

USING DEBATE TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SPEAKING RESPONSE FOR THE SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT THAI NGUYEN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

English is a compulsory subject in Vietnam education system. Nevertheless, many Vietnamese students in general and the second-year English major students at Thai Nguyen University of Education in particular have some difficulties in learning English. Especially, in terms of speaking, although students have a large number of vocabularies and good grammatical structures, they cannot express their ideas to respond others' opinions due to lacking of practicing speaking English regularly and having few opportunities for exercising English with foreigners at school campus. Therefore, the aim of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of using debate method to help the students improve their speaking response. The participants of this study are 24 students of the second-year English majors. By observing the process of speaking lessons, the researcher found out the current situation of using debate technique in learning speaking, the helpfulness of using debate technique to improve sophomores' English speaking response. There were two instruments used in the research, such as tests and checklist in order to collect more reliable and valid data for the study. The outcomes of the study will help second-year English majors at TNUE improve their English speaking response effectively as well as other English majors.

Key words: *debate technique; speaking; response; speaking response; the second – year English majors of Thai Nguyen University of Education*

Received: 18/3/2020; Revised: 27/3/2020; Published: 29/3/2020

SỬ DỤNG PHƯƠNG PHÁP TRANH LUẬN ĐỂ NÂNG CAO PHẢN XẠ NÓI TIẾNG ANH CHO SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH NĂM THỨ HAI TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC SƯ PHẠM – ĐẠI HỌC THÁI NGUYÊN

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TÓM TẮT

Tiếng Anh là môn học bắt buộc tại Việt Nam từ bậc tiểu học đến đại học. Tuy nhiên, nhiều học sinh, sinh viên Việt Nam nói chung và sinh viên năm hai chuyên ngành tiếng Anh của trường Đại học Sư phạm – Đại học Thái Nguyên nói riêng thường gặp khó khăn trong việc học nói tiếng Anh. Mặc dù sinh viên có kiến thức tốt về từ vựng và ngữ pháp, họ không thể bày tỏ ý kiến do thiếu thực hành thường xuyên cũng như cơ hội giao tiếp với người nước ngoài. Điều đó dẫn đến phản xạ nói của sinh viên bị hạn chế. Mục đích của nghiên cứu là đánh giá hiệu quả việc sử dụng phương pháp tranh luận để giúp sinh viên cải thiện phản xạ nói. Đối tượng nghiên cứu là 24 sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh năm thứ hai tại Trường. Bằng cách quan sát các tiết học nói, tác giả đã tìm ra thực trạng việc sử dụng phương pháp tranh luận trong tiết học nói, hiệu quả của phương pháp tranh luận để cải thiện phản xạ nói cho sinh viên. Bài kiểm tra và bảng quan sát được sử dụng để thu thập dữ liệu cho nghiên cứu. Kết quả của nghiên cứu sẽ giúp các sinh viên năm thứ 2 và các sinh viên chuyên ngữ khác tại Trường cải thiện được phản xạ nói tiếng Anh một cách hiệu quả.

Từ khóa: *phương pháp tranh luận; nói; phản xạ; phản xạ nói; sinh viên năm thứ hai chuyên ngành tiếng Anh tại trường Đại học Sư phạm – Đại học Thái Nguyên*

