical thinking, and confidence in using English.

2. Content

2.1. Theoretical background of applying debate technique in teaching speaking skill

Defining terms

According to Kidd A, (2002, p.34) "a debate is a structured argument. Two sides speak alternately for and against a particular contention usually based on a topical issue" [6]. Unlike the arguments a person might have with their family or friends, however, each person is allocated a

time they are allowed to speak and any interjections are carefully controlled. The subject of the dispute is often prearranged so they may find themselves having to support opinions with which they do not normally agree. They also have to argue as part of a team, being careful not to contradict what others on their side have said.

A debate revolves around a genuine or simulated issue where participants assume roles requiring sufficient shared knowledge about the topic and differing opinions or interests to defend, often culminating in a final decision or vote, as noted by Littlewood, (1981) [7].

Debate involves individuals taking stances, presenting arguments, and elaborating on their opinions across various topics, whether facilitated by a lead figure or chairperson, as highlighted by Carter & Carthy, (1997) [8].

Marriam-webster, (2024) defined debate as a discussion between people in which they express different opinions about something [9].

Debate is defined in the online Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary (2024) as "a formal discussion of an issue at a public meeting or in a parliament. In a debate, two or more speakers express opposite views and then there is often a vote on the issue" [10].

In short, it can be concluded that debate is an activity in which students take up issue positions and defend their positions   .

2.2. Benefits of using debate technique in second language learning

There are a range of advantages when the debate technique is used in English classrooms. Firstly, students' responsibility and autonomy are promoted through debate activities. Debating is a valuable tool in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms for practicing language skills in authentic contexts. According to Krieger (2005), debate is considered an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students cognitively and linguistically [11]. Beyond enhancing listening, speaking, and writing abilities, debate effectively develops skills in constructing persuasive arguments for both speech and writing. During debates, students collaborate to share ideas and collectively strive toward achieving common objectives. Engaging in debates also requires students to defend their opinions and viewpoints using authentic sources and documents, often sourced from the Internet, to substantiate their arguments against opposing teams.

Secondly, learners' participation, talking time, and oral fluency are improved through debating. Using a foreign language for debates can be seen as a form of implementing CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), where discussions occur in a   foreign language to convey concepts, ideas, and opinions on specific subjects. This dual-focused approach aligns with CLIL methodology, which integrates language with non-language content in a learning environment (Marsh, 2002, p. 2) [12]. Engaging in debates provides students with interactive learning tasks that activate their language skills and enhance fluency in speaking. Furthermore, adhering to specific rules, particularly regarding timing during different phases of the debate, is crucial. Each speech must adhere to allocated time limits (typically for arguments and rebuttals), which fosters the development of an important and practical skill for students—expressing opinions within a specified timeframe.

Finally, debate activities enhance students' motivation by providing opportunities to actively use the language and engage more deeply in the learning process. According to Richards and Lockhart, (1994), participating in debates encourages students to take on more active roles and benefit from sharing ideas within their teams [13]. Penny, (1996, p. 141) suggests that "students often feel less anxious when expressing themselves in smaller groups compared to speaking in front of the entire class, which can particularly benefit shy students who may otherwise remain quiet during whole-class activities" [14].

2.3. Steps of a debate activity in a language class

Debate activities in the classroom follow a structured process designed to foster critical thinking, communication skills, and active engagement among students. As stated by the European Commission, (2024), the steps of a debate activity typically include [15]:

Topic Selection: Choose a relevant and debatable topic that aligns with curriculum objectives and student interests.

Team Formation: Divide students into teams (affirmative and negative) or allow them to choose sides based on their positions on the topic.

Research and Preparation: Assign time for teams to research the topic, gather evidence, and prepare their arguments. Emphasize the importance of using credible sources and developing logical arguments.

Opening Statements: Begin the debate with each team presenting their opening statements. Teams outline their position on the topic and introduce their main arguments.

Rebuttal Phase: After the opening statements, allow teams to present rebuttals to counter arguments made by the opposing side. Encourage students to address weaknesses in the opponent's arguments while reinforcing their own points.

Closing Statements: Conclude the debate with closing statements from each team. Summarize key points, restate arguments, and emphasize why their side should prevail on the topic.

Reflection and Evaluation: Facilitate a debriefing session where students reflect on the debate process, evaluate their performance, and discuss what they have learned. Provide constructive feedback on argumentation, presentation skills, and teamwork.

