IMPROVING STUDENTS SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH DEBATE STRATEGY

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Abstract

In this research, the authors utilize the debate technique to improve students' speaking ability. The main goals of this study were to describe the implementation of the debate technique in teaching speaking and to identify how much the students' speaking ability was improved after being taught by using the debate technique. This study is classroom action research conducted in two cycles. Data were collected using observation, tests, and interviews. Data from observations, tests, and interviews taken from each cycle were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The application of the debate technique in teaching speaking in class XI IPS 1 the high school in Maumere was conducted in two cycles, namely cycle one and cycle two. The participants of this study were 16 students. The result of this study shows that the use of debate techniques can improve students' speaking skills. This is evidenced by the students' test scores which have increased in each cycle. In the first cycle, the student's average score was 54.37% and in the second cycle, the student's average score was 69.37%. It can be inferred that the debate technique can increase students' interest in speaking and can also upgrade the class to be more favorable

Key Terms: *speaking improvement, debate technique, classroom action research*

INTRODUCTION

A language is a communication tool humans use to interact with interlocutors. With the existence of language, it can connect conversations between people. According to Hualai (2017) and Keraf (1994), a language is a means of communication. It is also a means to convey opinions and arguments to other parties. In conclusion, language has an important social role in communicating with the wider community.

English is regarded as a global language. From the Indonesian perspective, English is recognized as a foreign language. Many people learn English seriously because they consider English a crucial language for interacting with foreigners. Hence, it can be seen that English is taught from elementary school to university.

Learning English cannot be separated from the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Chen (2007) mentions that "In the language learning process, listening, speaking, reading, and writing should be treated as integrated, interdependent, and inseparable elements of language".

Speaking is one of four essential skills in learning English. One language ability that every person has is the ability to speak. Speaking involves transferring thoughts or ideas from the speaker to the listener. Speaking skills are essentially producing the flow of the sound articulation system to convey the will, needs, feelings, and desires to others (Parmawati & Inayah, 2019). It means that speaking is important to improve pronunciation, deliver opinions and arguments, and interest the listener in emotions.

In addition, some problems also arise in teaching and learning related to students' speaking ability in class XI IPS 1 in the 2022/2023 school year. Based on the author's observations, only a few students are active in discussions during class activities. They are students who have good achievements and always participate in class. Nevertheless, there are mostly students who are not active in discussions and expressing their opinions. They are not enthusiastic about speaking and it is quite hard to respond to the opinions of their friends because of their limited vocabulary. The students lacked the confidence to speak English.

In the process of learning to speak English, several methods can be applied as stated by Harmer (2012) in Arung (2016) such as communication games, discussions, questionnaires, simulations, role-playing, and debates. In this research, we utilized one of the methods, which is the debate method. Debate is a formally organized conversation or discussion to discuss a topic in detail. Alasmari and Ahmed (2013 and Richa (2011) stated that debates can be well used to improve students speaking of English. Using debate techniques in speaking class, students will eliminate student's fear of English. In addition, the debate technique will improve their pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency.

There are seven debate models as stated by Pritchard (2009, p. 65): discussion, cross-examination, and parliamentary, British parliamentary, academic style, national style, and world style. Pritchard says that the discussion style practiced at the beginner level is an introductory format and will be used as a model at this guide stage (p. 9). In this research, the discussion style is used with XI IPS 1, because they are beginners in the debate strategy of using English debate. They are unfamiliar with this strategy as mentioned earlier.

In addition, debate is one of the techniques that has many benefits for students, including increasing students' critical thinking, developing communication skills, questioning skills, and the ability to make and defend opinions. Considering the problems and theories that have been mentioned above, the authors are interested in solving the problem by using the discussion debate strategy because it is one of the better ways for students to improve their speaking skills. Meanwhile, the authors also found that many previous studies show promising results related to the application of the debate method in teaching English. These studies can be described in the description below.

Meanwhile, the authors also found that many previous studies show promising results related to the application of the debate method in teaching English. These studies can be described in the description below. Firmansyah and Vegian (2019) found that incorporating debate techniques in language learning improves students' speaking skills. The study suggests that debate activities enhance fluency, accuracy, and confidence in spoken English. The implication is that using debate techniques in language teaching promotes active student participation, critical thinking, and overall language proficiency. Lubis and Siregar (2021) found that incorporating debate activities in language learning enhances students' speaking skills. It was observed that students who participated in debates showed improvements in their fluency, accuracy, and confidence when speaking. The implication of the study suggests that using debate as a teaching method can actively engage students, develop critical thinking, and improve overall language proficiency. Laoli (2021) mentions that implementing debate methods in junior high schools helps improve students' speaking skills. He observed that students who engaged in debate activities demonstrated enhanced fluency, accuracy, and confidence in their oral communication. The implication of this study suggests that incorporating debate methods in the classroom can actively involve students, foster critical thinking, and enhance overall speaking proficiency in junior high school students.

