



## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEBATE TECHNIQUE IN ENHANCING SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS' SPEAKING ABILITY AT DONG NAI TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

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### Abstract:

Speaking is considered the most important skill when learning English since it directly shows how students can utilize English in communication to meet the goal of English learning. There are a number of techniques that can assist students to enhance their speaking ability and the debate technique is one of the suitable methods of improving students' speaking ability. As a result, the researchers wanted to determine whether the debate technique can enhance the students' speaking skills and to examine the classroom circumstance when the debate technique is used in a speaking class. The participants of this study are 30 English-majored sophomores at Dong Nai Technology University. In conducting the study, the researchers used classroom action research (CAR) with the pre-test, post-test, observation and questionnaire in order to evaluate the effectiveness of this technique in teaching and learning speaking skills. The researchers used a t-test to analyze the score of the students' results in pre-test and post-test. There was a significant difference between the pre-test results and the post-test ones, the mean scores obtained by the students in the post-test (7.0250) were better than the mean scores of the students in the pre-test (5.5267). The data of the score of students' attitudes towards the debate technique through the questionnaire was a high category. It could be concluded that debate was an effective method to enhance students' speaking ability in teaching and learning English.

**Keywords:** debate technique, enhance students' speaking ability, classroom action research

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## 1. Introduction

Among the four macro skills in learning English, speaking skill is very essential because it is one of the evaluation indicators of mastering the language (Fauzan, 2014). By mastering speaking skills, people are able to make conversations, express their ideas and exchange information with others. Theoretically, mastering speaking in English is a challenge for English learners since it requires tremendous effort. Learners need to have good grammar, good vocabulary and good pronunciation to be skillful at this language skill. However, Fauzan (2016) says that most English learners feel arduous and unsatisfied with their performance in speaking because of their unwillingness, indecision, timidity, fear of making mistakes, or lack of sufficient vocabulary. Moreover, many English learners are loath and unmotivated (Nunan, 2003). Thus, they are limited to clearly understanding the component of speaking. Besides that, students seldom practice speaking English as they have less chance of improving the process of learning Speaking both in the classroom and out of the classroom. It is obvious that Vietnamese students also experience the same problems. Although they have a wide number of vocabularies and sufficient grammatical structures, they still have difficulties in speaking. At Dong Nai Technology University (DNTU), this problem also appears among the students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages. They usually have a fear of speaking during speaking lessons even though they are good at grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, many students do not feel motivated when studying speaking since they find the techniques in learning speaking skills are, to some extent, boring and less effective. Furthermore, they have fewer opportunities and motivation to practice speaking English regularly because most of them often communicate with their friends in Vietnamese in daily conversations.

In order to overcome these problems, Ur (2012) recommends the following strategies to overcome these above speaking problems including using teamwork activities, making a careful choice of topics and tasks, giving some instructions and training discussion ability and keeping the students speaking the goal language. Acknowledging the facts above, the debate is an appropriate technique that helps to improve students' speaking skills and makes the process of learning become more engaging. Besides that, it is an effective teaching technique to improve critical thinking skills and communication skills. Krieger (2005) claims that debate is an excellent activity for learning speaking because it attracts students in a variety of perceptive and dialectal ways. It is highly effective to develop practical listening, speaking and writing, or argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing. Alasmari and Ahmed (2013) recommend debates to be used intensely to boost up students' speaking in English.

## 2. Literature Review

Debate is formal speaking in rejecting arguments to persuade listeners. D'cruz (2003) claims that debate is about persuasion, not rules. The rules are only a structure within

which arbitrators can make unbiased decisions and reduce their subjectivity. Moreover, the debate is an interactive and representational discussion method that aims at persuading arbitrators and listeners (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013). It is essential to make definitions, and limitations, find the conflicts, persuade the arguments and rebuttals as well as show suitable evidence. Nesbett (2003) claims that debate is an important educational method for learning critical thinking skills as well as for practicing self-conscious reflection on the validity of one's idea.

Debate is a good way to build and maintain critical thinking skills and spoken communication abilities (Camp & Schnader, 2010; Paul & Elder, 2007; Ryan & College, 2006; Roy & Macchiette, 2005). Besides that, the person who joins in debates will use his/her voice, body language, evidence and background knowledge to persuade, as well as to exceed the others. Debate is not actually a kind of personal censure, foolish attacks or emotional dodging. Krieger (2005) states that debate is a great activity for speaking learning because it enlists students in a variety of intellectual and language ways. Furthermore, Halvorsen (2005) claims that debate demands students not only to think about the numerous sides of an issue but also to interact with one another. Roy and Macchiette (2005) believe that the debate technique connects the speakers' mindset not only with what to say but how to say it. Freeley and Steinberg (2005) say that the debate technique is a process of taking multiple points of view into problems to determine what perspective is the most suitable for the topic. Speakers can use the debate to make decisions and use it to convince others to agree with them.

