

Analysis of Debate Skills to the Learners' Confidence and Anxiety in the Use of the English Language in Academic Engagements

Collin C.Ceneciro¹, Marivic R. Estoque²,
Jason V. Chavez³

¹colineceneciro2021@gmail.com

Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University

²purple.maimai180429@gmail.com

Zamboanga State College of Marine Sciences and Technology

³Jasonchavez615@gmail.com

Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University

Abstract

Competitive debating in education has grown in recent years. Debating shaped the skills of students in researching, argumentation, language use, and persuasiveness. Language fluency allowed the students to express their thoughts in clear and concise manner. The aim of this study was to explore how debating grows the confidence and reduce anxiety in English language use, particularly during academic engagements. There were 12 trained debate students who participated in the study from high school and college. This study explored the narratives of students on what nature of competitive debating influenced their speaking skills within their academic engagements e.g., class discussions and responding to questions. Narrative analysis suggested that students experienced changes on how they construct sentences in their minds—they did it quickly and more efficiently now. Notably, their exposure to competitive debates reduced their fear in public speaking which then helped them understand their weaknesses in terms of grammar, structures, and vocabulary. Debating also reduced their fear of public speaking because they feel they are more capable of responding to questions and sharing opinions. This qualitative analysis shed light on which aspects the students perform good at after years of engaging to competitive debates.

Keywords: academic engagement, anxiety, communication, confidence, debate skills, discussions, English language, presentations.

Introduction

Since critical thinking is related with linguistic abilities such as speaking and writing, the two can be combined when learning English (Indah, 2017; Riwayatningsih, 2019; Saputri et al., 2022). Critical thinking is a necessary component in the development of speaking skills of students (Sovianti, 2021). For Amiri et al. (2017), the ability to speak fluently in English is a key indicator of success in learning English as a foreign language. This is because it allows students to actively engage with and apply the target language in a practical setting.

The purpose of this study was to explore the confidence and anxiety of students in speaking and debating, and how they improved their communication skills after engaging in debate clubs and trainings. This study explored the narratives and experiences of students when applying their speaking skills within classrooms through responding to questions and sharing ideas in discussions. Basically, these narratives served as the extension of previous studies to explore in-depth connections between confidence, speaking and debating.

The production of speech is an observable and empirical skill that requires the integration of lexicon, discourse, and language structure by the speaker (Brown, 2004). To achieve proficiency in public speaking, it is essential to consider five key elements: vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and comprehension (Brown, 2001). Numerous external and internal variables impede the progress in oral communication abilities. The study identifies external factors that may affect the effectiveness of speaking classes. These issues include the repetitiveness of the topics given as well as the inadequacy of the methods used, such as reading monologues in front of the class. Some of internal factors include difficulties in producing phrases, concern about articulating their thoughts, low motivation, and a lack of confidence (Firmansyah & Valatansa, 2019; Saputri et al., 2022; Sovianti, 2021; Suhendra, 2020).

In addition to the cultivation of critical thinking skills that facilitate the expression of ideas and analysis in language

courses, self-confidence appears to be a salient factor that is intricately linked to speaking proficiency among students. This cognitive capacity encompasses intellectual and affective processes, as well as behavioral manifestations, that enable individuals to effectively execute tasks with confidence and without hesitation (Moneva & Tribunalo, 2020). Situational beliefs, language potential beliefs, communication beliefs, and language skills beliefs are four self-confidence variables that concentrate on willingness to speak (Park & Lee, 2005).

Anxiety and uncertainty are closely interconnected and can significantly impact language learners' speaking abilities. Students often experience anxiety and fear when faced with uncertain situations, particularly in public speaking or debate settings (Sari, 2017). The presence of uncertainty in a threat setting can cause anxiety and fear, leading to communication apprehension (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2022). Anxiety is characterized by a future-focused orientation and a high degree of uncertainty, while fear is characterized by a present-focused orientation and a relatively high degree of certainty (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2022). Anxiety has been identified as a hindering factor that can impede and diminish language learners' abilities (Nascente, 2001). Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) assert that English as a EFL students afflicted with anxiety issues exhibited no significant improvement in their language learning.

The phenomenon of speaking anxiety affects both low and high proficiency students and can impede their performance ability (Dewi & Putri, 2016). However, when students feel confident in their speaking skills, they are more likely to generate ideas effectively. Effective communication and adaptation to cross-cultural encounters are more likely to occur when individuals possess the belief that they can predict the outcome of the interaction without excessive anxiety (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992). Strategies aimed at reducing uncertainty and anxiety play a pivotal role in enabling learners to adapt and communicate proficiently.

Numerous research had shown that such reflective exercises improve argumentation among students in different argumentative topics, from social to scientific (Bächtold, 2023; Felton, 2004; Iordanou, 2010; Iordanou & Constantinou, 2015; Iordanou & Rapanta, 2021; Kuhn et al., 2008; Shi, 2019). In the study conducted by Felton (2004), conducting a series of five debates and including reflection exercises had a positive impact

on the level of students' reasoning on a transfer issue (abortion), as opposed to holding debates alone. Sahamid et al. (2015) found that students who engaged in argumentation, reasoning, explanation, and questioning reported improvements in their critical thinking abilities.

Debate is an engaging and conversational approach that can be used in a classroom setting. Students can strengthen their speaking skills by participating in, listening to, and observing a debate in class (Somjai & Jansem, 2015). Although it was known that debating can improve the communication and speaking skills of the students, there was still a need to determine how students reinforce their reasoning in specific activities e.g., responding to questions, sharing opinions, and in class discussion, where speaking is also essential.

