

Improving students' speaking skill through debate technique at X grade of SMK Dr. Indra Adnan Indragiri College

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ABSTRACT

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*Speaking skill is an essential competence in English learning. However, students often face challenges such as limited practice and vocabulary. This issue was identified among tenth-grade students of SMK Dr. Indra Adnan Indragiri College and became the background of this study. The research aimed to determine the improvement of speaking skills through debate techniques. An experimental method with a pre-experimental design was applied. Data were collected through oral tests administered to 21 tenth-grade students. The findings indicate that debate techniques positively influenced students' speaking skills. The mean post-test score (71.71) was higher than the pre-test score (69.05), accompanied by increased participation, engagement, and confidence. Statistical analysis showed that the *t*-observed value (8.61) exceeded the *t*-table values at both the 5% (2.08) and 1% (2.84) significance levels. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted, confirming the effectiveness of debate techniques.*

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INTRODUCTION

English is a language that has been spoken since the early centuries and has developed into the most widely used language worldwide. In the process of learning and teaching English, there are four language skills that should be mastered, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these skills, speaking is an interactive process of

Rika Delia Putri

constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Tarigan (2013) states that compared to other language skills, speaking is considered the most difficult skill to teach and learn. Ernest (2016) further explains that speaking requires learners not only to produce language according to their intentions but also to deeply understand and absorb the meanings of words and sentences conveyed by others. Based on these explanations, speaking can be understood as a complex skill and often regarded as the most challenging skill to acquire among the four language skills.

At SMK Dr. Indra Adnan Indragiri College, students from tenth to twelfth grade study all four language skills in their English subject. During field experience practice, the researcher identified problems in the teaching process, particularly in students' speaking performance. One technique that may help address this issue is debate. Tarigan (2020) defines debate as an activity of argumentation between individuals or groups to determine whether a suggestion is supported or opposed. Similarly, Wulandari and Ena (2018) state that debate is a method of discussing ideas in which two groups attempt to defend opposing viewpoints. Debate can therefore function as a communicative tool in EFL classrooms, allowing learners to practice language skills in real-life situations and engage in interaction through critical argumentation.

Speaking is one of the four language skills that must be mastered in order to communicate orally. According to Nunan (2011), speaking is equivalent to oral interaction, a conventional way of presenting information and expressing ideas. It is an interactive process of constructing meaning in which interpretation depends on context. Thornbury (2011) also describes speaking as speech production that forms part of daily activities involving interaction. Thus, speaking is essential for learners to become effective communicators.

The mastery of speaking skills is a priority for many second and foreign language learners. Brown (2013) categorizes the functions of speaking into three types: talk as interaction, talk as transaction, and talk as performance. Speaking as interaction primarily serves social functions, such as exchanging greetings or casual conversation. Speaking as transaction focuses on conveying messages clearly and accurately to achieve understanding. Speaking as performance refers to public speaking situations in which information is presented before an audience, often following structured formats similar

Improving Students' Speaking Skill through Debate Technique at X Grade of SMK Dr.
Indra Adnan Indragiri College

to written language. These functions demonstrate that speaking involves multiple communicative purposes that learners must develop.

The primary goal of teaching speaking is to develop speaking competence. Speaking competence refers to the ability to express ideas and feelings clearly using appropriate language. Tarigan (2017) explains that speaking is the ability to articulate sounds or words to convey thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Competence can be evaluated through four components: fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Mastery of these components enables learners to communicate effectively and be understood by listeners.

Debate technique is one approach that can support the development of speaking competence. Fleming (2013) states that debate is essentially an argument governed by rules, often involving teams presenting and defending positions on a topic within a specified time frame. Zare (2014) adds that debate is an important educational tool for developing analytical thinking and encouraging reflection on the validity of one's ideas. In debate activities, several aspects must be considered. Wiyanto (2016) identifies key elements including predetermined themes, prepared participants, judges who evaluate the process, and time regulations that structure the activity.

Formal or conventional debate, also known as educational debate, typically involves two opposing teams presenting arguments on an issue (Winda, 2014). The objective is to provide opportunities for each team to present arguments that support or reject a motion, with reasoning that is clear, logical, and relevant. Croe (2013) outlines procedural rules for conventional debate, including team composition, time limits for constructive and rebuttal speeches, questioning procedures, and the requirement to provide sufficient evidence to support claims. These structures ensure that debate activities are organized and focused on persuasive communication.