It can be said that debate has some noteworthy positive effects. According to Elliot (1993), debate offers a chance for students to move past the obtaining of essential information on a topic and advances into the kinds of higher request basic reasoning abilities that great discussion requires. Moreover, Vygotsky (1978) claims that debaters learn how to analyze, combine and assess the information they have procured to propose, go against and settle on contending decisions. Additionally, Goodnight (1993) states that people can improve themselves by using debate techniques to examine an issue, win others' understanding, and convince others to act. The debate also creates association abilities and basic reasoning abilities. Because the debaters need to organize contentions plainly and convincingly, so that the thoughts can be not difficult to follow and difficult to neglect. Furthermore, debate creates powerful talking abilities. Debaters need not just talk before various crowds and judges, yet additionally apply the best standards of public addressing, select, mastermind, and present their materials. They can become flexible and agreeable to talking out in the open (Goodnight, 1993). In short, debate helps learners not only to develop reasoned arguments and fascinating evidence but also to clear up their viewpoints through critical thinking skills. The debaters will possess a vast sense of poise and confidence. They can obtain a variety of skills in researching, organizing, and presenting information in an exciting way. White (2003) notes that one of the most significant factors to enhance the effectiveness of speaking lessons is the ability of practical speaking activities in the classroom to help learners to gain experience in using all the prerequisites that they learned in class. Therefore, the debate technique is

considered the feasible approach to enhance students' speaking ability. Furthermore, the debate technique can help students engage in applying features of the language with a view to defending a side of an issue convincingly. Due to this reason, the debate technique is often used in many classrooms for intermediate and advanced students, who have been assessed and guided to prepare for debate activities.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research questions**

The aim of the study is to enhance English-majored sophomores' Speaking ability at Dong Nai Technology by using debate techniques. In order to achieve the aim, the study is expected to accomplish the objectives which are (1) to identify how effective the implementation of debate techniques in teaching speaking skill for English-majored sophomores at Dong Nai Technology University is; and (2) to analyze the students' attitudes after being taught speaking skill by debate technique. Accordingly, the study is conducted to answer the following questions:

**Question 1:** How effective is the implementation of the debate technique to enhance the speaking ability of English-Majored Sophomores at Dong Nai Technology University?

**Question 2:** What are the students' attitudes toward the application of the debate technique in speaking lessons?

#### **3.2 The participants**

The study was conducted at Dong Nai Technology University (DNTU) in Dong Nai Province, Vietnam. A total of 30 students in class Speaking 5 studying the second year at the Faculty of Foreign Language were selected for this study. They were supposed to be at their intermediate level in speaking English.

They were invited to take part in two lessons that applied debate techniques in teaching. Before studying the lessons, students had been invited to take a speaking test based on the format of the IELTS Speaking test. After two lessons, they were invited to take another speaking test in the same format to examine their progress. When the tests were completed, they were encouraged to complete a survey questionnaire about their attitudes towards the implementation of the debate technique in the speaking lesson.

#### **3.3 Research instruments**

##### **3.3.1. Lesson plans**

The lesson plans were designed based on the content of unit 3, page 104 from the textbook "Collins Speaking for IELTS" by Kovacs (2011). Each session lasted 90 minutes (totally 2 sessions in 2 weeks). A typical lesson plan for teaching speaking included three main parts which are pre-speaking, while-speaking, and post-speaking. Students' debate performances were evaluated based on the scoring rubric for debate with the criteria

including an understanding of topic, organization, arguments & evidence, rebuttal, delivery, and teamwork.

### **3.3.2. Speaking tests**

The researchers applied a pre-test in the first class, and a post-test after the end of the second lesson to measure the students' English-speaking proficiency and the improvement in speaking ability after applying the technique. In each test, students were asked to answer a question posed by the researchers with one minute of preparation and four minutes of presentation. The topics of these tests are different from those students practice during the lessons. The topics of the test are all referenced from the Collins Speaking for IELTS Book. The pre-test and post-test to assess the progress of the students after learning the debate technique. These tests helped draw conclusions about changes in students' improvement after treatments.

