

Using a Program Based on Online Debate to Develop EFL Majors' Speaking Skills and Reduce their Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract

The current study aimed at examining the impact of a program based on online debate on developing second-year languages and translation students' EFL speaking skills and decreasing their speaking anxiety. The study adopted a quasi-experimental design. One experimental group of 26 EFL students at second-year Faculty of Languages and Translation in the academic year 2020/2021 was randomly chosen to participate in the study. They received the online debating training program treatment via Microsoft teams. To determine the necessary speaking skills to be enhanced through the treatment, a checklist was designed, and the speaking skills were approved by the jury members. Based on these skills, a speaking test was developed and used as a pre-post test. In addition, an EFL speaking anxiety scale was designed and approved by the jury members to measure the students' level of speaking anxiety in English language classes before and after the treatment. The t- test was used for the statistical analysis of data. Results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- and post-test in overall speaking skills and each sub-skill, favoring the post-test scores. There was also a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- and post-administrations of the EFL speaking anxiety scale, favoring the post-administration. Therefore, the online debate based program was effective in developing EFL majors' speaking skills and reducing their speaking anxiety.

Keywords: *Online debate, EFL speaking skills, EFL speaking anxiety.*

استخدام برنامج قائم على المناظرة عبر الإنترنت في تنمية مهارات التحدث وخفض القلق أثناء التحدث لدى طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية

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الملخص

هدف البحث الحالي الي التحقق من فعالية برنامج قائم على المناظرة عبر الإنترنت في تنمية مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية وخفض القلق الخاص بالتحدث لدى طلاب الفرقة الثانية قسم اللغة الانجليزية كلية اللغات والترجمة بجامعة الأهرام الكندية. وقد أجريت الدراسة على ٢٦ طالباً وطالبة يمثلون هذه الفئة من الطلبة. وقد تضمنت أدوات الدراسة: قائمة لمهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لتحديد أهم مهارات التحدث لدى طلاب الفرقة الثانية كلية اللغات والترجمة جامعة الأهرام الكندية، واختبار لقياس مهارات التحدث قبل وبعد تطبيق البرنامج القائم على استخدام المناظرة عبر الإنترنت، ومقياس القلق الخاص بالتحدث باللغة الانجليزية. وقد قامت الباحثة بالتطبيق لمدة اثني عشر أسبوعاً. وقد عولجت البيانات التي تم جمعها عن طريق اختبار التحدث، وكذلك عن طريق مقياس القلق الخاص بالتحدث باللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية باستخدام اختبارات- ت. وقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة- بعد تطبيق البرنامج المقترح - بتحقيق مجموعة البحث التجريبية مستويات أعلى في التطبيق البعدي لامتحان التحدث عن التطبيق القبلي ، وكذلك مستويات أقل في التطبيق البعدي لمقياس القلق الخاص بالتحدث باللغة الانجليزية عن التطبيق القبلي. وقد أكدت النتائج - بعد معالجتها إحصائياً - فعالية البرنامج القائم على المناظرة عبر الإنترنت في تنمية مهارات التحدث وكذلك خفض القلق المتعلق بالتحدث باللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. كما أوصت الدراسة بضرورة تضمين ملامح المناظرة في مناهج تدريس اللغة الانجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المناظرة عبر الإنترنت – مهارات التحدث باللغة الانجليزية– القلق نتيجة التحدث باللغة الانجليزية.

I- Introduction:

English is regarded as the most dominant and acceptable language for global communication, with an increasing number of speakers as a first, second or foreign language. Therefore, speaking skills are regarded as extremely important in language education and language teaching because the main purpose of language is to communicate. Speaking is demanding and challenging for EFL learners to improve because it requires being aware of grammatical, as well as linguistic rules and suitable vocabulary to produce the proper utterances (Shabani, 2013).

Speaking is an active and dynamic skill that requires interactive instruction and more educated, organized, and targeted support (Dehham, 2021). In addition, speaking, in general, refers to the process of expressing one's thoughts and feelings through spoken words (Jordan, 2009). Similarly, Solcová (2011) states that speaking is an intuitively prepared activity in which participants exchange their roles as speakers and audience members and use both verbal and nonverbal modes to achieve communication goals. Hence, speaking is a two-way interaction between a speaker and a listener in which they communicate and exchange ideas, receive information with paralinguistic characteristics (Iman, 2017).

According to Khalil et al. (2019), learning to speak English properly should not revolve around the idea of only academic purposes but also develop EFL learners' communication skills and social interaction; they are expected to express their thoughts accurately and fluently. While Al-ma'shy (2011) clarifies that teaching EFL skills such as listening, reading, and writing is based on speaking skill; hence, speaking is an influential skill in class. Further, Afshar & Rahimi (2016) assert the importance of speaking skills for EFL learners. However, speaking is considered a challenging skill because learners need to combine the knowledge and language to use it in real-life situations (Bygate, 2002).

Juhana (2012) agrees that EFL learners are sometimes held back by some psychological factors like being shy, anxious or afraid of getting embarrassed when making mistakes. Anxiety is the main factor that affects the learners' ability to speak fluently. Moreover, Suleimenova (2013) explains that anxiety disorder controls the mind of learners as their brains sense the existence of some danger. According to Yalkhong and Usaha (2012), most EFL and ESL learners struggle with high anxiety levels during oral tasks.

Scholars suggest some ways to reduce students' English speaking anxiety levels, such as offering students enough time to practice speaking skills. However, this is challenging since teaching hours are not enough to

practice speaking skills (Woodrow,2006). Nevertheless, some teaching techniques do not match the obstacles EFL learners face. As a result, it is pivotal to provide students with as many opportunities to speak the target language as possible in the classroom. Students need to express their thoughts, communicate their intentions, and respond to others through speech. Thus, spoken language is a tool with which a person can communicate. However, speaking is a vital skill; teaching speaking skills has become an additional challenge for EFL teachers in their learning and teaching process. According to Songbatumis (2017), some teachers' difficulties are due to a lack of knowledge about teaching languages, a lack of training, limited mastery of teaching methods, unfamiliarity with IT, and a lack of professional development. For Afshar and Asakereh (2016), the source of speaking skills problems in the EFL context is a lack of varied speaking activities and opportunities in the classrooms compared to the variety of situations in which learners could use the language in real-life situations. Learners must be immersed in real-life situations that allow them to use the language effectively.

