

The Impacts of Debate Instruction on Iranian EFL Students' L2 Speaking Performance

Mohammad Mahdi Kazemi*

Persian Gulf University, Boushehr, Iran

*Corresponding Author: Mohammad Mahdi Kazemi, Persian Gulf University, Boushehr, Iran

ABSTRACT

The overarching aim of the study is to figure out the effects of debate instruction on Iranian EFL students' L2 speaking performance and also to determine the differences between A1 and A2 students exposed to the debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance. Moreover, the study aimed to list the challenges experienced during conducting the classroom debate instruction. The participants included 26 A1 and 24 A2 high school students exposed to the debate instruction for eight sessions. The data were collected by means of L2 speaking tests and field notes of the researcher. The findings from the quantitative data revealed that students' L2 speaking performance improved statistically significant after exposing to the debate instruction. The findings also revealed that there were not statistically significant differences between A1 and A2 students' L2 speaking performance. The findings from the qualitative data reported that time limitation, students' motivation, students' satisfaction and students' proficiency levels were the biggest challenges that L2 teacher faced in implementing the classroom debate instruction.

Keywords: Debate Instruction, L2 Speaking Performance, EFL Students, EFL Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skill plays a crucial role in communicating and learning a foreign language and it is considered the most challenging skill for learners. Most learners are afraid of making mistakes while speaking the foreign language because they cannot plan their speech beforehand, especially in real life situations unlike other skills in which they can edit and revise what they have done.

According to Fauzan (2016) the most common challenges EFL students face when communicating in second language (L2) are as follows: speaking English in real time, negotiating meanings, managing conversations, and speaking spontaneously. Thus, many L2 learners feel unsatisfied about their L2 speaking performance, have low confidence, and feel anxious while speaking the foreign language (Aydin, 2013).

The current study attempts to contribute to the previous studies in enhancing Learners' L2 speaking abilities. To reach this goal, the researcher of the present study decides to use debate instruction as one of the effective strategies that can help students to communicate easily and trigger them to speak confidently. Darby (2007) believed that debate is found to

enable students to be involved in a range of cognitive and linguistic ways. Besides, it gives students chance to improve their culture awareness by being exposed to different controversial topics and participate in cooperative learning that can enable them to improve their communication and argumentation skills (Akerman & Neale, 2011). In addition, Debate enables L2 learners to get rid of their fears in speaking a foreign language (Fauzan, 2016; Gersten, 1995).

Therefore, the researcher of the present study believes that debate instruction can help EFL students to improve their L2 speaking performance since the students will be engaged in a lot of practice and verbal discussions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the review of the literature that has been done, there is a variety of studies which investigated the effects of debate instruction on L2 speaking performance among Indonesian and Thai EFL students, but to the researcher's best knowledge, there is no study to date which examined debates' effects on L2 speaking performance among Iranian EFL students. Therefore, this study will fill the gap in the literature by conducting the debate instruction in ELT context.

In case, you need more space to categorize your description of the problem, you may use detailed numbering with a title to go through the problem.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The present study aims to implement debate instruction with EFL A1 and A2 students to explore the effects of debate instruction on their L2 speaking performance. The study will also investigate the differences between A1 and A2 students exposed to the debate regarding their L2 speaking performance, in order to determine which level will get more benefits out of using the debate instruction. In addition, the study will list the challenges experienced while conducting the classroom debate instruction.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to reach the main goals that have been mentioned above, the following research questions will be answered:

1. Will debate instruction have an impact on Iranian EFL students' L2 speaking performance?
2. Will there be a statistically significant difference between A1 and A2 EFL students exposed to debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance?
3. What are the challenges that L2 teachers face in implementing the classroom debate instruction?

The following hypotheses are formulated:

H01) Using debate instruction will not have any impact on EFL students' speaking performance.

H02) There will not be a statistically significant difference between A1 and A2 Iranian EFL students exposed to debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is significant since it will implement the debate instruction with two different English proficiency levels in order to seek whether the debate would be more beneficial for the A1 students or for the A2 students in terms of enhancing their L2 speaking. Moreover, the study and its results may guide and encourage L2 teachers to implement the debate instruction in their classes by providing the impacts of the debate instruction in ELT context and listing some challenges that L2 teachers may face in implementing this method.

Grounded on this information, the obtained data will contribute to the English language

education research by providing rich information about the debate instruction and its role in English language education. With this study, it is hoped that Iranian EFL students will benefit from using debate instruction and will be more encouraged to participate in EFL classrooms and practice their English confidently.

Literature Review

Overview

Since the English language has become the international or a global language that is used as a primary method of communication among people all over the world, the number of the learners of this language is increasing day by day. Thereby, there is a need to find out more effective activities and instructions that enable L2 learners to speak the English language spontaneously and easily since learning another language is generally characterized in terms of speaking that language (Nunan, 1999). Speaking skill enables learners to express their ideas and share their thoughts through verbal and nonverbal symbols with other people, but also it is considered as one of the stressful skills for learners because it depends more on individual cognitive process (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Debate instruction is recommended by many scholars (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013; Krieger, 2005; Pinardi, 2016; Stewart & Pleisch, 1998) to be used in English classes since the debate requires many skills that can lead debaters to speak the English language efficiently. Many English language teachers and practitioners consider debate instruction as a valuable method in teaching English language since it provides meaningful listening, speaking, reading, and writing practice (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013). Debate enable students to express their views and arguments freely and in return they need to listen and interact with each other's opinions. Therefore, many researchers believe that debate instruction can enhance students' L2 speaking performance (Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, & Loudon, 1999; Bellon, 2000; Williams et al., 2001).

Furthermore, Roy and Macchiette (2005) believed that students' confidence of speaking the English language can be increased through using debate instruction since their fears of speaking the English language can be stroke out. In addition, Fauzan (2016) claimed that the debate is highly effective for developing EFL learners' argumentation skills for their

persuasive speech and writing. It enables students to be aware of the social issues that happen in their society due to their usage of the controversial topics. Thus, this study attempts to enhance students' L2 speaking performance by involving L2 learners in a structured debate that keeps them actively participated.

