

Enhancing Students' Critical Thinking Skills Through the Application of Debate Technique

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.8110032>

Received: 09 October 2024; Accepted: 20 October 2024; Published: 29 November 2024

ABSTRACT

Test analysis from previous studies indicates that students' critical thinking skills still need to improve. This study aimed to enhance the critical thinking skills of Grade 9 students in English at one of the secondary schools in Ozamiz City during the school year 2023-2024 using the debate technique through a classroom-based action research design. Thirty-five participants were selected through purposive sampling. The study utilized qualitative and quantitative methods, including a Researcher-made test and interviews for data collection. Statistical analysis used MiniTab and HyperResearch, with tools like mean, standard deviation, t-test, and thematic analysis, to comprehensively understand the findings. The study sought to answer the following objectives: 1.) Determine the learner's level of performance before the application of debate technique 2.) Determine the learner's level of performance after the application of the debate technique; 3.) Determine the significant difference in learners' performance before and after the application of the debate technique, and 4) Explore other developments observed among the learners following the use of debate. The findings revealed an outstanding improvement in the learners' overall performance through the use of the debate technique. Therefore, the application of the debate technique proves it to be an effective tool for enhancing students' critical thinking skills.

Keywords: Critical Thinking Skills, Debate Technique, Learners' Performance

INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language, spoken more widely than any other language today (Mehdi et al., 2019). Additionally, English has been integrated as a core academic subject. In recent years, critical thinking has emerged as a vital 21st-century skill and a crucial learning outcome at the university level, recognized as a critical competency for students (Prayogi et al., 2019). However, test analysis from previous studies indicates that students' critical thinking skills remain quite low. This conclusion is based on analyzing student responses to test questions (Oktafiany, 2023).

The 21st century is characterized by rapid advancements across various domains, encompassing both technology and education. In today's world, education goes beyond memorizing information and facts (Qasrawi & BeniAbdelrahman, 2020). This is because the amount of information available is rapidly increasing, and students need to be able to comprehend, analyze, apply, evaluate, and create to succeed in this competitive world. Hence, critical thinking skills are essential requirements of the 21st century that students must possess (Redhana, 2019).

Critical thinking is a process that involves using higher-order thinking skills to understand problems, analyze them, synthesize information, and evaluate ideas logically (Tumanggor, 2021). Students are trained to develop high-level thinking skills, enabling them to solve problems, particularly those they may face in the future

(Mislia Indartono & Mallisa, 2019). In high-level thinking, students not only rely on memorization but also understand and reason to develop their own ideas.

There are several studies that have identified factors contributing to low critical thinking skills in students. It is noted that certain teachers' conservative educational ideology, with traditional attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning, poses a severe challenge (Saleh, 2019). This ideology shapes these teachers' teacher-centered approaches to teaching, which do not promote critical thinking. The classes conducted by these teachers are usually highly regulated, lacking any room for self-directed or inquiry-based learning (Rahmi, Alberida & Astuti, 2019). Consequently, persuading these teachers to shift their attitudes and beliefs to suit modern ideas about language teaching and learning can be quite an uphill task.

Additionally, the reason behind students' inadequate critical thinking skills is their inability to reason and respond to problems effectively. This inability to reason is due to their lack of interest in demonstrating principles or concepts and their failure to conduct investigations and draw generalizations from issues. One reason students may not be interested is that the teaching methods used need to be more suitable, leading to less engagement (Hamdani, 2019). Moreover, many students have not received training in high-level thinking skills (HOTS), which is affecting their ability to think critically and analyze complex questions. As a result, they often feel anxious about facing the National Examination (Mallisa, 2019). The lack of training in handling questions that require high-level analysis or questions in the HOTS category is a significant factor in this situation.

Based on a review of previous research has shown that collaborative learning can lead to higher achievement and positive relationships among students. Group discussions have been found to stimulate creativity and improve comprehension. Therefore, collaborative group discussions are recommended for adoption in the EFL classroom to promote classroom interaction, enhance learners' cognitive and communicative development, and facilitate their critical thinking abilities (Liu, 2020).

Furthermore, other studies also emphasized that the inquiry learning model positively impacts students' critical thinking skills in the excretory system subject (Rahmi 2019). Inquiry learning is a method that focuses on developing critical and analytical thinking skills in students, encouraging them to find their own solutions to problems. The study found that all indicators of critical thinking skills in students improved as a result of using the inquiry learning model. This improvement can be attributed to the syntax of the inquiry learning model, which helps train and enhance students' critical thinking abilities.

