

AREL TO ENHANCE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN DEBATING

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Abstract

Speaking skill is believed as an essential part of language instruction at every level because it supports learning in multiple ways. Debate is considered as the best method to enhance students' speaking skills that used to construct the argument, create the logic idea, work in group, sharing knowledge and arrange the information to be delivered in debating. This is a qualitative research focuses on AREL to enhance the students' speaking skills in debating. The aims of this research are finding out the implementation of AREL in debating; investigating how AREL reflected on students speaking performance and revealing the obstacles faced by teacher and students in applying AREL. The research was conducted in a senior high school and involved tenth-grade students who became a delegation in each class as the candidates to compete in the debate competition in Cianjur. The instruments used for this research were observation, questionnaire, and interview. Moreover, there were stages in implementing AREL included: introducing debate of WSDC, implementing AREL (Assertion, Evidence, Reason, and Link-back), giving a stimulant, and constructing the argument. By using AREL in debating, the students became confident to speak English and got a lot of benefits from the debate not only for their speaking skills but also advancing their critical thinking. They showed their ability to explore the argument by giving a logical reason and strong evidence in order to elaborate on their argument. It was also reflected in the students speaking performance including conversational discourse, pronunciation, accuracy and fluency, affective factors, and the interaction effect. However, AREL is difficult to apply for students with insufficient ability in reading information and constructing or arranging their speech. In addition, the students were still in tenth grade and it was also such an obstacle because their speaking skill is still low. Furthermore, the students have more obstacles in their speaking skills such as memorization, anxiety, less vocabularies, and grammatical error.

Keywords: *AREL, debating, speaking skill*

INTRODUCTION

English language teaching is one of the compulsory subjects in the school stated by the government since Independence Day. In Indonesia, the communicative language approach has been globally used. The implementation of this method is expected to reach the balance between language usage and language function (Dardjowidjojo, 2005). Students need to perform their skill in using language with various academic tasks in different disciplines. Academic language has been defined as “the language that is used by teachers and students for the purpose of acquiring new knowledge and skills” (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994, p. 40).

In teaching English speaking there is needed an appropriate way to make learning process will be interesting for students and one of the ways that can be used in teaching English speaking is the debate. Nisbett (2003) argues that debate is an important educational tool for learning analytic thinking skills and for forcing self-conscious reflection on the validity of one's ideas. In debating, the students need to construct the idea, construct the argument, create the logic idea, work in a group and share the knowledge and arrange the information that must be connected as the specific information that shows as a factual and accurate data.

To facilitate students in delivering their argument, AREL is considered the best solution to the debate. AREL is the structure argument used in the debate that stands for Argument, Reasoning, Evidence, and Link-Back. By using AREL, the students can make the arguments become logic, and linked to the topic, therefore, it can persuade the adjudicators or juries of their argument. Debate foster students active learning by giving them a responsibility to understand course content, an approach that completely transforms their perspective from passive to active (Snier & Schunner, 2002).

Unfortunately, there is a very little discussed regarding the strategy in debate, the debate is not only just delivering a lot of arguments but also it is talking about how is the structure (in this point is AREL) that used in the debate itself. There are some researches involving the method of debate in teaching English that concern of the students’ speaking skill but still in a general context. In this research, the researcher decided to explore deeper about AREL that it

should be applied in debating as a way to make the arguments presented more structured.

It is important to investigate the implementation of AREL in the debate that focuses on students speaking skills. On the other hand, they are connected to each other. Consequently, the research regarding AREL in debating would be a very beneficial studying. From the explanation above, the researcher would like to know the implementation of AREL to enhance students speaking skills in debating.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are some theories underpinning the current research. Those cover theories on speaking skills, debate, and AREL as follow:

Speaking Skill

Speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of context (Chaney, 1998, p. 13). Speaking skill is the art of communication and one of the four productive skills that must be mastered in learning foreign language.

Aspects of Speaking Performance

Brown (2001) describes five aspects of speaking performance. The six categories are as follows:

a. Conversational Discourse

As Richards (1990) noted, “The conversation class is something of an enigma in language teaching”. The goals and the techniques for teaching conversation are extremely diverse depending on the student, teacher, and overall context of the class. Historically, „conversation“ classes have arranged from quasi-communicative drilling or to free, open, and sometimes agenda-less discussions among students.

b. Teaching Pronunciation

Pronunciation is the way in which a language or a particular word or sound is pronounced (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionart, 2006). It has to do with

phonological process refer to the components of a grammar made up of the elements and principles determine how sounds vary and pattern in a language.

