

Journey To Fluency: EFL Learner's Experiences In Improving English Speaking Skills Through English Debate- A Narrative Inquiry

Amanda Rusdian Purnomo¹, Imam Wahyudi Karimullah², Dzul Fikri³

English Education Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Islam Malang, Malang 65144, INDONESIA

Email: amandarusdian@gmail.com

Abstract: This study explores the experiences of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in enhancing their English speaking skills through participation in English debate activities. This research design aims to explore how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners experience improvements in their English speaking skills through participation in English debate activities. Using narrative inquiry as the methodological approach, the study will capture and analyze the personal stories and reflections of EFL learners to understand the impact of the debating on their speaking abilities and overall language development. Narrative inquiry focuses on collecting and analyzing personal stories and experiences to gain insight into how individuals make sense of their world. This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. Through group debate, it sought to ascertain the students' attitudes toward verbal engagement in the classroom and their level of active participation. Participants will be selected from universities where English debates are a part of the curriculum. Ideally, the sample will include a diverse group in terms of language proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds. Participant 1 is 21 years old and has been a 6th-semester student at one of the universities in Malang. Participant 2, aged 22, has become a 21st-year university student. The research findings reveal that participating in English debates significantly enhances EFL learners' speaking skills, fosters critical thinking, and increases active participation. Participants shared diverse experiences and strategies, illustrating the multifaceted benefits of debates.

Keywords: efl learners, experiences, speaking skills, English debate, improving

INTRODUCTION

The journey to improving one's English speaking skills is a transformative experience that often encompasses various challenges and milestones. It is of self-discovery and personal growth, as individuals to effectively communicate in one of the world's most widely spoken languages. In this narrative, we will explore the multifaceted adventure of this journey. To be competitive in this era of 4.0, English students or learners should be skilled in English, especially speaking skills. Richards (2008) claimed that mastering speaking skills was a priority for second-language or foreign-language learners.

For those learning English, becoming proficient in speaking can be difficult as it demands a significant amount of effort. Unlike reading or writing, when we speak, we cannot predetermine our exact words or sentences. Speaking occurs instantly; typically, the person we are conversing with is anticipating our response right away. We do not have the opportunity to edit or revise our spoken words. Effective speaking requires managing the dialogue and responding spontaneously (Fauzan, 2014). Oral communication involves multiple participants in the process of negotiating meanings and is always influenced by the context in which it takes place.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is very important for helping. We communicate with people all over the world, especially because the world is now more connected. When we study the English language, we cannot only study to speak with people from other countries but also learn about the challenges or difficulties faced by the person who studies the language. This is for EFL students who use the English language in their daily lives. Mastering speaking skills is considered to be the primary focus for those who want to improve their English proficiency. As per the studies conducted by Hamouda (2013) and Savasci (2014), students tend to shy away from speaking in English due to a lack of confidence, fear of being reprimanded by teachers, poor preparedness, and the anxiety of making mistakes. Speaking is considered a productive skill, and no one can deny that Class participation plays an important role in success in language learning, Tatar in Tamara Andrea (2014). It means students who are more active in speaking better in their spoken language. So, speak is important to learn in any school. But for us to become good speakers, it is necessary more confidence to communicate with others. When someone speaks to us, they just transfer information, they do the strength of their conviction about its validity information.

Speaking skills in English could be a need for numerous second- language or outside-language learners. Thus, learners regularly assess their victory in dialect learning as well as the adequacy of their English course on the premise of how much they feel they have made strides in their talk dialect proficiency Richards (2008). Numerous dialect learners respect talking aptitudes as the criteria for knowing a dialect. They respect talking as the foremost critical aptitude understudies procure. Understudies assess their advance in terms of their achievements in talk communication Brown, et.al (1983). The teaching- learning procedure is the imperative figure to the victory of dialect learning from all angles in instruction. The teacher ought to prepare a great method in conducting their education to persuade the understudies to speak English. In this manner, arranged to improve talking ability, different methods ought to be endeavored to meet the wants of English talking dominance.

