

Employing Diverse Teaching Approaches in Debate Class to Enhance EFL Learners' Speaking and Listening Skills: Basis for Curriculum Design

Alvin G. Datugan¹ and Sureerat Talapngoen^{2*}

Faculty of Education, Nakhon Phanom University, Nakhon Phanom Province, Thailand¹

Faculty of Education, Nakhon Phanom University, Nakhon Phanom Province, Thailand²

*Corresponding author. Email address: toeytalapngoen@npu.ac.th

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Abstract

This study explored the diverse teaching approaches in debate class among EFL learners employing mixed-method research design. The data were gathered through questionnaires distributed to students, along with the open-ended questions and structured interviews to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions with diverse instructional approaches. The participants of this study were thirty-seven (37) third-year English major students from the Faculty of Education. The results revealed that extemporaneous speech activities, class lectures, and group presentations all positively impacted learners' speaking and listening skills. Among these approaches, group debates was reported as the most preferred approach, indicating a significant difference the EFL learners' perceptions and the diverse teaching approaches. The implications of these findings suggest that educators should prioritize integrating preferred teaching methods into the curriculum design to enhance EFL learners' debate performance and overall language proficiency. Recognizing and implementing diverse approaches, teachers can better address the different needs and preferences of their students, and most importantly a more effective learning environment. However, the study also faced some limitations. The sample size was relatively small and limited to a specific major at the university, which may restrict the generalizations of the findings. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data could introduce bias, as students might have provided socially desirable responses. Future researchers may aim to include larger, more diverse participants to further investigate the long-term effects of teaching approaches on EFL learners' speaking and listening skills. The conclusion of this research contributes to the understanding of how various teaching strategies can enhance speaking and listening skills, informing educators, school and university administrators in their efforts to improve EFL instruction.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language, Extemporaneous Speech, Listening Skills, Speaking Skills, Diverse Teaching Approach

Introduction

In the world of ever-changing educational landscape, effective communication skills are increasingly recognized as essential for personal and professional growth and success. The ability to articulate thoughts clearly and engage in both conversational and academic communication is critical, especially in the globalized world where English has become a lingua franca. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, mastering speaking skills is not only about language proficiency but also involves developing confidence, critical thinking, and the capacity to engage in meaningful discussions. Therefore, incorporating interactive learning activities, such as debates and presentations, into EFL curriculum is essential to promote these skills effectively (McNaughton, 2016)

In Thailand, where English language instruction has gained significant emphasis in the educational system, teachers are continually seeking innovative methods to enhance students' language proficiency. Intraboonsom et al. (2020) mentioned that teachers' classroom observation would be helpful in developing

students' metacognitive knowledge, suggesting metacognitive strategies and cognitive strategies, and giving them choices over their learning. Furthermore, Kirst et al. (2023) suggested that EFL should be more exposed and aware of the variety of English language to cope with the real situations. This statement was supported by Kongkerd (2013) stating that by allowing the learners should be exposed to different accents, and intercultural communicative situations rather than focusing on the grammar and pronunciation in reaching the goal towards efficacy and effectiveness in communication. The Thai government has been supporting English language education to prepare students for the global workforce (Basic Education Core Curriculum, 2008).