Debate and its Role in Education

Debate has been defined by many researchers like Akerman and Neale (2011), Doody and Condon (2012), Roy and Macchiette (2005), Scannapieco (1997), but all of the definitions share the same idea which is a form of a structured discussion between two contrasting groups about one of the controversial issues. For instance, debate was defined by Akerman and Neale (2011) as a formal discussion where two opposing sides follow a set of pre-agreed rules to be engaged in an oral exchange of different points of view on an issue. Similarly, Doody and Condon (2012) defined debate as a means of discussion "requiring a structured argument to be developed. Challenging students to consider the present and discuss their views with others" (p. 234). According to Roy and Macchiette (2005) debate is considered as a form of oral controversy based on the systematic presentation of opposing arguments about a specific issue. In Scannapieco's (1997) words, debate is "an effective means by which opposing theories or alternative solutions to complex problems can be articulated" (p. 955).

A review of literature has shown that debate instruction as a teaching tool has been successfully used in a variety of fields including sociology, history, psychology, biotechnology, math, health, dentistry, nursing, marketing, and social work (Jugdev, Markowski, & Mengel, 2004). Debate instruction is varied in use in education. It can be embedded in the course curriculum in order to provide a variety of teaching methods that enable students to be active learners (Oros, 2007). It can be used to start a class discussion on one of the controversial issues (Frederick, 1981). It can be a classroom debate or a competitive debate. The classroom debate is the most common debate used as a teaching tool in education (Akerman & Neale, 2011). According to Akerman and Neale (2011) the classroom debate instruction can be used as follows: firstly, all students should be provided with the debate procedure and format beforehand. The International Debate Education Association (2016) demonstrated that the traditional format is appropriate for high school

students and the parliamentary debate format for university students. After acknowledging students with the format of the classroom debate due to Akerman and Neale (2011) suggestions, a school teacher or instructor should set a topic to be debated and divide students into two contrasting groups.

Then, students need to do their own research about the debate topic or the issue in order to debate about it during the class. Both contrasting groups should be given the same amount of time whether to deliver their speech or to check their statements with each other. The positive or the affirmative group should always go first. Each debate group should start their arguments with constructive discourse and then there should be refutation in order to attack the other group on their initial speech (Scannapieco, 1997). Following that each group should conclude their arguments with a conclusion statement to convince the instructor about their views and argumentation (Scannapieco, 1997). After debating practice, the students may also be asked to write an essay about their experience of participating in the debate or about the debate topic (Akerman & Neale, 2011).

On the other hand, a competitive debate mostly used for holding competition between schools or universities and has also been used commonly in education (Akerman & Neale, 2011). Pinardi (2016) believed that a competitive English debate encourages students to be exposed to the global knowledge since it gives them an opportunity to share their ideas, knowledge, and opinions with people from different cultures and backgrounds. The students who participate in the competitive debate usually receive academic credits (Akerman & Neale, 2011). The competitive debate runs according to a variety of setting and styles that determine the length of debaters' speech and the debates' topics (Akerman & Neale, 2011). The formats commonly used in the competitive debate can be a policy debate, parliamentary debate, Asian parliamentary debate, or Australian parliamentary debate (The International Debate Education Association, 2016).

Many scholars believed that debate instruction enables students to increase their motivation to learn, master their course content, express themselves effectively, express their opinions to defend their position, take informed decisions, arguments based on the related data, improve their social interaction, critical thinking, knowledge, group management, team skills,

confidence, and facilitate immediate feedback from students, (Darby, 2007; Doody & Condon, 2012; Hall, 2011; Kennedy, 2007, 2009; Moomala, Faizah, & Amiri, 2013; Ramlan, Kassim, Pakirisamy, & Selvakumar, 2016; Rear, 2010; Yang & Rusli, 2012).

Ramlan et al.'s (2016) findings showed that students' confidence and critical thinking were enhanced through using the debate instruction. Similarly, the findings that obtained from Tawil's (2016) study showed that classroom debate instruction improves students' overall critical thinking disposition, enables students to enhance their overall open mindedness, inquisitiveness, analyticity, systematicity, and confidence of reasoning. Moreover, the debate instruction helps students to promote a deeper level of understanding the difficult topics through arguments and enables them to be aware of the different controversial topics that are in their field. Omelicheva and Avdeyeva (2008) found in their study that the political undergraduate students who were exposed to the debate instruction during their course perform better on comprehension of concepts, cognitive skills of application, and evaluation than the students who were just exposed to lectures. Furthermore, debate instruction is found to transform students' perspectives from passive to active learners as the students are responsible to hold the discussion while the role of the teacher will be as a coordinator and advisor (Akerman & Neale, 2011; Snider & Schnurer, 2002). Thus, debate instruction motivates students to take responsibility for their own learning rather than being instructor dependent.

On the other hand, some scholars stated that debate can reinforce bias towards dualism since the debaters during debate are divided into two contrasting groups, so they will look to the issues from two sides whether positive or negative and the issues should be solved not just from black or white sides, but there should be a grey one (Rubiati, 2010; Tumposky, 2004). In addition, it is stated that debate instruction needs a long time and a lot of preparation from students in order to debate with their friends very well and attack their opponent's opinions (Rubiati, 2010; Tumposky, 2004).

The Role of Debate Instruction in L2 Speaking Performance

Debate instruction can increase students' L2 speaking and create communicative activities because debaters have to defend their points of views and initially they need to respond to the

questions that are asked by their friends (Pinardi, 2016). So the debaters will have the chance to practice their English and acquire argumentation skills that can enable them to accept other people's views in their life. In addition, the debate instruction is not just affected students' oral communication, but also improves students' productive and receptive skills (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013).

