LLT Journal, e-ISSN 2579-9533, p-ISSN 1410-7201, Vol. 23, No. 2, October 2020

LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching
http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/LLT
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

THE BENEFITS OF JOINING ENGLISH DEBATING SOCIETY (EDS) FOR STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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DOI: 10.24071/llt.v23i2.2504
received 2 April 2020; accepted 13 May 2020

Abstract
This qualitative research study aims to analyze the benefits of joining a debating club to enhance students' speaking skills. The data was collected from semi-structured interviews to delve into students' perceptions about the most outstanding debaters after joining the debating club 2014 batch at UKSW. The research questions used in this study were about the benefits of joining a debating club on speaking skills and how the debating club could enhance their speaking skills. The findings show that five speaking skill traits and three other soft skill aspects were enhanced through debating. Those skills are fluency, vocabulary, comprehension of the essence of debates, pronunciation, grammar, critical thinking, collaborative learning, and problem solving. The skills were improved though the drilling practices and materials in the learning process. The significance of this study is to attest to the significant improvements found in enhancing students' speaking skills from using the debating method.

Keywords: benefits, debate, English Debating Society, speaking skills

Introduction

The existence of English as a global language, which is spoken worldwide, makes the language a must to be learned from childhood to adulthood. It can give one a promising position in a big company or a higher position in a governance office. In order to learn a new language, there are four important skills to be mastered by learners which are writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Each of the skills has its own difficulty to be mastered. Yet, some people admit that speaking is the most difficult skill. Speaking does not only require mastering the pattern of a language, but it is also about practicing the stress management skill such as having self-confidence and not feeling anxiety when you communicate in front of people. Despite its difficulty, speaking is also considered as the most important skill. Khoiruniyah in Sabbah (2015) bravely stated that the speaking skill is the most needed skill in our society. She affirmed that successful language learning is when a person can orally convey knowledge or information to an interlocutor proficiently. The situation can also achieve the purpose of having a conversation to exchange information.

Reflecting on the importance of the speaking skill for one's life, improving an individual's English speaking skill in society has started to be a need. Many learning strategies have been developed to overcome students' problems in speaking. One of the most effective strategies to improve speaking skills is through debating. Krieger (2005) stated that debating is a very good way to involve students in cognitive and linguistic ways to improve their language learning. Moreover, Tornament (2011) added that students' skills in making arguments through competitive debate practices or competitions could help them overcome problems in society and improve the way students respond to various issues. A competitive debate should be rational, focused, and structured**.** Debating builds a unique set of skills, helping students to analyze problems, think critically, synthesize arguments, and present these ideas in a cogent and convincing manner. In other words, debating does not only train students to communicate in English, but debating also teaches students to have critical thinking, make an argument structurally, and deliver it effectively and decisively.

Unfortunately, the use of the debating format for students in an EFL context has not been effectively used. Some researchers have tried to substantiate the effects of using the debate method for speaking skill improvements in the L2 learning class, such as Fukuda (2003), Alasmari and Ahmed (2013), and Arung (2016). Fukuda found that the ability of students to speak English increased from 30.8% to 56.7% after conducting a debate study on Japanese students. Alasmari and Ahmed discovered that debating can help students improve their speaking skills and let them practice using English language in real-life situations. However, teachers usually fail to use the appropriate debating method in the classroom. Therefore, Alasmari and Ahmed proposed a module to maximize the benefits of the debating method in the classroom. Through an appropriate debating method and teachers' assistance, Arung found out that students joined and engaged in the classroom enthusiastically with a total of 64% to 78.4%. However, none of the researchers conducted an investigation on the benefits of debating in a smaller community like a forum or club that is offered in a school as an extracurricular activity that also contributes to one's speaking ability.

According to Baso (2016), debating as a strategy to develop students' speaking abilities has also been researched in Indonesia. With an urgency to communicate in English, the curriculum has been developed to provide chances for students to practice and use the language from a classroom context to the National Examination. Yonsisno (2015), who once experienced the benefits of the debating method using a quantitative collecting data format, found out that debating significantly contributes to improve students' speaking performance in the classroom. The technique was discovered to stimulate students to share their opinions confidently and increase their ability to think critically.