Given the circumstances described above, it is necessary to employ novel techniques to improve speaking ability. The teacher can use online debate as one of the techniques. Debate is a formal technique for persuading an audience through interactive and representational arguments (Fauzan, 2014). In addition, a debate in a foreign language can be used as a reflection of a communicative approach to improve a wide range of communication functions such as; achieving team agreement between sentences and sentences via logical connectors, expressing agreement or disagreement, supporting a point of view with evidence, or showing appreciation for speech (Alasmari & Ahmed, 2013; Dalt -puffer, 2013). As a result, current research claims that using online debate in EFL classrooms may help students improve their speaking skills and also may assist them in overcoming their fear of the speaking English language. To meet this need, the current study attempts to investigate the impact of online debate in developing EFL majors' speaking skills and reducing their speaking anxiety.

II- Literature Review:

Speaking skills:

The definition of speaking skill for Channey (1998, p.13) is a process of constructing and communicating meaning via the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in different contexts. However, for Asrida (2016), it is a sharing act of information between speakers and listeners in any situation. Similarly, Richards (2016) defines the skill as a process of

sharing information through spoken language by expressing thoughts and emotions.

EFL learners face many challenges while developing their speaking skill because it requires managing their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. For two reasons, speaking a language is considered more challenging than listening, reading, or writing. One reason is that speaking requires a present face to face interaction, unlike reading and writing. The other reason is that speakers cannot edit or revise what they comprehend, unlike written content (Asrida, 2016). According to Lackman (2010), many teachers use a sub-skill approach to deliver speaking skills instead of asking students to speak directly in class without clear guidelines. For him, speaking sub-skills include the following skills; fluency, pronunciation, structure, appropriacy, and turn-taking skills. Fluency refers to students' practising speaking without preparing, and their speaking is distinguished by how accurate and smooth their choice of vocabulary, phrases, and ideas. Further, the second skill focuses on the student's success in correctly pronouncing words. Students can achieve the third sub-skill by using correct grammatical rules. Appropriacy refers to the practice of determining the suitable language, grammar and vocabulary for specific situations. Students have to determine whether they use formal or informal language depending on the situation. The practice of exchanging turns during a conversation is referred to as turn-taking skills. Sub-skills like turn-taking and turn-giving are considered an influential part of communication as it controls the time and method of interrupting speakers politely. Al Bajalani (2018) believes that communication strategies are the main speaking sub-skills.

According to Strivastavo (2014), accuracy means the learner's ability to produce grammatically correct sentences. In addition, the learner should be able to speak and write correctly and know the right grammatical rules of the language. In contrast, fluency refers to a level of communication proficiency which means producing written and spoken sentences with ease and efficiency, without pauses or communication breakdowns. While, Al Bajalani (2018) believes that fluency is one of the main speaking sub-skills with two definitions. One definition refers to "the narrowest domain, which only includes features such as pausing, hesitations, and speech rate. The second is concerned with the broadest domain in which fluency is the same as speaking proficiency." For Lackman (2010), students might struggle with being fluent due to their lack of vocabulary or grammar to express their thoughts.

Humaera (2015) and Leong & Ahmadi (2017) classify speaking problems into two categories; linguistic and affective issues. The first problem includes a lack of grammatical rules, vocabulary, mispronunciation, and problems related to fluency and accuracy. However, the affective issue includes lack of motivation, anxiety and confidence. As a result, speaking becomes a stressful obstacle for the learners.

Lochana and Deb (2006) explain that EFL teachers usually focus on teaching grammar rather than speaking skills. Further, Al-Nasser (2015) adds that many teachers speak Arabic with students during English lectures, resulting in a number of students who do not acquire the language, despite having spent years studying English in schools. This may lead college students to be unable to communicate effectively in contexts that require spoken communication in English. To overcome this, new strategies and tools are required to provide students with more opportunities to communicate in English, improve their speaking abilities, and reduce any feelings that negatively affect their oral performance, like anxiety.

Speaking anxiety:

Speaking is considered the most challenging and demanding skill in language learning. There are some factors affect students' ability to improve their speaking skills. Anxiety is one of these factors (Derin & Hamuddin, 2019). Anxiety is important in language learning as it reduces learners' oral engagement and performance. Foreign language anxiety is defined as "the subjective feelings of tension and apprehension associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p.284). Foreign language anxiety, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), is "a distinct complex of feelings, self-perceptions, and behaviours associated with classroom language learning emerging from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p.127). As for Al-Sobhi and Preece (2018), anxiety and fear impede speaking the target language. Moreover, students find it challenging to maintain control when speaking with other people. Anandari (2015) assumes that the main reason for the emergence of anxiety is that anxiety is a complex issue that involves the learners' psychological conditions. This makes many students feel afraid of speaking skills, especially those who lack self-confidence; thus, it affects their ability to speak English.

Anxiety is a significant cause of students' silence, and it can impact their ability to communicate; it is associated with shyness and fear.

Classroom researchers contend that students experience it because they are afraid of their classmates' laughing or criticizing their proficiency and performance in the target language (Arifin, 2017).

Huang (2004) investigated EFL non-English university students' speaking anxiety levels in Taiwan and detected that those students have a high level of anxiety when speaking English. Similarly, in a large scale research study of 547 Chinese EFL students, Liu and Jackson (2008) found that students experience anxiety when speaking and that foreign language anxiety is a strong predictor of unwillingness to communicate in foreign language classrooms. Furthermore, Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) studied fifteen third-grade Greek children, ages 13 to 14, and discovered that six of them had English language speaking anxiety due to a fear of unfavourable peer judgement and a feeling of low ability in contrast to their classmates. Dalkıç (2001) investigated the relationship between students' levels of foreign language anxiety and their performance in speaking courses in her study. She conducted her research on 126 Turkish first-year EFL students. She revealed a significant relationship between student's anxiety levels and their speaking class success from qualitative and quantitative data. Moreover, Ay (2010) discovered that students with advanced levels of productive skills reported anxiety. Participants in the study declared that their anxiety increased when they were required to speak without prior preparation. Additionally, Balemir (2009) discovered that Turkish EFL university students have a moderate level of speaking anxiety in their language classes that investigated the relationship between students' proficiency level and the degree of FL speaking anxiety in a Turkish EFL context. In a similar vein, Naghadeh et al. (2014) conducted a study with Iranian English major students at Payame Noor University. The study revealed a significant relationship between student anxiety and their ability to communicate. According to them, the greater students' anxiety, the lower their speaking ability when participating in oral communications.

Woodrow (2006) distinguishes between in-class and out-of-class anxiety. He points out that the two most important causes of language anxiety in speaking classes are interacting with teachers and performing before a class. Giving oral presentations, answering teacher questions, role-playing in front of the class, participating in formal discussions, and informally speaking teachers were major causes of learners' in-class anxiety. Furthermore, Tanveer's study (2007) reveals that learners' beliefs, perceptions, and poor command of the language may lead to a higher level of anxiety. Other factors as social and cultural environments could also be the source of anxiety-provoking situations.

