

Enhancing EFL Students' Speaking Skills Through the Debate Technique: A Classroom Action Research Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the debate technique in improving students' speaking skills and to assess the outcomes after its application. Conducted in class XI A3 of SMAN 19 Tangerang Regency, the research involved 36 students and employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) through two cycles. Data was collected via observation, documentation, and speaking tests, and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The population of this research is 180 students in the XI science classes, while for the samples, the researcher selected 36 students from XI A3 because this class is considered to be the most passive one compared to others. The findings revealed that the debate technique was effective in enhancing students' speaking performance, self-confidence, and classroom interaction. The pre-test score was 62. These improved to 68.67 in the cycle one. In the cycle 2, students exceeded the minimum passing score, achieving 76.89. The results indicate that debate is a beneficial and engaging technique for fostering speaking skills in an EFL context. It is recommended that teachers integrate debate activities into their instruction to encourage student participation, critical thinking, and oral communication. Yet, the improvement on the pronunciation needs more exploration for the next research.

Keywords: *Teaching Speaking; Debate; Classroom Action Research; EFL; Speaking skill.*

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the ability to communicate effectively in English has become a vital skill, especially in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. Among the four core language skills, speaking is often considered the most important—yet the most difficult—to master. As Nunan (2003) emphasizes, success in language learning is frequently judged by one's ability to carry on a conversation in the target language. However, in many EFL classrooms, particularly in non-urban or resource-limited schools, speaking remains the weakest skill, hindered by a range of linguistic and affective challenges.

At SMAN 19 Tangerang Regency, these challenges are clearly observed. Students struggled with vocabulary limitations, weak grammatical structures, inaccurate pronunciation, and lack of fluency and comprehension. Additionally, many learners experienced low confidence, minimal motivation, and rare opportunities to participate in interactive speaking activities. As a result, they often frequently resorted to code-switching and demonstrated hesitation when asked to express their ideas in English. This situation calls for more dynamic, student-centered methods to help learners engage with the language meaningfully and

confidently. One promising approach is the integration of debate into the language classroom. While communicative activities such as storytelling, role-play, and drama have long been employed to develop speaking skills, debate remains relatively underutilized, particularly in Indonesian high schools (Bachtiar, 2022). Whereas debate highlighted the effectiveness of the discussion in promoting not only fluency but also critical thinking, collaboration, and structured argumentation (Lubis & Kurniawan Siregar, 2021). Debate empowers students to express opinions, defend viewpoints, and engage in respectful dialogue—skills that are essential in both academic and real-world contexts.

Importantly, the use of debate aligns closely with the principles of the 2013 Curriculum (Kurikulum 2013), which emphasizes student-centered learning, critical thinking, and active participation. Under K13, students are encouraged to become independent learners, capable of constructing knowledge through exploration, collaboration, and communication (Qomariah et al., 2021). Debate, as an interactive and analytical learning activity, supports these aims by shifting the classroom dynamic from teacher-led instruction

to student-driven discourse.

Prior studies have examined the significant discoveries that inform and differentiate current research. For example a study conducted by (Sahril et al., 2020) They sought to determine whether the use of debate enhanced students' speaking skill successes and to what extent debate contributed to each facet of speaking abilities. The findings revealed that respondents believed discussions help them improve and strengthen their speaking confidence. Students report that debates can increase courage, boost self-confidence, expand vocabulary, and teach critical thinking skills.

While (Lumbangaol & Mazali, 2020) investigated how debating strategies might increase students' speaking abilities to ask questions, provide answers, and respond. Using the classroom action research technique in three cycles. The research subjects' debate technique reveals an improvement in their speaking skills. According to the data, using the debate strategy increased pupils' speaking abilities. Debate approaches increased pupils' capacity to express their viewpoints. Furthermore, the debate strategy considerably increased the students' speaking abilities to respond to the opinions of others. This argument has the potential to encourage almost all students to participate actively in the classroom's teaching and learning process. Besides that, students' grammar skills and vocabulary mastery have significantly grown during the period of debate.

