

Effect of Debate Strategy on Developing EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency at Ibb University and Their Attitudes Towards It

Mukhtar Mohammed Ahmed Ghalib Al-Badani

Sana'a University, Faculty of Education, Yemen
mokalbadani@gmail.com

Fazee Khalid Alezi Mohammed Almuslimi

Faculty of Education, Sana'a University, Yemen
Aboehab1977@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of debate strategy on developing learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University and their attitudes towards it. Due to the nature of the study, the researcher used quasi-experimental research. The study used qualitative and quantitative methods; an oral speaking test, a checklist observation and a questionnaire were conducted on 32 students. The study used means, standard deviations, and a t-test to analyse the data. The participants went through ten debate sessions that lasted for two months and 15 days and sat for a test before and after using the debate strategy. The checklist observation evaluated the participants' performance in the tests. To reveal their attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on their speaking proficiency, the participants were asked to respond to the questionnaires that were analyzed later. The findings revealed that participants' level of speaking proficiency greatly developed and that there was a significant difference in the participants' scores before and after using the debate strategy, which suggested that the effect of debate strategy on developing the learners' speaking proficiency was very high. The participants' attitudes they held towards the debate strategy were highly positive. This means that the debate strategy was very successful in developing learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University, and, therefore, it was recommended for teachers, specialists, etc., to teach English, mainly the speaking skill, through the debate strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking skill is considered the most important skill because it is the skill that English learners use mostly when communicating with others. Through speaking, learners can verbally convey their opinions, feelings and ideas to others. Therefore, more attention should be paid to developing this skill, and English learners should get enough opportunities to practice their English speaking skills. To achieve this, teachers should use different strategies, techniques, methods, activities, etc., that can help learners participate actively in the class and get enough exposure to English as a foreign language. Debating is one of the effective

modern strategies that can develop learners' English speaking skills. Krieger (2005) puts it this way:

Debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways. In addition to providing meaningful listening, speaking and writing practice, debate is also highly effective for developing argumentation skills for persuasive speech and writing. (p. 25)

Therefore, for many scholars and theorists, the debate is considered one of the most effective classroom strategies to help learners develop their speaking proficiency. This is because it engages learners in many activities and enhances them to participate actively in the class. As a result, learners will practice English, have enough chance to express their ideas, and develop their speaking proficiency and critical thinking skills (Darby, 2007; Doody & Condon, 2012; Hall, 2011; Kennedy, 2009, 2007; Moomala, Faizah, & Amiri, 2013; Rear, 2010; Tumposky, 2004; Yang & Rusli, 2012). In addition, debate strategy, through debate activities, can create an atmosphere that helps learners be more exposed to English as a foreign language. In that created atmosphere, learners can have enough opportunities to express their ideas and viewpoints freely, which can also help them develop their ability to speak English successfully. In addition, such atmosphere can create an environment where learners can be encouraged and motivated enough to practice their English properly (Krieger, 2005).

Besides, debating helps learners develop their speaking proficiency and to build their self-confidence, especially when they try to defend their points of view. Maryadi (2008) states that debate can motivate students' thinking, if they must defend their stand or opinion which contradicts others. In fact, many learners of English feel afraid, shy or anxious when they are asked to speak in front of their classmates. These problems can hinder the development of the learners' speaking proficiency (Ur, 2000). Using a debate strategy in the class can overcome these problems and give learners more confidence and courage to speak fluently in public. Rybold (2006) claims, "Debating will help you to become a better speaker in all situations – private and public" (p. 2).

According to the researcher's experience as a student and teacher at many public and private universities in Ibb City, learners at Ibb University have less exposure to English as a foreign language. They do not have enough opportunities to practice their English in class with their classmates or teachers. One of the reasons behind this is the use of the traditional ways in the teaching process that lack suitable strategies and activities that make all the learners participate and practice their English actively. This affects their ability to speak negatively and makes them poor in their oral communication with others. To support this, Sohmani, a teacher at Ibb University for many years, and Zrekat (2022) assert that lack of appropriate teaching atmosphere, methodology and materials, ... are the main problems hindering Arab learners from speaking English fluently. Likewise, Zare and Othman (2015) assure that in the traditional way of teaching, for instance, using chalk and talk, the students stay passive and receive lectures from their instructors. In this way, the learners get little (if any) opportunities to practice their English, express their opinions, or improve their critical thinking skills.

Therefore, many English learners at Ibb University find it difficult to communicate appropriately with other English people when they are put in real-life situations. Also, when they debate on a particular controversial topic, they cannot freely express their thoughts, feelings, and points of view or even defend their ideas or opinions properly. For these reasons, this study investigates the effect of debate strategy on the learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University and their attitudes.