Follow-Up Activities: Depending on learning objectives, assign follow-up activities such as writing reflections, conducting further research on related topics, or revisiting arguments based on new information.

2.4. Research setting

Research design

To discover the effectiveness of applying the debate technique in teaching speaking skills, the author used action research combined with questionnaires about students' perceptions of using the debate technique.

There are four main stages in the action research, Mertler (2013) [16]:

Stage 1. Planning, including 4 steps: (1) Identifying and limiting the topic; (2) Gathering information; (3) Reviewing the related literature; (4) Developing a research plan.

Stage 2. Acting: including 2 steps: (5) Implementing the plan and collecting data; (6) Analyzing data.

Stage 3. Developing: (7) Developing an action plan

Stage 4. Reflecting: including 2 steps: (8) Sharing and communicating the results; (9) reflecting on the process.

Intervention activities

The action research was done during a 10–week   term.

The topics used in this action research were adapted from the coursebook and the introduction to the the research plan was clearly stated as the Table 1.

The participants

The participants of this study were 60 second-year students at B1 level studying the subjects on the level of IELTS 4.0 for the academic year of 2023-2024 at a university in Vietnam. Their age ranges from 20 to 21 years old.

Table 1. Introduction to the Research Plan

Week	Unit	Topic for debating in groups
1	*Introduction to the Research Plan* *Pre-questionnaire*	
2	*Pre-test*	
3	Unit 1: Education *Speaking practice test 1*	Should technology be used more in classrooms?
4	Unit 2: Health *Speaking practice test 2*	Is exercise more important than diet for maintaining health?
5	Unit 3: Environment *Speaking practice test 3*	Should plastic bags be banned worldwide?
6	Unit 4: Technology *Speaking practice test 4*	Is technology making people less social?
7	Unit 5: Work and Employment *Speaking practice test 5*	Is working from home more productive than working in an office?
8	Unit 6: Society and Culture *Speaking practice test 6*	Is it better to live in a big city or a small town?
9	Unit 7: Sports *Speaking practice test 7*	Should professional athletes be good role models for children?
10	Post-questionnaire	

(Source: Author)

Data collecting instruments

This study employed three data instruments, including questionnaires (pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire), 01 pre-test, and 07 weekly speaking practice tests. The pre-test was taken before the treatment was given. The 07 weekly speaking practice tests were conducted during the treatment stage.

Questionnaires

As mentioned by Ranalli et al (2013) post-project survey was used to investigate students' improvement before and after applying the debate technique to develop students' fluency, vocabulary, critical thinking, and confidence in using English. The Likert scale (5 = "strongly agree"; 4 = "agree"; 3 = "not sure"; 2 = "disagree"; 1 = "strongly disagree") was adopted so that the available answers could be quantified and analyzed [17].

Before the intervention, the author also tested the questionnaire with a small sample of Vietnamese speakers to identify any potential issues with comprehension or interpretation and gathered feedback on the clarity of questions, instructions, and overall understanding.

To help students understand the questionnaire clearly, the author provided detailed instructions at the beginning of the questionnaire in Vietnamese and explained the purpose of the research and how to answer the questions.

Speaking tests

Speaking tests (pre-test, weekly speaking practice test) were designed in the format of the IELTS speaking exam. The speaking tests were used to measure students' progress in speaking

skills/ performance during the course, namely how learners improve speaking skills with debate techniques in speaking lessons. Seven speaking practice tests were developed according to the topic adapted from the book *Collins English for Exam - Speaking for IELTS, U*nits 7-11. Each speaking test was evaluated according to the speaking assessment rubrics with 4 criteria: (1) Fluency and coherence, (2) Lexical resource, (3) Grammatical range and accuracy; and (4) Pronunciation. The scores of the speaking test were ranged into four different levels from Exceeds Expectations (9.0-10) to Meets Expectations (7.0-8.5) to Needs Improvement (5.0-6.5) to Inadequate (under 5).

The study utilized quantitative methods to analyze data, investigating not just the correlation between the use of debate techniques and speaking skills, but also exploring learners' perceptions of debate techniques. This approach aimed to offer fresh insights into the enhancement of speaking abilities.