Another compelling study also conducted by (timbu et al., 2023). Using a classroom action research with two cycles, the authors use the debate technique to increase students' speaking abilities. They described how the debate technique was used to teach speaking and how much the students' speaking ability increased as a result of being taught with it. The study found that debating strategies can help students enhance their speaking skills. This is demonstrated by the pupils' test scores, which have increased with each round. The student's average score in the first cycle was 54.37%, but in the second cycle it was 69.37%. It may be extrapolated that the debate strategy can improve students' interest in speaking, as well as elevate the class to using classroom action research with two cycles, the authors use the debate technique to increase students' speaking abilities. Although previous research has shown that debate techniques improve EFL students' speaking abilities by increasing confidence, vocabulary, and critical thinking, these studies have primarily focused on general EFL contexts rather than specific curricular requirements or under-researched school environments. Notably, there is

a scarcity of research that investigates the application of discussion within the framework of the Indonesian 2013 Curriculum (K13), particularly in relation to the hortatory exposition genre, which is required by the syllabus. Furthermore, most previous studies did not provide a complete, step-by-step account of how discussion can be systematically integrated into classroom action research cycles, nor did they combine qualitative and quantitative analyses to fully assess its impact. Furthermore, the use of debate strategies in resource-constrained, there is a gap of research that investigates the application of discussion within the framework of the Indonesian 2013 Curriculum (K13), particularly in relation to the hortatory exposition genre, which is required by the syllabus. Furthermore, most previous studies did not provide a complete, step-by-step account of how discussion can be systematically integrated into classroom action research cycles, nor did they combine qualitative and quantitative analyses to fully assess its impact.

Debate, as an interactive and analytical learning activity, supports these aims by shifting the classroom dynamic from teacher-led instruction to student-driven discourse. Therefore, this study sought to explore the use of the debate technique to enhance students' speaking abilities in an EFL context, specifically within an eleventh-grade class at SMAN 19 Tangerang regency during the second semester. The focus is placed on the hortatory exposition text, a genre suitable for argumentative and opinion-based discussion as mandated in the K13 syllabus. Therefore, the research addressed two central questions: (1) How is the debate technique implemented to improve students' speaking skills? and (2) What is the outcome of students' speaking development following the use of debate? Ultimately, this study aimed to contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical application of debate in EFL classrooms. It is hoped that the findings will offer valuable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and language practitioners seeking to enhance student engagement and oral communication through interactive, student-centered approaches.

Method

The populations of this research are 180 students of the Science class at SMAN 19 Tangerang Regency and the samples of the study consisted of 36 students from class XI A3 at SMAN 19 Tangerang Regency starting from August 2024 until October 2024. This class was chosen due to its notably quite low speaking scores and observed passivity compared to other classes. The school was selected for two primary reasons: first, the researcher's role as the school's debate coach

allowed for practical and consistent involvement; second, the debate method had not previously been applied in the school's English language instruction. Therefore, the implementation of debate was expected to contribute significantly to enhancing students' speaking abilities.

This study adopted Classroom Action Research (CAR) as its methodological framework to address real-world classroom issues and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Action Research involves the application of fact-finding to practical problem-solving within a social setting, emphasizing collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and participants (Rafiqie et al., 2023). Specifically, CAR focuses on improving educational practices through a cyclical and reflective process that includes four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Novia Ardine & Nur, 2023). The selection of this approach was based on the need to improve students' speaking skills, which were hindered by several challenges such as limited vocabulary, weak comprehension, lack of fluency, grammatical inaccuracy, poor pronunciation, and low levels of confidence and motivation. To address these issues, the researcher implemented the debate technique, and the study was conducted over two complete CAR cycles, each following the prescribed four stages.

In the first cycle, the researcher initiated the planning process by analyzing data from the pre-research phase to evaluate the students' initial speaking abilities. These insights informed the preparation of a lesson plan focused on hortatory exposition texts, with the entire instructional design centered around the use of debate techniques. The researcher also held a discussion with the collaborator, the class's English teacher, to finalize plans and inform participants of the activities. During the action stage, the researcher began by explaining the debate rules and procedures, then distributed sample texts of hortatory exposition to the students. Each group was assigned a debate topic, which they discussed and developed into written arguments. Every student was given the opportunity to perform a speech in front of the class and engage in the debate through the "point of information" (POI) method. At the end of the activity, each student submitted a written report summarizing what they had heard. The observation phase involved evaluating the students' speaking performance during the sessions, as well as noting behavioral indicators such as engagement and responsiveness. Most students showed enthusiasm and understood the basic structure of debate. However, the reflection stage revealed that only 60% of the students scored above the minimum

proficiency standard (score ≥ 75), while 40% were still below. This outcome led to a collaborative review of the lesson plan and the identification of areas that required improvement, particularly in guiding students more thoroughly through the argumentation process and refining debate procedures for better clarity and engagement in the next cycle.

The second cycle built upon the results and reflections of the first. In the planning stage, the researcher and collaborator revised the lesson plan and enhanced the preparation of the debate activities. Emphasis was placed on re-explaining the debate procedures and introducing supplementary materials to aid student comprehension and performance. During the action phase, students were assigned new debate motions. They worked in teams to analyze the motions in the form of hortatory texts, developed structured arguments, and actively participated in debate sessions. Students responded to one another's speeches and demonstrated improved turn-taking and engagement. As each group completed their debate exhibition, others responded constructively, and every student had their chance to speak. Observation during Cycle Two showed a marked improvement in students' understanding of the debate process and their ability to engage critically and confidently in spoken English. The reflection phase indicated significant progress: 75% of the students achieved scores at or above the minimum passing grade of 75, and the overall average speaking score surpassed the required standard. This demonstrated that the modifications made in Cycle Two were effective in enhancing both the students' speaking performance and their ability to participate in structured, academic discussions through debate.

