Debate Pedagogy in Semi-Military Law Enforcement Classrooms: A Case Study of English-Speaking Fluency

Gatot Hadi Waluyo*)
Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia
E-mail: gatothadi117@gmail.com

Urip Sulistiyo
Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia
E-mail: urip.sulistiyo@unja.ac.id

Mukhlash Abrar
Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia
E-mail: mukhlash.abrar@unja.ac.id

Bunga Ayu Wulandari
Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia
E-mail: bungaayu.wulandari@unja.ac.id

*) Corresponding Author

Abstract: This study examines how debate pedagogy supports the development of English-speaking fluency among third-year cadets in a semi-military law enforcement institution. Guided by an interpretivist paradigm, it adopts a qualitative, single-site case study design focused on the integration of British Parliamentary debates into the English curriculum. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observation of debate sessions, and document analysis involving 36 purposively selected participants (34 high-proficiency cadets and 2 English lecturers). Data were coded and analyzed in NVivo 15 using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The analysis yielded six interrelated thematic advantages of debate for speaking development: training spontaneous yet structured speaking; refining grammar and pronunciation; expanding topic-relevant vocabulary; strengthening logical argumentation; building confidence in English public speaking; and fostering critical thinking, research skills, teamwork, and active listening. These findings indicate that debate-based instruction effectively enhances cadets' communicative competence and key soft skills when supported by consistent practice, peer collaboration, and constructive lecturer feedback. The study positions debate as a viable instructional strategy for semi-military academies and offers implications for curriculum design that integrates language development with preparation for contemporary, globally oriented law enforcement roles.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana pedagogi debat mendukung pengembangan kefasihan berbicara bahasa Inggris pada taruna tingkat tiga di lembaga pendidikan semi-militer penegak hukum. Berlandaskan paradigma interpretivis, penelitian ini menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif pada satu lokasi yang berfokus pada penerapan debat model British Parliamentary dalam kurikulum bahasa Inggris. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, diskusi kelompok terarah daring, observasi sesi debat di kelas, dan telaah dokumen terhadap 36 partisipan yang dipilih secara purposif (34 taruna berkemahiran tinggi dan 2 dosen bahasa

Inggris). Analisis data dilakukan dengan NVivo 15 menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang mencakup tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Hasil analisis menghasilkan enam tema utama mengenai keunggulan debat bagi pengembangan kemampuan berbicara, yaitu: melatih kefasihan berbicara spontan namun terstruktur; menyempurnakan tata bahasa dan pelafalan; memperkaya kosakata tematik; memperkuat kemampuan menyusun argumen logis; membangun kepercayaan diri berbicara di depan umum; serta menumbuhkan berpikir kritis, kemampuan riset, kerja tim, dan kemampuan menyimak aktif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis debat secara efektif meningkatkan kompetensi komunikatif dan keterampilan lunak taruna ketika didukung latihan konsisten, kolaborasi antarteman, dan umpan balik konstruktif dari dosen. Studi ini menegaskan debat sebagai strategi pengajaran yang layak di akademi semi-militer dan memberikan implikasi bagi perancangan kurikulum yang mengintegrasikan pengembangan bahasa dengan persiapan peran kepolisian dalam konteks global masa kini.

INTRODUCTION

The use of debate as an instructional approach in language education has increasingly gained attention due to its capacity to foster communication skills, critical thinking, and analytical reasoning (Aclan, 2015; Hadi et al., 2021; Zare & Othman, 2015). Within the Indonesian Police Academy (IPA), strengthening English-speaking competence is of particular importance, especially as police officers are increasingly expected to participate in international peacekeeping missions and collaborate with global law enforcement agencies (Nugraha et al., 2024). Consequently, mastering English for clear and confident communication has become indispensable rather than optional, both for engaging in international collaborations—such as joint investigations with INTERPOL on transnational crimes—and for handling domestic cases involving foreign nationals with precision and confidence (Wei, 2012). In alignment with national policy, the IPA has therefore designated English as a compulsory component of its academic program to cultivate the communicative competence required for scholarship opportunities and future roles in international law enforcement (Baker, 2021).

Against this background, structured debate, particularly the British Parliamentary Debate (BPD) format, emerges as a promising pedagogical strategy to advance these linguistic and professional goals, as widely acknowledged in the academic literature (Majidi et al., 2024). Debate is recognised as a dynamic teaching technique that engages learners actively in constructing arguments, thinking analytically, and communicating spontaneously in English(Aclan, 2015; Zare & Othman, 2015). Through this interactive process, cadets can enhance their language proficiency while simultaneously developing critical reasoning, analytical problem-solving, teamwork, and public speaking confidence—skills that are essential for aspiring officers tasked with effective communication in fast-paced and multicultural environments (Nurakhir et al., 2020; Rubio & Conesa, 2022). Thus, incorporating debate activities into classroom practice provides cadets with meaningful opportunities to use English authentically, engage with relevant policing

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and societal issues, and refine the soft skills necessary for professional competence in both domestic and international arenas.

