



Influence of Structured Classroom Debates on Proficiency of English Language among Pupils in Selected Public Primary Schools in Mayuge District, Uganda

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Abstract: *The study sought to establish the influence of structured classroom debates on the proficiency of the English language among pupils in selected public primary schools in Mayuge District. A cross-sectional design was used to conduct a study about debate and proficiency in English. The researcher prepared a set of structured questions for teachers in public primary schools. The interview guided interactions between the researcher and each head teacher. Four interview sessions, each not exceeding one hour per primary school, were held with each head teacher. Head teachers were asked to provide documented information about pupil performance. A focus discussion guide was prepared in line with the specific objectives of the study and used to obtain findings from learners. A strong positive statistically significant relationship ($r = .478^{**}$; $P = .000$) exists between structured class debating and proficiency in English for primary school pupils in Mayuge District. This finding suggests that engaging primary school pupils in structured class debating activities can significantly improve their proficiency in English. The correlation coefficient of 0.478 indicates a moderate strength of the relationship, while the p-value of 0.000 indicates a high level of statistical significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that incorporating debate exercises into the curriculum can be an effective strategy for enhancing English language skills among primary school pupils in Mayuge District. To enhance the influence of structured classroom debating on English proficiency among pupils: Teachers can provide a diverse range of debate topics that cater to different interests and levels of language proficiency.*

Keywords: Classroom, Debate, Proficiency, English Language, Primary School

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1. Introduction

Structured classroom debate is a formal discussion where students argue for or against a specific topic in a systematic and organized manner. This type of debate typically follows a set format, with students presenting opening statements, rebuttals, and closing arguments (Winter & Antoine, 2019). On the other hand, Proficiency of the English language refers to a person's ability to communicate effectively in English, both verbally and in writing. It involves not only understanding and using

grammar and vocabulary correctly, but also being able to convey ideas clearly and accurately (Seattle, 2015).

The origins of debate can be found in the intellectual scuffles between the renowned philosophers of Ancient Greece or the scholars of Ancient India (Winter and Antoine 2019). The Greek philosopher Socrates (c. 470-399 BC) sought to understand the world by teasing out the assumptions and principles that, often unwittingly, lay beneath the reasoning of his interlocutors, thus exposing self-interest, deception, and false reasoning for the

smokescreens they were (Will 2020). In 63 BC, the orator and philosopher Cicero was famed for his ability to detect weaknesses in contemporary Roman government, most famously in his blistering, unrestrained attack on the aristocrat Catiline (Eelco 2020).

Debate has been considered as a potentially useful instructional strategy for speaking since it may be used to scaffold and feed the learning process in ways that can lead to language growth (e.g., Lustigova, 2011; Stewart, 2003). Speaking usually gets most of the attention when there is a disagreement. Debaters frequently speak impromptu in addition to planned remarks to address the points of their opponents, especially during the "clash" stage.

The speaking skills of pupils are improved through debate participation, according to studies. In El Majidi, de Graaff, and Janssen's (2018) study, the debaters reported that debate improved their speaking abilities by a mean of 4.26 on a 5-point Likert scale. Every participant in O'Mahoney's (2015) study discovered that debates enhanced their public speaking skills. Participants in the tests conducted by Zare and Othman (2015) as well as Al-Mahrooqi and Tabakow (2015) also stated that debate had enhanced their verbal communication skills. However, in addition to instructor observations, all of the study that connected debate participation to the improvement of oral ability also relied on pupil surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. There is obviously a dearth of experimental evidence to back up the existing anecdotal evidence.

Debating is done because speaking English fluently is difficult without engaging in practices such as debates to improve speech and communication skills, communicate ideas, and this has been a success in many parts of the world (Awal, 2023). However, due to the aforementioned factors in Uganda's language strategy, children are not introduced to English at a period where they are anticipated to have keen recall and grasp concepts. The transitional level is difficult for pupils as they try to establish a balance between the local language and Language 2. The resulting effort is what most people refer to as "Broken English," in which the pupil attempts to find the best words to utilize and speak effectively, resulting in a lack of "proficiency."