To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the teaching-learning process and the students' progress, the researcher employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative data collection was designed to capture the depth and complexity of classroom interactions and student development throughout the intervention. Through participant observation, the researcher actively engaged in classroom settings, particularly during debate sessions, to observe real-time student behavior, interaction patterns, and engagement levels. Assisted by a collaborator—the class's English teacher—the researcher used structured observation sheets and field notes to document student responses, participation frequency, and speaking performance. The teacher's involvement helped ensure a more accurate and contextually informed interpretation of classroom dynamics,

minimizing observer bias. In addition, various forms of documentation were collected to enrich the qualitative dataset. These included lesson plans and teaching materials to verify instructional alignment, transcripts of debate sessions to analyze language use and argumentation skills, photographs to visually capture student engagement and classroom arrangements, and student outputs such as written assignments or reflective journals to track linguistic and cognitive development. Collectively, these qualitative data sources provided in-depth insights into the impact of the intervention, allowing the researcher to analyze not only whether changes occurred but also how and why students' speaking skills and engagement evolved.

To support and quantify the findings, oral tests were administered as pre-tests and post-tests before and after each cycle. These tests were evaluated using oral proficiency scoring rubric, which measures five key aspects: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Each aspect was scored on a scale from 1 to 5, and the total score was obtained by summing all aspects and multiplying the result by four to align with the school's 10–100 grading scale. To maintain objectivity and reliability in assessment, both the researcher and the collaborator served as independent raters of student performance. The result from both raters are made in the form of average score to be the selected scores used by the researcher.

The analysis of data followed distinct procedures for qualitative and quantitative components. For qualitative data, the research drew the data by using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Mezmir, 2020). Observation results and transcripts were condensed and categorized based on key indicators of speaking improvement, then presented descriptively using charts, tables, and narrative interpretation. Quantitative data, on the other hand, were analyzed by calculating mean scores and tracking score improvements across cycles. The levels of improvement were classified using some criteria, which range from “very low” to “high.” Improvements in post-test results across both cycles provided evidence of the effectiveness of the debate technique and supported the acceptance of the research hypothesis (Barella et al., 2024).

Findings

The pre-test was administered as part of the planning phase in Cycle 1 to establish baseline data prior to the implementation of the debate technique. Its primary objective was to assess students' initial speaking proficiency. The test was conducted in the

form of group discussions, where students collaboratively expressed their opinions, ideas, and arguments on self-selected issues, namely banning smoking in public places, prohibiting dating at school, and promoting vegetarianism—framed within a hortatory exposition context. Each of the six groups, consisting of six students, engaged in a discussion followed by a group presentation and peer questioning session, with each group allotted 10 to 15 minutes.

During the pre-research phase, the researcher conducted observations of the teaching and learning process, focusing on the teacher's role during pre-teaching, while-teaching, and post-teaching activities. In this session, the debate technique had not yet been introduced; instead, the researcher, acting as the teacher, explained hortatory exposition text material and assigned group discussions on selected issues such as banning smoking in public places, banning dating at school, and promoting vegetarianism. Observations revealed that while students paid attention to the teacher, their participation in speaking activities was generally passive. Many relied heavily on written texts, resulting in limited peer and teacher interaction. Common challenges included a lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and a tendency to respond in Bahasa Indonesia or code-mixed language. These findings underscore the need for a more dynamic, engaging, and communicative approach to speaking instruction. Consequently, the researcher identified debate as a promising technique to enhance students' speaking proficiency, particularly in expressing opinions aligned with hortatory exposition text objectives.

In the first cycle of the study, the researcher followed the action research stages of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, which were implemented across three meetings. The planning stage involved obtaining permission from the school, coordinating with the English teacher, conducting a pre-test to identify students' speaking difficulties, and designing a lesson plan. The lesson plan incorporated materials on expressions of agreement and disagreement, hortatory exposition texts, debate structure, and techniques for presenting arguments and rebuttals. The planned activities included discussing the motion “Legalizing LGBT in Indonesia,” conducting a debate, and composing a hortatory exposition text based on the debate outcome.

During the acting phase, the first meeting began with a review of hortatory exposition texts and introductory discussions to stimulate critical thinking. The researcher introduced the concept of debate as a method to enhance speaking skills, and students engaged in structured debate activities.