Ngày nhận bài: 18/3/2020; Ngày hoàn thiện: 27/3/2020; Ngày đăng: 29/3/2020

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.2020.03.2846>

1. Introduction

These days, English is extremely significant and essential not only in daily life but also in school systems. English is a compulsory subject of education system of many countries; almost all children are taught and stimulated to learn English as a second or foreign language. This means that teachers desire to equip their students with essential knowledge related to English, which creates great opportunities for international integration in every field. Because of the significance of English, Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training has led English into school's curriculum system and fixed it as a compulsory subject for every education from primary up to university level of education. There are four skills in English language, namely speaking, reading, writing and listening. These skills are indispensable to every student and they need to learn them simultaneously in order to make sure that students can digest a new language in a comprehensive way. Besides, English speaking is applied not only at schools to evaluate students' language ability through giving tests and marks but also in some conversations with foreigners in real life. Moreover, English speaking response is also necessary for students to rejoinder others' opinion, defend as well as support their own ideas. Nevertheless, in order to have a good command of English, Vietnamese students in general and the second – year English majors of Thai Nguyen University of Education in particular have a lot of difficulties in speaking English. In fact, the number of students who can speak English fluently is low and many of them found that speaking is a difficult skill. Since these students do not have the suitable ways to conquer speaking skill efficiently, the researcher desires to find a useful technique to help students improve their speaking capability. Therefore, the researcher studies “Using debate technique to improve English speaking response for the second-year English major students at Thai Nguyen

University of Education” with the hope that it can help the second – year English major students the university to improve their response of English speaking effectively. By using debate technique in speaking, students can respond others' speech shaper and faster. Besides, they become more confident when interacting with friends as well as foreigners by English.

2. Literature review

2.1 The concepts of speaking

According to Chaney [1, p. 13], speaking is the process of constructing and transferring meaning by using verbal and nonverbal signs, in a diversity of milieux. Speaking can be considered as an interactive process of erecting meaning that contains manufacturing, receiving and tackling information [2], [3]. Florez [4] points out that speaking is a principal part of learning and teaching when approaching second language. Bygate [5] deems that speaking is an underestimated skill in many ways. Speaking is often supposed that it is a ‘popular’ form of an expression which utilizes the prestigious colloquial register.

2.2 Debate

2.2.1. The concept of debate

Debate is a process of expressing the opposite idea or thought in order to protect their idea or point of view. Debating can be utilized in EFL classes as a way to help students practice English language skills in real-life situations. There are parts of debate: (1) Motion; (2) Definition; (3) Theme line; (4) Argument; (5) Rebuttal; (6) Sum-up/closing.

Based on these mentioned concepts, debating can be considered as an activity that students take up positions on problem and defend their position.

2.2.2. Advantages of using debate technique

a) Debate is a tool to re-connect students to public life if they have been overcome by feelings of alienation and it also a way to link students with academic subjects effectively.

- b) Enhance students' critical thinking. Students are recommended to analyze an issue critically in debating.
- c) Students are able to overcome their dreads to reveal opinion and improve their English speaking skill by debating.
- d) Questioning skill enhanced in and struggle-often in the face of disappointment and defeat.
- e) Through debate learners learn how to utilize the library to reason, to analyze, to clarify viewpoints, and to show arguments.
- f) Debaters can make and defend informed selection related to complicated problems outside of their zone of concern because of doing so on a daily basis.
- g) Improve learners' communication skill. They spend much time practicing and collecting a number of public speeches on topics of national significance.
- h) Students can be taught by policy debate specifically to adopt multiple perspectives that describe as one of the most significant problem solving skills.
- i) By applying debate technique students will be a better speaker in any circumstances. Debating also helps students to be more confident and they will state their ideas more obviously when speaking.

2.3. Response

2.3.1. The concept of response

Response is the body's reaction to environmental stimuli under the control of the nervous system.

There are two kinds of response such as unconditional and conditioned response.

- An unconditional response appears immediately when people were born and it does not disappear.
- A conditioned response is formed in the process of the time people live, work and study. People can practise in order to get it and it can also be lost if they don't maintain their work.

2.3.2. The concept of speaking response

Response while speaking English can understand simply that a person has an action to respond to a stimulus quickly, this action is

expressed in words. The stimulus can be an English question that someone asks another and they need to answer that question. The action that people respond to the stimulus is that they reveal words quickly to respond to those.

