



**Exploring Teachers' Perspectives on The Use of Debates to Enhance the Speaking Skills  
of Lower Secondary ESL Learners**

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## APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Exploring Teachers’ Perspectives on The Use of Debates to Enhance the Speaking Skills of Lower Secondary ESL Learners” prepared and submitted by Christianne Abilekha A/P Chandra Sekaran in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Education is hereby accepted.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates teachers' opinions regarding the effectiveness of debates as an instructional tool for lower secondary English as a second language (ESL) students. This research uses a qualitative methodology to collect data from eight ESL teachers in a variety of schools in order to better understand their perspectives on the advantages and disadvantages of including debates in the curriculum. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. The results indicate that debates foster critical thinking, engaged participation, and increased confidence in students; nevertheless, teachers have also identified challenges such as disparities in language proficiency and problems with classroom organization. The study concludes with ways for incorporating debates into ESL teaching approaches at the lower secondary level by offering suggestions for best practices and solutions to these problems based on what was shared by the interviewed teachers.

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

In Malaysia, English is a required language as it is so frequently utilised in a variety of daily activities such as business, education, and administration. English is recognized as a significant component of the education system in Malaysia because it is one of the very few nations in the world where it is officially used as a second language (Thirusanku & Yunus, 2012 as cited in Aziz & Kashinathan, 2021). Malaysian learners are therefore recognized as English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Malaysian children are exposed to the English language from a young age, typically starting in preschool around the ages of 5-6. This instruction continues as a mandatory component of the national curriculum throughout primary school (ages 6-12), secondary school (ages 13-17), and into post-secondary and tertiary education (18 and beyond) (Azman, 2016). In summary, the typical duration of English language education for an average Malaysian is approximately 11 years yet despite dedicating considerable time to learning the English language, many Malaysians still struggle to fully comprehend or speak the language. This raises questions about the effectiveness of the education they receive in regards to developing speaking skills.

When learning a new language, the learners are exposed to four different skills which include listening, speaking, writing, and reading. One cannot understate how crucial good speaking abilities are for ESL learners. The development of effective speaking skills is essential for academic performance and future professional opportunities, especially in the setting of lower secondary students. While proficiency in all four language skills is crucial, this research will primarily emphasize the development of spoken English. Speaking allows a learner to communicate their feelings, share their knowledge and information as well as practice the language. Hence, it is crucial for teachers to implement various methods of teaching to promote

students' speaking skills. With the recent changes in the Malaysian education system, there is an emphasis on the English-speaking skills and as such various methods should be employed by teachers to help students improve their speaking skills. Accordingly, this study will be conducted to investigate if the use of debates in the classroom can promote speaking skills of ESL learners.

Debates have drawn attention as a teaching method because of their ability to help ESL students develop their critical thinking, argumentative skills, and language proficiency (el-Majidi et al., 2021). Debates give ESL students an organized setting for engaging in active discussions and expressing their points of view clearly, which helps them improve their language skills and speaking ability.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Speaking English confidently and fluently creates a lot of chances in professional as well as educational settings (Kondo & Ratuwongo, 2023). Nonetheless, a lot of students struggle with speaking English, which can impede their ability to communicate and enhance their language skills in general. Even after Malaysian ESL learners are required to spend a significant amount of time in the English language during their official education—roughly 14–15 years—many still struggle with understanding and speaking the language. The reason why many students still struggle to speak in English is due to several reasons such as the thought that English is not really necessary as they can still get a job without mastering English (Nindita, 2020). In another study, it was noted that students still struggles to speak English because speaking and listening comprehension were not given as much attention in English classes in Malaysia as reading and writing essays (Kaur, 2006 as cited in Nadesan & Shah, 2020). Therefore, this disparity calls into question the effectiveness of Malaysians' education system in developing fluent English language abilities. Furthermore, the findings of past



research imply that teachers are still implementing conventional teaching strategies, such as textbook-based education. The teachers feel obligated to go back to more teacher-centered classroom practices because of the pupils' low skill level. The importance of improving speaking abilities among ESL students has been recognised in the literature, as has the potential of debate as a teaching method to advance speaking competency (el-Majidi et al., 2021).

However, the current state of the issue reveals certain inadequacies. While several studies have looked into the use of debates in ESL classroom instruction, in-depth research that focuses primarily on lower secondary pupils is lacking. This calls for a more targeted investigation into how debates can be tailored to cater to their specific needs and challenges.

This proposed study aims to bridge this gap by performing a study that focuses primarily on ESL students in lower secondary. Given their distinct developmental and linguistic traits, it will offer a nuanced analysis of the effectiveness of debates as a specialized teaching strategy to improve students' speaking abilities. By doing this, the study aims to close a gap in the literature and provide useful insight on how to tailor debate-based language instruction to meet the speaking needs of lower secondary ESL students.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The research questions for this study are as below:

1. How effective are debates in enhancing the speaking skills of lower secondary ESL learners?
2. Are debates suitable for all lower secondary ESL learners?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The present study aims:

1. To determine whether debates have been successfully used to enhance lower secondary ESL learners' speaking performance.

2. To identify the suitability of debates for lower secondary ESL learners.

### **1.5 The Significance of The Study**

This study is important in a number of ways related to the educational environment. First, the study addresses the urgent need for education systems to improve the effectiveness of ESL curricula in secondary schools in Malaysia. Through examining the possible influence of debates on speaking abilities, the research can offer significant perspectives that could influence curriculum modifications and policy decisions to promote more efficient methods of language acquisition.

The results of the study have significant implications for educators, who are essential players in the process of learning. The use of debate techniques in language education provides teachers with innovative tools to help students become more proficient speakers and creates opportunities for professional growth. Teachers will have a better understanding of how to design dynamic, interesting classrooms that meet the changing needs of English as a Second Language students. Furthermore, the study is a useful tool for aspiring teachers because it provides insights into cutting-edge instruction strategies and promotes a research-oriented mindset. Future educators will be better equipped to handle language learning difficulties when they join the field by knowing how effective debates are at fostering speaking abilities.

Measurable gains in communication skills for students, who will be the main beneficiaries can be expected. Improved speaking abilities provide students with a vital life skill that is necessary for future personal and professional endeavors, in addition to being critical for academic success. The study raises students' self-esteem and gets them ready for more widespread social interaction by encouraging effective communication.

The study's social implications are significant because younger generations with excellent command of the English language make up a workforce that is more skilled and competitive worldwide. Enhanced language competency additionally promotes cross-cultural

communication and comprehension, cultivating a more comprehensive and linked community. The advantages to society that come with students becoming well-rounded communicators go beyond their academic performance and include increased social cohesiveness and cross-border cooperation.

Lastly, the study benefits language education researchers by adding to the expanding corpus of information on successful language learning techniques. Beyond the Malaysian context, the research findings can impact global discussions on language instruction and guide future studies and talks on best practices in language education. In summary, by promoting efficient language learning and communication skills among ESL learners in Malaysian lower secondary schools, this study has the potential to have an impact on education systems, educators, students, society, future educators, and researchers.

## **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

### ***1.6.1 Speaking***

According to Riyadini (2021), among the macrolanguage abilities there are speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Speaking allows people to engage in meaningful conversation. Furthermore, speaking is a useful talent that a speaker employs to communicate meaning to his audience. Likewise, speaking or verbal communication involves two or more persons acting as listeners, and the speakers must respond quickly to what they hear and add to the conversation (Riyadini, 2021). Using both verbal and nonverbal symbols to create and communicate meaning in a variety of contexts is another definition of speaking (Riyadini, 2021). This implies that speakers of English need to be able to communicate in a variety of contexts and genres.

Speaking is the process of expressing ideas and feelings, thinking back on experiences, and imparting knowledge orally (Ratnaningsih et al., 2019). Ratnaningsih et al. (2019), also said that speaking requires social skills, discussion, and the capacity for thought processes, all of which make it a complex process. Conversely, speaking is "to talk to somebody about

something, to have conversation with somebody," in Hornby's words (Ratnaningsih et al., 2019). Speaking, then, is defined as the act of talking to someone else about something or having a conversation with someone else.

Speaking is a two-way oral communication process that requires both receptive comprehension skills and productive speaking abilities between the speaker and the listener (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020; Oktaviani, n.d., as cited in Wahyuni & Utami, 2021). Speaking generally can be understood as using spoken language to convey one's objectives (ideas, thoughts, and hearts) to other people (Mandasari & Aminatun, 2020 as cited in Wahyuni & Utami, 2021).

Speaking is an interactive method of creating meaning that include using spoken language to convey one's ideas and feelings as well as to produce, receive, and process information (Triyoga et al., 2022). The most important part of learning a new language for most people is becoming proficient speakers (Triyoga et al., 2022).

### 1.6.2 Speaking Skills

As stated by Utami and Noviana (2021), speaking skills is the ability to articulate a thought or thoughts vocally in front of a large group of people. In order to communicate, speaking skills also consist of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

### 1.6.3 Debates

According to Iman (2017), a debate is a process in which two opposing parties exchange ideas and opinions and attempt to defend each one.

Furthermore, Affendi and Wahyudi (2023), stated that a debate is an activity where participants craft well-organized arguments in an attempt to convince one another of their points of view.

In another study, debate was defined as a type of argument or discussion on a certain topic that often consists of two or more speakers expressing opposing points of view (Hadiningrum, 2020). Speakers in a dispute generate meaningful statements to convey their points of view, and some of these expressions may have speech functions (Hadiningrum, 2020).

Lastly, another researcher, namely Chen (2020), stated that debates is when two people discuss something or a problem with each other for a specific purpose, pointing out contradictions, and eventually reaching an agreement and shared understanding. Debate is an interactive, confrontational kind of verbal communication that is founded on the idea of speculation where only one person speaks at a time while two or more people are conversing (Chen, 2020). There is a sophisticated turn-taking system and no set exchange process; in turn-taking, interruptions and overlaps are frequent (Chen, 2020).

#### 1.6.4 English as a Second Language (ESL)

The term "English as a Second Language" (ESL) describes how the language is tied to all that is left of the globe and is perceived as a second language by those who were colonized by the British (Anand & Srinivas, 2022).

The term "English as a Second Language" (ESL) also refers to the use of the English language by non-native speakers in contexts where English is the primary language (Lanfeng & Anokye, 2018). That setting may be a nation where English is widely spoken, like Australia and the United States; or one where English is an official language like India and Nigeria (Lanfeng & Anokye, 2018).

### **1.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter is an overview of the issue that is going to be researched upon. Furthermore, this part also covers what this study will encompass and how it will have

an impact with its findings. The definition of key terms are also provided to make it easier to understand the technical jargons used. In the following chapter, a more in depth review of past studies will be conducted to further understand why this research is necessary.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the theoretical framework adapted to conduct this research will be explained. Furthermore, several studies will be reviewed in this chapter in order to serve as a guideline or to improve this research. The primary focus of this study would be on the effectiveness of debates to improve students speaking skills. Hence, this chapter will look into the challenges faced by ESL learners in learning speaking skills, the current speaking fluency of Malaysian students, the importance of improving students speaking skills, and the usage of debates in improving students speaking skills.

### **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory is a useful theoretical framework for analyzing speaking abilities among ESL (English as a Second Language) learners via the prism of debates. Lev Vygotsky's paradigm emphasizes the role that social interaction and cultural context have in the cognitive development (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018). This theory's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) hypothesis is especially pertinent since it indicates that ESL students might gain from participating in discussions because it distinguishes between autonomous and supported learning (Pathan et al., 2018). Debates act as a scaffold, guiding students to improve their speaking skills under the watchful eyes of more experienced classmates or teachers. Specifically, he defined ZPD as the difference between an individual's actual development level as assessed by autonomous problem solving and their potential development level as assessed by working with more experienced peers or under the supervision of an adult (Vygotsky, 1978 as cited in Pathan et al., 2018). Hence, debates act as a scaffold, enabling students to improve their speaking skills under the guidance of the more knowledgeable other, in this case more experienced classmates or teachers.

Moreover, Vygotsky's theory's emphasis on social interaction is consistent with the fundamental characteristics of debates. With the help of these exercises, ESL learners can have meaningful conversations in which they can co-construct knowledge and negotiate meanings. In Vygotsky's framework, language is seen as a tool for thought (Hemalatha & Pradesh, 2019). In debates, ESL learners actively use language to convey ideas, defend positions, and critically analyze arguments, all of which support their cognitive development.

Vygotsky's theory takes the cultural context into account and acknowledges the impact of cultural diversity on learning (Hemalatha & Pradesh, 2019). ESL students from a variety of cultural backgrounds can participate in discussions that honor and take into account their differing points of view. Vygotsky's idea of collaborative learning (Umer & Gul, 2019) is clearly demonstrated in debates, particularly when they are held in groups . Through collaborative interaction ESL learners may exchange knowledge, share language skills, and work together to improve their speaking talents (Pathan et al., 2018).

Vygotsky's theory's central idea of cognitive development applies to ESL students engaging in debates. As cognitive apprentices, instructors or more experienced peers can provide advice and feedback to further aid in the learners' progress. In addition, while using Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural Theory to analyze speaking abilities in debates, it is imperative to take into account the cultural-historical background of ESL learners, including their past experiences and cultural impacts on communication patterns. Essentially, this theoretical framework offers a comprehensive viewpoint on the ways in which social interactions, cultural background, and cooperative learning support the growth of speaking abilities in ESL students participating in debates.

### **2.3 Low English Language Proficiency Among Malaysians**



One of the language abilities that is most in need of improvement and is frequently brought up by educators and legislators is speaking (Tunku et al., 2017 as cited in Azlan et al., 2019). Although the majority of students passed the English exam, not all of them are proficient in the language (Azlan et al., 2019). It is rather questionable because despite the fact that English has been taught since preschool, students' competency levels, particularly in speaking the language, are still poor. One of the main issues with students' poor English language proficiency is that the large percentage of them who still struggle to speak the language face challenges when it comes to continuing their education beyond high school or finding a respectable job after graduation, which prevents them from taking advantage of the best opportunities available (Kamsin & Mohamad, 2020).

A study by Rusli et al. (2018) investigated the low English speaking proficiency among Malaysian undergraduate students, identifying factors such as inadequate teaching management, psychological factors, and influences from teachers and peers. The results showed that students thought textbook speaking activities were insufficient, which suggests that the materials for speaking lessons were inadequate. The study also found that a lack of emphasis on speaking occurred both within and outside of the classroom as a result of teachers' restricted ability to modify textbooks or curricula. The speaking lessons, according to the students, were too long and mostly consisted of reading comprehension and essay writing exercises. Students used techniques including reading books written in English, viewing movies, and listening to music without subtitles to improve their speaking abilities. The study emphasized how little speaking is taught in language classes and suggested using technology, a variety of teaching methods, and interactive exercises. To increase pupils' English language ability, the use of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and exposure to real-world situations was stressed (Rusli et al., 2018).

In another study that was conducted by Nesaratnam et al. (2020), the lack of English proficiency was a contributing factor to the high unemployment rate among graduates. The study interviewed employers and found out that one key factor of the high unemployment rate is the insufficient proficiency in communicating in English (Nesaratnam et al., 2020).

The findings of the above mentioned studies highlight that Malaysian students low English proficiency is indeed a concern. The findings could serve as an important guideline in improving Malaysian students' English proficiency from an early age, ensuring that they are proficient enough when they leave highschool. Therefore, there is a need for an effective programme in enhancing students proficiency level in English language by employing a variety of speaking activities.

#### **2.4 Challenges faced by ESL Learners in Learning Speaking Skills**

English as a Second Language (ESL) students face a slew of difficulties in honing their speaking skills, which are widely regarded as the most difficult to master in this demographic (Hamad, 2013 as cited in Kaur, 2022). The barriers to progress in speaking proficiency are varied and complex, encompassing psychological factors as well as instructional challenges. One major impediment is ESL learners' widespread lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes (Husnawati, 2017). This fear, which is often caused by low self-esteem, manifests as nervousness, impeding natural and confident expression of thoughts. As a result, the anxiety associated with the fear of making mistakes causes hesitancy and reluctance to participate in English conversations (Nijat et al., 2019 as cited in Kaur, 2022).

Despite accepting the importance of speaking skills and expressing an interest in learning, ESL learners frequently face barriers related to anxiety and social factors (Horwitz et al., 1986, as cited in Yahaya et al., 2021). Fear of making mistakes, being the center of attention, and comparing oneself to more accomplished peers all contribute to learners' anxiety

in speaking situations. Furthermore, learning-related issues such as interference of the first language (L1) and over-reliance on teachers for error correction present additional challenges (Premela & Oh, 2020; Bartran & Walton, 1994 as cited in Yahaya et al., 2021).

According to Gard and Gautham (2015, as cited in Khan and Hasnahana, 2019), the psychological aspects of language learning play an important role in speaking proficiency, with fear of making mistakes, shyness, or nervousness impeding active participation. A study conducted by Kaur (2022) supports the preceding point; data collected from 40 students and four teachers at a Malaysian school revealed that 18 of them cited fear of making mistakes as one of the biggest factors affecting English speaking skills, while 15 cited low confidence and another 8 cited anxiety.

Classroom Dynamics, particularly in larger class settings, pose challenges for ESL learners, limiting individual attention and active participation (Wonglekha, 2010 as cited in Khan & Hasnahana, 2019). Dominating participants or a reluctance to communicate in English, especially among groups sharing the same native language, further complicate the learning process (Ur, 1996 as cited in Khan & Hasnahana, 2019).

Motivation emerges as a vital factor influencing speaking skill development, with challenges in maintaining motivation affecting learners' willingness to speak accurately. Teachers play a crucial role in fostering a supportive and motivating environment, encouraging learners to overcome challenges and actively engage in speaking activities (Thyab, 2016).

Effective Pedagogical Approaches involve a variety of activities, such as role-plays, group discussions, debates, and storytelling, to enhance ESL learners' speaking skills; the effectiveness of these activities, however, depends on the pedagogical approach and strategies employed by instructors to address the unique challenges faced by non-native English speakers (Maximchuk, 2018).

In short, these past studies highlights that the difficulties that English as a Second Language (ESL) learners face in developing their speaking skills are multifaceted and deeply rooted in psychological, social, and instructional factors. ESL learners' widespread lack of confidence and fear of making mistakes, which often stems from low self-esteem, significantly impedes their natural expression of thoughts and active participation in English conversations. Anxiety related to the fear of making mistakes, combined with social factors such as the fear of being the center of attention or comparing oneself to more proficient peers, adds to the complexities of ESL learners' speaking difficulties. Learning difficulties, such as interference in the first language (L1) and an over-reliance on teachers for error correction, add another layer of complexity. Classroom dynamics are important to consider, especially in larger settings, because they limit individual attention and active participation. Overcoming these obstacles necessitates a comprehensive approach that addresses both psychological and instructional aspects while also fostering a supportive environment for language development.

## **2.5 Importance of Improving English Speaking Skills**

Enhancing one's speaking abilities is crucial for anyone seeking language proficiency, particularly in the English language (Huyen & Lan, 2021). As previously mentioned, in the English language, among the four skills, acquiring the speaking skill is known to be one of the most difficult skills. However, as the English language has emerged as the de facto worldwide language in today's globalized world, with a strong focus on proficient speaking, there is a need to improve students' speaking skills. This section reviews recent researches that have been done on the importance of improving students' speaking skills.