While this study observes the BPD format, it is important to acknowledge that a range of other debate models—such as Asian Parliamentary, public forum, and panel debates—have also been used in language classrooms, each with distinct patterns of role distribution, interaction, and assessment. These formats differ in the extent to which they emphasise prepared speeches versus spontaneous rebuttals, individual performance versus teamwork, and adversarial versus consensus-oriented interaction, and thus may align differently with the communicative and organisational demands faced by police officers in practice. In the IPA context, however, BPD offers particular advantages: its multi-bench structure requires cadets to coordinate within and across teams, process rapidly evolving lines of argument, and respond under strict time constraints, thereby mirroring the need to make quick yet reasoned decisions in complex policing situations (Majidi et al., 2024). Nevertheless, because very few studies have compared debate models in police or military academies, the present focus on BPD should also be viewed as a starting point for future comparative research that systematically evaluates which debate formats best support specific linguistic and professional outcomes in semi-military institutions.

At the same time, the implementation of debate-based pedagogy in a semi-military academy such as the IPA is not without constraints. The regimented daily schedule, the strong emphasis on obedience and uniformity, and the prioritisation of physical and disciplinary training can limit the flexibility and time available for extended interactive activities like debate. Furthermore, cadets are socialised into hierarchical communication patterns in which challenging ideas proposed by seniors or peers may be perceived as disrespectful, potentially inhibiting the open, critical exchange of arguments that meaningful debating requires. These structural and cultural features raise important questions about how far debate can be adapted without undermining institutional discipline and highlight the need for empirical accounts that document concrete obstacles, tensions, and locally developed solutions when debate is implemented within semi-military environments such as the IPA.

Given these tensions, the effectiveness of debate as a teaching strategy depends heavily on the readiness of both lecturers and cadets, which underscores key pedagogical conditions for successful implementation. Lecturers must possess the expertise to moderate debates constructively, ensure active yet respectful engagement, and foster an inclusive environment that balances critical inquiry with institutional norms of discipline (Flynn, 2007; Zare & Othman, 2015). At the same time, cadets require adequate language competence, confidence, and motivation to participate productively in debate activities. Despite the growing advocacy for communicative and student-centred approaches in language education, there remains limited academic discussion on how well debate-based pedagogy fits within the militarised ethos that shapes cadet socialisation in police academies. Critical questions persist about whether practices that foreground questioning, rebuttal, and open disagreement can be reconciled with expectations of conformity, obedience, and deference to authority, and how this tension may influence cadets' willingness to participate actively in debates, both during training and in their subsequent professional roles.

To respond to these issues, the present study not only explores the pedagogical benefits of debate but also examines how debate activities are negotiated within the academy's disciplinary culture, including

classroom management, role expectations, and the ways cadets experience institutional rules during debate sessions. By drawing on data from interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis, the research provides a nuanced picture of both the affordances and the limitations of debate in a semi-military educational setting, thereby extending existing discussions of debate beyond conventional civilian school and university contexts. Although this study focuses on cadets' and lecturers' perceptions of the advantages of debate for English-speaking proficiency during training, its findings also provide an empirical foundation for subsequent longitudinal investigations into how debate-based learning may shape alumni's communicative performance in the field—for example, when interviewing victims and suspects, briefing superiors, engaging with communities, or collaborating with international partners.

In light of the above, by situating debate within the broader militarised institutional culture of the IPA and highlighting possible continuities between classroom practices and professional demands, this research invites further scholarly discussion on the role of debate in forming reflective, articulate, and ethically responsible law enforcement officers. Accordingly, investigating the adaptation of BPD in this context can contribute to educational scholarship by offering empirical insights into how debate supports speaking fluency, critical thought, and teamwork in a disciplined training environment. These considerations lead to the central research question guiding this study: How do lecturers and cadets at the Indonesian Police Academy perceive the advantages of using debate in enhancing English-speaking proficiency?