This research aims to provide insights into the benefits of using the debate method for students of an English Language Education Program in a private university in Salatiga, Indonesia, to improve their speaking ability skills by joining an extracurricular debate club. It is hoped that future English teachers may utilize debate as an alternative format for teaching English speaking in the classroom. Moreover, students can also consider debating as an alternative tool for enhancing speaking performance outside the classroom context. This study is

thus aimed to analyze the benefits of the debating learning process to enhance the speaking abilities of students at UKSW.

Debate Concepts

Many researchers have attempted to define a debate. One definition could have a very different meaning from the others, regarding the context of having a debate practice itself. In general, Richard (2008) stated that a debate is a discussion which comprises two opposing sides to defend and attack a motion.

Krieger (2005) added to his belief about the definition, in that a debate gives students the opportunity to improve their critical thinking while they are delivering their opinions to their opponents. Moreover, with the various topics discussed in debates, students can absorb new vocabulary and phrases about the topic. In this study, the students were asked to filter the information needed related to the discussed topic.

Similar to Krieger, Allison (2002) also affirmed that debating is a multi-tasking job for students. Students need to speak their opinions, write their arguments, listen to their opponents, and read an abundance of materials to give their insights about a topic. Zare and Othman (2013) added that a debate provides students with better learning course content. Students may get inspired to learn how to deeply explain and justify their beliefs, convince others, and counter arguments by the various topics provided in debating.

Despite all the benefits of debates embedded in the previous debate definitions, Snider and Schruner (2002) highlighted the idea of critical thinking as well as the result of using the debate method in the classroom back in the time of the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers. They believe that a debate is a significant way to teach students in the classroom. According to Worthen and Pack (1992), the importance of having critical thinking for students in life prepares them to bear whatever life situation they must face.

There are several objectives of having debates in a learning process, as mentioned by Leo in Azma (2008). First, it can trigger the students to practice speaking. Second, it can provide students with the chance to talk in English when they have a break. Third, a debate is able to boost students' motivation to talk in English. Fourth, a debate may create a situation that makes students feel that learning English is easy. Fifth, students can practice talking in English without worrying about sentence patterns. Sixth, a debate may help students consider their parents, friends, and classmates as their companions to practice English. Seventh, it is able to make students' use of leisure time more effective to practice English. Eighth, it may expand students' desire to talk in English. Last, it can contribute to establishing the students' everyday discussion practice with their friends.

In the heart of learning English through debates in an EFL context, debates have also been proven effective for students learning English. Despite the exposure of four English skills in one debating practice, Rowland (1995), in Majidi, Graaf, and Janssen (2015), mentioned that the debating environment forces students to have outstanding performance. Mitchell (1998) added to the point of competition, in that debating can motivate novice or advanced debaters to get acknowledgment as professional and academically excellent students in their circumstances. In other words, debating can motivate students in a competitive way to master English in order to be actualized in society.

There are several types of debates that are used to fulfill the needs of each user. According to Steven (2012), as cited in Baso (2016), there are various types of debate formats, such as the British Parliamentary (BP), Australian Parliamentary, and Asian Parliamentary systems. Those kinds of debating styles are quite often used in Indonesia. The styles have their own rules and regulations. The schools and universities can freely choose the need or style to be used in the class or competition. The difference of the style can be seen from the time allocation for the speakers, the number of people on one team (like two or three people), and the motion/problem discussed.

The Principles of Teaching English Speaking Skills

In order to teach English speaking skills to students, the teacher must realize the aim of teaching to students. According to Sabbah (2015), a teacher needs to acknowledge that second language learners will not be able to produce perfect English like native speakers. Yet, students have to be able to feel confident and have to practice to use the language. Teachers should try to lessen the comments on the grammar and pronunciation and start to observe the cultural context that influences students to produce the language.

The principles that are used to achieve the aims of the speaking skills were suggested by Nunan (2003) and Kayi (2006). The researchers proposed 10 principles which reveal that teachers should consider the learning contexts, create an opportunity for students to exercise and use the language, design meaningful activities related to the development of the language, provide feedback and real-context situations in which students will have courage to speak up, and exercise the target language.

