

'DANCING TO DEBATE' IN ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL: STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the utilization of the "Dancing to Debate" method in speaking class from the viewpoint of students. A total of 46 students from the English Education Department at a state university in North Sumatera Province, Indonesia, participated in filling out a questionnaire consisting of 10 Likert scale questions (1 to 5), as well as semi-structured interviews with the students. The qualitative data were collected through a qualitative case study approach to examine a phenomenon within its real-life context. The results show that a significant percentage of students felt that this method helped them feel more confident in speaking English (34.78% strongly agreed, 32.61% agreed). Most students also found the method to be effective in improving their speaking skills (32.61% strongly agreed, 28.26% agreed) and making speaking practice more enjoyable (36.96% strongly agree, 45.65% agreed). The positive feedback from students suggests that the strategy was successful in achieving its intended goals and was valued for its positive impact on the learning experience. Overall, the findings of this study align with the importance of making English learning activities enjoyable, fun, and stimulating for children.

Keywords: *Debate, fluency, fun, speaking*

INTRODUCTION

The English learning activities in the classroom should be enjoyable, fun, and stimulating for children, allowing them to naturally engage in the English teaching-learning process (Bavi, 2018) ; (Octaviana, 2017)(Ramzan et al., 2023). This approach enables youngsters to reach their full potential (Jingga, 2022). Creating a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, establishing a happy and relaxed learning environment, and using agile and varied teaching methods are essential for fun junior middle school English teaching (Mei, 2005). Interactive activities, which fully utilize the presence of teachers and peer students, are preferable in the classroom (Tian, 2021). Fostering positive emotions in English language classrooms helps students become more attentive, active, and motivated to study (Liu & Hong, 2021). Using humor and fun in the classroom enhances vocabulary development, grammar instruction, and the illustration of the importance of word choice and clarity in composition (Minchew & Hopper, 2008). Classroom enjoyment significantly influences students' attitudes toward learning English, underscoring the importance of creating an enjoyable learning environment (Ramzan et al., 2023).

In speaking, English-speaking activities in the classroom should be enjoyable and stimulating, as this helps develop learners' communicative competence and motivation (Singh, 2016); (Socheath, 2010); (Yagcioglu, 2022). Moreover, effective classroom activities in higher vocational English classes should be practical, authentic, and innovative, improving students' communicative skills through teamwork, pair work, and personal work (Pin-Rong, 2011). For instance, speaking activities in the classroom, such as discussions and information gap activities, can help adult learners develop

speaking skills and become effective communicators in English (Doff, 2014). In addition, speaking activities in the classroom can develop students' ability to speak fluently and interactively, resulting in increased confidence in speaking English (Nuriddinovna, 2021).

One of the teaching methods that can be used in teaching speaking is the "dancing to debate" method. First, the class is divided into two groups, selected randomly. The first group forms an inner circle facing outward. Then, the next group of students forms an outer circle around the first circle. The teacher plays music, chosen according to the students' preferences. When the music plays, the students must dance. Students in the inner circle must dance while walking clockwise. Meanwhile, students in the outer circle must walk and dance counterclockwise. The teacher plays the music for about 30 to 45 seconds. Then, the teacher stops the music. When the music stops, the students will find their new partners. Students must debate with the partner right in front of them. The teacher provides a debate topic that has been written on the board, a poster, or a projector screen.

Implementing the debate technique has been shown to enhance students' speaking skills, as evidenced by the progressive mean improvement in speaking scores (Lubis & Siregar, 2021). Incorporating debate into language teaching helps students gain confidence in presenting their viewpoints, contributing to character development and improved speaking abilities (Pradana, 2017). Debate interventions also have been found to enhance English L2 speaking competence in secondary school students, making their language more fluent, accurate, coherent, and lexically sophisticated (el Majidi et al., 2021). Moreover, the debate method enhances students' speaking proficiency by fostering their active participation in expressing oral arguments logically and systematically (Werdiningsih, 2018). Furthermore, the benefits extend beyond students; using the debate technique also enhances teacher performance, student engagement in teaching and learning, and their speaking skills (Nhan et al., 2022); (Tianame et al., 2019).