In addition, seventh-grade students' prevalence of critical thinking concepts was notably low. The study aimed to investigate the impact of cooperative learning, complemented by reflective activities, on enhancing students' critical thinking skills at this grade level. The study's findings suggest that the implementation of cooperative learning, coupled with reflective thinking activities, can be construed as positively influencing the development of students' critical thinking skills (Erdogan, 2019).

The existing studies primarily focus on international contexts, highlighting a notable gap in research within the Philippines. Furthermore, no studies have employed debate as a strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills. This identified gap underscores the need for localized inquiries to cultivate critical thinking abilities among students. To bridge this gap, the researcher aims to examine the application of debate to enhance grade 9 students' critical thinking skills during the 2023-2024 school year in one of the public schools in Ozamiz City. The debate technique provides teachers with practical implications for curriculum development and instructional methods tailored to foster critical thinking among grade 9 students.

PROPOSED STRATEGY

The researcher intends to employ the debate technique as a strategic approach to enhance students' critical thinking skills. Critical thinking can be enriched through instructional methodologies that foster active learning. Using debate methods is an effective means to underscore active student engagement. The primary

objective of conducting a debate is not solely focused on securing victory in the discussion; instead, it is geared towards cultivating students' capacity to think independently and critically by presenting a series of claims or arguments. This process aims to broaden their comprehension and enhance their proficiency in thoughtful analysis (Derouiche, 2019).

Debates have been instrumental in facilitating diverse and relevant learning experiences, thereby being pivotal in nurturing critical thinking skills through active learning (Kim & Park, 2019). It has demonstrated positive outcomes, manifesting in heightened confidence levels, mastery of subject matter, teamwork proficiency, peer assessment capabilities, refined communication skills, and an enhanced capacity for critical evaluation among students. Furthermore, debates provide valuable opportunities for students to challenge and counterclaims and assertions subsequent to an opponent's initial statement and principal arguments (Rodger & Stewart-Lord, 2020).

The strategy involves dividing the students into two groups, one advocating the affirmative stance and the other presenting arguments against the given topic or motion (Rodger & Stewart-Lord, 2020). Each group, comprising two or more speakers, will articulate their perspectives and counter the arguments put forth by their opponents. This strategy can potentially enhance the critical thinking skills of Grade 9 students.

ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This action research aimed to address the performance of Grade 9 students in English.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the learner's level of performance before the application of debate technique in the classroom?
2. What is the learner's level of performance after the application of the debate technique in the classroom?
3. Is there any significant difference in the learner's performance before and after the application of the debate technique?
4. What other developments are observed among the performance of learners after the application of debate?

ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design.

This study is experimental research where pre-test and post-test were used to measure students' critical thinking skills. The study also used both qualitative and quantitative. For qualitative data, the researcher used an interview as an instrument to elicit information towards 35 students.

This study used a classroom-based action research design to assess the effectiveness of using debate as a strategy to enhance students' critical thinking skills, specifically within the Grade 9 context. Implementing classroom action research primarily aims to address identified challenges within the classroom setting and enhance the overall efficacy of the teaching and learning processes.

This study employed a classroom-based research design. Classroom-based Classroom-Based Action Research (CBAR) is an effective method for bridging the gap between theory and practice in teacher development (Ratnawati & Idris, 2020). It serves as a sustainable professional development strategy, enhancing both theoretical and practical aspects of pedagogy through classroom action research-based instruction (Wongrugsu, 2019). This action research design was deemed appropriate as it aimed to apply debate technique to enhance the critical thinking skills of Grade 9 students in English.

Site

The study was conducted in one of the public secondary schools in Ozamiz City, focusing on Grade 9 students at the Junior High School level. This school offered education following an English Curriculum from Grade 7 through Grade 12.

Participants

The participants of the study were 35 Grade 9 students. The participants were selected using a purposive selection technique. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: 1.) Students who were enrolled in the Junior High School Department as Grade 9 students for the academic year 2023-2024; 2.) Students who were observed to have low critical thinking skills; 3.) Students who give their full consent will serve as respondents to the study. (4) Only students from the Einstein section were chosen because the researcher teaches in this section. The researcher ensured that all these conditions were met before conducting the survey.