### **3.3.3. Scoring rubric for speaking test**

In this study, the researchers selected a scorecard to assess the learners' English-speaking proficiency. Aspects of the assessment sheet included Fluency & Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, Pronunciation. We also score based on small factors in the aspects mentioned to collect more detailed information about a speaker's strengths and weaknesses. The researchers adjusted the scoring rubric on a 10-point scale to fit the Vietnamese education system. It had made it easier for students to see their results.

### **3.3.4. Class observation**

An observer-performed observation checklist was collected from observing the Speaking class 5 trimester 3 of the academic year 2021-2022 to provide important information for the study. Observers recorded student behaviors and attitudes toward non-participation in learning activities. The class observation was done for 1 hour per class session.

### **3.3.4. Questionnaires**

A survey questionnaire was used in the study for 30 students who took part in the two speaking lessons. To collect accurate data to answer the research questions, the questionnaire was written in both English and Vietnamese. This was an efficient method for gathering a large amount of data in a short period of time. The responses of the students gathered through the questionnaire survey could provide a clear understanding of their attitudes toward the use of the debate technique in speaking lessons to improve their speaking ability. There were ten items listed in the questionnaire. The questions were closed-ended, with alternatives for students to select one alternative from a five-point scale (strongly disagree; disagree; neutral; agree; strongly agree) that best suited their circumstances. The questions were adapted from the study of Zare and Othman (2015) whose results showed the attitudes of students towards the debate technique. The

questionnaire was designed by google form and the link was sent to the participant after the post-test results were gathered.

### **3.4. Research procedures**

#### **3.4.1. Data collection procedures**

In the first stage, the participants were invited to take the pre-test. The test included 2 parts. In part 1, each student was given a topic and had 1 minute to prepare about the topic and 2 – 3 minutes to present it. In part 2, the interlocutor asked the candidate 2 questions related to the topic that he/she had presented. The results of this test let the researchers know the improvement of students in their speaking ability.

After getting the results from the pre-test, the researchers followed the procedure including Plan – Action – Observation – Reflection.

The first step is to plan. In this section, the researchers classified a problem or subject and alter a strategy of action in order to respond to developments related to the subject. It entailed analyzing the problem and the situation, as well as preparing the instrument for data collection. The designing of the lesson plans, the material and media of the teaching process, as well as the determining of success criteria, were all decided during this action planning.

The next step is action. In this step, researchers acted as teachers, introducing students to the debate technique. The study was divided into two sessions. In the first session, the researchers introduced students to debate, why they should use argumentative skills in speaking skills, and the structures, and phrases used in debate. In the second lesson, the researchers let the students directly debate with each other, and then gave comments on that debate.

The third step is observation. In this phase, the research observation was done by the observer. The observer helped the researchers to observe the class and evaluate in the Yes/No column and comment on what he/she had seen in each class about the student's performance and learning attitude.

The final step is reflection. After gathering the data, the researchers discussed reflection, evaluation and the description of the observation to figure out whether the debate technique was the best implementation in the speaking class.

In the second stage, the researchers conducted the post-test. The test included two parts and it is the same as the pre-test. Each student also had one minute to prepare the topic and two-three minutes to present it. The results of this test allowed the researchers to examine the improvement of the participants after the treatment.

Finally, the link to the questionnaire was sent to the participants to get the statistics about their attitudes towards the implementation of the debate technique in speaking lessons.

**Table 1:** Schedule activity

Meeting	Topic	Activities
1	Pre-test	Give students pre-test speaking
2	Treatment 1	Introducing debate technique and practice
3	Treatment 2	Practice debate
4	Post-test	Give students post-test speaking
5	Questionnaire	Send students a questionnaire link

### 3.4.2. Data analysis procedures

Firstly, the results of the pre-test and post-test were compared using SPSS. Four main aspects including fluency and coherence, lexical resources, grammar range and accuracy, and pronunciation were described in detail. Secondly, the observation checklist was described in detail. Finally, the results from the questionnaires were collected and analyzed by frequency statistics using SPSS.

### 3.5. Ethical issues

In all types of research, ethical issues are seen as very important issues. To ensure the value of this research, three elemental ethics including not hurting, deference and honesty were taken into consideration during the research process. To solve the ethical issues above, the researchers told the students about the study's objective, asking the students if they would volunteer to do this. All students were treated equally whether or not they participated in this research. The researchers ensured that the data collection process has been accepted by the DNTU director by submitting them an application for data collection for our thesis and starting only after receiving their approval.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Finding results

#### 4.1.1. Results from students' speaking tests

The results handle the means of students' speaking scores related to four aspects of speaking: Fluency and Coherence, Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range and Accuracy, Pronunciation. Table 2 below showed the change in the mean of the speaking scores between the pre-test and post-test of the students among four aspects.