The big concern in learning speaking is to make students feel comfortable. That is why teachers should still guide the students to master the correct English speaking skills. There are five components according to Brown and Yale (1994) that have an important role to measure the development of one's speaking skill ability. Those components are pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Pronunciation is an important aspect to be learned by students. In learning English speaking, pronunciation will affect the meaning of one word, so the way we pronounce a word will give meaning to the word. Moreover, Hornby (1995, p. 928) in Harris (1969, p. 81) added that "Pronunciation is the way in which a language is spoken, the way in which a word is pronounced, and the way a person speaks the words of a language." Kelly (2000) in Seyedabadi and Fatemi (2015) affirmed that using the stress and the intonation inaccurately can cause problem for students if they do not carefully pay attention to the pronunciation of the words.

Grammar is a tool for students to measure good sentences produced correctly based on the principles. Coghill and Magendanz (2003, p. 26) defined grammar as "a set of rules that govern its structure. Grammar determines how words are arranged to form meaningful units." Reflecting on the importance of arranging meaningful units, Uibu and Liiver (2015) mentioned that by exposing students gradually to challenging and various reading materials, it can produce effective and correct language use such as in debating practice to improve the mastery of grammar.

Vocabulary is the word choice in uttering a message. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, it defines vocabulary as a list or collection of words or of words and phrases usually alphabetically arranged and explained or defined. It has to be appropriate and effective for the interlocutor. Krashen (1981) stated that most learners improve their vocabulary through unintended exposure inside/outside of the classroom. The teacher can prepare some vocabulary in the classroom, but students might also unintentionally acquire new vocabulary from the learning process in the classroom.

Fluency of speaking is a skill to speak with less fillers and pauses. In other words, speaking has to be accurate. Richards (2009, p. 14) also mentioned that fluency is "natural language use occurring when a speaker engages in meaningful interactions and maintains comprehensible and ongoing communication despite limitations in his or her communicative competence". Khaldun (1958) in Tsou (2005) said that one of the ways to make students have a higher level of proficiency towards a language is if the teacher establishes contexts and practices for students to utilize the language itself.

For comprehension, speaking is needed to be understood and responded by others or the interlocutor in order to know the message has been delivered well. Allison (2002) also affirmed that debating is a multi-tasking job for students. They need to respond and deliver their ideas to the interlocutor understandably and effectively.

The benefits go to the extent that was mentioned by Gieve (1998); a debate can also improve one's critical thinking to analyze and develop arguments or ideas. Fisher, LaPointe, Peterson, and White (2001) as well as Hall (2011) stated that debating can also improve one's problem solving skills in which students can make optional solutions to overcome issues in society. Lastly, Brown (2015) also confirmed the idea of collaborative learning for students to deal with their friends in debating practices.

The Benefits of Debates for English Speaking Skills

Some researchers have already identified the benefits of debating to improve speaking skills, as it is considered effective for students' English improvement. Zare and Othman (2015) conducted a study to identify the students' perceptions using classroom debates to improve their critical thinking and oral communicative competence. Sixteen university students participated in the study. They attended nine debating sessions in one semester. The data collection was done by utilizing a survey questionnaire and open-ended questions to know students' opinions about classroom debates. Moreover, the researchers also used semi-structured interviews to know students' feelings. The results of the study show that students' critical thinking and oral communication abilities improved. The students also admitted that debates could help them master course content, increase their self-confidence, and improve their team work skills.

Sabbah (2015) also worked on identifying the effectiveness of using debates in developing speaking skills among English major students at the University of Palestine. The research was conducted using a quasi-experimental research design in order to test the hypotheses of the study. The researcher took thirty participants for this study who were English major students in 2014/2015. The results of the study showed that debating had significant improvements on the students'

vocabulary and pronunciation. The students also were eager to speak in English after the research session was done.

