

Enhancing Iraqi EFL Preparatory School Students' Speaking Skill By Using Debate Technique

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Abstract The aim of this study is to empirically investigate the impact of debating on Iraqi EFL students' speaking skills . To achieve the objective the study, two-on the pre-test post- test experiment is administered . The present study is limited to 5th grade female students for the academic year 2018-2019 in Babylon schools. The study sample comprises 30 students as the experimental group and students as the control group.

Both groups are the same through statistical analysis of several variables, such as age, parenting, mid-year English performance. Following the use of the Alpha Cronbach formula, the reliability coefficient of the pre-test language skill (0.801) was determined. It was calculated with the Alpha-Cronbach Formula.

Finally, the results of the study after administration of the posttest indicated that the experimental groups exposed to the debate technology had higher performances than those of the control group exposed to the conventional method recommended in the textbook.

Keywords: Preparatory School, Speaking Skill, Debate Technique.

1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Speaking skills are considered to be very important in language education and language teaching. It is a dynamic and active ability that needs interactive education in which language students need more informed, structured and focused assistance.

The pilot study reveals that speaking skill in English school textbook activities is not seriously treated. These exercises are not interactive and the assistance of the instructor is not clear. There are many problems learners can encounter in speaking skills.

According to Goh "66 percent of learners mentioned the accent of a speaker as one of the most important factors affecting their understanding"⁽¹⁾.

Unknown accents both indigenous and non-indigenous can cause serious problems when speaking. Familiarity with emphasis helps students improve their speech skills.

Buck states that listeners will have critical difficulties listening when they hear an unfamiliar accent, such as Indian English, for first time after studying only American English⁽²⁾.

This will definitely disrupt the whole listening understanding process and at the same time makes it impossible for listeners to understand.

If students know the meaning of the words, they can stimulate interest and motivation and have a positive effect on their ability to speak.⁽³⁾ Many words have more than one meaning and students will get confused if

they are not used properly in their own contexts. Ur points out that mastering speech skills is an important part of second language learning.⁽⁴⁾

Therefore, learning a language remains incomplete if one cannot speak competently.

The researcher adopts an alternative way for the students to create an appropriate and interesting technique. The debate is one of the techniques used to enhance student speaking skills in preparatory schools.

The debate is a forum for two opposing teams to express their ideas, perspective and point. The debate is a way for them to argue. Case construction, movement, definition, team line, split teams, refutation are part of debate.⁽⁵⁾

Debate technology can help students understand their reluctance to exchange ideas and develop their oral English skills. According to Rybold the discussion will make students better speakers in their everyday lives. Since students are actively, broadly and deeply involved in the content of the course.⁽⁶⁾

The debate will improve the content of students courses.⁽⁷⁾ On the other hand, Krieger said debate is an excellent language learning activity as it involves students in many cognitive and linguistic ways.⁽⁸⁾

1.2 Aim of the Study

The goal of this study is to find out the impact of Debate Technique in improving the speaking skills of Iraqi EFL Preparatory School Students.

1.3 Hypotheses

The study hypothesizes the following :

1. In the experimental and control groups there is no statistically significant difference between the mean ages of the students.
2. There is a statistically significant difference of 0.05 between the mean scores of the experimental students and the control groups regarding the scores for the first course.
3. There is a statistically significant difference of 0.05 in the speaking skills after test results in favor of the experimental group among the mean scores of students from the experimental and control groups.

1.4 Limits of the Study

In addition to the following points, the present analysis is confined to the speaking ability which is a productive skill:

1. Iraqi EFL Preparatory School Students.
2. The 2018-2019 academic year.
3. Debate Strategy.
4. "English for Iraq" textbook materials.

1.5 Procedures of the Study

1. Choosing a sample of fifth preparatory school students, which are randomly divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group.
2. Constructing of an expert pre-test and posttest to ensure its validity, and calculation of its reliability and analysis of items.
3. Administering a pretest to experimental and control groups in order to assess students' level of creative writing skills.
4. Teaching the control group speaking skills using current way and the experimental group using a discussion (debate) technique.
5. Analyzing the data collected in order to obtain results using appropriate statistical tools, and finally presenting the results for conclusions.

2. Literary Review

2.1 Speaking

Speaking is vocal sound making act. We may say speaking means conversing in spoken language, or sharing one's thoughts and feelings. Speaking often means conveying information.

This may range from an informal comment to a formal response to a scholarly presentation.