**Table 2:** Students' Mean score

Aspect	Pre-test	Post-test
Fluency and Coherence	1.57	1.99
Lexical Resource	1.72	2.1
Grammatical Range and Accuracy	1.17	1.48
Pronunciation	1.07	1.45
Total	5.53	7.02

The results showed that students' mean score in Fluency and Coherence after post-test was gradually higher than pre-test. By comparing the means score between the pre-test (1.57) and post-test (1.99), the students' gain score was 0.42.

In terms of Lexical Resource, the mean score of students also improved after post-test (2.1) compared to the pre-test (1.72). They gained 0.38.

The mean score of the Grammatical Range and Accuracy aspect in Table 2 also showed an improvement. In the pre-test, the mean score was just 1.17. After the post-test, it increased a little bit to 1.48. The gain score was 0.31.

In the Pronunciation aspect, the students also make some improvements. In the pre-test, the mean score was 1.07. After post-test, the mean score improved to 1.45. The gain score obtained was 0.38.

The descriptive statistics of the pre-test and post-test scores were clearly presented in Table 3, below.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	30	3.50	7.25	5.5267	1.05031
Posttest	30	5.00	8.50	7.0250	.94310
Valid N (listwise)	30				

As can be seen from Table 4, when taking the pre-test speaking, the lowest score was 3.5 while the highest score was 7.25. The average score of 30 students was 5.53. However, the average score increased significantly to 7.03 when students took the post-test speaking after they had learned two lessons taught by implementing the debate technique. Besides that, the lowest score and the highest score increased to 5.0 and 8.5 respectively.

The details of the pre-test and the post-test scores of students were clearly shown in Table 4, as follows:

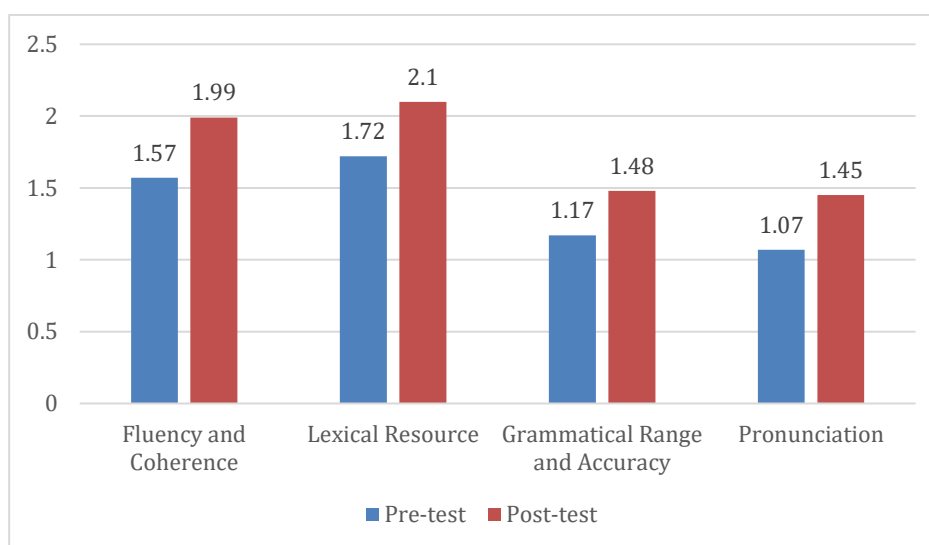
**Table 4: Pre-test and post-test scores**

	Fluency and coherence (3)		Lexical Resource (3)		Grammatical Range & Accuracy (2)		Pronunciation (2)		Total	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
S1	2	2,5	2,25	2,5	1,25	1,5	1	1,5	6,5	8
S2	1,5	2	1,5	2	1,25	1,25	1	1,25	5,25	6,5
S3	1,5	1,5	1,75	1,5	0,75	1,25	0,75	1,25	4,75	5,5
S4	1	2	1,5	1,5	1	1,75	1	1,75	4,5	7
S5	1,75	2,5	2,25	2,5	1,25	1,5	1	1,5	6,25	8
S6	2,25	2,25	2,25	2,5	1,5	1,5	1	1	7	7,25
S7	1	1,5	1,5	2	1,75	1,5	1	1,5	5,25	6,5
S8	1,5	2	1,5	2	1,25	1,5	0,75	1,5	5	7
S9	0,5	1	1	1,5	1	1,25	1	1,5	3,5	5,25
S10	1	2,5	1	2,25	1	1,5	1	1,5	4	7,75
S11	1,75	2,5	2,25	2,5	1,25	1,75	1,25	1,75	6,5	8,5
S12	1,25	1,5	1	1,5	1	1,5	1	1,75	4,25	6,25
S13	1,75	2,5	1,5	2,5	1	1,25	1,25	1,5	5,5	7,75