El Sakka (2016) states that many EFL students struggle with many issues, including an inability to express their own opinions and underestimating their abilities. Moreover, they always complain that speaking is their most stressful experience. As a result, examining speaking anxiety and attempting to reduce it is a demand that research should pursue.

Debate:

Many educators have repeatedly urged the adoption of a student-centred approach. Debate is an example of a student-centred approach that allows for using other language models, as a debate is a structured discourse that enables students to participate in various roles. Pradana (2017) argues that debate is a cooperative learning method in which students are encouraged to take on responsibilities in the learning and teaching of the English language.

Bambang (2006, p.125) defines debate as an activity used for topic understanding carried out by two groups. Each group is made up of three or five students, pro and contra groups. In a similar vein, debate consists of two groups of people on opposing sides of the issue discussing an agreed-upon topic in the agreed-upon rules, and the judges listening to both sides of the argument, choosing the winning team based on the reasoning and evidence provided" (Shan, 2005, p.21). Furthermore, debate can motivate students' thinking, especially if they must defend their stand or opinion that contradicts their own conviction (Maryadi, 2008).

Debate is a process that involves organized discussion in which two or more people advocate opposing views on a topic or a specific issue. In a debate, various reasons for opposing viewpoints are presented in order to persuade an audience (or others) to accept their position (Glover, 2014). Debate is also regarded as a form of play in which students can express their ideas and opinions. In addition, it is an evidence-based game in which students provide arguments and defend their claims to better understand the world and develop their ideas (Lee & Nair, 2016).

Krieger (2005) claims that debate is an efficient learning activity, as it involves students in various cognitive and linguistic ways. Similarly, Halvorsen (2005) argues that debate drives students to look into multiple aspects of the topic and interact with each other, not just with the details given of a particular topic.

Debate is an active learning process that teaches students to think more creatively while sharing their ideas with others. It involves activities in which two or more teams participate, with speakers on both sides

debating their viewpoints and agreeing or disagreeing on the issue at hand. According to Hasibuan and Batubara (2012), debate is a pedagogy that improves learners' speaking skills and critical thinking. Critical thinking skills are developed at all stages of the debate process (Scott, 2008). For example, students must gather relevant evidence of support while thinking critically in order to present a strong argument when preparing for rebuttals. Students also needed to learn how to use evidence to back up their arguments and points of view. While for Doody and Condon (2012), debate helps learners employ critical thinking skills by attempting to define the problem, evaluating the reliability of resources, identifying and challenging assumptions, recognizing contradictions, and prioritizing the relevance and importance of various points in the overall discussion.

In addition, debates can be in the form of real issues or simulations. The students are required to share sufficient knowledge about the issue and different opinions or interests to persist in reaching a concrete decision or putting the issue to a vote at the end of the activity. As a result, students will also be familiar with various statements and technical terms because debating covers a wide range of topics and issues (Fauzan, 2016).

Online courses can be regarded as effective as traditional when the methods and techniques used match the classroom assignment, and there is student-to-student interaction, as well as timely teacher-to-student feedback (Hamzaee, 2005). Therefore, it is logical to believe that, similar to a debate in a face-to-face class, an online debate could be used to improve or increase student participation as well as develop critical thinking skills.

According to Khalsi (2013), the online debate promotes knowledge building by assigning roles or tasks to online debaters. Participating in online debate helps promote collaborative learning and critical thinking skills. Park et al., (2011) claim that using debate as a teaching strategy helps learners become more engaged in argumentation, form a stance, gain confidence, and find more thoughtful, logical, and persuasive proof to participants.

Debates, either in-class or online, must include students' perspectives and arguments during a rich discussion of a specific issue. Debate promotes active participation and higher-order thinking. In addition, it encourages students to identify the problem, assess the credibility of sources, determine and challenge the point of contention, distinguish inconsistencies, and prioritize the relevant claim (Kennedy, 2007). According to Roy and Macchiette (2005), debate entails not only

deciding what to say but also how to say it. Finally, debate teaches students how to obtain accurate information and interpret subject matter cooperatively. It also assists them in evaluating the information they receive and improves students' speaking skills.

Many experts and researchers agree that classroom debate is an approach that involves learners in the learning process, allows them to express themselves, develops higher order thinking, prevents rote memorization and misunderstanding, motivates learners, and helps them to make judgments based on valid information. Therefore, they explored its potential to improve students' speaking abilities. Lestari et al. (2021) examined the effect of the debating process during the pandemic on EFL students' perceptions of speaking courses. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview using a call via messages application. The study revealed that debate technique develops students' critical thinking, teamwork, social skill and students' satisfaction towards the course. In a similar vein, Harahap et al. (2021) investigated the impact of virtual debate on teaching speaking. The study adopted the qualitative descriptive method. Data was collected through analysing eight students' debate speeches. Collected data were transcribed into text. After the treatment, both students' improvisation and fluency were improved. Moreover, Firmansyah & Vegian (2019) investigated the effect of debate technique on improving students' speaking skills. The study aimed to determine whether debate can improve students' speaking skills and analyze the classroom situation during the debating process. Collaborative classroom research was used in this study, which included 29 participants. The study discovered that debate is an engaging activity in which students have numerous opportunities to practise speaking in the speaking class. Debate is a type of speaking in which opposing points of view are presented. Students are also actively involved in the debate process in order to defend their positions.

Similarly, Desita et al. (2017) conducted a study to increase students' speaking abilities in expressing opinions through discussion. The study employed a three-cycle classroom action research technique. Twenty-six students in the eighth grade participated in the study. To collect data, the researcher used an observation checklist and field notes. It demonstrated that the debating strategy improved students' speaking abilities in giving and responding to other students' perceptions. At the same time, Azka & Kurniawan (2017) focused on students' perspectives on using argument in speaking class; this study aims to learn about and characterize students' perspectives on using debate in speaking class. The descriptive qualitative

method was used in this study, and the participants were undergraduate English Department students. This study discovered that students have positive perceptions of the use of debate, which students can well accept. Furthermore, that debate is entertaining and beneficial to the students' speaking skills, which incorporates that debate is valuable. Therefore, using debate techniques in teaching the speaking process has been approved.

Weeks (2013) investigated the effect of an online debate assignment in a graduate course on leadership and discovered that online students performed better (i.e., better work and higher grades) on the assignment than students in her traditional seated course. In addition, she observed that students appeared to think more deeply before posting online rather than discussing topics in class. Weeks reflected on her experience, noting that online debates last longer, allowing students to examine the topic differently—and perhaps more deeply—than in-person discussions. She concluded that online debate could effectively increase participation in course discussions and provoke more complex or in-depth thought of the issues.