In the light of this information, a variety of studies conducted in Indonesia and Thailand to explore the impact of debate instruction on L2 speaking performance. Rubiati (2010) conducted a study to describe how the debate instruction can be applied in teaching L2 speaking and to examine its effects on improving L2 speaking performance among first semester students of the English language department Tarbiyah Faculty at IAIN Walisongo Semarang. The study was done as an action research in two cycles. The participants were 31 Indonesian EFL students exposed to debate instruction for one month. The data were collected by means of researcher's observations and L2 speaking tests in every cycle. The data from the L2 speaking tests were analyzed descriptively, whereas the data from the researcher's observations were analyzed in terms of students' behaviors and students' responses that indicated students' activeness during the debate. The findings from the observations indicated that majority of the students participated in the debate enthusiastically. The results from the speaking tests implemented the observations' results and showed that the debate instruction improved students' L2 speaking abilities.

Another study conducted in Thailand by Somjai and Jansem (2015) examined the efficacy of the debate instruction that carried out during 18 lessons in enhancing EFL students' L2 speaking performance. 46 Thai tenth grade students participated in the study. The data were collected by means of English speaking test that used as pre and post tests and an attitude questionnaire to know students' views regarding the debate. The results from speaking tests showed that students' L2 speaking performance improved statistically significant after using the debate instruction and the findings from the questionnaire showed that the students have positive attitude towards the classroom debate instruction. Besides, the students believed that the debate should be impeded in the high school English course curriculums in order to make them practice their L2 speaking and improve their confidence.

In 2016, there was another study conducted by Fauzan to implement the debate instruction in the English classroom and see its effects on L2 speaking performance of third semester EFL students at IAIN Samarinda, Indonesia. In his study, an action research was employed into two cycles, including four meetings in each cycle; three were for implementing the debate instruction and one meeting for testing L2 speaking performance of the students. The data were collected by means of observation checklist, field-notes of the researcher, L2 speaking tests, and questionnaire. The findings from speaking tests revealed that students' L2 speaking performance increased from being „fair“ to being „good“. Besides, there was a great improvement in the classroom atmosphere. The findings also indicated that the debate instruction helped students to express their views, thoughts, improved their creativity, their fluency, developed their arguments from certain motions, and enhanced their confidence as well.

Desita, Supardi, and Suhartono (2017) conducted a study in Indonesia to improve students' L2 speaking through using debate instruction. The participants included 26 eighth grade students who were exposed to the debate instruction at Sungai Raya School, Indonesia. The study was done as an action research included three cycles. The data were collected by means of field notes of them researcher and observation checklist. The findings showed improvements of students speaking ability in expressing their opinions and arguments skills from the first cycle and more increased in the last cycle. Another study was conducted in 2017 by Yulia and Aprilita in order to examine the effects of debate on L2 speaking performance among 18 university students at Baturaja University, Indonesia. The students were exposed to debate instruction particularly the parliamentary debate format. The data were collected by means of L2 speaking tests that used as pre and posttests. The results showed that the debate is an effective tool to improve students' speaking abilities since it motivated them to practice their language.

The findings from previous studies proved that debate instruction is an appropriate technique used in teaching L2 speaking for EFL students since it improved their L2 speaking performance. However, the study was conducted in 2016 by Syukri and Mardiana to explore the effects of debate on L2 speaking performance of third year EFL students at faculty of UIN Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia showed that the

debate instruction did not enable students to improve their L2 speaking performance. In their study, six EFL students were observed and later the observations were analyzed by using fluency accuracy data, accuracy measurement rubric and authentic debate assessment rubric. The findings indicated that the students have low levels in conducting the debate and they need a further guide and improvements. Besides, the findings revealed that students' L2 speaking performance did not improve after using the debate since pronunciation errors and basic grammar mistakes were still observed in several places of students' L2 speaking performance.

CONCLUSION

The review of the literature covered the role of the debate instruction in the education and in ELT context. Besides, various research studies which were carried out to increase L2 speaking and of the students were provided. As the number of the English language learners increased, there should be more conducted studies to implement different teaching methods and activities in order to seek its effects on ELT context. As it can be seen from the literature, there is lack in the literature in examining the use of the debate instruction on students' L2 speaking performances. Thus, this study tries to fill the gap in the literature by using this method with two different English proficiency levels in Iranian EFL context.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides information about the methodological design of the study including detailed description of the research design, research setting, and characteristics of the students who participated in the study. Besides, the data instruments that were used to gather the research information are discussed in details. In addition, the research procedures including the debate process, data collection procedure, data analysis procedure, reliability and validity of the data instruments are explained deeply. Then the chapter will provide the limitations of the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is designed as a mixed method research in order to obtain the richness of the information by using combination of qualitative and quantitative data techniques besides to avoid any weakness that can be obtained from just using one certain design. Green, Caracelli and Graham (1989) confirmed the importance of mixed method research by shedding the light on five major factors which are triangulation,

complementary, development, initiation, and expansion. In addition, Lynch (1996) asserted that the research that is based on the combination of both elements techniques would provide the most thorough information possible as the data is validated by means of triangulation. Therefore, it is recommended to look at the problem from more than one standpoint as Rodgers (2002) stated that "if you can examine your data from at least two points of view, you will maximize the possibility of getting credible findings by cross validating those findings" (p. 243) and that can be done only by using qualitative and quantitative data techniques.

The qualitative data of the present study were obtained from field notes of the researcher, whereas quantitative data were obtained from L2 speaking exams. The present study was conducted with two research groups and there was no control group, so it is pre-experimental research. The first research group represented the ninth grade students whose levels were A1 and the second research group represented the tenth grade students whose levels were A2, but both groups were taught by using the same treatment which was the debate instruction to examine its effects on students' L2 speaking performance. The research used this pedagogy with two different levels to see whether both levels would get the same benefits out of using it or not. Accordingly, this study is based on two variables; one represents the independent variable i.e., the classroom debate instruction and the other three represent the dependent variables i.e., L2 speaking performance.