This method is recognized as one of problem-based method. Problem-based tasks in language learning significantly enhance linguistic competence, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving abilities. For future educators, these tasks not only improve speaking skills but also promote ideational originality, as shown by Dmitrenko, Petrova, and Podzygun (2020). Similar outcomes were found in multilingual Finnish classrooms, where students experienced greater language awareness and saw the tasks as meaningful and novel (Repo et al., 2021). The Creative Problem-Solving (CPS) model, applied in English L2 classrooms, has also demonstrated its effectiveness in fostering creativity, classroom participation, and original thinking (Wang, 2019). Moreover, intentional teaching methods that prioritize inclusivity can make complex problem-solving more accessible, developing both cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Glazewski & Ertmer, 2020).

Cognitive development, particularly in bilingual learners, is closely tied to language acquisition. Saienko (2017) highlights that foreign language education enhances memory, perception, and creativity. Additionally, bilingualism has been linked to superior performance in tasks requiring cognitive flexibility, further illustrating how linguistic diversity fosters creative thinking (Cushen & Wiley, 2011). Collaborative and

inquiry-based learning, combined with project-based tasks, also elevates students' problem-solving abilities and innovation potential (Plailek et al., 2023; Hether, 2023).

To that reasons, the "dancing to debate" method is not only an innovative way to teach speaking but also a fun and engaging approach. It is hypothesized that this method can make the learning process enjoyable for students and increase their willingness to speak. By incorporating elements of music, movement, and debate, this method stimulates multiple senses and learning modalities, making the learning experience more dynamic and memorable. Additionally, the element of fun and excitement inherent in this method can create a positive learning environment, encouraging students to participate actively and confidently. Overall, "dancing to debate" has the potential to transform the way speaking skills are taught, making it a valuable tool for language educators.

Various studies have investigated the use of certain fun strategies in teaching English (An-nisa & Suwartono, 2020); (Ghafar, 2024); (Guzalkhon, 2024);(Kurniawan et al., 2022), and teaching speaking specifically (see: (Ardiningtyas et al., 2023); (Ekoç, 2020); (Ericsson et al., 2023). Among these, some have specifically explored the impact of debate strategies on enhancing speaking abilities (see: (Arung & Jumardin, 2016); (Iman, 2017); (Tianame et al., 2019). However, research that combines the elements of fun activities and debate in English language teaching remains relatively limited. This gap shows the potential for further exploration into enjoyable approaches that integrate both fun and debate elements to promote speaking proficiency in English language learners.

To that extent, investigating the role of fun activities and debates in enhancing students' speaking fluency is crucial for several reasons. First, it helps educators understand the effectiveness of these methods in improving language skills. From the students' perspective, it offers insights into their engagement levels and how these activities impact their learning experience. This research can lead to the development of more engaging and effective teaching strategies, ultimately benefiting both educators and students. To that extent, this study is aimed to investigate the utilization of the "Dancing to Debate" method in speaking class from the viewpoint of students.

METHOD

Design

In this study, the researchers chose to use a qualitative case study approach to examine a phenomenon within its real-life context. This approach allowed the researcher to gather detailed information from multiple sources, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the problem being studied, by avoiding a single perspective and considering various complexities (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The researcher aimed to provide a thorough analysis of the "Dancing to Debate" strategy for improving speaking skills.

Participants and Technique of Collecting Data

The participants in the study were 60 students from the English Education Department at a state university in North Sumatera Province, Indonesia. These students were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they had experience with the "Dancing to Debate" strategy. Data were collected through a questionnaire consisting

of 10 Likert scale questions (1 to 5), as well as semi-structured interviews with the students. The scale in this study ranges from 1 to 5, with each number indicating a different level of agreement or disagreement. A rating of 1 means "Strongly Disagree," 2 means "Disagree," 3 means "Neutral," 4 means "Agree," and 5 means "Strongly Agree." This scale lets respondents show their agreement or disagreement with statements or questions.

Technique of Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using two methods. First, statistical counts were applied to the quantitative data obtained from the student questionnaires. This analysis allowed the researcher to quantify the students' responses and identify any patterns or trends. Second, a constructive analysis was conducted on the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. This analysis involved interpreting the students' responses to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences with the "Dancing to Debate" strategy. Overall, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods provided a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the "Dancing to Debate" strategy for improving students' speaking skills.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 46 students from three different classes of the semester II English Education Study Program participated in filling out the questionnaire, which was designed to gather data on the utilization of the "Dancing to Debate" method in speaking classes. The questionnaire data, presented below, provides information about the students' perspectives on this teaching approach.