Speaking proficiency is crucial in English lessons, as demonstrated by Rao's (2019) research, which covers basic language skills, the importance of speaking, instructional requirements, and tactical methods for EFL/ESL students to develop their speaking skills.

Speaking has been identified as the most important ability in learning a new language, since the study emphasizes the need of successful communication on a worldwide scale. Rao (2019) highlights the importance of communication skills in today's workforce, emphasizing their superiority over technology. The study tackles the undervaluation of oral communication abilities in contemporary classrooms, highlighting the difficulties pupils encounter while constructing independent sentences. The study also emphasized how important speaking skills are for success in the workplace, in debates, in presentations, and in academic settings. Ultimately, speaking fluency is recognized as a key factor for increased job prospects, with oral communication proficiency now a standard criterion in interviews (Rao, 2019).

In another research conducted by Dewi et al. (2017), the study emphasized how important it is for foreign language learners to acquire and become better at speaking English, highlighting the language's importance in global communication and employability. It discussed the difficulties experienced by students in Asian nations, promotes workable solutions to these problems, and draws attention to how tourism affects students' motivation to learn English in some parts of Indonesia. The study, which criticized conventional teaching techniques, suggested communicative games as a way to improve students' speaking abilities while highlighting the need of motivation and involvement. It presented speaking as a complex ability that is essential for social, professional, and commercial contexts (Dewi et al., 2017). In the end, the study promotes the continuation and expansion of methods for developing language competency with an emphasis on improving English speaking ability.

The above past studies highlight the importance of developing English speaking skills and is further supported by a research conducted by Prayudha and Pradana (2023), where they emphasized the significance of enhancing one's English speaking abilities. The research underscores how important English is for efficient communication and how widely spoken it is over the world. It talks about the difficulties pupils have when learning the language and

emphasizes how important it is to speak English fluently in order to communicate effectively in a global setting. According to the research, mastering English is essential for interacting with the real world—that is, social media, ads, and day-to-day activities—and goes beyond academic requirements (Prayudha & Pradana, 2023). It also emphasizes how important it is for English teachers to support their pupils in overcoming obstacles, gaining confidence, and honing their conversational abilities. The study concluded by highlighting how important it is to maximize English proficiency for intercultural communication in the twenty-first century.

The collective findings of the mentioned studies underscore the paramount importance of enhancing English speaking skills for language proficiency and success in various contexts. According to one study, speaking fluency is crucial for learning a new language, especially in the globalized workforce where communication skills are more important than technical aptitude. The study by Dewi et al. (2017), emphasizes the value of English speaking skills even further, emphasizing their relevance in employability and worldwide communication. Furthermore, Prayudha and Pradana's (2023), research supports these viewpoints by emphasizing how widely used English is and how important it is in interactions outside of the classroom. When taken as a whole, these studies highlight the multifaceted advantages of becoming proficient in speaking English, from enhanced employment opportunities to efficient global interaction, establishing it as an essential skill for the twenty-first century.

## **2.6 The Use of Debates in Improving Students' Speaking Skills**

Debates have been used in past studies to study its effectiveness in improving students speaking skills. In a study conducted by Afri et al. (2019), the effectiveness of debating strategies in enhancing students' speaking skills was investigated. Two cycles of classroom action research were used in the study, which involved Politeknik students in their third semester. The stages of the research were planning, action, observation, and reflection. The

observations made of the students indicated common problems, including lack in vocabulary and a fear of speaking up for fear of being judged (Afri et al., 2019). The researchers tracked the pupils' development using observations, interviews, and speaking evaluations. With 71% passing in the first cycle and a significant increase to 92% passing in the second, the findings showed a noticeable improvement from the first to the second cycle. This study demonstrates the benefits of using debate strategies in English language instruction and how well they work to help students become proficient and confident speakers (Afri et al., 2019).

Another similar research was carried out with the purpose of determining the impact of debate techniques on tenth grade students' English-speaking proficiency through project-based learning. Nurjannah and Sudarwinoto (2020), conducted an experimental study by administering a pre-test, applying the treatments and administering a post-test. Cluster random sampling was employed in the study, which involved two groups of 24 students each. The experimental group, which used debate motions in project-based learning, scored much higher on English speaking exams than the control group. This difference was observed by the researchers through the administration of pre-tests, treatments, and post-tests. A mean acquired score of 7.25 for the experimental class and 3.96 for the control class was found by statistical analysis using SPSS, demonstrating the effectiveness of debate-based project learning in improving students' English speaking abilities. The study came to the conclusion that project-based learning with discussions is a useful substitute strategy for educators looking to help their students become more fluent in English speakers.

An additional example that can be drawn from is the study by Amiri et al. (2017), in which they conducted a case study on a single form 1 student. Similarly their study sought to explain how debating activities are used to teach English to secondary students in Malaysia, which can improve the students' speaking abilities. The study discovered that engaging in debating activities improved participants' ability to work together, increased participants'

understanding speakers' roles, and provided participants with guidance through prepared texts (Amiri et al., 2017). However, this study had a serious drawback in terms of number of participants.

Taken as a whole, these studies confirm that teaching debate strategies to students is a useful way to help them become more proficient speakers of English. The favorable results seen in various contexts and approaches offer a strong basis for teachers and curriculum designers to think about using debate tactics as an important tool in language learning pedagogy. However, while these studies do in fact focus on debate as a technique to improve speaking skills, the context in which they focus on is different. Many of these studies focus on English for Foreign Language (EFL). Furthermore, they tend to use subjects who are more developed such as upper secondary students, university students or even postgraduates. Hence, there is a gap in research when it comes to the impact that debate has on lower secondary students.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Based on these past studies, there have been quite a few researches conducted on improving students' speaking skills using various methods including debates. While it has been proven that debates have a positive impact on students, all the above mentioned studies focused on university and upper secondary students. Besides that, the context in which debates were used are in foreign language context and not second language. Therefore through this study the effectiveness of debates in improving lower secondary students' speaking skills will be analysed thoroughly.



## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to explore teachers' perspectives on the use of debates to enhance the speaking skills of lower secondary ESL learners. Hence, this chapter will go over detailed explanations on the samples and sampling techniques, the research design, the research instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

### **3.2 Samples & Sampling Techniques**

The samples for this study are eight secondary school English teachers who have a minimum of three years teaching experience either in the government or private sector. Furthermore, when referring to “teachers” here, it can mean tuition teachers or teachers who have taught in schools. Furthermore, the teachers who were interviewed were also teachers who have insight about debates. For example, they have participated in debates themselves, they have trained their school debate team, or they have been orators for debate competitions. Next, the teachers who were interviewed also consisted of teachers who have employed debates in their classrooms as this will give them a higher level of understanding in terms of what the students need, and whether debates have played a role in students' speaking skills.

The sampling technique used for this research is a semi-structured interview. This method includes a set list of questions with further probing from the interviewer. The questions will revolve around the teachers' knowledge on debate, the effectiveness as well as their opinions in regard to the implementation and its use in enhancing students' speaking skills. The interview session will be held via online platform or physically depending on the preference of the teachers. Furthermore, while there is a set number of questions, the order in which the questions are asked may vary depending on the interviewees and their answers.

### 3.3 Research Design

This study, as previously mentioned, will employ a semi-structured interview method using qualitative data collection. The qualitative data will be collected through interviews. Each teacher is interviewed, and once all interviews are done, the data will be transcribed, grouped into thematic groups and analysed accordingly to answer the research questions. The themes will be decided upon after all the data from the interview has been compiled and thoroughly analyzed.

| <b>Research Question</b>  | <b>Data Collection Method</b> | <b>Data Analysis Method</b>                        |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| How effective are debates in enhancing the speaking skills of lower secondary ESL learners? | Semi-structured interview     | The data will be analysed using thematic analysis. |
| Are debates suitable for all lower secondary ESL learners?                                  |                               |  |

*Table 1: Overview of Research Design*

### 3.4 Research Instruments

A semi-structured interview will be used to collect the necessary and relevant data for this research. Semi-structured interviews is a combination of two methods (unstructured interview and structured interview methods) which make way for conversational, free-flowing parts along with certain pre-planned questions. This semi-structured interview is a way to gain insight on teachers' perspective towards the use of debates to enhance the speaking skills of lower secondary ESL learners in Malaysia as well as whether or not this method is suitable for

all students. The questions for the interview will be adapted from past studies conducted. The interview session will be recorded to allow the researcher to analyse all the answers from the participants and thematically analyse it. Furthermore, the recording will be in an audio format.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

In terms of data collection, one method was employed which is the semi-structured interviews. The method used will give insight and further details that will aid to answer the research questions and objectives. The data collection method is further elaborated below.

For the interview itself, , the researcher will set up a date convenient for both the teacher and the researcher. The researcher will focus on getting high-school teachers who have taught lower secondary to participate in the research. The researcher will provide the interviewees with available time slots to align the timetables as well as allow them to choose method they feel most comfortable with which is either through online interview or physical interviews. Once everything has been decided on, the researcher will set up and prepare the necessary details. For example, if it is a physical interview, the researcher will discuss with the interviewee the most suitable place for the interview to be done. In the case of online interviews, the researcher has to share with the interviewee the platform that will be used as well as the meeting codes. For this study, the platforms used were WhatsApp, Google Classroom, and Zoom.

The researcher will inform the interviewees that it will be an interview and they do not have to worry as it will mainly be centered around questions related to teachers' experience in using debates as well as their understanding of how to enhance students' speaking skills and whether debates are a suitable method for all students. The questions used for this interview is an adaptation from the interview questions used by Kassem (2018), in his research titled "Improving EFL Students' Speaking Proficiency and Motivation: A Hybrid Problem-Based

Approach.” To be specific, only a few questions will be used from the list of 10 questions from his study. The questions will be restructured to suit this study. The questions used are as below and the researcher will also use prompting when necessary and if the questions can lead to answer the objectives better; hence corresponding to the interview method being used.

### Interview Questions (Adaptation)

1. Good morning, Sir/Madam/Miss. Could you please share your name, the school that you’re currently teaching at, the subject you teach as well as how many years of teaching experience you have?
2. Sir/Madam/Miss, in your years of teaching English, what methods have you used when teaching your students speaking?
3. Sir/Madam/Miss, have you ever heard of debates? If yes, could you share a little about your knowledge on debates?
4. Have you ever used debates in your classrooms? If yes, was it helpful in testing students speaking proficiency?
5. Based on what you’ve shared on your knowledge of debates, do you think debates are a suitable tool to be used to help students enhance their speaking skills? (If no, What method do you think is most suitable to be used to improve students’ speaking skills?)
6. What do you think are the benefits and drawbacks of using debates in the classroom?
7. Lastly, do you think debates can help motivate students to speak English more confidently? If yes/no, please share why?

The data for the interview will be collected using recording tools such as recorders in phones (for voice recording). After the interview session, the data will then be transcribed for data analysis.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Since there is only one method of data collection, there will subsequently be only one data analysis method which will be through a thematic analysis. The thematic analysis will be conducted by the researcher manually. After transcribing all the interviews, the researcher will familiarize herself with the data collected and generate initial codes by noting down key ideas and patterns presented by the interviewees. These codes will be organized into themes and applied to analyze the dataset. Once the themes have been decided, the researcher will analyze the themes to identify patterns and relationships, interpreting the findings in relation to the research questions. The results will be written up, incorporating quotes from the data and ensuring rigor through documentation and validation. Quotations from the transcribed data will be included in the written report of the findings, which will ensure rigor through validation and documentation.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, several factors have been looked into, starting with the basis for this research which is covered in Chapter 1. It has been established that while there have been prior researches about using debates as a teaching techniques, their focus was more towards English as a Foreign Language context and even when they did focus on ESL, the subjects used were upper secondary students and university students, Hence, the results for these students can't be generalised and be said that it is applicable for lower secondary students thus establishing a gap in the past researches. Chapter 2 on the other hand, covered various past studies to show that while these past studies have been conducted, there is still a lack of research when it comes to speaking activities associated with lower secondary students. Lastly, Chapter 3 covers the methodology that this research will employ, going over specific details such as the instruments

used, the subjects of this study, the research design, how the data will be collected and analysed as well as the interview questions that will be used for the study.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will consist of a detailed analysis of the data that has been collected through the interviews with the secondary school teachers. All the interviews were conducted via physical or online platforms and recorded. Hence all the collected recordings were individually transcribed and will be used to analyze the data. The data, as previously mentioned, will be thematically analyzed after generating similar code words or responses collected from the interview. There is a total of eight teachers, four male and four female teachers who were interviewed. The reason only eight teachers were chosen is because this is an exploratory research. If the findings of this research prove to be positive, future researchers can then increase the sample size as well as choose a specific state or region that they want to focus on to generalize their findings. Furthermore, the interviewees are teachers or tutors with a minimum of 3 years teaching experience and teachers who have experience with debates.

### 4.2 Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

The data collected was analyzed and coded into four different themes based on the answers given by the teachers who were interviewed. Using the themes that were generated, further in-depth analysis by themes was conducted based on the responses from the interviews. The teachers who participated in the interviews have the qualifications as below, hence, their views and opinions do indeed help in this research.

|                  | <b>YEARS OF EXPERIENCE</b> | <b>QUALIFICATIONS</b>  |
|------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Teacher 1 (Male) | 5 years                    | Participated in debates<br>Organized debates in the<br>classroom |

|                    |          |   |
|--------------------|----------|---|
|                    |          | <p>Been a judge for debate competitions</p> <p>Has been an orator</p>   |
| Teacher 2 (Female) | 4 years  | <p>Has knowledge of debates</p> <p>Has implemented debates in the classroom</p>   |
| Teacher 3 (Male)   | 35 years | <p>Judge for national level debates for students and teachers</p> <p>Has knowledge of debates</p> <p>Has implemented debates in the classroom</p>                   |
| Teacher 4 (Male)   | 24 years | <p>Participated in debates</p> <p>Has been an orator</p> <p>Has been a judge for debate competitions</p> <p>Has trained debate competitors</p>                      |
| Teacher 5 (Female) | 15 years | <p>Been tutoring primary and secondary school students for years</p> <p>Has knowledge in debates</p> <p>Has applied debates in the past and even in the present</p> |
| Teacher 6 (Female) | 3 years  | <p>Was a school teacher</p>   |



|                    |          |  |
|--------------------|----------|--|
|                    |          | <p>Has experience in debates</p> <p>Teaches public speaking and oral presentation</p> <p>Has implemented debates in various classrooms</p>   |
| Teacher 7 (Female) | 5 years  | <p>A debator since highschool</p> <p>Been a tutor since 2019</p> <p>Taught students from lower to upper secondary</p> <p>Has applied debates in tuitions and even in school context</p>  |
| Teacher 8 (Male)   | 36 years | <p>Participated in debates</p> <p>Has been an orator</p> <p>Has been a judge for debate competitions</p> <p>Has trained debate competitors</p> <p>Was also a lecturer in a teacher training college</p> <p>Familiar with various pedagogical tools</p> |

*Table 2: Participants Information*

The teachers above were selected for this study due to their extensive experience and knowledge. Therefore, the following four themes that will be analyzed will include input from the teachers based on their experiences.

#### 4.2.1 Perceived Effectiveness of Debates

The first theme is the teachers' perceived effectiveness of debates on students. All the teachers who were interviewed not only had experience with debates but also have implemented debates in their own classrooms. Hence, their responses were based on what they noted during the implementation of debates in their classrooms. After analyzing the teachers' responses, it was evident the teachers unanimously agreed that debates did in fact enhance their students' speaking skills. As a matter of fact, the teachers noted that they had seen tremendous improvement in their students in various aspects such as enhanced speaking skills, development of critical thinking skills, and development of transferable skills.

Several teachers highlighted that debates have a positive impact on students speaking skills. They also mentioned that it had an impact on students' confidence as well as their ability to speak up what they are thinking. For example, teacher 1 noted that debates had been effective in improving their students' ability to express themselves orally. Their students also became more confident in speaking English and articulated their thoughts better during debates. Teacher 1 stressed the fact that debates provide students with controlled platforms to share their thoughts and opinions, which helps them become better speakers, especially when it comes to arranging their ideas and presenting arguments. Teacher 7 echoed this by saying, "Students become more confident in speaking English and articulate their thoughts better during debates." From this it can be concluded that there has been a discernible rise in students' self-confidence as they learnt how to effectively present arguments and reply to counterarguments by participating in debates.

Next, in terms of effectiveness of debates, the teachers not only mentioned its impact on students speaking skills but also pointed out that debates stimulated their students' critical thinking skills. This was because students who participated in debates had to conduct background research on the given topic, examine supporting data, evaluate arguments by the opposing team, and take into account many viewpoints, all of which improved their capacity for critical thinking and analytical reasoning. Teacher 2 pointed out that debating enhances students' critical thinking abilities in addition to their speaking abilities, demonstrating the multifaceted benefits. Debates promote agility in thought and communication by requiring participants to respond swiftly and persuasively to arguments made by the other side. Teacher 6 emphasized that debates are an exercise in "higher order thinking skills" (HOTS) and that students must do more than just express their opinions; they also need to evaluate, critique, and create well-organized arguments. Debate's dynamic quality forces students to engage deeply with the subject matter and think critically, which fosters both intellectual progress and better communication skills.

In a nutshell, debates are vitally important for helping students develop critical thinking abilities. Debates in class encourage students to perform extensive research, evaluate the information, and formulate rational arguments, as Teacher 5 and Teacher 7 pointed out. Debates also help students develop deeper comprehension and critical thinking skills by enabling them to assess the validity of arguments and provide evidence to back up their positions. Thus, incorporating debates into teaching techniques is a useful way to help students develop their critical thinking skills.

Lastly, the teachers also stressed that through debates their students managed to develop transferable skills. Transferable skills refer to abilities, qualities, or capacities that people pick up in one situation or environment and can use successfully in a variety of other contexts (Nagele & Stalder, 2016). Transferable skills are also defined as ".....a term in common use

within education" (Fallows & Steven, 2000 as cited in Muhamad, 2012). The idea is that abilities acquired in one context—education—can also be applied in another context—employment. This refers to "reverse transfer," which is taking what is necessary in a work environment and applying it back to education (Muhamad, 2012). Teachers agreed that debates help students build transferable skills in addition to improving their speaking abilities. Teacher 3 made the observation that students who do well in debates frequently develop into exceptional speakers in other spheres of life as well. They pointed out that a large number of previous pupils who excelled in debating are currently enjoying remarkable success in their occupations, indicating that the abilities they acquired in debates have played a major role in their accomplishments. These abilities, which are transferable to other life situations, include problem-solving, cooperation, and critical thinking. In a similar vein, Teacher 4 emphasized that debates help students develop their interpersonal, problem-solving, and speaking skills in addition to their speaking abilities. Additionally, debates help students develop their oral presentation abilities, which is important in professional situations. When taken as a whole, these observations show that the benefits of debates extend beyond scholastic achievement and give pupils useful life skills.

In general, teachers believe that debates are a very good way to help students become better speakers because they provide them a chance to express themselves, think critically, stay engaged, and acquire transferable skills. These findings demonstrate the multifaceted advantages of debates in ESL classes, highlighting their value as a pedagogical tool for language acquisition and skill development.