Despite initial hesitations and limited confidence, a few students began to express their opinions, though many relied on code-switching and struggled with fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. The class was divided into affirmative and negative teams to debate the motion “Banning dating at school,” with each student allocated three minutes to present and respond to arguments. However, participation remained limited, as most students were reluctant to speak in English.

In the post-teaching segment, the researcher acted as adjudicator, providing feedback and highlighting areas for improvement. Students were encouraged to reflect on their performance and build their confidence in public speaking. They were also assigned to summarize the debate in written form as a hortatory exposition text, reinforcing the lesson objectives. To prepare for the following session, students were given a new motion, “Banning children from joining reality shows,” to begin researching and formulating arguments, thereby fostering independent learning and deeper engagement with the material.

In the second meeting of cycle 1, the teacher began with a pre-teaching session by greeting students, checking attendance, recalling the previous lesson, and introducing the new topic: “Banning children from joining reality shows.” Students were encouraged to think critically and express their opinions confidently, while the teacher also presented the learning objectives and linked them to the importance of debate in understanding hortatory exposition. This activity aimed to stimulate students’ engagement and foster their critical thinking skills in a real-life context.

During the while-teaching stage, the teacher briefly reviewed how to construct arguments and rebuttals before dividing the class into affirmative and negative teams to debate the given motion. Students were given time to prepare and then presented their arguments in turn. The post-teaching and observation phase involved assessment, self-reflection, and motivation. The teacher provided constructive feedback and encouraged students to improve their speaking abilities for future sessions. Despite progress in student collaboration and participation, a lack of confidence and limited vocabulary remained notable barriers to fluency. Observations also highlighted students’ willingness to collaborate during discussions, though hesitancy to speak English persisted. To address this, the teacher provided additional motions for home preparation and urged students to be more confident and proactive in speaking activities.

In the cycle 1, Post-test I, administered to assess the students’ progress in speaking

proficiency following the integration of debate as a pedagogical technique. The assessment took the form of structured oral debate exhibitions across three motions, with participants articulating arguments from both affirmative and negative stances.

Since the objective of the result was not achieved, the revised strategies were included: providing clearer and more accessible instruction on debate structure, supported by exemplar video demonstrations; addressing students’ lack of confidence through targeted instruction on effective public speaking, complemented by engaging video content; encouraging critical thinking and minimizing code-switching by assigning motions for prior research and vocabulary preparation; enhancing fluency and pronunciation through consistent practice and corrective feedback; and fostering motivation by introducing rewards for high-performing teams to promote a more competitive and engaging learning environment.

In the second cycle of this classroom action research, the researcher implemented a series of activities consistent with those in the first cycle, including the stages of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This cycle aimed to address the shortcomings observed during the initial implementation of the debate technique and to enhance its effectiveness in improving students’ speaking proficiency. During the planning stage, several strategic adjustments were made. The lesson plan was revised to include more interactive and structured activities. Additional emphasis was placed on providing clear explanations of debate procedures, presenting illustrative examples through video demonstrations, and delivering targeted instruction on public speaking to help build students’ self-confidence. Motions were also distributed in advance to allow students to conduct prior research, and a reward system was introduced to increase motivation and competitiveness among the students.

The implementation phase consisted of two structured meetings, each divided into pre-teaching, while-teaching, and post-teaching segments. During the pre-teaching segment, the researcher initiated the lesson by greeting students and setting the classroom atmosphere through interactive engagement. The session began with a reflective discussion on a previous debate motion and students were encouraged to express their critical opinions. This served to activate prior knowledge, foster confidence, and emphasize the importance of debate in developing effective public speaking skills. To stimulate interest and contextual understanding, students were shown videos that

exemplified strong public speaking techniques and high-quality English debate performances.

During the while-teaching segment, students received instruction on the fundamentals of public speaking, including strategies for delivering persuasive arguments and effective rebuttals. The teaching approach included interactive elements such as a game designed to promote attentiveness, followed by impromptu speeches that provided students the opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills. The core of the session involved a structured debate on a relevant social motion. Students were free to choose their stance and were grouped accordingly. Participation levels were noticeably higher than in the first cycle, with students appearing more engaged and confident in expressing their views, although occasional code-switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia persisted.

In the post-teaching segment, the researcher acted as adjudicator, providing formative feedback on the strengths and areas for improvement in students' debate performances. Students were encouraged to engage in self-reflection, expand their English vocabulary, and strive to reduce their reliance on mixed-language usage. As a reinforcement activity, they were assigned to summarize the day's lesson and debate in the form of a hortatory exposition text, thereby integrating writing skills and deepening content retention. Finally, students were introduced to new motions for the upcoming session, selected through a class vote. Group roles were assigned through a random method, and the teacher provided guidance and feedback to help students better prepare for the next debate. This reflective cycle was intended to further develop students' speaking competencies by targeting specific areas of weakness identified in the previous cycle.