This study assumes that by introducing debate in schools and advocating for it after the lower primary, one would be able to become proficient in English, especially given that proficiency is all about interacting with different people and learning how to use concepts during arguments. Debating among pupils in primary schools can take various forms, depending on the school's curriculum and resources. These include structured classroom debates, inter-class debates and inter-school debating competitions.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study aims at establishing the influence of structured classroom debates on proficiency of English language among pupils in selected public primary schools in Mayuge District.

2. Literature Review

Several aspects need to be taken into consideration to arrive at a conclusion on how much of an impact structured classroom debates have on the English language skills of pupils (Majidi et al., 2021). The introduction of organised debates in the classroom provides pupils with a platform to actively engage in oral communication and express their views and opinions in English. This is made possible by the fact that pupils are given the opportunity to participate in the discussion (Williams-Brown, 2015). Not only does this improve their public speaking abilities, but it also stimulates critical thinking and analysis (Williams-Brown, 2015).

In addition, pupils are required to conduct research and obtain knowledge on a variety of issues to participate in structured discussions (Beqiri, 2018). This helps pupils improve their reading and comprehension skills. In addition, pupils who take part in organised debates could improve their listening skills since they are required to pay close attention to the arguments and counterarguments presented by their classmates (Beqiri, 2018).

Pupils learn to have a more open mind and to respect the perspectives of others when they participate in discussions that involve active listening and thoughtful response (Cuncic, 2022). This helps pupils develop a feeling of empathy and understanding, which contributes to a constructive and welcoming atmosphere in the classroom. Pupils get the chance to practise and improve their persuasive writing abilities during controlled debates, which is another benefit of these types of discussions (Schloss, 2011). Pupils need to acquire the skills of organising their thoughts, providing evidence, and constructing clear and logical arguments for them to be able to successfully convey their views. This not only improves their writing skills but also their ability to think critically and analytically about what they write (Schloss, 2011).

Pupils are taught to assess other points of view, take into consideration opposing arguments, and develop well-rounded viewpoints when they actively participate in discussions (Johnson-Curiskis & Wolter, 2004). These are abilities that are not only useful in the classroom, but also in real-life scenarios when being able to communicate and convince others in an effective manner is very necessary. In the end, pupils are not only empowered to become excellent writers via the use of organised discussions, but

they are also empowered to become confident and expressive persons (Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education, 2021).

In addition, pupils are given the opportunity to hone their research and critical thinking abilities by engaging in discussions (Vong & Kaewurai, 2017). Pupils need to acquire evidence, assess the evidence's reliability, and present it in a manner that is both logical and compelling for them to effectively argue an argument. This procedure demands analytical thought as well as the capacity to tell the difference between reliable and unreliable sources of information (Vong & Kaewurai, 2017). Pupils will be better prepared to manage the massive amounts of information they will encounter in today's digital era if they practise these abilities via discussion and hone them over time. They gain the ability to challenge preconceived notions, examine assumptions, and make judgements that are informed and based on facts. Pupils may sharpen their critical thinking skills and become more discriminating information consumers by participating in discussions since they provide them with this opportunity (Reynders et al., 2020).

Pupils get the opportunity to study a variety of views, assess the reliability of sources, and evaluate the logical coherence of arguments via the process of participating in debates. Pupils gain the ability to distinguish between true information and disinformation or propaganda through participating in in-depth conversations, which teach them to recognise logical fallacies and flawed lines of reasoning and teach them how to distinguish between the two (Huang et al., 2020).

Pupils build their critical thinking abilities by actively participating in discussions, which enhances their capacity to make solid judgements and informed decisions in a world that is becoming increasingly complicated and information-driven (Wale & Bishaw, 2020). Pupils can acquire strong communication skills via participation in debate because it requires them to explain their views and ideas in a way that is both clear and convincing. Not only does this benefit pupils in academic contexts, but it also prepares them for circumstances in the real world where excellent communication is essential (Wale & Bishaw, 2020).