#### 4.2.2 Student Engagement and Motivation

A consistent pattern of observations and experiences about the influence of debates on students' active participation and excitement for learning becomes apparent when the theme of

student engagement and motivation is analyzed based on the interviews with multiple teachers. This theme is analyzed because many teachers observed that students, quiet or active had the tendency to be more participative when debates were used in the classroom. There were four notable aspects that the teachers touched on which were active participation, motivated learning, personal investment, and of course enhanced learning experiences.

The first thing that teachers noted was the participation of the students. When it came to debates, especially informal debates, many teachers mentioned that they saw a rise in student participation in language learning. For instance, when the teachers threw a simple topic of “Superman versus Batman; Who is stronger?” and asked students to pick one side and defend their stance, they realized that many students were not only excited to speak but they also wanted to share their views. Teacher 2 highlighted that students find debates to be very interesting. They get enthusiastic about doing research and putting together arguments, which encourages them to participate and enhance their public speaking abilities. Teacher 7 agreed, saying that students are actively involved in conducting research and developing arguments, which improves their confidence and increases their engagement.

These findings highlight how engaging debates are as a means of piqueing students' curiosity and motivating them to participate actively in the educational process. In addition to enhancing speaking abilities, active engagement in the learning process gives pupils a sense of agency and control over their education.

Second, concerning motivated learning. Teacher 6 observed that pupils were more motivated to study English when they discover how relevant debates are to real-world circumstances. They become involved in listening to their peers' opinions and standing up for what they believe in. This finding was supported by Teacher 4, who stated, "Students are motivated to participate in debates because they see them as opportunities to express themselves and engage in meaningful discussions." When debates are connected to students'

interests and experiences in the real world, they become more motivated to participate and engage with the class material. This encourages the development of skills and language learning.

The third thing is when it comes to personal investment. Usually, students have the tendency to only give about 50% of their investment into their studies especially when it comes to language. Many students are not interested, or they do see the need to invest their time. However, when teachers use debates, especially bringing in real world situations, students tend to invest themselves and their time. In a debate, Teacher 5 affirmed Teacher 6's observation that students get engaged in defending their positions and hearing those of their peers. She said, "students take ownership of their arguments and actively listen to their peers' viewpoints, fostering a sense of mutual respect and collaboration." Students' active participation in topic research, argument preparation, and presentation of ideas to peers is the source of this personal involvement. Students are more inclined to take charge of their education and aim for academic success when they feel personally invested in the learning process.

And lastly, in terms of enhanced learning experiences. The examination of teacher interviews concludes by highlighting the important influence debates have on students' motivation and level of engagement in ESL classes. Debates foster a dynamic and interesting environment where students are eager to participate, express themselves, and connect with the topic because they encourage active involvement, motivated learning, personal investment, and an enhanced learning experience. This increased involvement advances pupils' speaking abilities while also improving their general language proficiency and academic performance. Consequently, in the context of ESL classrooms, debates become an invaluable teaching tool that promotes student motivation, engagement, and language acquisition.

### 4.2.3 Challenges and Barriers

As with any pedagogical methods or techniques, there will of course be certain challenges and barriers. The interview with the teachers reveal several challenges and barriers encountered when implementing debates in an ESL classroom. Some of them include lack of language proficiency, limited preparation time, unequal participation, and resistance to critical thinking among others. Each of these will be discussed in further detail below.

First of all, lack of language proficiency. Students' capacity to participate in debates effectively is greatly influenced by their language proficiency. The first teacher stated that one of the main challenges is that some students struggle with language proficiency, making it difficult for them to articulate their arguments effectively during debates. Teacher 4 expressed similar worries, saying that language hurdles may prevent pupils with lower competency levels from participating in debates. The demands of words may overwhelm them, and they may lack the courage to express themselves. Students' confidence, fluency, and comprehension can all be hampered by lower competence levels, which can also limit their engagement and negatively impact their overall learning experience. Thus, students lack in proficiency can impeded the potential effects of debates on their overall learning experience.

Secondly, limited preparation time. This applies to both students and teachers. As we all know, teachers have a strict syllabus that they have to follow, therefore putting them on a tight schedule to complete their syllabus. Many teachers found it difficult to incorporate debates into their lessons as it would take a considerable amount of time to pick a suitable topic, plan out the implementation as well as to teach students the necessary debate skills. Furthermore, the time that teachers have for their classes also will pose as a challenge because of the number of students in each class. It can be difficult to find kids adequate time to prepare for discussions, as Teacher 2 pointed out. Due to time constraints and conflicting

expectations from the curriculum, it can be difficult to find enough time for research and practice. The sixth teacher stated, “some students struggle to balance their academic workload with extracurricular activities and personal commitments, which affects their ability to prepare adequately for debates.” These viewpoints further suggest that one of the biggest obstacles to incorporating debates into the curriculum is indeed time management, which affects both teachers and students. Students need enough time to prepare in order to conduct topic research, develop arguments, and hone their speaking abilities. However, students may find it difficult to balance their preparation for debate with other academic obligations, which may affect their performance and level of readiness.

The third aspect is unequal participation. With debates, the problems that teachers face tend to tie back to the previous point of lack of language proficiency. When it comes to debates, many students have the tendency to shy away from it as they feel like they do not have what it takes for them to present their points. This leads to unequal participation whereby the high proficiency students will have high participation and the lower proficiency students will have lower participation. Teacher 3 noted that some students dominate the conversation during debates, while others remain silent or show little interest. This discrepancy in involvement could limit the diversity of viewpoints and hinder cooperative learning. Teacher 7 highlighted that equal engagement among students, especially those who are introverted or less confident, requires careful facilitation and scaffolding. It is essential to create a supportive environment where each student feels appreciated and encouraged to contribute. Teachers frequently struggle to encourage equal participation in debate. In order to address unequal participation, teachers must use tactics that promote an inclusive classroom environment, reward active listening, and provide all students the chance to voice their opinions. This will also reflect back on the teachers’ classroom control and management as well as how they can creatively get all their students involved in the lesson.



Lastly, we have resistance to critical thinking. With debates, students have to think out of the box and think critically, which is something that many students are not accustomed to. Primarily due to their excessive dependence on teachers, pupils are accustomed to receiving everything. According to teacher 5, some students struggle with critical thinking skills and tend to rely on memorization or personal opinions rather than evidence-based arguments during debates. Teacher 8 also stated that encouraging students to critically evaluate arguments and consider opposing viewpoints can be challenging, especially when they are accustomed to passive learning or rote memorization. To participate in debates effectively, one must have critical thinking abilities. However, because of their cultural background or past educational experiences, some students could be reluctant to engage in critical thinking. It takes a supportive learning environment, instruction in critical thinking techniques, and encouragement of pupils to consider other viewpoints to overcome this reluctance.

Therefore, addressing these challenges requires strategic planning, differentiated instruction, and ongoing support to ensure that debates effectively enhance language learning, critical thinking, and student engagement. Teachers and students have to work hand in hand to overcome these challenges.

#### 4.2.4 Adaptability and Differentiation

The last theme is adaptability and differentiation. The data from the interviews revealed insight into the adaptability and differentiation strategies that these teachers employed or suggest for other teachers to employ in an ESL classroom. While using debates may work in some classrooms, teachers underlined the need for using different strategies to enhance students' speaking skills. Some suggestions from the teachers include flexible topic

selection, differentiated instructions, flexible assessment methods and adaptive instructional strategies. While these four aspects may sound similar, they have their differences.

When it comes to debates, topic selection is very important, especially in the case of lower secondary students. Teachers have to select the topics very carefully ensuring that students have enough knowledge of the chosen topic. Besides that, teachers can better engage and comprehend their students by selecting topics that are flexible enough to accommodate their interests, cultural backgrounds, and language ability levels. Teachers can foster a supportive learning atmosphere that encourages meaningful discourse and active involvement by providing choice and adjusting the complexity of the topics, so it also meets students' proficiency level. The teachers said they make an effort to choose debate subjects that their students will find interesting and pertinent. "By allowing them to choose themes based on their interests or life experiences, I may increase their motivation and participation in the debates," stated Teacher 1. Teacher 3 said it's important to adjust debate themes' difficulty based on students' skill levels. For students who are less proficient, assign simpler subjects so they can join in class discussions more easily. So, these are some examples of how teachers make their topics flexible to allow all the students to participate actively. The teachers also suggested that if other teachers were to implement debates, they get to know their students really well to allow them the flexibility to work with their students.

Next, differentiated instruction is essential to ensuring that all students in the ESL classroom can actively participate in and benefit from classroom speaking activities, regardless of their skill levels and learning preferences. Teacher 2 emphasizes the significance of providing scaffolding and supporting materials for students in order to help them develop their arguments and hone their speaking abilities. To help students strengthen their arguments and enhance their speaking abilities, Teacher 2 said, "I differentiate instruction by providing scaffolding and support materials." For instance, to help pupils with

lesser proficiency, she might provide them word lists or sentence starters. On the contrary, Teacher 5 emphasized the value of heterogeneous grouping, saying that it “allows for peer learning and collaboration during debates by grouping students heterogeneously.” In order to help and learn from one another, Teacher 5 combines students with greater and lower proficiency levels.

Consequently, this enables both higher and lower proficiency students to be equally participative in the lessons. Hence, it is important for teachers to recognize the value of differentiated instructions at different levels and for students with different needs.

Moving on, the third thing that teachers touched on was flexible assessment methods. When it comes to assessing students speaking skills, teachers have to be flexible and not too rigid because flexible evaluation methods take into account a range of learning requirements and preferences. Teacher 4 elaborated, stating, he uses a variety of methods, including oral presentations, peer reviews, and written reflections, to assess students' involvement in debates. This allows him to assess their critical thinking, communication, and collaborative skills in-depth. Teacher 6 noted, alternative assessment options, like small-group debates or online forums, are provided to accommodate students' choices and learning requirements. This flexibility ensures that every student has the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. Hence, teachers can effectively assess students' performance and progress while taking into account their different learning requirements and preferences by adopting flexible assessment methods. Teachers can also encourage fairness, involvement and motivation in the debating process by providing a variety of evaluation alternatives and taking into account the strengths and challenges of their students. This can be applied in various contexts in an ESL classroom not just for debates.

Lastly, continuous assessments, feedback, and support are all part of adaptive instructional practices, which aim to meet students' changing requirements and maximize

their learning outcomes. Teachers enable students to become active participants in their learning process and form lifelong learning habits by cultivating self-awareness and metacognitive skills. For instance, Teacher 7 stated that she monitors her students' progress and adjust her teaching strategies as necessary. She provides additional guidance or support to pupils who seem to be struggling with a specific topic of discussion in order to help them overcome these obstacles.

Overall, the information gathered for this part highlights the need of differentiation and flexibility in promoting effective debate instruction in ESL classrooms. Teachers can use flexible topic selection, differentiated instruction, flexible assessment methods, and adaptive instructional strategies to create inclusive learning environments that support diverse student needs and foster meaningful language learning, critical thinking, and communication skills.

#### **4.3 Conclusion**

By analyzing the four themes above – perceived effectiveness of debates, student engagement and motivation, challenges and barriers, and lastly adaptability and differentiation – it becomes apparent that the use of debates do in fact have a positive impact in enhancing ESL learners' speaking skills. All things considered, debates are perceived by these teachers as highly beneficial for enhancing speaking abilities because they provide pupils a chance to express themselves, grow as critical thinkers, remain engaged, and pick up transferable skills. Teachers have found that by making learning relevant, flexible, and meaningful, debates encourage student motivation and engagement. This, in turn, encourages students to actively participate in and be enthusiastic about language acquisition.

However, there are other impediments to effective debate classroom instruction, including differences in language proficiency, speaking anxiety, and time limits. Teachers can use adaptive tools like scaffolded support, flexible assessment techniques, and individualized instruction to meet these hurdles and make sure all students can flourish in

debates. Teachers establish inclusive learning settings that support fair access to language learning opportunities by addressing a variety of learning needs and offering individualized support.

In summary, while debates provide many advantages for ESL students, such as enhanced speaking abilities, critical thinking, and motivation, overcoming obstacles and implementing flexible tactics are essential to optimizing their efficacy. By means of strategic preparation, individualization, and continuous assistance, educators may leverage the power of debates to craft captivating, comprehensive, and productive learning experiences for every student.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a thorough summary of the study's findings, highlighting the following research questions and will consist of a discussion based on the findings as well as its implication, and recommendations for future research. The research questions being discussed in this study are as follows:

1. How effective are debates in enhancing the speaking skills of lower secondary ESL learners?
2. Are debates suitable for all lower secondary ESL learners?

### **5.2 Summary of Findings**

Based on the data analysis in Chapter 4, many valuable insights regarding the use of debates in ESL lower secondary classrooms such as the effectiveness of it, the impact it has on students as well as its suitability. As the data has already been analyzed previously, this section will focus on answering the above research questions which are the effectiveness of debates and the suitability of it for lower secondary ESL learners.

#### **5.2.1 Effectiveness of Debates** (Research Question 1)

It has been suggested that debate is a potentially useful speaking pedagogical technique that can scaffold language development-promoting learning processes (el-Majidi et al., 2021). The findings from this study align with this view as out of the eight English teachers who were interviewed, all of them unanimously agreed that debates did in fact have a positive impact on students' speaking skills; thus, indicating that debates can in fact be particularly effective in enhancing speaking skills, confidence and critical thinking skills among ESL students.

In this study, Teachers 1, 4 and 8, reported that when they used debates in their classes, they did observe a certain boost in their students' level of confidence, a point that is not only supported by their fellow teachers but also by past studies. According to a study by Paneerselvam and Mohamad (2019), engaging in debates can aid students in overcoming stage fright as well as boost their confidence. Additionally, the students will learn new words and broaden their vocabulary as they engage in debate and listen to others. Another example would be a research by Alasmari and Ahmed (2013), which showed that debates foster a lively and interesting atmosphere that motivates ESL students to practice speaking in front of an audience where they may voice their opinions without worrying about being judged. Through this interaction, students' fluency can be enhanced along with their capacity to reason logically and express themselves coherently.

Similarly, prior research supports Teachers 2,6 and 7's observation regarding the value of debates in fostering critical thinking. Multiple research projects have shown that debates are an effective teaching strategy for developing students' oral communication and critical thinking abilities (Doody & Condon, 2012; Hartin, Birks, Bodak, Woods, & Hitchins, 2017 as cited in Nurakhir et al., 2020). Debates compel students to gather, evaluate, and integrate knowledge, which eventually improves their critical thinking abilities (Freeley & Steinberg, 2009 as cited in Gardiner, 2017). Debates' structured nature encourages students to assess opposing viewpoints and supporting data, which advances their comprehension of the subjects covered. Consequently, debating can serve as a stimulant to enhance critical thinking and problem-solving abilities in addition to speaking abilities.

Through this research, some teachers also touched on the point that through debates students can also improve their argumentative skills. This is one of the skills that debates do indeed effect. Gillies (2019) study stated that students were able to develop the necessary discourse-based reasoning abilities to provide an argument by learning how to participate in

dialogic discourse related to their field (math, science, literacy). In this same study, they noted that debates foster the expansion of disciplinary knowledge and a more thorough comprehension of difficult ideas (Gillies, 2019). Students who participated in discourse-intensive training were able to build on the ideas of others, ask questions when they required clarification, and make defensible decisions in light of the information provided.

Besides the above, debates foster the growth of transferable skills like collaboration, communication, and teamwork in addition to linguistic proficiency. Debates promote cooperation, shared dialogue, and self-directed learning (Nisly, Kingdon, Janzen, & Dy-Boarman, 2017 as cited in Nurakhir et al., 2020). Therefore, debates motivate students to collaborate in groups, cultivating a sense of shared accountability and teamwork. Students that participate in debates gain excellent interpersonal skills, teamwork abilities, and an understanding for other people's viewpoints.

All in all, based on the data collected from the eight teachers, it can be concluded that debates are effective in enhancing students' speaking skills. The effectiveness of debates was not only noted in students speaking skills, but also in various aspects such as their ability to develop argumentative skills, transferable skills, as well as the impact it has on students' speaking confidence. Therefore, the responses collected answers the first research question.

### 5.2.1 Suitability of Debates for All Students (Research Question 2)

Although the study found that debates are clearly effective, there are a number of issues that could limit their applicability to particular ESL student groups. These difficulties align with previous research findings and emphasize the necessity of exercising caution when introducing debates into ESL classes.

The most pressing issue is in regard to unequal participation. Teachers 4,5 and 7 brought up the subject of unequal participation, which is a prevalent worry in language



learning. Research such as that conducted by Cuong (2023) suggests that students with lower proficiency levels may be less inclined to engage in debates because of linguistic obstacles and confidence. This may cause an unbalanced classroom dynamic where students who are more advanced lead the debate emphasizing the difficulties in using it as a teaching tool for people who don't speak English well or haven't studied the language, prompting concerns about whether it is appropriate for all students. They contended that these students might find it challenging to express themselves clearly in English, which might make it more difficult for them to participate completely in debates (Cuong, 2023). According to the teachers interviewed, differentiated instruction and extra assistance for pupils with lower skill levels are advised to overcome this problem. For example, Teacher 1 suggested that teachers start off with simple topics that can pique students' interests. Teacher 7 on the other hand, echoed this motion by suggesting that teachers start off by getting to know students and making them speak about themselves so that they do not feel pressured to overexert themselves.

As Teachers 2 and 6 have pointed out, time restrictions might also make it difficult to execute debates successfully. Strict curriculum plans and constrained class periods frequently make it difficult to have lengthy debates. Besides executing debates successfully, teachers also highlighted the fact that debates are not part of the syllabus in lower secondary education and thus many teachers do not have the time to prepare for debates due to the amount of planning that goes into preparing a debate lesson. This difficulty is consistent with research by Franklin and Harrington (2019), which found that incorporating any tool into regular classroom procedures requires careful planning and efficient time management. This was also one of the reasons that make teachers skeptical about the suitability of debates.

Furthermore, some students could show resistance to critical thinking, which might be caused by cultural differences or a lack of experience with debate-based instruction. As Teacher 7 pointed out, this opposition necessitates that educators take a flexible posture and foster an

environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts because at the end of the day, the goal is to get students to speak and communicate in the target language.

All things considered, debates are a useful tool for fostering collaboration, critical thinking, and speaking abilities, but they must be used carefully. Teachers must carefully evaluate elements including language proficiency, class dynamics, and curriculum limits to use debates in ESL classrooms effectively. Teachers should provide scaffolding, like vocabulary lists or organized templates, to support students with lower competence levels so that debates are accessible to all students. To encourage quieter students to participate, it is crucial to create an inclusive environment with clear ground rules for polite interaction. Debates should be organized to fit into the larger curriculum, ideally as part of project-based learning or through condensed, adapted debate formats, given the time limits in classroom settings. The secret is differentiated instruction, where students can contribute in ways that best suit their skills thanks to a variety of roles. Debate structures that are flexible can help students overcome obstacles and foster a rewarding experience. They can also provide students with tools and continued assistance. This method will help students become more proficient speakers and critical thinkers while also promoting a cooperative learning atmosphere where all students are able to thrive.