Speaking through debate can significantly benefit both the teacher and the student (Firmansyah & Valatansa vegian, 2019). In addition, students use the debate approach even though it is not directly applied in real life and that the debate learning method increases students' self-confidence (Azka& Kurniawan, 2017). Debate is undoubtedly one of the most exciting and valuable experiences that high school or college students can have. Those who learn to debate well learn how to conduct extensive research and gather information on a significant issue. They also learn how to organize research or arguments into a logical and convincing presentation. Furthermore, through critical thinking and listening, the debater learns to defend his or her presentation against the opponents' attacks. As a result, a good debater should be able to research data, build constructive arguments, present and defend arguments, refute and rebut opponents' arguments, and so on.

However, almost all debates held are traditional debates carried out in the classroom. There hasn't been a lot of research conducted on the online debate, specifically via using Microsoft teams. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the current study contributes by expanding knowledge of how teachers can use online debate via Microsoft teams to improve students' speaking skills and reduce their speaking anxiety.

Context of the Problem:

As previously stated, speaking skills are essential for language learners in general and EFL learners in particular. However, even if EFL students in Egypt begin learning English at a young age, they may complete their studies and still be unable to speak English properly. Ezz (2018) demonstrated that it could be due to the following factors; many students think in Arabic first and then translate their thoughts and ideas into English, resulting in interference between their mother tongue and the target language they wish to learn. In addition, teachers do not give students enough opportunities to practice speaking, either because of limited class time or because they do not believe speaking skills are important enough to be given much attention in their classes. Students are rarely willing to speak English orally in front of their colleagues; instead, they take notes on the teacher's explanations on speaking skills rather than practise English orally. Students would rather answer questions on a worksheet provided by the English teacher than practise their speaking skills in class. Moreover, teachers explained that when students were forced to speak directly in front of their classmates, many were afraid and anxious to do so; only a few students accepted but with limited intensity. When asked to speak, students will occasionally look at their notes to read them. It was also clear that students appear to have extremely high anxiety levels when speaking English orally in front of the class.

The researcher also conducted a speaking test in Spring 2021 as a pilot study to identify the difficulties facing the second-year EFL languages and translation students at Ahram Canadian University and determine the extent to which these students lack those skills. The sample of the pilot study consisted of 28 students. The pilot study results revealed that 62% of the students got less than 50% of the test's total score. They struggled with fluency, as many hesitations and periods of silence frequently occurred while speaking. In addition, they have difficulty expressing their ideas and selecting appropriate vocabulary. They mispronounced many of the words they used in their presentations. They could not either organize their speech in a logical order or apply grammatical structures accurately and consistently. Moreover, Students were shy when asked to speak in front of their classmates, and some students were embarrassed and afraid of making mistakes, particularly with their pronunciation.

According to the review of related studies (EL-Sakka (2016); Salem (2014); Diyyab et al. (2013), it could be noticed that there is a problem with speaking skills among EFL learners in general and university

students in particular. Most university students in Egypt are neither fluent nor confident English speakers. Consequently, there are various reasons for students' lack of speaking skills; the most important is the teaching method. So, there is a need for a teaching approach that can help promote the classroom to be more student-centred, allow students to take responsibility for their learning, and improve their speaking abilities.

Statement of the Problem:

In the light of the aforementioned argumentative account, it became crystal clear that EFL second-year languages and translation students, Ahram Canadian University, lacked the necessary EFL speaking skills and often avoided participating in speaking activities for fear of being judged negatively.

So, the current study attempted to explore the impact of a program based on online debate on developing EFL speaking skills and decreasing speaking anxiety among second-year languages and translation students.

Questions of the Study:

The current study was an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What are the EFL speaking skills required for second-year languages and translation students?
2. To what extent do second-year languages and translation students acquire these skills?
3. To what extent do second-year languages and translation students have EFL speaking anxiety levels?
4. How can a program based on online debate be used to develop EFL speaking skills among second-year languages and translation students?
5. What is the effect of a program based on online debate on developing EFL speaking skills among second-year languages and translation students?
6. What is the effect of a program based on online debate on reducing EFL speaking anxiety levels among second-year languages and translation students?

Hypotheses of the study:

Based on the previous studies, the study hypotheses have been formulated as follows:

1. There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance in the pre-and the post- administrations of the speaking skill test as a whole and each sub-skill, favoring the post-administration.

2. There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance in the pre-and the post-administrations of the EFL speaking anxiety scale as a whole, favoring the post-administration.
3. The program based on online debate would have an effect on developing the overall speaking skills and each sub-skill among the EFL second-year languages and translation students.
4. The program based on online debate would have an effect on reducing the EFL speaking anxiety levels among second-year languages and translation students.

Aim of the study:

The present study aims to develop EFL second-year languages and translation students' speaking skills and reduce their EFL speaking anxiety levels via the program based on online debate.

Significance of the study:

The significance of this study might derive from the following considerations:

1. This study highlighted the importance of online debate in improving EFL majors' speaking skills as well as reducing their EFL speaking anxiety levels.
2. It could help EFL majors overcome their difficulties while speaking.
3. It could provide language teachers, curriculum developers, and designers with online debate activities to be incorporated in EFL courses and textbooks to help improve EFL majors' speaking skills and reduce EFL speaking anxiety levels.
4. The instruments developed and used in this study may be useful to other researchers working in (TEFL) the field of Teaching English as a foreign language.
5. The study's findings may be useful for both EFL lecturers and students in their classroom debate practice.

Delimitations of the study:

This study was delimited to:

- Some EFL speaking skills required for second-year languages and translation students, which the jury members have approved.
- A group of twenty-six EFL students enrolled at the faculty of languages and translation, Ahran Canadian University.
- Online debate, in the present study, was presented in Microsoft teams synchronously, which allows the video section to practise debates and

the chatting column section to keep track of any comments made during the debating session.

- The Spring semester of the academic year 2020-2021 as the time duration of the experiment; one lecture per week (three hours each).

Definition of terms:

Speaking skills:

Speaking skills, according to Kayi (2006, p.23), are an interactive process of building meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Amin (2007, p.16) defined it as students' ability to interact orally, accurately, and fluently with the correct pronunciation and grammar. Hassan (2009, p.19) defined it as the learner's ability to talk, converse, and negotiate fluently using grammatically correct phrases with native-like pronunciation. In this study, speaking skills are operationally defined as the student's ability to talk, converse, and negotiate fluently using appropriate vocabulary and grammatically correct phrases with native-like pronunciation.

EFL Speaking Anxiety:

Foreign language anxiety is defined as "the subjective feelings of tension and apprehension associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p.284). In this study, EFL Speaking Anxiety is operationally defined as the subjective feelings of tension, fear, and apprehension which impede speaking in the EFL context.