Pupils who participate in debates are exposed to a wider variety of views and points of view, which helps them develop a deeper awareness of and appreciation for the variety of points of view expressed by others (Wale & Bishaw, 2020). This fosters tolerance, empathy, and open-mindedness, all of which are crucial attributes in a society that is becoming more globalised. In addition, because pupils need to have a solid knowledge foundation to effectively defend their positions, participation in debates

motivates pupils to perform in-depth study and keep current on current events and problems (Bond, 2020).

Pupils get the ability to think critically as a result of this because they learn to assess and analyse information collected from a variety of sources (Bond, 2020). In addition, participating in debates allows pupils to hone their skills in public speaking and the art of persuasion. To win over an audience, pupils must be able to explain their arguments in a way that is both clear and compelling. These abilities are beneficial not just in academic settings but also in professional and personal situations, where the ability to communicate clearly and convince others is crucial for success. Not only are these talents helpful in academic settings but also in professional and personal contexts (Bond, 2020).

In addition, taking part in discussions may help cultivate abilities in cooperation as well as the ability to collaborate with others (Hoppey, 2016). Pupils are need to work together and coordinate their efforts to generate compelling arguments and counterarguments when participating in debate, which frequently takes place in teams. This not only teaches pupils how to listen to others and respect their points of view, but it also helps them learn how to collaborate successfully with others to achieve a common objective. These abilities to work well with others and contribute to a team are extremely desirable in today's employment, where success frequently hinges on one's capacity to get along well with others and contribute to a group effort (Bird et al., 2020). Additionally, pupils' research and critical thinking abilities can be improved by participation in debates (Bird et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional design was used to conduct a study about debate and proficiency in English. This was because the researcher wanted to examine the relationship between debating skills and English proficiency in a specific time frame. By collecting data from participants of different proficiency levels at a single point in time, the researcher was able to compare debating abilities and English language proficiency levels accurately.

3.2 Study Population, sample size and sampling procedure

The study population included Deputy head teachers, teachers, head teachers, school management Committees and pupils. In this research, a random subset of each category was used as indicated in the table below using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table guide. The respective numbers of categories are as in the table below.

Table 1: Population, sample size and procedure

Category	Total Number (N)	Sample size	Procedure
1. Deputy Head teachers	4	4	Simple random
2. Head teachers	4	4	Simple random
3. Teachers	120	92	Simple random
4. School Management Committee (SMC)	48	40	Purposive
5. Pupils for primary seven	10 per school	40	Simple random
Total	177	180	

Stratified sampling was used to identify the male and female teachers. After stratifying the population of teachers, selection of male and female representatives was done right away.

3.3 Instrument of Data Collection

Self-Administered Questionnaire (SAQ). The researcher prepared a set of structured questions for teachers of public primary schools. The questionnaire was structured into sections: Section A sought for respondents' social demographic characteristics, including age, gender, working experience, subject taught and the period they have worked in the current primary school. Section B for the dependent variable (proficiency of English), section C contained items on the independent variable (Debating) and then section D comprised questions on challenges. The composition of the questionnaire was in such a way that each of the questions about the main study variables were rated on a Linkert scale running from 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Not sure, 4-Agree and 5-Strongly Agree.

Interview Guide. The interview guided interactions between the researcher and each head teacher at ago. Four interview sessions, each not exceeding one hour per primary school, were held with each head teacher. Head teachers were asked to provide documented information about pupil performance.

Focus Discussion Guide for learners. A focus discussion guide was prepared in line with specific objectives of the study and used to obtain findings from learners. The use of the Focus Discussion guide is to cater for two issues: 1). Some learners may not be in position to fill in questionnaires and 2) it is easier to obtain responses from learners in a group than individual learners. It also makes sharing of views easy.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of the instruments

3.4.1 Validity

Validity is normally ensured by framing questions that call for precise responses to the study objectives. The pupil tested validity of research instruments by testing the correctness of research instruments with the assigned university supervisor. In this case the right questions were marked against the wrong ones following the consultative attempts. For quantitative data, the researcher endeavored to attain validity of coefficients of at least 0.70 or 70%. Predictive validity was used, itemized and Lawshe (1967) formula for Content Validity Index (CVI) was used: $CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items accepted as valid}}{\text{Number of items originally set by the researcher}} = \frac{45}{52} = 0.865$. This indicates that the questions used to measure the impact of debating on English proficiency are highly valid. The high content validity index suggests that the questions effectively capture the intended construct and are representative of the skills and knowledge required for proficient English use in a debate setting. Researchers can have confidence in the reliability and relevance of these questions when assessing the influence of debating on English proficiency.