2.5. The research results

2.5.1. To what extent does the use of debate techniques improve learners' speaking skills?

Interpretation of the results of pre-test and weekly speaking practice tests

Table 2. Pair t-test for pre-test and weekly speaking practice tests

			Paired T-test	Statistics			
N o	**Speaking Test**	**Obs**	**Mean**	**Std. Err.**	**Std. Dev.**	**95% Conf. Interval**	
1	Pre-Test (S0)	60	8.258333	0.1331346	1.031256	7.991932	8.524735
2	Speaking Test 1 (S1)	60	9.741667	0.0976357	0.7562825	9.546298	9.937035
3	Speaking Test 2 (S2)	60	11.19167	0.1109102	0.8591071	10.96974	11.4136
4	Speaking Test 3 (S3)	60	13.15833	0.1039418	0.8051301	12.95035	13.36632
5	Speaking Test 4 (S4)	60	14.14167	0.0806853	0.6249859	13.98022	14.30312
6	Speaking Test 5 (S5)	60	15	0.0958164	0.742191	14.80827	15.19173
7	Speaking Test 6 (S6)	60	15.44167	0.1089833	0.8441808	15.22359	15.65974
8	Speaking Test 7 (S7)	60	16.09167	0.1309956	1.014687	15.82955	16.35379
9	Speaking Test 123	60	11.36389	0.0907259	0.70276	11.18235	11.54543
10	Speaking Test 4567	60	15.51111	0.0974298	0.7546883	15.31615	15.70607

(Source: Author)

Table 3. Paired t-test Difference for pre-test and weekly speaking practice tests

						Paired T-test	Difference		
No	**Pair**	**Obs**	**Mean**	**Std. Err.**	**Std. Dev.**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**t-test**	**Accepted if the hypothesis is correct.**
1	S0 & S1	60	-1.48	0.08	0.68	-1.65	-1.3	-16.8347***	Pre-test (S0) < Speaking Practice 1 (S1)
2	S1 & S2	60	-1.45	0.07	0.61	-1.6	-1.29	-18.2487***	Speaking Practice 1 (S1) < Speaking Practice 2 (S2)
3	S2 & S3	60	-1.96	0.07	0.61	-2.12	-1.8	-24.7050***	Speaking Practice 2 (S2) < Speaking Practice 3 (S3)
4	S3 & S4	60	-0.98	0.07	0.61	-1.14	-0.82	-12.3388***	Speaking Practice 3 (S3) < Speaking Practice 4 (S4)
5	S4 & S5	60	-0.85	0.09	0.76	-1.05	-0.66	-8.6888***	Speaking Practice 4 (S4) < Speaking Practice 5 (S5)

					Paired T-test		Difference	
No	Pair	Obs	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	Lower	Upper	t-test	Accepted if the hypothesis is correct.
6	S5 & S6	60	-0.44	0.09	0.71	-0.62	-0.25	-4.7941***	Speaking Practice 5 (S5) < Speaking Practice 6 (S6)
7	S6 & S7	60	-0.65	0.1	0.8	-0.85	-0.44	-6.2207***	Speaking Practice 6 (S6) < Speaking Practice 7 (S7)
8	S123 & S4567	60	-4.14	0.12	1	-4.4	-3.88	-32.0175***	Mean (Speaking Practice 1 & 2 & 3) < Mean (Speaking Practice 5 & 6 &7)
	Note: *** represents a significant difference at the 1% level, ** at the 5% level, and * at the 10% level.								

(Source: Author)

Both Table 2 and Table 3 shows a pair of t-test results and paired t-test difference between the pre-test and seven speaking practice tests. The mean-comparison t-test shows that 100% (24/24) of tests are statistically significant (implying that the results of speaking practice tests were becoming better and better, and the results of those practices tests were better than the previous ones with a significant difference at the 1% level.

On the other hand, the results of the paired t-test shown in Table 2 also reveal that there was a substantial discrepancy among the tests' results in terms of vocabulary, ideas, and fluency. The participants gained higher speaking practice test mean scores.

