

## IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY THROUGH DEBATE TECHNIQUE

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**Abstract:** The study is aimed to find out how to improve students' speaking ability in making questions, giving explanations, and answers based on the debate topic. The methodology of this research is a classroom action research which consisted of 3 cycles. The subject of this research was 60 students of Semester II Sistem Informatika of Informatica Technical Faculty 2019/2020, Potensi Utama University. The observation checklist and field notes were used to collect the data. Through the observation checklist, students' activities were documented, and by using fieldnotes the researchers summarized the problem during debating process. The data, then, were analyzed qualitatively. Based on the research findings, the debate technique which was applied by the subjects reflected the improvement of students' speaking ability. Based on the result of observation, it can be inferred that students' speaking ability in making questions and giving explanations have been improved. The percentage of students' activity in the classroom when debating, in the first cycle, was 42.83%, in the second cycle was 59.17%, and the third cycle was 85.17%. It indicated that debate technique had improved students' speaking ability in making questions and giving explanations.

**Keywords:** *Classroom Action Research, College Student, Debate Technique, Speaking Skill*

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### INTRODUCTION

Speaking is a speech production that becomes a part of our daily activities (Thornburry, 2005). Speaking skills can help students communicate their opinions, feelings, and expressions without being limited in different languages, cultures, and countries.

The ability to speak is very important because by mastering speaking skills, people can have conversations with other people, giving ideas, and exchange information with others. By speaking, someone is able to convey the meaning, express feelings, give opinions, etc. The failure or success of learning English really depends on the ability and readiness of students to participate in learning activities, one of which is influenced by how their attitudes and interests towards English. The attitudes and interests of students can be created and can be developed with innovations made by lecturer so that it attracts attention and can foster students' interest and motivation to learn. Ghazali

(2013) explains that the implementation of "real communication" in the classroom can be determined by factors such as lesson objectives, student skill levels, and types of role playing activities, paired interviews, surveys/polls, or problem solving situations.

Based on the researchers' observations, students cannot give opinions and respond to other opinions of their friends in English. They cannot express their opinion to respond other opinions whether they agree or disagree with someone's opinion. They were silent when the lecturer asked them. It showed that they are passive in speaking especially if the lecturer asks their opinions. They are afraid to express their opinions and to respond because they do not know how to express their opinions or arguments in speaking English. Students are afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, by applying debate as a technique in teaching speaking, it is evident that students can give opinions and respond to the opinions of others.

One learning model that is expected to increase motivation and learning outcomes is to use the debate method. The debate method is one of the most important learning methods to improve English speaking skills. Debate is an argumentation activity between two or more parties, both individually and in groups, in discussing and deciding problems and differences (Mulyani, 2018).

Debate provides an opportunity to develop students' speaking skills. Debate can be an effective pedagogical technique because in the debate, students are actively involved and responsible in the learning process. By debating, students become more active in speaking and expressing their opinions or ideas. The more students express their opinions, the more likely they are to improve their speaking skills.

Debate is the process of conveying ideas or opinions that occur to two or more opposing parties and trying to defend their ideas or opinions. Debate can be used in an EFL classroom as a tool to get students to practice their skills in speaking English in a real-life context. Here, the debate parts are as follows: (1) Motion; (2) Definition; (3) Theme line; (4) Argument; (5) Rebuttal; (6) Sum-up/closing.

Debate will help students be more courageous in sharing ideas and develop their oral English skills. Through debate, they will explore ideas more and make them feel more confident in expressing ideas clearly when speaking.

Debating can also develop several other skills that will help students to communicate effectively in English or any language students speak. In applying the debate method, there are several steps that need to be considered, including:

1. The lecturer divides students into two groups of debate participants, one pro and the other contra,
2. The lecturer gives an assignment to read material that will be debated by the two groups,
3. The lecturer appoints one pro member to speak at the time, then the counter group responds. And so on until some students can express their opinions. While students convey their ideas, the lecturer writes ideas from each conversation until they get the expected number of ideas,
4. The lecturer adds concepts or ideas that have not been revealed,
5. From the data disclosed, the lecturer invites students to make conclusions or summaries that refer to the topics to be achieved,
6. The lecturer guides students to make conclusions according to the material discussed.

