

DEBATING TECHNIQUES IN LANGUAGE LEARNING TO TRIGGER STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION IN ENGLISH AND CRITICAL THINKING

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Abstract

Being communicative has always been the crucial matter in any languages. People cannot be said being able to use a language unless they can produce it. Some approaches of learning have also been raised all the time but the purpose of language for communication is hardly achieved by the foreign language learners. One of the problems is that students are too afraid in giving their opinions. Debating is one way to force our students to interact by using English and think critically. In a debate, students are divided into PRO and CON sides to criticize the issue given. By having a debate students can convey their ideas in certain issues along side with building their critical thinking. The idea of having a debate in the classroom is surely one of techniques in the teaching of English. This study tries to elaborate how some debate activities might be brought into classroom by always considering the varieties of Englishes that Indonesia belongs to. According to Kachru (1988:5), Indonesia is grouped into the expanding circle of World Englishes. Thus, the modified version of British, Australian, and Asian Parliamentary systems of debate are introduced for the sake of enhancing students' speaking skills by always tolerating and exploiting the uniqueness of Indonesian Englishes.

Key Words: *English debate, Activities, British, Australian, and Asian Parliamentary systems*

Introduction

Speaking is one the ability that the students have to be reached. Although speaking ability is the difficult one, students are required to deliver it as speech is the fundamental consideration in communication. Speaking can be a burden to students and they may have difficulties in delivering speech. Brown (2004:326) mentions these followings numbers of speaking to be considered: (1) *Clustering*, Learners need to cluster their speck into phrasal, not by word;(2) *Redudancy*, Learners can point out this as an opportunity to make meaning clearer through the redundancy of language;(3) *Reduced forms*, students who do not have knowledge of colloquial contractions may get problems in spoken English; (4) *Performance Variables*, spoken language gives opportunity to make a certain number of performance hesitations, pauses, backtracking, and corrections; (5) *Colloquial Language*, teachers

have to provide their students' knowledge with the words, idioms, and phrases of colloquial language and they get practice in producing these forms; (6) *Rate of Delivery*, the task of language teachers in teaching spoken English is to help learners achieve an acceptable speed; (7) *Stress, rhythm, and intonation*, the stress-timed rhythm of spoken English and its intonation patterns convey important messages; (8) *Interaction*, as speaking is the way of communicating, then interaction is the most important thing in all the parts of spoken skill. Those Factors are difficulties and also threats for speaking especially for foreign language context.

Regarding those difficulties in spoken language, the point of speaking ability is communication. As the ideas of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Savignon (1972, in Celce-Murcia 2001:16) used the term "communicative competence" to characterize the ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning, as distinct from their ability to recite dialogs or performs on discrete-point tests of grammatical knowledge. CLT proposes the nature of language in conveying meaning by *collaborative* nature of making meaning. It requires strategies in deliver meaning by not only using grammatical competence but also pragmatic competence.

Furthermore, Shumin in Richard and Renadya (2001:205) categorize factors affecting adult EFL learners' oral communication that cover the followings: (1) *Age or maturational constraints*, this is considered as a dominant factor in determining success in mastering L2 or foreign language. The "fossilization" of language makes them get difficulties in developing the second language; (2) *Aural medium*, the communication in speaking can not be separated with listening. A speaker is able to interact once they understand what the other speaker has said that requires the ability of listening. (3) *Sociocultural factors*, the speaker has to know how the language is used social context. Without knowing these factors, the speaker may lose the information or misunderstood it. (4) *The affective factors*, the affective factors related to L2 learners are emotions, self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude, and motivation.

Dealing with teaching speaking, Brown (2004:331) states some principles for teaching speaking skill: (1) Focus on both fluency and accuracy, depending on objective; (2) Provide intrinsically motivating techniques; (3) Encourage the use of authentic language in a meaningful context; (4) Provide appropriate feedback and correction; (5) Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening; (6) Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication; (7) encourage the development of speaking ability. As ELT practice, when designing the techniques and task for teaching speaking, an English teacher has consider and organize their task based on those principles.