S14	2,25	2,5	2,25	2,25	1,5	1,5	1,25	1,5	7,25	7,75
S15	1,25	1,5	1,5	1,25	1	1,75	1,25	1,25	5	5,75
S16	2	2,5	2	2,25	1,5	1,5	1,25	1,5	6,75	7,75
S17	2	2,5	2,25	2,5	1,25	1,5	1,5	1,5	7	8
S18	2	2,25	1,5	2	1,25	1,5	1,25	1,5	6	7,25
S19	1,25	1,75	1,5	2	1,25	1,5	1	1,5	5	6,75
S20	1,5	1,75	1,75	1,75	1,25	1,5	1,25	1,25	5,75	6,25
S21	2	2,5	2	2,5	1,25	1,75	1	1,75	6,25	8,5
S22	1,25	1,75	1,25	2	0,75	1,5	1,25	1,5	4,5	6,75
S23	2,5	2,5	2,5	2,5	1	1,5	1,25	1,5	7,25	8
S24	1	2	1,5	2	1	1,5	0,75	1,5	4,25	7
S25	1,5	2	1,5	2,25	1,25	1,5	1,25	1,5	5,5	7,25
S26	2	1,75	2	2,25	1	1,25	1	1,25	6	6,5
S27	1,5	1,5	2	2,5	1,5	1,5	1	1,5	6	7
S28	1,25	1,5	1,5	2	1	1,25	1	1,25	4,75	6
S29	1	0,75	1	1,75	1	1,5	1	1	4	5
S30	2	2,5	2,25	2,5	1	1,5	0,75	1,5	6	8
<b>Mean</b>	<b>1,57</b>	<b>1,99</b>	<b>1,72</b>	<b>2,1</b>	<b>1,17</b>	<b>1,48</b>	<b>1,07</b>	<b>1,45</b>	<b>5,53</b>	<b>7,03</b>

As can be seen from Table 4, in the pre-test speaking, there were 9 students who got an under average score of 5, which showed that their speaking ability was really in need of improvements to meet the objectives of the course Speaking 5. However, after the treatment of two debate technique lessons, all of them had made significant improvements to the average score and above. Especially, students 4, 10, and 24 had reached the score of 7, which was the big progress for them. In addition, the post-test scores were higher when compared with the pre-test scores of those who got the average scores and above in the pre-test speaking. Significantly, there was no student getting an under average score in the post-test speaking. There were 6 students who got a score of 8 and above, and two of them got a score of 8.5, which was the highest score in the post-test speaking.



**Figure 1:** Students' mean scores in four aspects of speaking

As can be seen from Figure 1, the improvement of students' speaking ability after using the debate technique in teaching was shown very clearly among four aspects of speaking. Although students' scores showed light increases, if we continue to apply this teaching method, students' scores will increase significantly. It can be seen that applying the debate technique in teaching is very helpful in improving the English-speaking aspects of students.

#### 4.1.2. Results from classroom observation checklist

Besides results from tests, the classroom observation checklists are known as a useful tool for assessing learner improvement. Classroom observation took place over two sessions. The observer ticks Yes or No on what he/she sees about the teacher as well as the students' learning attitudes. Then, researchers can see and evaluate what students achieve after the sessions.

Regarding the analysis of the researchers' performance in the teaching process of section 1, the observation was conducted in class Speaking 5. In the observation, the first researchers acted as a teacher. The focus of the observation was on teaching speaking by using the debate technique. In the first section, the researchers gave the students a pre-test, the purpose is to assess the student as to how he or she is making mistakes that do not get the minimum passing grade. After the pre-test, the teacher divided the students into 6 groups that consisted of five students in a group. In this meeting, the researchers introduced to them the debate technique before the teaching-learning process. The researchers explained to the students what Debate is, why we should Debate, give some Debate structure and content, and some phrases used in Debate. After finishing the pre-teaching activity, the researchers instructed the students to work in groups. In this part, the researchers explained the topic given, how to express an opinion, arguments, and also about the debate by writing on the whiteboard. The researchers also suggested the students discuss and share with their group members.

The collaborator observed not only the researchers' activity but also the students' activity while the process of teaching and learning speaking through debate technique was going on. It was aimed to know the students' participation in the debate technique implementation in teaching speaking in the first section.

