

Enhancing EFL Students' Oral Proficiency: The ChatGPT-Assisted Debate Clinic Method

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Abstract

The low level of students' English oral proficiency was caused by inappropriate learning methods and the lack of a conducive English learning environment created by lecturers. Therefore, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of implementing the ChatGPT-assisted debate clinic approach to enhance students' oral proficiency in English. This study was conducted using a quantitative approach with a true-experimental design (pretest-posttest control group design). The population involved in this study consisted of third-semester students from the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at STAI DDI Pinrang, Indonesia. The total population was 45 students, and the study sample was 29 students, selected using a total sampling technique. The statistical test results show that the significance values (Asymp. Sig. and Exact Sig.) are very small (0.000), indicating high statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). This means that there is a significant difference between the post-test data of the two groups. Therefore, teaching English through the ChatGPT-assisted debate clinic method can effectively enhance students' oral proficiency.

Keywords

ChatGPT, Debate Clinic Method, English Oral Proficiency

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak English is a soft skill that is highly valuable in the workplace, as almost all employment opportunities require prospective job applicants to be fluent in English, often demonstrated by language proficiency certificates such as TOEFL and IELTS. These requirements are becoming increasingly stringent, with several agencies setting minimum score criteria for English language test results as part of their administrative selection process. It is undeniable that the ability to communicate in English supports job success. For instance, when using technology, every employee must have at least basic English skills to effectively use the available features. Additionally, English communication skills are essential for building relationships between agencies or companies, whether through verbal or written communication. Oral communication is important for tasks such as delivering project presentations or interacting with clients, while written communication is often required for sending email messages. Therefore, it is a significant challenge for students to continue learning and improving their English language competency to remain competitive in the workforce.

Almost all universities in Indonesia include English language courses in their curricula, and many even make English proficiency a graduation requirement. This is done as a concrete step toward producing graduates who are not only proficient in their respective fields of study but also capable of communicating internationally. Teaching English tailored to specific scientific fields is known as English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which focuses on teaching English relevant to particular disciplines. The presence of ESP helps students quickly grasp English because the teaching material is directly related to their field of study.

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) aims to equip students with the language skills and vocabulary needed in their studies and profession (Enesi et al., 2021). Remembering that vocabulary in language teaching is very essential for students in mastering ESP subject matter (Duong, 2022). It is hoped that the language skills they have will be able to support their careers while working. However, mastering the science of communicating in English cannot be done in a short time, it requires a lot of communication practice by practicing the vocabulary that has been learned or memorized. The communication exercises in question can be in the form of dialogue practices, monologues, or discussions with colleagues.

Apart from increasing practice in English, what is no less important is creating an English-speaking environment. Creating an English learning environment that requires students to use English when in that environment is one solution to improving English language skills because they get different learning strategies (Murtiningsih & Lisnawati, 2022). The difference lies in terms of communication frequency. If students are in an environment where English is used almost all the time, it will trigger them to use English which will ultimately have a good impact on students' language development.

Related to this, the researcher made observations and test regarding students' communication skills in English for third semester students at STAI DDI Pinrang. The results of the English communication ability test showed their average score was 33 out of a range of 0-100. The reason their English communication skills are still relatively low is that they were not supported by good teaching methods and the lecturer did not create a conducive English learning environment. There was no interaction process between students and lecturers in using English so this did not trigger their language development. The use of inappropriate methods and a non-conducive learning environment were obtained from the results of the questionnaire analysis that the researcher gave to students. The results show that 40% of respondents need conducive English learning environment, 40% of them need interesting learning media, and the other 20% need appropriate English teaching methods.