### **5.3 Implications of The Study**

The results of this study show how important debates can be for enhancing students' language proficiency and engagement levels in the classroom, and they have several significant implications for the area of ESL education. First, it has been demonstrated that using debates to teach ESL students improves their communication and critical thinking abilities. Students are taught to express their ideas clearly, build sound arguments, and actively listen to the opinions of others by taking part in debates. This results in a deeper comprehension of language and a larger vocabulary in addition to creating a more dynamic

educational atmosphere. Furthermore, debates promote cooperation and teamwork, which can change the traditional classroom environment into one that is more engaging and participative (Chen & Swan, 2020).

The study does, however, also highlight the necessity of flexible assessment techniques and customized training to meet the diverse competency levels of ESL students. It's possible that traditional assessment methods don't fairly represent the range of skill sets present in a classroom. Teachers should use a range of debate roles and styles to maintain inclusivity and allow all students, regardless of ability level, to participate meaningfully. Flexible assessment strategies that ensure each student's development is acknowledged and rewarded, like peer feedback and self-evaluation, can help promote this approach (Brookhart & McMillan, 2019).

Regardless of these benefits, the research suggests that teachers need to address specific obstacles when introducing debates into ESL classes. Variations in linguistic ability can result in uneven involvement, which may deter certain students. In order to address these problems, it is necessary to provide ongoing support, individualized feedback, and scaffolded exercises that gradually increase confidence and skill sets (Abdala & Hamdan, 2021). Teachers can utilize strategic planning to set up language-building activities for their students, provide role-based support during discussions, and foster a culture of taking chances and learning from mistakes in the classroom.

In conclusion, even though debates have the potential to be a transformative tool in ESL lessons, their successful implementation necessitates careful consideration of these difficulties. In order to foster an inclusive learning environment where all students may profit from the cooperative and communicative components of debates, teachers must modify their pedagogical approaches. Teachers may fully utilize debates to promote language

development and a lively learning environment in ESL classrooms by addressing these challenges.

#### **5.4 Recommendation for Future Research**

The results of this study point to various directions for additional research to improve the effectiveness of debates in lower secondary ESL classes. An important suggestion is to increase the sample size in future studies. Researchers can obtain a more comprehensive knowledge of the ways in which debates affect different learner demographics, educational situations, and linguistic backgrounds by involving a bigger and more diverse group of teachers and students. This broader viewpoint will make it easier to spot subtleties and patterns that are harder to spot in smaller samples.

Conducting longitudinal studies to look at the long-term effects of debates on speaking abilities and other language acquisition characteristics is an essential area for future research. Studies with a longitudinal design can monitor students' development over a long period of time and offer important new perspectives on the long-term advantages of debating as a teaching technique. This method can also show how students' opinions of debates change over time and whether their initial excitement results in long-term skill development.

Moreover, studies into different methods to executing debates may tackle certain obstacles noted in this study. This involves looking at efficient ways to involve students who may be introverted or reluctant to participate, as well as those who have different degrees of language competency. Through an analysis of various teaching strategies and resources, researchers may provide educators with useful advice on how to design inclusive and equitable debating environments. In order to promote greater student participation, this may also entail looking into the usage of scaffolded materials, group projects, and flexible topic selection.

Lastly, future researchers can select a particular state or area to conduct the research at. As this study is an exploratory study, it explores various teachers' perspectives without choosing teachers from a specific area. Hence, the results collected from this research can't be generalized to a larger population. However, if future researchers are able to minimize the area which participants are selected from, their results can be used to generalize the effectiveness of debates on a larger scale.

All things considered, these suggestions show how further study might improve and broaden the application of debates in ESL instruction, making this pedagogical strategy flexible, inclusive, and effective for a variety of students.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study has shown that debates are an effective way for lower secondary ESL students to enhance their speaking abilities. According to an examination of the teacher interviews, debates help pupils become confident, critical thinkers, and acquire transferable skills. Nevertheless, for debates to be implemented successfully, issues like uneven participation and language proficiency must be addressed using adaptable tactics and personalized education. Teachers can establish inclusive learning environments that foster meaningful language acquisition and student engagement by implementing adaptive strategies and providing ongoing assistance. On the basis of these results, future studies might investigate the efficacy of discussions in more detail and develop methods to optimize their use in ESL classes.

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## **APPENDIX (INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS)**

### **TEACHER 1**

#### **Interviewer:**

First of all, very good morning, Mr. Avi. So I will have to introduce myself. My name is Christianne Abilekha, an undergraduate student currently pursuing Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Education at UTAR. The interview is in partial fulfillment of my FYP II, and is meant to explore teachers' perspectives on the use of debates to enhance the speaking skills of lower secondary ESL learners. So the responses collected from this interview will be used only for academic purposes and will be kept strictly confidential. So by continuing with this interview, you agree to participate in the study and allow the interviewer, me, to record the interview for data collection and tabulation purposes.

#### **Teacher 1:**

Yes, good morning. And you have full permission of whatever I'm speaking here, yeah.

#### **Interviewer:**

Okay, thank you, sir. Okay. So to start off, the first question is, I would like you to please share your name, the school that you're currently teaching at, the subject that you teach, as well as how many years of teaching experience you have in the subject.

#### **Teacher 1:**

Okay, all right. So first of all my name is Avinash Ravichandran and currently I am a teacher in SMK Sentosa Kampar teaching English language for form three and from four students and together with form five students as well. I have been teaching for the past five years, two years in The Private Service and three years about almost three in the public service yeah.

**Interviewer:**

Sir in your years of teaching English what methods have you used when you're teaching students to help develop their speaking skills okay?

**Teacher 1:**

When it comes to speaking skill there are actually several approaches that I take and one of the most frequent one that I always use is game -based learning and also task- based learning. So this is to allow the students to actually encourage them to speak first then think about things like content, grammar and all the others thing because the most important thing when it comes to speaking itself is confidence. So I believe that when we want our students speak we need to make sure they feel comfortable and that they are not being pressured or pushed to speak because I don't think that's a good idea. It might end up, you know, the students being stuttering, being humiliated, and they might feel embarrassed. So to avoid all this, we try to start off with more of a game -based lesson where the students might have fun, but at the same time, they have the opportunity to use their language orally.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, thank you. Have you heard of using debates before as a speaking method?

**Teacher 1:**

Yes, yes. Debates is one of the activities that I would often use when it comes to teaching English, whether it be lower secondary or upper secondary. And together with debate, there are other speaking activities, right? We have things like public speaking, you know, impromptu speaking and all that. But out of all this, I believe that debate is one of the, if not the most challenging type of speaking because not only do the students speak on their own; which you can compare with public speaking but in debate specifically they have to persuade,



they have fight for their ideology or the emotion that is given to them in the debate. So not only are we allowing the students to practice speaking through debate activities but we are also trying to help them how to persuade, use persuasive language because English we have persuasive languages. So how do you use the persuasive language and at the same time how you take a stand and try to provide as much information, evidence, you know opinions as they can based on what they understand or what they believe based on the motion that is given or the topic that is given during the debate. So yes, I always would love to use debates especially for large classrooms, you know. Oftentimes I would start off with group debates, like students will be grouped up, maybe like in one group there'll be four to five students and then they will discuss and do a brainstorming session first and then they'll start the debates. They're my standard representative, one or two students and so from that on we can see who is capable enough to do this debate activity or who's proficient enough to it and we sharpen their skills more and more. Meanwhile those who are much more introverted or weak in English proficiency is not really good. Well they get to see their friends do debate and you know visual learning is one of the most important types of learning and they actually can get a lot knowledge and information from what they see from, what their friends are doing in the debate.

**Interviewer:**

When it comes to debate right Sir, have you ever heard about like formal and informal types of debates?

**Teacher 1:**

Yeah I have heard of formal and informal types of debate. I mean this is from my understanding, I don't know if there's specific terms for this. I mean formal debates are often times the ones that strictly follow the rules that is provided by the debate boards you know

and this is often applied in competitions ranging from district level, state level and the national level. Meanwhile those that I would do in school would often be informal debates because we can't really push the students to strictly follow the rules of the debate. For example you could only speak from this time frame or you have to use certain types of languages. Let's say in a classroom especially in school, if I want to use formal debates, I would only use it or I would only allow my students to practice formal debates when they actually join a debate competition. So outside that, most of the times as a teacher, I would actually prefer doing informal debates because I personally believe that let the students speak first, let them explore first. Rules and regulations come later, when it comes time for them to go to competitions and things like that. Before that this journey that they go through in this debate we can do it informally; let them speak first, let them gain the confidence first. I believe that is the big difference of informal and formal debates. In summary, I believe that formal debate focuses more on the types of language that we use, the rubrics that is given, whether the students are following the rubric or not, and also the time that is given. Meanwhile informal debates, we don't really follow much of these rules, just the base or the surface level rules that I know. Like one representative will speak on this topic and then the next one, you, know and sometimes for example, things like rebuttals, right, there might not even be a rebuttal in the informal because the student may not have the capability to rebut someone. So we don' force them to do rebuttals, but in formal you kind of have to do rebuttals. I believe these are the two differences when it comes to formal and informal debates.

**Interviewer:**

So in a sense formal debates are more rigid whereas informal debates are flexible.

**Teacher 1:**

Yes, in a nutshell.

**Interviewer:**

You've mentioned before that you use debates in your classroom. Would you say that it was helpful in a way when you're testing students speaking proficiency?

**Teacher 1:**

Yes. In fact, debates have been effective in improving my students' ability to express themselves orally. They become more confident in speaking English and articulate their thoughts better during debates I believe that through using debate I have learned so much more about my students than by using traditional teaching methods by using activity books or textbooks. I mean we do use it as a teacher because at the end of the day the students are going to sit for exam, so we have to use our textbooks. But what I do is, let's say in a week I have three classes with my students. One or two periods I might use textbook or workbook meanwhile the other lessons I prefer to do my own activities and one of these activities that I usually do would be speaking lessons because in my school specifically students have the skill they can write English well and they can read English well, that is not their issue. Their issue is actually speaking and I believe that one the most prominent causes actually is their shyness. They don't have the confidence to speak in English because they are afraid that their friends might tease them. That is the reason why I tend to use debates in the classroom. To make sure that the students get to explore how a debate session is done and also at the same time trying to learn the language in a much more robust, a very loud way. Students love to be loud right but when we give them a platform and suddenly they're all quiet. So through debate I think we can slowly push them to be the kind of person who can speak confidently and loudly.

**Interviewer:**

Based on what you've shared right Sir, do you think that debates are a suitable tool to be used to help lower secondary students to improve their speaking skills in class?

**Teacher 1:**

Definitely yes because if we go through the syllabus and each forms that the students go through, in form 1 to form 3, we don't have a specific exam to assess students' speaking skills. That only comes later in the form 4 and form 5 because in SPM, English has four papers, and one of it is speaking. So that is where the students are actually and formally assessed, for their speaking skills. But in the meantime, lower secondary students are not assessed formally, but we do have to award them marks in the Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah (PBD). How good is their speaking level? So you have one to six, one being the lowest and six being highest proficiency, so that's why we have to award them. So I believe that everyone has to start somewhere and the best way to start is early. Students coming from standard six, jumping into form one, and many of them actually, I mean, out of this entire group of students say that maybe there's about 80 to 100 students, only about 10% or 15% of them who are actually confident English speakers. Meanwhile, the rest of them are either timid, introverted, or weak. So by starting off early and by using tools like debate to teach the students. We actually can allow them to understand the importance of speaking at the same time they get to explore their hidden talents. Just because they are weak or timid, does not necessarily mean that they're not good at speaking in English. So by having debate as a platform, a physical or an online platform for the student to express themselves and give their opinions. Because personally I think I as a teacher, for me the choice and opinions from my students are crucial to my teaching. Sometimes we tend to take our students opinions and their point of view for granted we; don't really take into consideration. However, for me as a

teacher I think that is actually very important because we have to train our students to express themselves from such a young age because once they grow up and they go to universities, and they go to work ; that is where they actually have to use this skill. Where they have to speak confidently. So we do have the start from the bottom. We have to sharpen and enhance their speaking skill through tools like debate from, form one to from three, so that when they go to form four and form five (SPM), they are already good enough. Those who are weak, they actually have some understanding, some background of how to speak English properly without much of an issue. Like I said before, the most important thing when it comes to speaking is speaking itself. They have to learn to speak, say a few words, say your opinion. That comes first. Contents, grammar, their confidence, the way they speak or the intonation, all those can come later on. But it starts off with speaking. So that is why as a teacher, I believe that we have to train our students to speak especially in platforms like debates; from a young age so that once they reach form 4, form 5, STPM, university degrees and all that, they actually have a background on how to use the language more formally and properly.

**Interviewer:**

Thank you Sir. So you know how when we use any sort of teaching tools, right? Each teaching tool definitely has its benefits and drawbacks. So when it comes to debates, what do you think the benefits and drawbacks of using debates in a lower secondary ESL classroom would be?

**Teacher 1:**

Basically the pros and cons of debates. We'll start off with the pro's first. Some of the good thing, of course is to allow the students to be themselves, express themselves and express their opinion. We're giving them a platform to do that. Oftentimes students are not given this platform. They are sitting in the classroom copying whatever the teachers are teaching at the

front and at end of the day they go back with whatever on their textbook. But what's in their mind? So this is where debate comes in. When the students use debates, they actively involve themselves in a session where they share their opinion and they give their ideas. So I believe that this shows how debate is very much impactful. Number two is confidence. Debate needs confidence and it teaches confidence. For example, if a student needs to speak on the stage or if our student needs to speak to a stranger. Nowadays many of them are not even capable of speaking on the phone; like if I ask my students to call this person to ask them if we can do this for our club or not, they would be really shy and introverted. They wouldn't want to do it because they're scared, they're like what might the people think about my language. I'm scared. So I often tell them you have to have the confidence from now because if you don't have the confidence at such an early age you are not gonna get it when you grow up. So debate actually helps the students to build confidence. That's why I say, we have to start pushing for the use of tools like debates from a young age itself. We cannot start late, if we start out at form five, give them a debate. No, that's too late already. Students are going to be focusing more on theoreticals over there because SPM is in the way. So in the meantime, while the students are going up in their journey, they have to be exposed to debates because they need that confidence. And you have to remember that confidence is not only crucial in learning language or using language. But also in their social skills, when they grow up, they're gonna meet a lot of strangers. They're going to meet their employees, their lecturers and other teachers. So they need that confidence to speak to them. If not, they're gonna just be quiet and it's going to be a bad thing for them in the future. So I believe the second point confidence is actually a very, very important point. Other than that, debate is fun. It's such a fun activity. Students get to enjoy themselves, especially when we do it in a group-based debate, and this group based is one of the informal ways of doing debates. You can see how the students actually contribute, especially in the brainstorming session. Everyone will give

their points, because debate's very competitive. You want to see who wins unlike things like public speaking or spelling bee, the thrill is not there because you are there alone on the stage. You are fighting against your competitors but they're not there with you. But debate on other hand, you're actually facing your competitor and you want to win against them. So this thrill that they get from it, it's really really fun. I myself have joined multiple debates competition and I find that by expressing myself and giving my opinion and to challenge my opponent based on my ideas, it actually brings me such satisfaction. I believe in school we can actually help the students to see debate as a fun activity rather than something that they should be afraid of. So the third point is fun. Now we go on to the cons. One of the cons is actually that debate is not specifically required in the syllabus for us to do. There is nowhere in DSKP where we have to do activities focusing on just speaking, like debates. So, sometimes teachers don't really use this activities in their teachings. It's sometimes, pushed away. So one of the cons is, I guess you can say how the syllabus is built. How debates, and other speaking activities are not pushed to the front, where teachers can and should be encouraged to use such activities to allow students to prosper. Number two, the cons would be that sometimes students get too excited and they can hurt one another. So sometimes in our classroom especially, what I'm talking about right now is not debate in a sense that is done in the competitions in district level or state level. What I am trying to say is that debates that are done in classrooms, yeah they are fun like I said. But at the same time if the teacher does not play the role as a facilitator properly, do not be the mediator, things can get out of hand. Sometimes, especially students who are soft spoken, when they see that their friends are being so harsh to them, challenging them, they actually can be hurt and they might cry. I have seen students, at first they are so excited for the debate they want to share their opinion but the moment they get an opponent who is ten times better than them and then the debates session goes on; this weak student sees how better her or his opponent is and immediately

their self-esteem goes down. So this is one of the reasons why we need to train our students from young. So that they don't get hurt you. This is normal in debate. Oftentimes our opponents are better than us and that is actually how we build ourselves. So that's number two. Number three is actually, how debate can be used in a wrong way. This one I have seen myself, especially with students who treat debate as a way of just fighting. It's just simple word fight. There are certain topics in debate that can instill some negative perception. For example, who can be a better leader, a women or a men? When you have this kind of an instigating kind of a topic; the students they might get riled up and they tend to go as far as to taking it very personally. They see their opponent is talking too much and they dig into their opponent's personal life. For an example, I can say this one student when she sees that her opponent, is talking over her or being too loud, she used this wrong card in the play. Which is calling him an orphan. So when you don't have a mediator or a facilitator at the moment, students can take this in a very bad way and when this kind of things happen it can hurt a lot of people. And of course, the use of vulgar languages. Under the same point, students will use all sorts of improper languages and bad words when it comes to debate because they get carried away with what they do. Sometimes it just comes out, they just blurt out the words but sometimes they intentionally use it. So these are a few examples I would say the pros and the cons of debate.

**Interviewer:**

One last question Sir, you did touch on it a bit, but to reiterate your point. So, do you think that debate can help motivate students to speak English more confidently? If yes, could you please elaborate more why?

**Teacher 1:**



Yeah, definitely. Definitely, debate can help students be more confident. Because at the end of the day, debate is all about speaking and standing for your motion, so in order for you to do that you need confidence. Nowadays, many of these kids they are so stuck in their hand phones and they don't get to explore and actually interact with people face to face. The only time they do that is in the school and school is more of a safe zone. They meet the same person, learn from the same teacher. So they know everyone in the school so of course they're gonna be confident and comfortable when they speak to them. But outside, if we let the students go outside of our school and speak, they're gonna be quiet. There they don't know the people, they are talking to total strangers. So their confidence level just goes down. With activities like debate and exposing students more on debate type of competitions/ activities, whether it be in classroom or outside of classroom as long as the students get to express themselves and also talk about what they think, that can actually build the confidence that the students need. Especially students who are having a tough time speaking just because they are shy, just because they're afraid of using the English language; well, through debate, we can help them to build that confidence. Let them speak first. That's why I always say, just let the students speak. And then we worry about the content and all the other aspects later on. Let them speak. So through that, they can slowly start to get the confidence they need because confidence can only be built if the student starts to speak. If they don't speak, a student can be however good as he or she can; get full marks for grammar, get full marks for reading, and get full marks for writing, but can actually fail in speaking. Because speaking itself is actually something that we learn from ourselves. Something that, we learn on our own. The teacher can teach as much as we can, trying to push them to speak, give them platforms to talk, but at the end of the day, it is the students themselves who must have the confidence to speak in English. That is why I believe that debate definitely does help push the students to be more confident, builds up that confidence, to not only to speak but actually to

express themselves. For example if we call the students to go up the stage, immediately they'll get stage fright. If they don't want to go up there, they'll feel nervous. You can see their hands and legs shaking. So to avoid this from happening especially our younger generations today, we have to push for platforms or games and activities like debates. Speaking activities where students get to build their confidence. It can be slow, no issue at all. No one becomes a master in a day. So students can build their confidence step by step. It takes time. Everyone is afraid to do something and we have all been there. To go up the stage and speak or to speak English language fluently without any issue; we all have been there. That struggle has always been with Malaysians. I myself, I'm not a native English speaker. My mother tongue is Tamil, so I don't speak English at home. In fact none of my parents speak in English but the way I learnt speaking is actually by interacting with my friends who speak in English, watching movies/ television shows that are in English. So through this students get to learn as much as they can from watching people speak, getting the confidence that they need from them. So at the end of the day debate is definitely one of the most important activity or competition or a method like you said to have the students to build up their confidence and speak in English and like what you say you're focusing more on the lower secondary right. So yes, is the moment where the students need to build. It can take three years it, can take four years but we have to start from the lower secondary; we cannot start too late.