Debate can be practiced in two groups (pros and cons) consisting of five students in each group. By doing so students can convey opinions or ideas that are in their mind. It can

help students improve their speaking skills.

Previous study reveals that students' speaking skill can improve through the implementation of Project Based Learning because it made the students to be more active and innovative in doing the task and joining the class. Thus, it is strongly recommended to apply this teaching method in speaking class as an alternative way to improve students' speaking competency (Mafruudloh & Fitriati, 2020). Junaida and Prastiyowati (2018) on their research found that L1/L2 based strategies could enhance speaking ability at 10<sup>th</sup> Grade of Computer and Network Engineering Class C at SMKN 4 Malang.

Speaking abilities are essential skills to produce the flow of articulation sound systems to convey the interest, needs, feelings and desires to others (Iskandarwarsid, 2008). Lecturers have a big role to motivate their students to speak. Debate in the speaking session aims to improve students' critical thinking and communication skills. In debate activities, students have more opportunities to practice speaking. Iriantara and Syaripuddin (2013) argue that someone who has the ability to speak will easily convey ideas to others, the success of using the idea so that it can be accepted by people who listen or are invited to talk. Conversely, someone who lacks the ability to speak will have difficulty in conveying ideas to others. Krieger (2005) stated that debate forces students to think about the multiple sides of an issue, and it also forces them to interact not just with the details of a given topic, but also with one another.

Conclusively, this study address the following question: was there a significant difference in the speaking ability between before and after the students experienced the debating technique? The purpose is to find out whether or not there was a significant difference in the speaking ability between before and after the students experienced the debating technique.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Subjects**

The participant of this study was 60 students of evening class at Semester II Sistem Informatika of Informatica Technical Faculty 2019/2020, Potensi Utama University. They were selected purposely due to the the difference on the Speaking Ability.

### **Design and Procedures**

In this study, Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted. According to Harmer (2007), action research is a term given to a series of procedures that lecturers can perform, either because they want to improve aspects of their teaching, or because they want to evaluate the success and / or appropriateness of certain activities and procedures. Kunandar (2011) said the Classroom Action Research (CAR) is a research that aims to improve the quality of each learning in class. This classroom action research can also bridge the gap between educational theory and practice. There are four stages of Classroom Action Research: planning, observing, acting, and reflecting.

The procedures of action research conducted were as follows:

1. Plan an action  
The stage identifies the problem and develops a strategic plan to overcome the problem. The strategy was prepared, implemented, revised, re-implemented, and revised again until it is effective to solve the problem.
2. Implement actions  
This is the stage of implementing the planned strategy. The lecturer applied the strategies that are in line with the syllabus.

### 3. Observing

This is the stage of observing the effects of strategy and collecting data needed to solve problems.

### 4. Reflection of actions

It is the stage of analyzing, evaluating, and describing the effects of a strategy to find out how far the strategy has solved the problem.

## Data Collection and Data analysis

### Instruments

There were two instruments to collect the data. In this case, observation checklist and field notes were taken during the treatment. Through observation checklist, ten aspects of students' activities such as giving opinion, responding to others, and others as described in table 1 were scored from level 1 to 5. Meanwhile, field notes was conducted by noting down several critical activities when students had debating session.

In analyzing the data, percentage formula was used. The score resulting from the checklist was divided by the total score, and then multiply with 100. The result, afterwards, was categorized into 5 levels: very bad, bad, enough, good and very good (see table 2). This category was compared with the indicators in each cycle in order to describe the success of the teaching and learning process using debate in improving speaking skills. Meanwhile, data from field notes were evaluated by the themes emerged.