This study, in fact, is expected to contribute much to the development of the teaching and learning processes as it will be very useful for learners, teachers, researchers, and other people of interest. It can provide learners with enough opportunities to practice English and develop their speaking proficiency. Also, it can help teachers as it provides them with an excellent strategy that can be used to motivate learners to participate actively in class. In addition, it can provide researchers and other people of interest with the related data and information they need in the same field.

1.2. Study Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1- What is the level of the EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University before and after using the debate strategy?
- 2- What is the effect of the debate strategy on developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency?
- 3- What are the attitudes of the EFL learners at Ibb University towards the effect of debate strategy on developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency?
- 4- What are the attitudes of the EFL learners at Ibb University towards the effect of debate strategy on reducing some of the learners' problems hindering their progress in their speaking proficiency?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

When people express their ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to communicate with each other, they are, in fact, using 'the speaking skill'. Therefore, speaking is "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information" (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Glenn (2003) defines speaking as "the verbal use of language to communicate with others" (p. 23). Nunan (2003) also defines speaking as "the productive oral skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterance to convey meaning" (p. 48). Therefore, speaking is mostly used to communicate, convey information, make relationships among people in the world, etc., because it is one of the abilities to carry out conversation (Sayuri, 2016). Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that speaking skills can be defined as the ability to express feelings, attitudes, ideas, meanings, etc., using words.

However, though these definitions define the speaking skill well, they don't provide a sufficient concept of the meaning of the speaking skill. For example, they speak only about the oral production of meaningful utterances, whereas people can sometimes speak with each other through gestures. Also, they don't refer to the context, whereas the context is considered a main factor in the communication process. For example, one cannot say to his friend 'good morning' in the evening, because the context in which the word is used is unsuitable. Chaney (1998), in the researcher's opinion, provided us with a sufficient concept of speaking skill. He reveals that speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts" (p. 13). It means that speaking is an interaction between speakers and listeners, either verbally or through gestures in different contexts.

In fact, speaking skill seems to be harder than other English skills because it involves more than just pronouncing words. Mastering the speaking skill requires the learners to master five elements: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension (Asrida, 2012). In a similar vein, Harris (1974) states that speaking is a complex skill which requires mastering five components of speaking ability: pronunciation, which includes the segmental features of vowels and consonants and the stress and intonation patterns, grammar,

vocabulary; fluency, which means the ease and speed of the flow of speech, and comprehension, which requires the ability to respond to speech as well as to initiate it. These five elements of mastering the speaking skill, according to Brown (1997, p. 4), are defined as follows:

- a. **Comprehension:** oral communication certainly requires a subject to respond to speech as well as to initiate it.
- b. **Grammar:** it is needed for students to arrange a correct sentence in conversation or the student ability to manipulate the structure and to distinguish appropriate grammatical forms inappropriate ones.
- c. **Vocabulary:** vocabulary means the appropriate diction which is used in communication.
- d. **Pronunciation:** pronunciation is the way for students to produce clearer language when they speak. It deals with the phonological process that determines how sounds vary and pattern in a language.
- e. **Fluency:** fluency can be defined as the ability to speak fluently and accurately. Fluency in speaking is the aim of many language learners. Signs of fluency include a reasonably fast speed of speaking and only a small number of pauses and "ums".

According to Dennis, Krach, McCreery, and Navarro (2019), those elements are indicators for assessing learners' speaking proficiency based on the Student's Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM). Luoma (2004) states that:

To speak in a foreign language,, learners must master the sound system of the language, must have almost instant access to appropriate vocabulary and be able to put words together intelligibly with minimal hesitation. In addition, they must be able to understand what is being said to them and be able to respond appropriately to maintain amicable relations or to achieve their communicative goals. (p. ix)

Thus, if the learners master all the elements of speaking, they will be proficient speakers of English. On the contrary, if English learners do not master the elements of the speaking skill, they will find difficulty in communicating with others properly. Asrida (2012) contends that these elements are essential to communication since effective communication depends on students grasping all the elements of speaking.

In reality, learners of English have many problems that face them in the process of developing these five elements of speaking proficiency. Therefore, it's the teacher's responsibility to find the appropriate methods and strategies to overcome such difficulties. Astrida (2012) asserts that "English teachers have a responsibility to improve students' English speaking skills; therefore, the teachers must have a good teaching method in order to solve the problems faced by the students in learning English" (pp. 149-150). Such methods and strategies should also give learners more opportunities to practice the language; the more they practice their speaking skill, the more proficiency they will acquire. Astrida (2012) states that "The teachers also need appropriate techniques in teaching speaking to make the students capable of being active and creative in the learning process in the classroom" (p. 150). He (2012) also adds that "In order to create effective learning activities in the classroom, the teachers should focus on the student's participation during the process of learning" (p. 150). This means that the more effective learning strategies the teachers can use in the class, the more opportunities for participation the learners can get, and the more proficiency they can have in their speaking skills. Therefore, teachers should look for effective strategies to encourage learners to participate actively in the classroom.