**Interviewer:**

If teachers were to implement the debate method in their classroom right since you have already mentioned that you have used it before, what would your advice be in terms of the implementation in a classroom?

**Teacher 1:**

First of all this is just my opinion. Don't be too strict. Yeah, debate is a competition that actually has certain rules and regulations that requires the students to follow. It has its own rubrics of grading, but at school, especially at lower secondary, teachers need to apply or implement this debate activity in an informal, a more casual manner. Yeah, casual I believe is the word. Conduct debate sessions, go ahead, but let them do it more casually. It's not about fighting and winning, it's about expressing yourself. So I would say don't start off in a more rigid manner, start of in a more casual manner. You can follow the rules and stuff but that comes later on when the students have the basics already. Once they have to basics of participating or even conducting a debate, then we can let the student explore the rules and regulations that are set by the debate board. But other than that; at the start we cannot immediately push the students. No, let them speak first, let, them explore their speech first and then slowly we can explore and implement the rules. In fact it is not really necessary for us to specifically follow the guidelines of debate especially if it's not competition. In competition definitely yes but other than that if its a game based learning or a task -based learning that uses debate as its medium then you can do it in a more casual manner you can do in group based debate or individual debate. One of the things that I love to do is actually bring my students outside the classroom, so going to the field or assembly hall. Anywhere where the students get to sit in a circle or where the student's get to be comfortable first. Once they are in a comfortable environment that is where we can actually see the students perform better. These are few I would say methods of implementations that one can use when conducting a debate in classroom. In summary environment and also to start off in a more casual manner.

**Interviewer:**

Thank you so much sir for your thought and really appreciate your help in doing this interview, sir.

**Teacher 1:**

Okay, thank you.

## **TEACHER 2**

### **Interviewer:**

Good morning Miss, could you please provide your name and the school that you're currently teaching at?

### **Teacher 2:**

Okay, my name is Thanushini and I'm currently teaching in SK Kementah.

### **Interviewer:**

Alright, may I also know what subject you teach and how many years of teaching experience you have Ms?

### **Teacher 2:**

So I'm currently teaching English. My teaching experience, I had four years of teaching experience in Chinese independent high school. And then now in this new school that I'm currently posted, I have about three months of teaching experience.

### **Interviewer:**

In your years of teaching English, can I know what specific methods you have employed when teaching your students the speaking skills for English?

### **Teacher 2:**

Okay, so when I am teaching them speaking skills for English. I have a few methods that I employed, such as collaborative. So my students get to work together and bounce ideas off of each other. Drama, roleplaying, storytelling, debates and even music.

### **Interviewer:**

So, since you did mention debates right, could you share a little bit of what you know about debates?

**Teacher 2:**

Okay, yes. So the debate style I usually employ is based on the British parliamentary style. So usually when I have this type of debate in class, I'll get the students to break into two groups, one with the government, the other with the opposition, and each group will have about three speakers; speaker one - the prime minister, then speaker two, and the third speaker. I also give them a motion. So like for example, this house believes in the abolishment of exams. I'll just put the motion there, give them two minutes, and then let them start to speak.

**Interviewer:**

So, based on your understanding of debates, do you believe that debates are a suitable tool for helping students to enhance their speaking skills?

**Teacher 2:**

Yes, definitely. I think through debates, they are not only enhancing their speaking skills, they are also enhancing their critical thinking skills and they are also able to practice on how to respond very quickly based on what the opposition or the government side has given. You have to divide the points very quickly and they are able to build concise sentences to persuade everyone else in the classroom that they are the main sector. So yeah, I definitely think it helps in their speaking skills.

**Interviewer:**

Besides debate what alternative methods of would you consider appropriate for teachers to use to help enhance their students' speaking skills, especially in the lower secondary contexts?

**Teacher 2:**

Okay, so in terms of lower secondary students, I think another method for them to practice their speaking skills would definitely be role playing or storytelling. I feel like they'd truly enjoy acting out a scenario and they are able to work together with their friends as well as storytelling. I think both these methods will work well.

**Interviewer:**

Okay thank you. Then the next one is, since you have mentioned that you have incorporated debates in your classroom; be it formal or informal do you think that this type of debates are helpful to examine the students speaking proficiency level?

**Teacher 2:**

Yes, in this case, in order to see how proficient we are in the language, I would start with the informal form of debate first. This is very simple, maybe I'll just give them a topic or give them a question and see how they speak. So it's definitely a good way to see how proficient they are in the language, by the way they present their points and how they respond to their opponent.

**Interviewer:**

The next one is, in your opinion, what are the benefits and drawbacks of using debates as a teaching tool for lower secondary students?

**Teacher 2:**

Okay, the benefits, I would say, they're able to interact with their peers when they're in teams, so they learn how to communicate and improve their communication skills. Next, I also think that through debates, they're able to think faster and think more critically. Whereas for the drawbacks, I think for lower secondary students, they are quite young. So at times the topics thrown at them might be too difficult, they're not able to think out of the box, so most of the time, they get frustrated. Especially when they don't understand what the motion is about, or when they feel like they are not good enough. So I would say, probably, the motivation-wise, their motivation level is going to be quite low when it comes to debate, because they lack confidence. **Interviewer:**

Another question is that if teachers were to use debates, what would you suggest teachers to do when they are implementing the debate in their classroom?

**Teacher 2:**

Okay, first, if they're planning to implement formal debate, then they definitely have to introduce students to specific terms like motion, government, opposition, and they should also tell the students how the debate will go. Like the process, maybe the debate will be started by the first speaker from the government side, moving on to the first speaker from the opposition side. The flow of the debate, maybe give examples or show them a video, so they won't be as lost.

**Interviewer:**

Do you think that debates, even if for lower secondary, do you think it is suitable to be used for all levels of students?

**Teacher 2:**



If it's in secondary school, yes, I would say, but you also have to look at their proficiency level. If they are more towards the weaker side, then I think it'd not be suitable for them.

**Interviewer:**

Okay and the last question is do you think that debates can effectively motivate students to speak English more confidently?

**Teacher 2:**

I would say in the long run, yes. Probably in the beginning, they might feel not as confident if their proficiency level is in the intermediate level. But yeah, from what I've seen, as time goes on, once they get used to the format of debate, once they get used to communicating with their friends, definitely their motivation level and confidence level will increase and improve.

**Interviewer:**

That was the last question and thank you so much for helping me with the interview.

### **TEACHER 3**

#### **Interviewer:**

Good afternoon Sir, could you please provide your name and the school that you're currently teaching at?

#### **Teacher 3:**

My name is Sundareson Arumugam and I am currently teaching a SMK Buntong, Ipoh.

#### **Interviewer:**

Thank you sir. So, may I know what subject you teach and how many years of teaching experience you have?

#### **Teacher 3:**

I have been teaching since 1989. I have been teaching English throughout my career, till now I'm still teaching English. But now, since I'm holding the admin post, I'm given very minimal number of teaching periods. But still teaching upper forms English.

#### **Interviewer:**

Sir, can I know in your teaching experience, what specific methods have you used to teach your students speaking skills for English?

#### **Teacher 3:**

Right, for me, the best model would be the role model. It may sound old, it may sound ancient, but this role models technique is the best for children to pick up their speaking skills.

#### **Interviewer:**

Sir could you share a little bit about what the role model technique is?

**Teacher 3:**

Right, role models is basically on situations. For example, you go to a post office. How do you deal with those people there? Either you act as a person buying stamps or you're one of the officers there. So students take turns to take the role of those people.

**Interviewer:**

Alright. Thank you Sir. Moving on, Sir are you familiar with debates? If so, could you share some insights of yours regarding debates?

**Teacher 3:**

Okay, I have been training debate teams. I had been called to go judge debate competitions at national and even teachers' debate competitions. So I feel that debate is one of the higher level skills for students to pick up their speaking skills. And it's not normal conversation but the kind of conversation which requires you to have more details of what you are saying. And it has to be put in the right manner because this in the context of writing, it is under argumentative. So you have to know how to write, choose the correct word in order to avoid hurting people. So this is one of the important skills in debate and when you are doing debate, you will put yourself into a higher level of speaking skills. That's what I always feel. That is the reason why not everybody can do debates.

**Interviewer:**

Sir based on your understanding of debate, do you believe that debates are a suitable tool for helping students to enhance their speaking skills?

**Teacher 3:**

As I said, no as this is higher order thinking skills, which requires them to think a lot, which require them to have solid proven content. This is because debates are more of an academic conversation and you will see some academic conversations.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, thank you sir. So, besides debates, right, what other alternative methods would you suggest or would you consider appropriate for enhancing students speaking skills?

**Teacher 3:**

Storytelling is also another technique that has been forgotten, I would say because you have a lot of new technology whereby the older ones have been eliminated. Storytelling is one of the second best methods to encourage students in their speaking skills. It helps them. For example, they watch a small and short video, then come back and rate that story to someone. It's already a good speaking lesson for them.

**Interviewer:**

The next question is have you ever incorporated debates either formally or informally in your classrooms when you're teaching your students Sir?

**Teacher 3:**

Yeah, definitely Definitely. That is one part of my teaching methods which I feel is a compulsory method. Probably once a month, we have something to talk about. It may not be a formal debate, but it will be like arguing about something, arguing about the benefits, or arguing about the truth about something. So they will act. And also the lowest level of argumentative way of talking is justifying something. When a child says I like to do this. Then the child has to justify why this person likes to do this, and also comment on the other

side; why it is not right to do this. This is already a kind of debate which happens in my classrooms.

**Interviewer:**

Sir, do you use this debate method for lower secondary or upper secondary students?

**Teacher 3:**

Actually, you can opt for a lower and upper secondary. In fact, we can also use this for primary. Only thing is, you simplify the tasks. They are still debate. You simplify the task and they will be able to speak.

**Interviewer:**

Since you have mentioned that you have used debate in your classrooms before, sir, was it helpful for you to examine it or decide how proficient your students' speaking skills were?

**Teacher 3:**

No. Because some students, you see, it's not fair to evaluate a person's speaking skills just based on a debate, because some students may have some problem in speaking loud. Some students they have problem speaking in the public. So I can't have a same kind of evaluation to be recorded using the same method for these different kinds of students. So, therefore, we only have a very informal way of evaluating these students through pentaksiran bilik darjah (PBD). Classroom evaluation. That is only putting a grade or note about how the child has performed. There is no marks for that. So we just take note, this child has got this problem. This child can do this, so we will take note. However, there is no formal evaluation unless they are already in form 5. Even then debate cannot be used to evaluate, because in SPM oral,

we do not have debates, we only have normal conversations. So we don't incorporate debate into them. But debate can be used as a practice, not as evaluation.

**Interviewer:**

Thank you Sir. Next when we use any teaching tools there's benefits and drawbacks right? So in your opinion if teachers were to incorporate debate in their classroom; what do you think the benefits and drawbacks of using debate as a teaching tool would be?

**Teacher 3:**

First of all, the teacher must choose the class. Which class are you going to teach debate to? You can't have debate with a class where they can hardly speak. We cannot have debate. For classes, with that kind of ability, probably can go into like singing songs, not debate. Songs, parallel reading, or parallel storytelling, all those things can be done. Poetry recitation and poems can be done. Role models can, drama can. Can be done in the weak classes, but not debate. Debate you can guide, but you cannot put so much input as the information should come from them. So the drawback would be if we choose debate in weaker classes, you won't see any results, you won't see participation, they will keep quiet. And that will eventually make them run away from speaking. So you are not opening the door for them, in fact you're closing the door for them. Don't give debates for weaker classes. If the class is good, fine, you throw any topic they will talk.

**Interviewer:**

Okay. And the last one is, do you think that debates can effectively motivate students to speak English more confidently?

**Teacher 3:**

Definitely, 200%. The moment they know they can speak; that's where you see that the students will become outstanding. The moment they know how to speak, they know that they had substance, they would become outstanding not only in speaking skills, but in general life. Because they feel they can carry themselves with that language. So I do have many students living proof, who are good in debate and doing very well in life. Debate has contributed so much in their life. The skills students develop through debates are transferable to other areas of their lives

**Interviewer:**

One last question Sir. In general would you encourage teachers to incorporate debate in their classroom?

**Teacher 3:**

Definitely, definitely. I'm old school, so I believe in all these tools.

**Interviewer:**

All right. Thank you so much for taking time to help me out. Have a good day ,sir.

**Teacher 3:**

All the best to you. Bye.

## **TEACHER 4**

### **Interviewer:**

So, first of all, sir, could you please share your name, the school that you're currently teaching at, as well as the subject that you are currently teaching and how many years of experience you have?

### **Teacher 4:**

Good evening, Ms. Anne. It's a great pleasure to be with you. My name is Mr. Mazlan Ismail. I'm teaching in SMK Sentosa, Kampar. I've been teaching there for almost 16 months. And prior to that, I was teaching in Selangor. And I was with the Ministry of Education for 10 years. And in total, I have been serving for the past 24 years.

### **Interviewer:**

Sir, can I know what subject you teach?

### **Teacher 4:**

I teach English. I'm a TESL graduate from University of Malaya, 1999, and I pursued my Masters in 2007, and graduated from the University of Malaya also in 2009.

### **Interviewer:**

Okay, thank you, Sir. So you've been a teacher for quite a few years, right. And in your years of teaching, what are some methods that you have used when you're teaching students to help them develop their speaking skills?

### **Teacher 4:**

Okay, as you are aware, teaching language is very challenging. I'm not saying it's difficult because the minute you say it is difficult, difficult is a very negative word. To me it means



challenging, challenging meaning we can overcome, we can deal with it, but it depends. Young teachers when I say young teachers I'm not saying junior -seniors; young teachers, like when I was 25 I did some of the things that you're doing now. Back then we didn't have this WhatsApp and telegram. We only have S -A -L -C; self-access learning center and language lab. My first posting was in Sabah. So in term of facility we were very underprivileged. So what we did is we used a book focusing on grammar, and a conducted lot of language games. And back then, we did NIE, newspaper in education. I taught in a rural area in Sabah, where they do not read newspaper, they don't even have TV, they didn't watch television. So after a few weeks teaching them, I asked them what did you watch yesterday? So I didn't get any positive or any response from the kids. I can't bring TV into the classroom, so what I did I brought newspaper. They did the jigsaw puzzle, the crossword and they did language games. But then it was very challenging because English wasn't their first or second language. It was their third language, they had like their Bahasa Iban, Kadazan, Semai, then they had their Bahasa Malaysia, then only English.

**Interviewer:**

Sir, as you said, speaking is one of the most difficult methods to develop. So in a sense of like debates, have you ever heard of debates? If yes, could you share a bit about what you know about debates.

**Teacher 4:**

Okay, debate is very interesting because it helps students to learn through friendly competition and they are given controversial topics and debate, it could be done in a very relaxed way, we can give topics like for local secondary kids, Superman versus Batman, who is stronger. Nasi Lemak versus Olio Aglio, which is more popular. It enhances students' speaking ability and also their interpersonal skills, team building, problem solving, and above

all, oral presentation. They have to speak. Obviously, in debate, you can't be using sign language. You have to open your mouth and some meaningful messages should be uttered. You can just speak, but if it doesn't make sense, it's gone. And number two, You need to listen to your opponent and you need to counter attack them. So that's why I say leadership skill. All the skill counts because your eyes, your brain, your ear, and your tongue works simultaneously. I was a debater long ago. But debate is a very interesting way of teaching language. We should modify adjust to the ability of our students. You know, if you wanna give debate to Asunta kids or you want to ask a student from Bukit Bintang girl school, to them it's easy. But then if you wanna give debate to a kid from SMK Pengkalan Hulu or in Bali or elsewhere, it would be very challenging. I'm not saying that it will be impossible. The first two, three classes, maybe it's okay, but as you move to the, sorry, low -proficiency kids they don't have the language. It's just a turn off to them. You'll be disappointed. The teacher, when I say you, me, the educators would be disappointed. So we are the master of our class. So, we design, we identify what they are good at, what are their strengths, and then we do. You can do debate, but prior to doing it, you should let them watch. The fun time type, and not, I'm not asking you to give topics, or even for my kids, my last two classes, I can't give topic that are very challenging. Like the other day, they were talking about artificial intelligence. Even my third class cannot define what is AI.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, so when it comes to debates right, there are different types like formal and informal debate. So have you ever tried using either of the debates in your classrooms? And if you've used it, was it helpful in testing students' speaking proficiency?

**Teacher 4:**

Yes, I've used it. In terms of the testing, I would say yes and no. Let me go to the yes first. For good kids definitely. The better class students they will look forward to it. But when I go to my last class, they do not have the language. They want to do debate. They were asking me, "Sir can we do debate in Bahasa Melayu?" "It's not a debate! It's bahas", I said like that. Then they will say yes let's do that. So I told them I can't be teaching you English in Malay. Yes, we can have one or two words in Malay but if I am teaching English in Malay, they will be fluent in Malay. They might end up getting A in Malay and still their English would be an F or a G. That will defeat the purpose.

**Interviewer:**

Okay sir, based on what you've shared on your knowledge of debates right sir. Do you think that debates are a suitable teaching tool to be used to help enhance lower secondary students' speaking skills?

**Teacher 4:**

Obviously. Okay, as I initially said, debates can help students to learn things through friendly competition, the keyword there is friendly. And then we give them controversial topics and it strengthens their skills. At the same time they improve their leadership skills, interpersonal influence, team building because debate is unlike public speaking. It's not a one -man show. Debate you know that speaker one, speaker two, speakers three, then they have rebuttal. Then they would have problem. You need to lay out your ideas and your oral presentation, your style differs. Of course, nothing is wrong. Whatever you say it couldn't be wrong but then you have to justify your point with concrete, valid examples. You can't just say that Superman is stronger than Spiderman because I think Superman is strong. Then your opponent can say but Spiderman have web coming from his arms. I did this the Superman versus Spiderman thing. And back then, I didn't want it to be boys versus girls. Sometimes

teachers, you need to be creative. You should be able to control the situation. So what I did, I had boy girls mix, boy girl mix. So it was team A, team B. It's not boys vs girls.

**Interviewer:**

So Sir, when you use any sort of teaching tools there definitely are benefits and drawbacks.

So when it comes to using debates in a lower secondary classroom, what do you think are the benefits and drawbacks?