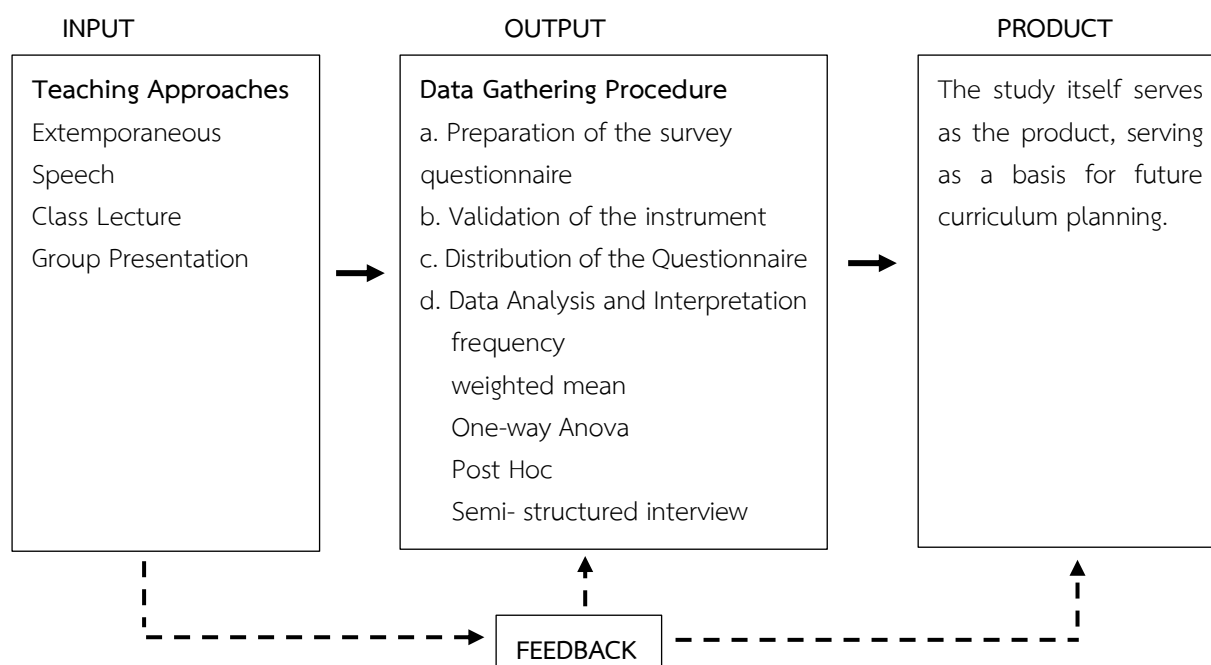
Modern approaches have been long implemented in other parts of the world (Dehham et al., 2021) however, traditional teaching methods often fall short in providing learners with the practical speaking opportunities they need to become effective communicators. This gap gives emphasis to the importance of integrating activities that encourage active participation, such as debates, into the curriculum. These activities not only enhance students' speaking skills but also promote collaboration and critical thinking, essential components of language acquisition (Liu & Littlewood, 2019)

The study explored the impact of debate activities on students' speaking skills, confidence, and overall engagement in a Thai EFL context. Through a mixed-methods approach, including quantitative questionnaires and qualitative feedback, the research aimed to identify the benefits and challenges associated with these interactive learning experiences. The findings revealed that debate activities significantly improve speaking skills, enhance students' confidence, and provide a better sense of collaboration. This research provides insightful values into effective teaching practices in EFL settings and gives emphasis on the necessity of adopting innovative approaches to language education.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used the IPO Model that presents the concept of this study. The Extemporaneous Speech, Class Lecture, and Group Presentation represent as the input. The process began with careful construction of the survey questionnaire making sure that it captures the study's objectives. It was followed by instrument validation, distribution of the survey questionnaire, and data analyses. This process represents the output.

The product of this study is the research itself. It aimed at helping EFL teachers, lecturers, and policy makers in the future in planning for the curriculum development. The main goal was to find out the EFL learners' preferences by looking at the statistical results.



Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the diverse teaching approaches in enhancing EFL learners' speaking and listening skills. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. Which teaching approach do EFL learners prefer in enhancing their speaking and listening skills in debate class?
2. What is the perception of the EFL learners towards debate class in enhancing their English skills?
3. Is there a significant difference between the EFL learners' perceptions and the diverse teaching approaches?

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of diverse teaching approaches in enhancing the speaking and listening skills of EFL learners in debate class. Specifically, the following are included: participants, instruments, data gathering procedure, and ethical considerations.

Participants

The participants involved were third-year EFL learners from the English Department of the Faculty of Education at Nakhon Phanom University, selected through purposive sampling. Out of a total number of 48 students enrolled in the debate class during the first semester of 2024, 37 agreed to participate to contribute to the research. From these participants, 10 students were chosen for an in-depth interviews based on specific characteristics, including their ability to speak fluently and their strong performance in debate activities. This careful selection aimed to gather insights from those who excelled in relevant skills, providing better perspectives on the impact of diverse teaching approaches on debate performance (Palinkas et al., 2015). The participants willingness to participated was also considered.