In fact, there are several effective techniques and strategies which the teacher can use to teach speaking in class. These techniques and strategies can be interactive and interesting to interest and draw the learners' attention throughout the lesson in the class. Not only this but it also allow all the learners to participate actively in the class. Debate, in fact, is one of the effective learning strategies that can help learners study English more actively, as it engages students in many interactive and interesting activities. Debate is an interdisciplinary field, but

it can be defined as a communicative activity that uses reasons and evidence to convince the listener or reader of a standpoint. For Douglas (2014), a debate is a process of presenting an idea or opinion in which two opposing parties try to defend their idea or opinion. Similarly, Carnielli, Coniglio, Gabbay, Gouveia, and Sernadas (2008) also assured this definition when they said that debate is "concerned primarily with reaching conclusions through logical reasoning" (p. 527).

Debate is considered to be a motivating activity through which learners can have the freedom to express their ideas and opinions in English. It creates an atmosphere in which learners abandon their passive roles and start to Participate actively in the learning process (Zare & Othman, 2013). This fact is supported by Astrida (2012), who assures, "In debating activities, the students are free to talk and give their opinions" (p. 150). Besides, debate activities can enrich the learners' knowledge and help them deeply understand different topics. Zare and Othman (2013) also state that debate could stimulate students to learn the course content better, since they are engaged in it actively, broadly, deeply and personally.

Learners involved in debate activities can spend much time preparing for the debate session. They spend a lot of time looking for information supporting their opinions, looking for suitable vocabulary, and practising how to present and organize their ideas properly in front of their classmates. Arung (2016) assured that debaters spend many hours gathering information and practising hundreds of public speeches on topics of national importance. When they do this many times, they gradually gain their proficiency in the process of time. When they do this many times, they gradually gain their proficiency in the process of time. Not only this but also they will be able to form and defending their opinions about different controversial issues.

Researchers emphasized that debate is an excellent strategy for developing English learners' speaking proficiency and critical thinking skills. For example, Astrida (2012) states, "The teachers need to hold debates in the classroom because by doing this, the students will be able to enrich and develop their critical thinking as well as their speaking skill" (p. 150). Krieger (2005) says that Debate is an excellent activity for language learning because it engages students in a variety of cognitive and linguistic ways. Similarly, Hasibuan and Batubara (2012) also declare that debate is a method of language learning that can be applied to improve speaking ability and critical thinking. In the same way, Halvorsen (2005) says that debate forces learners to think about the multiple sides of an issue, and it also forces them to interact not just with the details of a given topic but also with one another.

Similarly, studies clearly indicate that debate is helpful for developing and sustaining critical thinking skills and oral communication ability. For example, in their study, Widiawati and Agustini (2020) concluded that debate technique positively influenced students' speaking competency Lumbangaol and Mazali (2020) concluded that the debate technique developed the students' speaking ability to make questions and provide explanations. Zahra (2019) also proved that debate strategy could prove the four skills of English, not only the speaking skill. Zare and Othman (2015) studied students' perceptions toward using classroom debate to develop critical thinking and oral communication ability and discovered that the respondents believed that the debates helped improve their critical thinking skills and oral communication ability. The students also claimed other benefits of the debates, including mastering the course content, boosting confidence, overcoming stage fright, and improving teamwork. Kennedy (2007) revealed that through debate, the learners' English communication ability would be better inside or outside the class; learners would have a higher ability to share ideas, show opinions and present their perceptions.

Likewise, Rybold (2006) states that debate would help and encourage students to be better speakers. To support this (Fukuda, 2003, as cited in Iman, 2017), a debate study conducted with Japanese students found that before the debates, only 30.8% of the students were not afraid of expressing their opinions when they were not the same as others. After the debate, this figure increased to 56.7%. He goes on to say that the knowledge or skills from the practice in the debates led the students to become more accustomed to expressing opinions. In their study, Tianame, Usman and Muslim (2019) assure that the debate strategy made the students become motivated, pleased, and confident to speak English.

Based on the studies briefly surveyed earlier, this study primarily aims at investigating the effect of debate strategy on developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University. Though the issue has been addressed in different parts of the world, this study is the first to be conducted on Yemeni learners at Ibb University, as far as the researcher knows. Therefore, since this study is the first one in Yemen, it is expected to be very useful for learners, teachers, researchers, and other people interested in other parts of the world, in general, and in Yemen, in particular.

3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This descriptive study sought to explore the effect of debate on developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University. Due to the nature of the study, the researcher adopted quasi-experimental research, in which the study of mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative was carried out on 32 participants using a pretest and posttest, an observation checklist and a questionnaire in the second semester of the year 2022. The pretest occurred at the beginning of the semester (before the debate sessions), whereas the posttest occurred at the end of the semester (after the debate sessions). In each session, the participants were divided equally into eight groups and each group was divided into two teams debating on one of the selected controversial topics given to them in front of their classmates. Each team adopt an opinion which is opposite of the other team. In the pretest and posttest, the learners were asked to sit for a debate session and speak about a particular topic. The learners' speaking proficiency was observed and evaluated during the debate sessions of the pretest and posttest. To recognize the learners' attitudes towards the effect of using debate strategy to develop their speaking proficiency, they were asked to respond to questionnaires distributed to them after the debate sessions.