**Table 5:** Observation Checklist Result

No.	Statement	Opinion	
		Lesson 1	Lesson 2
1	The teacher uses time effectively	Yes	Yes
2	The teacher is friendly to the student	Yes	Yes
3	The teacher is able to use the technique well	Yes	Yes
4	The teacher provides teaching aids	Yes	Yes

5	Students pay attention to the teacher explanation	Yes, most of the students listen, but there are a few didn't pay attention to the lesson	Yes
6	Students ask the teacher explanation	No	Yes
7	The students become active in the classroom	No	Yes
8	Students brave to ask and answer	No	Yes
9	Students feel happy during the lesson	No, most of the students didn't care about the teacher's question	Yes, the students are more active in participating in activities
10	Students get bored during the lesson process	Some students left while the teacher is teaching	Some students left while the teacher is teaching

The result of the observation sheet from Table 5 noted that there were some positive and negative points presented by the students in the first section. The first aspect was the ability of the students to express opinions and arguments. The students still felt it was difficult to speak fluently. They still took a few seconds to continue their speech from one sentence to another sentence. The second was the involvement in the discussion. Some of them still felt reluctant to share ideas with their teammates. In fact, in a discussion of debate, students are expected to work together as a team rather than individually. If you worked individually, it would affect the whole group's debate because of disagreement. The final aspect that needs to be improved is the feedback on the other groups' arguments. They often do not focus on the points that the other party says when arguing. That will keep the group from grasping the opponent's point and will sometimes make stray arguments on other issues. Based on the result of the observation checklist by the observer, showed that the percentage of the students' involvement was 65%. It indicated that the students needed to improve their performance in the next section of the research.

The specific reason for the percentage of the researchers' performance in the second section increased gradually to 80-85% was the application of the debate technique in teaching. This makes them more focused because it's new to practice a debate in class, and students are often curious about new things.

As can be seen from Table 5, it can be interpreted that the weaknesses in the speaking skills of DNTU students have been gradually improved. Specifically, in the answer section, students have demonstrated their speaking skills well, they are no longer grammatically incorrect, and their pronunciation is also gradually becoming more accurate and correct. However, the observer noted that the students needed to pay more attention in the lesson because he felt that they were not paying attention during the lecture or the assignment. They do not listen to lectures, often depending on their group mates. Based on this note, the researchers prepared the solution for the next lesson by trying to be more sociable with students and paying more attention to students' attitudes. These aspects of speaking were observed by the student for effective correction during the last session. Specifically, students have focused more on listening to lectures, and

have participated in activities organized by lecturers. In summary, students' speaking skills were improved after two sessions of debate technique.

### 4.1.3. Questionnaire analysis

**Table 6:** Students' attitudes towards the implementation of debate technique in speaking lessons

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
1	Debate technique is lots of fun.	3.33	3.33	13.33	43.33	36.68
2	The debate technique is an effective and An innovative way to learn to speak English.	3.33	3.33	6.67	46.67	40
3	Debate technique improves oral communication and argumentation skills.	3.33	0	6.67	36.67	53.33
4	The debate technique improves listening note-taking skills and increased self-confidence.	0	3.33	6.67	50	40
5	The debate technique enhances students' critical thinking skills.	0	3.33	6.67	56.67	33.33
6	Classroom debate promotes teamwork skills and collaboration.	0	6.67	6.67	56.67	29.99
7	The debate technique helps students increase learning motivation.	3.33	0	10	53.33	33.34
8	The debate technique helps students to cultivate quick and multi-dimensional logical thinking.	0	0	6.67	56.67	36.66
9	Classroom debate increases students' awareness of current events and global issues.	0	3.33	16.67	46.67	33.33
10	Teachers should use the debate technique regularly in speaking class.	0	0	23.33	46.67	30

**Note:** Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4 & Strongly Agree = 5

From Table 6, we can see that 80.01% of the students agreed and strongly agreed that learning the debate technique is lots of fun. Besides, 86.67% strongly agreed and agreed that the debate technique is an effective and innovative way to learn Speaking English. From the results, we can see many students have positive perceptions of the debate technique.