Instruments

The study utilized structured questionnaires containing Likert rating scale and open-ended questions to support the quantitative data and semi-structured interview for an in-depth analysis of their perceptions towards diverse teaching approaches. The instruments were prepared and developed by the researchers, to assess learners' perceptions of various teaching methods and their debate performance. Prior to the distribution, these instruments were validated by at least three experts in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, who have at least a Master's degree and are currently residing in Thailand. This validation ensured that the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were relevant and applicable to the specific context of EFL education in Thailand.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process began with securing permission from the head of the English Department, Faculty of Education, Nakhon Phanom University to ensure compliance with departmental policies and ethical standards. The participants were from the English Department of the Faculty of Education and were recruited based on their willingness to participate. Participants were provided with informed consent that explained the study's purpose, procedure, and benefits, ensuring that they understood the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any time without facing any penalties. To protect confidentiality, they were not required to input their names, keeping their personal information separate from their responses. After the validation process, the questionnaires were distributed to the participants, providing clear instructions and assistance when necessary. Simultaneously, interviews were conducted with selected participants who consented to share their experiences, enabling an in-depth exploration of their perceptions regarding the teaching methods and their debate performance. The data collection process took place in a classroom setting to support open expression of thoughts. Finally, the results were carefully collected, coded, transcribed, and analyzed, for the conclusion.

Data Analysis

In this study, quantitative and qualitative data analyses were used, which can be described as follows:

1. Utilization of survey questionnaire with the five-component scale method of Rensis A. Likert (1932). The questionnaire also contained open-ended questions to further understand the results of the quantitative data. The researchers utilized Microsoft Excel and Jamovi Application to analyze the data from the questionnaire. The following statistical treatment were used in this study, weighted mean, average mean, frequency distribution, One-way Anova and Tukey Post-Hoc Test.

Legends:

Legend: M – Mean

DE – Descriptive Equivalent

1.00 - 1.50 (SA - Strongly Disagree)

3.51 - 4.50 (A - Agree)

1.51 - 2.50 (D - Disagree)

4.51 - 5.00 (SA - Strongly Agree)

2.51 - 3.50 (N - Neutral)

2. Semi-structured Interview

The Semi-structured interview contained questions regarding diverse teaching approaches employed in the classroom. The researchers carefully collected the data through recording of their responses and notetaking. The results were then coded, transcribed, and analyzed through thematic analysis to present the qualitative conclusion.

Table 2. Frequencies of Age

Age	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
19	1	2.7 %	2.7 %
20	15	40.5 %	43.2 %
21	21	56.8 %	100.0 %

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were a fundamental aspect of the research process to ensure the protection and well-being of all participants involved. The researchers prioritized obtaining informed consent by providing participants with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and benefits, allowing them to make informed decisions regarding their involvement (Creswell & Poth, 2016). This approach ensured that participants understood their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing penalties. To safeguard confidentiality, unique identifiers were assigned to each individual, separating their personal information from their data, which was securely stored and accessible only to the researchers.

Results

This chapter presents the outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the research question answers. The results from the quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were tabulated, and the qualitative data from the open-ended questions and interviews were carefully analyzed and presented in themes.

Tables 1 and 2 present the profile of the participants. It shows that majority of the participants were females (75.7%), followed by males (21.6%) and the rest preferred not to say (2.7%).

Table 1. Frequencies of Gender

Gender	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Male	8	21.6 %	21.6 %
Female	28	75.7 %	97.3 %
Prefer not to say	1	2.7 %	100.0 %

Table 3 shows the findings from the survey, indicating a positive response to extemporaneous speech gathering a mean of 4.45. Students strongly agreed that these activities improved their speaking skills (WM = 4.57), enhanced their confidence in spontaneous speaking (WM = 4.30), and provided feedback on their practice (WM = 4.59). Engagement in extemporaneous speech was high, with many participants finding the activities enjoyable (WM = 4.59) and helpful in organizing their thoughts (WM = 4.38). Furthermore, group debates significantly enhanced students' listening skills (WM = 4.68) and aligned with their preferred learning styles (WM = 4.22). In summary, students expressed a desire for more group debate activities in the class (WM = 4.30), illustrating the feedback on the perceived benefits of this approach to learning.

