

SPEAKING SKILL ASSESSMENT THROUGH DEBATE FOR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract: Speaking is one of the productive skills in language, including English. Along with writing, speaking serves as a visible skill that show one's language skill. Not like listening and reading, speaking skill complex in terms of its assessment. Therefore, it needs a proper assessment to really measure the students' comprehension in speaking skill. In this paper, the writer proposes *debate* as a comprehensive method to assess the students' speaking skill. Based on the available literatures, the instruction to do a comprehensive assessment of speaking through debate is proposed, as well as the rubrics used to ensure the assessment's consistency. Beside the method, the writer also shed light on how debate is seen in the perspective of different test principles. Despite some drawbacks regarding its implementation, as an assessment tool for speaking, debate offers more benefits than just for speaking itself, such as cooperation between the members and critical thinking when building their arguments.

Keywords: speaking, assessment, debate

INTRODUCTION

English language has gained a lot of users globally. As an international language, it has been spoken globally and spread rapidly (Raja et al., 2022). In many different contexts, English is taught depending on the purpose of using the language itself. Some countries treat English as a Second Language (ESL), while others teach it as foreign language (EFL). In both ESL and EFL context, the language skills, namely listening, reading, writing and speaking

become the focus of the language learning. Hence the mastery in every skill is deemed important as an indicator of a good language comprehension.

As a productive skill, speaking is one of the complex skills in English. Furthermore, the most crucial skill to develop when learning a second or foreign language is believed to speaking and it is considered to be the most crucial of the four essential language abilities for learning a foreign or second language (Rao, 2019). To convey one's idea to other, speaking is used to transfer meaning. Therefore, its existence in language learning, including English, is crucial.

In the school context, particularly in Indonesia, speaking is mostly taught along with other skill despite less proportion compared to other language skills such as reading, writing and listening. The possible cause would probably the practicality in assessing the students' skills. Speaking skill assessment could take longer time to be done. If we take listening, for example, the audio played can be done for numerous questions and it will take shorter time to assess and correct. Despite being complex, the need to assess speaking is still needed to be able to thoroughly see the progress the students make in the skill that is crucial.

Various method has been proposed as the speaking test, from the very simple ones such as imitative speaking to the complex ones like oral presentations (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Different level of learners, in terms of age and language proficiency level, would enact different kinds of speaking test to suit their language comprehension. For this paper, the writer looks at how speaking assessment is conducted for university level EFL learners. In the Indonesian context, English is taught at most higher education institutions as a compulsory subject. Moreover, in English-specialized department such as English Department, speaking skill is taught as a core skill. Therefore, the need to use an assessment

method that looks at the different aspect of speaking comprehensively cannot be denied.

Debating is one of the interactive speaking that is widely used. Many research studies have looked into incorporating debate to enhance students' speaking skill (Arung & Jumardin, 2016; Iman, 2017; Tianame et al., 2019). However, most these studies look into different contexts of language learner's lever. In this paper, the writer tries to shed light on how actually using debate, particularly Australasian debate system, can help in making a comprehensive assessment of the university level students' speaking skill. Besides, this proposed assessment will be followed by the view from various language testing principles to look deeper into why it is a good assessment method for speaking skill.

METHOD

This paper is a result of a library study. Database searches were done during the course of this analysis. As a main database, ERIC was employed. ERIC stands for Education Resources Information Center. It was chosen as the main database due to its availability of various fields of education, including the ones in English language assessments. Only recent articles released after 2010 were included in the search. The words "debate," "speaking," "evaluation," and other pertinent terms were utilized as keywords. There were numerous articles that came from various contexts. The ones that were pertinent to the topic were kept after the irrelevant ones had been removed. There were also other references utilized that weren't in the database, such as key references for debate. All the found and chosen articles and references were manually reviewed and juxtaposed with the aim of writing this paper.

RESULT

After reviewing various literatures on using debate as a speaking assessment, one method of debate has chosen as the most

appropriate one to be applied, namely Australasia parliamentary system (D'Cruz, 2003). Each team has three speakers total. A first speaker, second speaker, third speaker, and reply speaker are required for each team. Both the first speaker and the second speaker may respond in a reply speaker. First, second, and third speakers would each give an 8-minute speech, while speakers for the rebuttal would each give a 4-minute speech to wrap up the team's points.