Table 1. Students' perspectives regarding the "Dancing to Debate" strategy

No	Criteria	Percentage (%)				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	The "Dancing to Debate" strategy helped me feel more confident in speaking English.	34.78	32.61	21.74	4.35	6.52
2	I enjoyed participating in the "Dancing to Debate" activities.	39.13	36.96	10.87	8.70	4.35
3	The "Dancing to Debate" strategy improved my ability to think quickly and articulate my thoughts.	32.61	39.13	13.04	10.87	4.35
4	I found the "Dancing to Debate" strategy to be an effective way to improve my speaking skills.	32.61	28.26	23.91	13.04	2.17
5	The "Dancing to Debate" strategy helped me become more comfortable speaking in front of others.	97.83	-	-	-	2.17
6	I believe the "Dancing to Debate" strategy made speaking practice more enjoyable.	36.96	45.65	6.52	2.17	8.70

7	The "Dancing to Debate" strategy encouraged me to participate more in class discussions.	34.78	36.96	15.22	6.52	6.52
8	I would recommend the "Dancing to Debate" strategy to other students to improve their speaking skills.	30.43	47.83	19.57	-	2.17
9	The "Dancing to Debate" strategy helped me learn new vocabulary and expressions.	30.43	47.83	13.04	4.35	4.35
10	Overall, I am satisfied with the "Dancing to Debate" strategy for improving my speaking skills.	26.09	50.00	19.57	4.35	-

The table presents the questionnaire results regarding the "Dancing to Debate" strategy used in speaking classes, with responses rated on a scale from 1 to 5. The findings show that a significant percentage of students felt that this method helped them feel more confident in speaking English (34.78% strongly agreed, 32.61% agreed). Additionally, most students enjoyed participating in these activities (39.13% strongly agreed, 36.96% agreed) and believed that it improved their ability to think quickly and articulate their thoughts (32.61% strongly agreed, 39.13% agreed). Most students also found the method to be effective in improving their speaking skills (32.61% strongly agreed, 28.26% agreed) and making speaking practice more enjoyable (36.96% strongly agreed, 45.65% agreed). Furthermore, nearly all students felt that it helped them become more comfortable speaking in front of others (97.83% agreed). The "Dancing to Debate" strategy also encouraged students to participate more in class discussions (34.78% strongly agreed, 36.96% agreed) and helped them learn new vocabulary and expressions (30.43% strongly agreed, 47.83% agreed). Overall, a majority of students were satisfied with the "Dancing to Debate" strategy for improving their speaking skills (26.09% strongly agreed, 50.00% agreed).

The highest score, with 97.83% agreement, is for the statement "The 'Dancing to Debate' strategy helped me become more comfortable speaking in front of others." This indicates that most students felt that this method significantly improved their confidence in speaking publicly. This high level of agreement suggests that the "Dancing to Debate" strategy is particularly effective in addressing this aspect of speaking skills, which is often a significant challenge for language learners. The positive response to this statement underscores the potential of using innovative and engaging teaching methods, such as "Dancing to Debate," to enhance students' confidence and proficiency in speaking English. This statement is supported by the interview with one of the students. The respondent highlights

"Because it's kinda fun, make me feel more confident in speaking English, improved my ability to think quickly and articulate my thoughts, improve my speaking skills, and last it's enjoyable".

This indicates that the "Dancing to Debate" strategy was perceived positively by students for several reasons. Firstly, students found it enjoyable, suggesting that the method engaged them and made the learning process more enjoyable. Secondly, the strategy made students feel more confident in speaking English, indicating that it

helped build their self-assurance. Thirdly, students felt that the method improved their ability to think quickly and articulate their thoughts, suggesting that it enhanced their cognitive skills. Additionally, students believed that the strategy improved their overall speaking skills, indicating its effectiveness in enhancing their language proficiency. Overall, the positive feedback from students suggests that the "Dancing to Debate" strategy was perceived as a beneficial and enjoyable approach to enhancing their speaking skills.