There are a lot of meanings of expressions. Hornby defines speech using words in an ordinary voice.⁽⁹⁾ Lawtie, mentions that speaking is the fundamental part of communication between humans.⁽¹⁰⁾ He adds that contact is performed face-to-face interaction through speaking and happens as part of a conversation or other form of verbal exchange.

According to Hornby speaking is saying a word in an ordinary voice, pronouncing terms, understanding and being able to use a language; expressing one in terms; making an expression.⁽⁹⁾

In short, the ability to speak is the ability to execute linguistic knowledge in actual communication. We're able to learn what kind of problem there is in the world by talking to one another. "Speaking is an interactive process of meaning building Involving the production and reception and processing of information".⁽¹¹⁾

2.1.1 Speaking Skills

Speaking skills are the ability to communicate effectively . These skills enable the speaker to convey his message passionately, carefully and convincingly. Speaking skills also help to ensure that those who listen are not misunderstood. Many language learners consider speech as a test of language knowledge.

These students define fluency as the ability to speak with others, far beyond the ability of reading , writing and understanding oral language. Speaking is the most important ability they can learn and they evaluate their progress in speech communication. Language learners must realize that three areas of knowledge are involved in speaking:

1. Mechanics (pronouncing, grammar and speech): Using the right words with the correct pronunciation in the right order.
2. Transaction and interaction: knowing when message clarification is Important and when accurate understanding (interaction / relationship building) is not necessary.
3. Social and cultural rules and norms (turn taking, rate of speech, length of breaks between speakers, relative roles of participants): how you understand who talks to who, under what circumstances, about what and for what reason .

2.1.2 The Importance of Speaking Skills

All four language competencies of listening , speaking , reading, and writing are interconnected . To become a well-rounded communicator, skill in each skill is required, but the ability to speak skillfully provides several distinct advantages for the speaker . The ability to bring words together in a coherent way to convey ideas , beliefs and emotions offers these major advantages to the speaker :

1. Ability to inform, persuade, and direct

Business managers, educators, military leaders, lawyers, and politicians, among others, are seeking to develop their speaking skills to such a level as to transform them into master communicators.

Speaking clearly and confidently can attract an audience's attention, providing the speaker with the golden opportunity to convey the message . Wise is the speaker who gains and then keeps an audience's attention, with well-chosen words in well delivered presentation, forming an effective, informative and understanding message.

2. Ability to stand out from the rest

If one thinks about speaking skills, one tends to think of it as a growing skill talk it over again. The ability to stand up and speak effectively before others is not an ordinary skill.

Many people are mortally afraid of speaking in public; others have little ability to form thoughts into sentences and then deliver those words in a credible way.

The bad news is that the world has precious few with the talents of, say, Winston Churchill or John F. Kennedy speaking at any given moment. The good news is that a speaker whose abilities are fine-tuned and developed can stand out with constant application and hard work.

3. Ability to benefit Derivatively

Well-developed verbal skills can boost one 's negotiating abilities . It improves self-confidence. A growing sense of comfort comes from speaking to an ever larger audience. A reputation for speech excellence can accumulate overtime, thereby giving the speaker some credibility.

4. Career Enhancement

Employers have also respected strong speaking ability. It's an valuable ability, and will always be, and well worth the effort to fully create.

5. Personal Satisfaction

Speakers who have experienced contact with an appreciative audience via a well composed and well laden lecture often find a profound degree of satisfaction rarely achieved in other forms of communication.

When an audience expresses its outgoing admiration for a speaker, the usual sense of Nervous stress will give way to sentiments of achievement and exuberance. It's some sort of reward for all the hard work and training you need to develop your skills. ^{12}

2.2 Debate Technique

2.2.1 The Concept of Debate Technique

The debate is a process involving organized debate on a specific issue. Different reasons for opposing views are brought forward in a debate. Debate takes place in public forums, research bodies, and legislative assemblies.

Debate refers to a discussion where two or more people advocate opposing positions on a topic or question in an attempt to get an audience (or others) to accept their position. ^{13}

The debate in its simplest form requires a question, statement or idea with at least two opposing positions, each of which is defended by one advocate against the others, often with an impartial moderator ensuring the discussion remains focused.

