

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the introduction, which navigates the study's background, research question, and purposes while addressing its significance, framing its scope, and clarifying the key terms.

1.1 Background of the Study

The vast majority of scientific literature has overwhelmingly utilized English as a way to communicate with the broader scientific community throughout the world. According to Roa (2019), over 85% of research publications are published in English because English is a primary communication language. Moreover, scientific conferences and seminars use English as the primary language to communicate their ideas, scientific findings, and discoveries. Thus, English unifies the broader diverse community with varied backgrounds to use the same language as a form of communication. In addition, English has become an essential foreign language in Indonesia due to its requirement in both educational and professional fields (Plantika & Adnan, 2021). Learning English involves understanding four fundamental skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Thus, without these underlying skills, effective English language learning is unfeasible (Boonkit, 2010). Among the four language skills, Akhter (2021) stated that speaking is the most essential skill in learning both a foreign and a second language.

Undeniably, speaking plays an essential role for EFL students who are learning to master it because it requires oral communication, such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension (Brown, 2004). Oral communication is essential because it allows people to express their opinions, views, and thoughts (Akhter, 2021). Moreover, EFL students must communicate in

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English because the language is universally used. Within this context, Aziz and Kamilah (2020) stated that EFL students desire to be fluent in speaking skills despite the difficulties that may hinder their communication. Thus, EFL learners must be given the platform and opportunity to improve their speaking skills in an educational context.

However, students find it challenging to master speaking skills due to the lack of exposure and proper framework for improving speaking skills. Zare (2015) stated that one of the problems of mastering speaking skills is stage fright and anxiety that EFL students feel while conducting a public speaking speech. Moreover, when students want to express themselves, they are demotivated due to their speaking skills, i.e., lack of confidence and stage fright. In addition, Schneier et al. (2011) stated that the fear of direct eye contact is also due to an individual's feeling socially anxious in interacting with others, such as during a speech. In line with Fehlmann et al. (2023), fear related to public speaking is the most common fear in a social situation.

One novelty approach toward EFL students' speaking skills is the application of English debate. As stated in previous research conducted by Alasmari and Salahuddin Ahmed (2013), countries that use English as a foreign language need practical activities that propel students to practice skills of the language properly inside as well as outside classrooms. Debating inspires learners to learn and encourages verbal learning, getting into discussion, defending their positions, placing counterarguments, and researching related issues. This accuracy is needed in the academic world due to promoting critical language skills with practical English communication. However, the debate is not widely practiced in the context of EFL.

Furthermore, debate can be used as a teaching method to encourage critical thinking and oral argumentation skills with the course materials. The standard debate procedure was adopted from the British Parliamentary Debate system, which consisted of two teams (Government and Opposition) on either side of the case

(Zare, 2015). The undergraduate freshmen are assigned topics related to the current news, prepare arguments, and present their viewpoints. Students expressed that engaging in debate encouraged them to explore the content deeply, exposed them to many different perspectives, and hence assisted them in connecting broadly to the content of the course. A study by Omelicheva (2007) found that debate helped the learners get involved in the intellectual practices that illustrate critical thinking skills. However, the hurdle in English debate is the implementation of the debate because EFL students often experience anxiety and fear when faced with uncertain situations, particularly in public speaking or debate settings (Sari, 2017) due to uncertainty as a threat that causes anxiety and fear, leading to apprehension in communication (Hasibuan & Irzawati, 2022).

Nevertheless, Zare (2015) stated that the debate helped students overcome these barriers, feel more confident about talking using the target language, lose anxiety and nervousness, and, as a result, improve their speaking ability. In addition, debate can facilitate undergraduate freshmen' oral argumentation skills. Othman et al. (2015) found that students who engaged in argumentation, Reasoning, explanation, and questioning reported improvements in their critical thinking abilities. Within a structural debate, Sulaiman et al. (2008) claim that preparing and delivering arguments in debates allows students to develop their communication, self-confidence, research, and critical thinking skills. Moreover, debate can be applied in various ways, both in and out of the classroom. Supported by experts and researchers (Doody & Condon, 2012; Darby, 2007) in the context of an English language learning classroom, English debate presents various outlets to help students develop the following skills, develop higher-order thinking, prevent rote memorization and misunderstanding, motivate the learners, assist them to stay away from prejudice and make informed decisions and judgments based on valid data sources.

Previous studies on speaking and debating are limited and have mainly investigated how to improve students' speaking skills using quantitative methods.

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While the earlier studies showed promising results and insight, few studies focus more on the qualitative method of conducting debate activity. Additionally, this study explores the ability of the freshmen in their oral argumentation skills capacity and insight into the benefits and challenges of the implementation of debate as a tool to improve EFL learners' oral argumentation skills. Thus, this gap emphasizes the need for further research on implementing debate activities in an educational context to achieve the maximum benefits of improving EFL learners' oral argumentation skills.

