



The Effectiveness of Using Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) in Developing Iraqi EFL Students' Speaking and Listening Skills

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims at exploring the effectiveness of using the Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) in developing Iraqi EFL students' speaking and listening skills. To fulfil the study goals, the researcher conducted a questionnaire as a data collection method. The questionnaire consists of 14 items and distributed to a sample of second year students in the English department, Collage of Basic Education, AL-Mustansiriya University. The outcomes of the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency percentage. The results show that almost 44.67% of Iraqi EFL students agreed that using (SAC) is an effective in improving and developing their speaking and listening skills in English. In addition to that, most of them agreed that this technique creates an interactive environment for the learning. Furthermore, when they were asked to give their evaluation for the role of also evaluated the role of Structured Academic controversy in improving speaking skills, the results of the evaluation reveals that 45.51% of them agreed that using (SAC) enhanced their speaking skills. That's to say, SAC has a significant effect in improving and developing students listening and speaking skills.

Keywords: Structured Academic Controversy (SAC), EFL students.

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The Aims of the Study

This study aims at investigating whether or not using Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) can be effective in enhancing and improving Iraqi EFL students' speaking and listening skills.

The Hypothesis of the Study

The hypothesis presented in the study is that:

- SAC technique is effective and efficient in enhancing and improving speaking and listening skills.

The Procedures of the Study

To test the truth of the presented hypothesis, the following procedures are followed:

- 1) Pointing out the various strategies and facilitates that structured academic controversy technique provides.
- 2) Conducting questionnaires of 14 questions to collect the data from the students.
- 3) The questionnaire is some online and was sent to a group of students on various social networks platforms so that they share their experience and evaluation about using SAC in developing speaking and listening skills.
- 4) Finally, the outcomes of the questionnaire are analyzed to find out whether or not using SAC can enhance students' Speaking and listening skills.

Limitations of the Study

The study has the following limitations:

- 1) The respondents to the questionnaire are limited to second stage students from English Language Education Department.
- 2) The selected sample is limited to 25 respondents.
- 3) Finally, the limitation of the place is about the place from where the sample was taken which is Collage of Basic Education, AL-Mustansiriya University.

The Importance of the Study

The importance of the study lies in that it can be useful for the English Language Department and Students of English Language Education Department especially in selecting the appropriate strategy for improving language skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

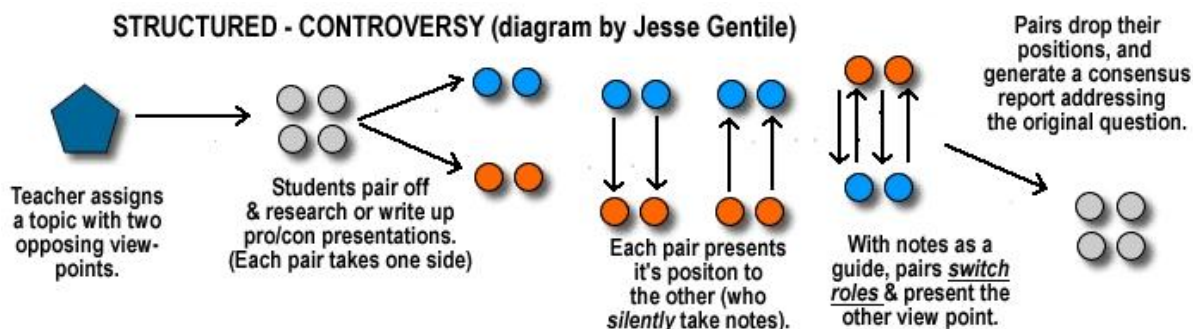
INTRODUCTION

Structured academic controversy is not only limited to the fields of language and learning and teaching but also is defined and proposed by various scholars and researchers in different scientific disciplines [1,2& 3]. The SAC was used by certain practitioners in the classrooms or professional context. Interestingly, Bull [4] employed structured academic controversy in the nursing graduating courses. Furthermore, this technique was also used by Nathan and Lee [5] who employed it in the social studies' classroom. SAC was also used by Wright [6] who used it in the real context namely in Advanced American Studies classroom. The powerful effect of SAC on the students' performance was proved and shown clearly by these researchers.

Anyways, there wasn't many studies about the use of Structured academic Controversy in language learning and teaching disciplines. Moore and Zainuddin have employed SAC in enhancing the English language learner's critical thinking. Hosseini [7] conducted a rare study concerning the use of SAC where he made a comparison between the SAC effect and the competitive team-based learning (CTBL).

