



STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING CLASSROOM DEBATING STRATEGY TO INCREASE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate university students' perspectives regarding the implementation of classroom debating strategies to enhance speaking skills. This study employed a descriptive qualitative methodology involving the distribution of questionnaires, conducting interviews, and gathering documentation. To assess the data, the researcher employed a 5-point Likert scale, which contained twenty items in the questionnaire and five questions during the interview session. Thirty-six respondents completed a full questionnaire, while eight students participated in an interview session with detailed questions. The findings of this study indicate that university students possess favorable attitudes regarding the utilization of classroom debate strategies to enhance their speaking skills. The debate effectively motivated students to enhance their speaking skills and improve several elements of speaking, including vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, and grammar. University students encounter numerous hurdles in executing classroom debating strategies, including difficulties in defining the motion, articulating reasons, formulating rebuttals to opponents' arguments, structuring logical and coherent discourse, and managing uneasiness and anxiety during presentations.

Keywords: Students' Perceptions, Classroom Debate Strategy, Speaking Skill

1. PENDAHULUAN

The majority of students in schools or universities believe that speaking proficiency is the most challenging talent to learn compared to other English skills (Harmer, 2009). Richard (2008) asserts that becoming an adept communicator in social contexts requires effort, and not all students will deem it significant. The pupils may believe that speaking skills

require attention to various aspects, including sentence form (grammar), pronunciation accuracy, fluency in delivering material, comprehension, and more. They must master several facets of speech prior to being able to articulate. If people communicate without considering the nuances of communication, their ideas or thoughts may not be effectively transmitted. Moreover, it would lead to misconceptions between the speaker and

Vol 7 No. 2 (2024): ESTEEM

listener regarding the information being conveyed. Students often utilize their perceived enhancement in spoken language proficiency as a criterion for assessing both their language learning success and the effectiveness of their English course (Richard, 2008:19).

In the observation of the academic speaking class, the researcher discovered that the majority of students continued to read from the material while speaking English in front of the class. It undoubtedly affects their fluency in communicating. Secondly, they still lack drive and exhibit diminished confidence in speaking English. Thirdly, problems in speech and grammar remain prevalent. Finally, in terms of vocabulary, the pupils must utilize suitable and novel words and expressions. Students' speaking challenges may arise from various issues, including lack of self-confidence, nervousness, worry, or the pedagogical methods employed in teaching the English subject.

To enhance students' speaking skills, it may be necessary to employ effective interventions or strategies to mitigate the aforementioned issues. In numerous instances, an individual's speaking proficiency may be contingent upon the frequency of their speaking opportunities. The students must cultivate

the habit of speaking through regular practice. The pupils would attain fluency and enhance their speaking proficiency. The pupils must engage in verbal communication (Paul in Jumhari, 2019). Kartikasari (2017) asserted that a learning method is a technique employed by educators to impart knowledge to pupils in order to attain specific objectives. An effective teaching approach to implement in the English Education Study Program at PGRI University Palembang is the Classroom Debate strategy.

Classroom Debate is a method employed to structure discourse or discussion about a topic comprehensively. Employing classroom debate techniques in speaking classes, students would practice articulating and conveying their viewpoints on various subjects (Alasmari and Ahmed in Richa, 2011). The students can engage in regular activities to enhance their public speaking skills. They can articulate their thoughts, mitigate their emotional fears, and acquire comprehensive skills in effective communication.

Furthermore, the Classroom Debate activity is anticipated to enhance their speaking abilities, including pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary. Moreover, another notable consequence of students' awareness of the debate may

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING CLASSROOM DEBATING STRATEGY TO INCREASE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

Vol 7 No. 2 (2024): ESTEEM

manifest in the future, as they can participate in various annual Debate Competitions, such as the National University Debating Championship (NUDC), Binus Debating Championship, UNSRI Debate Competition, Atmajaya Debating Championship, among others.

The author aims to assess students' perceptions of the classroom discussion method in relation to the speaking skills of English Education students. The researcher aims to perform a study titled "Students' Perceptions of Implementing Classroom Debating Strategies to Enhance Speaking Skills"

2. LITERATURE REVIEW**2.1 Perception**

Perception can be understood from multiple viewpoints: 1) the cognitive interpretation of an object or concept; 2) the sensory experience derived from sight, hearing, etc.; and 3) the inherent ability for rapid understanding or observation (Longman Dictionary, 2003). It can be concluded that perception is the manner in which one thinks, observes, and comprehends something being examined. Simultaneously Rahmat (2013: 50) defines perception as the comprehension of an object, relationship, or occurrence derived from deducing and interpreting stimuli. A

person's perspective regarding an object they observe to interpret or conclude about it and the associated event is termed perception. This is attained by exercising discernment on the surrounding items based on individual perceptions. Individuals are at liberty to articulate their impressions, which may differ based on their unique information processing methods.