Data Gathering Methods

The researcher employed higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) questions to evaluate students' critical thinking skills. These questions served as both pre-tests and post-tests using a researcher-made instrument, such as test questions, to assess the effectiveness of the debate technique application.

A. Pre-Implementation Phase: The researcher initiated a comprehensive background investigation into the challenges emerging students encountered in their learning. An extensive review of previous studies was undertaken to provide a broader perspective on the research subject. The researcher started crafting the research proposal, developed lesson plans, and created pre and post-tests, as well as a prototype intervention. Eventually, the researcher sought permission from the Superintendent of the Division of Ozamiz City and authorization from the principal and cooperating teacher to conduct research at a secondary school in Ozamiz City.

B. Implementation Phase: The implementation stage involved collecting data, which included conducting pre-tests with the participants, implementing the targeted intervention for a specific time frame, monitoring participants' performance and attitudes, and conducting post-test assessments. This stage also encompassed retrieving, tallying, analyzing, and interpreting the data. The data analysis aimed to determine whether the intervention was significantly effective.

C. Post-Implementation Phase: The post-implementation phase comprised the derivation of conclusions, formulation of recommendations, meticulous proofreading, comprehensive editing, and the finalization of the research study. Additionally, this stage entailed the appropriate dissemination of research results to a specific audience or group.

Ethical Issues

To uphold ethical standards, researchers prioritized principles to prevent any harm or detriment to the respondents, emphasizing informed consent (Husband, 2020). The researcher adhered to the regulations outlined in Republic Act No. 10173, commonly referred to as the 'Data Privacy Act of 2012,' to uphold the privacy and data security of the participants. All participant data was securely stored to safeguard both privacy and information integrity. Participants were explicitly informed of their right to withdraw from the study without any adverse consequences.

Data Analysis

With the use of MiniTab and HyperResearch statistical software, the following tools were utilized:

Frequency and Percentage were employed to provide a descriptive overview of the various aspects related to the study.

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the learner's performance before and after the intervention.

T-test was used to determine the significant improvement in the learners' level of performance before and after using debate.

Thematic Analysis was conducted to explore other improvements observed among the learners after using the debate technique.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Learners' Performance Before the Application of the Debate Technique

Table 1 presents the performance of learners before the application of the debate technique in the classroom. The findings reveal that a majority of the learners fell under the Satisfactory category ($M = 34.833$, $SD = 0.707$), with 51.43% ($n = 18$) of the students achieving this performance level. This is followed by the Fairly Satisfactory category, which comprises 34.29% ($n = 12$) of the students ($M = 31.333$, $SD = 1.073$). A smaller portion of the learners, 11.43% ($n = 4$), did not meet the expectations (DME) ($M = 28.500$, $SD = 0.577$). Only 2.86% ($n = 1$) of the students achieved a Very Satisfactory performance ($M = 38.00$).

The analysis indicates that more than half of the learners were performing at a satisfactory level before the application of the debate technique. This suggests that while a significant portion of the class met the minimum satisfactory performance, there is still a notable percentage of students who are only fairly satisfactory or below. The small number of students achieving a very satisfactory performance highlights an area for potential improvement.

The findings suggest that intervention is needed to elevate the class's overall performance. Educators should consider integrating more dynamic and interactive teaching strategies like debate to foster critical thinking and deeper understanding. Schools must transform to equip students with 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, for success in work and life (Erdogan, 2019).

In recent decades, critical thinking has emerged as an essential 21st-century skill and a crucial outcome of university-level education, becoming one of the critical competencies students must attain (Prayogi et al., 2019). When learning tools or strategies are well-designed, they can provide information that significantly aids learners in achieving their educational goals more effectively (Pozzi et al., 2020).

To address these gaps, it is recommended that educators should apply debate to their teachings. Activities such as targeted tutoring sessions, peer mentoring, and personalized feedback could help address these learners' specific needs. Additionally, fostering an environment that values active participation and critical discourse could enhance the performance of all students, leading to a higher level of performance.

Table 1. Learners' Performance Before the Application of the Debate Technique

Learners' Performance	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Very Satisfactory	1	2.86	38.00	-
Satisfactory	18	51.43	34.833	0.707
Fairly Satisfactory	12	34.29	31.333	1.073
Did Not Meet the Expectations (DME)	4	11.43	28.500	0.577
Overall Performance	35	100		

Note: Scale: 42-50 (Outstanding); 38-41 (Very Satisfactory), 34-37 (Satisfactory), 30-33 (Fairly Satisfactory); 1-29 (Does Not Meet the Expectations)

Learners’ Performance After the Application of the Debate Technique

Table 2 presents the performance of learners after the application of the debate technique in the classroom. The findings reveal a significant improvement in performance, with 97.14% (n = 34) of the students achieving an Outstanding level (M = 49.059, SD = 1.071). Only 2.86% (n = 1) of the students remained at the Satisfactory level (M = 34.00).