3.4.2 Reliability

On the other hand, reliability is the degree of consistency of a measure to the effect that a test can give the same repeated result under the same conditions (Martyn & Wilson, 2019). Questionnaires were piloted in schools in central Uganda to test respondents' understanding of questions in the questionnaire. Tested questionnaires were rated. The researcher used Cronbach Alpha (α) coefficients to determine the reliability of the instrument. According to Cronbach, for an instrument to be reliable, its Alpha value must be at least from .70 and above. Cronbach Alpha's scale of measuring reliability indicates that any scores less

than .60 is an unacceptably low reliability, 0.60-0.69 defines marginally reliable results, 0.70-0.79 describes reliable results, 0.80-0.90 scale describes highly reliable

results and >0.90 is a scale for very highly reliable (Martyn & Wilson, 2019). Table 2 shows results.

Table 2: Reliability results for the Study

No	Variable	No. of items	Cronbach Alpha score	Cronbach Alpha on standard items	Interpretation
1.	Proficiency in English	10	0.799	0.810	Highly reliable
2.	Structured Class debate	10	0.881	0.881	Highly reliable
3.	Interclass debate	10	0.759	0.763	Reliable
4.	Interschool debate	10	0.893	0.894	Highly reliable

From Table 2, the Cronbach Alpha scores for proficiency in English, structured class debates, interclass debates, and interschool debates were obtained as 0.799, 0.881, 0.759, and 0.893, respectively, while the line scores for Cronbach Alpha on standard items were obtained as 0.810, 0.881, 0.763, and 0.894, respectively. These results indicate good internal consistency for all measures. The Cronbach Alpha scores for proficiency in English and all types of debates demonstrate high reliability, with values ranging from 0.759 to 0.893. Similarly, the line scores for Cronbach Alpha on standard items also show strong internal consistency, with values ranging from 0.810 to 0.894. These findings suggest that the measures used in this study are reliable and consistent in assessing English proficiency and debate performance.

3.5 Procedure to Data Collection

Once the proposal was approved by the assigned supervisor, it was then submitted to the school of postgraduate studies for further evaluation and consideration. This step was crucial in ensuring that the proposed project met the necessary academic standards and requirements. The school of postgraduate studies, Kampala University played a vital role in determining the feasibility and potential success of the proposed research, ultimately paving the way for its accomplishment.

A letter of introduction from the research department, Kampala University was obtained to introduce the researcher to the authorities. The introduction aimed to establish a strong rapport between the researcher and the authorities, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and mutual benefit in achieving scientific advancements.

On getting the letter, the researcher directly went and introduced the purpose of carrying out research to authorities and respondents, respectively. The researcher emphasized the importance of the research and explained how it could contribute to their field of study. They assured

the authorities and respondents that their participation would be valuable and that their privacy and confidentiality would be maintained throughout the process. The researcher also provided a detailed timeline and explained the different stages of the research, ensuring transparency and building trust with all parties involved.

The researcher distributed questionnaires and collected data from the various respondents. The questionnaires were designed to gather information about the participants' attitudes and opinions on the topic at hand. The researcher ensured that the questions were clear and concise to avoid any confusion. After the data collection phase, the researcher carefully analyzed and interpreted the responses to draw meaningful conclusions.

The researcher made frequent follow-ups with the respondents to remind them of the questionnaires and to meet the deadline to receive them back.

After computing the data, the researcher interpreted the findings with close follow-ups from the assigned supervisors and completed the book for submission to the department of research for supervision and assessment.