Research Objectives

1. Determine how debate skills develop the confidence of the learners in the use of the English language in terms of:
 - a. Class presentations
 - b. Responding to questions
2. Determine how debate skills reduce the learners' anxiety in the use of the English Language in terms of:
 - a. Class presentations
 - b. Responding to questions
3. Determine the benefits of debate skills in terms of developing confidence and reducing anxiety in the use of the English Language before and after acquiring debate skills.

Theoretical Framework

Numerous studies have shown over the years that the presence of uncertainty as a frequent element in a threat setting can cause anxiety and fear. The concept of "intolerance of uncertainty" is derived from research on anxiety, whose primary element was initially recognized as fear of the unexpected. This study used this concept as well as underpinned the uncertainty/anxiety theory as its primary context.

Fear of the unknown is defined as "an individual's propensity to experience fear caused by the perceived absence of information at any level of consciousness or point of processing" (Carleton 2016, p. 31). Fear is characterized by a present-focused orientation and a relatively high degree of certainty, whereas anxiety is characterized by a future-focused orientation and a

relatively high degree of uncertainty (Gu et al., 2020). The conceptual model of fear posits that uncertainty plays a pivotal role in the development of anxiety and worry.

Uncertainty/anxiety reduction theory posits that individuals are more likely to engage in effective communication and adapt to cross-cultural encounters if they possess the belief that they can accurately predict the outcome of the interaction without experiencing excessive anxiety (Witte, 1993). This belief motivates individuals to employ strategies aimed at reducing uncertainty and anxiety in the interaction. In contrast, Gudykunst and Kim (1992) assert that an excessive amount of uncertainty and anxiety can impede an individual's ability to adapt and communicate proficiently.

In the case of debating, at an initial step of training, students feel anxious of their skills in speaking. Students were uncertain on how they can share their thought effectively. In fact, speaking in front of audience was a known fear among students. In essence, this study wanted to determine how frequent engagement to debates shaped the language competence of students throughout time.

Communication anxiety is a prevalent form of anxiety that is described by feelings of unease and phobic attitudes towards public speaking. Individuals may experience varying levels of anxiety when engaging in public speaking, with some individuals experiencing heightened anxiety when addressing larger audiences of over one hundred people, while others may experience similar levels of anxiety when speaking to smaller groups of just five individuals (Lifei, 2018). In the context of classroom instruction, beginner students frequently exhibit communication apprehension, which has a detrimental impact on their acquisition of the English language.

The presence of foreign language anxiety at a high level has been observed to have a significant impact on communication apprehension among learners, resulting in their reluctance to engage in communication (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2022). Anxiety is a psychological phenomenon characterized by a subjective sense of apprehension and physiological symptoms such as sweating, nervousness, and impaired verbal communication, which are believed to arise from uncertainty regarding one's ability to speak effectively (Dewi & Putri, 2016; Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2022).

It has been observed that anxiety is not limited to low proficiency students, but also affects high proficiency students. The extent to which students can mitigate speaking anxiety during oral presentations is contingent upon their individualized coping strategies (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2022). The phenomenon of speaking anxiety has the potential to impact the performance ability of language learners. The presence of anxiety is observed among students who are required to communicate in English without sufficient opportunities for practice provided by the teacher (Sari, 2017).

The uncertainty/anxiety theory provided connection on how students could feel anxious on speaking, especially if they feel they are not proficient enough in speaking. Anxiety can be linked to different mannerism and actions that show the student is uncomfortable when speaking. In contrast, the theory also explains that when a person is confident enough that the speaking turns out well, he/she could generate ideas more effectively.

Methods

This study collected narrative statements from the debate trainees. Narrative data holds crucial significance in analyzing and answering the objectives of this study. By capturing the personal experiences, viewpoints, and reflections of the debate trainees, trainers, and experts, narrative data provides a deeper understanding of the nuances involved in skill development during debates. It allows for a more holistic and contextual interpretation of the essential skills acquired by debate trainees, enabling a comprehensive exploration of their experiences, challenges, and growth throughout their debate training process.

Sampling and Participants

The participants of the study were debate trainees for at least one year. Specifically, the participants of the study were former debate trainees, a member of a school debate club, has been in debate competitions. These characteristics of the participants became the basis of the study in finding the most applicable participants to be interviewed. There were 12 participants who participated in the one-on-one interview. This study employed purposive sampling to determine the participants.

Purposive sampling “is intentional selection of informants based on their ability to elucidate a specific theme, concept, or

phenomenon” (Robinsons 2014, p. 5244). Guidelines for choosing participants purposefully are offered by Rubin and Rubin (2011) in their discussion of qualitative interviewing. The criteria for selecting research subjects involves prioritizing those who possess (1) a deep understanding of the context of culture, situation, or experience under investigation, (2) a willingness to engage in dialogue, and (3) the ability to consider and respond to diverse perspectives (Robinsons, 2014; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The application of purposive sampling can offer significant contributions to quantitative and mixed methods studies. This is due to the ability of qualitative research to incorporate diverse perspectives, shedding light on the importance of the informants' positionality in relation to the research being conducted.

Purposive sampling can be utilized as a technique to enhance our comprehension of intricate social processes, which are often disregarded or undervalued in studies that employ probability sampling, if researchers are transparent about their selection criteria (Robinsons, 2014). Below were the profiles of the participants of the study.