In the second meeting of Cycle II, the pre-teaching segment commenced with standard classroom routines, including greetings, checking attendance, and a collective prayer. To engage students and stimulate critical thinking, the researcher initiated a discussion around the use of plastic bags for food packaging, prompting students to share their opinions. This topic served as a gateway for deeper reflection on environmental concerns and personal responsibility. The researcher also provided a brief review of the students' performance in the previous session, offering encouragement and highlighting notable improvements in speaking proficiency. To support continued development, the teacher emphasized the application of public speaking strategies introduced earlier and reminded students of the roles and expectations in debate. A short video on the

advantages and disadvantages of plastic bag usage was shown to provide context and support students in formulating arguments based on evidence.

During the while-teaching phase, the lesson focused on reinforcing key debating techniques, particularly the construction of arguments and rebuttals using effective public speaking strategies. The teacher linked the motion—"Banning the use of plastic bags for food"—to the earlier video, helping students contextualize their arguments. In the post-teaching and observation phases, the researcher acted as adjudicator, offering formative feedback on students' strengths and areas for improvement. Students were then asked to reflect on their performance and summarize the session through a hortatory exposition text, further reinforcing the integration of speaking and writing skills.

The outcomes of students' speaking development following the use of the debate technique

The students' performances were evaluated across five key speaking components: pronunciation, grammar, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. During the pre-research, the pre-test results indicated that most students had not yet achieved the minimum competency standard in speaking skills. These results suggest that students' speaking proficiency remained low, with notable challenges observed across all five assessed components: pronunciation, grammar, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. While more students actively participated compared to the previous meeting, many still struggled with confidence, fluency, and language use. Code-switching between English and Bahasa Indonesia was common, indicating ongoing challenges in vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The following statements are examples of students' speech during the process:

Table 1
Some Field Notes from Cycle 1

Category	Source/Statement
Code mixing and switching (English-Bahasa)	(S.6, field note, September 12 2024) <i>"...Miss I want to give response LGBT kan dilarang oleh agama ya? So how kita bisa melegalkannya?"</i> (S.34 field note, September 19 2024) <i>".....Children should not join in reality show karena mengganggu waktu bermain dan belajar."</i>
Talk in Full English with some Speaking Skills	(S.10 field note, September 19 2024)

Obstacles.	<i>".. let me tell you my rebuttal. Ho...w religion lesson of students' majority relation at school, can lead to discrimination for minority lesson. Argument, through religion lesson can lead to discrimination..."</i>
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In the cycle 1, Post-test I, administered to assess the students' progress in speaking proficiency following the integration of debate as a pedagogical technique. The assessment took the form of structured oral debate exhibitions across three motions, with participants articulating arguments from both affirmative and negative stances. The mean score was 68.7, falling below the established minimum competency standard score of 75. Nevertheless, 21 out of 36 students succeeded in meeting the required benchmark, reflecting a positive trajectory in speaking performance.

Despite the overall scores remaining marginally below the standard, there was a discernible improvement from the pre-test, with gains of 6.67% and 6.59% reported by Rater I and II, respectively. However, deficiencies persisted in key areas such as vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation, where average scores did not exceed 70. In light of these findings, the researcher and collaborator engaged in a reflective evaluation to identify pedagogical refinements necessary to enhance learners' speaking competencies in subsequent instructional cycles.

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Based on the observation and post-test results, the improvement in students' speaking proficiency following the implementation of the debate technique was deemed insufficient, as the majority failed to meet the established minimum competency standard (KKM) of 75. This shortfall was reflected across all assessed elements of speaking. In response, the researcher conducted a reflective evaluation and identified key areas for pedagogical refinement in Cycle 2.

In cycle 2, after reviewing the core principles of the debate, students engaged in a 15–20 minute team-based case-building activity. The subsequent debate showcased a marked improvement in students' confidence and

engagement. Most students delivered their points using English, although a few continued to code-switch to Bahasa Indonesia. Compared to earlier sessions, the quality of their speech—regarding grammar, fluency, vocabulary, and coherence—demonstrated considerable growth. Students were more willing to speak up, took initiative in discussion, and responded actively during the debate, making this one of the most participatory.

Compared to earlier sessions, the quality of their speech—regarding grammar, fluency, vocabulary, and coherence—demonstrated considerable growth. Students were more willing to speak up, took initiative in discussion, and responded actively during the debate, making this one of the most participatory. Several students expressed interest in continuing their learning outside the classroom, requesting further consultation via phone or social media. During the observation process, both the researcher and collaborator noted improvements in student behavior, including increased critical thinking, reduced reliance on notes, and higher levels of spontaneous interaction in English.