In conclusion, speaking is a complex and essential language skill that requires both linguistic and communicative competence. Debate, as an instructional technique, offers opportunities for learners to practice interaction, argumentation, and critical thinking while using English in meaningful contexts. Through structured debate

Rika Delia Putri

activities, students can develop fluency, accuracy, and confidence in speaking, supporting their overall communicative competence in English learning environments.

METHOD

The design of this research was an experimental research design using a one-group pretest–posttest model supported by a quantitative approach. According to Gay (2012), quantitative research involves the collection and analysis of numerical data to describe, explain, and predict phenomena. In addition, Hartono (2015) explains that a pre-experimental research design does not employ a control class; therefore, no other class serves as a comparison or control group to measure the effectiveness of the treatment. In this design, the researcher compares students' scores before the treatment (pre-test) and after the treatment (post-test) to determine the effect of the applied teaching method, technique, strategy, or learning environment.

This research was conducted at SMK Dr. Indra Adnan Indragiri College, located on Trimas Street, Indragiri Hilir. The participants, who also served as the sample of the research, were students of the tenth grade TLM program. The study was carried out from February to March 2023. The researcher used tests as the data collection technique, administering a pre-test before the treatment and a post-test after the treatment to measure students' performance..

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data presentation, the researcher found out the data about students' speaking skill at the X grade students of SMK Dr. Indra Adnan Indragiri College. The result of the pre-test of the students was 1.450 with mean score 69.05. The other word was still fair catagory. And the result of the post-test of the students was 1.506 with mean score 71.71. The other word was good category or more detail it can be seen in the table below:

Table 1
Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test Speaking Scores

No.	Pre-Test (X)	Post-Test (Y)
1	69	73
2	67	71
3	71	74
4	65	67
5	65	68
6	74	75
7	69	72
8	70	71
9	63	75
10	72	70
11	66	68
12	62	61
13	71	75
14	62	68
15	78	79
16	73	76
17	78	79
18	68	73
19	67	66
20	66	70
21	74	75

This research addresses the question of whether students' speaking skills can be improved through the debate technique at the tenth grade of SMK Dr. Indra Adnan Indragiri College. To answer this question, the researcher proposed the null hypothesis (H0) and the alternative hypothesis (H1) as follows:

H0: There was no significant improvement in students' speaking skills through the debate technique.

H1: There was a significant improvement in students' speaking skills through the debate technique.

The criteria for hypothesis testing stated that if the t-observed value was greater than or equal to the t-table value, the null hypothesis would be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. Conversely, if the t-observed value was smaller than or equal to the t-table value, the null hypothesis would be accepted and the alternative hypothesis rejected.

Based on the statistical calculation, the results were as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} t\text{-observed} &= (8.61) & t\text{-table} &= 5\% \ 2.08 \\ & & &= 1\% \ 2.84 \end{aligned}$$

Since the t-observed value (8.61) was higher than both t-table values, H₀ was rejected and H₁ was accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a significant improvement in students' speaking skills through the debate technique.

CONCLUSION

Debate technique is one of the techniques that can be used in teaching English, especially in improving speaking skills. Through this technique, students can express their opinions, enjoy the learning process, and become more active in class. To examine the improvement of students' speaking skills through the debate technique, the researcher conducted a study. After conducting the research at SMK Dr. Indra Adnan Indragiri College, it was found that the t-observed value was higher than the t-table value ($8.61 \geq 2.08$ or $8.61 \geq 2.84$) at the significance levels of 5% and 1%, with a degree of freedom (df) = 20. This means that the null hypothesis (H₀) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H₁) was accepted. It also indicates that the debate technique had an effect on improving students' speaking skills, particularly in learning how to ask for and give opinions among tenth-grade students of SMK Dr. Indra Adnan Indragiri College. Based on the information above, it can be concluded that the implementation of the debate technique to improve students' speaking skills was applied effectively, as shown in the statistical analysis.

Some suggestions are offered: English teachers are encouraged to apply the debate technique to improve students' speaking skills in teaching English. Students should also apply the debate technique to develop their vocabulary, especially when encountering

Improving Students' Speaking Skill through Debate Technique at X Grade of SMK Dr.
Indra Adnan Indragiri College

unfamiliar words during debates. By doing so, they will not be afraid to share their opinions, interact more with their peers, and become more motivated in learning

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Rika Delia Putri

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