4.1. STUDY DESIGN

The current study used the quasi-experimental design (one group pre/post) to examine the effect of debate strategy on developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University and their attitudes towards it. *Through a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods used in the study, oral speaking tests, a checklist observation and a questionnaire were conducted on 32 students enrolled in level one, English Department, Ibb University, during the second semester of the academic year 2022.*

4.2. PARTICIPANTS

This study is conducted on 32 participants enrolled in level one, English Department learners, Faculty of Arts, Ibb University, Republic of Yemen. The study took place during the second semester of the academic year of 2021/2022, which lasted for two months and 15 days. These participants were purposely selected for two reasons: First, they were beginners, and the results of the effect of the debate strategy can be shown clearly. Second, these participants finished one semester, and they already knew the basics of English phonetics and some simple conversations; therefore, it is suitable to implement the debate strategy on them and see its effect on the development of their speaking proficiency. During the period allocated for conducting the study, the participants went through ten debate sessions. They

were divided into eight groups; each group contained four participants. Each group was divided into two teams, each containing two participants adopting an opposite opinion to the other team and debating on a particular topic in front of their classmates.

4.3. TOOLS OF THE STUDY

As mentioned earlier, the tools of this study were an oral pretest and posttest, an observation checklist and a questionnaire. These tools were purposely chosen to achieve the aims of this study. The oral tests and the observation checklist were designed to assess the learners' speaking proficiency, whereas the questionnaire was made to show the learners' attitudes towards the effect of the debate strategy on developing the EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University. Each one of these tools will be explained in detail in the following sections:

4.3.1. TEST

The first data-gathering tool of this study was an oral pretest and posttest that the researcher developed. The participants went through these tests before and after conducting the debate strategy. The test was oral, not written, so that the teacher could assess the learners' speaking proficiency while debating with each other. In the pretest, the participants were given two interesting and controversial topics and asked to choose one for their debate. The topics selected for the tests were controversial so that learners could have more than one opinion in the debate sessions. In the test, the participants were divided into eight groups with four learners, each divided into two teams with opposite opinions. The teams in each group were asked to sit opposite each other, in front of their classmates, for the oral test, i.e. a debate session on the topic they chose for the test. In the same way, at the end of the semester, mainly after having finished ten debate sessions, the participants were also asked to sit for another oral test, i.e. a debate session on a particular topic. Using a checklist observation, the learners' speaking proficiency was evaluated during the tests, i.e. pretest and posttest tests.

4.3.2. OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

The second data-gathering tool of this study was an observation checklist that was used to evaluate the participants' oral pretest and posttest during the second semester of the year 2022. This checklist observation was designed based on Higgs and Clifford's description of the components of speaking proficiency (1982) (as cited in Richards and Renandya, 2022). However, this observation checklist was shown to experts and modified to suit the target participants. As mentioned earlier, the learners went through many debate sessions, mainly ten debate sessions. They were observed and evaluated in two tests: The first test (pretest) occurred at the beginning of the semester, whereas the second test (posttest) occurred at the end. The observation checklist used the evaluation: weak, accepted, good, very good and excellent.

4.3.3. QUESTIONNAIRE

The third data-gathering tool of this study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. In addition, the researcher chose a questionnaire of close-ended items to assess the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on developing their speaking proficiency and reducing some problems hindering their speaking proficiency progress. The questionnaire consisted of sixteen statements using a five-point Likert scale: "strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree" (Griffie, 2012, p. 136). These sixteen items were divided into two parts: the first part (Part A) consisted of ten items addressing the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on developing their speaking proficiency. The second part (part B) consisted of six items addressing the learners' attitude

towards the effect of debate strategy on reducing some of the problems that can hinder their speaking proficiency progress. Participants were then requested to check the number corresponding to their opinions.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As indicated above, the current study mainly sought to reveal the effect of the debate strategy on developing the EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University and their attitudes towards it. The study used means and standard deviation to assess and analyze the results of the English learners. Based on the questions formulated earlier, the results of the study will be analyzed and discussed based on the following points:

1- Level of the EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University before and after using the debate strategy.

A- Learners' level of speaking proficiency before using the debate strategy.

It is worth mentioning that the study used means and standard deviations to find out the learners' level of EFL learners' speaking proficiency before using the debate strategy.