Based on these problems, the researcher implemented a teaching method that can create a conducive English learning environment where this method allows each student to be actively involved in discussing and giving their arguments using English. This method is the Debate Clinic method where debate method is an effective and interesting method to use in teaching English speaking (Musfirah, 2019). Apart from that, in its implementation, the researcher used the ChatGPT application as a learning medium that can help students compile arguments so that they can stimulate critical thinking skills. This is very important because the main cause of an individual not being able to communicate in English orally is limited vocabulary and the ideas they want to express. Therefore, it is hoped that implementing the Debate Clinic method assisted by ChatGPT in teaching English, can improve the English speaking skills of students in the third semester of the STAI DDI Pinrang Islamic religious education study program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Importance of English Oral Proficiency

Language, especially oral communication allows humans not only to convey information but also arguments, requires vocabulary and logic so that communication messages can be conveyed well (Pratiwi, 2021). Oral communication is a productive skill that cannot be separated from listening skills. When we speak we produce information that can be understood by other people because the purpose of communication is to obtain feedback from the speaker and listener. This is known as public speaking. Public speaking skills, or the ability to express ideas effectively to an audience while capturing their attention, are considered a component of effective communication in the field of communication study. Public speaking is one of the skills that is very necessary in the era of the Industrial Revolution throughout the world. (Girsang, 2018).

Speaking is one of the most important skills to learn as it is the primary mode of communication throughout the world. However, it is a difficult skill for most people. This is caused by several factors such as the need for information, rarely practicing, low

self-confidence, and so on (Hamsia, 2018). These factors can be minimized with regular training, of course with good knowledge. Providing knowledge related to linguistics can start from the simplest things, for example learning how to differentiate sounds in English (Zaky Media, 2013).

The majority of English language learners are still trying to improve their English speaking skills (Ying et al., 2021). They are aware that speaking skills are an indispensable communication technique (Eshankulovna, 2021). In everyday life, students need to have good speaking skills because the success of the activities carried out is based on the way we build communication. Unfortunately, the facts show that students face many problems in improving their speaking skills because they are used to using their mother tongue in everyday life instead of using English (Nikmah, 2019). In the classroom, improving students' speaking skills is always a concern. In the rapidly developing 21st century, various innovative technologies are being introduced to teach speaking skills in the classroom. Technology is a vehicle for gaining access to this modern world (Yahya et al., 2019). Therefore, it is a tool that can be used to make changes and help the learning process of students in the classroom, including in this case improving speaking or verbal communication skills where communication skills are the main component of the language learning curriculum (Albogami & Algethami, 2022).

The importance of speaking skills has enormous benefits for students. To reach the stage of being fluent in a language, speakers of a language need to be specially trained and aware of their speaking skills. To be a knowledgeable communicator, one must be proficient in each of the four language skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but the ability to speak skillfully gives the speaker several different benefits (Nilufar Kadamovna, 2021). Speaking and writing are the most important communication tools in supporting human activities. Speaking skills are more widely used in everyday life and are seen as a natural productive tool in conveying messages, on the other hand, written language is seen as complicated because its rules are very complex. Therefore, most believe that oral communication skills are more important than other language skills (Alsaawi, 2019).

2. Debate Clinic Method

Debate is considered a potentially effective speaking pedagogical tool that can assist the learning process in a way that leads to language development (el Majidi et al., 2021). Debate can be a powerful tool for discussing controversial topics because it encourages critical thinking and inspires individuals to consider alternative points of view. However, debate can only help identify issues that need to be clarified to answer questions, but cannot help resolve the controversy itself (Fouad et al., 2021). Therefore, the debate method is effective and interesting to use in teaching English speaking skills (Musfirah, 2019).

Several things need to be understood in a debate, namely motions, arguments, rebuttals and point of information. Rasyid & Namrullah (2021) explain that: (1) the motion is a topic that will be discussed in the debate by the affirmative team and the

opposition team. There must be a motion or topic for each debate. Motions are announced before the debate begins and once the topic or motion is given, both debating teams are given 10 to 30 minutes to prepare a series of arguments supported by evidence; (2) argumentation is a structured explanation regarding the reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the motion given; (3) rebuttal is a way for the opposing team to show a topic that is not relevant to the evidence provided by the speaker. The rebuttal is usually carried out by the opposing team when they determine the opponent's illogical ideas. Rebuttal is a feature of parliamentary debate, which allows members of opposing teams to voice questions and offer brief points during the debate. Rebuttals should not be offered to members of the same team.