In designing activities for oral skill in ESL/EFL classroom, Lazaraton (in Richard and Rinandya, 2002:106) promotes activities such as discussions, speeches, role plays, and conversation. In discussion activities, the students are introduced to a topic via reading, a listening passage, or a videotape and are then asked to get into pairs or groups to discuss a related topic in order to come up with a solution, a response, or the like. Discussion is a good way in cooperating the listening and speaking and provide the authenticity through the reading material to be discussed. However, this paper will go a bit further into "Debate Activity" that is not only required a

discussion among group member but also deliver a contrast belief and opinion into the other group/opponent.

The point of debating is delivering arguments. “Debating has strict rules of conduct and quite sophisticated arguing techniques and you will often be in a position where you will have to argue the opposite of what you believe in”(www.actdu.org.au/archives/actein_site/basicskills.html). By having a chance in different side of certain issues, the students will stimulate their critical thinking and communication in English. This paper will describe the important of debate techniques in oral skill classroom, the basics theory of debate, and suggestions for accommodating debating techniques in Indonesian classroom as the expanding circle of World Englishes.

Why Debate?

As it is mentioned above, there are some difficulties in speaking. Some approaches of learning have also been raised all the time but the purpose of language for communication is hardly achieved by the foreign language learners. The affective factors (self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude, and motivation) will be one of the threats for learners in producing their oral skill. One of the problems is that students are too afraid in giving their opinions. Debating is one way to force our students to interact by using English and think critically.

Reviewing from previous research on *A New Approach to Public Speaking Course in ESL Classroom* which is speaking class using debate techniques by Minghua Hou from Yangzte University china, 90% of the students get a positive effect. Hou involved 150 students and get the data as follows: (1) *The Greatest achievements from English speaking and debating class on students' part*. They have improved their confidence to speak in public and strengthened context awareness; (2) *The development of the ability to utilize English integrally*. Based on the above survey results, about 85% of the students think this course improved their ability to utilize English integrally, 89% of the students are more strongly motivated to learn English and 77% more strongly motivated to speak English; (3) *Cultivation of thinking*. 75% of the students felt their reasoning ability has been improved and 65% though the same with their creative thinking; (4) *The necessity of the course*. 98% of the students think it's necessary for junior and senior English majors to receive training on English speaking and debating, 78% think it's more suitable for juniors, and nearly half of them think it be established as obligatory course instead of optional.

As the review of previous study above, the debating techniques in speaking class for adult especially university students will be very beneficial to be conducted. The

debating techniques will improve their motivation and reduce the anxiety level. At the same point, it also promotes the critical thinking and cultural awareness.

The Basic of Debate

Before the discussion on debate, knowledge on some basic terms is needed both for teachers and students. According to Shawn in Kushner (2004:205), people can debate about three things: values, policies, and facts. The value debate is about the priority of different values. The policy debate is whether or not to take particular action. The fact debate is "everything else". (A debate whether UFOs exist would be a fact debate.)

There are some key terms on debate such as Affirmative, Negative, Resolution, Constructive speech, Rebuttal. Affirmative is the positive side that has the role in holding the motion (Resolution). Negative is the side who against the change from Affirmative side. Motion (Resolution) is a statement that the affirmative side will argue for and the Negative side will argue against. Constructive speech is an initial speech in which you develop the arguments for your side. Rebuttal is later speech in which you refute the arguments against your position and show why you're correct.

The forms of debate itself are various. A lot of debate styles in contests and practices are provided. However, the most famous debate form in Indonesia will be on these three kinds which are Australian, Asian, and British Parliamentary.

The British Parliamentary debating style involves 4 teams; two "government" or "proposition" teams support the motion, and two "opposition" teams oppose it. In a competitive round, the teams are ranked first through fourth with the first place team receiving 3 points, the second receiving 2, the third receiving 1 and the fourth place receiving no points.

Australasia style debates consist of two teams who debate over an issue, more commonly called a topic or proposition. Each team has three members, each of whom is named according to their team and speaking position within his/her team. For instance the second speaker of the affirmative team to speak is called the "Second Affirmative Speaker".