The data indicates a remarkable shift in the learners' performance following the introduction of the debate technique. After implementing the debate technique, almost all students achieved an Outstanding performance. This improvement suggests that the debate technique was highly effective in enhancing students' understanding and engagement with the course material. The substantial increase in the mean score (M = 49.059) and the low standard deviation (SD = 1.071) reflect a consistent and high level of achievement across nearly all students.

The findings indicate that the debate technique had a profound positive impact on student performance. This suggests that interactive and participatory teaching methods, like debates, can significantly enhance learning performance. Hence, educators should consider regularly incorporating debate techniques into the teaching strategy to maintain high student engagement and achievement levels.

Interaction, collaborative learning, and learning performance are significant aspects of education (Chan et al.). The application of debate in the classroom fosters interaction among students. It encourages them to consider various perspectives on an issue, as they must counter the arguments presented by opposing teams (Ristawati, 2019). This interactivity also enables educators to respond to students’ input during lessons, promoting collaborative learning and exercising their critical thinking skills. (Al-Rahmi et al., 2019).

Additional individualized support could be provided to address the single student who remained at a satisfactory level. This might include one-on-one tutoring, additional practice sessions, or more targeted feedback to help this student reach the outstanding level.

Furthermore, ongoing assessment and feedback mechanisms should be established to ensure that all students continue to perform at their highest potential. Activities such as reflective sessions, peer evaluations, and continuous skill-building exercises can help sustain the high-performance levels observed after the debate technique is applied.

Table 2. Learners’ Performance After the Application of the Debate Technique

Learners’ Performance	Frequency	Percentage	M	SD
Outstanding	34	97.14	49.059	1.071
Satisfactory	1	2.86	34.00	-
Overall Performance	35	100		

Note: Scale: 42-50 (Outstanding); 38-41 (Very Satisfactory), 34-37 (Satisfactory), 30-33 (Fairly Satisfactory); 1-29 (Does Not Meet the Expectations)

Significant Difference of Learners’ Performance Before and After the Application of Debate Technique

Table 3 presents the significant difference in learners' performance before and after the application of the debate technique. The analysis reveals a highly significant difference in the learners' performance before and after the application of the debate technique (t = 27.02, p = 0.000). The mean performance score increased from 33.000 (SD = 2.555) before the debate technique to 48.629 (SD = 2.756) after its application, indicating a substantial improvement.

The significant variable identified is learners' performance before and after the application of the debate technique. The mean score increased significantly, reflecting the effectiveness of the debate technique in enhancing students' understanding and engagement with the course material. There are no non-significant findings in this analysis, as the p-value is less than 0.01, indicating that the difference in performance is statistically significant.

The findings imply that incorporating debate into the teaching strategy can substantially improve learners' academic outcomes. Educators and curriculum designers should integrate debate techniques into their teaching methods to consistently enhance student engagement and performance. To ensure all students benefit, continuous support and assessment should be provided. This includes training teachers in debate techniques, regularly evaluating student progress, and adapting methods as needed. Encouraging student participation in debates and offering platforms to practice critical thinking can further enhance their learning experience.

Debating is regarded as one of the most effective strategies for helping students develop various skills essential for learning success. Through active participation in debates, students enhance their critical thinking skills and other specific abilities and strategies (Ban et al., 2023). Research has shown that more experienced teachers have a greater understanding of higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) and strive to implement them to enhance students' critical thinking skills (Mursyid & Kurniawati, 2019). English teachers recognize the importance of HOTS and are trying to incorporate approaches that promote these skills in their teaching methods (Mustika et al., 2019).

Overall, the findings suggest that adopting cooperative learning methods, such as debate, can significantly improve student performance, highlighting the importance of interactive and participatory teaching methods in fostering academic excellence.

