

THE USE OF DEBATE TECHNIQUE TO DEVELOP SPEAKING ABILITY OF GRADE TEN STUDENTS AT BODINDECHA (SING SINGHASENI) SCHOOL

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I. INTRODUCTION

English has become the global language and the primary method of communication for the peoples of the world in fact it is now common for English to be referred to as International or even Global Englishⁱ. Within this global environment fluent English is vital for wider economic and to some extent social successⁱⁱ. Any company in the modern world of open economies, the ability to speak English is one of the principle requirements of employees and stakeholders alike, to meet the demands of the global economy, a sound English speaking skill has become the medium for the ease of communicationⁱⁱⁱ.

The Ministry of Education has stated in the national curriculum that basic teaching of English should include the four skills at both primary and secondary levels (The Ministry of Education, 2008). A good performance in English is required at all levels, and students are expected to use English in various situations, both in and out of their classrooms and with local and foreign communities.

This leads us to the crux of our problem- whilst the nation is aware of the need for sound global English, whilst schools place a high emphasis on the teaching of English across the levels- it is a sad indictment that speaking ability frequently fails to meet the required standard.

There might be justifiable reasons for this, not least that students feel too shy to speak, fear losing face or making mistakes they might struggle with pronunciation or have not had enough times to practice^{iv}. It has also been claimed that students do not have enough opportunities to use their English skills in 'real life' situations^v. Add to this the heavy focus on the more easily assessable reading and grammar and there is a real and significant problem with the development of English speaking skill.

This paper was inspired from my own experience as an English teacher at Bodindecha (Sing Singaseni) school in Bangkok. It was apparent that students frequently could not speak English well, from their Ordinary National Education Test (ONET) scores in English for the academic year 2013 the students were quite advanced in English, especially in written and reading skills. Their ONET average score for English is 52.26% while the average score of students from other schools located in the Secondary Educational Service Area Office 2 in Bangkok is 35.61% and the average score for the whole of Thailand is 30.35%. When trying to understand why speaking skills were not as good as reading and writing there were many factors not least that grammar and reading was easier to get a higher score in- this then helps University application, there was a limited understanding of the economic advantage of effective English and lastly but perhaps more significantly- students

did not feel that their English lessons were really productive and useful in developing their verbal ability.

It was the exploration of this problem which has led the researcher to consider and experiment with using the debate method to develop the verbal communicative skills of English students with rather encouraging results.

II. WHY DEBATE?

Having many chances to train and practice with students to participate in English debate competitions, the researcher found that debate was a challenging and highly rewarding activity for those who were involved. It has been argued^{vi} that debate allows students to share and cooperate with one another. It educates students with responsibility, encourages creativity, deepens friendships and strengthens the rapport with the teacher. The ability to speak freely also improves when students practice debate because they take part in conversations as they are debating. Likewise^{vii}, debate can motivate student to practice the language. It can embolden students in critical thinking, and develop students' speaking ability in communication.

III. THE DEFINED OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY ARE:

1. To investigate the effectiveness of using the Debate Technique in developing the English speaking ability of grade ten high school students.
2. To explore the students' perceptions towards Debate Technique learning in the classroom.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent does the Debate Technique develop students' English speaking ability?
2. What are students' perceptions towards the use of Debate Technique learning in the classroom?

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The results of this study can be proposed as an alternative learning technique for English teachers in implementing debate to promote English speaking ability. They could also be useful for course developers, educators, and practitioners in planning English lessons. Alongside that, it could be a springboard to further studies in implementing debate in the EFL context to develop speaking ability.

VI. RESEARCH SUBJECTS AND VARIABLES:

The research was conducted on a test section of some 46 Bodindecha grade 10 selected via a purposive sampling procedure. The school selected them to study in this class

form their Grade Point Average (GPA) which was accumulated from grade 7 to grade 9. Their GPA is from 3.90 to 4.00 which is high while the GPA of students from other classes is lower than 3.90. The essential variable is English speaking ability and perception towards debate technique.