Debate:

According to Shan (2005, p.21), debate is an instructional method that consists of two groups of people on opposing sides of the issue discussing an agreed-upon topic in the agreed-upon rules, and the judges listening to both sides of the argument, choosing the winning team based on the reasoning and evidence provided. Debate is also regarded as a form of play in which students can express their ideas and opinions. It is an evidence-based game where students provide arguments and defend their claims to better understand the world and develop their ideas (Lee & Nair, 2016, p.125). Debate is operationally defined as an instructional method where two opposing parties present their ideas or opinions and try to defend their claims online through Microsoft teams application.

III- Method, Instruments, and Procedures:

A- Design of the study:

The current study used the quasi-experimental design (one group pre/post) to examine the effect of a program based on online debate on developing EFL Majors' speaking skills and reducing their speaking anxiety.

This study is partially analytical as it contained a theoretical framework and partially experimental as it implemented a pre-post speaking test and EFL speaking anxiety scale.

B- Instruments and materials of the study

- 1) A checklist of EFL speaking skills required for second-year languages and translation students.
- 2) An EFL speaking skills test was used as a pre-posttest for testing the study group.
- 3) The speaking rubric.
- 4) The EFL speaking anxiety scale.
- 5) The program based on online debate was implemented to enhance EFL speaking skills and decrease speaking anxiety levels among second-year languages and translation students.

1- The EFL speaking skills checklist:

a. Aim of the checklist:

The EFL speaking skills checklist was designed to determine the speaking skills relevant to second-year languages and translation students (Appendix. 1).

b. Description of the EFL speaking skills checklist:

The EFL speaking skills checklist, in its final form, included five main speaking skills and a number of 15 speaking sub-skills; The following were the skills that were chosen based on their high percentages, namely: Comprehensibility and Pronunciation, Vocabulary, Fluency, Grammar, and Content.

c. Validity of the EFL speaking checklist:

In its initial form, the checklist included five main speaking skills and a number of 18 speaking sub-skills was submitted to jury members in the field of Curriculum and methods of teaching and applied linguistics; changes and modifications concerning the skills were considered. Based on their feedback, 5 main speaking skills and a total of 15 sub-skills were agreed upon.

2- The EFL speaking skills test:

a - Aim of the test:

The test was pre and post used to measure EFL second-year languages and translation students' assigned speaking skills to determine the effectiveness of using the program based on online debate to enhance these speaking skills.

b- Description of the test:

The test was designed to measure the five EFL speaking skills assigned by the jury members as very important for college students. The test consisted of four questions; The first question was an ice-breaker conversation. The researcher held a short simple conversation with the students to break the ice in this stage. The second question was a five-minute picture description. Students were asked to choose one image and describe it in at least five sentences. They were given two minutes to organize their thoughts and three minutes to present the description. The third question focused on language functions. Students were given two minutes to respond to two of four given situations. The fourth question included a six-minute mini-presentation. The students were instructed to choose one topic from a deck of seven, and they were given two minutes to prepare and four minutes to present the topic. Students were permitted to write some thoughts on a piece of paper but not complete sentences. The test's four questions addressed five skills: comprehensibility and pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and content (Appendix. 2).

c- Validity of the test:

To test the validity of the EFL speaking skills test, two forms of validity were used; *content validity* and *construct validity*. To test the content validity, the test was given to a panel of jury members to evaluate each question in terms of content and level of the measured skills. Moreover, they were asked to assess the test as a whole in terms of correctness, the number of questions, scoring suitability of the test for the student's level, the suitability of the test for students' age, and its time limits. The test proved to be mostly valid as the TEFL jury members approved most of the questions with few modifications, such as modifying some words and changing some pictures to suit students' level.

To test the construct validity, the correlation coefficient was calculated between the total score for each skill and the total score of the overall test by using the statistical package for social science software (SPSS). The correlation coefficient and the significance level are presented in table (1)

Table 1
Correlation Coefficients between Each Skill and the Overall Score of the EFL speaking Test

N	Skill	Correlation coefficients	Level of significance
1	Comprehensibility and pronunciation	0.90	0.01
2	Fluency	0.75	0.01
3	Vocabulary	0.84	0.01
4	Grammar	0.92	0.01
5	Content	0.89	0.01

All correlations were statistically significant. This proved that the test was internally consistent and valid.

d- Reliability of the Test:

To verify the test reliability, the internal consistency method and test-retest method were used. Cronbach's Alpha technique was calculated by (SPSS) program. Accordingly, the test was administered to a randomly chosen group of (28) second-year languages and translation students at Ahram Canadian University. These students were excluded from the study group. The test reliability was 0.77. Then, after two weeks, it was administered to the same group again. The Pearson correlation between the two administrations was (.981), which is significant at the 0.01 level. This result proved that the test was statistically reliable.

e- Piloting the EFL speaking skills test:

To check the clarity of the test instructions and questions, the researcher administered the test to 28 second-year languages and translation students (the same group used to calculate the reliability of the test) to examine:

1. The clarity of test instructions.
2. The suitability of the test items for students' educational level.
3. The simplicity /difficulty level of the test questions so that students could understand them easily.
4. Test timing.

This time was estimated according to the following formula:

The addition of the time taken by each student divided by their number (N.) = 16 minutes

f- Scoring the test:

The total mark of the EFL speaking skills test is "100" marks. All questions were scored according to the speaking skills scoring rubric that the researcher designed. Students' answers were sent with the rubric to another rater for inter- rater reliability.

3- The EFL Speaking Skills Scoring Rubric:

a- Aim of the rubric:

The researcher designed the EFL speaking skills scoring rubric based on different resources to assess students' performance in the pre/post speaking test (Appendix, 3).

b- Description of the rubric:

The EFL speaking skills scoring rubric was divided into five categories: comprehensibility and pronunciation, Fluency, Grammar, Vocabulary, and Content. These categories were then used to determine the assessment criteria which represented the desired standards or expectations of students' performance. To determine the degree to which

student's performance met the task criteria, five levels of descriptors that differentiate several levels of performance (i.e., Poor, Fair, Average, Very good and Excellent) were specified and described qualitatively and quantitatively.

c- Validity of the rubric:

The EFL speaking skills scoring rubric was submitted to EFL specialists to determine if the rubric items measured and reflected the targeted EFL speaking skills. Accordingly, they indicated that the components of the rubric were valid and comprehensive, but with the following modification; instead of a four-point scale, it should be a five-point scale ranging from excellent to poor.

d- Reliability of the rubric:

The reliability of the EFL speaking skills scoring rubric was estimated using the inter-rater reliability by calculating the correlation coefficient between the researcher and another rater who scored the EFL speaking skills test of the study group. The correlation coefficient between the two raters' scores was 0.92.