Structured Academic Controversy (SAC)

The theory which Structured Academic Controversy was built on is credit to Johnson and Johnson [2]. The two were working at University of Minnesota's Cooperative Learning Center. According to Khourey-Bowers [1] "Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) is a teaching approach in which students will research one or several points of view and then communicate their findings in a structured format". The aims of the structured academic controversy are to provide students with information and data about issues and how to appreciate and respect multiple viewpoints, and learn how to build consensus. Hess [8] states that SAC creates a cooperative learning and cooperative method of research. By using SAC, students can gain knowledge about various debatable issue such as the way they can stand for their position when they try to support a certain part of that issue. That is to say that this method provides the students with the ability to categorize, create, and understand ideas about a controversial issue. Moreover, it elicits informed responses from the learners.



METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A questionnaire has been conducted on a sample of students. The questionnaire is designed to check the responses of the students toward using structured academic Controversy (SAC) in enhancing and developing their speaking and listening skills.

Participants

The participants who were selected to participate in the questionnaire were a number of EFL Iraqi second stage students. The researcher chose a sample of 20 English students from the English Department in the College of Basic Education, AL-Mustansiriya University. The researcher conducted the questionnaire online to make sure that the results are reliable.

Face Validity

What is meant by face validity is that "A test is face valid if it appears to be measuring what it claims to measure". "It is the best type of validity in the case of self- rating".

After finishing constructing the questionnaire items, it was submitted to the jury to assess their validity. The members of the jury were selected based on their experiences in the education field. The researcher asked the jury to identify and check out the items of the questionnaire to give their decision about whether or not the questionnaire is

suitable. Therefore, certain items needed to be removed and others to be modified. Most of the jury members have verified the questionnaire items validity. The remaining 14 items have constituted the final version of the questionnaire.

Table 1: the items of the questionnaire

No	The Questions	Options				
1.	What is your Gender?	Male		Female		
		35%		55.00%		
2	What is your evaluation for the use of structured academic Controversy for learning and teaching?	Excellent way	Good	Fair	Poor	
		33.67%	54.00%	6.67%	5.66%	
3	Have you experienced the use of SAC for learning	Yes		No		
		66.67%		33.33%		
4.	Is your classroom uses SAC as part of the course?	Yes		No		
		68.33%		40.00%		
5.	SAC is a effective method in creating an interactive environment among students.	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
		46.67%	0.00%	20.00%	0.00%	26.67%
6	Using SAC helps me driving the shyness away while speaking with others.	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
		44.00%	6.67	26.00%	3.33	20.00%
7	Listening to others in the SAC method helps me enhancing my listening skills.	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
		35.33%	20.00%	26.00%	0.00%	19.67%
8.	SAC method improve the way I pronounce words by listening to others pronunciation.	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Neutral
		20.00%	46.67%	25.33%	1.67%	0.0%
9.	The interlocutors on the SAC method and their interaction help me improving my Speaking skills.	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
		49.00%	6.67%	33..33%	0.0%	11.00
10	When I participate in the SAC, my confident in my Speaking skills increase.	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
		53.45%	0.0%	44.55%	0.00%	0.00%
11	Participating in the structured academic controversyimproves my fluency.	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
		50.00%	12.50%	25.00%	12.50%	0.00%
12	Using SAC method enhance my ability to listen to English audio.	Agree	Disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Neutral
		44.44%	0.00%	55.56%	0.00%	0.00%
13	Would you recommend others to use SAC method an effective and efficient Method for developing their Speaking and listening skills?	Yes		No	Never	Maybe
		64.67%		0.0%	13.33%	33.33%
14 Evaluating the role of SAC in developing speaking skills		Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Fluency		30.57%	50%	10.28%	9.15%	
Vocabulary		33.33%	44.54%	16.55%	0.0%	
Pronunciation		41.33%	55.66%	0.0%	0.0%	
Grammar		41.66%	58.33%	0.0%	0.0%	

Language skill	Mean scores	Standard deviations
Speaking	44.67%	1.678
Listening	46.33%	9.034

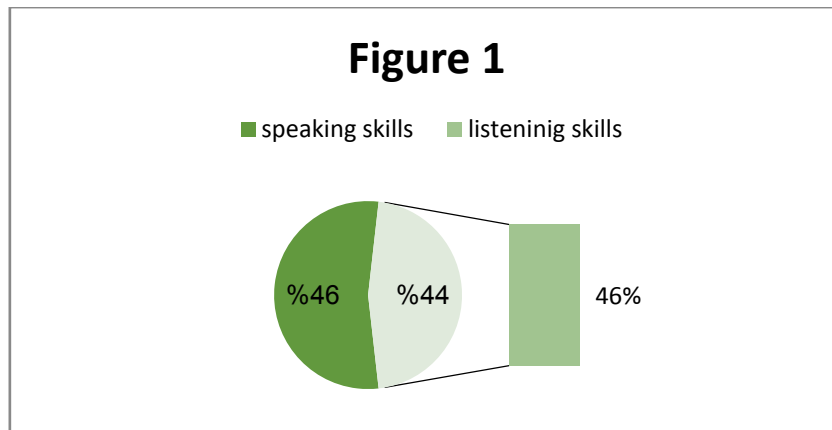


Figure 1: shows the mean scores of student’s responses to the role of SAC in developing language skills.