Asian debates are largely an adaptation of the Australasian format. The only difference is that each speaker is given 7 minutes of speech time and there will be points of information (POI) offered by the opposing team between the 2nd to 6th minutes of the speech. This means that the 1st and 7th minute is considered the 'protected' period where no POIs can be offered to the speaker.

At this point we have to consider that Indonesia is grouped into the expanding circle of World Englishes (Kachru, 1988:5). Thus, the modified version of British, Australian, and Asian Parliamentary systems of debate are introduced for the sake of

enhancing students' speaking skills by always tolerating and exploiting the uniqueness of Indonesian Englishes.

As it is stated earlier that debate is delivering arguments then we have to consider the characteristics of a good argument. A good argument is supported by evidence. Kushner (2004:206) states that a good argument is using quotes and paraphrases and also giving sources a qualification. Giving sources a qualification is done by giving evidence on the authority of the sources you are given.

Gestures and language used are also important to be considered in conveying ideas. These following are the table that suggested by Lam, Christopher, and Green (in Richard and Renandya: 2002:229).

Functions	Language used	Pronunciati on	Gestures
1. To prevent interruption and finish speaking	<i>Please.....I must finish</i>	Voice gets louder and faster	Holds up one page
2. Interrupting to disagree	<i>Sorry, but I can't agree...</i>	Stress the negative	Eye contact made with speaker
3. Interrupting to obtain more information	<i>What do you mean by...?</i>	Stress on uncertain term; voice falls at end of question	Leans forward
4. Supporting the previous speaker	<i>I think my previous speaker have made a good point on</i>	Stress good	Look at the speaker

Those suggestions of language used and gestures are important to be taught to the students before they have debate practice in class. Language used will enhance the meaning to the other speaker while the gestures provide supporting pragmatics meaning.

Designing your Classroom

In designing a classroom with the debating techniques, teacher should provide the knowledge of debate. These following are suggestions in Classroom activity with debating techniques.

Week 1: Modeling debate

Objectives:

Students should be able to get the ideas of debate in contest/practice (Asian, Australasian, or British parliamentary) and point out the language features in conveying ideas.

Suggested time: 90 minutes

Materials : video from online sources, handout basic terms on debate.

Activities :

1. Students are shown the video of debate contest.
2. Students are required to point out the language feature (helped by handout).
3. Students are required to practice debating with partners with a very simple idea.

Debate rehearsal for week 1: Pencil vs. Ballpoint!

At this meeting, the students are asked to pick one thing and they have to argue that the thing (example pencil) is better than the opponent speaker's has. The students will have turn-taking in delivering their ideas.

Week 2 : Getting more dynamic!

Objectives:

Students should be able to get deliver ideas with a certain motion given.

Suggested time: 90 minutes

Materials : articles from online sources.

Activities :

1. Students are asked to pick topics that teachers provide.
2. Students are required to make a group of two or three and start a discussion on the topic.

3. Students are required to practice debating with the opponent group.

Week 3 : A taste of Native! (Formal Debate Structure)

Give students the following debate structure, adapted by Krieger (2005) from LeBeau, Harrington, Lubetsky (2000).

Speech 1: The **first affirmative speaker** introduces the topic and states the affirmative team's first argument.

Speech 2: The **first negative speaker** states their first argument.

Speech 3: The **second affirmative speaker** states their second argument.

Speech 4: The **second negative speaker** states their second argument.

Give a 5-10 minute break for each team to prepare their rebuttal speech.

Speech 5: The **negative team** states two rebuttals for the affirmative team's two arguments and summarizes their own two reasons.

Speech 6: The **affirmative team** states two rebuttals for the negative team's two arguments and summarizes their own two reasons.

Conclusion

Speaking is indeed stressful for some ESL/EFL learners but through enhancing debate in practice then the learner may reduce their anxiety level and improve their motivation in learning English. Students also build their critical thinking and fluency in English. To be noted, the teacher has to provide sufficient materials before force them into debate practice. Regarding world Englishes and adult characteristics theory then we can not assume our students will become as fluent as Native speaker of English but we may provide them circumstances of language learning especially speaking (oral competence).

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