METHOD

Research Design

This research adopts a qualitative, single-case study design to examine the advantages of using debate as a teaching strategy in enhancing English-speaking skills among police cadets at the Indonesian Police Academy (IPA). The case is bounded by one semi-military law enforcement institution and its English debate program, while cadets, lecturers, classroom practices, and institutional documents function as embedded units of analysis (Creswell, 2012). This design provides comprehensive insights into cadets' experiences within the distinctive context of semi-military law enforcement education and enables in-depth exploration of how a teaching strategy such as debate interacts with institutional discipline, culture, and peer relationships. Grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, the study explores how participants make sense of and participate in debate activities within their institutional setting, highlighting the dynamic relationship between pedagogical strategies and the environment in which they are applied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Research Site and Participants

The primary participants in this study were third-year police cadets from the IPA in Semarang, Indonesia who had taken English courses incorporating debate as a teaching method during their first to third years. Participants were selected from eight classes, each comprising 30 to 32 cadets, totaling 247 individuals. This sizable sample enabled the inclusion of varied experiences and perspectives. The researchers utilized IELTS mapping scores provided by the IPA's academic division to ensure a more precise selection process. Finally, the researcher got 36 purposive participants, including four cadets with high-proficiency of speaking skills and two English lecturers for interviews and 30 cadets for FGD. Four high-proficiency cadets were included as in-depth interviewees because they represent information-rich cases:

among the advanced cohort, they had the highest speaking scores and the most extensive debating experience, so they were best positioned to provide detailed, reflective accounts of how debate pedagogy shapes their English-speaking fluency. The participants' distribution and corresponding codes are presented in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. Participants

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	N
Initial population	Third-year IPA cadets who had taken English courses with integrated debate (8 classes, 30–32 each)	247
Eligible cadets	Cadets mapped at advanced IELTS Band 7.0–8.0 by the Academic Division	45
Interviewed cadets	Cadets with the highest speaking scores and extensive debating experience	4
FGD cadets	Remaining advanced cadets, assigned to two online FGDs (2 groups × 15 participants)	30
Total cadets included	All cadets participating in interviews and FGDs	34
English lecturers	Lecturers responsible for implementing debate-based English instruction	2
Total participants	Cadets and lecturers combined	36

Table 2. Interview and FGD's Participants Code

NO	CADET PARTICIPANT (CP)	LECTURER PARTICIPANT (LP)	FGD PARTICIPANTS (FP)
1	CP1	LP1	FP1-FP30
2	CP2	LP2	
3	CP3		
4	CP4		

Data Collection Techniques

This study employed a comprehensive data triangulation strategy, integrating observations, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis. This multi-method approach facilitated a multidimensional understanding of the effectiveness of debate as a teaching strategy. Structured observations of debate sessions involving selected cadets and lecturers were conducted using video recordings rather than live, in-person observation. The debate lasted 120 minutes across two sessions. This indirect method enabled a more objective, consistent, and unobtrusive data collection process, aligning with established research principles that advocate for recording-based observation rather than physical presence (Anguera et al., 2018).

Participants also took part in semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom. As a core form of Internet-mediated research (IMR), online interviews facilitate firsthand data collection through digital platforms, allowing for detailed analysis directly linked to the study's research questions (Salmons, 2016). This method elicited in-depth narratives about participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the advantages and challenges of using debate as a pedagogical tool. Each online interview took around 60 minutes, providing sufficient time for an in-depth discussion while remaining considerate of participants' availability. The researcher employed open-ended questions to structure the dialogue and encouraged participants to describe their experiences and perspectives in detail. The inclusion of open-ended questions encouraged comprehensive and reflective

responses, fostering deeper understanding of their viewpoints (Roberts, 2020). The researcher designed the interview protocols for both lecturers and cadets by adapting them from a prior study by Linguaggi (2019), thereby ensuring that each question was closely aligned with the established research questions.

In addition, two online focus group discussions, each comprising 15 cadets, were conducted to capture a broader range of perspectives on debate-based learning. The FGD procedures mirrored those of the interviews, with careful adherence to ethical standards such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. As a qualitative strategy, FGDs promote focused exploration of themes through collaborative discussion, offering collective insights into shared experiences (Abrar, 2024).

Document analysis complemented these methods by examining institutional materials, including curricula, teaching resources, lesson plans, and assessment reports. These documents provided valuable information on the objectives and expected outcomes of integrating debate into the English language program. The analysis clarified how debate was conceived and implemented as an instructional strategy to strengthen speaking proficiency, forming a solid foundation for evaluating its effectiveness. Furthermore, this documentary evidence enriched contextual understanding and reinforced the study's validity through triangulation (Prior, 2003).

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). The qualitative analysis was conducted in NVivo 15, where all interview and FGD recordings were transcribed and coded. NVivo 15 is a specialized tool for qualitative data management and analysis (Van et al., 2025).