Consistent with the aforementioned remark, perception constitutes an individual's interpretation of others in their life and can significantly influence success. This is particularly applicable to students (Corbin et al:2020). In contrast, Hadi et al. (2017) asserted that perception is the process by which individuals understand and ascribe meaning to their inputs and experiences. It is significantly shaped by both internal and external factors specific to each individual.

a. Speaking

Zuhriyah (2017:122) asserts that speech is the oral medium through which individuals communicate and express themselves. Verbal communication is crucial in social interactions, as daily activities inherently involve inseparable elements of engagement and communication.

Vol 7 No. 2 (2024): ESTEEM

Similar to writing, speaking constitutes a productive skill. It involves conveying meaning to others via verbal communication (Spratt, 2005:34). The act of thinking is described as a meticulous process that results in productive competence.

This aligns with Thornbury's (2005) assertion that fluent speaking enables students to express their thoughts, emotions, and opinions without the limitations imposed by nationalities, languages, or cultural conventions. Individuals can articulate emotions, communicate significance, propose concepts, and more through their verbal skills unimpeded.

b. Debate

Debate is a method of articulating an idea or opinion wherein individuals engage in discourse about a topic from two contrasting perspectives. Debate stimulates pupils cognitively and linguistically, rendering it an effective exercise for language acquisition (Kriger:2007). Halvorsen (2005) concurred that students participating in discussion are necessitated to contemplate competing perspectives and to interact with the particulars of one subject as well as those of another. Freeley & Steinberg (2005) asserted that debate involves

evaluating multiple perspectives and arriving at a conclusion. It might be utilized by an individual to arrive at a personal decision or by a collective to influence others to adopt their viewpoint. Based on the aforementioned opinions, the researcher concludes that debate is an activity aimed at discussing the proposition or rejection of a given topic. A strategy to enhance oral communication skills is engaging in debate. It pertains to a discussion format; yet, it is really an argument between conflicting perspectives.

In-class debates not only assist students in mastering the topic but also cultivate their critical thinking, empathy, and oral communication skills (Kennedy, 2007). Lumbangaol and Mazali (2017) contended that debate provides pupils an opportunity to enhance their speaking skills. Active student participation in debates fosters accountability for their own learning, rendering it an effective pedagogical method. Students can articulate their opinions and responses to a topic and become more engaged speakers through debate. Consistent with those viewpoints, the author concludes that debating technique provides numerous advantages in enhancing students' skills. Students can enhance their speaking skills by engaging in direct conversations with

Vol 7 No. 2 (2024): ESTEEM

their classmates. Secondly, employing classroom debate enhances students' ability to construct sound arguments, fosters critical thinking through the analysis of issues and the status quo, and broadens their perspective on whether to accept or reject a given notion.

3. METHODS

The researcher chose people who were directly pertinent to the issue addressed in this study. The researcher employed a purposive sample approach to select the subjects of this study. Purposive sampling is an approach for selecting individuals to gain insights into an existing problem. This research focused on second-semester students of the English Language Education Department at PGRI University of Palembang for the academic year 2023-2024. The author employed a descriptive qualitative methodology for data collection and analysis. Qualitative research is a type of educational inquiry in which the researcher predominantly utilizes participant perspectives, formulates broad, open-ended questions, collects data mainly in the form of participant narratives (or text), identifies and analyzes themes, and conducts the investigation in a subjective, biased manner.

In this study, the researcher elucidated the data through analysis and presented the results. The researcher ultimately reached a conclusion based on the findings. Sugiyono (2013) defines data analysis as the systematic process of examining and organizing field notes, interview transcripts, and other materials to enhance understanding and facilitate the dissemination of acquired knowledge. Upon collecting data via questionnaires, interviews, and documentation, the researcher will analyze the questionnaires utilizing a Likert scale. The questionnaire results were examined using a percentage approach.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Most university students possess favorable impressions of classroom debates. The classroom discussion method could enhance their self-confidence, motivation, nervousness, and anxiety. Moreover, classroom debate strategies may boost students' speaking abilities by enabling them to articulate their thoughts clearly, improve their oratory skills, advance their speaking proficiency, and foster critical and logical thinking.

