



IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH DEBATE TECHNIQUE

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Abstract: This article investigates the role of a debate in language learning and teaching process and the several ways in which debate assists to excel the speaking ability. The article highlights the debate technique's noteworthy advantages, which include vocabulary growth, fluency development, the development of critical thinking and argumentation abilities, exposure to a variety of viewpoints, and the promotion of higher levels of enthusiasm and engagement. The study does, however, also recognize some possible disadvantages, including increased anxiety, a propensity to value persuasion above linguistic accuracy, less possibilities for engaging discourse, and a higher likelihood of misconceptions because debates are competitive in character.

Key words: debate, speaking skill, language proficiency

INTRODUCTION

In the language learning process students are required to have particular proficiency skills in speaking as from all the other language components. As students' involvement in the class marks the efficiency and the relevance of the lesson, speaking is regarded as one of the important attributes in assisting language mastery. It maximizes students' ability to express themselves creatively, imaginatively and to interact with others effectively. However, mastering speaking skill demands real-life experience and knowledge and it is evident that lack of authenticity and exposure to real- life situations may hinder the development of



language levels. Therefore, practicing can be the best way to accomplish speaking competence.

According to Mc Donough and Shaw (2013), in many contexts, speaking is the skill upon which the person is judged at face value. To be more specific, people may often make judgements about person's language competence from speaking rather than from any of the other language skills. That is the reason why the applicants are required to have an interview session with the recruiters or the selection committees. Nevertheless, designing lessons to practice speaking English is usually seen as real obstacle for both teachers and students. The instruction of speaking ability aims to improve students' skill to communicate effectively.

In simple terms, speaking is how a person shares their thoughts, ideas, or information with others. It is also important to teach speaking as it can show how well someone has learned a language. EFL students should be able to speak clearly and make sense when talking about a specific topic. This is an important goal for them to achieve. Being good at speaking means being able to have a conversation in a language and understand and respond to the information being shared. When talking, students need to be good at using the right words, saying them clearly, using correct grammar, and speaking smoothly. Speaking is using words and language to talk in a normal way. It means knowing and using a language to say what you want. In simple terms, speaking is a way to express our feelings with words, and to have conversations with others. Students need to learn different parts of speaking to become good at it, like how to connect their words, how to use language to express themselves, and how to use vocabulary and grammar correctly. Also, when people talk, they often say things too soon. This means that they might later change their minds and change or give up on what they said. Teaching speaking began with teaching students how to talk in English as their second language, and then asking them to pronounce the new language correctly. Then we



help students learn how to figure out if their sound is right or wrong. Now, the teacher's main job is not just to fix mistakes, but to help students practice speaking the new language.

Debate as a means of strategy to enhance speaking ability

Debate is a formal argument or discussion of a question at a public meeting, with two or more opposing speakers (Krieger, 2005). While some state that debate is a form of modern rhetoric in general, it is identified by the presence of two or more speakers establish a mutual communication with language and trying to influence attitudes and opinions of the person or others so they do the act, or they have a tendency to follow with what desired by the speaker. They explain that debate is a forum which is very appropriate and strategic to develop thinking skills. Debate can be a valuable method for promoting thinking and reflection, especially if students are expected to take a position that may be contrary to their own.

Debate as a communicative and an interactive technique is an interested activity to be practiced in the classroom. Having said that Conway (1976) identified the advantages of implementing the debate technique in classrooms as follows:

- 1)Improves students' critical thinking. In debating, every student is proposed to analyze a problem critically.
- 2)Develops students' communication skill. Debaters spend many hours assembling and practicing hundreds of public speeches on topics of national importance.
- 3)Effective reasoning skill can be enhanced and struggle--often in the face of disappointment and defeat



The above-mentioned benefits of debate can deliver the message prioritizing the urgent need to practice in speaking lessons. It is also emphasized by Tessier who said that take-aways were tremendous when students wrote about a debate they witnessed, the teacher provided debate questions, and students received a reward for winning (Tessier, 2009).

Debating can be a powerful tool for learning a language and improving speaking skills, but it also possesses strengths and weaknesses at the same time. Let's explore both:

Strengths of Debate in Language Learning:

1. **Vocabulary Expansion:-** Debating requires the use of a wide range of vocabulary, including persuasive language, technical terms, and complex expressions. Actively participating in debates helps learners expand their vocabulary and gain a deeper understanding of word usage in several contexts.
2. **Fluency Development:** - Debating urges students to think and speak quickly, which can significantly improve their fluency and confidence in the target language. The back-and-forth nature of debates provides plenty of opportunities for learners to practice their speaking and listening skills.
3. **Critical Thinking and Argumentation:** - Debating requires learners to analyze information, formulate arguments, and counter opposing viewpoints.
4. **Exposure to distinct worldviews:** - Debates aid learners to immerse themselves in a variety of perspectives and ideas, which can increase their awareness of cultural and social issues.

Weaknesses of Debate in Language Learning:



1. Anxiety and Stress: - Debating can be stressful activity, especially for learners who are not comfortable with public speaking or expressing disagreement which can lead to increased anxiety and delay language development.
2. Excessive Focus on Persuasion over Accuracy: - In the heat of a debate, learners may prioritize making persuasive arguments over maintaining grammatical accuracy or pronunciation rules during the speech.
3. Limited Opportunities for Interaction: - In a debate setting, the focus is often on making individual arguments, leaving fewer opportunities for the kind of interactive, back-and-forth conversation that is essential for language development.
4. Potential for Misunderstanding: - The competitive nature of debates may result in misunderstandings or communication problems, especially when dealing with complex or sensitive topics interfering the development of cross-cultural communication skills.

To maximize the benefits of debate in language learning process, keeping a balance, integrating debate activities alongside other speaking and interactive exercises that address the weaknesses mentioned above holds a great meaning in this very situation.

Conclusion

The debate method has shown to be an effective strategy for improving students' public speaking abilities. Students improve their critical thinking and argumentation skills in addition to increasing their vocabulary and fluency through the lively back-and-forth of debate. Debate competitions' competitive atmosphere can serve as a source of inspiration for pupils, encouraging them to stretch their language boundaries and develop their communication skills.



But it is crucial to be aware of the possible drawbacks, such elevated anxiety and the possibility of putting persuasion ahead of accuracy. To ensure that students have a well-rounded language learning experience, wise teachers must carefully balance debate sessions with other speaking exercises.

The debate platform enables students to find their voice, express their thoughts, and interact more meaningfully with the world around them. It works similarly to a passionate speaker enthraling an audience or a spirited discussion among friends. Students who master this strategy will not only become more fluent in the language but also develop the critical thinking and problem-solving abilities necessary to thrive in a world where everything is connected.

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