Table 1. Description of students' observation checklist

| No    | Activities                                                   | N | Valuation |   |   |   |   | Total Score |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---|-----------|---|---|---|---|-------------|
|       |                                                              |   | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |             |
| 1     | Student pays attention to researcher's explanation           |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 2     | Student obeys to researcher's instruction                    |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 3     | Student gives opinion by using expression & hand gestures    |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 4     | Student gives opinion with clarity and appropriate statement |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 5     | Student responds to another opinion & question               |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 6     | Student is eager to defend one's opinion                     |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 7     | Student's grammar and vocabulary in debating                 |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 8     | Student has minimal reliance on note                         |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 9     | Student's activeness and enthusiasm in debating              |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| 10    | Student's ability to summarize the result of debate          |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |
| TOTAL |                                                              |   |           |   |   |   |   |             |

*Adapted from Rubiati (2010)*

The total score resulted from the checklist was then calculated using the percentage formula in order to categorize the valuation as indicted in table 2.

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Total Score}}{\text{Maximal Score}} \times 100$$

The categories of valuation consist of five: very bad, bad, enough, good and very good.

Table 2. Description of checklist valuation

| Valuation | Categories | Rating |
|-----------|------------|--------|
| 1         | Very Bad   | 0-30   |
| 2         | Bad        | 31-50  |
| 3         | Enough     | 51-75  |
| 4         | Good       | 76-85  |
| 5         | Very Good  | 86-100 |

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the description and the discussion of the results of the research were presented. Research findings are based on behavior checklist observations and fieldnotes. The implementation of each stage of observation was described by applying classroom action research. This classroom action research was divided into three cycles. The results of all cycles are explained as follows:

### The First Cycle

Table 3. Students' observation checklist in the first cycle

| No    | Activities                                                   | N  | Valuation |    |    |   |   | Total Score |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|----|----|---|---|-------------|
|       |                                                              |    | 1         | 2  | 3  | 4 | 5 |             |
| 1     | Student pays attention to researcher's explanation           | 60 | 8         | 36 | 14 | 2 | 0 | 130         |
| 2     | Student obeys to researcher's instruction                    | 60 | 0         | 24 | 35 | 1 | 0 | 157         |
| 3     | Student gives opinion by using expression & hand gestures    | 60 | 18        | 22 | 17 | 3 | 0 | 125         |
| 4     | Student gives opinion with clarity and appropriate statement | 60 | 14        | 24 | 20 | 2 | 0 | 130         |
| 5     | Student responds to another opinion & question               | 60 | 13        | 25 | 21 | 1 | 0 | 130         |
| 6     | Student is eager to defend one's opinion                     | 60 | 5         | 27 | 25 | 3 | 0 | 146         |
| 7     | Student's grammar and vocabulary in debating                 | 60 | 19        | 12 | 27 | 2 | 0 | 132         |
| 8     | Student has minimal reliance on note                         | 60 | 28        | 16 | 13 | 3 | 0 | 111         |
| 9     | Student's activeness and enthusiasm in debating              | 60 | 18        | 31 | 9  | 2 | 0 | 115         |
| 10    | Student's ability to summarize the result of debate          | 60 | 29        | 14 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 109         |
| TOTAL |                                                              |    |           |    |    |   |   | 1285        |

The score of the observation as follows:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Total Score}}{\text{Maximal Score}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Score} = \frac{1285}{3000} \times 100$$

$$\text{Score} = 42.83\%$$

Based on the observation list table above, it can be seen that only 42.83% of the students' who were involved and active in debate. In the first cycle, the researchers observed student activities in class while arguing. Based on the results of field notes, most students paid attention to the researchers' explanation. Some students also joined the class with enthusiasm.