Table 3. Significant Difference of Learners' Performance Before and After the Application of Debate Technique

Variables	M	SD	t-value	p-value	Decision
Before the Application of Debate Technique	33.000	2.555	27.02	0.000	Reject H ₀
After the Application of Debate Technique	48.629	2.756			

H₀: There is no significant difference in the learners' performance before and after the application of the debate technique.

Note: Probability Value Scale: ** $p < 0.01$ (Highly Significant); * $p < 0.05$ (Significant); * $p > 0.05$ (Significant); $p > 0.05$ (Not Significant)

Other Developments among the Performance of Learners After the Application of Debate

The study analyzed the distinguished effects of the application of debate technique in the classroom. Participants of the study presented individual experiences and feelings regarding the implementation of this activity. The researchers utilized participants' responses and analyzed the results for significant meaning in search of emergent themes to classify the responses. The three (3) emerging themes mentioned in the study revealing the participants' experiences and feelings in the application of debate technique are as follows: 1) Improves Students' Confidence; 2) Nurtures Open-mindedness; 3) Increases Motivation.

Improves Learners' Confidence

Debate has been used in educational settings to present benefits to learners from different backgrounds who learn together in groups. Some students said besides speaking anxiety, the other problem that they find

whenever they have to speak in front of other people is the lack of confidence. During the debate preparation, a change has happened to their confidence. After several practices with their teammates, they began to feel a sense of confidence because they could deliver the arguments to their friends, and the responses that they got were quite satisfying. This is highlighted in the responses of the participants:

“Participating in debates has noticeably increased my confidence when speaking in class. The regular practice of presenting arguments has made me more comfortable and less nervous about speaking up.” (P1)

“After participating in the class debates, I can say for sure that I noticed a lot of improvements in my confidence, spontaneity, and conviction while speaking in front of the whole class.” (P4)

“After participating in the debates, it boosted my confidence. Although we were unable to win the said debate, I was still able to push myself to go to the front of many people and deliver my speech.” (P8)

Moreover, the participants also stated that debate allows them to express their ideas freely and enhance their speaking skills.

“After our debate, I now feel more self-assured and comfortable expressing myself in front of my peers.” (P3)

“My level of confidence changes significantly when speaking in class after participating in debates. It boosts my confidence since it helps me improve my public speaking skills.” (P10)

Developing self-esteem and confidence can be challenging for many students. However, participation in debates can significantly boost student self-confidence, enhance learning across various subjects, and improve communication skills (Ban et al., 2023). Having self-confidence fosters a positive attitude, which helps individuals tackle future challenges (Nadiyah et al., 2019). With effective oversight, incorporating debate activities into the curriculum can enrich the educational experience for students. This is because debating requires students to carefully listen to and analyze their classmates' arguments and defenses (Ghafar & Region-Iraq, 2024).

Nurtures Open-mindedness

The application of debate techniques nurtures open-mindedness by compelling participants to consider and understand multiple perspectives. During debates, individuals must research and present arguments for both sides of an issue, broadening their understanding and challenging preconceived notions. This process encourages participants to listen actively, evaluate evidence critically, and appreciate different viewpoints. As a result, debates foster a more inclusive and tolerant mindset, helping individuals to become more empathetic and open to new ideas. This is evident in their following responses:

“Debating has pushed me to consider multiple perspectives and understand arguments I hadn't thought of before.” (P1)

“My understanding of different viewpoints has increased as a result of debate, and I now approach situations with greater analysis and open-mindedness.” (P2)

“The debates expanded my understanding of different viewpoints. Now, I am much more open to different opinions that led me to become more substantial with my arguments and rebuttals.” (P4)

Participants 1 and 6 also noted a significant improvement in their critical thinking skills, as being immersed in different viewpoints exercised their minds to analyze and evaluate information more effectively. This is revealed in their answers:

“Since we started using debates in class, my ability to think critically and analyze different viewpoints has improved.” (P1)

“I feel that my critical thinking and ability to analyze different viewpoints have improved since we started using debates in class. I learned that debates effectively enhance these skills by encouraging individuals to consider multiple perspectives and develop well-supported arguments.” (P6)

Debate is closely linked to developing critical thinking skills (Rahmatullah, 2023). It fosters these skills in students through activities like examining arguments, conducting research, gathering information, performing analysis, questioning assumptions, and evaluating arguments (Ghafar & Region-Iraq, 2024). Additionally, debate encourages open-mindedness by requiring students to engage with diverse viewpoints, further honing their critical thinking abilities, such as analysis, self-regulation, and evaluation (Tiasadi, 2020).