3. Various Debate Styles

a. British Parliamentary Debate System (BPDS)

British Parliamentary Debate System can provide opportunities for students to be involved in discussions. Students can have courage and critical thinking and be willing to take responsibility for their role. Even though the role of students is considered more necessary, this does not mean that educators in the classroom do not follow the process because educators act as planners, companions, and directors in the learning process (Nur et al., 2021). According to (Wahyuni et al., 2020), there are three challenges in implementing BPDS, namely institutional, procedural, and intellectual challenges. Institutional challenges consist of the limited quantity of meetings and duration in the classroom. Procedural challenges are the very short duration of argument preparation for novice students and the inability of BPDS to cover the population of students in the class. Meanwhile, intellectual challenges are students' lack of general knowledge and poor speaking skills. Nanlohy (2020) found that two main things influence the critical thinking of the BP system, including "case (argument) making" and the "four-team mechanism" which summarizes the effect of creating a platform for critical engagement on global issues. Therefore, the BP mechanism can be implemented in the teaching and learning process, especially in the critical thinking aspect.

b. Asian Debate Parliamentary System (APDS)

The Asian Parliamentary Debate System, often abbreviated as APDS, is a style of debating model after the British Parliamentary Debate (BP) system. It is widely used in Asia, especially in university-level debating competitions. In the APDS, debates typically involve four teams: two government teams and two opposition teams. Each team consists of two speakers. The government teams argue in favor of a motion (proposition), while the opposition teams argue against it. There are several main characteristics of the Asian Debate Parliamentary System as follows:

- 1) There are two teams, each consisting of three speakers;
- 2) Each team is assigned one side (Affirmative, which supports a topic, and Opposition, which opposes it);
- 3) A topic is assigned to each debate;
- 4) Teams are given thirty minutes to prepare arguments;
- 5) Each speaker speaks within a certain period;

6) Speakers alternate between teams, from the first Affirmative to the third Opposition.

4. Definition and Benefits of ChatGPT

Artificial Intelligence is no longer a fictional topic read about in novels or seen in films. Artificial intelligence has been making slow and gradual inroads in medical education and clinical management. Recently, chatbots, especially ChatGPT, were developed and trained, using large amounts of textual data from the internet. This has had a significant impact on the approach to medical science. Despite the benefits of this new technology, much caution is required in its use (Khan et al., 2023). Additionally, the Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer (ChatGPT) is a natural language processing model with 175 billion parameters that can generate conversational-style responses to user input (Gilson et al., 2023).

ChatGPT is a chatbot with conversational artificial intelligence developed by OpenAI. As one of the most advanced artificial intelligence applications, ChatGPT has attracted much public attention worldwide (Tlili et al., 2023). Due to the generative language modeling tool launched by OpenAI on November 30, 2022, it allows the public to communicate with machines on a variety of topics. In January 2023, ChatGPT reached more than 100 million users, making it the fastest-growing consumer app to date. It has recently been shown to pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) (Eysenbach, 2023). ChatGPT was tested using a typical clinical toxicology case of acute organophosphate poisoning and successfully answered all questions related to it (Abdel-Messih & Kamel Boulos, 2023).