With the application of the debate technique in speaking class, 90% of the students said that their oral communication and argumentation skills could be improved and 90% of them agreed and strongly agreed that the debate technique also improves their listening note-taking skills as well as increased self-confidence. Amazingly, 90% of students stated that their critical thinking skill was enhanced by the debate technique. Besides, classroom debate promotes teamwork skills and collaboration, of which 86.66% of the students agreed and strongly agreed. Furthermore, 86.67% of the students claimed that they have more learning motivation when they learn to debate in speaking class, 93.26% agreed and strongly disagreed that debate technique helps them to cultivate quick and multi-dimensional logical thinking. Additionally, classroom debate increases

students' awareness of current events and global issues, of which 80% of the students agreed and strongly agreed. Moreover, 76.67% of students agreed and strongly agreed that teachers should use the debate technique regularly in their speaking class. To put it in the nutshell, debate technique gives a positive contribution to the enhancement of students' speaking abilities in terms of oral communication, argumentation skills, listening note-taking, increased self-confidence, critical thinking skill, teamwork skills, motivation, logical thinking as well as their awareness of global issues in learning English speaking skills.

## **4.2. Discussion**

### **4.2.1. The effectiveness of debate technique in enhancing students' speaking ability**

Based on the observation, the problems faced by the students in speaking were mainly caused by the performance and the technique used by the teacher. Moving on to the teacher's performance and the student's involvement during the process of teaching and learning to speak, the analysis of the teaching and learning process was done to know how the debate technique was implemented in class Speaking 5. The information was about the teacher's and the student's activities in the classroom while teaching and learning speaking through debate technique. The strength and weaknesses of the implementation debate were analyzed in this phase.

The researchers improved some aspects of the speaking classes. The first aspect was the way of how instructing the students because the debate technique was new for the students. The instruction should be explained clearly and adequately to ensure that the students understood it. Clear instruction would make the students work in groups actively. The second aspect is confidence, the researchers must give students practice speaking in front of the class so that they are more confident when communicating or arguing. The third aspect is pronunciation, the researchers helped the students practice pronouncing difficult words, and phrases that were often used in the debate to help them speak more clearly, making it easier for listeners to visualize.

In the second meeting, the researchers explained clearly how to do debate in groups. It really helped the students in the discussion. This time, the researchers told the students to practice debate in front of the class on the topic given in the first meeting. This will make the students easier to understand the lesson. The students were already familiar with the argumentation technique in the second lesson, so it was not difficult to practice. As a result, the student's ability to express opinions and arguments, ask questions, and respond to the other groups' performance that needed to be improved had been figured out.

As a result, the debate technique gave a better effect. It could be seen from the result of the students' mean score and standard deviation after treatment of post-test. It can be concluded that debate skills contribute to improving the Speaking skills of DNTU students. In addition to improving their speaking skills, students also improve in four aspects of a speech: fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. These are also the factors that students often find difficult

to score with the examiner. The results showed that after two sessions of applying debate skills to the class, the average score in these aspects increases gradually. This also means that they have a sense of small things to be able to score on the next test.

In addition, the description of the data collected through the tests as explained in the previous section showed that the students' speaking skills improved significantly. It was supported by the mean score rate of the result of the student's pre-test and post-test. The mean score of the pre-test was 5.53 and the post-test was 7.03.

The post-test results and observational checklists showed that applying the debate technique to an English-speaking class has resulted in students making more progress in speaking English. Debate helped students become more confident when speaking in front of the class, practicing thinking, and finding information to defend their own points. This shows that the application of the debate technique in teaching can help students improve their English-speaking ability as well as their ability to work in groups, think, and debate. Students need to have to be able to help them in their future jobs. The application of the debate technique in teaching has helped students focus more on the lesson, avoiding distractions and boredom. Based on that, it can be seen that the use of argumentative skills in teaching has contributed to improving students a lot in positive aspects, and maybe soon, classes will be carefully applied. Debate techniques go hand in hand with teaching to improve students' grades and speaking skills.

#### **4.2.2. Students' attitudes to debate techniques in their English-speaking process**

The findings from the questionnaire indicated that most students had a high interest in the debate technique in speaking class, which was proved by the table of percentage of students' interest.

After applying the debate technique to teaching, students' attitudes towards the argumentation technique are very clear. Some of the students who responded positively showed that they enjoyed the argumentative skill because it helped them a lot. While debate, students do not only practice individual skills but also practice teamwork because, in the debate process, the debaters have to talk and work together to make sure their ideas are consistent and coherent. And if they lack this critical skill, they may have unclear and incoherent arguments. This is very beneficial for introverted students because this will be a good opportunity for them to open up more with their friends and help each other in debates as well as in future studies. Moreover, debate encourages students to support each other as team members to build confidence. Confidence shows the ability to present ideas appropriately, and students can do things that they cannot do in a general discussion. Students also need to be able to think critically to present arguments related to the debate topic. They have to express themselves so that the audience and judges can understand what they are saying. To present a good argument, students should research arguments in advance so that they are aware of their responsibility as a team member and understand what and how they must present the arguments. Understanding the technicality of an argument is very important for students to present a quality argument.