Altamimi (2017) also conducted research on improving speaking skills by examining the implications of using debatable topics in an English-speaking class. The researcher utilized a quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-tests. The study involved seventy native speakers of Arabic language. The results of the study showed that debating can be an alternative for teaching speaking. It gives students the confidence of speaking in English as EFL students. However, from the research observations, it can be concluded that the teacher has to be trained well in order to maintain students' euphoria in learning to speak English.

Those previous studies obviously showed that debating can significantly improve students' speaking abilities. However, none of the studies truly discussed the benefits of debating which serve as an extracurricular activity in school and are related to students' opinions. Therefore, this study intends to delve into and analyze how debating can significantly affect students, especially in a smaller community like an extracurricular club. The limitations of the time to practice and a lack of control by the lecturer in the university might also be discussed in the study to know if having debates outside of the classroom context can still contribute to students' improvements in their English-speaking skills.

Method

Context of the Study

This research was conducted in the Compact Semester of 2017/2018 in a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. The study identified the perceptions of students about the benefits of debates as a method to improve students' English speaking skills. The debating method was used significantly in the club. The activity was conducted regularly using a classroom context in which the students would follow a learning process in the classroom, do drilling practices using various topics, receive feedback, do assignments, and obtain credits in the university system. The purpose of having the practice sessions was to make the students feel comfortable in using English in the competitions.

Participants

The participants consisted of three students. Those participants were chosen based on the consistency when they were members of a debating club and the significance of showing improvements after joining the club. There were one male and two female participants in this study. All the participants were 2014 students and had not joined the debating club when they were in high school. EDS (English Debating Society) is an extra-curricular activity outside the class hours. These participants' abilities were just average before they joined EDS. However, after joining EDS, it can be concluded that their abilities in speaking, debating in particular, had improved a lot, both in terms of language and content. The improvements will later be elaborated in the Findings and Discussion section.

Data Collection Instruments

The data was collected from semi-structured interviews with the three participants, who were former debate members. There were six questions using English asked to the three participants. The questions were related to the benefits

of joining the debate club. Audio-recorded interviews were conducted using a mobile phone. The data was then analyzed based on the answers from the participants.

Data Collection Procedures

In the data collection, three former EDS (English Debating Society) members were interviewed. The participants who were interviewed had significant improvements since joining the debating club in a private university in Central Java, Indonesia. The interviews were conducted on July 16th and 17th, 2018. Afterwards, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed based on the emerging themes.

Findings and Discussion

The interviews were conducted with the previous members of EDS from the 2014 batch. The interview results are presented in this section. In general, all the interviewees admitted that their English-speaking skills improved after joining EDS. Moreover, the interviewees also mentioned that there were other skills improved by joining EDS. They were critical thinking, discipline, and some other abilities. However, the interviewees admitted that there were still challenges that the EDS members experienced. In general, the EDS members' speaking skills improved in the community. The reasons and explanations are elaborated below.

How EDS Helped Debaters Improve Their Speaking Skills

The five aspects of speaking skills, which are fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, were all improved, as admitted by the participants who were EDS members from the 2014 batch. The materials and methods used in the practice or competition to enhance students' speaking performance were mentioned. Here are the explanations of the five speaking skills improved.

Fluency

Based on the interview results, Student A, Student B, and Student C admitted that EDS helped them to speak fluently in English. It was honed through drilling exercises and feedback which were given by the community. Moreover, Student A, Student B, and Student C explained that they also had a responsibility to achieve their goals as debaters which were to deliver the arguments effectively within the time limitations. So, the students admitted that EDS trained them to speak English confidently through all the experiences in the practices and competitions. In addition, the usage of gap fillers as the biggest challenge to speak fluently in English were also decreased from time to time for EDS members from the 2014 batch. Below are the students' opinions about their fluency development in EDS.