Table 1. Basic Information of Participants

No.	Gender	Age	Education Background	Track	Trained
1	Female	21	Bachelor	Social Science	2018
2	Female	19	High School	Science	2020
3	Female	20	High School	Social Science	2019
4	Female	23	Bachelor	Science	2020
5	Male	20	High School	Social Science	2018
6	Male	20	Bachelor	Social Science	2019
7	Male	22	Bachelor	Science	2022
8	Female	19	Bachelor	Social Science	2020
9	Male	17	High School	Science	2021
10	Female	21	Bachelor	Science	2021
11	Male	19	High School	Science	2019
12	Female	18	High School	Social Science	2018

Research Instrument

This study developed an interview guide for data gathering. The research instrument is an interview guide that has been designed to enable individual interviews with participants. The utilization of an interview guide is a systematic approach to

ensure uniformity in the collection of data and to obtain pertinent narrative data from the study participants. The framework and objectives established in this study enabled the researcher to develop specific questions, pursue relevant contexts, and conduct an in-depth exploration of the research.

The interview guide was designed to incorporate probing and follow-up questions which help in harnessing in-depth narrative data collection. These questions help the researcher explore participants' viewpoints, motivations, experiences, and underlying reasons behind their responses. Probing questions encourage participants to elaborate on their initial answers and provide deeper insights.

Table 2. Interview Guide Questions

Objectives	Interview Questions	n
1. Determine how debate skills develop the confidence of the learners in the use of the English language in terms of a. Class discussion b. Responding to questions	A. Did your debate skills help you develop your confidence in the use of the English Language in Class Discussions? Elaborate with examples. B. Did your debate skills help you develop your confidence in the use of the English Language in Responding to Questions? Elaborate with examples. C. Are there any other instances in your academic engagements where your debate skills help you develop your confidence in the use of the English Language?	12
2. Determine how debate skills reduce the learners' anxiety in the use of the English Language in terms of a. Class discussion b. Responding to questions	A. Did your debate skills reduce your anxiety in the use of the English Language in class discussions? Elaborate with examples. B. Did your debate skills reduce your anxiety in the use of the English Language in responding to questions? Elaborate with examples. C. Are there any other instances in your academic engagements	12

	where your debate skills reduced your anxiety in the use of the English Language?	
3. Determine the benefits of debate skills in terms of developing confidence and reducing anxiety in the use of the English Language before and after acquiring debate skills.	A. What difference did you observe in terms of developing your confidence in the use of the English Language before and after acquiring your debate skills? B. What difference did you observe in terms of reducing your anxiety in the use of the English Language before and after acquiring your debate skills?	12

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection for this study involved the use of narrative data obtained through interviews. Interviews were conducted with debate trainees, trainers, and experts in the field of debate. These interviews aimed to gather in-depth insights and perspectives on the skills developed by debaters.

The one-on-one approach of the interviews facilitated an in-depth study of each participant's experiences and viewpoints. The researcher followed the interview guide, starting with introductory questions to establish rapport and gradually moving towards more specific topics related to the development of skills during debate training. Probing and follow-up questions were incorporated to encourage participants to elaborate on their initial answers and provide deeper insights. The interviews were conducted through a phone call.

During the interviews, the researcher collected narrative statements from the debate trainees. These narrative statements captured the personal experiences, viewpoints, and reflections of the participants. The researcher actively listened, taking detailed notes, and recorded the interviews with the participants' consent. The entire interview was recorded.

Data Analysis

The collected narrative data was subjected to narrative analysis process. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and unique perspectives within the narratives. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the

various skills developed by debate trainees and provided rich contextual information. This study employed analyzing themes that described the skill development of the participants in relation to their confidence and anxiety. Previous literatures described themes as “reflecting a pattern of shared meaning, organized around a core concept or idea, a central organizing concept” (Braun et al. 2019, p. 845).

The researcher reviewed and coded the data, organizing it into meaningful categories related to the essential skills developed during debate training. This analysis process allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the participants' experiences, challenges, and growth throughout their debate training process.

Results

Objective 1. Determine how debate skills develop the confidence of the learners in the use of the English language.

1.1 Class Discussion

All twelve (12) participants said that participating in debate strengthen their confidence level and became an effective speaker in front of the audience. One major benefit on participating in debate is developing their conviction and improve on how they articulate words in a logical form. One participant highlighted that debating has exposed him to a wider range of vocabulary and understand this vocabulary and therefore has applied him to use them to better explain certain logics. The data gathered indicated that the participants developed their speaking skills and confidence through their participation in debate.

“It did increase my confidence because in debate, strengthened my confidence level. It increased it a bit. When reporting in class, I am not stuttering because I can do nuancing with certain topics and the conversation will go on and on.” **[Participant 1]**

“Through debating, at least I can cope up with conversations with other people and I have confidence to say my thoughts.” **[Participant 2]**

“Debate has helped me think on top of my head.” **[Participant 3]**

“In general, debating has improved my vocabulary, especially that I am an interpersonal person. So, I love speaking so much, especially during oral presentations, especially during my reports.” **[Participant 7]**

“Debate has exposed me to a wider range of vocabulary, hearing people use different words, and it has helped me also learn this particular vocabulary and therefore has applied me to use them to better explain certain logics.” **[Participant 9]**

1.2 Responding to Questions

Discussions and oral presentation play a significant role on improving the academic performance of the learners. Six participants highlighted that having the ability to speak in English, provides the advantage to the learners on becoming an effective public speaker. Furthermore, debating can also help understand their weaknesses in terms of grammar, since they usually found their selves in a situation where in, they can experience and realized that they really have a problem with grammar, especially in subject-verb agreement.