VII. DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Debate is a speaking situation in which opposite points of view are presented and argued. Debate is about real or simulated issues. The students' roles ensure that they have adequate shared knowledge about the issue and different opinions or interest to defend. At the end of activity, they may have to reach a concrete decision or put the issue to a vote.

2. English speaking ability is the ability (1) to verbalize the English language in conversation purposively, (2) to speak fluently and communicate effectively, (3) to use language structure and vocabulary in the right context, (4) to use appropriate pronunciation, and (5) to apply appropriate manner.

3. Students' perceptions towards the use of Debate Technique refer to students' views, opinions, and beliefs in their speaking ability, and learning through debate.

VIII. THE CONCEPT OF DEBATE

A debate is a speaking situation in which opposite points of view are presented and argued^{viii}. It has also been pointed out^{ix} that a debate may be defined as verbal action or a form of formal argument on a topic or issue about which two groups or teams of people do not agree. Moreover it has been suggested^x, that debate is data in which people take up positions, pursue arguments and expound on their opinions on a range of matters; with or without some sort of lead figure or chairperson. Ronald Carter and Mc Carthy^{xi} argue that debate is a process of presenting an idea or opinion in which two opposing parties try to defend their idea or opinion. Krieger^{xii} states that that debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways. Halvorsen (2005) says 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. Wood (1972) explains debate is a competitive-educational activity; it teaches communication skills, and the context for the learning is the competitive situation. One of the most important skills that debaters gain is the ability to communicate verbally with another person in a condition that involves both pressure and spontaneity for excellence. He states that debate can be a very competitive learning process because the learners need the linguistic ability to guide the audience to their opinion. Debate is still an important way for students to enhance their language although it may cause pressure for learners.

Therefore we can work on the hypothesis that debate is competition of argument or ideas or opinions involving a critical thinking process and speaking skill in which there are two opposing parties face to face and each defending their ideas or opinions or argument by rational reason.

IX. TERMS AND FORMAT OF DEBATE

It was important for the purpose of this research paper that the terms of the debate were clearly established and that the traditional methodology and structures were followed.^{xiii}

Alongside defining the terms of the debates students must have a clear and workable understanding of the skills of debate but also would enjoy the competitive angle of debating. It is that competitiveness that can produce the most effective language development. Students must be able to define their motions, establish a strong position be ready for rebuttal and both deliver and cope with points of information.^{xiv}

The order of proceedings was:

- 1) First Proposition Speaker
- 2) First Opposition Speaker
- 3) Second Proposition Speaker
- 4) Second Opposition Speaker
- 5) Floor Debate
- 6) Opposition Summary Speech
- 7) Proposition Summary Speech

X. THE STRATEGY AND TACTICS OF DEBATE

Debate demands that debaters design and find strategies to stimulate the audience to accept their idea. Strategies are very significant for them to plan to accomplish their goal of winning. According to Buy (1997) it is important for the debaters to accentuate the importance of the speaker's requirements, and debaters should clearly consider the requirements for the speaker. The speaker should have something to say and have the ability to organize his message in away where others can understand clearly. It is very important for the speaker to use body language and gestures to compose precise stimulation and well-supported arguments and to critique arguments offered by an opponent. Moreover, Braden (1995) mentions that the ability to use figures of speech which attract attention and express their thoughts in language different from their ordinary usage is one of the common characteristics of a great speaker. He also notes that a great speaker should be able to impress the audience by presenting their thoughts dissimilarly from common language.

XI. ADVANTAGES OF DEBATE TECHNIQUE

As a communicative and an interactive technique, debate can be integrated into the classroom context. Just by partaking, listening and watching a debate in the classroom, students can improve their speaking skill automatically. Debate has many advantages in teaching speaking^{xv}.

- debate allows the students to share and cooperate well with one another;
- it educates the students' about responsibility,
- encourages creativity,
- deepens friendships and builds rapport with the teacher.
- students are motivated and enjoy the activity.
- Finally, it can improve the students' speaking ability.
- debate is a form of produced conversation.
- within the smaller context of debate students can become more lively and gain more confidence.^{xvi}

We can add to this the idea that debate can be beneficial to the teaching and learning process^{xvii}. Furthermore, Bellon (2000) as cited in Rubiati (2010) also states that debate has some benefits in the teaching and learning process.