Setting and Participants

Table 1

Gender Distribution of the Participants

	Male	Female	Total
A1 Group	9	17	26
A2 Group	12	12	24
Total	21	29	50

Procedure

Sampling

Since the study was conducted with two groups of the high school students and each group represented different English proficiency level. It was not possible to conduct the study with the

The study was conducted for ten weeks during 2021-2022 academic year and took place in a private high school in Boushehr, Iran. The total number of the students in this school is around 550 and their grades start with ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth. The present study was conducted with just ninth and tenth grade students whose levels were A1 and A2 respectively due to the English proficiency test that was used by the school to determine students' levels. They take English course as main course with the other courses like chemistry, history, music, and so on. Their English classes are based mainly on learning grammar and speaking skill with little reading skill, they do not practice writing skill so much. Both levels take 4 hours weekly for English lessons in addition to one hour speaking club that holds every Thursdays. The present study conducted by the researcher himself since he had a teaching experience for over one year. Thus, he offered to take Thursdays' classes to implement the research's treatment due to the school regulations.

All of the high school participants volunteered to participate in the study on Thursday speaking classes and they were asked to sign the consent form to be participants in this study (see Appendix B). The first group consisted of 26 ninth grade students (17 female and 9 male) whose levels were A1 and the second group contained 24 tenth grade students (12 female and 12 male) whose levels were A2. All of the participants were Iranian and their ages ranged from 15 to 16 years. They have been learning English from 7 to 10 years, but they do not speak English outside the school. They learn it because it is one of the school requirements.

whole population of each English proficiency level. As Cohen and Manion (2000) stated that it is not always possible to collect the data from the whole population "due to factors of expense, time and accessibility" (p.87). Thus, smaller group "sample" were chosen to represent the whole population. The sampling method used in

The Impacts of Debate Instruction on Iranian EFL Students' L2 Speaking Performance

this study was based on a random sample procedure on voluntary basis whether for collecting the data from the students or for being participants in the 8-weeks debate instruction program.

Data Collection Instruments

In order to answer the research questions, the data were gathered by means of a combination

of quantitative and qualitative data techniques. The quantitative data were obtained by means of L2 speaking tests, whereas the qualitative data were gathered by means of field notes of the researcher. Table 2 presents the use of the data collection tools that were used to answer the research questions.

Table 2
The Overview of Data Collection Instruments

Research Questions	Data Collection Tools
1. What is the impact of using debate instruction on EFL students' L2 speaking performance,	Pre and post L2 speaking tests
2. Will there be a statistically significant difference between A1 and A2 EFL students exposed to debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance,	Pre and post L2 speaking tests
4. What are the challenges that L2 teacher face in implementing the classroom debate instruction?	Field notes of the researcher

L2 Speaking Tests

Two pictures were used as pre and posttests to assess students' L2 speaking performance (see Appendix G). The pictures were used purposely instead of using L2 speaking tests because the researcher believed that the students would be able to describe pictures in few minutes without being worried and anxious. Accordingly, the researcher chose randomly six of the participants from each level to represent the whole participants due to the time constraints. Therefore, twelve students were asked to describe one of the pictures which used as a pre-test to measure students' oral performance before the debate instruction. Then the same twelve students who described the first picture were asked to describe another one in order to be used as a post-test to examine if using the debate instruction has any effects on student' L2 speaking performance or not and also to determine the difference between both groups who were exposed to the debate regarding their L2 speaking performance. Students' voices were recorded and then transcribed carefully by the researcher with binaural earphones in order not

to miss any utterances. Then the utterances of the students' responses were checked also by another English teacher who listened again to the tape recording in order to add any missing utterance or modify any wrong transcriptions. Afterwards, students' utterances were graded by the researcher and the English teacher based on the clarity, organization of the speech, and word choices by using one of L2 speaking rubrics that used by the school (see Appendix H). The overall score of each speaking test is 15 points including 5 points in terms of clarity, 5 points in terms of organization of the speech, and 5 points for word choices.

Field Notes

A final tool used in this study is field notes of the researcher which were taken during the classes each week in order to describe the difficulties that happened while implementing the debate instruction. Besides, the teacher added some notes when the classes were finished as the memory was fresh. Richards and Farrell (2005) described field notes as "brief descriptions in note form of key events that

The Impacts of Debate Instruction on Iranian EFL Students' L2 Speaking Performance

occurred throughout the lesson” (p.89). Therefore, these field notes will be used to answer the last research question of the study that aims to list the challenges that experienced by L2 teacher in implementing the debate instruction.

Data Collection Procedure

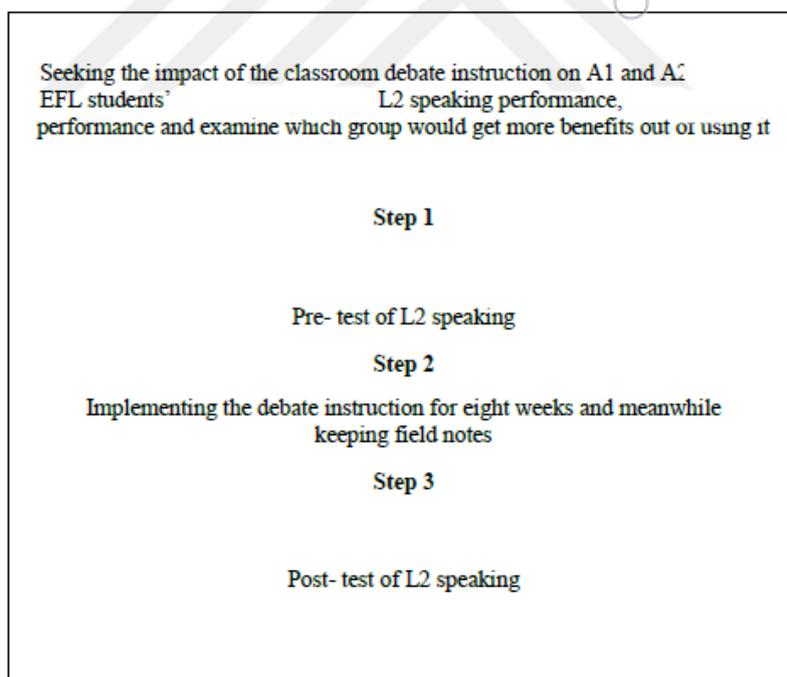
The teacher randomly chose six A1 students from ninth grade participants and six A2 students from tenth grade to describe a picture that aimed to determine students' L2 speaking performance before the debate instruction. Also, students' scores in L2 speaking test were kept in order to be compared with their scores after the debate instruction.