“When you know that you are capable of speaking English, obviously you will be confident because your self-perception and self-efficacy will be improved. And your confidence in English language, if you know that you are confident, if you know that you can speak English in straight, it will help you to increase your confidence.” **[Participant 10]**

Moreover, six (6) participants answered that debating helps them cope up in a conversation and have the confidence to share their thoughts. The confidence they build by participating on debate, serves as their assets on providing logical inputs that makes them stand out in class. One participant highlighted that debate help her think on top of his head and answers questions that is accurate and quick. The data collected shows that participating on debate helps them improve their conversational skills.

“Before debating, it would take me super long to construct the answer to a particular question in my head. But debate, in its nature, is like fast track, right? So, you need to be ready on your feet always.” **[Participant 6]**

“Debate has helped me construct a reply for example, a response when a question still hasn't been finished asked.” **[Participant 4]**

“Debating helped in answering questions from classmates and teachers, because the same reason, it helped because debate will strengthen your conversational skills. **[Participant 5]**

Question 2. Determine how debate skills reduce the learners' anxiety in the use of the English Language.

2.1 Class Discussion

All twelve participants stated that participating in debate really helps them to improve their speaking skills and the ability to communicate using English language. Furthermore, one respondent highlighted that it improves his vocabulary and increase his confidence on communicating in front of large audience that resulted to reduce his anxiety every time he delivers speech in public. Based on the results, it indicates that the development of the capability on the usage of English language, depends on their participation in debates that plays a significant role on vocabulary development.

"It really helps reduce anxiety because most of the people have anxiety in front of an audience. Through debating, it helped me actually to strengthen self-confidence in front of other people. So I can speak to them now because of debating." **[Participant 7]**

"I think one person will be anxious if he is not exposed to this type of activities. Because our education system really relies on written. So if there are debate activities, one person will be anxious if he is not confident in his skills, at the same time, he is not exposed to these activities." **[Participant 6]**

"And I am very fortunate that I have these skills. I have learned these skills when I was in junior high school in comparison with my friends and some of my classmates who were not immersed in public speaking or who were not immersed in debating skill at all." **[Participant 7]**

"You will be less anxious because debating helps you share your thoughts fluently. And so, people will not misunderstand what you say." **[Participant 8]**

In addition, one (1) respondent emphasized that when he stopped participating on debates, he feels like his capability to speak grammatically correct decreases and feels like his not a good speaker anymore. Debate really has an important role on developing one's confidence and decreasing the anxiety on speaking in public and generating logical inputs.

"So, I wanted to go back to the debate with a clear intention of me wanting to have the conviction I once had of being articulate, I once were. So, I think the anxiety stems from me feeling that

I'm not as good when I am a debater as opposed when I am not okay." **[Participant 6]**

"Okay, so very recently I got back into debating because I stopped debating for a year. And within that year, I felt like I wasn't as good of a speaker anymore." **[Participant 4]**

2.2 Responding to Questions

Debate has the capability not only on improving confidence of a specific individual, but also it helps boost the ability to speak logically and create an informative conversation. One participant stated that his confidence to communicate depends on if he knows the topic and will just hear them talking if he doesn't. The other eleven (11) participants said that when they are engaging in debating, at first, you will feel uncomfortable with your experience. In the long run, as they keep on doing debating activities, they have less anxious because they able to be more fluent on conversing English language.

"When you are engaging in debating, at first, you will feel uncomfortable with your experience. In the long run, if you keep on doing debating activities, you will be less anxious because you will be more fluent." **[Participant 12]**

"In terms of debating, I will have confidence if I know the topic. But if I don't know the topic, I usually hear out the people who are talking. And then that's the time that if I know something, that's the time I will input." **[Participant 3]**

"Debating can also help me understand my weaknesses in terms of grammar because I usually found myself very in situation where in, I realized that I really have a problem with my grammar, especially in subject-verb agreement." **[Participant 7]**

"Debating influenced my confidence in speaking. I am able to respond to the questions more fluently because I know how to construct my sentences on-the-spot. This fluency also helps me respond to questions that oppose my stance." **[Participant 11]**

3.1 Emerging themes on the development of confidence and reducing anxiety towards their participation on debates.

Twelve (12) participants answered that debate helps them to explore and discover things that are out of their comfort zones. One participant highlighted that participating in debates help her became more proactive when a conversation is present. Their participation helps them to become more fluent and have more conviction when sharing their thoughts in a conversation.

Furthermore, the data shows the effectiveness of debate participation on developing the conversational skills, confidence and decreases the anxiety of a particular individual.

“Before debating, I was timid. I don't know how to initiate a conversation. I will usually just hear out people talking without me giving any inputs. But after debating, it made me more proactive when conversation is present.” **[Participant 10]**

“So, when I went into debating, I'd say that I became more confident in general. As I mentioned, I have more conviction.” **[Participant 5]**

“I think that the purpose of debate is to share your ideas and accept others' ideas also. You are debating to have a more reasonable connection and not to divide your thoughts. I think this makes debate important for us because we have a method that allows us to share ideas confidently and make solutions to our notions.” **[Participant 12]**

“Personally, before I engage in debating, I think I'm more on shy type person. The one who doesn't hear much. More on written, more on handwritten activities, quizzes. While when I engage in debating, I'm more into speaking. I'm in the meeting, I've been in the meeting sessions, I still feel anxious on myself because I think that I need to improve myself.” **[Participant 2]**

Discussion

Question 1. Determine how debate skills develop the confidence of the learners in the use of the English language.