On the other hand, ChatGPT has the potential to offer a personalized and effective learning experience by providing tailored feedback and explanations to learners, as well as creating realistic virtual simulations for hands-on learning. However, it is also important to consider the limitations of the technology. ChatGPT and other generative AI systems are only as good as their training data and can perpetuate bias or even generate and spread misinformation. Additionally, the use of generative AI in education raises ethical issues such as the potential for unethical or dishonest use by students and the potential for human unemployment to be made redundant by the technology (Qadir, 2022). Thus, in using AI technology, teacher assistance is needed so that it can be directed toward positive things that can support the learning process in the classroom.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a true-experimental study design (the pretest–posttest control group design). A true-experimental study design requires at least two groups, each formed by random assignment. Both groups were given a pretest, each group received a different treatment, and both groups were retested (posttest) at the end of the study. Posttest scores were compared to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. The pretest-posttest group control design can also be expanded to include

several treatment groups (Gay et al., 2012). The population involved in this study was third-semester students of Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI DDI) Pinrang, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The total population is 45 students and the study sample is 29 students. The study sample was determined using the total sampling technique. The experimental class is semester 1 with a sample size of 14 students and the control class is semester 3 with a sample size of 15 students. Before conducting the study, the researcher conducted pre-observations to determine the communication skills of STAI DDI Pinrang Islamic religious education study program students. During pre-observation, the researcher tested their communication skills in English. After obtaining data that students' communication skills were still relatively low, the researcher gave them a questionnaire to find out the reasons why their communication skills were low. The data obtained from pre-observation results then becomes a reference for the researcher in conducting study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Analysis of students' pre-test scores on communication skills in English

Table 1. Frequency and Average Pre-test Scores of Experimental Class Students

Score Range	Predicate	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	A	Very Good	0	0%
65-79	B	Good	0	0%
50-64	C	Fair	0	0%
40-50	D	Poor	1	7.14%
<40	E	Very Poor	13	92.86%

The frequency distribution shows that the majority of students in the experimental class had low pre-test scores, with the majority (92.86%) falling into the "E (Very Poor)" category. This indicates that most students need significant assistance in improving their communication skills in English. However, there was one student who received the title "D (Poor)", indicating that there was variation in the level of ability between students. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the majority of students in the experimental class had low pre-test scores, indicating an urgent need for intervention or treatment aimed at improving their communication skills in English. With the majority of students receiving an "E (Very Poor)" rating, appropriate treatment steps must be taken to help them achieve the desired level of competency.

Table 2. Frequency and Average Pre-test Scores of Control Class Students

Score Range	Predicate	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	A	Very Good	0	0%
65-79	B	Good	0	0%
50-64	C	Fair	0	0%

40-50	D	Poor	0	0%
<40	E	Very Poor	14	100%

The frequency distribution shows that all students in the control class got low pre-test scores, with all students (100%) falling into the “E (Very Poor)” category. This shows that all students need significant help in improving their communication skills in English. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the pre-test scores of students in the control class showed a very low level of ability before the treatment. With all students receiving an “E (Very Poor)” designation, appropriate treatment steps must be taken to help them achieve the desired level of competency. Therefore, further treatment needs to be designed to help improve their English communication skills significantly.

2. Data Normality Test on Students’ English Communication Ability

Table 3. Data Normality Test on Students’ English Communication Ability

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest Experiment	.482	14	.000	.373	14	.000
Pretest Control	.534	14	.000	.297	14	.000

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test show that the two groups of experimental and control pre-test data are not normally distributed because the significance value (Sig.) of both tests is less than the alpha value that is generally used (0.05). This indicates that the distribution of pre-test data in the two groups does not follow a normal distribution pattern. Therefore, to test the significance value of students’ English language skills after being given treatment, the researcher will use non-parametric data tests.

3. Frequency and Average Post-test Scores of Experimental Class Students

Table 4. Frequency and Average Post-test Scores for Experimental Class Students

Score Range	Predicate	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	A	Very Good	2	14.29%
65-79	B	Good	1	7.14%
50-64	C	Fair	2	14.29%
40-50	D	Poor	2	14.29%
<40	E	Very Poor	7	50%

Frequency distribution shows how students’ post-test scores are distributed into various predicate categories. Most of the students (50%) received the predicate “E

(Very Poor)”, which indicates that the majority of them still have very low English communication skills after the intervention or treatment. This highlights the need for more effective treatments in improving their English communication skills. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the post-test results show variations in the students’ English communication skills in the experimental class. However, the majority of students still have a very low level of ability. Therefore, more effective treatments should be taken to help them achieve the desired level of competency in English.