Table 1. Teams in Australasia parliamentary system

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Affirmative team's first speaker● Opposition team's first speaker● Affirmative team's second speaker● Opposition team's second speaker● Affirmative team's third speaker● Opposition team's third speaker● Opposition team's reply speaker● Affirmative team's reply speaker |
|---|

As this is a debate, a motion is presented to be argued by both teams. The motions are about the topic that has a balanced view in terms of positive and negative arguments. Before the debate, the two teams should be given a time to prepare for their arguments and the points they want to say in the debate. Because this debate is for classroom assessment purposes, some adjustments are made, particularly in the speech duration for each speaker and the argument building. In this assessment, the first, second, and third speaker would spend four minutes while the reply speakers would have two minutes. In total, one debate will take around 30 minutes. The judgement process will not use the original mechanism of

adjudication. Instead, teacher uses the rubric as the assessment for students' speaking skill. Following is the instruction for this assessment task:

Considering this is a debate, a motion is put up for both parties to defend. The motions concern a subject with a balanced viewpoint in terms of both pro and con arguments. The two teams should be given time to prepare their points of contention and their arguments prior to the debate. Several modifications are made to the debate because it is being used as a classroom evaluation tool, specifically to the length of each speaker's statement and the way the arguments are developed. The first, second, and third speakers in this assessment will be adjusted in terms of the duration of the speaking, with each has four minutes to talk, while the reply speakers would each have two minutes. One debate will last approximately 30 minutes in total. The first adjudication technique will not be used in the judgement process. Instead, the teacher evaluates the pupils' speaking abilities using the rubric. The guidelines for this assessment task are as follows

Table 2. Classroom Debate Instruction:

- Based on all the unit we have covered so far in this course, your performance in this debate will be evaluated for your persuasive speaking skills as well as how you present your points and rebuttals. You will also be graded on your overall presentation, vocabulary, fluency, grammar, pronunciation, and the clarity of your arguments and rebuttals.
- Be seated with the group you established during the prior meeting. You should be ready whether your group is in favor of the motion under discussion or against it because you have previously studied the readings linked to it at home.

- We decided that Groups 1 and 2 would discuss the death penalty, and Groups 3 and 4 would discuss the legalization of same-sex marriage. Each team should send a representative to the teacher's drawing to determine if their team is the opposing or affirmative one.
- Discuss how you would structure your team's speaking flow and overall arguments in ten minutes after learning your team's position. Groups 1 and 2 debate first, followed by Groups 3 and 4, who then participate.
- Conduct the debate based on the Australasia Parliamentary system and the mechanism we have learned during the unit.

The following rubric was used to evaluate how well the students performed in their debates:

Table 3. Rubric for Assessing Debate

Criteria	Basic ($<50\%$)	Standard ($50-69\%$)	Good ($70-79\%$)	Excellent ($\geq 80\%$)
Clarity of arguments and rebuttals (25)	Unclear in most parts of ideas and arguments. No effective counter-arguments made	Clear in some parts but not overall in ideas and arguments. Few effective counter-arguments made	Mostly clear and orderly in all parts of ideas and arguments. Some effective counter-arguments made	Completely clear and orderly presentation of ideas and arguments. Many effective counter-arguments made
Fluency (25)	The speech was difficult to follow due to the lack of flow in the speech.	Communicate some main points fluently but there were four times or more where	Communicate clearly but there were two times or more when the student paused.	Communicate clearly with no difficulty. Student did not have long pauses when speaking.