1.1 Class Discussion

The adoption of classroom debate as an active teaching and learning method has been shown to enhance learning across multiple domains. Research suggests that the utilization of certain techniques can aid learners in achieving mastery of course content, enhancing critical thinking abilities, and improving oral communication skills. Debate has been found to foster critical thinking skills among learners. This is achieved through engaging in argumentation, conducting research, gathering facts, analyzing data, questioning assumptions, evaluating arguments, and demonstrating interpersonal skills. The learning environment fosters a shift from passive to active engagement among learners, prompting them to take a more participatory role in the learning process (Zare & Othman, 2015).

The participants of the study thought that their exposure to debate trainings and competitions helped them develop their presentation and impromptu speaking. Omelicheva (2007) revealed that the implementation of classroom debate was effective in engaging learners in intellectual practices that demonstrate critical thinking skills. Participants in the survey additionally reported that classroom debate allowed them to develop and improve their presentation. In addition, this study had similar results where participants observed direct improvement in their speaking skills. For instance, one student said that debate “strengthened her confidence level... when reporting in class, I am not stuttering because I can do nuancing with certain topics” [Participant 1].

Debate is an intellectual exercise that entails the presentation of arguments by students, who are required to provide reasons, explanations, and evidence to bolster their position. All of these pertain to competencies associated with critical thinking abilities. According to Sahamid et al. (2015), their survey results indicate that students reported an improvement in their critical thinking skills because of engaging in argumentation, reasoning, explanation, and questioning. Engagement to critical thinking, also allowed the participant to “have confidence to say his thoughts” [Participant 2].

Debating can also influence the competence of a student to learn new words and use them while speaking in a class discussion. Notably, they espouse the advantages of engaging in debates as a means of enhancing students' linguistic aptitude, particularly with regards to expanding their vocabulary and improving their fluency (Cinganotto, 2019). The students are encouraged to communicate in a manner that is both natural and effective, “what really matters is the fluency the students can develop supported by a wider and wider vocabulary” (Cinganotto 2019, p. 114). Participants of the current study also experienced improvements in their vocabulary, “debate has exposed me to a wider range of vocabulary... and therefore has applied me to use them to better explain certain logics” [Participant 9].

In this study, critical thinking was an essential skill that the participants developed which they were able to adapt during class discussion. One participant said that “debate has helped me think on top of my head” [Participant 4]. Participants reported improvements in their presentation, impromptu speaking, and speaking confidence as a result of engaging in debate. Debates

help students build their confidence that they may overcome their fear of speaking in front of others, which is a skill that is necessary for these scenarios (Zare & Othman, 2015). The intellectual exercise of presenting arguments with reasons, explanations, and evidence in debates directly relates to competencies associated with critical thinking. The development of critical thinking skills through debate enables participants to think on their feet and express their thoughts confidently during class discussions.

1.2 Responding to Questions

Compared to conventional teaching methods like lectures, discussions are more effective at developing students' higher order thinking skills (Roy & Macchiette, 2005). Finding and challenging assumptions, finding and acknowledging contradictions, and prioritizing the salience and relevance of distinct issues within the larger argument are some examples of critical thinking skills employed in a debate.

Debates call for the development of oral communication abilities beside critical thinking abilities, which are essential for success in most jobs (Combs & Bourne, 1994). According to Roy and Macchiette (2005), the process of debate encompasses not only the identification of appropriate content, but also the selection of an effective mode of delivery. This suggests that successful debate requires careful consideration of both message and presentation. Williams et al., (2001) gather data from 286 participants of competitive debate teams across 70 universities. The most significant advantage of participating in debates, as rated by the students, was the enhancement of their communication skills. Combs and Bourne (1994) found that student participation in in-class debates resulted in improvement in oral communication skills. This study also had an in-depth context of these literatures. For instance, one participant said that "debate has helped me construct a reply for example, a response when a question still hasn't been finished asked" [Participant 4]. Similarly, in classroom setting, one participant has similar experience, "it helped because debate will strengthen your conversational skills" [Participant 5].

Students also have the chance to express their ideas and refute the arguments of the opposition by supporting them with facts (Mumtaz & Latif, 2017). Along with that, the students must defend their opinions and give clear answers to the questions

that are posed to them (Alén et al., 2015). Debates require students to articulate their points of argument in a way that is convincing to an audience (Dy-Boarmana et al. 2018; Kim & Park, 2019). One participant also said, “debate, in its nature, is like fast track... you need to be ready on your feet always” [Participant 6]. Because of how a debate is being delivered, debaters can adapt to their oral presentations and are able to respond to questions effectively—as one participant said, “debating helped in answering questions from classmates and teachers” [Participant 5].

Debaters learn to construct replies, strengthen conversational skills, and articulate their arguments convincingly. They could express their ideas, refute opposing arguments with factual support, defend their opinions, and provide clear answers to questions. Debaters are trained to think on their feet and adapt their oral presentations, enabling them to respond effectively to questions posed by classmates and teachers.

Question 2. Determine how debate skills reduce the learners’ anxiety in the use of the English Language.

2.1 Class Discussion

This study indicated that the participants exposed to debating were less anxious when it comes for class discussion. Essentially, because of their debate trainings and practice, they were more capable of expressing themselves without visible fear in every statement. In that case, it is important to note that most of the time, anxiety levels reduce when a student often participate in debates. “Debates are strategy which widely supported by EFL teachers and learners in order to enhance learning skills and it is useful for the students to follow the program and practice activities through discussion” (Doyle, 1986, p. 396). The learner develops good listening skills through debate, enabling them to speak clearly.