After collecting the data, the debate instruction was implemented on Thursdays for eight weeks

and the teacher weekly repeated the same process with different topics, different warm up questions, and different pictures according to the debate topic. During the debate instruction, the teacher kept some field notes which focused on the challenges she faced in using such method in order to shed the light on the difficulties that L2 teachers may face in implementing the debate instruction. One week after the study, the same twelve students who were selected to describe the picture, which was used as pre-test for L2 speaking performance, were also selected to describe another picture which was similar to the first one to be used as a post-test. Table 3 presents the data collection procedure as a whole.

Table 3

The Overview of Data Collection Procedure



Debate Instruction Procedure

The classroom debate usually consists of three members in every team sometimes four members in many debates. However, debates can vary in use, “sometimes it used based on the number of students in the classroom and the level of students” (Arung & Jumardin, 2016, p.73), so the members of the debate in this study were based on the number of the students in the classes and the debate procedure based on the traditional format of the classroom debate.

The teacher, who is the researcher of this study, introduced his study to the students and asked

them to participate in his study and they were told that it is not compulsory for them to take part in it and they can withdraw from the study anytime they want. So all the participants in the study were provided with the consent form to sign it. After that, the teacher explained the debate instruction to the students and informed them how they would debate, and then she provided them with eight debate topics in order to check if they like them or not. The topics were chosen carefully and modified according to students' levels. They were based on controversially issues in order to be debatable. The topics were as follows “Smoking should be

banned in all public places”, “Students should not have to wear school uniforms”, “Video game shave bad effects on children”, “Animal testing should be banned”, “Mobile phones should be banned in schools”, “Students should not be given homework by their teachers”, “Money can buy your happiness”, and lastly “Eating fast food can cause some diseases”. The links of these reading topics that used in this study are provided in Appendix K. Afterwards, the students were provided with the reading material of the first debate topic and they were granted one week to read it because it is important to give the students enough time to read and search on their own about the debate topic. Besides, the students were provided with some expressions to be used in the debate activity (see Appendix L). Then, the teacher started each session with warm up questions for four minutes and distributed a picture related to the debate topic that it contained new words to acknowledge the students with them. The teacher used pictures because it was easy to use them and instead of explaining the meaning of new words, the pictures could easily illustrate the exact meaning of the words. After that the teacher introduced the debate topic briefly and provided the students with the pros and cons statements that are related to the debate topic in order to trigger their thoughts.

Initially, the students were divided randomly into two groups. One represented the positive or affirmative group and the other one represented the opposition or negative group. The affirmative group always in favour with the debate topic and supported it, whereas the negative group always against the debate topic and tried to support their negative views. The division was only happened before the debate started, so the students had to read all the text

that distributed to them in order to gather information on both sides to support their teams. The positions of each group were not fixed weekly; their positions were changed each lesson by the teacher.

Afterwards, the students were given three to four minutes before each debate in order to check their statements with their teams' members. Then, the first speaker of the affirmative group introduced the debate topic and defined their position toward the topic. Next, the first speaker of the negative group also introduced their position toward the debate topic. Then, the second speaker from the affirmative group started his or her speech by commenting on the speech of the negative speaker and then declaring the debate topic with presenting their speech and their arguments. The following speaker was from the negative group who rebutted and commented on the speech of the second speaker and again he or she represented their arguments. Afterwards, the third speaker from the affirmative group also commented on the speech of the negative group member and represented new speech that supported their arguments and views. The debate continued in the same fashion till all the students participate. To end the debate which lasted usually forty minutes, the last speaker from each group concluded their arguments and their speech with a conclusion statement. After the debate, the students were asked to write about the debate topic which they already discussed for ten minutes and they were allowed to use their written clues, which were used during the debate, in their writing. Table 4 presents the sample of how the time was divided and used during an hour that used in debate program each week.

Table 4
The Overview of Debate Instruction

Procedure	Time	The objectives
Warm up questions	4 Minutes	To activate students' knowledge about the debate topic
New vocabulary	3 Minutes	To enable the students to guess the meaning of the words by using pictures
Pre-debate	3 Minutes	To trigger students' thought about the topic by distributing pros and cons statements and enable them to check their statements with each other
During the debate	40 Minutes	To implement the debate instruction and encourage students to be more confident while speaking the English language.
Writing about the debate topic	10 Minutes	To train the students to write about different debatable topics

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

For the purpose of the present study, a combination of quantitative and qualitative data techniques used to analyze the obtained data of the study. Quantitative data were obtained from L2 speaking tests, whereas the qualitative data were occurred from the field notes. The analysis of quantitative data was conducted through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.0. Then the data were first examined in terms of normality and outliers by means of graphical and statistical analysis such as histograms, bar graphs, standardized scores, Shapiro-Wilk test, skewness, and kurtosis. No outliers or missing scores were detected.

Grounded on the normality tests, the data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics for each research question to have a better understanding of the participants' answers. Paired sample t-tests were used to answer the first research question that aimed to seek the impact of the debate instruction. On the other hand, independent t-tests statistics were computed to answer the second research question which based on finding out the statistical significance difference between the A1 and A2 students exposed to the debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance. The gain scores of L2 speaking performance was computed by subtracting the post-test scores from the pre-test scores. Following the paired sample and the independent samples t-tests, the effect size and confidence intervals were reported for each research question in order to keep the fellow researchers informed on practical significance of the results. The effect sizes of the tests were computed by using Cohen's d criteria in order to understand the size effects of the debate. The Cohen's d was obtained by the help of the spreadsheet designed by Thalheimer and Cook (2002). Besides, the post hoc power analysis was computed in cases of not obtaining statistical significant differences.