Table 3: Result of the Participants' Perceptions towards Extemporaneous Speech

Extemporaneous Speech	5	4	3	2	1	\bar{X}	DE
1. The extemporaneous speech activities in the debate class improved my speaking skills.	21	16	0	0	0	4.57	SA
2. I felt more confident speaking spontaneously during debates.	16	16	5	0	0	4.3	A
3. The feedback on my extemporaneous practice was helpful.	24	11	2	0	0	4.59	SA
4. Extemporaneous speech practices are engaging during class.	25	9	3	0	0	4.59	SA
5. Extemporaneous speech activities helped me organize my thoughts quickly.	17	17	3	0	0	4.38	A
6. I participate frequently in extemporaneous speech activities.	19	8	9	0	1	4.19	A
7. I actively participated in group debates and found them valuable.	25	11	1	0	0	4.65	SA
8. The group debate activities enhanced my listening skills.	25	12	0	0	0	4.68	SA
9. Group debates matched my preferred learning style.	14	18	4	1	0	4.22	A
10. I want to have more group debate activities in debate class.	18	13	5	1	0	4.30	A
Total						4.45	A

Table 4 shows the findings from the survey results indicating the participants' satisfaction with class lectures on debate topics (4.52). Students agreed that the lectures provided clear explanations of debate concepts (WM = 4.51) and were informative and relevant (WM = 4.65). The format of the lectures significantly aided in understanding debate strategies (WM = 4.57), and students felt engaged throughout the sessions (WM = 4.49). Additionally, the lectures effectively met their learning needs for grasping debate principles (WM = 4.62) and helped prepare them for debate activities (WM = 4.73). The clarity of information presented was generally satisfactory (WM = 4.46), and students expressed a desire for more lectures in the debate class (WM = 4.27), indicating a strong appreciation for this instructional method.

Table 4: Result of the Participants' Perceptions towards Class Lecture

Class Lecture	5	4	3	2	1	\bar{X}	DE
1. Class lectures provided clear explanations of debate concepts.	23	11	2	1	0	4.51	SA
2. Class lectures were informative and relevant.	26	9	2	0	0	4.65	SA
3. Class lecture format helped me understand debate strategies better.	24	10	3	0	0	4.57	SA
4. I feel engaged during the plain lectures on debate topics.	20	15	2	0	0	4.49	A

Class Lecture	5	4	3	2	1	\bar{X}	DE
5. Class lectures met my learning needs for understanding debate principles.	24	12	1	0	0	4.62	SA
6. I was satisfied with the clarity of information presented in the class lectures.	17	20	0	0	0	4.46	SA
7. Class lectures help me prepare for debate activities.	27	10	0	0	0	4.73	SA
8. Class lecture content matches my learning style.	19	14	4	0	0	4.41	A
9. I felt involved and attentive during the plain lectures.	21	14	2	0	0	4.51	SA
10. I want to have more class lectures in debate class.	17	13	7	0	0	4.27	A
Total						4.52	SA

Table 5 shows the findings from the survey results, indicating a high level of satisfaction with group presentation activities (4.62). Students reported that these activities significantly improved their speaking skills for debates (WM = 4.62) and enhanced their confidence in speaking (WM = 4.70). They found group presentations to be beneficial for speaking practice (WM = 4.68) and felt confident while participating in these activities (WM = 4.62). Feedback received during group presentations was viewed as helpful for developing speaking skills (WM = 4.65), while also contributing to teamwork and collaboration (WM = 4.62). Students regularly participated in group presentations and found them useful (WM = 4.62), and they noted improvements in their listening and response abilities (WM = 4.65). Furthermore, group presentation activities matched well with their learning preferences (WM = 4.49), and there was a strong desire for more group activities in the debate class (WM = 4.51).

Table 5: Result of the Participants' Perceptions towards Group Presentation

Group Presentation	5	4	3	2	1	\bar{X}	DE
1. Group presentation activities help me improve my speaking skills for debates.	23	14	0	0	0	4.62	SA
2. Working in groups for presentations enhanced my ability to speak confidently.	27	9	1	0	0	4.70	SA
3. Group presentations are helpful for my speaking practice.	26	10	1	0	0	4.68	SA
4. I felt confident during group presentations.	27	7	2	1	0	4.62	SA
5. Feedback received during group presentations was helpful for my speaking skills.	25	11	1	0	0	4.65	SA
6. Group presentations developed my teamwork and collaboration skills.	24	12	1	0	0	4.62	SA
7. I participated regularly in group presentations and found them useful.	24	12	1	0	0	4.62	SA
8. Group presentations improved my ability to listen and respond to questions.	26	9	2	0	0	4.65	SA

Group Presentation	5	4	3	2	1	\bar{X}	DE
9. Group presentation activities match my learning preferences.	22	11	4	0	0	4.49	A
10. I want to have more group debate activities in debate class.	23	10	4	0	0	4.51	SA
Total						4.62	SA

Table 6 shows the summary of the quantitative data gathered. It concludes the results from the data collected through the questionnaire (Google Forms). It includes the demographic profile of the participants; the diverse teaching approaches; and their perceptions towards diverse teaching approaches employed.