**Teacher 4:**

The benefit is obviously it's peer learning. So the not so good ones, they learn from the good ones. And from there, I managed to identify debaters in the future. You can't achieve anything overnight. The drawback is it's time consuming and it is a large class. You cannot involve all the kids. When I was teaching in Sabah, the kids, the number was very large. So I can have 4, 8 or 12 kids only. So the rest, they have to be the audience. Being an audience, you learn, seeing, watching, your brain is functioning. But when I go to the lower classes, the less proficient one, I have to modify. And I need to give them the points, like the good ones, they have the point, but then I needed to be the facilitator, and I had to make sure their points are alright because sometimes the points can be very controversial. The drawbacks are time consuming number one, and number two you are the master of your classroom. You set ground rules. We work within this, if you say come up with something within 20 minutes; they have to come out with something within twenty or twenty five minutes not within 60 minutes. Then your lesson is gone. What is the point of you having debate, you sitting there preparing your lessons for the whole week and the kids are not learning anything?

**Interviewer:**

So do you think that debates can help to motivate students to speak English more confidently?

**Teacher 4:**

Yes definitely it motivates kids, the good ones. It also helps critical thinking and when I say critical thinking, it's HOTS, higher order thinking skill. Last time it was CCTS which is critical creative thinking skills. The kids, when it comes to gadgets, I'm not as good as my daughter. They are very fast because it's their thing, okay? So same goes with debate. It helps to build the language as well as their confidence. Over years or maybe over weeks or months definitely, the shy ones sometimes they want to try. Of course, in the good classes like I said you have four eight twelve kids the rest are audience don't take the same students. Each time you do debates, choose a different group of students. They all have a chance. When you set down groups like that, they know oh no way i'm gonna be exempted my turn will come now or later so I need to be prepared. No point of getting good grades if you don't have the soft skills. So yes, debates can help motivate students to speak English more confidently.

**Interviewer:**

Thank you so much Sir for helping me with this interviewer and sharing your feedback.

**Teacher 4:**

No problem Anne, take care.

## TEACHER 5

### Interviewer:

Can I know, in your years of teaching English, what specific methods have you employed when teaching your students' English speaking skills?

### Teacher 5:

Okay, when I first started I could do debates and drama and all that. That went well like say 15 years ago, that was good because proficiency was there. Students could speak English well. So that was good. And it was very interesting. And students enjoyed it a lot. In fact, they used to ask me to have more of those kind of classes. But now, I find that I can't do that anymore. I can't have debates. Even speech, even having speech is becoming quite difficult, because proficiency is not there. And especially, I wouldn't say it's only with vernicular schools, public schools is also the same. So I've tried a few times doing debate. It was a disaster. And they just can't speak, they have a lot of difficulties coming up with ideas. And so I've given up on that. I don't do that anymore. As per speech. Yeah, I still do it. I can't do impromptu with them, because they just cannot speak. They have to go back home, I have to give a title, go back home, prepare. And what they do is they memorize and come back. So it's not just talking, it's all memorizing. And now, some of them even have to hold the papers and and talk. So that's how it is nowadays. So what I do is I give them the title, go home and prepare and come. So at least they are talking, you see. And another thing I do is I ask them questions like how was school? How did it go today? What did you do? So in that way, they are not very self conscious. So they are talking to me, even though English is not so good, but still, they are making an effort to talk, you see. So in this way, I find that they are not very self conscious. So they're just talking to me, telling me what happened. And it's all in English.

So I find that helps them to speak at least, instead of speaking in Tamil or Malay or Chinese, they're trying their best.

**Interviewer:**

Teacher, as you've mentioned you are familiar with debates right; could you share a bit of what you know about debates?

**Teacher 5:**

Well, of course you divide them into two groups, you give them a title and then you ask them to debate on the title.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, so based on your understanding of debates teacher, do you think that debates are a suitable tool for helping students to enhance their speaking skills?

**Teacher 5:**

Well, if you ask me about students these days, I don't think it is. Because one, especially, like I said, nowadays, proficiency is not there. So it is not working out at all. So that is not really helping them. Where debate is concerned, they get up to talk, and then they become so silent. They just can't seem to talk. So I don't see how it is going to help students who are weak in English, especially.

**Interviewer:**

Based on your previous point, instead of debates what alternative method do you think would be most appropriate especially when teachers are looking to enhance students speaking skills?

**Teacher 5:**

I think it's more like something that they feel comfortable to talk about instead of things that they have to find points and talk about. Just talk about day-to-day things with them. Things they are comfortable talking about, so I think that makes them want to speak English. Like I said it doesn't make them become self-conscious. I think just a simple conversation among students and teachers you know; sharing ideas as such. I think that way works better. That's what I do in my class and for students who can't speak English very well, I don't immediately correct them. If not they become very self-conscious when you do that. So I just let them speak, so I find that when I do that they all want to talk so I think that will help a lot

**Interviewer:**

Miss, if teachers do decide to implement debates, what do you think the benefits and drawbacks of implementing debates would be?

**Teacher 5:**

Benefits, I would say if the student can speak English very well and the student has good knowledge on the topic, I think that will boost the confidence of the students. Students who are not good in English and they do not have much knowledge on the topic, then it's going to affect them, they're going to be embarrassed and that is going to make them feel that they're not good enough and they may not want to try speaking English.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, thank you Miss and then we will move on to the last question. So, do you think that as you mentioned just now right it affects the student's confidence right. Do you think that debates can help motivate students to speak English more confidently?

**Teacher 5:**



Speak English more confidently is for students who can speak English well, so they will improve of course and students who do not speak English very well, I don't think that's going to help them because I see them struggling and they really get put off by it. They don't like debates. My experience because I've tried several times and I find that it's always a disaster. They just don't want it. They don't enjoy it because they just can't seem to get up and just speak about something. They cannot. They just can't seem to do it.

**Interviewer:**

Okay thank you very much aunty.

**Teacher 5:**

No problem.

## **TEACHER 6**

### **Interviewer:**

First of all, a very good morning Miss. Could you please provide your name and the school that you taught at?

### **Teacher 6:**

Good morning, my name is Nurullashkeen Binti Mohd Anis. For the secondary school that I have taught before was Tenbi International School. I taught Form 1 to Form 5 students English class.

### **Interviewer:**

As you mentioned, you taught English. Can I know how many years of teaching experience you had at the school?

### **Teacher 6:**

At the School, it was only for three years.

### **Interviewer:**

In your experience of teaching English for the students, can I know what specific methods you employed, especially when teaching them English speaking skills?

### **Teacher 6:**

When you talk about speaking activities, I like to do role playing. Then of course, they have to do presentation and the presentation basically it is also covered in their writing and also reading classes ok. So, for the presentation normally is either group presentation or individual the presentation. So they have to present their findings, sometimes if the reading comprehension questions require them to do summary writing so, they need to present their

summary. And when it comes to speaking, I do a lot of roleplay and other than that, it will be pair work. Once in a while, I will ask them to do, like, giving their opinion one by one, they will come to the front.

**Interviewer:**

Okay. So, are you familiar with debates Miss?

**Teacher 6:**

Yes.

**Interviewer:**

Could you share a little bit about what you know about debates?

**Teacher 6:**

All right. Debate I would say that debate focuses on topics that are very argumentative; whereby you can have two sides of the coin you know like either you agree or disagree. Basically when you talk about debate, the students are given chance to express the opinion and one team is giving their opinion and their viewpoints and the other team will be rebutting the points like giving the points against to the point that was stated earlier. So that is debate and normally they will have a chance to refute. They would have the opportunity for them to express their point and to refute their opponent's point so yeah I think that's debate that is my understanding of debate.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, thank you Miss. And so, based on your understanding of debates right Miss, do you believe that debates is a suitable tool for helping students to enhance their speaking skills?

**Teacher 6:**

Yeah, I think debate is an integrative skills. When we talk about integrative skills, you can cover so many things in debate. You can cover the writing aspect, the speaking aspect and also the reading part; because when you have this activity, this debate, when you come up with points, there is a need for you to do reading. In order for you to come out with the point and the support, the evidence. And debate is also good because when we talk about writing, we are doing argumentative writing. So the writing part is covered. I mean both are covered, They cover each other and when it comes to debate the speaking skills, I will say yeah. In debate, there are a variety of requirements that you need to do. You need to read, need to express your point, then you need to use certain expression to show agreement, disagreement, and you have to learn how to disagree politely. And of course debate, just like public speaking is that our representation requires intonation you know voice projection those kind of thing and body language.

**Interviewer:**

Alright. Miss, while you were a teacher did you ever incorporate debates in any of your classrooms, either formal or informal style?

**Teacher 6:**

Oh yes but I don't really do it like a debate. It started with like a forum kind of thing.

Whereby I combine it with role play, I create a situation; where by something to do with household chores. So this is a forum discussing who should be doing the housework. Should the students be doing the housework? Should the children be doing the house work? So I assign people to become the parents, the children, and also the school teachers; because sometimes kids they like to say I didn't do my work because I had to do a lot of houseworks. So in a way the forum does function like a debate whereby the child will be expressing their view whether they want to do the housework or not. Then when they say that they don't want

and the parents will start giving their own point this kind of thing. I told you just now I did teach the lower and upper secondary. For the lower secondary I make it as as a mini debate but for the upper secondary I have it like a forum because to me forum is a bit wider and you don't have preparation actually. But when when we talk about debate, you have time to prepare those kind of things. So yeah I do but it's a mini debate because of the time constraints.

**Interviewer:**

So how did you conduct the mini debates?

**Teacher 6:**

I call it mini debate due to the time constraints. So I limit the duration of them being able to speak. So what I did is like, I start with giving them a topic and then assigning them whether they are on the proposing or the opposing team and then of course I give the guideline. I think as you know there are so many debate styles. We have the parliamentary debate style, the rotary debate, those kind of things. So me, myself I'm not familiar with all this parliamentary, rotaries. So I just used a traditional method whereby like team A they have three people, the first speaker will get the chance to speak to introduce the topic and then to present the first point. Then it goes to the team B, the first speaker refute and proceed with their point and so on. After all the six speakers have spoken, the last speaker is the one who's going to wrap up, to summarize all the point and try to persuade that their stance is better compared to the other team.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, so Miss in your opinion, if teachers were to use debates for lower secondary students what do you think the drawbacks and benefits of using debates as a teaching tool would be?

**Teacher 6:**

Okay, in terms of benefits, okay, it's a lot because debate requires students to do critical thinking. It is a very HOTS activity because it's not sufficient for the student just to state their point. Homework is not good because of this. There is need for them to really elaborate and explain and also quoting some examples. Of course a debate also helps in the brainstorming session and I think this is a good practice to force students to think about points when doing writing. So debate is a hands-on kind of activity for a brainstorming because when you ask the students to write a paragraph or essay, you can't see the process of brainstorming. But when it comes to debating, they have no choice but to really prepare the points. So basically, that is one good thing. And of course, when we talk about debate, you have the combination of the verbal language and the non-verbal language which helps the students in overcoming their anxiety, their shyness, so that they will be very confident. And debate is one activity that will definitely force the student to speak because when you talk about speaking class, how you check their speaking fluency is to ask them to speak. So just by asking questions in class that will not help them but debate could help. Then I think due to the nature of debate having some topic that is controversial and argumentative it's like fighting; so students at that age they like to express their ideas and they want people to accept their ideas and if people reject their ideas, they would like to fight and try to defend their points. So that is very good. But of course, there is some sort of like a constraint, drawbacks of debate, especially in terms of time. If you prepare debate as a speaking, you can only cover a few students, all right? Like, for example, if we have two teams, you know one team of three and another of three, only six students are able to be covered. I'm not so sure how you can do a group debate because having three is already a chaos. So basically that in terms of time constraint. And of course in terms class control because you only have six of them doing the debate, what about the rest? You can't really like control and you must have a task for the students who are not

participating in the debate. So having only six people who are involved in this speaking skill, so the rest 24 of them are neglected. So that's the drawback in terms of time and it only covers a few participants. And another issue for a debate is in terms of the choice of topic because sometimes as I mentioned debate requires examples in evidence and support. So unless the students are very knowledgeable about things outside, then they will be able to come up with points. If not it's gonna be a very like one -sided kind of debate. Of course the other one is the proficiency of the students. Debate requires a string of sentences compared to if you are writing or if you are doing reading comprehension you have time to construct sentences to construct answers but when it comes to debate, yes you can construct the points but uttering the sentences requires a good foundation of the language. And of course the refutation part, when you listen to the other team saying a point and you want to refute you have to like immediately remember the point and construct sentences, so that will be a drawback for the lower secondary case. However, a debate could be something which is very good for the upper secondary because at that level they should be already like very good in constructing sentences.

**Interviewer:**

So Miss overall, do you think that debates can effectively motivate students to speak English more confidently?

**Teacher 6:**

Yes definitely, because when you talk about speaking, you need something that is very conducive and it really has a meaning towards the skill. So activities like role play, debate, it's the best, I know our representation because Because it will definitely require the students to speak, you know. And I think, I don't know, personally I enjoy, doing debate, okay. And of course the extroverts would definitely love debate okay, but not the introverts because they

would be very shy to give their point of view, those kind of things. But personally, it is an effective way.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, last question is besides debates, right? What alternative method would you suggest for teachers that you think is appropriate for teachers to use or for them to enhance their students' speaking skills?

**Teacher 6:**

Role play would be a good idea, but then role play, one thing is the students might have problems in writing the dialogues, the scripts, okay. Because unlike debate you just need like one point and then you just elaborate you know this kind of thing for one person but when you when you talk about role play it requires dialogues it it requires practices you don't in terms of time rather than debate debate you can have spontaneous debate very very easy all right and And then role play okay but still there are some drawbacks okay. Impromptu speech could be a good idea but not for you know students with high anxiety level okay and another one maybe in terms of oral presentation could be some sort of a good idea of doing speaking activity.

**Interviewer:**

Alright that was the last question Ms and thank you for your time.

**Teacher 6:**

Okay, thank you so much for having me.



## **TEACHER 7**

### **Interviewer:**

Okay, so first of all, a very good evening, could you please provide your name and the school that you're currently teaching at?

### **Teacher 7:**

My name is Priyanika and I'm currently a year four home-room teacher at Sayfol International.

### **Interviewer:**

Can I know what subject you teach as well as how many years of teaching experience you have?

### **Teacher 7:**

Okay, I teach English, Math, Science and Social Studies. In school, this is my first job, so I started in January. But prior to this, I was a tutor since 2019. While I was a teacher, I taught English, Math, History and Economics to secondary school students.

### **Interviewer:**

Okay, so in your experience of teaching English, what specific methods have you employed when teaching your students the speaking skills?

### **Teacher 7:**

For speaking, I used different means because some students they are more comfortable when it comes to telling you about their personal life. So I think with those students it motivates them more to talk when its about their personal life as opposed to something formal so I tend to tailor the lessons according to my students. So the students who are more comfortable

telling stories and sharing their life I give them certain periods of time for them to tell me about their weekend or a holiday. Usually it's about the weekend because this speaking lesson tend to happen in the Monday class and that method of teaching has followed through to my job now although it's not a requirement with the job but I find that it opens students up a little bit more. So it's more for personal connection so they feel comfortable with you but some students they are not comfortable sharing their personal life, which is also okay as it depends on the person. But so with those students they are more comfortable when you give them a topic and sometimes with those who are less proficient you need to provide some speaking points as well. So I tend to give them a time frame because if you don't give a time frame then the speech ends in like 10 seconds. So I usually tell them you're required to speak for a minute or depending on the age group two minutes. Then I give them time to prepare and then they provide me with their speech, so both ways are different methods of getting them to talk because ultimately with speaking it doesn't really matter and along the way I don't interrupt them during their speech because it muddles the flow of their speech. Whether it's about their weekend or whether its a formal topic, I let them speak and I write down points as I go along. So I correct them like oh when you said this you were actually meant to say this or you could have said these would have sounded better so they take the points in their stride and go alone so it is usually a one -to -one sort of lesson even though it the group setting you You know what I mean?

**Interviewer:**

Yes, I understand. Yes. Okay. So, Miss, are you familiar with debates and if so, could you share some insights into your knowledge of debates?

**Teacher 7:**

Okay, yes. I am very familiar debates because throughout my schooling years from what age, from 12...from 12 to 17, I was very heavily involved in debate. When I was in upper secondary, I was part of a team that represented the state. So, yes, and I'm very familiar with debate

**Interviewer:**

Okay, could you share a little bit of what you know about debates?

**Teacher 7:**

What I know of debates. So you mean like rules?

**Interviewer:**

Yes, like how it's applied.

**Teacher 7:**

Okay. Debates tend to have two teams. So you have the government team and you have opposition team. Government team basically means that you are supporting the topic being debated about and the opposition if you're opposing the topics being debated about. I assume this is similar in all cases but with the teams that I was a part of, you had three speakers. You have first speaker, second speaker and third speaker. First speaker only provides points, second speaker provides point and rebuttal, so they rebut. If you are the government team, you will rebutt the points of the first speaker of the opposition team. And the third speaker, only provides rebuttals, so you basically are viewing against every point provided by the opposing team whether you're part of government or the opposition teams. I was, for the most part, placed as the third speaker, so most of my experience lies with being the second speaker. So it's mainly rebuttals. I don't have any points, like with the first speaker and second speakers of both teams, you have to have points prepared beforehand on the topic. But

with a third -speaker, you had no points. So, it is very much an impromptu thing. You have listen to what the other person is saying, and you've to fight them on it. I say fight, but you can't actually go into a screaming match or insult the other person. It's just mainly you disagreeing with their points and it's very professional, very non-insulting. Although there are debaters who will try and slip in insults here and there, but, you cannot curse the person out or anything like that. It is just very professional and very well mannered. But yeah, that's basically the idea of how a debate works.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, thank you. So as a teacher, have you ever incorporated debates in your classroom either formally or informally?

**Teacher 7:**

Yeah I have when I was tutoring public school students. For the most part I would say if we divide students as low achievers, medium achiever and high achievers, I would say for the most part, my students were low achievers, so their proficiency in English was not very good. So with those students, it's very hard to incorporate debate because debate involves a lot of speaking and a lot opinions and being able to articulate your points well in the given language which is English. But I did have a class where I would say it consisted of medium achievers and high achiever. So with that class, I tried incorporating debate. And I would say, so how I tend to place it is I do it in a formal setting because I feel like, personally I think that if you allow for a group of students to have debates in an informal sense, it will involve calling the other teams stupid or whatever it may be, if your point is stupid or things like that, which then it becomes personal and it doesn't help the case at all. So the debate that I organized was always in a formal setting, so your speech had to be formal as well. So that just means no insulting, no, you know, anything extremely negative doesn't come into play. So, the way I

arranged it was the team members, I put the medium -achieving students in the first speaker position, and usually the high achievers go in the third speaker position because with third speaker you need a lot of critical thinking and you need quick thinking as well. You can't have somebody who can't articulate their points quickly. If you have someone who needs to take time to think about it, you can't be a third speaker. So that's usually how I organize it and I would say it's gone pretty well. I have had debates with two classes actually and I have had them ask to have debates more often. So I think because you're set in a team the focus is not entirely on you as one person, so you work as a team and it gets quite exciting at least for me it was always exciting so I wasn't sure whether it will translate the same way for my students but it did. So, and even students who are not too keen on speaking tend to get a bit enthusiastic about the whole thing. Because even though your speech is not personal or a personal attack, you get very attached to the topic that you're debating about. So I would say it has gone well because I have gotten speakers, students who are not, very talkative or anything like that to speak quite a bit.