Excerpt 1:

> *"As the time goes by, our fluency is getting better. For example, we used to say "ladies and gentlemen" up to 20 times in our speeches. After all the practices, we realize that in order for us to achieve something in a competition, we need to practice omitting "ladies and gentlemen" in our*

> *speeches. We also have the burden to contribute in our speeches as well. Therefore, being fluent in English is needed as debaters. We need to be effective and contributive to our team. Moreover, the experiences shape us in our daily lives to speak in English fluently even in our lives."* (Student A's statement, July 16th, 2018)

Similarly, Khaldun (1958) in Tsou (2005) affirmed students' opinions through their research about the results of intensive speaking practices. The researcher said that the more a student utilizes a language, the higher his/her level of proficiency will be. Being fluent in English is as important as the language itself. Moreover, the stage of being fluent also means students feel confidence because of having enough practices and chances to use the language (Sabbah, 2015). Therefore, by having enough speaking practices through various contexts in the debating society, students' self-confidence will develop automatically.

Comprehension of the Essence of Debates

As mentioned in the interview results, Student A, Student B, and Student C said that their comprehension skills also improved really well. The students clearly admitted that comprehension was the key in which the dynamics of debates exist. The students read a lot of materials in order to speak defensively, and then listened and wrote opponents' arguments in every practice. Moreover, the students said that their comprehension skill in speaking English was developed. These students needed to respond to arguments and made their arguments stand against the opponents' beliefs. Therefore, these students were trained to understand various contexts of issues which consequently, made their comprehension increase. Here is a student's comments about the idea of comprehension development.

Excerpt 2:

> *"In fact, we were trained to read lots of things and watch videos to prepare us before a competition. I feel like my comprehension towards many kinds of books and diverse conversations improved in English. I was prepared with the knowledge in practices."* (Student B's statement, July 17th, 2018)

In line with what Student B said that their comprehension was increased in EDS, Allison (2002) also affirmed that a debate is a multi-tasking job for students. Students need to speak their opinions, write their arguments, listen to their opponents, and read an abundance of materials to give insights about the topic. Zare and Othman (2015, p. 157) added that debates provide better "learning course content experience" for students. Students may get inspired to learn how to explain and justify their beliefs deeply. Moreover, debates teach students to convince and counter arguments by the various topics provided in debates. In other words, debates increase students' understanding by having multiple activities in one practice or competition.

Vocabulary

As mentioned in the interview results, the student participants admitted that their vocabulary was automatically improved by joining EDS. By regularly

having the practices and going to competitions, they got chances to add to their vocabulary lists. Moreover, the students were forced to read lots of materials and listen to various videos which enriched their vocabulary lists. Here is a student's comments of the development of their vocabulary lists.

Excerpt 3:

> *"In a debate itself, there is an urgency to win a competition. How can you win a debate competition? We need to shield ourselves with lots of knowledge. So, as debaters we need to read a lot of English articles related to the motions and elaborate on the information in our arguments. Hence, by having those activities, our vocabulary will improve as well. If our vocabulary is not prepared well, we will be so confused to understand and respond to what the opponents say or even what the motion means."* (Student A's statement, July 16th, 2018)

The benefits of vocabulary improvement through EDS were also affirmed by Krashen (1981). The researcher stated that most learners had vocabulary growth through incidental learning such as through continuous exposure in order to comprehend the language in reading, listening, speaking, and writing exercises. In other words, the continuous practice of speaking in EDS had unintended improvements in students' vocabulary development.

Grammar

As mentioned in the interview results, Student A and Student B agreed with the idea that EDS improved their grammar significantly. Through joining in the drilling practices, Student A and Student B felt that by using good grammar in debates, it helped them to deliver their arguments and understand the opponents' arguments. Here is a student's comments regarding the grammar development.

Excerpt 4:

> *"When we learn debating, we will, as much as we can, follow the way a particular debater who has an outstanding performance in a competition debates. Those who have been outstanding as debaters will usually have excellent grammar. We get inspired and challenged to follow the good debaters in order to be "notified" because having good arguments is not enough if you can't deliver the arguments using good grammar. Moreover, we also sometimes meet good opponents who already have good grammar, so in a debate there is an exchange of information of grammar unconsciously."* (Student A's statement, July 16th, 2018)

Improving grammar through debating methods was also mentioned by Uibu and Liiver (2015). The researchers mentioned about the consequence of exposing students gradually to how challenging and various reading materials could produce effective language use. In other words, students who are given the opportunity to have lots of input of English will be able to produce the language, either verbal (speaking) or non-verbal (writing), correctly and automatically.