In the small-scale study of Raja (2017), 75% of the students fear public speaking. One main reason of their fear was their lack of confidence. Anxiety has been identified as a hindering factor that can impede and diminish language abilities of students (Nascente, 2001; Yasmine, 2022). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) have reported that EFL students who experience anxiety issues exhibit lower performance levels. Similar anxiety mechanism was determined in this study. One participant

explained that “one person will be anxious if he is not confident in his skills” [Participant 6]. Another factor was fear of speaking which “most of the people have anxiety in front of an audience” [Participant 7].

Aftat (2008) and Mazouzi (2013) posit that the fear of making mistakes is a psychological issue that can have a negative impact on the oral performance of students. This fear can hinder their ability to express and share their ideas, particularly in discussions, due to concerns about being judged by their teachers or peers (Juhana, 2012). One participant had an important point saying, “you will be less anxious because debating helps you share your thoughts... people will not misunderstand what you say” [Participant 8].

Hughes (2002) argued that students are considered fluent when they can speak in a clear, logical manner that is unambiguously understood; otherwise, listeners will find it hard to stay focused. According to Snider and Schnurer (2002), classroom discussion promotes active engagement among students. Consequently, the approach of the students undergoes a transformation from an inactive position to an active one.

Anxiety has been identified as a hindering factor that can affect the language abilities, and fear of public speaking is a common concern among students. Lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and concerns about being judged by teachers or peers contribute to this anxiety. However, participating in debates helps students overcome these anxieties by providing a platform to share their thoughts and ideas without the fear of being misunderstood. Additionally, debates foster the development of good listening skills, which further enhance the students' ability to speak clearly.

2.2 Responding to Questions

Students are encouraged to think critically about the use of academic language by using debate as a teaching and learning approach. This includes language structures and vocabulary that are appropriate to communicate the argument's distinctive cognitive discourse functions (Dalton-Puffer 2013, 2016). Debate is an example of an "opinion-gap activity," since it requires students to communicate their thoughts and feelings in response to a teacher-made assertion supported by evidence, which strengthens and makes their arguments more compelling. One participant thought that participating in debates “[enable him to]

respond to the questions more fluently because I know how to construct my sentences on-the-spot” [Participant 11]. One student explained that frequent practicing debates helped students be less anxious when speaking — “you will be less anxious because you will be more fluent” [Participant 12].

Assessing a debate requires looking at both the content and knowledge students have learned—which would be the primary focus for a subject teacher—from various angles as well as a broader set of skills. A language teacher would prioritize linguistic features, and a subject teacher would prioritize the students' understanding of the material. Because of this, they frequently employ paper or digital grids to account for the many aspects of the learning process (Cinganotto, 2019). In terms of learning process, one participant said debating “helped me understand my weaknesses” [Participant 7] pointing out his weakness in subject-verb agreement, especially while speaking and responding to questions.

Participating in debates improved participants' tolerance for different viewpoints and respect for others' perspectives (Mumtaz & Latif, 2017). As the students encounter numerous counterarguments from the opposite team, a sense of respect grows among them. With the use of debates, students can demonstrate a deeper level of understanding, including evaluation, criticism, and justification for a proposed solution (Hall, 2011). One participant of this study thought that “fluency also help me respond to questions that oppose my stance” [Participant 11].

Frequent practice in debates contributes to increased fluency, which in turn leads to reduced anxiety when speaking. Students expressed feeling more confident and less anxious in constructing their sentences on-the-spot during debates. This improved fluency and confidence gained from debating can carry over to their ability to respond to questions, as they become more comfortable with expressing their thoughts and ideas. Engaging in debates can have a positive impact on reducing anxiety levels when students are faced with the task of responding to questions.

3.1 Emerging themes on the development of confidence and reducing anxiety towards their participation on debates.

The practice of direct conversation for English language learners can take place in both formal academic settings, such as

traditional classrooms, as well as in informal non-academic situations, such as conversation clubs. English conversation clubs are typically established by educators and learners seeking to enhance their English language proficiency in a more relaxed and convivial setting than that of the traditional classroom environment (Милова, 2015). The efficacy of the conversation club is influenced by the proficiency of the communicative group's facilitator, who must possess pedagogical expertise to organize engaging activities (e.g., debates, film screenings, games) that can motivate all participants to utilize their English language skills proficiently (Dobson, 1981; Harmer, 2001; Милова, 2015). This study reflected similar results indicating that debates help trainees to start conversations and make casual statements. One participant said, debate “made me more proactive when conversation is present” [Participant 10].

“The conventional view is that strong beliefs are what we bring into a discussion. In debate, convictions are what we take out of such a conversation. The aim is not to safeguard our prior beliefs, but to play and experiment until we stumble on ideas worthy of our commitment.” (Bo Seo, from The Guardian, 2022)

One participant of the study indicated that debating helped her be “more confident in general. As I mentioned, I have more conviction” [Participant 5]. In relation to the snippet from above, one teacher said that “... you are debating to have a more reasonable connection and not to divide your thoughts. I think this what makes debate important for us because we have a method that allows us to share ideas confidently and make solutions” [Participant 12].

Participants mention that engaging in debates made them more proactive in conversations, increased their confidence, and strengthened their convictions. Debating fosters a reasonable connection, share ideas confidently, and find solutions. English conversation clubs provide a relaxed and informal setting for language learners to practice their English proficiency. Participating in debates helps improve students' speaking skills, boosts their confidence, and facilitates effective communication by enabling them to express opinions, engage in conversations, and find solutions through shared ideas.

Conclusion

Engaging in debate fosters critical thinking skills among learners. By participating in argumentation, conducting research, analyzing data, and questioning assumptions, learners develop the ability to think critically and express their thoughts effectively. This shift from passive to active engagement in the learning process promotes confidence in their ability to contribute to class discussions.