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics of EFL Learners' Level of Speaking Proficiency Before Using Debate Strategy.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Speaking Proficiency	8.52	2.80	good

Generally speaking, the results of the table above showed the means and standard deviations of the learners' speaking proficiency. The table shows that the total level of the learners' speaking proficiency is good ($M= 8.52, SD= 2.80$). This result indicated the learners' level before using the debate strategy. To recognize the learners' level of the elements of speaking proficiency for the learners before using the debate strategy in detail, the table below was made to show the data concerned:

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics of EFL Learners' Level of the Elements of Speaking Proficiency Before Using Debate Strategy.

	Elements	Rank	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Speaking proficiency	Accent	5	8.40	2.87	accepted
	Grammar	2	8.57	2.99	accepted
	Vocabulary	3	8.43	2.76	accepted
	Fluency	4	8.43	2.72	good
	Comprehension	1	8.77	2.84	good
	Total Average			8.52	2.80

The results in the table above show, in detail, the means and standard deviations for the learners' speaking proficiency elements. As given in the table above, the results of the learners' level of the elements of speaking proficiency range between ($M= 8.40, SD= 2.87$) and ($M= 8.77, SD= 2.84$). Some of the elements of speaking proficiency got accepted, i.e. accent, grammar, and fluency, whereas some other elements got good, i.e. grammar and comprehension. Based on the results in the table above, the elements of speaking proficiency can be ranked as follows: comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and accent, respectively. The results also showed that learners' fluency and accent ranked last, which can be attributed to the fact that the learners did not have enough opportunities to practice their English speaking appropriately.

B- Learners' level of speaking proficiency after using the debate strategy.

Before analyzing the data in the table below, it is worth mentioning that the results of the table were collected from the learners' posttests to show their speaking performance after using the debate strategy.

TABLE 3. Descriptive Statistics of EFL Learners' Level of Speaking Proficiency after Using Debate Strategy

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	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Speaking Proficiency	16.69	1.83	excellent

Generally speaking, the results of the posttests of the learners, as seen in the table above, reveal that the learners' level of speaking proficiency is excellent ($M= 16.69$, $SD= 1.83$). This result, compared to the learners' results in Table 1, revealed the fact that the learners' level of speaking proficiency greatly developed. In other words, the learners' level of speaking proficiency in Table 1 (before using the debate strategy) was generally good ($M= 8.52$, $SD= 2.80$), whereas their level of speaking proficiency in this table (after using the debate strategy) was generally excellent ($M= 16.69$, $SD= 1.83$). This means that the learners' speaking proficiency level generally developed. This development, in reality, was because the debate strategy the learners went through had successfully developed their speaking proficiency.

To recognize the learners' level in the elements of speaking proficiency in the posttest, the following table is made to show the data concerned:

TABLE 4. Descriptive Statistics of EFL Learners' Level of the Elements of Speaking Proficiency After Debate Strategy

Elements	Rank	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
Accent	3	16.63	1.67	excellent
Grammar	5	15.80	1.82	very good
Vocabulary	4	16.30	2.16	excellent
Fluency	2	17.13	2.09	excellent
Comprehension	1	17.57	2.35	excellent
Total		16.69	1.83	excellent

The table above results illustrates to what extent the learners' level of speaking proficiency developed after using the debate strategy. To clarify this, in Table 1, the learners' speaking proficiency level is good ($M= 8.52$, $SD= 2.80$), whereas, in Table 2, their general level of speaking proficiency is excellent ($M= 16.69$, $SD= 1.83$). This suggested that there was a remarkable development in the learners' speaking proficiency in general. This development was attributed to the debate strategy that the learners went through.

Based on the comparison between the result in Table 2 and in Table 4 shown earlier, it is noticed that the order of the elements of speaking proficiency was changed, signifying the significant development that occurred in the level of the learners' elements of speaking proficiency in the posttest. That is, the learners' elements of speaking proficiency, as seen in Table 2, were respectively ranked as follows: comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and accent respectively, whereas their elements of speaking proficiency, as given in the table above, were ranked respectively as follows: comprehension, fluency, accent, vocabulary and grammar. This means that the elements of speaking proficiency were reordered in a way that indicated the degree of the effect of debate strategy on these elements. To illustrate more, the elements of speaking proficiency that got the highest means, such as comprehension, fluency, accent and vocabulary, are the ones which were affected most after the learners' practising English through the debate strategy. In other words, the debate strategy conducted on the learners required the learners to use, unintentionally, some elements of speaking proficiency, such as comprehension, fluency, and accent, more than other elements. Therefore, the development of the learners' level of the elements of speaking proficiency could also be attributed to the debate strategy conducted on them.

2- Effect of the debate strategy on Developing EFL Learners' speaking proficiency.

Before interpreting the data, it is worth indicating that the analysis of the results in the tables below was based on comparing the EFL learners' speaking proficiency performance before

and after using the debate strategy. To achieve this, the researcher used the *t. test* to show the debate strategy's effect on developing the English learners' speaking proficiency.