- Firstly, debate equips students to learn and cope with both success and failure within both the social and the academic context.

- Students are able to make and defend informed choices about complicated issues outside of their own area of interest.
- Thirdly, debate is not only a way to connect students with academic subjects; it can also connect the students to public life.
- Finally, the policy that is used in debate specifically, can teach the students to adapt to multiple perspectives, which is described as one of the most important problem solving skills. Moreover, Barkley, et al (2005) states that there are three benefits of debate for students.
- Firstly, debate can improve students' motivation to practice their spoken language.
- Secondly, it can embolden students' critical thinking and develop students' speaking ability in oral communication.
- Thirdly, it grows and develops students' tolerance and recognition of their friends' opinions.

This considered, it can be concluded that debate can be used to enhance students speaking within the classroom.

XII. DISADVANTAGES OF DEBATE

In the learning process, debate has limitations too.^{xviii}

- Firstly, debate technique only can be used for specific subjects, such as subjects that are concerned with agreeing and disagreeing and giving argument.
- Secondly, debate needs a long times for preparation. Much preparation is needed in debating in order to make sure the debate runs well. Students should prepare their arguments before the debate to make it easier for them to attack the opponent's opinion.
- Finally, it requires the students to be controlled in defending their argument. Many students can't control their emotion when they defend their argument.

Although it has these disadvantages, its seems that the benefits do outweigh the disadvantages in the development of English speaking. Moreover, it disadvantages can be minimized by the teachers.

XIII. THE CONCEPT OF SPEAKING ABILITY

What is it that we are actually trying to develop and improve? How can we define and understand the concept of speaking?

- Speaking has been defined as making use of words in an ordinary voice^{xix}.
- We can assert that speaking is fundamental to human communication.^{xx}
- speaking is an interactive process in which an individual alternately takes the roles of speaker and listener, and which includes both verbal and nonverbal components^{xxi}
- Speaking is interaction between speakers with a listener^{xxii}.
- speaking means negotiating intended meanings and adjusting one's speech to produce the desired effect on the listener.^{xxiii}

Considering this we can then ask the question as to what is important for speaking ability, Fonocchiaro and Bonomo^{xxiv} argue that there are 6 factors

- 1) To decide what the learner wants to say,
- 2) To select words that fall into the pattern they are going to use,
- 3) To select words that fall into a pattern conveying the meaning,
- 4) To use correct arrangements of words,
- 5) To make sure of the appropriate situation, and
- 6) To place tongue and lips in certain positions to produce sounds.

So, essentially, what we aim to improve can be expressed as equipping students with the ability to speak volubly and correctly by using accurate vocabulary and structures and using the language in different functions and situations suitably. The teacher should employ the appropriate teaching technique in order to develop students' speaking ability effectively.

XIV. COMPONENTS OF SPEAKING

Therefore, we could suggest that the basic components of speech are^{xxv}:

- grammatical competence
- sociolinguistic competence
- discourse competence
- and strategic competence.^{xxvi}

Harris (1994) builds on this stating that speaking is a complex skill requiring the simultaneous use of a number of different abilities which often develop at different rates. He adds that there are five components of speaking ability as follow:

1. Pronunciation
2. Grammar
3. Vocabulary
4. Fluency
5. Comprehension.

XV. THE WAYS TO IMPROVE SPEAKING ABILITY

We can argue that students are generally holistic learners who need to use real communication in the classroom^{xxvii}, this is something within their experience and their context^{xxviii} but also embracing the significant learning styles and the resources within experience- not least movement, the senses, objects, pictures, and a variety of activities. Engaging in this way can remove the possible stigma of feeling that they are learning a foreign language but rather they are discovering a new concept of self expression.