	Too many very long pauses.	the student paused and had difficulty resuming their speech.		
Vocabulary (15)	Inadequate vocabulary choice with some words clearly lacking	Vocabulary range is basic	Good range of relatively well-chosen vocabulary	A wide range of well-chosen vocabulary
Grammar (15)	Grammatical errors are frequent including in simple structures that interfere meaning.	Grammatical errors are frequent but do not interfere meaning; little variety in structures	Grammatical structures contain minor errors with good variety of structures.	Excellent accuracy & variety of grammatical structures
Pronunciation (15)	Almost total inaccuracies in pronouncing individual sounds, word stress, intonation, and rhythm	Pronunciations are inaccurate in some individual sounds, word stress, intonation, and rhythm	Pronunciations are fairly accurate in individual sounds, word stress, intonation, and rhythm	Pronunciations are accurate in individual sounds, word stress, intonation, and rhythm
Overall Presentation (5)	Large sections of the speech were difficult to	Sometimes it was difficult to hear the speech. There were entire	Speech was loud enough but didn't stay loud. There were	Speech was communicated with confidence. Student used a

	comprehended due to the speech not being loud and clear enough.	parts of the speech that were not understood.	times where the student lost confidence and their voice lowered.	clear voice and have consistent volume
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DISCUSSION

Purpose of Assessment Task

Although the goal of this assessment is summative, it also includes components of formative assessment because students will receive feedback based on their performance using the rubric. This performance-based assessment is also frequently referred to as a summative assessment (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Debate is selected as the evaluation activity because it helps students develop their speaking and critical thinking abilities. Also, compared to other types of debate, The Parliamentary debate organization is more adaptable to be held in a classroom context.

The ultimate goal of this assessment is to determine how well the students have embodied the unit's learning objectives for argumentative speaking. The students have been exposed to argumentative discussion throughout the class in preparation for this objective through debate. For instance, during the first five subjects of the courses, the students learnt about an introduction to Australasia's parliamentary debate, how to support their arguments, the format of the debate, how to anticipate and counter other points, and the debate dos and don'ts. There are grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary courses pertaining to the delivery of debate included in the particular lesson content. The structure of

making a good argument, rebuttals and opinion are taught as well. The sixth meeting is scheduled to include this assessment work as the unit's last activity. Previous to it, groups are formed in the fifth meeting.

This assessment is both a summative test and an achievement test because it only covers specific topics that are taught over a specific period of time, as indicated by the unit's objectives (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). Therefore, the results of this evaluation will reveal whether the unit's goals have been met. This assessment will also show students what they still need to work on. The marking criteria and rubric would make it easier to determine which areas the students still need to work on, such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary selection, and speaking ability itself. In order to improve the students' language competence growth, the notes and information from this assessment work will be helpful information for the following learning cycle. Moreover, Black et al., (2010) assert that students' active involvement in the testing process can aid them in understanding how examinations can help them improve their learning rather than hinder them.

Benefits of Debate as an Assessment

For these university students, learning English can be advantageous in many ways. The first benefit is that it will get them ready to have the language abilities needed for the future workforce. Also, it will enable students to participate in worldwide communication where English is the common language. With the aid of globalization, the world's rapid pace has become intolerable, and English is now recognized as a crucial language to aid in adaptation. English instruction in this language center would be advantageous for the students to continue their English learning rather than only stopping at high school as English is a subject that is required in the Indonesian education curriculum at the university level. Even though there aren't many high stakes in this class, it

nevertheless benefits pupils in improving their language competency across the board. The teacher would deliver the findings of this assessment exercise to the students. Based on the students' performance in the debate and using the rubric as a guide, the teacher would provide narrative evaluations along with the numerical score

From the Test Principals

Due to the fact that the test measures what it claims to measure, it has a high level of validity (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). The assessment examines how well the students have mastered the lesson's content in the debate unit by having them achieve the learning outcomes, giving the test a high level of topic-related validity. Content validity is also quite high (Tsagari & Banerjee, 2016) which includes any validity strategies that concentrate on the test's content. Content validity, which includes any validity strategies focusing on the content of the test (Tsagari & Banarjee, 2016), is also persistent in this test.

The construct validity of this assessment test is still present even though it was administered in a classroom. This is because the students' argumentative speaking was judged based on factors that promote that skill, such as argument clarity, fluency, pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary. The students are urged to be well-prepared before participating in the debate, which might help them increase their knowledge and develop stronger arguments and rebuttals. This increases the consequential validity or impact of this oral presentation. This assessment places a high value on face validity because the skills and information it was designed to test were really measured. The students can infer from the instruction that this assessment activity is suitable for determining how well they have understood the unit's content. Also, it is reasonable, pertinent, and helpful for the students' learning and development of their persuasive speaking skills. When there are pupils who prefer

listening to speaking, the test may be invalid. Because of this, it is likely that pupils who are strong at speaking will score higher than those who don't.