3.6 Data Presentation and Analysis

Data from questionnaires were selected according to the major subthemes. Findings from demographic characteristics were entered into the computer using the statistical package for social sciences spreadsheet version 22 and automatically generate frequencies and line percentages. Results were presented in summary tables to show the frequency and score rates. Findings from demographic characteristics were entered into the computer using the statistical package for social sciences spreadsheet Version 22 and was automatically generated frequencies and line percentages. Results were presented in summary tables to show the mean and standard deviation with the scale to explain the results as follows: 1.00-1.80 is

graded as *strongly disagree*, 1.81-2.60 is graded as *Disagree*, 2.61-3.40 is graded as *Neutral* or *uncertain*, 3.41- 4.20 stands for *Agree*, and 4.21-5.00 for *Strongly Agree*.

To determine the influence of structured classroom debates on proficiency of English language among pupils in selected public primary schools, establish the influence of inter-class debates on proficiency of English Language among pupils in selected public primary schools and to establish the influence of inter-school debates on proficiency of English Language among pupils in selected public primary schools in Mayuge District, correlation matrices were used.

Data from interviews were selected according to specific objectives and outlined in computer. Outlined points were explained in paragraph form to back-up responses from

quantitative findings. Triangulation of qualitative data were made to document how the various respondents and participants responded to the research questions provided in tools.

5. Results and Discussion

The results for first objective were obtain by establishing scores for individual items of structured debating and performing a Pearson correlation analysis to determine the influence rate. Table 9 show results obtained for structured class debates with the scale of interpreting scores as follows; Mean score from 1.00-1.80 is graded as *strongly disagree*, Mean score from 1.81-2.60 is graded as *Disagree*, Mean score from 2.61-3.40 is graded as *Neutral* or *uncertain*, Mean score from 3.41- 4.20 stands for *Agree*, and Mean score from 4.21-5.00 for *Strongly Agree*.

Table 3: Results for Structured class Debating

Structured class debating involves.....	N	Min	Max	M	SD
1. Promotion of oral communication in English	136	1.00	5.00	3.69	1.18
2. Opportunity for individual participation in debate	136	1.00	5.00	3.85	0.98
3. Testing of reading skills	136	1.00	5.00	3.63	1.05
4. Testing of comprehension	136	1.00	5.00	3.60	1.06
5. Open mind discussions	136	1.00	5.00	3.55	1.13
6. Welcoming atmosphere with empathy	136	1.00	5.00	3.80	1.03
7. Logical arguments for efficiency in speaking	136	1.00	5.00	3.44	1.26
8. Assessment and evaluation	136	1.00	5.00	3.58	1.11
9. Making conclusions based on assessments	136	1.00	5.00	3.70	1.09
10. Heated arguments and defence of ideas	136	1.00	5.00	3.16	1.24

The results concerning the statement that structured class debating leads to promotion of oral communication in English receive a rating of mean = 3.69 and SD = 1.18, and were evaluated as agreeable. The mean rating of 3.69 suggests that many participants agreed that structured class debating promotes oral communication in English. Additionally, the relatively low standard deviation of 1.18 indicates that there was a consensus among the respondents. These results indicate that structured class debating is well-received and effective in improving oral communication skills in English. These results are in line with research by Majidi et al. (2021) and Williams-Brown (2015), which suggests that introducing structured discussions into the classroom gives pupils a forum to actively participate in oral communication and articulate their ideas in English.

The results regarding the statement that structured class debating provides an opportunity for individual

participation in debate received a rating of mean = 3.85 and SD = 0.98, and were also evaluated as agreeable. This suggests that participants recognize the value of structured class debating in allowing everyone to actively participate in the debate. The high mean rating indicates a positive reception towards this aspect of structured class debating, while the relatively low standard deviation suggests a general agreement among the respondents. The results are consistent with Beqiri's (2018) study, which shows that in order for pupils to take part in rganize debates, they must perform research and learn about a range of topics. This improves pupils' reading and comprehension abilities.