TABLE 5. Effect of Debate Strategy on Developing Learners' Speaking Proficiency Before and After Using Debate Strategy

Paired Samples Test						
		Paired Differences		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation			
Pair 1	Before - After	-40.10-	12.71	-17.28-	29	.000

The results of the learners' speaking proficiency in the table above indicate that there are statistically significant differences in the mean and standard deviation between the results of the participants before and after using the debate strategy ($M = -40.10$, $SD = 12.71$). The results also show that the P. Value is (.000), less than 5%. Therefore, the study accepts the alternative hypothesis, which indicates that the debate strategy has an important effect on developing the learners' speaking proficiency. This was, in reality, attributed to the new strategy, i.e. the debate strategy that the teacher implemented on the English learners in the class. Since the results above revealed that the learners' speaking proficiency got developed, this means that the elements of speaking proficiency, i.e. accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension got, also developed, proving the significant effect that the debate strategy had on the English learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University.

3- Attitudes the EFL learners at Ibb University hold towards the effect of debate strategy on developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

As mentioned earlier, the current study sought to explore the effect of the debate strategy on EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University and their attitudes towards it. Therefore, the analysis of the following questionnaires mainly aimed to reveal the learners' attitudes towards the effect of the debate strategy on developing their speaking proficiency skills and reducing some problems facing English learners. The researcher used means and standard deviations to analyze the learners' responses to sixteen statements, for which they were asked to tick any of the five alternatives, strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The questionnaire is divided into (A) and (P). Ten of these statements form part (A), mainly written to reveal the learners' attitudes towards the effect of the debate strategy on developing their speaking proficiency. Six of these statements form part (B) mainly written to reveal the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on reducing some of the important problems hindering the learners' speaking proficiency progress. All the parts in the tables below are ranked descending from the highest to the lowest.

The table below, based on the learners' responses, shows, in general, the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on developing their speaking proficiency as well as reducing some of the problems hindering their speaking proficiency progress.

TABLE 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Learners' Attitudes Towards the Effect of Debate Strategy on Developing Their Speaking Proficiency and Reducing the Problems Hindering Their Speaking Proficiency Progress

	Rank	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree of Effect
Part A	2	4.37	.44	Very high
Part B	1	4.38	.47	Very high
Total Average		4.38	.43	Very high

As seen in the results of the table above, the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy developing their speaking proficiency as well as reducing some of the problems hindering their speaking proficiency progress is very high ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .43$). This means

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that they hold positive attitudes towards using the debate strategy in the class. Also, based on the results above, it is noticed that the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on reducing some of the problems hindering their speaking proficiency progress ranked the first ($M= 4.38, SD= .47$), whereas their attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on developing their speaking proficiency ranked the second ($M= 4.37, SD= .44$). This logically means that the learners first overcame the problems hindering their progress in their speaking proficiency, and then developed their speaking proficiency. This great success was due to the effect of the debate strategy on the learners' speaking proficiency.

In order to recognize the learners' attitudes towards each part in detail, the researcher has written the tables below. The following table shows results of the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on developing their speaking proficiency.

TABLE 7. Descriptive Statistics of the Learners' Attitudes towards the Effect of the Debate Strategy on Developing their Speaking proficiency

Item number as in the original	Throughout the class debate,	Rank	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree of effect
A3	I feel that my vocabulary is getting improved.	1	4.60	.67	Very high
A1	I feel my English proficiency is getting better through debate activities.	2	4.50	.78	Very high
A2	I feel that my pronunciation is getting improved.	3	4.50	.51	Very high
A7	I feel that my ability to speak and communicate with others is getting improved.	4	4.43	.73	Very high
A5	I know how to ask and respond easily.	5	4.43	.73	Very high
A4	I feel that my grammar is getting improved.	6	4.40	.62	Very high
A9	I can convey my ideas to others in English easily and clearly.	7	4.33	.71	Very high
A8	I can express my ideas freely.	8	4.23	1.01	Very high
A6	I get more chances to practice my English speaking proficiency.	9	4.20	.81	Very high
A10	I have become more able to engage in debates about other debatable topics.	10	4.10	.88	High
Total Average			4.37	.442	Very high