This evaluation test's reliability is supported by numerous elements that have been observed. Because all students receive the same instruction, this test has a high level of test administration reliability. In addition, same amount of time to prepare and the same guidelines apply to all the students. Also, the same scoring criteria are used to evaluate their performance. These elements would also support the fairness of this evaluation task. As stated by (Kunnan, 2013), the practical aspect of fairness already exists in the mainstream exams, and from this assessment task, it is also seen from the debate topics that the students are familiar with and the fact that the students have been taught about the debate and how to deliver it before completing the assessment task. He also suggests that evaluations should be equitable to all test-takers. The teacher's intra-rater reliability is still good because there are few debates performed. It would take thirty minutes for each debate, taking an hour to complete. (Kang & Rubin, 2012) contend that it is important to recognize that a variety of subjective and affective factors that may affect judgment can affect the intra-rater reliability of a single rater. These could include the favoritism of the teacher, one's current wellbeing, one's emotional state, and others. Even though students have had some time to prepare for their arguments, unforeseen circumstances like as temporary illness, weariness, a poor day, and other physical or psychological problems may prevent them from taking the test. This would have an impact on the reliability associated to students. If students are given a topic that contradicts their personal beliefs, there may be a potential fairness drawback. For instance, a student might be in Group 3 and on the team that supports same-sex marriage even though they are opposed to the idea in their personal lives.

It is also important to note that this assessment holds low practicality. In terms of time, this assessment assignment requires the time of both the teachers and the pupils. Students must be well-prepared with their arguments in support of and against a particular motion because the teams supporting and opposing the motion are revealed before the debate even begins. Moreover, since this can be a summative assessment, students will have to prepare themselves more with what they have learned, to represent the speaking construct (Becker et al., 2017).

The teacher would hold twelve separate rubrics and switch the rubric as the speakers in the debate changed, as the students' performance is evaluated using a rubric. Afterwards, a narrative review of each student's performance is created using the rubrics. The teacher will have to spend a lot of time on this. Also, it would be difficult for the teacher to create the narrative evaluation. The teacher would need to take their time reviewing the recording after the discussion to confirm the scoring.

According to (Joughin, 2010), there are various methods that can be employed to ensure authenticity, including realistic preparation schedules, student collaboration, and tasks that are multi-dimensional and set in realistic situations. About that, the debate topics show that this assessment assignment has a high level of authenticity. The motions that were carefully selected are actual events, and it's possible that the pupils are talking about them on a regular basis. The students are unlikely to participate in a debate in their everyday lives, especially given the Australasian Parliamentary system, hence the authenticity of this assessment activity may be low as a result.

Students may benefit from washback from this debate assessment task. Discussion would teach students how to conduct in-depth study on important subjects (Iman, 2017). Additionally, Iman (2017) suggests that by incorporating critical thinking and listening skills into the debate process, students can practice

defending their position against that of the opponents. Students might acquire confidence in the test by using the planning time provided throughout the period of time before the debate (Wigglesworth & Elder, 2010).

CONCLUSION

As one of the leading languages in the world, English has been taught and studied extensively. All skills of the language have interchangeably been taught although with different proportions. As speaking is one of the complex skills to learn and to assess, it needs a proper assessment method, particularly for the university student level, who are expected to be able to show a good ability in using English.

This paper has thoroughly gone through the Australasian parliamentary debate system to be adopted to the classroom setting. Literature has shown that using debate can enhance the students' speaking skill. Different principles of test have also been discussed in this paper too have a deeper look at debate as an assessment. However, it is important to note that different context might affect how the debate s run as an alternative for speaking assessment. Teachers, in this case, must be mindful of the class character to be able to conduct a speaking assessment through debate which can bring the best out of the students.

Debate might seem to be just appropriate for students who already have a good command in English. Nevertheless, this should not be a precaution for English teacher to not introduce debate to students who are still developing their English proficiency.

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