c. Accuracy and Fluency

In the mid to late 1970s, egged on by a somewhat short-lived anti-grammar approach, some teachers turned away from accuracy issues in favor of providing a plethora of “natural” language activity in their classrooms.. While fluency may in many communicative language courses be an *initial* goal in language teaching, accuracy is achieved to some extent by allowing students to focus on the elements of phonology, grammar, and discourse in their spoken output.

d. Affective Factors

One of the major obstacles learners have to overcome in learning to speak is the anxiety generated over the risks of blurting things out that are wrong, stupid, or incomprehensible. Because of the language that informs people that “you are what you speak,” learners are reluctant to be judged by hearers.

e. The Interaction Effect

The greatest difficulty that learners encounter in attempts to speak is not the multiply of sounds, words, phrases, and discourse forms that characterize any language but rather the interactive nature of most communication. Conversations are collaborative as participants engage in a process of negotiation of meaning.

Debate

Debating is a formal method of interactive and representational argument aimed at persuading judges and audience. Quoting from Davidson (1995), Krieger (2005) said that with practice, many students had obvious progress in their ability to express and defend ideas in debate and they often quickly recognized the flaws in each other's arguments.

Constructing and Deconstructing Arguments of AREL

The most fundamental element of all debate events is the construction of solid arguments. Arguments may take many forms, but successful arguments share a specific set of elements that we called it AREL stand for Assertion,

Reason, Evidence, and Link Back. A complete argument contains based on (National Speech & Debate Association, 2009).

Claim or Assertion

A claim is the main point of an argument; a statement of what the debater intends to prove. It is sometimes called a “tagline” and should be contained in the first sentence of an argument. The claim should intuitively resonate with the audience by using powerful and direct language.

Warrants or Reason

A warrant is a reason that a claim is true. A claim without a reason is merely an assertion. It is a statement of opinion without explanation or justification. That because of the statement and the idea refer to the concept or proposition that you seek to prove (Sonnreich, 2012). If the claim is important because it gets the audience pointed in the right direction, the warrant is important because it helps the audience start moving down the path of the argument

Data or Evidence

In Debate, the additional information should include data or evidence. Evidence can take many forms: statistics, expert testimony, and specific examples are some of the most common. Because speakers are not established experts, they cannot simply argue for a position; no matter how reasonable their arguments may be, speakers are still merely students. Thus, they must conduct extensive research to prepare for the topics they will debate.

Impact or Link-back

Link-back is a conclusion of the entire argument as to why it proves/negates the give. This will highly relate to consistency and relevance (Sonnreich, 2012). Like claims, warrants, and data, link-back should be clearly delineated through the use of exact phraseology.

METHOD

This part focuses on the process of conducting the research. These include research design, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design

This research employed a qualitative research. Qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem in which you do not know the variables and need to explore (Creswell, 2012). A qualitative research study is needed to explore the phenomenon from the perspective of distance education students. A central phenomenon is the key concept, idea, or process studied in qualitative research.

Research Site

This research was conducted in one of senior high schools in Cianjur. It is one of popular schools that located in a strategic area of Cianjur. The schools is active in distributing the students' interest in many things and active in joining some competitions especially in education things for example in English debate championship.

Research Participants

The participants involved were tenth-grade students who become delegation in each class as the candidates to compete in debate competition of Cianjur. Students who are recommended to participate in debate contest amounted to thirty-one students. The tenth class consists of 12 classes of 7 science classes and 4 social classes, and each delegate is three to six in each class.

Data Collection

To collect the data, the researcher used three instruments. Those are observation, questionnaire, and interview.

Observation

Observation in this research was done by observing the whole situation of debate practice from start to the end. Note taking and documenting has been done while the process of teaching-learning. Observation in qualitative research generally involves spending a prolonged amount of time in the setting.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consist of 10 items with yes/no format, choose the appropriate answers that can choose more than one options, and explain by students' perception. The questionnaire was given to the students who as the delegation of School debate competition with some instruction in leading them before filling out the questionnaire. The scale of the questions was about AREL, speaking skills and speaking performance, and students' perception about AREL.

Interview

The interview was done by interviewing the teacher about the process of teaching training students in debating. The researcher spent about fifteen minutes to interview the English teacher who guides the students preparing the debate. During the interview, the teacher explained the obstacles and described the situation in teaching AREL in debating and also the students' speaking skill performance time by time.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted to answer all research questions. The data taken from observation, questionnaires, and interview were analyzed, categorized, and the interpreted into theme based on the research questions of this research.

Data from Observation

The observation was done by following the activity of teacher and students during teaching and practicing debate that spent more than 45 in each meeting. The researcher tried to describe step by step the activity in teaching and practicing

debate which involved AREL as their guide to deliver their arguments in order to enhance students' speaking skills.

Data from Questionnaire

Once students had completed the questions that given by the researcher. The data from the questionnaire were calculated from the answers of students. The questionnaire consist of ten questions there were provide yes or no questions, multiple choice, and short paragraph based on students' perception.