The analysis of the qualitative data was done by using pattern coding in order to reduce the large amount of data from the field notes into a smaller number of analytic units. The data was grouped first by the researcher according to the categories and interpreted in the light of the study's overall objectives, and then the coding were checked and modified by an English teacher in order to obtain more valid data and minimize any bias that can be obtained by just using the researcher analysis.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The scores reliabilities for the L2 speaking tests were estimated high revealed test-retest reliability over eight weeks by the researcher ($r=.95 < .02$, $n = 12$) since high Pearson correlation coefficients (above .7) are generally considered to indicate high test-retest reliability as stated by Kimberlin and Winterstein (2008).

The evidence of the validity for the L2 speaking tests, the researcher used the following methods:

1. a reputable expert view before distributing the tests to the participants,
2. a view of an English teacher from outside the school where the study was conducted,
3. a view of an English teacher from within the school,
4. distributing the tests firstly to four A1 students and four A2 students who were not included in the study.

The validity methods of the field notes were done by distributing the notes and the themes of the analysis to the English language teacher and then the themes of the field notes were checked and modified based on the focus of the study.

LIMITATIONS

This study has certain limitations in applying the debate instruction. Since the study and data collection instruments were implemented by the researcher himself, there can be some bias that exist whether to write the field notes that used to find out the challenges that the L2 teacher faced or to implement the treatment itself. The present study was conducted with two research groups without any control group because the teacher of the present study was allowed to implement his treatment with just two classes that were held every Thursday. Those classes contained the ninth grade students and the tenth grade students, so it was difficult to represent one of them as a control group since the students' levels were different. Thereby, effects of the debate instruction could be different with having control group. Besides, the study was not piloted before implementing the debate instruction because of the time limitation and school regulations as well and that can be considered another limitation of the present study.

Moreover, the duration of the time that used to implement the debate instruction could be one of the limitations since an hour every Thursday for eight weeks was quite short to get better results. In addition, the number of the

participants was quite small (just 50) since all of them were volunteers to participate in this study, so the teacher could not force all the students to come on Thursdays and being as participants of his study. Besides, the time that was granted to the teacher was quite short, so it was difficult for his to deal with a large number of the participants. So, the results of the present study cannot be generalized to the general population because the study was conducted with high school students whose levels were A1 and A2. Thus, the results could be different with high levels students or university students. Contrarily, the obtained results can only be representative to the general population in the relevant place. Moreover, assessing students' L2 speaking performance was limited to 12 participants out of 50 due to time constraints; therefore, the results could be more or less significant with the whole participants.

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the data analysis of the study based on the research questions and data analysis procedure that is explained in the previous chapter. Firstly, the quantitative data analysis will be devoted through answering the first and second research questions and then the qualitative data analysis will be presented by answering the third and fourth research questions.

Will debate instruction have an impact on Iranian EFL students' L2 speaking performance?

To find out the results of the first research question that aimed also to explore the impact of the debate instruction on L2 speaking performance, a descriptive analysis was done for the pre-L2 speaking test (M= 8.42, SD= 2.15) and for the post-L2 speaking test (M= 10.92, SD= 2.91) which indicated that the mean of students' L2 speaking performance improved after using the debate instruction, but to test whether the improvements of students' L2 speaking performance were statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was computed. The test aimed to find out the statistical significant difference between the means of students' pre-test scores and the means of the post-test scores. Based on the results of the paired sample t-test as illustrated in Table 7, the difference between the means of pre and post L2 speaking tests was statistically significant for improving students' L2 speaking performance ($t(11) = -5.59, p < .05; \text{Cohen's } d = 1.07$). These findings showed that the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that stated there was no statistically significant difference between the means of pre and post L2 speaking tests. Besides, the obtained Cohen's d (1.07) indicated that the debate instruction had large effects on improving students' L2 speaking performance compared to the effect size criteria of Cohen's d.

Paired Sample T-Test Statistics of L2 Speaking Tests

	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	P	Cohen's d
Pre-test	12	8.42	2.15	-5.59	11	.000*	1.07
Post-test	12	10.92	2.91				

In addition to the paired sample t-test, visual representations of the confidence intervals (95%) associated with the point estimates for both scores of L2 speaking tests are presented in Figure 3. Point estimate of students' pre-test was founded to be $[8.42 \pm 1.30]$ and point estimate of students' post-test was $[10.92 \pm$

$1.84]$. Means of students' scores of the pre and post L2 speaking tests had not an overlapping area. This means, in the 95% confidence interval, there was an evidence to say that population means were different before and after the treatment in terms of improving their L2 speaking performance.

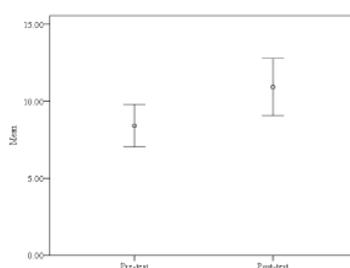


Figure 3. 95% Confidence interval of L2 speaking tests.

Will there be a statistically significant difference between A1 and A2 EFL students exposed to debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance?

A descriptive analysis and an independent t-test statistic were computed in order to determine the statistical significant difference between the A1 and the A2 Turkish EFL students exposed to the debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance. Based on the results of the independent t-test statistic as given in Table 12, the difference between the means of A1 and A2 students' gain scores was not statistically significant ($t(10) = 2.11, p > .05$; Cohen's $d = 1.34$). These findings showed that the researcher failed to reject the null hypothesis that stated

there was no statistically significant difference between the groups exposed to the debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance. However, the effect size for the comparison of groups' gain scores of their L2 speaking performance (Cohen's $d = 1.34$) is considered to indicate a large effect when compared to the effect size criteria of Cohen's d .