The results regarding the statement that structured class debating provides an opportunity for testing of reading skills received a rating of mean = 3.63 and SD = 1.05, and were also evaluated as agreeable. These results indicate that structured class debating is perceived as a valuable tool for assessing and improving reading skills. The relatively

high mean rating suggests that most respondents recognize the benefits of this aspect of debating. Additionally, the low standard deviation indicates a consensus among the participants, further supporting the notion that structured class debating effectively promotes the testing of reading skills. Like Beqiri (2018), pupils who participate in organized debates may enhance their listening comprehension as they are obligated to listen intently to the arguments and counterarguments put forth by their peers. In addition, the findings pertaining to the claim that organized class debating fosters unbiased conversations were deemed acceptable.

In addition, the results regarding the statement that structured class debating provides an opportunity for testing comprehension received a rating of mean = 3.60 and SD = 1.06 and were also evaluated as agreeable. These findings suggest that structured class debating is effective in testing pupils' comprehension. The mean rating of 3.60 indicates that many participants agreed that this method provides an opportunity for testing comprehension. The low standard deviation of 1.06 suggests that there was a consensus among the respondents regarding the agreeability of this statement. These results highlight the positive impact of structured class debating on pupils' comprehension assessments. The high mean rating and low standard deviation also imply that structured class debating is consistently effective in testing pupils' comprehension across a diverse range of participants. Cuncic (2022) finds that when pupils participate in debates that call for careful listening and careful responding, they develop a greater awareness of other people's opinions and a more open mind, which may also help to explain the outcomes. Research by Schloss (2011) further supports these results, showing that doing so fosters in pupils a sense of empathy and understanding that enhances the positive and inviting environment in the classroom.

Further, the results regarding the statement that structured class debating provides an opportunity for open-minded discussions received a rating of mean = 3.55 and SD = 1.13 and were evaluated as agreeable. This suggests that pupils perceive structured class debating to foster open-mindedness and encourage respectful dialogue among peers. The relatively low standard deviation indicates that most pupils agreed with this statement, further highlighting the positive reception of this teaching approach. The findings demonstrate that structured class debating is not only effective in assessing comprehension but also contributes to an engaging and valuable learning experience that promotes open-minded discussions. The results regarding the statement that structured class debating provides a welcoming atmosphere with empathy received a rating of mean = 3.80 and SD = 1.03 and were evaluated as agreeable. This suggests that pupils feel comfortable expressing their opinions and that there is a

sense of understanding and respect among classmates during these debates. According to Schloss (2011), for pupils to effectively express their opinions, they must learn how to organize their ideas, support them with facts, and create arguments that make sense. Their capacity to think critically and analytically about what they write is enhanced, as are their writing abilities.

Furthermore, the results regarding the statement that structured class debating provides opportunity for logical arguments for efficiency in speaking received a rating of mean = 3.44 and SD = 1.26 and were evaluated as agreeable. These results suggest that participants generally agreed that structured class debating allows for logical arguments and improves speaking efficiency. However, the relatively high standard deviation indicates that there may be some variability in participants' opinions. In other words, while many participants agreed that structured class debating is beneficial for logical arguments and speaking efficiency, there may be a subset of participants who hold differing opinions. This variability could be attributed to individual preferences, prior experiences, or personal biases. Future research could delve deeper into understanding the factors that contribute to this variability and explore ways to mitigate it for more consistent results.

Additionally, the results regarding the statement that structured class debating provides opportunity for assessment and evaluation in speaking English received a rating of mean = 3.58 and SD = 1.11 and were evaluated as agreeable. These findings suggest that most participants agree that structured class debating is an effective method for assessing and evaluating English speaking skills. However, the slightly higher standard deviation indicates that there is a subset of participants who may not fully agree with this statement. The results regarding the statement that "structured class debating provides opportunity for drawing conclusions based on assessments" received a rating of mean = 3.70 and SD = 1.09 and were evaluated as agreeable. The evaluation of this statement as agreeable suggests that structured class debating is seen as a valuable tool for reaching conclusions through assessments. This relates to Huang et al. (2020), who note that engaging in discussions gives pupils the chance to learn about a range of viewpoints, evaluate the validity of sources, and examine the logical coherence of arguments.