## The Second Cycle

Table 4. Students' observation checklist in the second cycle

| No    | Activities                                                   | N  | Valuation |    |    |    |   | Total Score |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|----|----|----|---|-------------|
|       |                                                              |    | 1         | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5 |             |
| 1     | Student pays attention to researcher's explanation           | 60 | 2         | 12 | 35 | 8  | 3 | 178         |
| 2     | Student obeys to researcher's instruction                    | 60 | 0         | 7  | 23 | 24 | 6 | 209         |
| 3     | Student gives opinion by using expression & hand gestures    | 60 | 4         | 17 | 20 | 18 | 1 | 175         |
| 4     | Student gives opinion with clarity and appropriate statement | 60 | 0         | 14 | 37 | 7  | 2 | 177         |
| 5     | Student responds to another opinion & question               | 60 | 5         | 12 | 29 | 13 | 1 | 173         |
| 6     | Student is eager to defend one's opinion                     | 60 | 0         | 23 | 30 | 5  | 2 | 166         |
| 7     | Student's grammar and vocabulary in debating                 | 60 | 3         | 13 | 31 | 10 | 3 | 177         |
| 8     | Student has minimal reliance on note                         | 60 | 2         | 19 | 17 | 18 | 4 | 183         |
| 9     | Student's activeness and enthusiasm in debating              | 60 | 5         | 21 | 22 | 8  | 4 | 165         |
| 10    | Student's ability to summarize the result of debate          | 60 | 1         | 19 | 29 | 9  | 2 | 172         |
| TOTAL |                                                              |    |           |    |    |    |   | 1775        |

The score of the observation as follows:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Total Score}}{\text{Maximal Score}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Score} = \frac{1775}{3000} \times 100$$

$$\text{Score} = 59.17\%$$

Based on the observation checklist table above, it can be seen that there is an increase in student scores in paying attention and being enthusiastic about attending class. The teaching and learning process went well, and the student activity in the debate was better than before in first cycle.

## The Third Cycle

Table 5. Students' observation checklist in the third cycle

| No    | Activities                                                   | N  | Valuation |   |    |    |    | Total Score |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|---|----|----|----|-------------|
|       |                                                              |    | 1         | 2 | 3  | 4  | 5  |             |
| 1     | Student pays attention to researcher's explanation           | 60 | 0         | 0 | 16 | 18 | 26 | 250         |
| 2     | Student obeys to researcher's instruction                    | 60 | 0         | 0 | 15 | 26 | 19 | 244         |
| 3     | Student gives opinion by using expression & hand gestures    | 60 | 0         | 0 | 8  | 27 | 25 | 257         |
| 4     | Student gives opinion with clarity and appropriate statement | 60 | 0         | 0 | 14 | 20 | 26 | 252         |
| 5     | Student responds to another opinion & question               | 60 | 0         | 0 | 17 | 19 | 24 | 247         |
| 6     | Student is eager to defend one's opinion                     | 60 | 0         | 0 | 6  | 16 | 38 | 272         |
| 7     | Student's grammar and vocabulary in debating                 | 60 | 0         | 0 | 9  | 18 | 33 | 264         |
| 8     | Student has minimal reliance on note                         | 60 | 0         | 0 | 13 | 25 | 22 | 249         |
| 9     | Student's activeness and enthusiasm in debating              | 60 | 0         | 0 | 9  | 26 | 25 | 256         |
| 10    | Student's ability to summarize the result of debate          | 60 | 0         | 0 | 11 | 14 | 35 | 264         |
| TOTAL |                                                              |    |           |   |    |    |    | 2555        |

The score of the observation as follows:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{Total Score}}{\text{Maximal Score}} \times 100$$

$$\text{Score} = \frac{2555}{3000} \times 100$$

$$\text{Score} = 85.17\%$$

Based on the observations in third cycle above, it can be concluded that the third cycle is the best compared to first cycle and second cycle. The majority of students paid attention to the lecturers' explanation. The majority of students were also enthusiastic in joining classes. All activities in the third cycle ran well. It can be seen from their responses. Meanwhile, in the debate process, most of the students were effectively involved. In the third cycle, the teaching and learning process went well, and the students' speaking ability showed improvement. Most students can give opinions with good expressions. They spontaneously raised their hands and gave their opinion. They also responded to the opinions of other groups. They automatically gave their opinion when the debate started. Some students had minimal reliance on notes when giving and responding to the opinions of others. Some students could also give and respond to opinions clearly and accordingly. The students' activeness in arguing increased. Students actively provide opinions and respond to other opinions.