The debate is a very important strategy in effectively developing students' speaking skills. Bambang defined the debate as an action in which two groups of opponents compete by bringing forward different arguments and perspectives. Each group is composed of 3 to 5 members. ^{14}

Krieger defined the discussion as an excellent language learning activity, since the students are involved in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways. ^{8}

Shan mentioned that the learners are divided into two teams to argue a particular issue in the debate. ^{16} By preparing great substantive arguments, they strengthen their case, and at the end of the match, adjudicators determine which side of the team will win the match. In addition, Maryadi said that "the debate can motivate the thinking of students because they have to defend their own position or opinion which is in contradiction with conviction itself". ^{17}

Baso states that Debate is the process of putting forward an idea or opinion that two opponents attempt to defend their idea or opinion. ^{18}

On the other hand, Khoironiyah assumes that "the debate can motivate the thinking of students, moreover if they have to know their own position or opinion which is a contradiction with conviction itself". ^{19}

Whereas, Krieger states that Debate is "an outstanding language learning practice as it includes students in different cognitive and linguistic ways" ^{8}

It is worth mentioning that "Halvorsen explains that debate forces students to think about the multiple sides of an issue and also forces them to interact not only with the details of a particular topic but with each other as well". ^{20}

2.2.2 The Differences between Debate and Discussion

The discussion in Inoue by Inoue) stands in contrast to debate. ^{21} The distinction between their use and the decision making process can be described as follows:

- a. The participants in the discussion. Participants in the conversation search for a solution to a problem.
- b. The debate is sometimes governed by fixed rules on speaking time and order. Discussion with less formal rules is conducted more freely.
- c. In the discussion, a third party takes a decision based on the claims of the positive and negative sides. The purpose of the discussion is to reach agreement between the participants. Leo in Azma sets out a number of goals to be achieved by discussion. ^{22}

First, encourage students to speak. Secondly, give students sufficient opportunity for their free instance time to speak English. Third, increase the motivation of students to speak. Fourth, let the students know that it is not as difficult as they think to learn English. Five, practice English without using grammar thought. Six, let students know that their parents, friend, classmate and others can teach English. Seven, ensure that anyone in their spare time will learn English. Eight, create the confidence of students to speak English.

Finally, children will engage in regular discussions with their interlocutor. The debate is thus a dispute of theories or ideas or views requiring a process of critical thought and expression, in which two rivals face to face defending their ideas or beliefs or claims on fair grounds. ^{23}

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

In this research, the effect of debating development practices on developing speaking competences in the study sample is investigated through an experimental method. The experimental design is an approach for investigating situations in which a particular hypothesis or idea is examined, in which various variables can be determined.

Both groups were exposed to a pre- and posttest designed to verify the effectiveness of the procedure for both groups. The pretest was piloted on 5th preparatory schoolgirls at the beginning of the 2nd (2018/2019) second term at a preliminary school in Al-Zahraa on 16 February 2017, and was sent to a panel of 14 experts with a letter confirming their validity and reliability before they had studied the English textbooks designed for 5th preparatory schools.

Table:1 Experimental design of the study

Group	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Experimental	Debate Technique	Performance
Control	The regular way	

3.1.1 Population

In the academic year 2018/2019, the population is the 5th grade students from all schools for girls in Babylon.

3.1.2 Sample

This study includes (63) Al-Zahraa school students in the Governorate of Babylon. A sample of this type is divided into two groups. The first group (A), consisting of (31) students, is the control group. The second group (B), consisting of (32) students, is the experimental group. The sample decreased after exclusion to (60) students for each group, (30). The experimental team was treated on the basis of the technical debate which the teacher taught during the second term of 2018/2019 for nine weeks. During this time, the teacher taught the experimental and control groups.

3.2. Equivalence of the Groups:

The researcher is persuaded of the equivalence of the two groups (Experimental and Control) before the experiment starts. There are certain variables which affect the results of the experiment. Those are the following variables:

1. The Age of Students.
2. Student First Course Scores.
3. Academic Parental achievement.
4. First Course Ratings for Students.^{{24} {25}}

3.3 Controlling External Variables

Since statistically equalizing the two classes (experimental and control) with the internal variables and their importance to the dependent variable (the progress), the researcher attempted to decrease the external variables influencing the experiment and probably the dependent variable.

Those are the following variables:

1. The sample was randomly selected, as well as the equivalence of the two groups shown earlier.
2. No obstacles or accidents were present which affected the experiment's steps, procedures or circumstances.
3. Some students' absence did not cause any experimental extinction, as the numbers between the two groups were similar.
4. The growth factor does not affect the dependent variable, as the Experiment took a short time (nine weeks)
5. Under the same circumstances the researcher used the same instrument for both groups.
6. The researcher taught the two groups (experimental and control) by herself in order to avoid the differences between the two groups including teaching methods and the way to deal with students. She also consolidated the course content for the 5th preparatory students which is the last four units of the English for Iraq textbook. For the two similar classes and under the same physical circumstances, the experiment period is the same for the two groups (the experiment and control) that started on (February 20, 2019) to (April 25, 2019).