Among the three approaches employed in debate class, group presentation received the highest mean of 4.62 followed by class lecture that received a mean of 4.52 and lastly, extemporaneous speech that received 4.45.

Table 6: Summary of the Quantitative Data

	n	Missing	\bar{X}	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Gender	37	11	1.81	2	0.46	1	3
Age	37	11	2.54	3	0.56	1	3
Extemporaneous Speech	10	38	4.45	4.47	0.19	4.19	4.68
Class Lecture	10	38	4.52	4.51	0.13	4.27	4.73
Group Presentation	10	38	4.62	4.62	0.07	4.49	4.70

To determine the activities the EFL learners prefer in their speaking and listening enhancement in debate class, qualitative data were carefully collected through the semi-structured interview and the data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Students reported that group activities significantly improved their speaking skills by creating a comfortable environment. Some students noted that group work reduces nervousness, making it easier to communicate. Another emphasized that practicing different speaking formats before formal debates strengthened their foundation. Mock debates were also highlighted as beneficial for building confidence and fast thinking. In summary, collaboration with peers was seen as essential for enhancing communication abilities.

Activities EFL learners prefer in enhancing their speaking and listening skills in debate class

Themes

Group Activities and Collaborative Learning

Confidence and Skill Improvement

Speaking Practice

Fun and Interactive Learning

Student 26: "Group activities because they allow us to talk to our friends in a group and are less nervous than talking alone."

Student 36: "Group presentation practice or practice speaking in various formats as basic speaking practice before leading to a debate."

Student 7: "Listen to music and watch movies with English soundtracks and turn off the translated subtitles."

Student 30: "Mock debates: Regular practice debates on various topics to build confidence and quick thinking."

Student 5: "I think debating in front of the class is the most helpful for my speaking skill."

To determine the participants' perception towards debate class in enhancing their English skills, qualitative data were carefully collected through open ended questions and interviews and were analyzed using themes.

Many students felt that debate activities greatly improved their English skills. Some students stated that debating helped them gain confidence in speaking, which was a major achievement. Another participant mentioned that debates enhanced their vocabulary and made them more confident in using English. Students also appreciated the opportunity to make mistakes in a supportive setting, making the learning experience meaningful. The positive feedback from the participants' responses concludes that debating was viewed as beneficial for developing speaking skills and enhancing assertiveness in communication.

The perception of the EFL learners towards debate class in enhancing their English skills

Themes

Increased Speaking Confidence

Enhanced Communication Skills

Vocabulary and Language Use

Improved Listening Skills

Positive Learning Experience

Student 10: "Help me gain confidence in speaking and greatly improve my English speaking skills compared to before."

Student 14: "Debating helps me improve my speaking skills and makes me more confident in speaking English."

Student 18: "Yes, it can improve speaking skills well because you can use English, there may be some mistakes, but at least you can practice speaking."

Student 19: "Debate helps me develop my speaking skills and learn many new words."

Student 29: "Yes, debate helped me practice speaking skills, practice more, speak more, be more assertive, and participate in class."

To determine if there is a significant difference between the EFL learners' perceptions and the various teaching approaches, the qualitative data were tabulated and One-way Anova was utilized using Jamovi application.

Table 7 presents the results of a Tukey Post-Hoc Test, to identify which approach shows significant differences from EFL learners' perceptions across three teaching approaches: Extemporaneous Speech, Class Lecture, and Group Debate. The analysis compared mean differences, t-values, degrees of freedom, and p-values between each pair of teaching approaches to identify any statistically significant differences. Evidently, the mean difference between Extemporaneous Speech and Group Debate is -0.1690, marked with

an asterisk to indicate a statistically significant difference with a p-value of 0.028. This suggests that learners perceived these two approaches differently. In contrast, the comparisons between Extemporaneous Speech and Class Lecture (mean difference of -0.075, p-value of 0.452) and between Class Lecture and Group Debate (mean difference of -0.094, p-value of 0.294) do not show significant differences. Thus, the only statistically significant difference in perceptions occurred between Extemporaneous Speech and Group Debate.