2.4. Strategies of teaching speaking

Strategies of teaching speaking skill are simulation, communication games, drilling and discussion. Simulations are activities that learners are required to feign to be in different social contexts and dissimilar social roles [6]. According to Thornbury [6], the drilling method is to enhance students' pronunciation ability through copying and repeating words, phrases, sentences or utterances. Students will notice to new materials and highlight words, phrases or expressions on their mind, transfer new things from working memory to long-term memory, providing a means to control speech.

2.5. Strategies to motivate speaking

There are several key units of motivational strategies:

2.5.1. Forming the Basic Motivational Condition

- There is an enjoyable and supportive classroom atmosphere
- A cohesive learner group characterized by appropriate group norm

2.5.2. Generating Students' Motivation

- Boost the goal-oriented of student
- Creating the curriculum germane for students.
- Creating practical students beliefs

2.5.3. Maintaining and Protecting Motivation

- Increasing the learners' self-confidence
- Creating learner autonomy

2.5.4. Promoting Positive Self-Evaluation

- Encouraging attributions to effort rather than to ability.
- Supplying motivational reaction.
- Enhancing students' satisfaction and the question of rewards and grades.

3. Methodology

This research is a classroom action research which was carried out by the researcher with

involving of students in a classroom. Data observation was used to teach English speaking skill by applying debate technique, and this data followed two cycles in action for purpose of analyzing. A cycle of classroom action research includes planning, action, observation and reflection.

The research used a checklist for the purpose of taking note students' activities and then analyzed them to get systematic and authentic information. Besides, the researcher also handed these students pre-test, and post-test to find out how students' speaking response can be improved after approaching debate technique. The total number of participants is 24 second-year majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education.

The researcher prepared 8 lesson plans which are proportional to 8 English speaking periods. In each topic, the researcher asked students to pair work and divided the class into 2 groups having opposite point of view to debate together in about 15 to 20 minutes. Each student was required to find his/her own viewpoints and take turn to reveal. While students were performing their task, the researcher was observing and taking note into the designed checklist. After finishing the lesson, students gave comments to another group and decided which one had better ideas to respond opponent's words as well as defend their opinion. The researcher also recorded students' performances to get more document for the study. The researcher could gather collected information and see the effectiveness of using debate technique to

learn speaking skill. Through 8 lessons, the researcher could evaluate the helpfulness of this method with regard to students' speaking response ability.

Action research

Action research includes a self-reflective, systematic and critical approach to enquiry by participants who are at the same time members of the research scope. The aim is to find out problematic circumstance or matters considered by the joiners to be worthy of investigation to bring about critically informed difference in practice. [7, p. 5]

Despite the large number of models in educational AR, typical representations show spirals or cycles of (i) planning, (ii) action, (iii) observation and (iv) reflection [8].

4. Findings and discussions

After completing 8 lessons, the researcher found out some important improvement among before and after utilizing debate technique. Almost second-year English majors admitted that they had met a lot of difficulties in speaking English, especially when discussing some topics having different or opposite viewpoints. They do not practice speaking English regularly because of lacking time and not having a good environment to use English. Thus, their speaking skill is not good, which leads to their speaking response is limited.

This classroom action research is divided into two cycles and table 1 presents the result of the observation in the first cycle.

Table 1. Observation Checklist in the First Cycle

No	Activities	Grades					Score
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Students pay attention to the teacher's explanation.			x			3
2	Students' ability to manage class in the form of team.				x		4
3	Students' activeness and enthusiast in debating.				x		4
4	Students' role in debating.				x		4
5	Students have minimal reliance on notes				x		4
6	Students present arguments with clarity and appropriate volume				x		4
7	Students' activeness in giving opinion in debating.			x			3
8	Students' responses on another' opinions in debating.			x			3
Total score							29

The score of the observation as below:

$$\text{Score} = (\text{Total score} / \text{maximum score}) \times 100\%$$

$$= 29/40 \times 100\% = 72.5\%$$

As can be seen through the observation above, almost students took part in the class positively. The researcher designed the test in the form of debate in pairs for the purpose of solving students' speaking response ability and the result of the first cycle test was recorded in table 2.