The items in the table above are made to measure the debate's impact on improving the learners' speaking proficiency. As seen in the table above, the results of the participant's responses generally show that learners' attitudes towards the fact that the debate strategy has significantly developed their speaking proficiency are very high ($M= 4.37, SD= .442$). This can be noticed from the mean scores of all positively reworded statements (i.e. items 3,1, 2,7, 5, 4, 9, 8, 6). Most of the participants of this study strongly agreed with the statement, '*I feel that my vocabulary is getting improved*' (ranked the highest with a mean score of 4.60). '*I feel my English proficiency is getting better through debate activities*' and '*I feel that my pronunciation is getting improved*' (ranked second and the third with the same mean score (4.50), and standard deviations (.78), and (.51)), respectively. '*I feel that my ability to speak and communicate with others is getting improved*' and '*I know how to ask and respond easily*'. (ranked fourth and fifth with the same mean score and standard deviation ($M= 4.43, SD= .73$)). '*I feel that my grammar is getting improved*' (ranked sixth with a mean score of 4.40). '*I can convey my ideas to others in English easily and clearly*' ranked the seventh ($M= 4.33, SD= .71$). '*I can express my ideas freely*' ranked the eighth ($M= 4.23, SD= 1.01$). '*I get*

more chances to practice my English speaking proficiency' ranked the ninth ($M= 4.20$, $SD=.81$). Finally, 'I have become more able to engage in debate about other debatable topics' ranked the tenth ($M= 4.20$, $SD=.81$). Based on the mean score and the standard deviation of the responses of the respondents, nine of the items gained very high, except the tenth item gained high. This indicated that the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on developing their speaking proficiency were highly positive.

4- Attitudes the EFL learners at Ibb University hold towards the impact of debate strategy on reducing some of the learners' problems hindering their progress in their speaking proficiency?

The table below is written to reveal the learners' attitudes towards the effect of debate strategy on reducing some of the learners' problems hindering their progress in their speaking proficiency?

TABLE 8. Descriptive Statistics of the Learners' Attitudes Towards the Effect of Debate Strategy in Reducing Some of the Problems Hindering Their Speaking Progress.

Item number as in the original	In-class debate	Rank	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree of effect
B4	helps me become more confident in speaking in front of others.	1	4.50	.73	Very high
B2	helps me to reduce my anxiety level when I speak in front of others.	2	4.47	.57	Very high
B6	makes me suggest that part of English should be taught through debate activities.	3	4.40	.67	Very high
B5	is a new way of teaching speaking English.	4	4.37	.85	Very high
B1	makes me feel challenged to speak in front of my classmates.	5	4.30	.95	Very high
B3	is interesting.	6	4.27	.69	Very high
Total Average			4.38	.47	

The table above shows the results of the effect of debate strategy on reducing some problems hindering learners from developing their speaking proficiency. Generally, the learners' attitudes towards the effect of the debate strategy on reducing some problems hindering them from developing their English proficiency is very high ($M= 4.38$, $SD=.47$). The participants strongly agreed that the debate strategy positively reduced some of the problems hindering their speaking proficiency progress (i.e. items 4, 2, 6, 5, 1, 3). As seen in the table, 'helps me become more confident to speak in front of others' ranked the highest ($M= 4.50$, $SD=.73$). This suggested that the learners, after the debate activities, became more confident when speaking in front of their classmates. 'Helps me to reduce my anxiety level when I speak in front of others' ranked second ($M= 4.47$, $SD=.57$). This item also assured that the debate strategy effectively reduced the learners' anxiety when speaking in front of others. 'Makes me suggest that part of English should be taught through debate activities' ranked third ($M= 4.40$, $SD=.67$), whereas 'Is a new way of teaching speaking English' ranked fourth ($M= 4.37$, $SD=.85$). The items which ranked the third and the fourth indicated that English teachers don't use debate strategy when teaching English speaking. That's why most of them strongly agreed that the debate strategy was a new strategy for teaching speaking. In addition, they strongly agreed that debate should be used as a technique, not to teach speaking only but other parts of English. The items 'Makes me feel challenged to speak in front of my classmates' ranked fifth ($M= 4.30$, $SD=.95$), and 'Is interesting' ranked last ($M= 4.27$, $SD=.69$). The learners in the last items strongly agreed that the speaking skill being taught through debate strategy is, though challenging, interesting. This means that the class was not boring, and

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this feature made them highly interactive and motivated throughout the debate activities conducted in the class.

To sum up, it could be concluded that the effect of debate strategy on learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University was highly positive. This study agreed with those of (Darby, 2007; Doody & Condon, 2012; Hall, 2011; Kennedy, 2009, 2007; Moomala, Faizah, & Amiri, 2013; Rear, 2010; Tumposky, 2004; Yang & Rusli, 2012), who said that debate strategy was an excellent strategy that could help learners practice English, have enough chance to express their ideas, and developed their speaking proficiency.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to explore the effect of debate on EFL learners' speaking proficiency at Ibb University. It could be concluded that the debate strategy very highly developed the learners' level of speaking proficiency. Also, there was a statistically significant difference in the means and standard deviations between the learners' results before and after using the debate strategy. These significant differences indicated the debate strategy's great effect on developing the learners' speaking proficiency. In addition, the participant's responses in the questionnaire revealed that the learners hold a highly positive attitude towards the effect of debate strategy on developing the learners' speaking proficiency. Besides, the learners feel that the debate strategy could help them overcome the problems that could hinder their progress in their English speaking proficiency, such as anxiety, shyness, hesitation, etc. Therefore, the debate strategy conducted on the English learners at Ibb University proved to be very effective and successful.