3.4. Teaching Material

The two groups (experimental and monitoring) after equalizing the internal variable and their significance. The researcher participated in the second course in the English for Iraq (2018/2019) in instruction of the last four units (5,6,7,8) of the textbook, and chose for each unit the following lesson:

Seven Unit: Who needs to be a millionaire. A textbook (p:88-89).

Eight units: an individual cutting hair

3.5 The Experimental Group

In this group, according to Debate Teaching Technique , the researcher prepared 30 lesson plans and behavioral goals.

3.6 The Pre-test administration

On February 20, 2018, the researcher tested and administered both the experimental and the control groups . This process aimed to compare the scores of the performance of the students, and between the pre- and post-test scores scored in the same school by the researcher and the English teacher.

3.7 The Post-test

On April 25, 2019, the researcher had post-tested the students of both groups . The same pre-test protocols were observed, as were validity, reliability, pilot analysis, scoring system, facilities for items and discrimination against items. All were viewed along with the post-test sample in by the same panel of experts.

4. Results and Discussion

To investigate the aim of this research, enhance the output of the students, and explore the hypotheses, statistically evaluate the data obtained from the experimental and control groups pre- and post-test. ^{{26}{27}}

This analysis proves when there is a significant difference in the pre- and post-test between the two groups.

4.1. Comparison of the Experimental and Control Groups in the post-test Scores

According to the results obtained from the posttests of both groups, the mean values of the EG (17.0) and the CG (14.5) have been shown to be higher than that of the control group for the successful speaker performance .

Using the t-test formula, for two separate samples, is not easy to demonstrate the important difference between the two classes . But the calculated t-value (4.15) was found to be higher than the tabulated t-value (2) at (0.05) meaning level below (58) degrees of freedom as shown in the following table :

Table 2: T-test statistics for the students' scores of the post-test

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Calculated	Tabulated	
Exp.	30	17.5	6.36	58	4.15	2	0.05
Con.	30	14.0	5.65				

4.2 Analyzing the Hypotheses

4.2.1 Analyzing the Results of the First Hypothesis

In experimental and control groups, there are no statistically significant differences between the mean age of the students . The table below illustrates the implications of this assumption:

Table 3: Students' ages of the EG and CG

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Calculated	Tabulated	
Exp.	30	208	12.7	58	1.092	2	0.05
Con.	30	209	8.48				

The previous table shows that the two groups are equivalent in the age variable, so the hypothesis is accepted.

4.2.2 Analyzing the Results of the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis is, There is a statistically significant difference of 0.05 between the mean values of the experimental students and the control groups concerning first course scores' The following table shows the obtained data :

Table 4: t-test statistics of students' scores in the first course.

Groups	N	Mean	SD	DF	t-value		Level of significance
					Calculated	Calculated	
Exp.	30	58.6	14.2	58	1.95	2	0.05
Con.	30	58.6	10.6				

The second hypothesis is accepted for there is no significant difference at the 0.05 level in the scores of the two groups .

4.2.3 Third Hypothesis Results

The third hypothesis is There is a statistically significant difference of 0.05 between the mean scores of experimental students and control groups in the post-test results of speaking abilities in favor of the experimental community. As shown in Table 4 above, this hypothesis is accepted.

4.3 Discussion

In the present study the results of using debate technique are as follows:

1. The researcher used a modern way in teaching such as debate technique. This technique helps the class make more fun and interesting
2. The researcher adopted logical steps in introducing the lesson, where he starts with warming up in order to stimulate students to start a new lesson and also for the purpose of reviewing the previous lesson information. She then used step-by - step debate technique such as (questions, role-play, and questions answering).
3. Discussion technique is an effective and important skill-speaking technique to help students understand the study material. Using this teaching technique the student is able to recall any piece of information they have learned in previous lessons.

5. Conclusions

Some conclusions were drawn, based on the results:

1. Debate strategy has proven successful in the speaking abilities of the students.
2. Using the technique of debating helps students increase their ability and enjoyment in class.
3. Debate technique plays a major role in stimulating the basic senses (listening and speaking) and making learning more productive and effective. This also enhances the knowledge of phonology, grammar and vocabulary that the students have.
4. In class the use of digital technologies helps students to improve their speaking skills . It also enhances their awareness and comprehension, as it appears in their post-test results.

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