4- The EFL speaking anxiety scale.

a- Aim of the scale:

The scale aimed to investigate second-year languages and translation students' speaking anxiety levels before and after the treatment (Appendix, 4).

b- Description of the scale:

The scale was designed considering the literature and previous studies. In its final form, it included twenty items. All the items indicated speaking anxiety except for items number (2, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13, 20) to balance and verify students' answers. As well, the items of the scale were direct, clear, and simple.

c- Scale validity:

To test scale validity, it was submitted to jury members specialized in Curriculum and EFL Instruction and Educational Psychology. They evaluated the appropriateness of the scale's items and the clarity of the scale instructions and items. The number of the scale items in its first version was 33. Therefore, the scale's items were modified based on their recommendations.

d- Scale reliability:

To test scale reliability, the reliability coefficient was estimated by using Cronbach Alpha Formula. The estimated value was (0.84), and it was considered acceptable.

e- Scale scoring:

The scale was a five-point Likert scale. All the scale items were answered on a 5- point Likert scale as follows: For the statements that indicate speaking anxiety, points: 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 undecided, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree. For the reversed statements, points: 5 strongly disagree, 4 disagree, 3 undecided, 2 agree, and 1 strongly agree.

f- Scale duration:

The duration of the scale was estimated by summing up the times of the fastest and the slowest students in answering the scale divided by two. So, the time allocated to the scale was $15+25/2= 20$ minutes.

5- The Study Material (The Program Based on Online Debate)

a. Aim of the program:

This program aimed to develop EFL speaking skills necessary for second-year languages and translation students and reduce their speaking anxiety levels.

b. Objectives of the program:

By the end of the instructional periods, participants were expected to develop their speaking skills; comprehensibility and pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and content and reduce their speaking anxiety levels.

By the end of this program, students would be able to:

- Use a clear, understandable, correct pronunciation.
- Apply appropriate patterns of stress, rhythm, and intonation.
- Speak comprehensible English related to the required tasks.
- Speak fluently, almost with no repetition or minimal hesitation.
- Speak at a reasonable rate smoothly
- Use gap-fillers correctly.
- Use appropriate vocabulary for the topics, settings and audience.
- Use a variety of vocabulary and word collocations
- Use markers and language functions in spoken discourse.
- Apply a variety of structures accurately and consistently.
- Use words, phrases, and sentences in the correct order.
- Express relationships between parts of spoken utterances through cohesive devices.
- Provide arguments that support ideas.
- Organize the speech in a logical order.
- Follow the topic of a conversation and participate accordingly and appropriately.

c- Content of the program:

The program includes students' material (handouts) and a teacher's guide. The content of the program is task-based. The content of the program was adapted from various sources and websites (Appendix 5).

d- Description of the program:

The program consisted of 12 sessions. The first session was an orientation session, and the other eleven sessions were instructional ones through which EFL speaking skills were practised through online debate.

The titles of the topics were as follows:

Session 1: Orientation session on how to debate (the debate objective, debate components, debate outline, debate rules, and how to debate)

Session 2: Debate the positive and negative effects of technology on academic performance

Session 3: Are single-gender schools more effective than mixed-gender schools?

Session 4: Children playing video games promote their creativity.

Session 5: All animal testing should be banned.

Session 6: Debate whether fire does more harm than good

Session 7: Legalize the sale of human organs

Session 8: Should drug addicts be punished or treated?

Session 9: Teenagers under 18 years should not have a driving license as they are not mature enough to handle the responsibility of driving.

Session 10: The examination results do not necessarily reflect the knowledge of students.

Session 11: Tobacco packages should contain warning labels about the possible dangers of smoking.

Session 12: Violence in the media, including television, music, movies, and video games, encourages violence in society.

e- The Suggested steps for using the proposed program:

The proposed online debating program of the present study was implemented via Microsoft teams through the following steps (pre-debate, during debate and after debate).

Lesson procedures:

Pre-debate stage:

- The teacher started the online lesson through Microsoft teams by using brainstorming techniques to open up discussion for a plurality of responses, i.e. asking students questions that prepared them for the debate stage. Then, the instructor displayed a video, presented some vocabulary, a reading passage that are related to the speaking topic. After that, The teacher introduces the motion or debate topic. The students had to adopt a point of view of being

for or against each topic of discussion. Thereupon, the debate provides an opportunity to foster thinking skills, contemplation, and reflection

- The teacher classifies the class via Microsoft teams breakout rooms into debate groups/teams: Affirmative and Negative team, and the teacher selects debaters/speakers: 3 for Affirmative and 3 for Negative.
- The teacher chooses the chairperson and timekeeper. Ideally, the teacher should take on the role of chairperson for the first debate activity.
- The teacher uploads handouts with debate explanations which included speech text with gaps to help each speaker deliver their speech.
- After the motion is released and before the debate begins, each team is given 30 minutes to prepare.

During debate stage:

- Participating in the debate: opening the debate activity (chairperson), each speaker gives a speech and a rebuttal argument (debating); the first speaker of the affirmative team, the first speaker of the negative team, the second speaker of the affirmative team, the second speaker of the negative team, a 5-10 minute break for each team to prepare their rebuttal speech, the third speaker of the negative team summarizes what his team believes and refutes the first and second speaker of the affirmative team, and the third speaker of the affirmative team summarizes what his team believes and refutes the first and second speaker of the negative team.
- Students were asked to take notes of the opponents during the debate to refute them in the rebuttal stage.
- Chairperson closes debate

After debate stage:

- An odd number of judges will judge each debate, and only the judges will determine who wins (there is no draw in the result of a debate).
- The instructor provides feedback on students' performance.

Experimentation went through the following steps:

- 1- The researcher designed the instructional materials and the instructor's guide, which were then validated by a number of ELT experts.
- 2- twenty -six EFL students were randomly chosen from the second-year faculty of Languages and translation – Ahram Canadian University.

- 3- The researcher pre administered the speaking test and the EFL speaking anxiety scale to the experimental group.
- 4- The researcher taught the experimental group through Microsoft teams in light of the program based on the online debate.
- 5- The researcher post administered the speaking test and the EFL speaking anxiety scale to compare the pre and post administering results.

IV. Data Analysis and Results:

The current study purpose was to examine the effect of the program based on online debate on developing EFL second-year Languages and translation students' speaking skills and decreasing their speaking anxiety. The material was developed and experimented with students enrolled in the Faculty of Languages and Translation at Ahram Canadian University. The sample was submitted to pre-post administrations of an EFL speaking test and speaking anxiety scale. The statistical package for social science program (SPSS Ver.23) was used to calculate the t-values for testing the differences between the mean scores of the study group on the pre and post-testing. The statistical analysis of the data and the results were interpreted in terms of the study hypotheses.