**Interviewer:**

As you mentioned right since you have used it in the classroom before, was it in a way helpful to examine your students speaking proficiency?

**Teacher 7:**

Good question, hard to answer question um has it allowed me to test them? I would say so. You know why even though I'm not actually taking down, like I don't have a rubric that I am following throughout this debate because they're always an impromptu thing and it's not in the lesson plan so you don't have a rubric prepared. But by hearing them speak so much more than they would in a regular day-to-day class you are able to assess them better, you're able to tell where they go wrong. For example, like some students have issues with differentiating he

and she; instead of he they're saying she or you may have students who have issues with the tense, the past and present tense that sort of thing. So throughout the debate, as they are talking, you as a teacher, you are just sitting there listening, you're not intervening at all, because obviously you can't interrupt the debate. So you just sit there and listening and it gives you a lot more room to pay attention to how they're speaking, as opposed to when in class and you have a student talking during your lesson or whatever it is. So with debate, it sort of gives you a third person perspective on their speech, so you can tell a lot better where their errors lie.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, thank you. So, the next question is, based on your understanding of debates, do you believe that debates are a suitable tool for helping students to improve their speaking skills?

**Teacher 7:**

It very much depends. I would say it very depends, it has to be a class-by-class basis or majority of the medium level when it comes to the English language. If your proficiency is very low, then no you can't use debate as the method of teaching because nothing is going to come up. Because they can barely form sentences in the English language. Let's say you you're teaching a class in a this is not me being judgmental but it's me realistic if you are teaching a class in rural area where most of the students don't use English as a first language or second language then you can't use debate as a method of teaching because the reality is nothing is going to come out of their mouth. They are not going to know what to say you know or how to say even. But if you have students who are at least a medium proficiency or high proficiency then you can use debate as a form of teaching because it opens them up even more to keep speaking. And with debate, it's always the case that once you start, it is very hard to stop talking because you know a lot about the topic and you are involved, especially

when the topics... It's also important... Sorry, I'm digressing a little bit, but it also is important that the topics that you provide your students with are topics they can relate to. In official debate competitions, the topics are not always things that the students can relate to, but they are still topics that are provided. But I think if you are using it in your lesson, it has to very much be topics that are in their world that is related to the student. So that way, even if we have students who are of medium proficiency, they can relate to the topic and they can talk about it. So that way it's fine to incorporate it in the lesson and I do think that it will allow them to improve. It's also very important that if you are using debate in your lesson that you take the time after the debate. So as a teacher, yes, you will have a bit more work because you have to take time during the debates to write down, okay, this speaker, these students, what did they say, where did their errors lie, what they can improve and you have to do that with each student. So if you provide them with the feedback then yes it will be a very what's the word it will be a very suitable tool for them to improve their language because it's coming from the heart. I know that sounds too cheesy but if their speech is coming from the heart it is a really impromptu thing. So it really depends on the situation. If you have low achievers, learners who have very low proficiency in the language, you can't use debate as a means of teaching. I think if speech-wise you will have to do a more one-to-one thing. But with medium achiever and high achievers, yes you can use debates, but like I said, the topics that you provide has to be existing in their world, in their life, and also as I said you have to take the time to correct everything that they have said to provide them with feedback on their speech and feedback that is detailed as well. You can't just say that oh okay you need to fix your tenses, oh you need to fix your..your he's and she's you need to fix um your is and are; whatever it is you have to be more detailed about it for them to be able to improve in their next debate.

**Interviewer:**

Okay thank you. Okay so uh the next question is what in your opinion are the benefits and drawbacks of using debates as a teaching tool if teachers use it.

**Teacher 7:**

Okay linking back to what I said previously if you are going about it in a sense where you're not bothered whether they are low proficiency students or they're high proficiency students, you are choosing to use debates then there will be drawbacks. Because, if you have a class that is very very mixed, where you have a lot of low proficiency students and a lot medium or high proficiency student, you using debate will prove to be a downfall to the low proficiency students. Because with..with speaking a language also comes the emotional side of it, where you feel ashamed or you feel embarrassed. That person is better than me, that person can speak better than I can. What am I going to say? You know, and what will end up happening is the students of low proficiency will end up drawing back into their shell even more because it's embarrassment and you can't tell the students don't be embarrassed just speak. Psychology doesn't work like that, the human brain and emotions don't work like that. So in that sense there are drawbacks to it as well. But it really depends, it really really depends on students. If you have students of low proficiency who are not embarrassed to try, who are NOT embarrassed to speak. They're like, you know, it doesn't matter. So what if my language is bad? I'm still gonna try. If you have students like that, then yes, it will work out well. But if you have students who are embarrassed and you keep forcing debate into their lessons, it will not go anywhere. It would only force them deeper into their shell and it would not allow for them to improve their English language, whereas or whatever language that is being used in the debate. Whereas if you are taking into account the state of mind of your students, the proficiency of the students the topics that you're providing and the way you are providing feedback, then yes it can be very beneficial because like I said earlier with debate there is a lot more speech than someone speaking to you one -to -one with a formal topic being



provided. Because it is very much unprepared, it's very much based off of their current knowledge on the language. So if you provide feedback to that and you give them room and time to work on it before the next debate rolls around, then yes it can be very beneficial. That being said, I think a lot of...this is just my opinion and it's also not a generalization. I'm not saying all language teachers are like this, but there are language teacher like this because they are very proficient in the language as a teacher. Obviously, if you are teaching the English language, my personal opinion is that your English has to be really, really good. If your English is sub -par or below average, you shouldn't be teaching a language. So taking into account teachers who are very proficient at a language. Sometimes there is also the, how to put this nicely, there's also a certain arrogance that comes with it. My teachers tend to think, oh my God, why is my students so dumb? Why are you like this? Why don't you know better? If you are using that as a means to provide feedback, if you are incorporating insults or demeaning your students when you're providing feedback..it's not going to go anywhere. Because your students are going to feel ashamed, your student are going feel small about themselves. So when you provide feedback, it has to be very black and white. And you also have to make sure your students know that, so what if you're bad at the language? So what if you're poor at the language. There's always room for improvement. You need to makes sure you students feel. Because debate can be a very harsh thing. Your opposing team is always going to try and drag you down they are always going to try and prove you wrong. That's literally the whole point of debate. So there there's already going be a bit of sense of shame, you know, or sense of alah I should have said this, I should've done this better, maybe I should have said this. And then when you are providing feedback, if you're sitting there as a teacher, shooting them down and being like, oh, come on now, why do you speak like this? Why are you saying like that? You are adding to the shame. Then there is not going be any benefit to it. So I know my answer is not exactly black and white and I'm not giving you

point -by -point answers but I think from what I said you can see the benefits and disadvantages of debate. It relies very heavily on how as a teacher, because as the teacher you are the chairperson of the debate, you're the one sharing the debates. It's very important how you handle it because with debate competitions nobody cares whether you're feelings are hurt, nobody cares, whether you are improving at your language, but with the classroom setting debate you have to care about this. You have care about the psychological impact that a debate can have on your students, you have the care, about how your feedback is affecting the students. Whether it's going to push them further into their shell or whether it is going to make them realize that, so what? You know, everybody can improve at anything If you make sure your students know that these debates that you are organizing in your class is a safe space for your student, then debate will be very beneficial because it goes back to earlier saying that with debate, there's a lot of talking, so it's easier for you to assess. It's easier for them to practice. So it falls back on both the students and the teachers. The students need to be comfortable enough to speak and the teacher needs to be kind enough and not arrogant to provide feedback that is actually beneficial instead of just throwing insults at the student.

**Interviewer:**

Okay for the next question is do you think that debates can effectively help to motivate students to to speak English more confidently.

**Teacher 7:**

Can you repeat the question?

**Interviewer:**

So do you think that debates can effectively motivate students to speak English more confidently?

**Teacher 7:**

I think it can. I'm not saying it will. It's not a 100% thing. But I think it can. All my answers tie into each other. It goes back to the teacher, the position of the teachers, how you are organizing the debate. What rules you're putting in place for the debate, if you keep at it, when you make sure your rules are not favoring the high achiever students or the high proficiency students, you have to make it clear you aren't favoring anybody. You are just there to provide feedback on the language and see who has done a better job at debating. That is it, that is your position as a teacher. If you can make that clear, with the first debate you organize, no. Of course, it will not give them the motivation to speak the language better, because debate is a very harsh thing. It can be an offensive thing, even though your language, or, you know, your very polite and things like that, it can still be a really intense thing but as you go along with a few rounds, you keep organizing it maybe on a weekly basis or a, you know, fortnightly basis, if you keep going at it, and with each round, you're making sure that all of the students, whether they are low proficiency, high proficiency they know that it's a safe space. They know you, as a teacher, are not judging. Their peers are not judging, it is just a space to talk, to provide your points, and that's about it. I think if you can keep that going, And eventually it will allow.. it will motivate your students to speak more because they know there's no embarrassment. They know it's not going to come back and bite them, sorry, poor language, but bite them in the ass, you know. And you are not gonna have them saying or their peer saying or you saying, you using that against them. How come, alah, the other day during the debate you say this, this. You know if that's not going to happen, it goes back to it being a safe space, then yes, it will motivate them eventually because I'm using my answers are based off of the debates that I have organized and as I kept organizing debates with those

classes, I realized even the students who are introverts, who were not too keen on speaking, were pulled out of their shell and during debate they have so much to say, suddenly they have so much say. You know, and I did see improvement with these students with each round of feedback that I provided. The next round they are not repeating the same mistakes. Or maybe even in the next round, they repeated it, with me repeating the feedback over and over again. They stopped making those mistakes, so I think if you keep at it sometimes the first round that you organize will be an absolute failure, it will blow up in your face. You will have students who don't want to speak, you will have students who are talking rubbish, all this kind of thing. But if you don't give up and you keep at it, provided that you do see progress, like if you see no progress you might have to give up on trying debates. But, if you see even the tiniest bit of progress and keep at it. Yeah, it can be a great motivational tool for your students to talk because it's not personal. It's not shameful. You know, it's just a topic that two teams are debating about. That's about it.

**Interviewer:**

Thank you so much. Okay, so we'll move on to the last question. So, lastly, what alternative method would you suggest is appropriate for enhancing students' speaking abilities besides debate?

**Teacher 7:**

As opposed to debate, okay. Let me think. Oh, you know what is a good method that I realized that actually funnily enough I only..I used it this week. Yeah, I used it this week with my students..focus groups. Because if you are in a classroom setting, do you know what is a focus group? Sorry, I'm not being insulting ,I'm generally asking.

**Interviewer:**

Is it like discussion?

**Teacher 7:**

Yes it's basically you provide...you can provide each group with a topic or you it is actually a method this is irrelevant sorry I'm just telling you this in case you want to do it for your master's or whatever. But it's actually a method that is also used in research so you have surveys and then you have interviews one -to -one interviews but you also have focus group. So focus group is sort of like an interview but it's in a group setting where you provide very very few questions like with a one -to -one interview maybe you have ten questions but with focus group maybe only three or four questions and you throw the question at the group and their answers are actually done bouncing off of each other. So one person may say something and then another person is like oh you know you made a good point. Actually you can also say this..this..this..this and then another person is like no but I don't actually agree with you, I think that it's this you see. So that's what a focus group is so you have very minimal questions where your job in that position is to make sure that they don't go very far off topic and nobody is hurting each other nobody's offending each other. That's literally your jobs. So you produce very few questions and they bounce off of each other, adding more and more details, more and more opinions to the topic that you have provided. So this is something that, this is something that if you choose to do your master's in the future. Or going back to question, this what I used for my class the other day. So the topics that I use for my classes, what are some problems that you see in this school or in the classroom that you think you as a student as a year four student can help solve or can help improve. So I did add a few things here and there so they have some sort of an idea because they're nine year old kids after all, right? So they had some kind of idea and you put your students in groups where you know that they are comfortable with. They can be groups of friends, they can groups or people who just hang out in class or whatever it is. You put them in groups that they are comfortable with don't go and

put a bully and a victim together in one group that's not gonna go anywhere lah, you know. But if you put them in groups they're comfortable with and you just listen, listen in to what they are saying..you will realize that they're speaking a lot ]. But like I said earlier with debates, with one -to -one speeches, with informal or formal speeches; you have to have to provide feedback. Otherwise that;s not a lesson, that is not going anywhere you know there's no improvement. But with focus groups, there is a lot of speech that will happen. In fact, I do think with focused groups it can be even more beneficial than a debate because a debate is a very formal thing; depending on the teacher lah, whether the teacher wants to hold an informal debate or what. Personally I think informal debates are harder to control but up to the teacher, but with focus group because students are close to each other because the students have a personal relationship they are comfortable with each other so they will bounce off of each each others ideas a lot and during my lesson the other day I got so much information out of them that it actually helped with the project that they were doing. So the question that I provided was actually for a bigger project later on but it provided so many more opinions than when I asked them to write down their answers just like that; you know you..you think about it, you write it down in your exercise book. I got very few answers. The question only had like one or two answers per student. But with focus groups, each student was giving out five, six answers, so there's a lot more speech involved. And if you take the time, you don't hold the focus group simultaneously. You don't say if there are five groups in your class, five of them are having focus groups at once. No. You make sure the focused groups are happening one at a time where you can sit down and take down points for what you need to give them feedback about. So it is a very good alternative method. All of these things because they are not your mainstream method of teaching, it can be hard for the teacher because it involves a lot more work. It involves a lot more attention. No longer just I talk you listen. If you talk I listen, so you have to be in the mental space to handle that. So if

you are incorporating it into your lessons, you can use debate. You can use one -to -one speeches and you can focus groups. Personally, I think focus groups are very very beneficial because in a group setting, even if they are not comfortable with each other initially, as the conversation is going along, people will want to start providing their opinions, their feedbacks, whatever it is. So focus group is a good alternative to debate, in my opinion

**Interviewer:**

Okay so that's all for the interview and thank you so much for helping me to answer my interview.

**Teacher 7:**

No problem I hope my answers were helpful, I'm not sure my brain is kind of foggy from being out all day.

## **TEACHER 8**

### **Interviewer:**

Good afternoon Sir. First things first Sir, could you please provide your name and the name of the school that you're currently teaching at?

### **Teacher 8:**

My name is Nanda Kumaran, I am 69 years old, I had taught in school for 8 years when I started my teaching career and I was a lecturer at a teacher's training college for 20 years where I taught English to the teacher trainees and finally as a principal of an upper secondary school where I also taught English for 6 periods a week as required by the ministry.

### **Interviewer:**

Okay, sir. Can I know how many years you've been teaching English for, sir?

### **Teacher 8:**

English, 36 years.

### **Interviewer:**

36 years, wow. Okay, in your experience of teaching English right sir, what specific methods have you employed when teaching your students the speaking skills?

### **Teacher 8:**

Okay, speaking skills actually, all the skills, the four skills are intertwined. The reading, speaking, listening and writing skills are all intertwined. We can not separate them because there's no such thing as one skill without the other. When you speak, you read, you write out. That's writing the skill. You see? When you read, that's your reading skill. And then when you speak, all the skills are used in tandem. It is just that which skill precedes the other skill.



So, in our syllabus, in the Malaysian syllabus, much of it, even though the syllabus is based on the four skills, you can look at the syllabus as I've seen from 1979 until 2015. Most of the syllabus is written, is the writing. Of course, they have part of it for reading, reading comprehension, and then of course there are parts for speaking. But as you know, a class full of 40 students does not leave the teacher any liberty for going to speaking very much. So, speaking is one of the most underused skills. Most of the time it is writing, reading. You know, writing, reading. And then of course, listening is always there. Whatever activity, listening is part and parcel, whether directly or indirectly. So, speaking has to be very focused on. You see, now with the CEFR syllabus, the listening and speaking skill marks awarded are about 50%. So, but before this, it was only 10%. So, teachers, they say, well, I'm going to concentrate on my syllabus. And the syllabus, which is mostly on reading comprehension and writing, they don't have the time to focus on the speaking. Only speaking is during question, technique, question, technique. They ask the students, tell the students answer. So, the actual speaking process is very, very limited, not because the teacher does not want to do it. It is because of the constraint in the syllabus. If you look at your form 1 from 2, and form 3 syllabus, it is the...you see. The first part is, what do you call it, objective question, ABCD. ABC, in fact, that's reading, reading comprehension. The second part is error analysis. That is also reading comprehension. It is grammar activity. Then you are filling the blank with 3 words and 5 words. That's also reading comprehension. And the last part is filling in like a passage and you fill in the right phrases. So, where does that give rise to speaking? Unless it's form 5, yes. Form 5, it is 50% speaking. Teachers are moving on to the speaking as much as they can. During my time, I used all the skills. I used all the skills, listening, speaking, reading, writing and vocabulary. You know, I have written vocabulary, I have written grammar. So, that's how you teach English in totality. You can not have one without the other three. Or three without the other one. Then that's not called language teaching. In college, I

was training the teacher trainees at a diploma level. And also the KPLI students who come and do their major KPLI English. So, we are very focused. The service provided by bahagian pendidikan guru is very focused and all the skills are emphasized. So, it's important. But the thing is that speaking, when the students are not proficient in English, they hate to speak. You ask them to speak. There are so many grammatical errors and structural errors. And most of all, confidence level. They don't have the confidence to speak. But when they write, they write better than they speak. When they answer, they write essays. Oh, they write not bad. They write as much as they can. When they answer grammatical questions, oh, they answer. When it comes to listening, of course, it is a touch and go, you know. Listening, it has to be trained. Listening has to be trained. And then when they ask them to sit for listening test, they miss out many of the answers because they are unable to catch the sentences; all the speakers. If they're native speakers, it's much better. Many of the listening text are by foreign speakers or speakers of first language. So with a bit of slang, our students get lost. And then speaking, now they are training. At form 4 and 5 levels, but I'm sad to say form 1,2 and 3, even after I retired and for nine years I'm teaching tuition from standard 2 to form 5. That means I know the primary school syllabus, I know the lower secondary school syllabus, I know the SPM syllabus, I also know the MUET syllabus. So speaking is a lot to be desired and I wish the teachers had more time to activate their speaking skills.

**Interviewer:**

Okay sir thank you for your answer sir. Sir in terms of speaking rights sir are you familiar with debates as a tool to help improve/ enhance speaking skills?