However, Student C felt that the grammar improvement was not that noticeable. Some debaters neglected the idea of using proper grammar in their

speeches. Student C affirmed that what the debaters were concerned about was whether or not the message could be well conveyed in the speech, instead of focusing on grammar. Yet, Student C admitted her grammar was still developed through EDS, even though it was not that significant.

Excerpt 5:

> *"Some debaters neglect the use of appropriate grammar in the competitions. The debaters rarely addressed the proper tenses. However, reading lots of English journals and articles could improve the grammar of the debaters."* (Student C's statement, July 16th, 2018)

However, Uibu and Liiver (2015) also stated if the students produce incorrect grammar, the exposure to peers who have correct grammar would automatically influence them. The practices and competitions give them an opportunity to communicate and exchange information. In short, by having various competitions and practices together, students will acquire correct grammar too.

Pronunciation

As mentioned in the interview results, Student A, Student B, and Student C agreed that their pronunciation was developed as well as the other English speaking skills in the club. All students said the importance of the pronunciation developed was to help them deliver their arguments to be understood by their opponents. If they mispronounced a word, it could influence all the sentences of the arguments. Moreover, the students also learned to hear new vocabulary related to the various topics pronounced by their opponents. Pronunciation took an important role to convey the meanings of the words. Here is a student's comments on pronunciation development.

Excerpt 6:

> *"When we try to deliver and understand arguments, our comprehension and pronunciation are linked to be developed in debates. We need to understand and make others understand what we are going to say in our speeches."* (Student A's statement, July 16th 2018)

Simply put, pronunciation development for students can influence their performance in speaking English. Similarly, Kelly (2000) in Seyedabadi and Fatemi (2015) affirmed that to use the stress and the intonation inaccurately can cause problems for students if they do not carefully pay attention to the pronunciation of the words. Therefore, through the drilling during debating practices, students lessened the chance to misinterpret the words for both the interlocutor and the speaker, and it gave the students confidence to talk in English.

Other Skills Improved in Debates

Critical Thinking

Student A and Student B admitted that debating activities also improved their critical thinking skills towards many issues that are popular in society. Participating in debates expanded their understanding about how to criticize the dynamic changes that happen in society or even a discussion with a teacher and

friends in a classroom context. Joining debates taught the students not only to perceive one problem from one perspective, but also to see it from others' perspectives too. For instance, they had to see the perspectives of the doer and the victim in a murder case. In the debating practices, the students were usually encouraged to identify, construct, and evaluate their arguments which prepared them to face various problems in society.

Excerpt 7:

> *"I felt the other skill which was improved was my critical thinking skill. I could reflect from some subjects that I took in the university which were discussed about philosophy, pop culture, and cross-cultural understanding. I felt so comfortable in the classroom sharing and criticizing about the differences of opinions of social problems by using my base in the debate. I learned that I could not see a phenomenon just from one view. I also learned to be able to elaborate on the reasons for my choice over identifying a change in society."* (Student B's statement, July 17th, 2018)

Similar to the students' opinions, Gieve (1998, p. 130) stated that for students to think critically they must be able to "examine the reasons for their actions, their beliefs, and their knowledge claims, requiring them to defend themselves and question themselves, their peers, their teachers, experts, and authoritative texts". Therefore, it was really obvious that students who were in the debating club would have critical thinking skills through the practices and competitions that they experienced.

Problem Solving Ability

Student A, Student B, and Student C admitted that they also learned to overcome various issues with lots of alternative solutions provided. The students were trained to prepare lots of rebuttals in one preliminary of a competition in order to defend their main positions. It was admitted by the students that the training in the debating club automatically made them able to implement problem solving skills in real world situations. The students got used to always preparing alternative options for pro or contra discussions that they might face in a classroom context, in a social situation, in an organizational life, and even in the family.