Furthermore, the study indicates that exposure to debate trainings and competitions helps learners develop their presentation and impromptu speaking skills. Through debate, participants reported a direct improvement in their speaking abilities, with increased confidence and reduced stuttering. By honing their communication skills in a structured and challenging environment, learners gain the confidence to express their ideas fluently and coherently.

Additionally, debate enhances learners' linguistic aptitude by expanding their vocabulary and improving their fluency. Engaging in debates exposes students to a wider range of vocabulary, allowing them to better explain complex concepts and reasoning. This exposure to new words and their usage strengthens their language skills and boosts their confidence in expressing themselves more effectively.

The acquisition of debate skills has been found to have a positive impact on the development of critical thinking abilities, enhancement of oral communication skills, and expansion of learners' vocabulary. These factors are considered crucial in bolstering learners' confidence in using the English language. Through engagement in debates, individuals acquire the capacity to engage in spontaneous thinking, articulate their ideas with assurance, and surmount apprehension associated with public speaking.

References

- Aftat, M. (2008). Motivation and Genuine learning. [Online]. <http://www.englishteacher1.com/motivation.html> (accessed June 13, 2023).
- Alén, E., Domínguez, T., & de Carlos, P. (2015). University students' perceptions of the use of academic debates as a teaching methodology. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 16, 15-21. doi:10.1016/j.jhlste.2014.11.001
- Amiri, F., Othman, M., & Jahedi, M. (2017). A case study of the development of an ESL learner's speaking skills through

- instructional debate. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 7(2), 120–126.
- Bächtold, M., Pallarès, G., De Checchi, K., & Munier, V. (2023). Combining debates and reflective activities to develop students' argumentation on socioscientific issues. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 60(4), 761-806.
- Berdine, R. (1987). Increasing student involvement in the learning process through debate on controversial topics. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 9(3), 6-8.
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., Terry, G. (2019). Thematic Analysis. In: Liamputtong, P. (eds) *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*. Springer, Singapore.
- Brown, D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
- Brown, D. (2004). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices*. Pearson Education.
- Carleton, R. N. (2016). Into the unknown: A review and synthesis of contemporary models involving uncertainty. *Journal of anxiety disorders*, 39, 30-43.
- Cinganotto, L. (2019). Debate as a teaching strategy for language learning. *Lingue e Linguaggi*, 30, 107-125.
- Combs, H., & Bourne, S. (1994). The renaissance of educational debate: Results of a five-year study of the use of debate in business education. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 5(1), 57-67.
- Dalton-Puffer, C. (2013). A construct of cognitive discourse functions for conceptualising content-language integration in CLIL and multilingual education. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1(2), 216-253.
- Dalton-Puffer, C. (2016). Cognitive discourse functions: Specifying an integrative interdisciplinary construct. *Conceptualising integration in CLIL and multilingual education*, 29, 54.
- Dewi, D. S., & Putri, A. (2016). The Influence of Jigsaw Technique and Speaking Anxiety toward Student's Speaking Competence. *JCP (Jurnal Cahaya Pendidikan) Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan*, 2(2).
- Dobson, J. M. (1981). *Effective techniques for English conversation groups*. English Teaching Division, Educational and Cultural Affairs, International Communication Agency.
- Doyle, W. (1986). Classroom organization and management. In, MC Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook on research on teaching* (pp. 392-431). New York: MacMillan.
- Dy-Boarmana, E. A., Nisly, S. A., & Costello, T. J. (2018). It's no debate, debates are great. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 10, 10-13. doi:10.1016/j.cptl.2017.09.016

- Felton, M. (2004). The development of discourse strategies in adolescent argumentation. *Cognitive Development*, 19, 35–52.
- Firmansyah, D., & Valatansa vegian, E. E. (2019). Improving the Students' Speaking Skills through Debate Technique. *PROJECT (Professional Journal of English Education)*, 2(6), 70–76.
- Goodwin, J. (2003). Students' perspectives on debate exercises in content area classes. *Communication Education*, 52(2), 157-163.
- Gu, Y., Gu, S., Lei, Y., & Li, H. (2020). From uncertainty to anxiety: How uncertainty fuels anxiety in a process mediated by intolerance of uncertainty. *Neural Plasticity*, 2020.
- Gudykunst, W. B. (2005). *An Anxiety/Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory of Effective Communication: Making the Mesh of the Net Finer*.
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Hammer, M. R. (1988). Strangers and hosts: An uncertainty reduction based theory of intercultural adaptation. *Cross-cultural adaptation: Current approaches*, 11, 106-139.
- Hall, D. (2011). Debate: Innovative teaching to enhance critical thinking and communication skills in healthcare professionals. *The Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences and Practice*, 9(3), 1-8.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching*. London/New York, 401-405.
- Hasibuan, A. R., & Irzawati, I. (2020). Students' speaking anxiety on their speaking performance: A study of EFL learners.
- Hughes, R., & Reed, B. S. (2016). *Teaching and researching speaking*. Taylor & Francis.
- Indah, R. N. (2017). Critical Thinking, Writing Performance and Topic Familiarity of Indonesian EFL Learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 8(2), 229–236.
- Iordanou, K. (2010). Developing argument skills across scientific and social domains. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 11(3), 293–327.
- Iordanou, K., & Constantinou, C. (2015). Supporting use of evidence in argumentation through practice in argumentation and reflection in the context of SOCRATES learning environment. *Science Education*, 99(2), 282–311.
- Iordanou, K., & Rapanta, C. (2021). "Argue with me": a method for developing argument skills. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 631203.
- Juhana, J. (2012). Psychological factors that hinder students from speaking in English class (A case study in a senior high school in South Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia). *Journal of Education and Practice*, 3(12), 100-110.