Field notes confirmed a gradual reduction in code-switching and an increase in the use of English during debates. Although pronunciation remained the most challenging aspect, students demonstrated substantial progress across all assessed areas—grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and pronunciation—ultimately achieving the expected minimum standard. These findings indicate not only the effectiveness of debate as a pedagogical tool for enhancing speaking skills but also its positive impact on students' confidence, motivation, and classroom dynamics.

Table 2
Some Field Notes from Cycle 2

Category	Source/Statement
Code mixing and switching (English-Bahasa)	<i>None</i>
Talk in Full English with some Speaking Skills Obstacles.	(S. 35, Field Note, October 3 2024) <i>"....I don't agree. The importance of capital city for the future of Indonesia, pleased report through spread it from flooding. Do not see the jump with a lost of .. for thirty billion per years conversing itself but wrinkling all the issue that come to the victim of the thousand people low average becoming weak in fourteen day....better to stay in Jakarta as capital city."</i> (S.20. Field note, October

10 2024)
"We disagree. A parameter of banning plastic... plastic.. bag... has to be in clear, because I think plastic bag is a very thin substance for food,...."

At the end, the analysis of the students' post-test II scores indicates a significant improvement in their speaking performance, as evidenced by the mean scores of 76.89 surpassing the established minimum standard score of 75. It was recorded an identical improvement rate of 8.22%, marking a considerable enhancement from the previous cycle.

Concluding the pre-research, cycle 1, and cycle 2, the summary of the speaking skills improvement could be seen from the table below:

Table 3

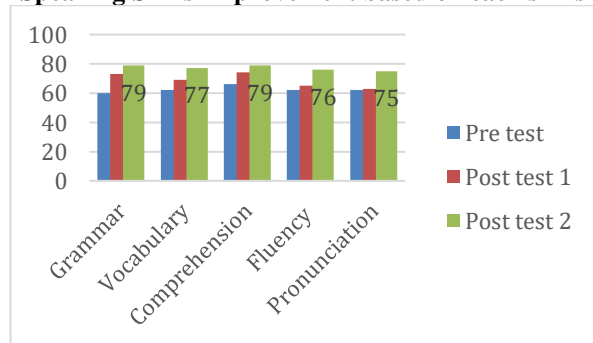
Table of Students' Speaking Score Improvement

Category	Pre-Research	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Min Score	48	60	76
Max Score	72	76	84
Total Score	2232	2472	2768
Mean Score	62	68.7	76.89
Students' Freq. Mean Score	62%	68.7%	76.89%

In addition to each skills, the following is the diagram of each skills improvement:

Figure 1

Speaking Skills Improvement based on each skills



The diagram presents the students' performance across five language skills—Grammar, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Fluency, and Pronunciation—measured during the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 stages. Overall, all skills showed noticeable improvement over time, reflecting the effectiveness of the instructional program. Grammar improved significantly from 60 in the pre-test to 73 in post-test 1 and reached 79 in post-test 2. Vocabulary followed a similar trend, rising from 62 to 77 by the final test. Comprehension had the highest initial score (66) and showed steady growth, reaching 79. Fluency and Pronunciation began at 62 and made moderate progress, ending at 75, respectively. Although Pronunciation improved, it consistently remained the lowest among the five skill areas. This suggests that Pronunciation requires further exploration and targeted instructional strategies in future research,

as it appears to respond more slowly to general interventions compared to other language domains.

Discussion

The Implementation of The Debate Technique As A Strategy To Improve Students' Speaking Skills.

The implementation of the debate technique in enhancing students' speaking skills was systematically observed through three stages: pre-research, Cycle I, and Cycle II. During the pre-research phase, the teaching and learning process revealed several challenges—most notably, students' passivity and lack of confidence, despite a manageable classroom atmosphere. Although their speaking scores exceeded the minimum standard score, students still required a method that could stimulate their speaking ability and address their reluctance to speak. Based on these findings it was found that debate is a powerful tool for developing critical thinking and self-expression (Rashtchi & Sadraeimanesh, 2011), the researcher selected debate as the primary technique for intervention.

The implementation of debate throughout Cycle I and II demonstrated progressive improvement in students' speaking performance. Initially, many students resorted to code-mixing between English and Indonesian. However, as debate activities continued, students became more accustomed to preparing their arguments in English, including looking up difficult vocabulary beforehand. This habit helped reduce their dependence on mixed language. By the end of Cycle II, only a minimal number of students continued to use code-mixing, and the clarity of their arguments significantly improved. Correspondingly, the students' scores rose from 62% to 68.67%, eventually exceeding the minimum standard score within 76.89% respectively.