Table 4. Results of Pre-test and Weekly Speaking Practice Tests

Results of Pre-test and Weekly Speaking Practice Tests									
						Speaking Practice: SP			
Levels/ marks	Obs	Pre-Test	SP 1	SP 2	SP 3	SP 4	SP 5	SP 6	SP 7
Students' Marks (0 - 10 points)									
Exceeds Expectations (9.0-10)	60	0	0	0	0	0	3	7	8
Meets Expectations (7.0 - 8.5)	60	0	0	15	21	35	47	48	50
Needs Improvement (5.0 - 6.5)	60	19	39	36	39	25	10	5	2
Inadequate (<5.0)	60	41	21	9	0	0	0	0	0
Students' Marks (%)									
Exceeds Expectations (9.0-10)	60	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.0	11.7	13.3
Meets Expectations (7.0 - 8.5)	60	0.0	0.0	25.0	35.0	58.3	78.3	80.0	83.3
Needs Improvement (5.0 - 6.5)	60	31.7	65.0	60.0	65.0	41.7	16.7	8.3	3.3
Inadequate (<5.0)	60	68.3	35.0	15.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

(Source: Author)

As can be seen from Table 4, out of a total of 60 students participating in the study: in the pre-test (before the treatment), 68,3% of the students did not meet the requirements of an IELTS

speaking test with marks below 5.0 (Inadequate) according to the speaking assessment rubrics with 4 criteria: (1) Fluency and coherence, (2) Lexical resource, (3) Grammatical range and accuracy; (4) Pronunciation; while the number of students scoring 5.0 - 6.0 (the level of Needs Improvement) accounted for 31.7%. No students scored 7.0 or above. When we started experimenting with the debate technique in speaking lessons, the results of the students' weekly speaking practice tests showed a noticeable improvement. As regards Speaking Practice Test 1, although there were no expected scores, the number of students exiting the "Inadequate" level was quite large: a considerable decrease from 68.3% to 35%. Similarly, the number of students with 5.0 - 6.5 points (Needs improvement) increased significantly from 31.7% to 65% for the four scoring criteria listed above.

The three weekly speaking tests No.2,3,4, demonstrated significant improvements the percentage of students scoring "Meets expectations" increased from 7.0 to 8.5 points. 25% of the students who met the expectations for these scoring criteria increased by 35% on the speaking test No.3 and got a pretty good rate at 58.3% on the speaking test No.4. While on test 2, the number of students who did not meet the requirements of the speaking test with the four scoring criteria was 36 students, accounting for 60% for all criteria but since the speaking test 3, there were no students who did not meet the speaking requirements. Interestingly, the closer to the end (the weekly speaking test No.5,6,7), the more stable the student's scores and the more likely it was that the number of students who had "exceeded expectations" (9.0 - 10), a ratio of 5% for the four scoring criteria on test 5, and the same level of 11.7% on test 6 and 13.3% on test 7. "Meet expectations" (7.0 - 8.5) increased continuously and steadily since test 2 from 25% to 83.3% on the last test (Test 7). The percentage of students with a "Needs to improve" score (5.0 - 6.5) fell sharply throughout the process, from 60% - 65% on Test 2 and Test 3 to 8,3% on Test 6 and 3.3% on Test 7.

2.5.2. What are the learners' perceptions of debate technique?

The second question of the research focused on the students' perceptions of debate technique. The results of the questionnaire were presented as follows:

Table 5. Results of the questionnaires

No		Items	Pre-intervention Questionnaire (%)		Post-intervention Questionnaire (%)		
			Disagree	*Not sure*	*Disagree*	*Not sure*	*Agree*
		Enjoyment	**48,1**	**51,9**	**12,2**	**21,1**	**66,7**
1		I enjoyed using the debate technique.	46,7	53,3	16,7	20,0	63,3
2	Enjoyment	The discussion, and arguments in the debate technique are interesting.	43,3	56,7	13,3	20,0	66,7
3		It is motivating to use debate techniques in speaking lessons.	50,0	50,0	15,0	23,3	61,7
4		I would use the debate technique again in the future.	53,3	46,7	10,0	23,3	66,7
5		This kind of learning tool should be included in other language skills.	46,7	53,3	5,0	21,7	73,3
	Usability	**Usability**	**36,3**	**63,7**	**10,0**	**23,0**	**67,0**
6		I found the debate technique easy to follow.	40,0	60,0	11,7	21,7	66,7
7		I clearly understood the purpose of debate technique and its purposes.	33,3	66,7	13,3	21,7	65,0