**Teacher 8:**

Actually, being a teacher trainer, I am a master teacher trainer in college. You know, *pensyarah pakar*, I'm also head of languages department in a teacher's training college,

which means I have the English lecturers, the English lecturers, the Chinese lecturers, the Tamil lecturers, the part of the Malay lecturers under me. So, there are a lot of activities you can do. There are a lot of techniques you can do. There are a lot of methods you can do, there are a lot of strategies you can use, there are a lot of approaches that you can use. So, when I am concerned, in college, we use all, in college, they are more mature students and they have to speak. There is no choice. So, when I am concerned, if you take me, for example, eventhough I was an English teacher. I schooled in the English region from standard one until university, until I did my first graduate diploma and then postgraduate diploma in TESL and master's in management, which was all done in English. So, I am well versed with the English language. So, I am also versed with the techniques and methodology of teaching English. Debate is only one of the methods, singing is one of the methods, poetry recital is one of the methods, storytelling is another method, question and answer is another method, public speaking is another method. So, for me, as I am concerned, personally, I won't speak for other teachers. When I was in form two, I was a school debater. That means, form two, I was 14. And form three, I was still representing the school. And then, form four, form five, I went on to another school. And I was also the school debater. And I was also the, in form six, I was a school actor. So, you see, because I am very based in linguistic activities, debate is part and parcel of me. And I became an orator. I am not only a debater, I am an orator. I run many courses on speaking, on public speaking and all that. So, when it comes to debate, of course, from my point of view, since I am very versed in debate, the preparation of debate, the old debate format and the new parliamentary style speaking, I am very well versed to it. So, I go for it. The teachers should use debate as a means of enhancing and enriching the English language. But then, Ms Christianne, the teachers do not have that time. As I was a principal, when I was the principal of SMK St Thomas for ten years, I used to observe my teacher's teaching. And I look at the syllabus. No, they don't have the time to do other

activities. Other than what activities, suggested in the syllabus. Of course, they have you know the speaking syllabus. Ask the students to speak about this, speak about that. That's all speaking. Just speaking is different from debating. It's different from story-telling. It's different from public speaking. Speaking is, I ask you a question, you answer, what is your name, where do you come from, what do you like to eat, tell me about your family, tell me about your dreams, your ambition. That part can be speaking, but debate is very specialized. And if it's a good English teacher to promote debate as a means of enhancing the teaching of language, I certainly enhance my language through debate. Why? Number one, vocabulary. You have to have a very good command of vocabulary. The semantics, the words, you know. Number two, the structures have to be good. And then linguistic apparatus. You have to use linguistic methods in speaking. And then you have to be very confident. You have to know your points. And you must know how to deliver your points. So this helped me as a debater. So if you ask me a question, does debate help? Of course, I would say it helps. But the question now is, do the teachers have the time? Or are the teachers qualified in running a debate. Many of them don't know the old style of debating. And the new style of parliamentary debate. And many of them are just not proficient. That is to say, many of the teachers are not proficient. So what happens? I, yes, if only one part of the English language was on debate, on storytelling and public speaking, I would be overjoyed. One part of the English syllabus.

**Interviewer:**

Sir, based on what you've said about debates, right sir, would you say that debates are a suitable tool for helping students to improve their speaking skills? If not, what alternative method would you consider appropriate when teachers want to enhance their students' speaking abilities?

### **Teacher 8:**

Okay, number one you have the reading comprehension, start out with the reading. You have reading passage, forget about the comprehension. Ask them to read the passages with the correct enunciation pronunciation, you know, and intonation. You know, remember enunciation, pronunciation, and with the proper intonation. And when in doubt, I checked the handphone, they have the correct pronunciation. You can see what's called the British style, and I speak the way my teachers taught me. And not all my pronunciation are correct. You see the route, you see, which route did you pick? Now they say, which route did you pick? Huh? Router, router. There are many words, you know, the American English is different, the British English is different. But what, whatever, there are many ways. So you can start with the reading. The teachers must make sure they read, when they start the passage, when they start the English class, teach them reading. Make sure that the students are reading. Pick out the difficult words, the vocabulary, those words that the students have difficulty with. Put them on the board. Let the class repeat. Let them have, let them find out the meaning of the words. And then let them, the teachers have to pronounce the words, and the students have to do the pronunciation. And then divide the passage into paragraphs, ask the students to read. And I believe I was a master lecturer, and my area was cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is one strategy that really enhances teaching. That means four students; one very good student, two average students, and one poor, weak student. They are placed together in a group. And they start reading. The better student becomes the peer teacher for the other students. And I have implemented this in college, in school. So this one way to enhance teaching. Second is the teacher must teach. The teacher must read, and then students have to read. That's one reading. Then the next is, when you have questions and answers, the students have to answers. You must have very critical and creative questions, huh? Now we have a thinking skills question. And then questions must be open and closed questions. One would

answer is closed. You like or not? Yes, I like. What do you think about this? That's an open question. So when the students are encouraged to answer these open questions, they are, you are actually encouraging them to speak. You see, they are giving their views. It can be correct. It can be right or wrong. That's not a question. The question is, are they confident to speak? Most of my students stand up and go dumb. They become dumb and deaf. I say, what do you think about it? No answer. Do you like it and tell me why? No answer. So you see, basically, their abilities in English is very impaired. They are not good. So the teacher has to do it. The teacher works very hard. As an English teacher, it's never a thankful task. You know, you just have to go. You have to teach. Then the other thing is that you can ask them to speak. Public speaking. Talk about the topic. Ask them to speak. Okay, what did you know about the topic or the passage. Tell me what you understood about the passage. Come out. Anybody wants to speak. So you encourage speaking. Then you can have a peer speaking. Get a few students, good students out. Let them speak. And then slowly involve the weaker students. Then you have the songs. You see, I believe in songs. I can have 20 activities, language activities, based on the four skills, just based on a song. I can have listening, they listen. I can have speaking. They talk about it. I can have them to write about the song. And then I ask them to listen to the song. All the skills are there. And I also have vocabulary exercises based on the words in the song. And also grammar activities based on the song. And then the other thing is that, of course, public speaking. But then, where do we have time for public speaking? Ask the teachers, you will interview many teachers that are dying to finish the syllabus. If the syllabus is not finished, the head of department will chase after them. The panitia head will chase after them. Then the PPD will chase after them. Come on, go on writing. You need four essays a month. Where do you have time for speaking and listening? You spend your time on listening and speaking, there goes your writing. And when the inspectrate comes, they ask you, oh, you have only done one essay for the whole month.

When you're supposed to do so many essays for one year, so teachers are lost because of the syllabus functions found in the syllabus. Then, of course, you can have a small debate in the class. Public speaking no problems. Speak about effort. Speak about your parents. Speak about your hobbies. Speak about something based on the syllabus. You see, form 1,2 and 3, each topic is a topical, symmetrical. They have a theme for each topic. So after teacher's done, there are activities planned for the teacher. There are speaking activities. There are listening activities in the textbook. And CDs are given. And of course you can even scan the activities. But how many teachers do that? That's a very good question. I don't blame the teachers. I've been teaching English for how many years. It's a struggle. So when I teach, when I was in college, a lot of speaking. I gave them a lot of debate. I gave them a lot of public speaking, poetry recitals. They have to memorize their poem and come and recite the poem with a correct enunciation, pronunciation, and intonation, and whatever. With a feeling, the poem evokes the feelings, too. Not just basic reciters, with feelings, with empathy, with sympathy. But then, it's so difficult. Of course, you ask me, does debate enhance? Of course, it enhances. But if there are 40 students, how many of them are given an opportunity to speak? How to debate? Even in school, the debating society. If only students are good in debate, they will debate. The others are just passers by or onlookers.

**Interviewer:**

So, in your years of teaching right sir, have you ever incorporated debates in your classrooms either formal or informal?

**Teacher 8:**

Oh yes, I've did it before. I was a debater you see, the difference from any normal teacher, any other teacher is because I was a debater when I was in a form 2, 14 years old. So normally when I finish a topic, when I finish a topic, I will I divide the class into two groups.

Proposals and opponents, do you agree or disagree? And I involve a whole class to talk, whatever they talk, let's start talking. Because you have to understand, a debate is not just a team of three person or four students. A debate can be more than a few students. It can be between classes. If it's between a class, do you agree or don't agree? Science has done more harm than good, for example. That's a topic, the English topic, about science and progress making science. It's one topic in either the lower secondary or the upper secondary syllabus. Then once you've gone through the syllabus, the children know the pros and cons of science. Then you divide the class into two. But make sure both the classes have got same capability students. You can't have all the good students in one group and the bottom students in another group. That's a no go for debate. So you have to divide the class. Okay, Christianne you are the best speaker, you're in Team A. Then Nanda, you're the second best speaker, join group two. Then you divide so that both the groups are fairly and effectively divided. Both of the teams have their speakers. Then the teacher says, okay, now, the proposal. Start, okay, this group, speak. Then, of course, the opposing team, okay, this group, speak. Will you agree or don't agree? So that's one way of debating which I always do it. Because I'm very particular about it. I know about it, I trained debating teams in my school when I was a teacher from 1979, I trained so many debating teams. And most of the debaters went through me. Not only debating teams, drama teams as well. I used to write the drama, direct the drama, make the students act in the drama, as well as a poetry reciter, whether it's individual or group or person. Well, that skill has helped me very, very much. Like I'm very linguistically capable, I'm right brain. So I'm very linguistically capable. So, yes, I use. But I won't say every time, only when I finish the syllabus early. If I cannot finish the syllabus according to my *sukatan pelajaran*, you know you have your *rancangan kerja*, right? For the week. You can't be using a time for speaking when your syllabus for the week is not finished. The next week is already another syllabus, the theme for next week is different. So when I



have the time, when I finish, I have. But the days need not be one period or two periods. If we just have 10 minutes. Okay, let's have a short period. Okay, so debate can be a big group; in the class anybody stands up, who agrees or don't agree? You in the whole class, the debate can be in the whole class. Who agrees or not? Who agrees stand up? Who doesn't agree obviously, I don't agree. Then you divide the class into two groups or four groups or you can have a debating team of four students. Three speakers and one reserved, also you can do debating. But it is a lot of effort, energy, and capability. The teacher must be capable. The teacher himself or herself must have debating skills. If you ask me, yes, definitely I will say yes, because I am biased. Because I was a debater. So 30+ years I'm teaching English, what's the big issue? I have presented papers in many, many forums and meetings and all that. So I am quite used to it. But new teachers, I am not sure.

**Interviewer:**

Sir, since you have used debate in your teaching right sir, would you say it is helpful to gauge or to examine students speaking proficiency?

**Teacher 8:**

It all depends, how many students are involved in your debate? If there are only three and three, these three students will definitely enhance their English or linguistic ability. It will enrich their linguistic ability, they will promote their ability to speak. But what about the rest? What about the rest? You cannot summarize and say, okay, the whole class has improved. Oh, no, they *cikgu*. No. The whole class has not improved. But the whole class might have improved their listening skills. Because they listen to the debating. Even though they are not speaking, they have not spoken, they don't have confidence, they don't have the ability, linguistic ability to speak, but at least they listen. And then, with a teacher, when the

students are debating, or three, three students are debating, the teacher can ask the other students, please note down the point. That must be their writing skills. They are listening, they are writing. They might not be speaking. So, you see, the other skills are used. So, but, enhances all the students speaking ability, I would tend to disagree. Only those students who are involved, definitely. My debating team members are fantastic. They get band six in MUET and SPM, they get A+, and A's, and A+, at minimum. Most of the debaters, either they get A or A+. Why? This debate has enabled them to improve tremendously. And they choose topics about debate, you know. They choose topics that need critical and creative writing. And they have already been trained in it. But all, I wouldn't say yes, because not all are involved in the debate. But definitely, I am very positive. Small debate, class debate. Once a while, encouraged. One week once. Not too much to ask. Simple debate. Divide the class into two teams. And then you have numbers, you know. How do you want to speak? You give each student a number. If there are 40 students, you have your numbers 1 to 20 and 21 to 40. So, this team, they hold a number. And the other team, they hold different numbers. And then they say, okay, proposal number five, speak. So, he or she has to speak. And then, opposing, number 35, speak. So, you see, they are not choosing, but they are forced to speak. You tell them, whoever has the number, you better start speaking. So, they will listen carefully. They will try to say something. This is part of cooperative learning and cooperative teaching by Kagan, Johnson&Johnson, and all. So, I use cooperative teaching, cooperative learning, which should be used for debates as well.

**Interviewer:**

Okay, sir. Thank you so much. The next question is, what, in your opinion, are the benefits and drawbacks of using debates as a teaching tool?

**Teacher 8:**

If you look at the syllabus, you are doing, you are focusing on form 1 to form 3 right?

**Interviewer:**

Yes Sir.

**Teacher 8:**

Please look at the syllabus. How many activities are there on debates? Just look. Since you're doing a research, you must review the syllabus in Form 1. Please go through the syllabus in Form 2 and Form 3. Lookout for the activities there, there are a lot of suggested activities.

How many activities are debate -based? That you must, it's your duty to analyze the syllabus.

Is the syllabus debate -friendly. Is the syllabus, public -speaking -friendly. Is the syllabus, storytelling -friendly. So these are all these techniques that enhances the teaching of the

language. So it all depends on the syllabus and the time factor. Does the teacher have time?

Are the teachers competent to handle drama, most of my English teachers are not competent to handle drama or even debate for the matter. They are quite blur themselves. So it's the

blind leading the blind. I'm sorry, but that's what I tell my teachers. You have to be an

English teacher; it's a very creative teacher. English language teachers are very, very creative.

And use your creativity. Nobody is the same. Nobody is perfect. Nobody has the same

ability. But we all can learn. Even in my time, I'm still learning. I'm still teaching from

primary school to SPM level. I'm still learning. How much it is used? That's the question you

have to answer. You look at the syllabus, how much is used? But other teachers ask them, do

you know what's a debate? Have you been involved in a debate? Have you participated in a

debate? Were you a debater before? Did you attend any workshops on debating? Have you

trained the school debating team? Have you done debate in class? You ask them and you get

your answer, you know. You will get the answer from them. And most of them will go into

shock. And go into coma as well, or even going into hibernation. Sorry, I mean, that's why

I'm saying. Being an English teacher, like, you know, when the KPLI students come, you know, they are lawyers and accountants and engineers, but they choose to do English. They choose to become teachers. After their degree, four -year degree, and all that. So, you know, this is how I teach them. I make sure I make a mark in their life. I make sure I diversify my teaching techniques and strategies and approaches. And I have to be a role model for that. I have used all this so that students can look at me and say, oh, yes, we saw Mr. Nanda using this technique. We saw Mr. Nanda using the debate technique. We saw Mr. Nanda using a public speaking. We saw him using a questioning technique. We saw him dramatizing. We saw him acting. I'm a great actor, you know. I act in class. But I didn't get any awards. But at one time, I was chosen as the best actor in Pahang for drama, you know. Whole state. I represented my college, represented the school. I represented Pahang. And I was the writer, I was the director, and I was the main actor. And I was, and I was chosen as, and I was given the best actor award. Because we all just language. We are just English, we are into English, we are immersed into English. So, teachers must be very versatile. They must have the confidence. They must build up. But after a while, they do, they do catch up. There's no doubt about it. Maybe the first initial three years, they have lots of difficulties, you know. But then it's accepted. Even a maths teacher has got issues. A science teacher has issues. A bahasa teacher has issues. It's between learning, teaching and learning. They can go on teaching and teaching and teaching, but they never, they never stop to think, "have the students learn anything?" It's not a matter of teaching. It's a matter of learning. So, teaching and learning must coincide. Must coincide. Many teachers go in and teach, and teach, and teach. Then come outside, "okay, I've done my duty." But you have to ask the students, did you understand? Oh no, I don't understand. So, language is like that. But a teacher must be a clown in class. You must be a dramatist. You must be an actor. You must be a debater. You must be a storyteller. You must love teaching the language. Then, your class will love you

and will wait for you to come. That's how my students, you know, when I don't come, they come searching for me, even as a principal for 10 years. I taught 6 classes of literature, form 5 classes. The moment I'm not in a class, if 5 minutes I'm not in a class, please come searching for me. Maybe there's a parent in my room. Students just come and stand outside and say, knock the door and say, "Sir Nanda it's your class now." So, I tell the students, I'm sorry, I have to go. Can you wait? Because only you are waiting. There are 40 students waiting for me and they love to see me in their class. Because the pengetua transforms himself into a clown. The students enjoy their literature, novel, they enjoy. So, that's what you know. So, debating, of course, I agree. But how many teachers can do it? This is a question you must ask. The teachers can just answer you know, oh yes, debate is one of the techniques of teaching, one of the methods. I won't say technique, it is a method. If you use debating for one whole period, it becomes a method. If you're just using a short short while, it becomes a technique. Ahh, so, well, I hope more language teachers become more versatile. It makes your life happy, you know. But then you see, when you go in the class of 40 and my school last time got 10 classes, you go into the last class, you can be a clown, you can be an actor, you can be a dramatist, you will roll on the floor. But learning is very limited because the student's lack of proficiency in the language. But they'll follow you somehow. Of course, they'll improve. So, I hope when you become an English teacher, Christianne, you have to do well. I'll find out where you're teaching. I'll ask Christopher, where is your sister teaching? And I'll drop by your school and I'll talk to the headmaster or principal. I may ask him, can I observe the teacher teaching? I want you to be a good teacher.

**Interviewer:**

Thank you, Sir. Okay, so the last question is, do you think that debates can effectively, if it's used as a teaching method, do you think that debates can effectively motivate students to speak English confidently?

**Teacher 8:**

Okay. This has got yes or no. If you go for a weaker student, what debate you're talking about? You know, you've got five classes. The fifth class, they can hardly read, they can hardly write. Debate cannot be useful for them, for them, the public speaking will be more useful, speak about something. Debate might not be of use. Ah, you see, the students have different capabilities, different abilities. And some schools, they have streamed the students. My former schools, we stream the students. I mean, the science classes are best classes. And there are many classes, I mix them up so that they have multiple abilities, multi-ability classes. But only the good students can take on debate because debate is very specialized. Debate is a very specialized method. It's not question and answer. It's not reading. It is not public speaking. You have to think. You have to listen. You have to listen to the points. You have to deliver your points. And then you have to refute; the new one, the parliamentary style. There must be rebuttal. You must have the capability to rebut the opponent's points, which not all students can do it. So, I would say it has got a limited usage. Limited usage for schools, only for better students. Those students in a better class, I would definitely say hit the debate. Hit public speaking. Hit dramas, dramatization. You know, hit them. Hit all these activities. Hit singing. Let them sing. Get a nice, grammatically accurate, correct song. You know? So, few songs that are dramatically correct. A lot of English words and phrases and word clauses and structures. And this will help them very much. I use a lot of singing. I use a lot of singing, dramatizing, public speaking. And so, students are improving. The parents are very happy. I'm happy. Not just because the parents, because that's the way language should be taught. It's not what, what sort of a lecturer, an English lecture, a useless lecturer. When children look up to me. So, I have to walk my talk. And I still do. And I'm still very passionate about teaching even though I have retired for nine years now.

**Interviewer:**

That's all for the questions Sir, thank you so much for your help, it honestly really helps for my research, thank you so much.

**Teacher 8:**

No problem. You just think out of the box, you know, debate is part and parcel of the English language teaching. The teachers cannot say, no, no, that's wrong. Then number two, are the teachers capable? Are they trained? Then the other thing is that do we have the time for the debate. The constraints of the syllabus. And some teachers are not proficient in the English language. They cannot conduct a debate. They themselves, they have so much of errors, you know, as a teacher they make so much of errors, so many errors. Language and grammar and tenses and all that. So they themselves are not very confident. What we can do is, the school has to be supportive. We have to be supportive and train them. Give the motivation, yes, you can do it. And I believe all teachers will live up to the demands of a language teacher. I'm sure of that.

**Interviewer:**

Okay Sir, thank you so much Sir and have a good day sir.

**Teacher 8:**

No problem, have a good day and all the best!