Data from Interview

The data from Interview was gained in order to answer the third research question about the obstacles faced by students and teacher in applying AREL that follow some steps. First, the researcher tried to determine several questions related to the topic of the research which would be the base for analyzing the obstacles faced by the teacher through the interview and for students the data interview were gained from the questionnaire because it already had relationships with the third research question. Second, the interview was transcribed into written data and third the written data will be explained based on what research questions and relevant literature in the next chapter.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

a. Discussion of AREL Implementation in Order to Enhance The Students' Speaking Skills in Debating

There were some stages in delivering AREL to the students. First, the teacher tried to introduce the debate of the World School Debate Championship, so the students knew what they did for. The second, the teacher explained AREL as a method in constructing the argument in debate step by step. Started from Assertion as simply a statement of fact, Reason as explanations as to why that claim is true, Evidence for facts to strengthen the reasoning, and the last Link-back as a conclusion of the entire argument as to why it proves they give. The third the teacher gave a stimulant how to be a good debater and how the debate competition would be

done. The last is the teacher asked the students to construct their argument by using AREL.

For the first observation, the students had some difficulties in understanding the AREL because it was their first time experienced the debate and they still difficult to speak in order to give their arguments. Related to this situation speaking is an interactive process of creating meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information (Burns & Joyce, 1997). And Richards (1990) noted, "The conversation class is something of an enigma in language teaching" because of that conversation from (First Observation, activities 16-25) showed that speaking extremely diverse depending on the student, teacher, and overall context of the class.

In the second until fourth observation, the researcher found that students tried to improve their ability in speaking and master the AREL as a method to convey their arguments. The students also became responsive in following the activity of debate practice. It was cited by Brown (2001) that a good deal of student speech in the classroom is responsive: short replies to the teacher or student-initiated questions or comments. This is a kind of short replies or responses to questions or comments of an interlocutor or speaking partner. Those responses or replies are usually sufficient and meaningful.

By using debate, the students enhance their speaking skills it showed in the way the students tried to speak in their daily conversation among other students.

On the other hand, they tried to speak English in order to make the same assumption in constructing the AREL as a material for debating and it also happened in their performance in debating. Even though there were still mispronunciations, grammatical errors, fillers, and sometimes they still repeat the similar argument from the previous debater and previous sentence but the students have become confident to speak English and the students got a lot of benefits from the debate not only for their speaking but also their critical thinking. As Nisbett (2003) pointed that debate is an important educational tool for learning analytic thinking skills and for forcing self-conscious reflection on the validity of one's

ideas (p. 210) and Pally (2000) claims critical thinking skills including questioning information are used widely in academic or professional settings.

b. Discussion of AREL Reflected on Students speaking performance in Debating

For the process of debate above the researcher considered to the students speaking performance while using AREL in debating. According to Brown (2001), there is five speaking performance including conversational discourse, teaching pronunciation, accuracy and fluency, affective factors and the interaction effect.

The first is conversational discourse is explained as the benchmark of successful language acquisition is almost always the demonstration of an ability to accomplish pragmatics goals through interactive discourse with other speakers of the language. This means students have to become interactive in speaking especially in the debate. It support by the statement that debating forces us to get used to speaking in front of public and trains how to explain arguments. This includes making a superior flow of arguments, using enhanced intonations and gestures, and so much more (Muhammadin, 2014).

Second is teaching pronunciation. However, the students still have mistakes in speaking, especially in pronunciation, the common mistake that is always done by the students is to pronounce something that becomes habitual such as study, student, honorable and etc. The teacher also noted that some students have a low voice that should be noticed. But the students had high motivation and they can explore their argument deeper with often practice. Additionally, the students became active to speak in the debate.

The third is accuracy and fluency. Fluency is one of the aspects that can describe the level of students' speaking. The students' fluency were still in the aspect of nervous and confuse how supposed to say. Moreover, the students still need a stimulus to create a good argument and need time to think. The students always repeat the same word or the same sentence. However, for the accuracy,

there was still need a practice in constructing the argument. Because accuracy is achieved to some extent by allowing students to focus on the elements of phonology, grammar, and discourse in their spoken output (Brown, 2001).

The next students speaking performance is effective factors. It is described the situation when the students should remove their doubt in speaking. In this case, the students for a very first time still had a lot of doubt when they tried to speak and afraid if they did a mistake. The teacher as a guided day by day encouraged the students do not be afraid and become confident. The teacher also motivates the student by evaluating their performance in speaking. It is relevant with Brown (2001) in his book that the teacher should provide the kind of warm, embracing climate that encourages students to speak, however halting or broken their attempts. According to Muhammidin (2014) stated that debating forces us to get used to speaking in front of public and trains how to explain arguments.