No		Items	Pre-intervention Questionnaire (%)		Post-intervention Questionnaire (%)		
			Disagree	Not sure	Disagree	Not sure	Agree
8		I found easy to use debate technique in group work.	33,3	66,7	8,3	23,3	68,3
9		I learn new words and ideas from my peers in debate technique	38,3	61,7	6,7	25,0	68,3
10		I improved my fluency in speaking skills thanks to the debate technique.	36,7	63,3	10,0	23,3	66,7
		Usefulness	**38,3**	**61,7**	**10,0**	**22,2**	**67,8**
11	Usefulness	I think the debate technique helps me improve my speaking skills.	40,0	60,00	8,33	20,00	71,7
12		Debate technique helped improve learners' confidence.	33,3	66,67	11,67	23,33	65,0
13		I will suggest debate techniques to my friends.	41,7	58,33	10,00	23,33	66,7
14		Debate technique enhanced learners' critical thinking.	48,3	51,7	13,3	18,3	68,3

(Source: Author)

The data from Table 5 presents the comparison of the findings on three subcategories of learners' perceptions of the debate technique strategy on different occasions. Data in Table 5 reveals that there was a dramatic increase in enjoyment, usability, and usefulness which means that learners' perceptions of the debate technique changed positively after the intervention.

When being asked whether learners liked debate techniques, there was a statistically impressive growth in their enjoyment on different occasions. Before the intervention, there was no 'agree' opinion, but 51,9% of 'not sure' opinions, and 48,1% of 'disagree'. However, after the intervention, the number of 'agree' opinions soared to 66,7% whereas the number of 'not sure' opinions dropped by over a half and the number of 'disagree' opinions grew dramatically to 12,2%.

Looking at the details of usability questions, no participant agreed that they knew how to use the debate technique properly before the intervention. In other words, their opinions included 63,7% 'not sure' and 36,3% 'disagree'. Nevertheless, after the intervention, about 67% of the participants confirmed that they were capable of using this software while only a small portion of 10% of the participants could not use it and around 30% expressed neutral opinions. As the figure suggests, there was a rapid improvement in learners' capability of using the debate technique.

Concerning the usefulness of the debate technique there was a noticeable surge in its statistics. Before the intervention, no 'agree' opinion appeared while the vast majority of participants felt 'not sure'. Moreover, 38,3% of them disagreed that debate techniques were an effective tool for online writing learning. However, after the intervention, more than half of the participants (67,8%) recognized its usefulness while just 22,2% of opinions were 'not sure' and 10% of opinions were 'disagree'.

In brief, the data indicated a positive impact of debate techniques on learners' perceptions across various dimensions including enjoyment, usability, usefulness, and critical thinking. Participants generally showed increased agreement in enjoying and finding debate techniques motivating, while also recognizing improvements in usability and usefulness in terms of skill development and confidence building. These findings suggest that debate techniques are not only

well-received by learners but also effective in achieving the intended educational outcomes of enhancing speaking skills and critical thinking.

Discussion

The main objective of the research is to identify whether debate techniques improve students' speaking at a university.

One of the positive effects of using the debate technique is that it facilitates the learning process. The research results showed that integrating debate into language instruction could improve students' fluency, vocabulary expansion, critical thinking, and confidence in using English.

3. Conclusions

The application of debate techniques in teaching speaking skills has brought about very positive effects on students. This article provides evidence of the positive effects of using debate techniques on improving learners' speaking skills. The research results have confirmed the positive effects of improving students' fluency, vocabulary expansion, critical thinking, and confidence in using English.

Debate techniques were perceived as effective in improving learners' speaking skills, enhancing fluency, and confidence, and fostering peer learning.

Learners generally viewed debate techniques favorably, finding them enjoyable, engaging, and motivating, while also acknowledging their usefulness in developing critical thinking skills.

Based on the positive outcomes and perceptions, integrating debate techniques into language learning programs could further enhance educational experiences and outcomes for learners.

Based on the research results, the following recommendations are made:

(1) Debate techniques should be encouraged to be used in speaking lessons in order to help students learn new words, generate ideas, and improve their fluency. This is a useful way to activate their previous knowledge and motivate them to speak.

(2) Debate technique should be considered as one of the innovative methods of teaching. It is not only applied in teaching speaking, but it is also useful in teaching other language skills and other subjects in multi-levels of the educational system.

In the context of the fourth industrial revolution, educational experts and curriculum developers should organize seminars, workshops, and conferences to give teachers/ lecturers chances to share their modern methods of teaching and learning, including debate technique strategy.

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