Next, Arung and Jumardin (2016) found that using debate techniques in language learning has a positive impact on students' speaking skills. The researchers observed that students who participated in debates showed improvements in fluency, accuracy, and confidence when speaking English. The implication of their findings is that incorporating debate techniques in classrooms can be an effective approach to enhancing students' oral communication abilities. Debate activities promote critical thinking, active participation, and the ability to express ideas effectively. By integrating debate into language teaching, students can develop their speaking skills and overall language proficiency. The fifth, research written by Yumelking et al. (2020) who study found that implementing the discussion debate strategy among fourth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at Nusa Nupa University had a positive impact on improving their speaking skills. The researchers observed that students who participated in discussion debates showed significant improvements in fluency, accuracy, and confidence in speaking English. The implications of the study suggest that incorporating the discussion debate strategy in language education can effectively enhance students' speaking abilities. It encourages active participation, critical thinking, and the development of effective communication skills. By utilizing this strategy, students can improve their overall speaking proficiency and become more confident English speakers.

METHOD

In this research, the authors utilized Classroom Action Research (CAR). Classroom Action Research is an essential educational research for educators to understand. Classroom Action Research is directly correlated with teachers' efforts to remedy or to increase the quality of their performance, primarily in the classroom learning process. In addition, Stringer (2010: p1) defines "classroom action research as an action that teacher can use can use to improve teaching skills facilitating student learning programs to be effective". In other words, classroom action research is a type of research conducted in the classroom to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process. Classroom Action Research is divided into several cycles. Each cycle is composed of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

The subjects of this study were 16 students of class XI IPS 1 at a high school in Maumere, in the academic year 2022/2023. Prior to commencing the research study, informed consent was obtained from all participants involved. The informed consent process involved providing detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Additionally, they were made aware of their rights regarding confidentiality and the anonymization of their data. A consent form was provided to each participant, explaining the study's objectives, data collection methods and data analysis techniques. The participants were given ample time to read and comprehend the information and were encouraged to ask any questions they had before providing their consent to participate. By voluntarily signing the consent form, participants indicated their understanding of the study's details and their willingness to participate (Ginting, 2022).

In data collection techniques, researchers used observation, interviews, and tests. While in the data analysis technique, the researcher assessed each student's achievement on the English test. Regarding the classical completeness of the student's scores, the authors used the following formula:

1. Classical Completeness$= \frac{\sum students\ score \geq 75}{total students in class}\ x\ 100$

2. To know the class percentage:

$$P = \frac{f}{n}\ X\ 100\%$$

There are four steps in a cycle for implementing classroom action research. These are planning, action, observation, and reflection. This action research follows the model developed by Kemis and MaTaggart (1988). This model is a well-recognized depiction of the "spiral" of action research, which consists of four stages as follows: 1). Planning, 2). Acting, 3). Observing, and 4). Reflecting. In this study, the authors implemented two cycles. Each cycle consists of four meetings. Each meeting consists of 90 minutes. So, there were four meetings during the research process. Each cycle consists of four steps; planning, implementing actions, observing, and reflecting. This classroom action research is based on the assumption that in the first cycle, the teaching and learning process of speaking was not optimal because the application of the debate technique was not yet optimal. After all, the application of the debate technique was not well organized. In the second cycle, students became active and interested in learning. This could be seen from the student's activities in the classroom.

The authors used speaking tests and observation sheets in the data collection process. A test is a method used to measure a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a particular domain that can be measured. A test is an instrument-a set of techniques, procedures, or items that requires performance from the test taker. Some tests measure general abilities, while others focus on very specific competencies or objectives. In the case of ability tests, although actual performance on the test involves only a sample of skills, the domain is overall proficiency in a language-a competency common to all language skills (Brown: 2004). The type of speaking test used was an oral presentation. The students are expected to give a short talk on a topic prepared in advance or notified shortly before the test. The data obtained will be analyzed through quantitative and qualitative data. Qualitative data is used to describe the situation during the teaching process. Quantitative data is used to analyze student scores. Quantitative data is collected and analyzed by calculating the speaking test scores.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

Pre- cycle

In the pre-cycle, the authors observed students' interaction in English learning, interviewed the English teacher, and gave students a pre-test to find out their English skills and problems, especially their speaking ability. The result of the observation showed that the students of class XI were less interested in learning English. They felt that the learning process in class was not fun and confusing. The classroom atmosphere is not lively, and students do not actively participate in learning. In an interview with the English teacher, he confessed that most of the students are capable but not confident in speaking English. On the other hand, the students' interview results showed that the lack of practice given by the English teacher made it difficult for the students to speak English. As a result, the classroom atmosphere becomes less pleasant.

From the data above, the authors conclude that students of class XI IPS 1 lack confidence in speaking English. This can be seen from the speaking test results, which show low scores individually and in groups. When referring to the passing score, no one passed the success criteria. From the observation and interviews, the authors saw that forcing students to speak was pointless, and they needed more fun learning. Therefore, the authors used the debate method to help improve students' learning and speaking ability.