To test the first hypothesis which stated: " there would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance in the pre-and the post- administrations of the EFL speaking test as a whole and each sub-skill, favoring the post-administration.", Paired sample t-test was used. The results are presented in table (2).

Table (2)

T-test Results Comparing the Mean Scores of the Pre- and Post- Administrations of the EFL Speaking Test for the Experimental Group in Each EFL Speaking Sub-Skill Assigned (N=26, DF=25)

EFL speaking skills	Mean pre	Mean post	Std Deviation pre	Std Deviation post	"t. value"	df	Sig
1- Comprehensibility and Pronunciation	10.88	15.27	1.51	1.66	11.40	25	0.01*
2- Fluency	9.58	13.58	1.55	1.42	10.41	25	0.01*
3- Vocabulary	11.5	14.5	1.63	1.61	9.28	25	0.01*
4- Grammar	11.04	15.19	1.91	1.27	12.53	25	0.01*
5- Content	9.96	14.5	1.95	1.36	11.78	25	0.01*
Total	52.96	73.04	3.59	3.75	28.62	25	0.01*

(*) statistically significant difference at 0.01

Table (2) confirms the following:

1) There is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of experimental group students' performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the EFL speaking sub-skills test in favor of the post-administration of the test.

2) The mean scores of the experimental group in the post administration of the EFL speaking test (73.04) are higher than those of the pre one (52.96). Thus, a development of the overall EFL speaking skills of the experimental group is proved. Therefore, this provides enough evidence to support hypothesis 1.

The difference between the experimental group scores in the pre and the post administrations of the EFL speaking test in each skill is evident in figure (1).

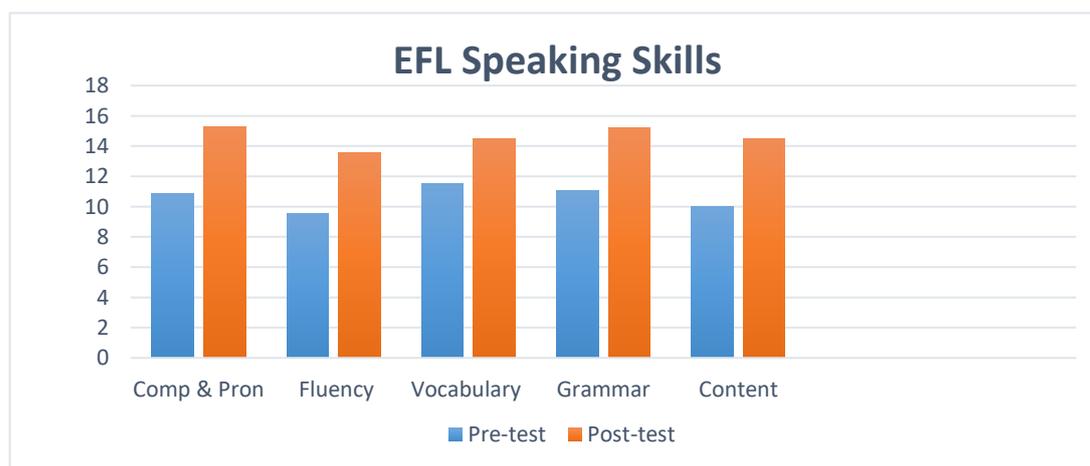


Figure (1): The Pre-Post- EFL Speaking Skills Test Results of the Experimental Group

To test the second hypothesis which stated: " There would be a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group in their performance in the pre and post-administrations of the EFL speaking anxiety scale as a whole, favoring the post-administration.". Paired sample t-test (SPSS, Version 23) The results are presented in table (3).

T-test Results Comparing the Mean Scores of the Pre- and Post- Administrations of the EFL Speaking Anxiety Scale for the Experimental Group. (N=26, DF=25)

Anxiety	Mean	Std Deviation	"t. value"	df	Sig
pre	68.69	8.36	21.17	25	0.01*
post	39.12	6.52			

(*) statistically significant difference at 0.01

Table (3) confirms the following:

- 1) There is a statistically significant difference at 0.01 level between the mean scores of experimental group students' performance on the pre-administration and post-administration of the EFL speaking anxiety scale in favor of the post-administration of the scale.
- 2) The mean scores of the experimental group in the post administration of the EFL speaking anxiety scale (39.12) are smaller than those of the pre one (68.69). Thus, a decrease in the EFL speaking anxiety levels of the experimental group students is proved. Therefore, this provides enough evidence to support hypothesis 2. For further elaboration, see figure (2).

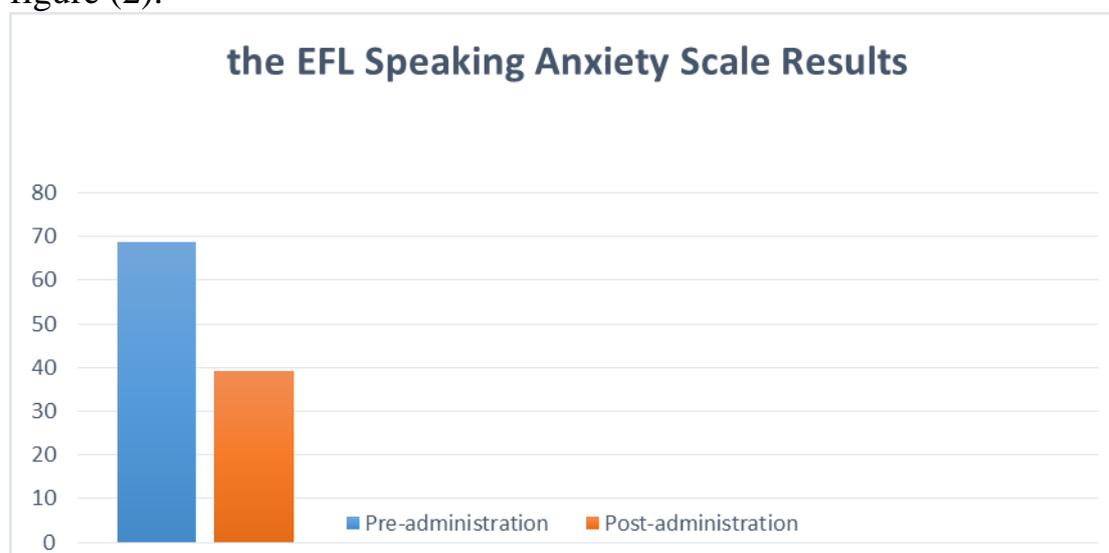


Figure (2): Differences between Participants’ Mean Scores of the Pre and Post- Administrations of the EFL Speaking Anxiety Scale

To test the third hypothesis of the study which stated that " The program based on online debate would have an effect on developing the overall speaking skills and each sub-skill among the EFL second-year languages and translation students.", the effect size of each skill was calculated using eta square formula.