Furthermore, the statement "I enjoyed participating in the 'Dancing to Debate' activities" received positive responses from most students. Specifically, 39.13% strongly agreed and 36.96% agreed with this statement, indicating that a significant portion of students found the activities enjoyable. This statement is supported by the statement from one of the students:

"Because this activity makes me feel that I don't get bored when studying and can also increase my self-confidence and increase the vocabulary of my debate partners, and this activity also makes learning activities not boring"

This underlines that the "Dancing to Debate" activity was perceived as engaging and effective by students for several reasons. Firstly, the students enjoyed the exercise, suggesting that it kept them engaged and kept them from getting bored while they studied. Secondly, the activity was seen as a confidence booster, suggesting that it helped students feel more assured in their speaking abilities. Thirdly, students felt that the activity contributed to expanding the vocabulary of their debate partners, indicating that it promoted collaborative learning and the exchange of ideas. Additionally, the activity was seen as a way to make learning more dynamic and interesting, highlighting its effectiveness in creating a lively and stimulating learning environment. Overall, the positive feedback from students suggests that the "Dancing to Debate" activity was successful in achieving its intended goals and was valued for its positive impact on the learning experience.

In addition, another point, the statement "The 'Dancing to Debate' strategy improved my ability to think quickly and articulate my thoughts" received varying levels of agreement from students. Specifically, 32.61% strongly agreed and 39.13% agreed with the statement, indicating that most students felt that the strategy had a positive impact on their cognitive skills. This statement is supported by the statement from one of the students:

"This activity makes the class atmosphere fun so it makes me happy and also gives me experience to think quickly in responding to things."

This underlines that the "Dancing to Debate" activity had a positive impact on the classroom atmosphere, making it enjoyable and creating a sense of happiness among students. Additionally, the activity provided students with valuable experience in thinking quickly and responding effectively to various topics or situations. This suggests that the activity was successful in creating a dynamic and engaging learning environment that stimulated students' thinking skills and fostered a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction in the classroom. Overall, the feedback indicates that the "Dancing to

Debate" activity was effective in achieving its goal of making learning enjoyable and promoting active participation and quick thinking among students.

However, according to the interview data which was elaborated by the respondents, this game brings some disadvantages.

"We've got only 2 or 3 minutes which I think it's not worth it to discuss a topic, then there are some students who can't talk what's in their mind but the time is already out"-one of respondents

"I think the disadvantages of the activity a little noisy because everyone is talking." -one of respondents

"In my opinion, maybe it was a disadvantage when the debate session started. Because all the arguing and creating a noisy atmosphere means that some people may not be able to focus on thinking." -one of respondents

One student mentioned that the time allocated for discussing a topic, which is only 2 or 3 minutes, is too short, making it challenging to fully express thoughts. Another student highlighted the noise level during the activity, as everyone is talking at the same time, which can be distracting. Additionally, one student expressed concern about the noisy atmosphere at the beginning of the debate session, suggesting that it might hinder some individuals from focusing on their thoughts.

The interview data further reveals additional drawbacks of the "Dancing to Debate" activity as perceived by the respondents.

"a little, because I am not very confident when facing friends to speak English with my ability to have quite a bit of English vocabulary and when facing friends to speak, I have stage fright making me nervous about what to say"-one of respondents

"But there is a drawback here. When debating, all participants join in speaking. This makes us and our debating opponents unfocused and unable to listen. There is indeed a good side Because it is to train your hearing to be more focused, but it returns to the initial problem. When all participants participate in a debate with limited time, we become unfocused. The solution to this problem is, when you finish dancing. Just choose 2 or 3 groups to debate, to be more effective. well, in the second dance or so on. Groups that have not yet received a part debate." -one of respondents

One student expressed a lack of confidence when speaking English in front of friends, attributing this to stage fright and nervousness about what to say, despite having a reasonable amount of English vocabulary. Another student mentioned a specific challenge during the debate portion of the activity, noting that when all participants are speaking simultaneously, it can lead to a lack of focus and listening ability. This student suggested a potential solution of limiting the number of groups participating in the debate to improve effectiveness. These drawbacks suggest that

while the "Dancing to Debate" activity has its benefits, it also presents challenges that need to be addressed for optimal learning outcomes.