In addition to linguistic improvements, debate also had a positive impact on students' affective factors, particularly self-confidence and critical thinking. To address motivational issues, the researcher incorporated lessons on public speaking and highlighted examples of effective public speakers. This exposure, combined with the interactive nature of debates, encouraged students to speak more confidently and formulate coherent arguments.

It shows that debate engages learners cognitively and linguistically, making it an effective activity for language learning (Majidi et al., 2021). Moreover, classroom interaction transformed notably. In the early stages, teaching was primarily teacher-centered with minimal student participation. However, as the debate technique was applied, students began to collaborate more effectively within their groups

and engage in meaningful discussions with the teacher. Their inquiries about debate motions and strategies signaled a shift toward a more learner-centered environment. This finding supports the belief that debate fosters student collaboration, creativity, responsibility, and enhances rapport between peers and teachers (Malone & Michael, 2018).

Importantly, this study builds on past research by offering precise insights into the step-by-step classroom action research process, specifically while teaching hortatory exposition texts as required by the K13 syllabus. This genre-specific application, together with the extensive mixed-methods evaluation, adds depth to the previous material, which has frequently lacked such concentrated curricular alignment and methodological rigor. In conclusion, the research findings affirm that debate is an appropriate and effective technique for improving students' speaking skills. It not only enhanced linguistic elements such as grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension but also addressed students' emotional and social needs, such as building confidence and fostering interaction. It aligns principles for designing speaking instruction, which emphasizes the importance of balancing accuracy and fluency, using authentic language, providing feedback, and encouraging student initiation (Brown, 2018). Therefore, the debate technique holds significant potential for creating a more engaging and effective English language learning environment.

The Outcomes of students' speaking development following the use of the debate technique

Based on the data from students' score, the researcher made the mean score from the cycle 1 and cycle 2. The researcher drew the students' improvement in the following table and diagram:

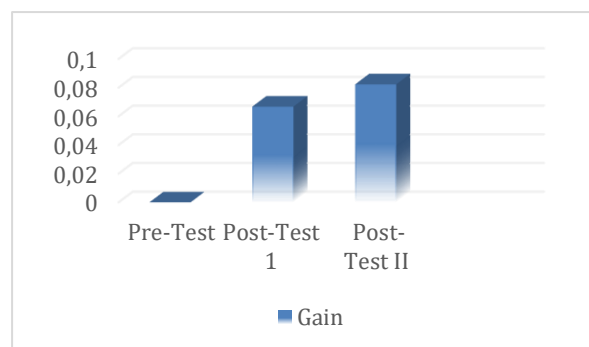
Table 4

The Result of Students' Speaking Score and Improvement

Test	Score	Percentage	Gain
Pre-Test	62	62%	-
Post-Test I	68.67	68.67%	06.67%
Post-Test II	76.89	76.89%	08.22%

The table above showed the students' speaking skill percentage score was increased 14,89%. Students score increased step by step. It started from 62% in the pre-test, increased into 68,67% in posttest I, and finally increased again to be 76,89% in posttest II.

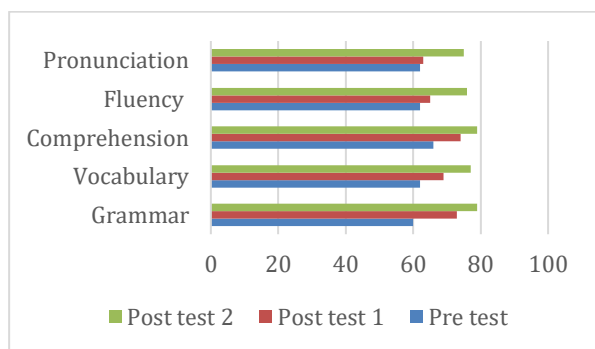
The findings of this study significantly support and are consistent with prior research on the use of debate strategies to improve EFL students' speaking skills. According to Sahril M. et al. (2020), Lumbangaol & Mazali (2023), and Timbu et al. (2023), implementing debate in the classroom resulted in considerable increases in students' speaking performance, as indicated by a marked increase in post-test results throughout both cycles. The kids not only met the minimum passing criteria, but they also showed increased self-confidence, more active classroom involvement, and enhanced critical thinking--all of which are consistent with previous findings. For example, Sahril M. et al. discovered that debate might raise students' courage, self-confidence, vocabulary, and critical thinking, whereas Lumbangaol & Mazali noted that debate methods increased students' ability to express. According to Sahril M. et al. (2020), Lumbangaol & Mazali (2023), and Timbu et al. (2023), implementing debate in the classroom resulted in considerable increases in students' speaking performance, as indicated by a marked increase in post-test results throughout both cycles. The participants not only met the minimum passing criteria, but they also showed increased self-confidence, more active classroom involvement, and enhanced critical thinking--all of which are consistent with previous findings. The findings of this study significantly support and are consistent with prior research on the use of debate strategies to improve EFL students' speaking skills.