Classroom debates are a great strategy to engage students in debates. However, there are problems with implementing this tactic. There will be some students who expressed a negative attitude when applying argumentative skills to teach because they often did not focus on the lesson, they completely did not pay attention when introducing debate skills, or are even unwilling to participate in debates. They are too lazy to learn new things, which can help them improve their grades and some personal or teamwork skills.

In this study, the majority of the participants had a positive attitude about the debate technique. The application of the debate technique in teaching has brought a lot of benefits to students in improving their grades, critical thinking skills, teamwork, speaking competence, and listening skills. The debate technique has given them more motivation to develop their speaking and critical thinking skills. Based on the findings of this study, it is believed that the debate technique provides students with a valuable opportunity to enhance their critical thinking and speaking ability. As a result, teachers should implement the debate technique in speaking class more frequently. The debate technique can be utilized as a potential substitute for teaching and learning methods and integrated into the course curriculum. Moreover, the debate technique is extensible in the sense that it can be applied in any method of delivery including face-to-face, online, or blended courses. The debate technique can be combined with certain other active learning methods including problem-based learning, mind mapping, and collaborative learning.

## 5. Conclusion

**Question 1:** How effective is the implementation of the debate technique to enhance the speaking ability of English-Majored Sophomores at Dong Nai Technology University?

After the classroom action research where the debate technique was applied in the teaching and learning speaking process, DNTU sophomores' speaking abilities were enhanced. Four features of students' speaking abilities consist of fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy and pronunciation which are also improved measurably after learning the debate technique. It is proved by the results of students' tests. Table 4 showed that the mean scores obtained by the students in the post-test (7.0250) were better than the mean scores of the students in the pre-test (5.5167). Therefore, it leads to the conclusion that debate is a considerably beneficial technique for enhancing students' speaking abilities.

**Question 2:** What are the students' attitudes toward the application of the debate technique in speaking lessons?

In this part, the questionnaire was used to investigate the students' attitudes after learning the debate technique. The data illustrated that most students agree to apply debate technique in the classroom because of its benefits in learning English and speaking skill as well. As for the results of table 6, over 82% of students strongly agreed and agreed

that the debate technique enhanced a variety of their skills and should be effectively used in speaking lessons. Furthermore, students' skills are able to be improved more obviously and productively with the great support and encouragement from their teachers.

## 6. Recommendations

After conducting this study, the researchers give some recommendations for teachers, students and future researchers.

First of all, the conclusion of this research is proved that debate could enhance students' speaking skills. From these results, teachers will obtain a deeper understanding of the debate technique's significance to establish a learning environment and apply the various techniques in teaching in order that the students are fond of learning to speak. Furthermore, the teachers can bring argumentative current issues as the source of discussions and debates to encourage students to express their opinions, and ideas and enrich their knowledge actively. In that way, the speaking lessons will become more interesting and effective.

Secondly, students' speaking improves measurably after learning debate activities. They can expand their knowledge, obtain new vocabularies, pronunciation and grammar improvement as well as be more confident in speaking publicly. Hence, they need to be more active in the class, prepare themselves before class and extensively practice speaking in their daily conversations with their friends to have a good result in speaking activities.

Thirdly, the debate technique is an intriguing educational approach that can involve students in an active teaching and learning process. Nevertheless, some difficult issues or problems with the application may arise. It is believed that debate technicality, preparation time, and motion choice were illustrations of factors to be considered in classroom debates. Understanding debate technicalities is essential for students who want to display productive debates. Additionally, debate proceedings should be tailored to the level of knowledge of the students; they should not be overly simple or overly complex, and they should be well-formulated. The topic of the debate influences how students participate in debates. Debates, as a method of teaching, help students develop and acquire communication and problem-solving skills that aid in the accomplishment of skill sets. As a result, regardless of potentially contentious issues in debates, teachers should consider this as a prospective teaching method.

Last but not least, this study definitely is not perfect because of its limitations. Therefore, the researchers expect that the other researchers who want to conduct research on the same subject should conduct a broader population of students in different universities in Vietnam and other countries to determine whether it works in other contexts or not. Besides that, it is expected that future researchers can conduct other studies similar to this study but in other skills of language such as listening, writing, reading in order to find the whole effectiveness of debate technique and apply it in teaching thoroughly.



### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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