The author discovered that employing the classroom debate technique enhances all facets of speaking

Vol 7 No. 2 (2024): ESTEEM

proficiency. The subsequent sequence delineates the parts of speaking that have exhibited the most significant improvement according to students' perceptions.

Among the 36 questioned pupils, vocabulary was identified as the speaking part that exhibited the most improvement. Engaging in debate may enhance kids' lexicon. In the course of preparing for debates, students discover and acquire new vocabulary and expressions pertinent to many subjects. Moreover, engaging with their opponents' arguments exposes kids to varied vocabulary, so enhancing their linguistic abilities. The necessity of employing precise and diverse vocabulary to formulate persuasive arguments compels students to expand their lexicon.

The second aspect being addressed is pronunciation. Pronunciation refers to the manner in which a word or language is articulated. In this research, pronunciation refers to the manner in which students articulated the words they intended to employ in constructing an argument. According to students' perceptions, debating strategy is a good approach for enhancing pronunciation, as it necessitates clear and precise speech to articulate their points. The iterative practice of formulating and presenting arguments aids

pupils in cultivating muscle memory for accurate pronunciation. The continual application and rectification of pronunciation in real-time contexts result in significant enhancements. Furthermore, the prompt feedback from peers and instructors during discussions enables students to swiftly recognize and rectify their pronunciation problems.

The third aspect being improved is fluency. Fluency in speech production refers to the effort, speed, smoothness, and continuity of verbal expression. Fluency is an essential component that is enhanced through debating. The rapid tempo of arguments necessitates that students think swiftly and express their ideas coherently. This ongoing practice of speaking under pressure aids students in cultivating increased ease and spontaneity in their communication, so improving their general fluency.

The fourth aspect being enhanced is comprehension. When students exhibit understanding, they can assess and interpret both the meaning of their statements and the relevance of the responses they get. This occurred during a discussion in which the students must focus on the arguments presented by the opposing sides. If the students cannot accurately analyze the logic or grasp the

Vol 7 No. 2 (2024): ESTEEM

genuine intent and meaning of the words, they will lose the discussion. Not only did they lose the argument, but they also failed to acquire any data or information shared by the other teams.

The final aspect that requires enhancement is grammar. Debating necessitates that students formulate meaningful and grammatically accurate sentences to convey their arguments effectively. Students perceived that the grammatical component was the least improved part, as they spoke spontaneously during debates based on the given motion within a constrained timeframe. Occasionally, the pupils neglected to focus on grammar during their speech delivery. The students believed that the crucial aspect of discussion is the clarity of the stated point.

The findings of this research indicated that the classroom debating technique might enhance students' speaking skills, particularly in the area of oral communication. This aligns with the objective of classroom debate strategy, which can address students' speaking requirements if implemented continuously, consistently, and routinely. Beyond the speaking component, students hold favorable views, believing that classroom debate strategies offer other advantages.

According to the students' perceptions in the discussion, they asserted that they can formulate logical and innovative arguments regarding the motion, actively engage in speaking practice, and improve their speech quality despite the constraints of limited study time. All participants reported an improvement in their English following their attendance at the classroom debate. During the execution of this classroom debating strategy, the author identified several challenges encountered by students, as indicated by their perceptions, including: a) Defining the motion, b) Elaborating on arguments, c) Rebutting opposing arguments, d) Structuring logical and coherent arguments, e) Overcoming anxiety, f) Managing time for brainstorming, g) Addressing technicalities and preparation, h) Insufficient experience in debate.

The many variables occurred due to the constrained time for implementing the classroom debating technique. Only 4 out of the 36 students are already familiar with the debate method. They participated in the debating extracurricular activity during their final year of high school. They were also engaging in habitual and active speaking practice, resulting in less obstacles than other pupils.

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING CLASSROOM DEBATING STRATEGY TO INCREASE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL

5. CONCLUSION

The author determined that students possess favorable opinions regarding the implementation of classroom debating strategies to enhance their speaking skills. The debate effectively motivated the pupils to enhance their speaking skills. The pupils who initially feared speaking during the classroom debate were subsequently eager to participate in the discussion. They have made commendable progress despite the limited adjustments due to time constraints; yet, they still wish to participate in the debate. University students had favorable opinions regarding the classroom debating method, noting improvements in various categories including vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, and grammar.

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