XVI. TEACHING ENGLISH SPEAKING IN THAI CONTEXT

English learning within the Thai context has numerous problems, in this brief overview I can just touch on a few of the more significant issues but any student or teacher is aware of the full complexity of the situation. There can often be a lacking of a full curriculum^{xxix}, teaching can be dry and focus on an abstract concept of grammar and because English is taught as a foreign language, exposure to English is obviously limited.

However, we must not be quick to be overly critical of Thai English- teachers have and are trying to discover new ways of teaching their subject and motivating their students^{xxx}.

XVII. USING THE DEBATE TECHNIQUE

This paper is an examination of the effectiveness of using debate to achieve the educational goals of improved English

speaking within schools. We have established the problems, and examined the context so now we must consider if debate can actually help our students to achieve.

When initially presented with the debate technique our students had a myriad of feelings and perceptions. Some were excited while others felt a little overwhelmed by the prospect. We wanted to be able to record and examine quantifiable data.

XVIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Understanding students perception towards debate and the effectiveness of the debate technique to improve English requires a clear methodology.

1. Research Design- utilizes a mixed-method approach, both quantitative and qualitative

2. Data- The data to be collected in this study consist of the scores of the students' English speaking in pre-test and post-test, and the students' perception questionnaire.

3. Research Site: Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) Grade 10 students

XIX. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTATION

Debate Technique Lesson Plan- the study took place over 18 lessons with clear objective led lesson plans for each session.

English Speaking Test- two tests consisted of 4 categories and each category had 5 questions, with 20 interview questions in total. The tests were based on the high school English curriculum of grade ten students. 46 students were tested on the pre-test and post-test before and after studying the Debate Technique.

English Speaking Assessment and Evaluation Criteria- Assessment conducted using the methods advocated by Brown and Hudson (2002), and the criteria of assessments was adapted from Reunyoot (2010): Fluency, Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Manners.

The Students' Perception Questionnaire- The questionnaire expresses students' perceptions towards learning English through Debate Technique

Data Collection Procedure- collection took place during Pre-test and Post-test. The scores are collected, compared and analyzed.

XX. DATA ANALYSIS

Speaking Scores- The scores on speaking ability tests gained from the Pre-test and Post-test are converted into mean scores and Standard Deviation (S.D.). The first step of the data analysis process involve determining the mean and standard deviation of each pre-test and post-test score. In this research T- test Dependent is used to compare the scores via SPSS to check if there is a significant difference.

The Students' Perception Questionnaire- All the students were asked to respond to questions in the open-ended questionnaire. The responses were labeled and grouped to yield themes of perception. The analysis of data involving perception will utilize qualitative method based on open coding.^{xxxii}

XXI. RESULTS

To test the hypothesis, the mean scores and SD scores on pre-test and post- test were compared by using a dependent t-test. The pre-test and post- test scores were assessed by three raters and calculated mean and SD scores of 46 grade ten students. As seen below, the three raters' mean scores of the

post- test were higher than those of the pre- test. The results on English speaking ability also reflected this. Participants had significant mean scores on the post- test (M = 11.7) higher than pre-test (M= 10.2). The results indicated that grade ten students developed in their English speaking abilities after learning through Debate Technique.

English speaking ability (Mean)		
Rater	Pre- test	Post- test
Rater 1	10.72	11.59
Rater 2	8.76	11.17
Rater 3	11.1	12.35
Average	10.2	11.7

Fig. 1 English speaking ability mean.

The data concluded that students who used the debate technique, made significantly higher progress than the students who did not.

XXII. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the effectiveness of the Debate Technique on grade ten students' English speaking ability at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) School. It also explored students' perceptions towards the use of Debate Technique learning within the classroom.

XXIII. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

Summary of the Main Findings

Students' English speaking ability performance after the completion of the study was different from that of the pre-test at the .05 level compared to students' post- test (M= 11.7) .

(M= 10.2).using this mean score improvement we can ascertain that there was an effective and indeed significant increase to the result, by using Debate Technique. The result demonstrated that there was development in speaking ability after the experiment.