Cycle one

The first cycle was conducted in two meetings. Each meeting was conducted for ninety minutes. The authors observed all activities in the classroom. Based on the observation, some students seemed interested in the teaching technique used. This can be seen from their enthusiasm for conducting debates. However, some students were still not interested. In addition, students still have low motivation in participating in speaking learning activities. The students also found it difficult to express their ideas due to the lack of vocabulary. The test results showed that the percentage of students who met the completeness criteria was 18.75% and the class average was only 54.37%. The researcher then considered revising the actions that could be used to support the achievement of speaking skills. From the students' average scores and observation results, in cycle I, the authors realized that this action research should be undertaken in cycle II.

Cyle two

The second cycle was conducted for two meetings. Each meeting was conducted for ninety minutes. The author observed all activities in the classroom. Based on the observation, students were active in discussing and giving opinions. And there was an improvement in the teaching and learning process. This can be seen from the increasing number of students who reached the completeness criteria is 62, 5 % and the class percentage result of 69.37%.

Discussions

Classroom activities using debates should optimize the chance for students to use the target language for meaningful purposes, with attention to the messages they are talking about rather than correct language structures. Students are allowed to focus on their own learning process and develop the proper techniques for independent learning. Teachers will provide more topics, giving students time to think and respond to in-class interactions. After making students feel comfortable in using the language, it seems advisable to challenge them to think critically about the language. By using debates, students' speaking ability will improve.

The application of the debate technique in this study has a good effect on students' speaking ability and can also create a positive learning atmosphere during teaching and learning activities. Based on the research results and observation process, the researcher can prove that there is a significant improvement in students' speaking ability.

The results showed that this research fulfilled the success criteria in two cycles. Based on the results of post-test 1, it can be seen that only 3 students (18.75%) achieved the success criteria in speaking. To overcome this, the author gave a very good conception at the beginning of the meeting to arouse students' enthusiasm and interest in learning and explain the material more clearly to build a conducive class and provide opportunities for students to ask questions and objectives in the debate. After a few weeks of applying this method, the author was pleased that the effort to improve students' speaking mastery had been achieved. Ten out of sixteen students (62.5%) passed the debate method applied in this research.

In addition, the observation sheet, interviews, and several tests applied can prove that students are active and enthusiastic during the learning process to improve their speaking skills through the debate method. This can be seen from the improvement of the observation sheet which shows that almost all students are interested in learning English, especially in speaking. From the interview results, some students also stated that this debate method can improve their speaking fluency in conveying their opinions and can foster critical thinking skills. This method can be applied to English language learning, especially in developing oral communication, and can create a more active and fun classroom atmosphere. Therefore, the author can conclude that the debate method is able to help students in improving English speaking skills.

Reviewing the productive actions in each cycle, the authors found some best practices after the application of debate techniques in specific contexts. The success story of improving students' speaking ability usually depends on the teacher's efficient way of teaching, including the manner of teaching, goal-oriented teaching, progressiveness, learning shifts, pace and variety, and encouragement.

Importantly, encouragement and praise or an overall optimistic attitude have become a way for teachers to inspire students to learn. Students feel respected because, in each learning cycle, they felt their teacher was helpful and appreciative, guiding them in speaking. This encourages them to learn English, especially in communicating to convey their opinions and ideas. Giving praise, and an overall optimistic attitude in inspiring students to learn is connected to student engagement (Ginting, 2021). In so doing, the teachers give the emphasis on the role of encouragement. When teachers provide these positive teaching strategies, students feel motivated and supported in their learning journey.

The positive attitude displayed by teachers creates a respectful and nurturing environment for students. By feeling respected, students become more actively engaged in the learning process. Moreover, when students receive assistance and appreciation from their teachers, they gain confidence in expressing their opinions and ideas. This confidence boosts their engagement in learning English, as they feel encouraged to actively participate and contribute during language activities. Overall, the connection to engagement lies in the positive teacher-student interactions, the sense of respect and support, and the focus on active participation and communication. These factors contribute to increased student engagement by fostering motivation, confidence, and a positive learning environment.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, the authors concluded that using debate techniques to improve students' speaking skills in class XI IPS 1 can be successful. This can be seen from the acquisition of student scores from the pre-cycle, first cycle, to the second cycle, which has increased. In the pre-cycle, the average student score was 45.93%. From the average score, it can be said that no student scored up to the standard of minimum completeness. In the first cycle, 3 students, or only 18.75% of students reached the Standard of minimum completeness score. The class average in the first cycle was 54.37%. However, in this cycle, the teacher did not monitor all groups. In terms of students, most students were less enthusiastic about the teaching and learning process. In the second cycle, there was an increase in the number of students who scored above the standard of minimum completeness, namely 10 people or 62.5% and the class average score was 69.37%. Meanwhile, from the observation sheet, the teacher can improve his ability to teach. The students were active in giving opinions through debate activities.

These results can help EFL teachers use debate techniques to improve students' speaking skills so that students become more active and enthusiastic about the material being studied. EFL teachers should also master other techniques or methods in learning to create a fun and friendly classroom atmosphere. Finally, for future researchers, it is suggested that these findings can be used as a reference and comparison to research teaching using debate techniques. This finding can help the teachers.

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