Hence, the primary objective of this study is to explore the implementation of English debate to enhance students' oral argumentation capacity and critical thinking skills. Doody & Condon (2012) state that debate helps learners employ critical thinking skills in which they try to define the problem, evaluate the reliability of resources, identify and challenge assumptions, recognize contradictions, and prioritize the relevance and importance of different points in the overall discussion. Apart from students developing critical thinking skills, with the help of English debate, public speaking skills can be enhanced. It is according to Aclan and Aziz (2014), who stated that developing confidence for speaking in front of an audience is one of the extrinsic rewards that debate students recognize as they seldom have the opportunity to practice public speaking and much more, something that involves critical thinking using a borrowed language. To conclude, oral argumentation can be developed and sharpened through debate to enhance students' oral argumentation ability.

1.2 Research Questions

This research aims to answer the following question.

- 1) To what extent can debating practices support students to enhance their oral argumentation skills?

- 2) What are the students' opinions about the benefits and challenges of British Parliamentary activity in helping them improve their argumentation process?

1.3 Aims of the Study

The primary purpose of this research is as follows.

- 1) The study aims to explore the extent to which debating practices can enhance students' oral argumentation skills.
- 2) To identify the benefits and challenges participants face in the British Parliamentary debate activity.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant from theoretical, practical, and policy perspectives. Theoretically, it contributes to the literature on English Language Education by emphasizing the potential of debate, particularly the structured application of the AREL (Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, and Linkback) argumentation process, as a pedagogical tool for enhancing oral argumentation skills. It enriches the understanding of how debating practices improve argument organization, persuasive reasoning, and the overall speaking ability of EFL students. Practically, the study provides valuable insights for educators on implementing debate systematically in EFL classrooms to enhance students' oral argumentation skills. Oral argumentation helps EFL students develop fluency, accuracy, and critical thinking by encouraging spontaneous and structured speech. It also improves listening and response skills, expands vocabulary, and builds confidence in public speaking. By practicing argumentation, students become more persuasive communicators, and better prepared for academic, professional, and social interactions. Using the AREL framework, educators can design debate-based classes that build confidence and competency in presenting structured arguments while

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addressing practical challenges identified in the study. Lastly, from a policy perspective, the findings push for integrating debate as a key component in language teaching strategies to support the development of institutional policies that promote debate programs. Additionally, the results inform policy recommendations for incorporating British Parliamentary debating as part of creative and interactive teaching methodologies in English Language Education curricula.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study focused on exploring the use of English debate using the British Parliamentary format as a teaching activity in facilitating EFL undergraduate freshmen currently enrolling in the first semester at a public state university in Indonesia. This study primarily utilized a speaking-related debate activity. Moreover, the study was conducted in an extracurricular class from the English Debating Society in 6 meetings. This research centered on students' oral argumentation ability before, during, and after the exposure to the debate activity. In addition, the present study examined the EFL students' opinions on the benefits and challenges encountered by students during the process of learning debate.

1.6 Clarification of Key Terms

1) Debate

Debate prioritizes constructive arguments rather than personal opinions (Nasriandi, 2021). The situation presented within a debate has an opposing point of view, either for or against the topic given: politics, education, environment, etcetera (Dale & Wolf, 2000).

2) Speaking Skills

Speaking is a productive skill that can be observed directly and empirically (Sartika, 2022). This skill can be implemented through direct experiences and carried out empirically. It is of significant importance because speaking skills

are more than expressing an opinion; they revolve around the listener's comprehension of the purpose of the conversation.

3)AREL

The AREL framework Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, and Link Back assist debaters in creating clear and persuasive arguments (Zahra & Suganda, 2021). Each part plays a key role: Assertion states the main idea, Reasoning explains it, Evidence supports it with facts, and Link Back ties everything together, showing its relevance to the topic. In the context of EFL students, learning AREL is crucial as it boosts critical thinking and speaking skills (Nirwana & Kurniawati, 2018). Through debates, they practice organizing their thoughts, presenting ideas clearly, and responding confidently, which is essential for effective communication.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

CHAPTER I Introduction

The introduction includes the research background, question, objectives, significance, scope, definition of key terms, and organization of the undergraduate thesis.

CHAPTER II Literature Review

The literature review contains the theory of teaching activity in facilitating EFL students' oral argumentation skills. The first section incorporates an overview of the debate using British Parliamentary systems, such as the technical systems with items to implement debate. In addition, the role and responsibility of the speaker in the debate is also mentioned. There will also be reviews of previous studies on the debate that have facilitated EFL students' oral argumentation skills.

CHAPTER III Research Methodology

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The research uses the constructivist paradigm. The method employed is a qualitative case study using triangulation methods, incorporating classroom observation, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Moreover, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

CHAPTER IV Research Result and Discussion

The research result and discussion will explain the process of analyzing data and examining the result. The chapter presents the findings of this research, aiming to address the research question of this study. Subsequently, a discussion is provided to analyze the results further and explore their connection to underlying theories. This research also revealed that implementing debate classes in the English Debating Society at a public state university has provided benefits and challenges for EFL undergraduate freshmen.

CHAPTER V Conclusion and Suggestion

The conclusion and suggestion contain the conclusion from the result of the research and the recommendation for readers for further research on this topic.

REFERENCE

ATTACHMENT