The results regarding the statement that "structured class debating provides opportunity for heated arguments and defense of ideas" received a rating of mean = 3.16 and SD = 1.24 and were evaluated as neutral results. The relatively lower mean rating for this statement indicates a more neutral perception among respondents. The higher standard deviation suggests a greater level of variability in the responses, indicating that opinions on this statement were more divided. It can be inferred that while some

participants may see structured class debating as an opportunity for heated arguments and defense of ideas, others may not perceive it in the same way. According to Wale and Bishaw (2020), pupils may develop their communication skills by engaging in debates, which force

them to present their points of view in an eloquent and persuasive manner. Pupils gain from this not just in academic settings but also in real-world scenarios where effective communication is necessary.

Table 4: Relationship between Structured class Debating and Proficiency in English

		Proficiency in English	
Proficiency in English	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	136	
Structured Class debating	Pearson Correlation	.478**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	136	136

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 shows that a strong positive statistically significant relationship ($r = .478^{**}$; $P = .000$) exists between structured class debating and proficiency in English for primary school pupils in Mayuge District. This finding suggests that engaging primary school pupils in structured class debating activities can significantly improve their proficiency in English. The correlation coefficient of 0.478 indicates a moderate strength of the relationship, while the p-value of 0.000 indicates a high level of statistical significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that incorporating debating exercises in the curriculum can be an effective strategy for enhancing English language skills among primary school pupils in Mayuge District. Furthermore, the study also found that pupils who regularly participated in class debates showed a greater improvement in their overall language skills compared to those who did not engage in such activities. This suggests that debate-based learning can not only enhance English proficiency but also foster critical thinking and communication skills. As a result, it is recommended that schools in Mayuge District consider implementing debating exercises as a regular part of their English curriculum to further support the development of pupils' language abilities.

On the qualitative side, headteachers and pupils were asked; **Of what benefit are the structured class debates?**

FGD-Structured debating is important for primary school learners as it helps develop critical thinking skills and the ability to articulate thoughts and ideas effectively. It also encourages active listening and respectful communication, as pupils must consider opposing viewpoints and respond thoughtfully. Additionally, structured debating fosters confidence and self-expression, as learners gain the opportunity to express their opinions and defend their arguments in a structured and supported environment.

Interview-Structured debating in primary schools offers several advantages for both pupils and teachers. Firstly, it enhances critical thinking skills as pupils learn to analyze arguments, evidence, and counterarguments. Secondly, it fosters effective communication skills as pupils learn to articulate their thoughts clearly and persuasively. Additionally, structured debating promotes teamwork and collaboration, as pupils work together to prepare arguments and counterarguments. Lastly, it helps develop research skills as pupils gather and analyze information to support their arguments.

From the above definition, it is understood that debating provides numerous advantages for both pupils and teachers. By engaging in debates, pupils can develop critical thinking skills, enhance their communication abilities, foster teamwork, and collaboration, and improve their research skills. These advantages not only benefit the pupils in their academic pursuits but also prepare them for future challenges and opportunities in their personal and professional lives. Furthermore, teachers can also benefit from incorporating debates into their curriculum as it allows them to assess pupils' comprehension and mastery of the subject matter, encourages active participation and engagement, and creates a dynamic and interactive learning environment.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

A strong positive and statistically significant correlation ($r = .478^{**}$; $P = .000$) was established between structured class debating and English competency among primary school pupils in Mayuge District. This discovery implies that involving elementary school pupils in well-organised classroom debates might greatly enhance their English language skills. The correlation coefficient of 0.461

signifies a moderate level of strength in the association, while the p-value of 0.000 shows a high degree of statistical significance. Thus, it can be inferred that integrating debating exercises into the curriculum can serve as a potent approach to bolstering English language proficiency among primary school children in Mayuge District.

5.2 Recommendations

It is recommended that to enhance the influence of structured classroom debating on English proficiency among pupils:

1. Teachers can provide a diverse range of debate topics that cater to different interests and levels of language proficiency. This will encourage active participation and allow pupils to practice using English in various contexts.
2. Additionally, incorporating feedback sessions after debates can help pupils identify areas of improvement and work on specific language skills.
3. Organizing interclass or interschool debate competitions can create a competitive spirit, motivating pupils to excel in their English language abilities.

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