During open coding, meaningful text segments were assigned initial codes such as "improved fluency," "better argument structure," "increased willingness to speak," and "reduced speaking anxiety," which were then grouped into broader categories like "Linguistic Development," "Cognitive Skills," and "Affective Outcomes." These categories informed the development of overarching themes; for example, the theme "Benefits of Debate for Speaking Abilities" encompassed subthemes related to critical thinking, enhanced self-confidence, and increased speaking fluency. NVivo's project map and tabulation features were used to display relationships among codes, categories, and themes, while source triangulation was applied to reinforce the validity and credibility of the findings in line with Miles and Huberman's framework. Consequently, the analytical process in this study was systematic, transparent, and thoroughly documented, ensuring that each step remained traceable and verifiable, when necessary, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.
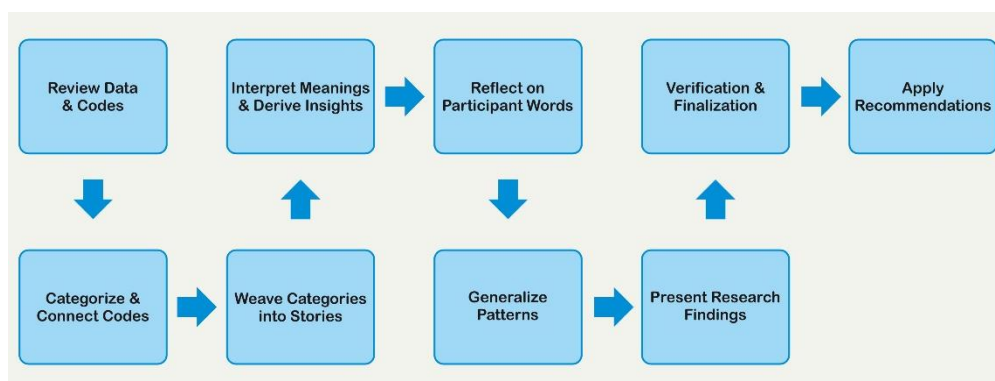
Figure 1 The Analytical Process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis process employed open, axial, and selective coding stages, utilizing NVivo 15 software to systematically examine interview transcripts, observation notes, focus group discussion results, and relevant documents. Codes were refined by identifying meaningful patterns, recurring narrative features, and the frequency of key themes. This rigorous approach enabled the recognition of consistent thematic trends across all sources, thus strengthening the validity of the study's findings. NVivo 15 facilitated the visualization of thematic relationships, the exploration of interconnections among codes, and the efficient retrieval of illustrative individual quotations to enrich the analysis.

The resulting analytic categories captured the unique experiences of both cadets and lecturers, revealing the perceived benefits of debate as a teaching strategy and insights into broader educational dynamics within a semi-military context. Each theme was organized according to the prominence and depth of perspectives, reflected through explicit statements and implicit meanings. Together, these findings provide a holistic understanding of the role of debate, highlighting its potential strengths as a pedagogical tool and its formative influence on character development, critical thinking, confidence in English-language public speaking, and helps cadets learn to express disagreement and critique while remaining within IPA's hierarchical, semi-military norms. Through this systematic analysis using NVivo 15, seven central themes emerged regarding the advantages of debate as a teaching strategy. The main themes and their corresponding sub-themes are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Thematic summary of perceived benefits of debate pedagogy

MAJOR BENEFIT / THEME	KEY INDICATORS (SUB-THEMES)	MAIN DATA SOURCES	BRIEF EVIDENCE
1. Spontaneous and structured speaking	Ability to respond without notes; clearer speech organization;	FGDs, interviews, classroom	Cadets described moving from heavily scripted contributions to more spontaneous yet still organized speeches, and observers