In light of the preceding description, the student's speaking skill is plagued by a number of issues. The issues were semantic and the strategies applied by the teacher. From a semantic viewpoint, the understudies felt hardships in some parts, for example, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. However, they felt that the lecturer's methods were primarily focused on answering student worksheets and were not considered interactive. Many English learners feel obstacles and unsatisfied with their achievement in speaking. They faced some problems in mastering their speaking skill. The students have problems speaking English due to reluctance, hesitation, fear of making mistakes, or lack of adequate vocabulary Fauzan (2014). The students do not want to speak English because they are too shy to talk in English, they are afraid of making mistakes or their friends will laugh at them, and they are also anxious because they do not have many chances to speak or because the teacher always gave critics and correction on their mistakes right away Fauzan (2014).

Existing research has largely focused on language acquisition in general, ignoring the nuanced and potentially unique challenges and benefits that may arise in the specific context of debate-focused language learning. Investigating this research gap is crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness and implications of incorporating debates into EFL education, ultimately contributing to the refinement and optimization of language teaching strategies to improve speaking proficiency. Additionally, the subjects were regarded as conventional or unrelated to the students' lives. Therefore, a solution to this issue must exist. For this situation, the scientist applied the method that has been presented before in particular English Parliamentary debate. Given the information presented, there is a necessity to adopt a new suitable strategy to enhance the speaking abilities of students. One approach that educators might consider is the use of debate and peer assessment. Debate serves as a structured method of interactive and representative dialogue aimed at convincing the audience. It can effectively facilitate speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. According to Krieger (2005), debating is a valuable tool for language acquisition, as it engages students on various cognitive and linguistic levels. It offers significant practice in listening, speaking, and writing, while also being particularly effective in developing argumentative skills crucial for persuasive speaking and writing. Alasmari & Ahmed (2013) assert that debating can be a powerful means to enhance students' spoken English. Through debates in EFL classrooms, students will not only overcome their apprehension about using the English language but will also see improvements in their fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Additionally, they will become acquainted with specialized terminology and technical language, as debates encompass a wide range of topics and issues. Based on the background, the researcher formulated three questions, as follows:

1. Can debate activate the EFL students' participation in speaking English?
2. What experiences do the participants have through English debate?
3. How did the participant improve speaking through debate?

METHODS

This research design aims to explore how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners experience improvements in their English speaking skills through participation in English debate activities. Using narrative inquiry as the methodological approach, the study will capture and analyze the personal stories and reflections of EFL learners to understand the impact of the debating on their speaking abilities and overall language development. Narrative inquiry focuses on collecting and analyzing personal stories and experiences to gain insight into how individuals make sense of their world. In this study, narrative inquiry will allow for an in-depth exploration of EFL learners' personal experiences and reflections on their participation in English debates. This study used a descriptive qualitative research design. Through group

debate, it sought to ascertain the students' attitudes toward verbal engagement in the classroom and their level of active participation.

This study was conducted at one of the universities in Malang. The study will involve a purposive sample of EFL learners who have regularly participated in English debate activities. Participants will be selected from universities where English debates are a part of the curriculum. Ideally, the sample will include a diverse group in terms of language proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds. Participant 1 is 21 years old and has been a 6th-semester student at one of the universities in Malang. Participant 2, aged 22, has become a 21st-year university student. She previously took private English lessons from elementary school to high school. Currently, she is still an active student at her university. The last participant 3, 22 years old, is also an active student at one of the universities in Malang. She is a batch 21 student who is always active in the organization.

The researchers conducted several procedures. First, the researchers created an interview guide for data collection and observation. The second step was the selection of participants according to the basic criteria. Then, the researchers contacted the selected participants to arrange the time and place and their willingness to be interviewed.