From the research findings above, it can be seen that students' speaking ability increases from cycle to cycle. From one cycle to another, it took two weeks of learning to debate. Students improve their speaking skills after being taught through debate techniques that were applied for three cycles. Because the whole meeting went well, it can be stated that there is a significant increase from the first cycle to the third cycle.

In the first cycle, the percentage of students' assessment in debate was 42.83%. In the teaching and learning process, many students enthusiastically attended class but some students did not pay attention and did not obey instructions. Many students were still confused about debating techniques because they have never practiced debating. It was found that many students were still confused about the debate and that their grammar and vocabulary were still poor. It was also found that many students were still unable to give opinions by using expressions and hand movements well and were less able to respond to peer opinions well. Many students were unable to give and respond to opinions accurately and use statements accordingly. They were still shy and afraid of making mistakes. Then, many students still saw notes or leaflets and found it difficult to summarize the debate.

In the second cycle, the percentage of student activity was 59.17%. It can be seen that the teaching-learning process is better than before. Students could give their opinions and respond well to other opinions when debating. They can use their expressions and hand movements to respond well and defend opinions. In this cycle, most students were more confident than before. They did not look as nervous or ashamed as in the first cycle but they still could not use the right and proper hand movements to respond to and defend opinions. However, some students still had bad grammar and vocabulary during practicing debate. Hence, the researcher decided to make the third cycle because some students needed more practice and motivation.

In the third cycle, the percentage of student activity was 85.17%. It can be seen that the teaching-learning process is the best of the first and second cycles. Students could give their opinions well in debating, they used expressions and hand movements

to give an accurate opinion and they can respond to other opinions and defend their opinions when debating. They did not see their notes to help them speak.

The debate technique cannot solve the problems of all students in speaking, but through the debate technique, students become less afraid and more confident to express their opinions and improve their speaking performance. By applying this technique in the classroom, students who are usually passive learners during the teaching and learning process become active learners because they want to talk and argue with other students to defend their opinions. Through debate, students are enthusiastic to talk in class because they want to show their ability to talk and debate. Students can improve their grammar and vocabulary skills as the main points for debating with others. They can also summarize the conclusions of the debate and to respond to other opinions.

The description above shows that the debate technique can improve students' speaking abilities, especially in the ten activities that students must learn and increase significant inaccuracies.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the research results that have been obtained, the following conclusions are made. From all data analysis on the use of debate techniques to improve students' speaking skills (classroom action research to students of semester II Sistem Informatika of Informatica Technical Faculty 2019/2020, Potensi Utama University), it can be concluded that:

1. Students' speaking ability at semester II Sistem Informatika of Informatica Technical Faculty 2019/2020, Potensi Utama University, which consists of 60 students, has been improved a lot through debate technique.
2. Students' speaking ability in term of giving opinion has increased through debate technique.
3. Students' speaking ability in responding to another's opinion has improved significantly through debate technique.
4. The debate could positively attract almost all students to become active speaker in the teaching-learning process in the classroom.
5. The grammar skill and vocabulary mastery of students have increased incisively during period of debating.
6. The role of debate technique will be share widely to lecturers in campus in order to improve students speaking ability.

Usually, debates are very interesting to carry out in improving speaking skills. Students have many opportunities to practice speaking and be actively involved in debates. As a result, they work very cooperatively as a team and they speak more actively in the classroom.

The findings of this study can provide suggestions for improving teaching and learning activities, especially in teaching speaking. The suggestions of this study are defined as follows:

1. Debate technique is good to be used in teaching speaking in English. Because the process of debating also involves a cognitive process in finding ideas and opinions that can defend their opinion. This is indicated by the results of research conducted by researchers. Students are more active and participate to speak in the speaking class. Therefore, the researcher recommends lecturers to apply debate to guide their students in speaking class. In selecting topics, the lecturer should provide interesting topics for students so that students are more enthusiastic about giving their opinions.



2. Researchers can reduce students' nervousness by making them enjoy speaking English and focusing on their speaking performance. Debate can also improve grammar skills and vocabulary mastery.
3. The researcher also recommends application of debating technique to another researcher and lecturers at Potensi Utama University.

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