- Kennedy, R. (2007). In-class debates: Fertile ground for active learning and the cultivation of critical thinking and oral communication skills. *International Journal of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education*, 19(2).
- Kuhn, D., Goh, W., Iordanou, K., & Shaenfield, D. (2008). Arguing on the computer: A microgenetic study of developing argument skills in a computer-supported environment. *Child Development*, 79(5), 1310–1328.
- Lifei, Y. (2018). How to overcome beginners' communication anxiety. *International Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Science*, 6(6), 94-98.
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1994). The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language Learning*, 44(2), 283-305.
- Mazouzi, M. S. (2013). Analysis of some factors affecting learners' oral performance (Master's thesis).
- Moneva, J., & Tribunalo, S. M. (2020). Students' Level of Self-confidence and Performance Tasks. *Asia Pacific Journal of Academic Research in Social Sciences*, 5(1), 42–48.
- Mumtaz, S., & Latif, R. (2017). Learning through debate during problem-based learning: An active learning strategy. *Advances in Physiology Education*, 41, 390- 394. doi:10.1152/advan.00157.2016
- Mumtaz, S., & Latif, R. (2017). Learning through debate during problem-based learning: An active learning strategy. *Advances in Physiology Education*, 41, 390- 394. doi:10.1152/advan.00157.2016
- Nascente, R. M. M. (2001). Practical ways to help anxious learners. [Online]. <http://www3.telus.net/linguisticsissues/anxious.html> (accessed June 13, 2023).
- Nisly, S. A., Kingdon, L. K., Janzen, K. M., & Dy-Boarman, E. A. (2017). Using debates to mimic clinical discussion in experiential education. *Innovations in Pharmacy*, 8(4), Article 9.
- Omelicheva, M. Y. (2007). Resolved: Academic Debate Should Be a Part of Political Science Curricula. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 3, 161-175.
- Othman, M., Sahamid, H., Zulkefli, M. H., Hashim, R., & Mohamad, F. (2015). The effects of debate competition on critical thinking among Malaysian second language learners. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research*, 23(4), 656-664.
- Park, H., & Lee, A. R. (2005). L2 learners' Anxiety, Self-Confidence, and Oral performance. *Kunsan National University, Concordia University*, 197–208.

- Raja, F. (2017). Anxiety level in students of public speaking: Causes and remedies. *Journal of education and educational development*, 4(1).
- Riwayatningsih, R. (2019). Improving Writing Skill with Questioning: A Path on Critical Thinking Skill. *Metathesis: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 3(2), 203–213.
- Robinson, R. S. (2014). Purposive Sampling. *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research*, 5243–5245. doi:10.1007/978-94-007-0753-5_2337
- Roy, A., & Maechiette, B. (2005). Debating the issues: A tool for augmenting critical thinking skills of marketing students. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 27(3). 264-276.
- Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2011). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. sage.
- Saputri, M. R. A., Indah, R. N., & Rasyid, F. (2022). DEBATE, CRITICAL THINKING DISPOSITION, AND SELF CONFIDENCE: DO THEY CONTRIBUTE TO SPEAKING PROFICIENCY?. *Premise: Journal of English Education and Applied Linguistics*, 11(1), 189-207.
- Sari, D. (2017). Speaking anxiety as a factor in studying EFL. *English Education Journal*, 8(2), 177-186.
- Seo, B. (2022). The art of debating taught me to see another view – it’s a skill that brings people together. *Life and Style, The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/sep/03/the-art-of-debating-taught-me-to-see-another-view-it-is-a-skill-that-brings-people-together> (accessed June 14, 2023)
- Shi, Y. (2019). Enhancing evidence-based argumentation in a Mainland China middle school. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 59, 101809.
- Snider, A., & Schnurer, M. (2002). Many sides: Debate across the curriculum. *IDEA*.
- Somjai, S., & Jansem, A. (2015). The use of debate technique to develop speaking ability of grade ten students at Bodindecha (Sing Singhaseni) school. *International Journal of Technical Research and Applications*, 13(13), 27-31.
- Sovianti, D. A. R. (2021). The Correlation Between Critical Thinking Ability and SelfConfidence toward Speaking Skill Among The Third Level Students at Language Center Pare-Kedir. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Proficiency*, 2(2), 17–27.
- Suhendra, E. (2020). Parliamentary English Debate within Communicative Language Teaching Context: A Personal Reflection. *Journal of English Language Education*, 3(1), 93–102.
- Walker, M., & Warhurst, C. (2000). 'In Most Classes You Sit Around Very Quietly at a Table and get Lectured at...': Debates, assessment and student learning. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 5(1), 33-49.

- Williams, D., McGee, B., & Worth, D. (2001). University student perceptions of the efficacy of debate participation: An empirical investigation. *Argumentation and Advocacy*, 37, 198-209.
- Witte, K. (1993). A theory of cognition and negative affect: Extending Gudykunst and Hammer's theory of uncertainty and anxiety reduction. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 17(2), 197-215.
- Yassmine, D. (2022). EFL Students' Attitudes towards the Effectiveness of the Debate Technique in Enhancing Students' Speaking Skill The Case of Third Year LMD Students of English at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra.
- Zare, P., & Othman, M. (2015). Students' perceptions toward using classroom debate to develop critical thinking and oral communication ability. *Asian Social Science*, 11(9), 158.
- Мілова, О. Є. (2015). Teaching conversation in English language classroom: conversational techniques. *Освітологічний дискурс*, 2(10), 159-169.