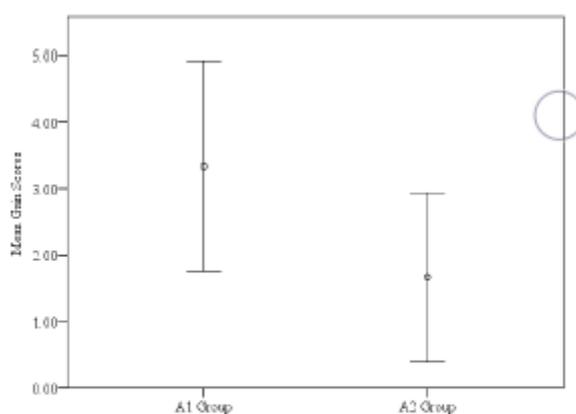
That means there were some practical differences between the means' gain scores of the students' groups in terms of their L2 speaking performance. Accordingly, the means of the A1 students' speaking performance seems to be improved a bit more than the A2 students' speaking performance as can be seen from their means of the post-test.

Independent T-Test Statistics of L2 Speaking Tests

	Groups	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	P	Cohen's d
Pre- test	A1 Group	6	8.17	2.14	-.39	10	.71	0.24
	A2 Group	6	8.67	2.34				
Post- test	A1 Group	6	11.50	2.51	.68	10	.51	0.43
	A2 Group	6	10.33	3.39				
Gain Scores ²	A1 Group	6	3.33	1.50	2.11	10	.06	1.34
	A2 Group	6	1.67	1.21				

Besides, Figure 6 presents visual representations of the confidence intervals (95%) associated with the point estimates for L2 speaking gain scores of the both groups. Point estimate of A1 students was founded to be $[3.33 \pm 1.50]$ and point estimate of A2 students was $[1.67 \pm 1.67]$. Means of gain scores for both groups had little overlapping area. This means, in the 95% confidence interval, there was some evidence to

say that population means were quite different in terms of the means gain scores of both groups due to practical difference, but not statistically significant. Therefore, a post hoc power analysis was computed. The achieved power was estimated to be 55% for scores in gain scores measures which means a larger sample size would be needed for the statistical significance.



95% Confidence interval for gain L2 speaking scores.

What are the challenges that L2 teachers face in implementing the classroom debate instruction?

The field notes were used to find out the difficulties that the L2 teacher faced in implementing the classroom debate instruction. Based on the analysis of the field notes that used by the teacher, four main themes are identified: time limitation, students' motivation, students' satisfaction, and students' proficiency levels.

Time limitation. Since the time that used to implement the debate instruction was just one hour due to the school regulations, the students' speech were limited as well. Thereby, the teacher faced some difficulties in managing the time for students' speech, students' writing, or explaining the new words. The students sometimes asked the teacher to provide them with some minutes for the debate preparation, but they were granted three to four minutes due to the time limit. Some of the students' statements that were repeated mostly every week are provided in the following statements:

Can we have some more minutes? We need to check some statements with our friends.

Please, give us some more time to be ready for the debate.

Students' Motivation. Students' motivation was one of the challenges that the L2 teacher face in implementing the debate instruction, especially with the A2 students. Even though the teacher used some pictures, warm up questions, and granted the students some points after each debate just to motivate them, the A2 students were not motivated as much as the A1 students. Sometimes some of the A2 students did not read the reading materials that were distributed to them one week earlier before the debate and they could not debate very well. Besides, some of them were not motivated to write after each debate and the teacher tried to encourage them by informing them that their writing performance would be improved, but they were not eager and excited to debate. Some of the students' statements that were repeated by the A2 students are as follows:

Can we write at home not here?

We do not have enough time to write, let's write it as homework.

Students' Satisfaction. Another challenge that experienced during implementing the debate instruction is students' satisfaction in terms of the divisions of the debate teams and the debate

grades. Dividing the students randomly into an affirmative team and a negative team was not preferred by the students. Some of the students wanted to move to the other team due to their views regarding the debate topic and after moving some students from their team, the number of both teams was not an equal. Therefore, some students were asked to change their teams in order to make balance between the teams. Some of the students' statements that were repeated by the A1 and A2 students are as follows:

Oh no, I do not want to be in the negative group, can I join the other group?

Can we represent the negative group not the affirmative one?

Since the teams' winner was declared after finishing each debate according to students' participation and argumentation. Some students were unsatisfied with the points that were granted to their opposing team. They claimed that their opposing team spoke less during the debate than their teams and their teams' argumentation were stronger than their opposing team. However, the points were just used to encourage the students to speak more in the debate. But the students were unsatisfied with their grades as cleared in the following statements:

It is unfair; we should have got more than their points because we spoke more than them.

Why did you give us this point? We deserve more than them.

Students' Proficiency Levels. As the levels of the participants in this study were A1 and A2, finding appropriate reading materials for the debate topics was not an easy task because most of the debatable topics and controversial issues are done for higher English levels. So some of the interested debatable topics could not be chosen due to the high English level of the text language. Besides, the students in the classes sometimes could not express their thoughts and ideas probably due to their lack of English words and as a result they spent some time to express their arguments as indicated by some of the students in the interviews and that took some time during the debate. Some of their statements that repeated by some of the students are as follows:

I do not know how to say that in English.

Oh, how can I say this word in English?

CONCLUSION

The chapter covered the findings of the research questions. The questions were analyzed in details starting with the descriptive statistics and ending with the inferential analysis for each

quantitative question. Besides the qualitative analysis was done in details for answering the third research questions. Table 14 presents the research questions and the findings of the study as whole.

Findings of the Research Question as a Whole

Research Questions	Findings
1. What is the impact of using debate instruction on EFL students' L2 speaking performance,	Students' L2 speaking performance improved statistically significant after the debate instruction.
2. Will there be a statistically significant difference between A1 and A2 EFL students exposed to debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance,	There was no statistical significant difference between A1 and A2 students' L2 speaking performance
What are the challenges that L2 teacher face in implementing the classroom debate instruction?	Time limitation, students' motivation, students' satisfaction, and students' proficiency levels.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter discussed the results that are derived from the research questions. Each research question will be discussed separately in details. Besides, the conclusion and implications for further researches will be provided.