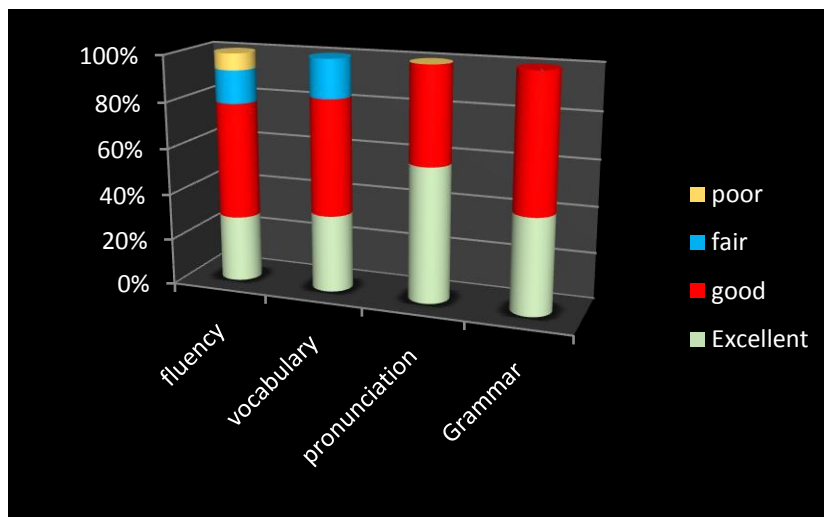


Figure 2: shows the evaluation of the role of SAC in evaluating speaking skills.

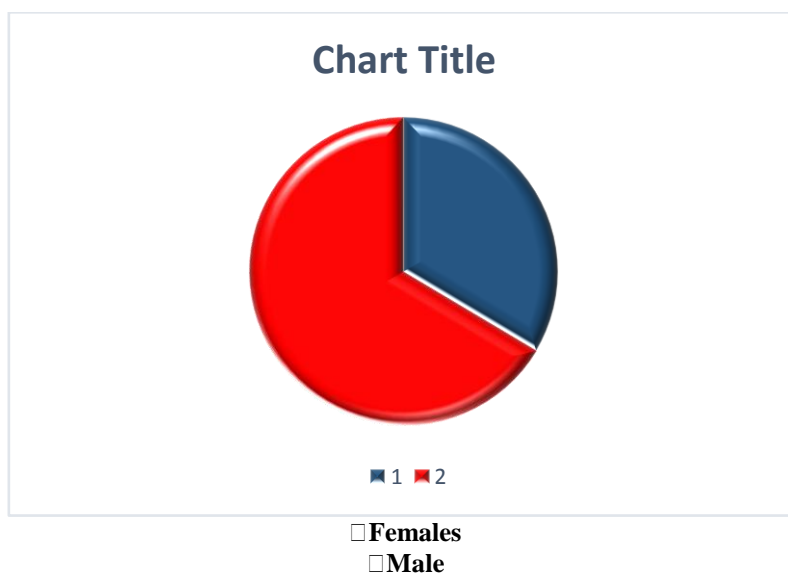


Figure 3: the gender of the participants

RESULTS

The results collected from the participant's responses shows that approximately most of EFL students agreed that applying SAC method in the classroom helped them to develop their language skills. The outcome showed that almost half of the Iraqi EFL students believed that using SAC method enhanced and improved their speaking skills. Furthermore, they also agreed that this method created as interactive and interesting environments for learning. When they were asked to evaluate the role of SAC in improving speaking skills, the responses showed that half of them rate it with an excellent in developing the four speaking skills. In addition to that 46.47% of them agreed that SAC method supported their listening skills. To sum up, we can say that the SAC can be used a method for enhancing and improving language skills. Students' responses to the use of SAC was positive which indicates that it can be used as an effective and reliable learning method.

CONCLUSION

The field of education is a life that keeps changing and developing. Thus, a new methods and techniques concerning learning keep emerging. The present study examined the use of SAC method in developing and improving speaking and listening skills for the EFL Iraqi students. The results of the questionnaire revealed that almost half of the participants agreed that using SAC can in fact improve students English speaking and listening skills and create a more interactive environment where the teachers and students interact more confidently. Therefore, it can be concluded that the responses of the students toward SAC are positive and high. Structured academic controversy (SAC) method provides the students with the ability to create, categorize, and understand ideas about a controversial issue. Moreover, it elicits informed responses from the learners.

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