During the interviews, the researcher spoke in Indonesian to ensure that there was no misunderstanding of information. This was also the mother tongue of the participants. The conversations were recorded for 15 minutes using a mobile phone to gather comprehensive data. In addition to this, the researcher asked questions to three participants for 15 minutes each. These questions were related to their strategies and experiences in improving their English language skills. This allowed the researcher to obtain specific and complete data. Six steps from (Braun & Clarke, 2006) theme analysis were used to look at the interview data. At first, the process involved finding the teachers' voice notes by listening to the tapes several times and underlining the most important parts each time. After that, the recordings were typed up and the interview records were reading again. Braun and Clarke state that the data should be read more than once to understand the shared experiences fully. To protect the privacy of participants, the researcher's alias will be used instead of their real name. The goal of this step is to verify the accuracy of the data by doublechecking it with the participants. Participants are allowed to provide any missing information or clarify any unclear points. The researcher has provided their contact details via WhatsApp and face-to-face, and all participants have given their consent for the data to be used in this study.

FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher explains and analyzes the research findings, which would answer the research questions stated in Chapter One. The objectives of the studies are to find the EFL learners' experiences in speaking English through debate, and improving speaking skills through debating can activate the EFL students' participation. Findings of the studies are based on the interview results with three participants at the universities in Malang. There are four themes in this finding these are the positive experience in the program, the experiences of the participants through English debate, the improve speaking English through debate, and the activation of the EFL student's participation.

The Experiences Speaking Through English Debate

The researcher divided the first theme which was the experiences of speaking through English debate. Participant 1 said that he had a problem. He said that his English speaking experience was bad, but after participating in the English debate, he has started to improve, As shown in the interview:

Excerpt 1:

I have a problem, I find it very difficult to describe my English, in my brain there are sentences but when spoken they become incorrect. This is also influenced because I am too nervous, but sometimes I can also speak fluently in English, this is my experience in speaking English. (Interview, Participant 1)

Debate Success in Speaking English

In this finding, researchers divided the second theme, namely debate success in speaking English. Participating in English debate can significantly activate your speaking skills. Participant 1 mentioned that debates can provoke students to speak as indicated in the following, excerpts:

Excerpt 4:

I think it can because debates can provoke students to speak because students sometimes feel "anxious" if they don't participate in debates even in English, it's better to join now or never. (Interview, Participant 1)

The Strategy to Improve Speaking Skills Through Debate

Improving speaking skills through English debate involves several strategies. Participants 1 used the strategy practice regularly and expanded vocabulary:

Excerpt 7:

Practice, I always play games and I play full English-based games the second is to develop my vocabulary and increase my vocabulary. (Interview, Participant 1)

DISCUSSIONS

This section explains the important findings of the research questions in- depth discussion. Participants reported positive experiences in various aspects of English debate. Effective debate is a crucial factor contributing to their positive experience. Based on the findings, students' ability to speak before using the debate technique showed that the student's ability to speak after the application of English-speaking learning through the debate technique was better than before the treatment given to the students. Through debate, technique is better than before the treatment given to students. Improving English speaking skills through English debate offers EFL learners a dynamic and interactive way to enhance their language proficiency. Firstly, participation in debates encourages learners to actively engaged in speaks English, fostering fluency and confidence. By preparing arguments, articulating them in English, and defending their positions, learners practice language skills in a structured and challenging environment. This process not only improves their ability to express themselves but also enhances their vocabulary as they learn to use formal and persuasive language effectively. Through regular practice in presenting their viewpoints and engaging in constructive dialogue, learners gradually build confidence in their speaking abilities. This newfound confidence extends beyond the debate setting, empowering learners to communicate more confidently in various real-life situations where English is required.