Discussion of Findings for Research Questions

The study had four research questions examining the impact of using the debate instruction on L2 speaking performance of Iranian EFL A1 and A2 students. Besides, the study aimed to determine the differences between the A1 students and A2 students instructed exposed to the debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance. In addition, the study aimed to investigate the challenges that experienced during implementing that pedagogy. The findings from those research questions were obtained through administration of the L2 speaking tests and field notes of the researcher. The obtained results were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics.

The discussions of the results analysis are provided under the following headings.

Discussion of Research Question 1.

The first research question aimed to know the impact of using the debate instruction on Iranian EFL students in terms of L2 speaking performance. The findings showed that the debate instruction enabled the A1 and A2 students to improve statistically significant their L2 speaking performance. Students' mean of the post-L2 speaking test was higher than the pre-L2 speaking test and that asserts the importance of using the debate to enhance students' L2 speaking performance. Also, the descriptive statistics proved the improvements in students' L2 speaking performance as well. These results are similar to the findings of the studies that were carried out by Fauzan (2016); Desita et al. (2017); Rubiati (2010); Somjai and Jansam (2015); Yulia and Aprilita (2017) whose proved by their studies that students' L2 speaking performance improved statistically significant after the debate instruction. Besides, Alasmari

and Ahmed (2013) confirmed the impact of the debate instruction on L2 speaking performance when they stated that the debate can be “used brilliantly to boost up students’ speaking in English” (p.148). In addition, these findings showed that when the students were more confident and less anxious, their L2 speaking performance were better.

Discussion of Research Question 2.

The second research question aimed to investigate the statistical significant difference between A1 students’ speaking performance and A2 students’ speaking performance through being exposed to the debate instruction. The results revealed that there was not a statistical significant difference between both groups’ scores in terms of their L2 speaking performance and a larger sample size is needed to get the statistical significant difference as proved by the post hoc power analysis, so the findings showed that the language proficiency levels do not affect students’ L2 speaking performance. However, the effect size criteria of Cohen’s *d* showed some practical differences between the both groups which mean that one of the groups’ scores were a bit higher than the other group after the debate instruction. Accordingly, A1 students’ mean of L2 speaking performance was a bit higher than A2 students’ speaking performance mean.

Discussion of Research Question 3.

The last research question aimed to determine the challenges the L2 teacher faced in implementing the classroom debate instruction. The results showed that time limitation, students’ motivation, students’ satisfaction, and students’ proficiency levels were the most difficulties that the L2 teacher faced in implementing the classroom debate instruction. These results confirm what Tumposky (2004) and Rubiati (2010) stated about debate. They stated that the debate needs a long time and lot of preparation from students in order to debate the topics very well and attack opponent’s opinion. Also, Littlefield’s (2001) results confirmed that when some of his students stated that debate instruction takes a long time from them to be prepared.

Pedagogical Implications

In the light of the study’s findings, several implications come out. Initially, the results of the study proved that the debate instruction can be successfully implemented in the ELT context since the debate instruction enhanced

statistically significant their L2 speaking performance. Besides, the students had positive perceptions regarding the debate instruction. Therefore, there should be more studies investigate the debate’s effects with different levels in order to make the L2 teachers aware of the debate’s impacts on students’ achievements since the debate is not a common method of teaching, especially in ELT context.

Moreover, the findings could be a source of motivation for many teachers to implement the debate instruction in their classes with students whose English proficiency levels are not high since the debate instruction worked well for both A1 and A2 Iranian EFL students and the findings showed that the proficiency level of the students does not have any impacts on students’ achievements through using the debate instruction. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that the L2 teachers should be granted more time in order to implement their treatments since time limitation was one of the determiners that challenged the L2 teacher in teaching the students by using the debate instruction.

CONCLUSIONS

The study aimed to implement the debate instruction in the English classes in order to help Iranian EFL students in enhancing their L2 speaking. Therefore, the debate instruction was implemented every Thursday for eight weeks at one of the private high schools in Istanbul, Turkey with two research groups of Iranian EFL students whose levels were A1 and A2. The first group contained 26 A1 students and the second group contained 24 A2 students. The study conducted with two different levels in order to determine the statistical significant differences between the A1 and the A2 students exposed to the debate instruction regarding their L2 speaking performance, and. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data techniques were used to collect the data of the study.

The findings showed that students’ L2 speaking performance improved statistically significant after using the debate instruction. Besides, the finding proved that the debate instruction was beneficial for both groups since there was not a statistical significant difference between the A1 students and the A2 students exposed to the debate instruction in terms of L2 speaking performance. The findings also showed that time limitation, students’ motivation, students’ proficiency levels, and students’ satisfaction whether for the debates’ team division or for the

points that were granted to the students after each debate were the biggest challenges that L2 teacher faced in implementing the classroom debate instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the light of the study's limitations, a variety of suggestions for the future researches are made. Replication for this study is highly recommended since this study was not piloted, thereby another study can be replicated it with larger number of the participants since the post-hoc power analysis proved a larger number of the participants are needed to have a significant difference between A1 students and A2 students exposed to the debate instruction regarding L2 speaking performance. Besides, another study can replicate the present study with different levels and examine the debates' effects on higher levels of English language. In addition to that, an experimental research design is needed to seek the effect of the debate instruction on participants' achievements since this study was pre-experimental research, so different results and effects can be found with having a control group and an experimental group.

For other future researches, the debate can also be used to enhance students' citizenship awareness because the debatable topics can be focused on other people's culture and that can play an important role in enhancing students' knowledge. Also another study can examine the debates' effects on L2 wrtng performance. Besides, another study can examine the debates' effects on enhancing students' critical reading since Elder and Paul (2008) recommended using the debate instruction as one of the effective techniques to improve students' critical reading. Moreover, the debate can be used to improve students' critical thinking as well. In addition to that, teachers' challenges in implementing the debate instruction should be investigated with more studies since there was no study focused on the debates' challenges expect the present study.

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