The last is the interaction effect. In the debate, it is important to have interaction with the people who you are supposed to speak such as audience, your opposite team and the adjudicators. It also happened when the students should do POI or rebuttal; they not only have to focus on sound, sounds, words, phrases, and

discourse forms but also the interactive communication and follow the rules of debate. When debating the students commonly ashamed to face the audience and their focus just on their notes. The eye contact of the students is still less and too many pauses in their debating. Nunan (1991, p.47) states that one learner's performance is always colored by that of the person (interlocutor) he or she is talking with. It is an effect of their personal trait for example in the debate, one does not simply interrupt abruptly. Some formats do not allow any interruptions at all. Formats that do allow interruptions require the interrupter to ask the speaker's permission first politely (such as by raising a hand and saying, „excuse me“).

c. Discussion of the Obstacles Faced by Teacher and Students in Applying AREL in Debating

Based on the finding revealed that teacher tried to teach students AREL with rehearsal frequently, but the teacher mentioned AREL is difficult to apply for

students with insufficient ability in reading information and constructing or arranging their speech. It was showed in the first and second meeting; the students were still difficult to construct their arguments because there was no background knowledge about debate or AREL they have experienced. Also, the students were still in tenth grade, It was such an obstacle because their speaking skill is low in order to overcome this issue, rehearsal frequently is important to improve students' ability in debating especially to enhance students' speaking skills. According to Krieger (2005) with practice, many students had obvious progress in their ability to express and defend ideas in debate and they often quickly recognized the flaws in each other's arguments and the beginning of the activity there were some difficulties to find a debater and did a selection quiet waste the time. It is noted that the World Schools Debating Championships (WSDC) is the competition for students in age 14-19 years old. As well as encouraging competition between the most talented young debaters in the world, the competition aims to promote international understanding and celebrate free speech (Schools et al., 2015).

In addition by debating the students were given a lot experience and chance to become fluent and able to speak and get a rich of information to become a critical thinker. It is supported by the statement that claims critical thinking skills including questioning information are used widely in academic or professional settings (Pally, 2000).

Contrast with students that described AREL as the best method for debate. They used AREL to make the arguments more structured, but in the process of the teaching AREL sometime the students got distraction in understanding the AREL itself. AREL stand for Assertion, Reason, Evidence, and Link-back which described as a structure of argument in the debate. The students could understand Assertion, Reason, Evidence but quite difficult to understand the Link-back what should they do in link-back. It is common because the word link-back has no specific meaning, so the students could not easy to understand. Link-back is a conclusion of the entire argument as to why it proves/ negates the give. This will highly relate to consistency and relevance (Sonreich, 2012).

Rather than used AREL, the students have more obstacles in speaking skills such as memorization, anxiety, less vocabularies, and grammatical error. In fact, the benchmark of successful language acquisition is almost always the demonstration of an ability to accomplish pragmatics goals through interactive discourse with other speakers of the language (Brown, 2001). But the students felt that because of debate and AREL, step by step memorization and anxiety can be handled by them and for increasing vocabulary and grammar they need to learn and practice more.

CONCLUSION

Here are the conclusions of this current study:

1. There were some stages in explaining AREL to the students. First, the teacher introduced the debate of WSDC and explained AREL as a method in constructing the argument in the debate. Started from Assertion, Reason

Evidence, and Link-back. The third the teacher gave a stimulant how to be a good debater and how the debate competition would be. The last is the teacher asked the students to construct their argument by using AREL. The students could enhance their speaking skills through AREL in debating. The students not only became responsive in following the activity of debate practice but also became confident to speak English and a chance to be a critical thinker. It was obvious because the practice of debate was done frequently. From 31 students who were recommended as a debater, only six students who finally could join the debate team. Because there was a selection needed and it was considered many aspects especially for students speaking performance.

2. In the students speaking performance, there were characterized by considering five aspects including conversational discourse, teaching pronunciation, accuracy and fluency, affective factors and the interaction effect. In the process of debate practice, the students had deeper analysis about the motion by using AREL so that the students can explain more about its motion. They showed their ability to explore their argument and then gave

a logical reason and strong evidence in order to elaborate their argument. After that, they gave a linked back to the topic in order to persuade the adjudicator. So, their argument, rebuttal, and POI were strong and organized.

3. The last is about the obstacles faced by the teacher and the students in applying AREL. AREL is difficult to apply for students with insufficient ability in reading information and constructing or arranging their speech. The students were still in tenth grade and it was also such an obstacle because their speaking skill is still low. Furthermore, the students have more obstacles in their speaking skills such as memorization, anxiety, less vocabularies, and grammatical error.

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