Excerpt 8:

> *"Besides joining in the debate club, I was also involved in other student activities. I felt it was really different when I had to deal with problems in another community. For example, we needed to work on a proposal for an event. Then we were stuck because of administrative reasons. Instead of complaining and getting angry like students in general, we'd try to directly fix the problem, we negotiated what we could do, we looked for alternatives, and so on. What I could feel was that I had more of an initiative to find a way out."* (Student C's statement, July 16th, 2018)

Similar to what the students said, some scholars also confirmed the idea that problem solving skills improved in debates. Fisher, LaPointe, Peterson, and White (2001) affirmed that debating gives students the ability to work with disagreements and provide another point of view in a study case or role play. Moreover, Hall (2011) mentioned in his findings regarding debates improving students' problem solving skills that debates actually prepared his students to deal beyond their capacities as healthcare professionals. Debating forced them to work with various challenging situations. Thus, debates contributed significantly to their problem-solving skills.

Collaborative Learning

Through the drilling practices and competitions, it was crystal clear that the debates trained the students to work on a team. Student A, Student B, and Student C said clearly that debates cannot be separated from "teamwork". The students learned how to communicate with their peers and convinced them about their beliefs to achieve or rebut one goal in a competition or practice.

Excerpt 9:

> *"At first, it was very difficult to communicate with my friends. Yet, through the practices and feedback to learn how to communicate with others, I could do that."* (Student B's statement, July 17th, 2018)

Frijters (2006) as cited in Brown (2015) mentioned that the debate structure forces students to share and interact their ideas either for or against the points of view of their team members. In addition, Dam and Volman (2004), as cited in Brown (2015) also asserted that students need to communicate the perspectives of others who support their arguments. Therefore, debates can actually strengthen the relationships of one student with other students and encourage them to work on a team. Students will automatically learn to adjust and adapt to the different characteristics of their classmates.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to see English Debating Society (EDS) members' perceptions about how debates can enhance students' speaking skills and some other soft skills. The responses to the research questions were derived through interviewing three members of the club using semi-structured interview questions, and then identifying the five aspects of English speaking skills. Those five aspects were fluency, comprehension of the debates, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Some other soft skills which improved through debating practices were critical thinking, problem solving skills, and collaborative learning.

As can be seen from the findings, all of the English-speaking aspects were improved through the debating practices and competitions experienced by the participants who were former members of EDS. The first aspect is fluency. The members admitted that through the drilling practices of EDS, their ability to speak fluently was improved. The second aspect is comprehension of the essence of the debates. The students said that by joining the EDS regular practices and competitions and then reading lots of debating material related motions, it trained

them to easily grasp and conceive the speeches and responses for the speeches as rebuttals against the motions of the opponents. The third aspect is vocabulary. The students were forced to prepare themselves through watching videos related to motions, reading news, and listening to the different levels of their opponents in competitions, which enhanced their vocabulary lists. The fourth one is grammar. The students were exposed to sophisticated inputs from debate materials, such as news and journal articles which automatically influenced their grammar. The fifth aspect is pronunciation. The students got used to listening to their opponents and peers in competitions, which enabled them to imitate the correct pronunciation of words.

Some other findings like critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborative learning were also explained in the interviews. Critical thinking skills were developed through analysis drilling practices to elaborate on ideas and defend arguments to achieve the goals. The problem solving skills were trained through expanding the reasons and arguments. The students needed to prepare various options for solving the problems. Collaborative learning as the last skill was also improved. The students learned how to share and interact with their peers in a team in order for them to win the competitions.

In short, the five aspects of English speaking skills were effectively improved through debating practices in EDS. It was obviously stated from the interview results of the previous member of EDS. Thus, the benefits also go to the other aspects of soft skills improved like critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborative learning. The speaking skill improvements in the club were effectively enhanced because of the efforts and courage of the students to study hard in the club.

This study was limited to only a few interviewees. This research could be expanded to engage more participants in the future. In expanding the concepts, future researchers can investigate how the debating method can be implemented for more participants in various classes at the university level, not only in an extra-curricular activity like EDS. Another weakness is that the method used for collecting the data was only through interviews. It is hoped that future researchers will use more various methods to identify the benefits of debates for students.

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