In conclusion, the experiences of speaking through English debate, as reported by the participants, highlight a range of personal challenges and improvements. Participant 1 experienced significant difficulties initially, struggling with translating thoughts into speech due to nervousness. However, his

participation in debates has led to noticeable improvements in his speaking abilities. Participant 2 had a more positive journey, owing to her extensive background in private English education from a young age, which made her adept at presentations and debates. On the other hand, Participant 3's experience was highly situational, depending largely on the surrounding atmosphere. She found that external distractions could cause nervousness, impacting her performance, while a calm environment facilitated better speaking. Improving speaking skills through English debate involves various strategies, as evidenced by the participants' experiences. Participants 1 and 3 focused on regular practice and expanding their vocabulary. Participant 1 engaged in English-based games and vocabulary development, while Participant 3 memorized new vocabulary and practiced formulating arguments

Participant 2, on the other hand, emphasized research and preparation, studying themes thoroughly and gathering relevant materials. These strategies not only enhanced their speaking skills but also improved their critical thinking abilities. Debating encouraged participants to think critically and formulate supporting arguments, as noted by Participants 1 and 3, who reported significant improvements in their critical thinking skills. Additionally, participation in debates increased active speaking skills, with Participant 3 highlighting a transition from passive to active English speaking, both within and outside the debate context. Overall, the combination of practice, vocabulary expansion, research, and preparation proved effective in enhancing speaking skills through English debate.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The research findings reveal that participating in English debates significantly enhances EFL learners' speaking skills, fosters critical thinking, and increases active participation. Participants shared diverse experiences and strategies, illustrating the multifaceted benefits of debates. Firstly, the experiences of speaking through English debates varied among the participants. Participant 1 initially struggled with nervousness and articulation but improved through regular debate participation. Participant 2, with a strong background in English education, found debates to be a positive and familiar experience. Participant 3's performance was influenced by the environment, performing better in calm settings. Secondly, the success of debate in improving speaking skills was evident. Participants noted that debates compelled them to speak, practice argumentation, and use English spontaneously. This not only enhanced their fluency but also expanded their vocabulary and improved grammar.

Thirdly, various strategies were employed to improve speaking skills through debates. Participants 1 and 3 focused on regular practice and vocabulary expansion, using games and memorization techniques. Participant 2 emphasized research and preparation, studying themes, and gathering relevant materials. These strategies also bolstered critical thinking skills, as debates required them to analyze topics deeply and formulate coherent arguments. Lastly, debates significantly activated students' participation and speaking skills. Participants reported increased confidence and active use of English, both in and outside the debate context. This active engagement in speaking contributed to overall language proficiency and intercultural competence.

In conclusion, English debates offer a dynamic and effective method for improving EFL learners' speaking skills. Through regular practice, vocabulary expansion, thorough preparation, and active participation, learners not only enhance their fluency and confidence but also develop critical thinking and intercultural understanding. The findings underscore the value of incorporating debate into EFL education to achieve comprehensive

language development. The researcher gives some suggestions related to this study, To improve speaking skills through English debate, EFL students should engage in regular practice by joining debate clubs or participating in English- based activities such as games to make learning enjoyable and consistent. Expanding vocabulary is crucial; therefore, students should learn new words daily and read extensively to encounter diverse vocabulary and expressions. Focusing on thorough research and preparation for debate topics will build a solid understanding and enhance their ability to respond spontaneously. Developing critical thinking skills by analyzing various viewpoints and reflecting on debate performances can lead to stronger arguments. Building confidence is essential, which can be achieved by practicing in front of a mirror, recording oneself, or participating in small group discussions. Creating a supportive environment with peers interested in improving their English skills, and providing constructive feedback, can facilitate mutual growth. Embracing mistakes as learning opportunities rather than setbacks is important, as analyzing errors helps in adjusting strategies. Utilizing technology, such as language learning apps and online debate forums, can offer additional practice and exposure. Engaging in real-life conversations with native or proficient speakers through language exchange programs or online communities will help apply skills in practical scenarios. Staying motivated by setting specific, achievable goals and celebrating milestones will keep students encouraged on their language.

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**Approved by,
Advisor 1,**

Dr. Imam Wahyudi Karimullah, S.S., MA.
NPP. 130301198632110