Table 7: Tukey Post-Hoc Test on EFL Learners' Perceptions and Diverse Teaching Approaches

		Extemporaneous Speech		Class Lecture	Group Debate
Extemporaneous Speech	Mean difference	-		-0.0750	-0.1690*
	t-value	-		-1.22	-2.75
	df	-		27.0	27.0
	p-value	-		0.452	0.028
Class Lecture	Mean difference			-	-0.0940
	t-value			-	-1.53
	df			-	27.0
	p-value			-	0.294
Group Debate	Mean difference				-
	t-value				-
	df				-
	p-value				-

Discussion

The results from the quantitative questionnaires indicated a positive impact of debate activities on students' speaking skills, confidence, and engagement in the learning process. For instance, the extemporaneous speech activities received a high mean score of 4.57, students' agreed that these activities significantly improved their speaking skills and helped them organize their thoughts quickly. This finding aligned with the study highlighting the effectiveness of structured speaking exercises in enhancing verbal fluency and critical thinking (Eisenberg, 2015; Bargh & Schul, 2020). Such activities support an environment where students can practice and develop their abilities in a supportive setting. The class lectures also gathered desirable results, with a mean score of 4.52. The results from the students' perceptions indicated that these lectures provided clear explanations of debate concepts, helping them prepare for debates (WM = 4.73). This suggests that well-structured lecture formats can significantly enhance students' understanding of complex topics, as supported by studies emphasizing the importance of clear and informative lectures in academic settings (Zhang et al., 2021). The engagement during lectures also indicated that students value informative content that meets their learning needs, reflecting effective teaching strategies. Group presentations were also a vital component of the debate activities, receiving an overall mean score of 4.62. The results revealed that working in groups did not only improve students' speaking skills but also enhanced their teamwork and collaboration skills. According to McNaughton (2016), collaborative learning experiences like group presentations can significantly boost students' confidence and facilitate peer learning, making them express their ideas more freely. These findings underlined the importance of interactive learning environments in promoting essential life skills with their academic competencies.

Qualitative data further complemented the quantitative findings, providing rich insights into students' experiences with debate activities. Many students expressed that debates helped them gain confidence in speaking English, emphasizing the value of practical experience in language acquisition (Liu &

Littlewood, 2019). Datugan, A (2024) also mentioned that learners learn better when the activities are designed based on the real life settings. The qualitative responses supported the transformative impact of debate on students' self-efficacy and their ability to articulate ideas clearly. This aligned with the concept that experiential learning can significantly enhance language proficiency and communicative competence (Fitzgerald & Posner, 2021).

The combined results of the quantitative and qualitative findings illustrate the various benefits of incorporating and integrating debate activities into the curriculum. These activities not only support improved speaking skills and confidence but also promote critical thinking and teamwork. As educators strive to create effective learning environments, the integration of debate and collaborative learning experiences should be prioritized, as they provide valuable opportunities for students to enhance their language skills and personal growth.

Conclusion

Majority of the participants were females (75.7%), followed by males (21.6%) and the rest preferred not to say (2.7%). Group debates appeared to be the most preferred method, indicating a significant difference among the three approaches receiving the highest mean from the quantitative data (4.62). Recognizing and implementing diverse approaches, teachers can better address the different needs and preferences of their students, and most importantly a more effective learning environment. Students appreciated the friendly approach of the teacher when giving activities making them free to try without being too pressured when making mistakes. Participants' positive responses concluded that debating was viewed as helpful for developing speaking skills and enhancing assertiveness in communication. Findings showed that there is a significant difference between the EFL learners' perceptions and the diverse teaching approaches.

Recommendations

Employing diverse teaching approaches is beneficial for EFL students to explore their skills and know themselves better especially in brainstorming, socializing and sharing insights towards language learning not only in debate but also to other related language learning activities. Providing a safe and friendly environment should be considered as one of the factors that could help release the students' anxiety in any language activities designed for the students. Future researchers may aim to include larger, more diverse participants to further investigate the long-term effects of teaching approaches on EFL learners' speaking and listening skills.

Based on the results of the study, it is therefore recommended that English teachers to create a meaningful learning environment encouraging the learners to participate even more with the tasks integrated in the class. Curriculum managers may also take into consideration the integration of communicative learning approaches towards improving the listening and speaking skills of the learners. Future researchers, on the other hand, may explore the theoretical perspectives of the researchers by conducting similar or related studies in their localities and municipalities.

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