XXIV. DISCUSSION

Academic Skill

It could be seen from the data gained from the student's perception open- ended questionnaire that the students eventually improved their academic skills after studying debate. Since participating in debate activities naturally provides students with the opportunities to practice these academic skills, there exists, for many of those involved, an intuitive link with the development of these skills. That is, there is an expectation that by practicing the skills, students are likely to see improvements in these areas. This has been assessed both through measures such as test scores and through students' own perceptions.

We also discovered that debate has helped students improve their crucial critical thinking skills but also contributed to their social skills, perhaps best expressed:

'Debate promotes civic engagement and might provide a venue for citizens, particularly members of socially disadvantaged groups, to empower themselves through the provision of social capital acquired by voicing and defending their concerns in a public arena'^{xxxiii}

In conclusion, although some students said that they did not like to learn debate because it was difficult, in the end, they were very proud of the fact that they could do it. They also pointed out that debate should be included in the curriculum of the English courses because it was an activity

that could greatly help the students to improve the academic skill, critical thinking skill, and social skills. Most students were happy and enjoyed studying debate with the teacher and said that they would want to study debate again. In addition, they also suggested that debate should be included in the high school English course curriculums in order to make the students feel familiar with conversation and improve their speaking skills. Once they felt more confident about their speaking ability, they would not be scared and nervous to study debate in a higher level with difficult motion. Finally, they reported that they were satisfied by studying debate because it could help them to think critically in every subject in life and know how to motivate people academically and professionally

XXV. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Even though debate technique proved the hypothesis that it was effective in developing English speaking ability, a few issues remained. The study was limited to Thai ten grade students therefore we don't know its potential effectiveness with other group of students. The time limit of the study may have affected progress of students' speaking. If the study time had been extended, the result might have been different.

XXVI. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Recommendations for further studies are as follows:

1. Debate Technique could be implemented in the teaching of other languages.
2. Interested researchers should try using debate with different English background knowledge students, such as students in lower years. This could help with curriculum development at lower levels of ability.
3. Interested researcher should try to teach students with different debate formats, such as longer debates with longer reply speeches and more formally defined motions. This could prepare students to debate competitively as well as reduce the time pressure in reply speeches, possibly improving the quality of discourse.

ⁱ Crystal 2003

ⁱⁱ Gerrish & Lacy, 2010

ⁱⁱⁱ Khamkhien 2010

^{iv} Ur 1996 Brown 1994

^v Karnpanich and Pulphol 1997

^{vi} Buckley (2008)

^{vii} Barkley, et al (2005)

^{viii} Dale & C Wolf 2000

^{ix} (Duansamosorn (2001)

^x Littlewood (1981)

^{xi} 1997

^{xii} 2007

^{xiii} Rubiati 2010

^{xiv} We can use Hasanah (2012) Junaidi (2011) as the foundation point for this in that Hasanah sees attack as the principle form of success and Junaidi looks to effective rebuttals as a means to success. Both skills do combine to creative a very hardened debater.

^{xv} Buckley (2008)

^{xvi} Lockett 2006

^{xvii} Bellon (2000) as cited in Rubiati (2010)

^{xviii} According to Malley and Pierce in Rubiati (2010), there are many disadvantages to debate in using it in the classroom.

^{xix} Hornby (1990)

^{xx} Lawtie (2007)

^{xxi} Mead and Rubin (1985)

^{xxii} Chaney in Kanyi (2006)

^{xxiii} O'Malley (1996)

^{xxiv} 1970

^{xxv} Scarcella Canale & Swain (1980)

^{xxvi} Grammatical competence is using and conceiving grammatical structures accurately and promptly relative to fluency. Sociolinguistic competence consists of speech acts such as apologies and compliments. Discourse competence concerns effective negotiation of ideas within a given discourse. Strategic competence is when speakers have mastered language strategies, allowing them to spread their ability to communicate effectively in their new language

^{xxvii} Celce & Murcia (2007)

^{xxviii} (Pattison, 1989).

^{xxix} Foley 2005

^{xxx} Ellis, 2003; Fotos, 2002; Saengboon, 2004; Snow, 2005

^{xxxi} (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

^{xxxii} (Mitchell 1998 in Mezuk et al. 2010