Based on the conclusions of the study mentioned above, the study recommends many points: First, part of the English language, especially speaking proficiency skills, should be taught through debate strategy. Debate strategy can create a good English atmosphere in which learners can get enough opportunities to practice their speaking skill in the class actively. Second, topics chosen for debate should be interesting and match the learners' needs and interests in their real-life situations. Such topics can help learners to be more active and highly motivated to participate throughout the class. Third, many teaching programs should be made and taught through debate strategy. Eventually, Further researches should be done on teaching English language using debate strategy as a new effective method in the English teaching and learning.

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APPENDIX (A)

Speaking Pretest & Posttest

Talk about one of the following topics, providing your ideas with enough evidences, statistics, examples, ...etc. so as to convince your listener with your points of view.

Section 1

Ramadan is a sacred month during which Muslims used to fast every year as one of the pillars of Islam. People, in the month of Ramadan, are of two views. Some people think

must take a rest in Ramadan and don't work. Others think that we can work and study even during the month of Ramadan. What is your opinion? Support your opinion with evidence. (10 minutes)

Section 2

Chewing Qat is a social habit in Yemeni society. Such a habit, in fact, has positive and negative effects on both a person and society. Therefore, try to write whether you are with or against chewing Qat. Support your opinion with evidence. (10 minutes)

APPENDIX (2)
A checklist observation

Speaking Checklist Observation		
Score		Components of Speaking
1	Accent	
1		Pronunciation frequently unintelligible
2		Frequent gross and a very good accent make understanding require frequent, not repetition.
3		"Foreign accent" requires concentrated listening and pronunciations, leading to occasional understanding and no apparent grammar or vocabulary errors.
4		Marked "foreign accent" and occasional pronunciations which interfere with understanding.
5		No conspicuous mispronunciations, but would not be taken for a native speaker.
2	Grammar	
1		Grammar almost entirely inaccurate except in stock phrases.
2		Constant errors showing control of very few major patterns and frequently preventing communication.
3		Frequent errors showing some major patterns uncontrolled and causing occasional irritation and misunderstanding.
4		Occasional errors showing imperfect control of some patterns but no weakness that causes misunderstanding.
5		Few errors, with no patterns of failure.
3	Vocabulary	
1		Vocabulary inadequate for even the simplest conversation.
2		Vocabulary limited to basic personal and survival areas (time, food, transportation, family, etc.).
3		Choice of words sometimes inaccurate, limitations of vocabulary prevent discussion of some common professional and social topics.
4		Professional vocabulary adequate to discuss special interests; general vocabulary permits discussion of any non-technical subject with some circumlocutions.
5		Professional vocabulary broad and precise; general vocabulary adequate to cope with complex practical problems and varied social situations.
4	Fluency	

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1		Speech is so halting and fragmentary that conversation is virtually impossible.
2		Speech is very slow and uneven except for short or routine sentences.
3		Speech is frequently hesitant and jerky; sentences may be left uncompleted.
4		Speech is occasionally hesitant, with some unevenness caused by rephrasing and groping for words.
5		Speech is effortless and smooth, but perceptibly non-native in speed and evenness.
5	Comprehe nsion	
1		Understands too little for the simplest type of conversation.
2		Understands only slow very simple speech on common social and touristic topics: requires constant repetition and rephrasing.
3		Understands careful, somewhat simplified speech directed to him, with considerable repetition and rephrasing.
4		Understands quite well normal educated speech directed to him, but requires occasional repetition and rephrasing.
5		Understands everything in normal educated conversation except for very colloquial or low frequency items, or exceptionally rapid or slurred speech.

APPEDIX (3)
A questionnaire

Dear learners,

This questionnaire is a part of the researcher's work entitled The Effect of Debate Strategy on Developing EFL Learners' Speaking Proficiency at Ibb University and Their Attitudes Towards it. Therefore, you are kindly required to put a tick (√) in the right box. Thank you, in advance, for your collaboration.

Part A					
Throughout the class debate,					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1- I feel my English proficiency is getting better through debate activities.					
2- I feel that my pronunciation is getting improved.					
3- I feel that my vocabulary is getting improved.					
4- I feel that my grammar is getting improved.					
5- I know how to ask and respond easily.					
6- I get more chances to practice my English speaking proficiency.					

7- I feel that my ability of speaking communication with others is getting improved.					
8- I can express my ideas freely.					
9- I can convey my ideas to others in English easily and clearly.					
10- I have become more able to engage in debate about other debatable topics.					

Part B					
In-class debate					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1- makes me feel challenged to speak in front of my classmates.					
2- helps me to reduce my anxiety level when I speak in front of others.					
3- is interesting.					
4- helps me become more confident to speak in front of others.					
5- is a new way of teaching speaking English.					
6- makes me suggest that part of English should be taught through debate activities.					