Increases Motivation

Through the application of debate technique, it increases motivation by actively engaging participants in dynamic and challenging discussions. As individuals work to construct compelling arguments and anticipate counterarguments, they become more invested in the subject matter. The competitive nature of debates also adds an element of excitement and urgency, further boosting motivation. This is evident in the answers of the following participants:

“Since debates were introduced, I've been more motivated to prepare for and participate in class discussions. The structured format of debates has given me a clear goal, driving me to delve deeper into the topics and ensure I'm well-prepared.” (P1)

“Yes, my motivation to prepare for and participate in class discussions has increased since debates were introduced. The competitive and interactive nature of debates makes the topics more engaging and encourages me to research my arguments effectively to win the debate.” (P2)

“Yes, I have noticed changes in my motivation. Since debates were introduced, I feel more eager to prepare and participate in class discussions because I enjoy the challenge and the opportunity to express my ideas.” (P13)

Furthermore, the debate also contributes to teamwork and collaboration, as participants work closely with their teammates to strategize, share insights, and support each other, fostering a cooperative and cohesive group dynamic. This is highlighted by participants 1, 3, and 13.

“We've bonded over collaborating on debate preparation and supporting each other during discussions, strengthening our teamwork and camaraderie.” (P1)

“Participating in debates has positively impacted my relationships with classmates. Collaborating with peers during debates has fostered teamwork, communication, and mutual respect.” (P3)

“Participating in debates has improved my relationships with classmates by building respect and teamwork. We now appreciate different opinions and work better together.” (P13)

Cooperative learning strategies, such as debates, can significantly boost student motivation (Nashori, 2021). Debates encourage interactive learning by requiring students to work together to solve issues, often leading to innovative problem-solving approaches (Chan et al., 2019). This aligns with the demands of 21st-century education, where students are not only expected to develop critical thinking, communication, creativity, but also collaboration skills (Stauffer, 2020).

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the debate technique in enhancing Grade 9 students' critical thinking skills during the Academic Year 2023-2024 in a public school in Ozamiz City. The research utilized a Classroom-based Action Research design, selecting 35 students through purposive sampling. A

researcher-made test was used for data collection, and the analysis included calculating the mean and standard deviation and conducting a t-test. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to: (1) determine the learners' performance before the application of the debate technique; (2) determine the learners' performance after the application of the debate technique; (3) identify significant difference in the learners' performance before and after the application of debate; and (4) explore other observed developments among the learners following the application of debate.

Findings

The following were the key findings of the study:

1. A significant portion of the learner's performance met the minimum satisfactory performance. Yet, a notable percentage of students still performed at a fairly satisfactory level or below before the application of the debate technique.
2. The learners' performance after the application of the debate technique improved significantly.
3. The study revealed a highly significant difference in the learners' performance before and after the application of the debate technique.
4. There are other identified developments after the application of the debate technique in the classroom.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Before the application of the debate technique, while a significant portion of learners met the minimum satisfactory performance, a notable percentage still performed at a fairly satisfactory level or below.
2. After the application of the debate technique, the learners' performance improved significantly, proving it to be an effective tool for enhancing students' critical thinking skills.
3. The study found a highly significant difference in the learners' performance before and after the application of the debate technique, which highlights how effective the tool is in enhancing their critical thinking skills.
4. In addition to the improvements in academic performance, other positive changes were noted after applying the debate technique. These include improved students' confidence, nurturing open-mindedness, and increased motivation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researchers suggested that:

1. Teachers gather student feedback to understand better their learning preferences, difficulties, and suggestions for improving teaching methods. By integrating this feedback into lesson planning, educators can create more effective learning experiences.
2. English teachers can participate in professional development programs that use cooperative learning, such as debate, to enhance students' critical thinking skills.
3. Schools and teachers can exchange best practices and success stories about the use of debate techniques to inspire others and foster the adoption of innovative teaching strategies in educational settings.
4. Conduct additional research to evaluate the effectiveness of debate technique not only in English but also in other subjects. Assess how these tools influence learners' overall academic performance across various disciplines.

The findings revealed that students often struggle to grasp subject-verb agreement, tense consistency, sentence structure, and proper punctuation. It is challenging for students to establish a clear flow of ideas and create a coherent structure for their academic writing. Students were also struggling to find relevant sources, choose

the right words, employ suitable terminology, and allocate time to dedicate to activities related to academic writing.

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