The data above showed that there were some improvements in students' speaking skills after debate was implemented. However, there were still some weaknesses that could be improved in the process of teaching learning. It could be seen from the result of improvement in the first cycle that only reached 6,67%. As same as with the first cycle, after the researcher did evaluation, the problem was solved and the improvement increased in the cycle 2 became 8,22% based on rater I.

Figure 3

The diagram of students' speaking skill in each element



Finally, from the result of the table and chart above, it could be concluded that debate technique could improve students' speaking skill at XI A3 of SMAN 19 Kabupaten Tangerang. The improvement of students' speaking skills was also successful to reach the minimum standard score that was 75 through the two cycles that had been conducted by the researcher. The highest improvement occurred in comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. However, pronunciation has the lowest score that could not pass 75 compared with other elements. This might happen because students focused more on content rather than pronunciation. Suggesting more attention also to this element at speaking when debate is implemented in future research.

The implementation of debate techniques also resulted in the student's improvements in critical thinking and self-confidence, and interaction in the teaching learning process between the teacher and the student. The improvement of students' speaking skills through debate was proven the statement that the ability to speak freely also improves when students practice debate because they take part in conversations as they are debating (Nurhalizah Aziz & Kamilah, 2020). Likewise, debate can motivate students to practice the language. It can embolden students in critical thinking and develop students' speaking ability in communication. Therefore, it was proven that debate could help the students in overcoming their speaking problems and improve the students' speaking skill.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis and findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of the debate technique significantly improved students' speaking skills at SMAN 19 Kabupaten Tangerang. The process itself fostered a more dynamic and interactive learning environment. Prior to the intervention, students were largely passive, lacked confidence, and demonstrated limited speaking ability. However, throughout the implementation of debate during Cycle I and Cycle II, noticeable improvements emerged in student engagement, collaboration, critical thinking, and classroom

interaction. The technique effectively encouraged students to express their ideas more confidently, participate actively, and engage with both peers and the teacher.

In terms of speaking performance, students demonstrated steady progress in grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Although initial post-test results in Cycle I did not meet the minimum standard score, subsequent evaluation in Cycle II showed significant improvement, with scores surpassing the threshold. While pronunciation remained the most challenging aspect, the overall enhancement in speaking ability affirmed the effectiveness of debate as a technique for language learning. The students' gradual shift from code-mixing to predominantly using English further illustrated their linguistic development and increased confidence. Furthermore, the findings align with the theoretical viewpoints presented in the introduction. The study's findings support Nunan's (2003) argument that speaking is an important but difficult skill in EFL contexts, particularly in settings where students lack confidence and chances for significant oral practice. By incorporating debate, a dynamic, student-centered activity, the study parallels the 2013 Curriculum's (K13) ideals of independent learning, critical thinking, and active involvement (Qomariah et al., 2021). The observed improvements in students' speaking ability, confidence, and classroom involvement are closely related to the curriculum's objectives and the theoretical basis for using communicative, interactive methods in language education.

Given these findings, the study recommends that English teachers adopt debate as an instructional strategy to enhance students' speaking proficiency. To ensure its effectiveness, teachers should actively monitor student participation, distribute speaking opportunities evenly, and design meaningful roles for each student during debate activities. Group composition should be thoughtfully arranged to balance active and passive learners, promoting a more inclusive and collaborative classroom dynamic. Moreover, greater emphasis should be placed on pronunciation practice, as it remains a crucial yet often overlooked component of speaking skills. From the research, compared to aspect, it has the lowest improvement and need to be paid more attention.

The implications of these findings are important for English teachers, curriculum developers, and school administrators. Teachers, especially those in resource-constrained or non-urban schools, are encouraged to use debate as a regular educational technique to overcome

common barriers to speaking fluency, such as inadequate confidence and practice. The study also emphasizes the importance of fostering a supportive, interactive classroom climate in which students feel encouraged to express themselves and engage in constructive discussion. Educators can increase language outcomes while also cultivating important life skills like critical thinking, teamwork, and respectful discussion.

Further research might look into the long-term effects of discussion on students' overall language development, including their writing and listening abilities. Comparative studies across genres, age groups, or educational environments (e.g., urban versus rural schools) could provide more insight into the debate technique's flexibility and scalability. Furthermore, future research might look into the problems that teachers experience while adopting debate, such as time limits, class size, or assessment techniques, and how they can be handled through targeted professional development.

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