However, overall, the findings of this study align with the importance of making English learning activities enjoyable, fun, and stimulating for children. This approach, as supported by (Bavi, 2018), (Chou, 2014), (Octaviana, 2017), and (Ramzan et al., 2023), allows students to naturally engage in the learning process. Additionally, the study's results are in line with (Jingga, 2022) assertion that such an approach helps students reach their full potential. (Mei, 2005) emphasizes the significance of creating a harmonious relationship between teachers and students, establishing a happy and relaxed learning environment, and using agile and varied teaching methods in junior middle school English teaching, which resonates with the findings. Furthermore, (Tian, 2021) highlights the importance of interactive activities that make full use of teachers and peer students in the classroom, which is consistent with the positive outcomes of the "Dancing to Debate" strategy in this study.

Furthermore, the findings of this study support the statements from previous studies emphasizing the importance of enjoyable and stimulating English speaking activities in the classroom, such as (Singh, 2016), (Socheath, 2010), and (Yagcioglu, 2022), which assert that such activities are essential for developing learners' communicative competence and motivation in speaking. Additionally, (Pin-Rong, 2011) suggests that effective classroom activities in higher vocational English classes should be practical, authentic, and innovative, improving students' communicative skills through teamwork, pair work, and individual work. For example, (Doff, 2014) mentions that speaking activities such as discussions and information gap activities can help adult learners develop speaking skills and become effective communicators in English. Furthermore, (Nuriddinova, 2021) states that speaking activities in the classroom can enhance students' ability to speak fluently and interactively, leading to increased confidence in speaking English.

In the meantime, debate methods in this research are also proved as an effective way to enhance students' speaking skills, as previously explained by some researches (see: (el Majidi et al., 2021); (Lubis & Siregar, 2021); (Nhan et al., 2022); (Pradana, 2017); (Tianame et al., 2019); (Werdiningsih, 2018)). It is proved that the progressive mean improvement in speaking scores indicates that using the debate strategy improves students' speaking abilities (Lubis & Siregar, 2021). Debate is a valuable tool for character development and better speaking skills since it gives pupils the confidence to voice their own opinions in front of an audience (Pradana, 2017). Additionally, it has been discovered that debate treatments improve secondary school students' proficiency speaking English as a second language by increasing their language's fluency, accuracy, coherence, and lexical sophistication (el Majidi et al., 2021). Furthermore, by encouraging students to actively participate in conveying oral arguments logically and methodically, the debate technique improves students' speaking proficiency (Werdiningsih, 2018). Moreover, employing the debate strategy improves student participation in teaching and learning, teacher performance, and speaking abilities ((Nhan et al., 2022); (Tianame et al., 2019)).

CONCLUSION

The "Dancing to Debate" activity was generally well-received by students, with a majority indicating that it helped them feel more confident in speaking English and improved their ability to think quickly and articulate their thoughts. Despite these positive outcomes, some students expressed concerns about the short duration of the debates and the noise level during the activity. Overall, while the "Dancing to Debate" strategy appears to be effective in enhancing speaking skills, adjustments may be needed to address these concerns and further optimize the learning experience. To that extent, the findings suggest several implications for the use of the "Dancing to Debate" activity in language teaching. Firstly, educators should consider the positive impact of the activity on students' confidence and speaking skills, indicating its potential as an effective teaching strategy. Secondly, educators should address the concerns raised by students regarding the short duration of debates and the noise level during the activity, potentially by implementing strategies to improve focus and organization. Finally, the study highlights the importance of incorporating enjoyable and stimulating activities in language teaching to enhance student engagement and motivation.

However, this study is limited in several ways. Firstly, the sample size was relatively small, consisting of only 46 students. A larger sample size would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the "Dancing to Debate" activity. Secondly, the study was conducted in a specific context, namely a language classroom in a university in Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Furthermore, the study only used the students' self-reported data, which could be biased. Thus, it is suggested that future research on the "Dancing to Debate" activity include a larger and more diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, incorporating objective measures, such as assessments of speaking proficiency by independent assessors, would provide a stronger evaluation of the activity's effectiveness. Furthermore, exploring the implementation of the activity in different contexts and cultural settings would enrich our understanding of its potential impact on language learning.

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