Table 5. Frequency and Average Post-test Scores for Control Class Students

Score Range	Predicate	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
80-100	A	Very Good	0	0%
65-79	B	Good	0	0%
50-64	C	Fair	0	0%
40-50	D	Poor	0	0%
<40	E	Very Poor	15	100%

The frequency distribution shows that all students in the control class had low post-test scores, with all students (100%) falling into the “E (Very Poor)” category. This shows that all students still have low English communication skills after the treatment. The average post-test score does not need to be calculated because all students have the same score. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the treatment given to students in the control class has not been able to produce a significant increase in their English communication skills. With all students receiving an “E (Very Poor)” designation, appropriate treatment steps must be taken to help them achieve the desired level of competency. Therefore, further treatment needs to be designed to help improve their English communication skills.

4. Analysis results of the significance of students’ ability to communicate in English using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test using the SPSS 26.00 application

Table 6. Non-Parametric Mann-Whitney Test

Test Statistics	
	Post_Test
Mann-Whitney U	6.500
Wilcoxon W	111.500
Z	-4.446
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.000 ^b

The very small significance value (Asymp. Sig. and Exact Sig.) (0.000) indicates that the results of the statistical test are very statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, there is a significant difference between the two groups of post-test data in students’ English communication skills. Therefore, the speaking skills of students who are taught using the debate clinic method assisted by ChatGPT can improve their English-speaking skills.

The study findings, which record a very small significance value (0.000), indicate that the utilization of the debate clinic method assisted by ChatGPT has a significant impact on students' English-speaking abilities. This aligns with the conclusion drawn from the study (Lumbangaol & Mazali, 2020), which found that the use of debate methods in the classroom significantly influences students' speaking skills. Thus, previous study findings support these results.

The study conducted by (Gusti Yanti & Amalia, 2018) about the implementation of the lesson study model, also demonstrates that the structured and planned development of students' debate skills through instructional methods can yield positive outcomes. Similarly, in 2016, Nurhidayat found that the use of the British Parliamentary debate style effectively enhances students' speaking abilities. Furthermore, the studies by (Hetharie et al., 2020) and (Cathriona Maharia, 2020), which highlight the benefits of debate clubs and students' perceptions of debates, also reflect the importance of debate methods in improving speaking skills. These collective findings consistently indicate that debate methods, whether in the form of clinics, lesson study-based learning, or debate clubs, can enhance students' speaking abilities.

Therefore, previous study provides support for the findings of the current study, which combines debate methods with modern technology such as ChatGPT to enhance the effectiveness of English-speaking instruction for students. The difference in the forthcoming study, namely the utilization of modern technology as instructional media, contributes additional insights to the development of more innovative and effective teaching methods.

CONCLUSION

The study aims to determine the effectiveness of implementing the ChatGPT-assisted debate clinic approach to enhance students' oral proficiency in English. The statistical test results show that the significance values (Asymp. Sig. and Exact Sig.) are very small (0.000), indicating high statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). This means that there is a significant difference between the two groups of post-test data in students' English communication skills. The study shows that the ChatGPT-assisted debate clinic method significantly enhance students' English oral proficiency. English instructors should consider adding similar debate-focused methods to their curriculum to improve oral proficiency. Debate clinics promote active language use, critical thinking, and structured argumentation, enhancing fluency and confidence. Additionally, using ChatGPT as a virtual debate partner demonstrates the benefits of integrating technology into language learning. AI tools like ChatGPT can create interactive, personalized learning experiences for students. The study was limited by a small or homogeneous sample size, which could affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research should include a larger and more diverse group of students to validate the results across different contexts. In addition to enhancing oral proficiency, the method also promotes

critical thinking, argumentation skills, and digital literacy, all of which are important across different academic and professional areas.

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