The mean of students' score as follow:

$$M = 1758/24 = 73.25$$

According to the table 2, the average score of the students' test in the first cycle was 73.25, however there were some students getting low mark in speaking skill. In order to have better result, the researcher continued to carry out the second cycle.

The observation checklist in the second cycle is presented in table 3. The score of the observation as below:

$$\text{Score} = 33/40 \times 100\% = 82.5\%$$

In this cycle, scores of students' activities was improved. It increased roughly 10% from 72.5% to 82.5%.

Table 2. *Students' Speaking Score test in the First Cycle*

No	Students' Score
1.	66
2.	74
3.	87
4.	80
5.	78
6.	67
7.	69
8.	77
9.	72
10.	89
11.	64
12.	84
13.	75
14.	71
15.	67
16.	79
17.	78
18.	71
19.	68
20.	76
21.	76
22.	69
23.	60
24.	61
Total score	1758

Table 3. *Observation Checklist in the Second Cycle*

No	Activities	Grades					Score
		1	2	3	4	5	
1	Students pay attention to the teacher's explanation.				x		4
2	Students' ability to manage class in the form of team.				x		4
3	Students' activeness and enthusiast in debating.					x	5
4	Students' role in debating.				x		4
5	Students have minimal reliance on notes			x			3
6	Students present arguments with clarity and appropriate volume				x		4
7	Students' activeness in giving opinion in debating.				x		4
8	Students' responses on another' opinions in debating.					x	5
Total score							33

The researcher continued to give students a spoken test to see their improvement. Table 4 is depicted students' speaking score test in cycle two.

The mean of students' score as follow:

$$M = 1894/24 = 78.9$$

After pre-test and post-test in the first and second cycle, students' speaking score tests were in advance. In particular, students' scores in the first and second cycle were 1758 and 1894, respectively. Thus, the mean of students' scores got a raise of roughly 5.65. It means that students' speaking skill had a positive change.

It can be concluded that after 8 speaking lessons using debate technique, students gradually had some advance when speaking English and expressing their ideas. The outcomes showed that this group of students can afford to speak English more fluently and interact with others more confidently when applying debate technique. Students' speaking skill was better, which leads to the improvement in their speaking response. Based on the results of the study after about 4 weeks, it is possible to consider that debate technique is a specific feasible and suitable method to help students improve their speaking response.

Table 4. *Students' Speaking Score test in the Second Cycle*

No	Students' Score
1.	68
2.	84
3.	88
4.	85
5.	83
6.	76
7.	75
8.	79
9.	72
10.	91
11.	74
12.	88
13.	78
14.	79
15.	79
16.	82
17.	80
18.	74
19.	78
20.	79
21.	88
22.	71
23.	79
24.	64
Total score	1894

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research about using debate technique to improve English speaking response for second-year English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education, it can be concluded that: Debate is a useful technique in learning speaking process. This method can be applied to improve speaking skill. Through debate technique, students have more opportunities to interact and communicate with everyone by English. Students' speaking skill is bettered, which leads to the improvement of their speaking response. Since then, they can deal with any topic in English and willing to express their own thoughts to oppose others' speech as well as defend their opinion in both class and daily life. By using debate technique in speaking class, students were very excited and comfortable when taking part in these lessons. This also motivated their passion with speaking English and helped them escape from the fear of making mistakes when speaking.

In summary, after analyzing the experimental results as well as observing students' activities, it can be said that this method is a perfectly suitable method for sophomore majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education. It is necessary for them to use debate technique more regularly when practising English speaking for the purpose of being more and more professional. It is hoped that this method will be applied for not only specialized students but also most of students at Thai Nguyen University of Education and other schools. Non-professional students can improve their speaking response through debating and make English become their favourite subject.

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