Table (4): The Effect Size of the Program Based on Online Debate on Developing the Overall EFL Speaking Skills and Each Sub-skill

EFL Speaking Skills	η^2	D	Effect size
1- Comprehensibility & Pronunciation	0.84	2.28	Large
2- Fluency	0.81	2.10	Large
3- Vocabulary	0.77	1.85	Large
4- Grammar	0.86	2.51	Large
5- Content	0.85	2.36	Large
Total	0.97	5.72	Large

The calculated effect size indicated that the implementation of the program based on online debate had a significant effect on the experimental group post-performance on each sub-skill score. Thus, the third hypothesis is supported.

To test the fourth hypothesis of the study which stated that " The program based on online debate would have an effect on reducing the EFL speaking anxiety levels among second-year languages and translation students.", the same formula was used. The results are presented in table (5).

Table (5): The Effect Size of the Program Based on Online Debate on Reducing the EFL Speaking Anxiety

	η^2	D	Effect size
EFL speaking anxiety	0.95	4.23	Large

The calculated effect size indicated that the program based on online debate had a significant effect on the experimental group's post-performance on the total score. Thus, the fourth hypothesis is supported.

In this quasi-experimental study, both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained to achieve the research questions of the current study.

The results might be due to the following reasons:

- All speaking skills, such as fluency, grammar, pronunciation and comprehensibility, vocabulary, and content, were influenced by debate. The correlation between debate and speaking skill was very strong, with fluency being the aspect most influenced by debate. This could be attributed to the debate process itself, in which students delivered and defended their arguments while also opposing the opponent team's arguments. They are also likely to be emotional in debate to deliver and argue, and they may somehow overlook other speaking skill components such as grammar.
- Debate instruction has the potential to have a significant pedagogical impact in ELT because it teaches students not only how to speak but also what to say. Debate also allows students to think critically about issues and collaborate with team members in terms of looking for information, facts, data, and so on, as well as to speak out about specific issues academically and appropriately. This will eventually lead to EFL learners becoming well-cultivated and competent speakers.
- Students found classroom debate to be an innovative, engaging, constructive, and beneficial approach to teaching and learning. Participants in classroom debate also believed that it helped them overcome their fear of speaking in front of a crowd, increase their

confidence to speak and express their opinions, enhance their speaking ability, and improve their critical thinking skills.

- Online debate has the potential to assist students in overcoming and reducing fear and boost confidence, allowing students to proceed with language learning more efficiently. Actually, as demonstrated in the current study, classroom debate assisted students in overcoming these barriers, feeling more confident to speak in the target language, reducing anxiety and nervousness, and thus improving speaking ability.

- Debate helps students develop their critical thinking skills by examining arguments, engaging in research, collecting information, questioning assumptions, performing analysis, assessing arguments, and demonstrating interpersonal skills.

- Debate fosters an environment in which students abandon their passive roles and become active participants in the learning process. As a result, learners can apply their abilities and skills in various situations.

- Rebuttals and group work were two of the favourite aspects of the classroom debate. Rebuttals allow students to express their opinions and disagree with a viewpoint. As a result, they valued the opportunity to speak up, express their opinions, and collaborate with their peers during the classroom debate.

- Classroom debate develops oral communication skills, which are required for success in nearly all professions. Debating is the ultimate multitasking activity because it entails research, writing, speaking, listening, and teamwork.

- Classroom debate is a constructive tool that can contribute significantly to teaching and learning if it is correctly practised, appropriate and interesting topics are chosen, and students are properly guided and instructed on the debate process.

- Online debate is distinguished by its flexibility; time flexibility. Instructors benefit from the online debate in tracking students' participation with their colleagues. Because of the adaptability of online debate, students are encouraged to investigate various sources, including both paper-based and digital content. According to current research, online learning environments allow students and instructors to manage their own time while completing tasks without meeting face to face.

- During the debate, participants must work as a team to prepare and deliver their arguments. Not only that, but they also support their arguments with concrete evidence to persuade the listener. As a result, debate improves persuasion skills. Throughout the activity, all participants made strong arguments in order to persuade the audience or even their opponents to agree with their stance.

- Students who took part in the current study reported that they were very satisfied with the debate experience. In addition, it improved their critical thinking skills, confidence, and speaking ability and decreased their stage fright.

V- Conclusion:

Based on the current study results, it can be concluded that online debate helps students develop critical thinking and oral communication skills. Students gain the ability to synthesize, analyze, and evaluate statements and arguments. Debate also encourages active learning, allowing students to actively participate in the learning process. It also assists students in improving their oral communication skills. Debate helps students speak more fluently; during a debate, they can freely express their feelings and thoughts on an issue. Online debate helps them gain experience working as part of a team. Moreover, the online debate is a good platform for students to practise their teamwork skills, decrease their speaking anxiety levels, and boost self-confidence. Finally, the findings confirm that students enjoyed the debating experience and consider it a novel and engaging approach.

VI- Recommendations:

Based on the study results and discussions, the following can be recommended:

- 1- English language teachers should be trained on using online debate while teaching English to their students in different educational stages.
- 2- English language teachers should develop the students' EFL speaking skills in the early educational stages to develop them in the following stages.
- 3- Students should be given more exposure to English-speaking activities, such as debate applications in the classroom, which can enhance students' critical thinking and increase their self-confidence and motivation to speak in public.
- 4- Teachers must attend workshops, seminars, and training courses to promote their professional development.
- 5- Both the teacher and the students should be well-equipped with resources, such as a library and the internet, to help them find the required information.
- 6- Great care and attention should be paid to selecting debate topics. If the topics are not interesting and controversial enough, students

will not fully participate in the debate. Therefore, involving students in selecting a debate topic is also beneficial and a good idea. As they participate in topic selection, they realize their opinions and suggestions have been valued and respected, increasing the likelihood that their participation and performance will be significantly improved.

- 7- Students should be given adequate time prior to the start of the debate. As a result, each team can get organized, make necessary preparations, review their statements, and be ready for the classroom debate.
- 8- Future research may investigate relation to other integrated language skills and employ not only tests but also interviews and questionnaires to obtain in-depth research findings.

VII- Suggestions for further research:

Based on the current study results, the following suggestions are presented for further research:

- 1- Investigating the effect of online debate on developing students' speaking skills at different levels of education.
- 2- Exploring the online debate impact on developing other language skills as persuasive writing.
- 3- Examining the effect of online debate on developing students' interpersonal skills and motivation towards the English language.
- 4- Investigating EFL teachers' attitudes towards using the online debate based program in teaching.
- 5- Using multimedia-based training curriculum to develop EFL students' speaking skills
- 6- Utilizing other strategies on developing EFL students' speaking skills.

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