MAJOR BENEFIT / THEME	KEY INDICATORS (SUB-THEMES)	MAIN DATA SOURCES	BRIEF EVIDENCE
	quicker idea generation; better time management	observations	noted clearer openings, bodies, and conclusions over time.
2. Improved grammar and pronunciation	Greater awareness of grammatical accuracy; self- and peer-correction; more controlled intonation and stress	FGDs, interviews	Participants reported monitoring each other's grammar and pronunciation in pre-debate practice, and several noted that repeated debates made them more attentive to sentence structure and delivery.
3. Vocabulary expansion	Acquisition of topic-specific and legal/procedural terms; wider range of expressions; transfer to real-life use	FGDs, interviews, documents	Preparation for debates pushed cadets to research unfamiliar issues and terminology, and some reported feeling more able to use this vocabulary in training, exchanges, and international contexts.
4. Logical argumentation	Use of evidence; anticipation and rebuttal of counter-arguments; multi-perspective analysis	FGDs, interviews, observations	Cadets described learning to back claims with data and to respond to opposing points more systematically, while observations showed clearer claim–warrant–impact structures in later sessions.
5. Self-confidence in speaking	Reduced speaking anxiety; willingness to volunteer; more assured body language	FGDs, interviews, observations	Initially anxious cadets reported feeling progressively more comfortable speaking in front of peers, and observers noted that previously quiet students became more active and assertive during debates.
6. Critical thinking, research, teamwork, and active listening	Topic analysis; collaborative preparation; division of roles; attention to opponents' arguments	FGDs, interviews, observations, documents	Participants linked debates to improved ability to analyze complex issues, coordinate within teams, and listen carefully in order to give accurate, timely responses in English.
7. Command Culture and Critical Expression	Reluctance to disagree in rigid hierarchy; distinguishing critique from disobedience; using debate rules for respectful disagreement	FGDs, interviews, observations	Debate was described as temporarily softening rigid command norms by providing a structured arena where cadets could question and rebut arguments without being judged insubordinate.

Trains Spontaneous and Structured Speaking

Across interviews, FGDs, and observations, participants consistently described debate as a platform for moving from scripted to spontaneous contributions while still maintaining clear speech organization (Table 3, Theme 1). Cadets and lecturers highlighted quicker idea generation, more coherent openings and conclusions, and better management of limited speaking time, indicating that debate practice strengthened both fluency and macro-structuring skills in English. As CP1 shared:

"Debate made me more trained in speaking spontaneously and in a structured manner. I learned to choose the right words, correct grammar, and improve pronunciation. In addition, I also learned to listen carefully to the other person in order to provide relevant responses." (CP1).

Improves Grammar and Pronunciation

Across focus groups and interviews, cadets reported that repeated debate practice heightened their awareness of grammatical accuracy and pronunciation, supported by peer-correction and lecturer feedback (Table 3, Theme 2). These experiences suggest that fluency gains were accompanied by more controlled articulation, intonation, and sentence construction, indicating that debate can function as a communicative context for developing form as well as meaning. As FP9 expressed:

"We also often practice informally first, for example, asking each other questions to test the strength of the argument. In addition, we also correct each other's pronunciation and grammar so that when the debate takes place, we are more prepared and confident." (FP9)

Expands Vocabulary

The data show that preparation for debate rounds exposed cadets to new topic-specific and policing-related terminology, which they then recycled in speeches and rebuttals (Table 3, Theme 3). Participants described transferring this wider lexical repertoire to other training and international interactions, indicating that debate encouraged durable vocabulary growth beyond the classroom. As CP3 said:

"I also got used to utilizing new expressions and vocabulary that I heard from my friends for the debate." (FP5)

Builds Logical Arguments

Findings from FGDs, interviews, and observations converge to show that debates pushed cadets to support claims with evidence, anticipate counter-arguments, and structure their speeches more coherently (Table 4, Theme 4). Over time, cadets demonstrated greater ability to analyse issues from multiple perspectives and to respond quickly yet logically to opposing positions, signalling strengthened argumentative competence in English. As FP17 stated:

"I have become accustomed to analyzing problems from various perspectives and logical solutions." (FP17)

Increases Self-Confidence

Participants frequently highlighted reduced anxiety and increased willingness to speak in front of peers as a key outcome of repeated debate exposure (Table 3, Theme 5). Observational data corroborated these self-reports, with quieter cadets gradually taking more visible speaking roles and displaying more assured body language, suggesting that debate contributed to the development of communicative confidence. As FP29 shared:

"When I first joined a debate in English class, I actually felt very nervous and afraid of saying the wrong thing... But after joining a few times, I started to feel more confident." (FP29)

Critical Thinking, Research, Teamwork, Active Listening

Across all data sources, debate activities were associated with more systematic topic analysis, collaborative preparation, and attentive listening to opponents' arguments (Table 3, Theme 6). Cadets linked these practices to improved research skills, stronger teamwork, and sharper real-time judgement,

underscoring debate's potential to cultivate higher-order thinking and interpersonal competencies that are relevant for operational policing. CP4 highlighted:

> "The group discussion procedure before the debate also trains communication and collaboration abilities."

LP2 reinforced this view:

> "Debate also trains critical thinking and teamwork, which are very important for prospective police officers." (LP2)

Command Culture and Critical Expression

Debate in IPA not only enhances fluency, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy but also temporarily reinterprets the semi-military command culture (Table 3, Theme 7), as cadets who are used to rigid hierarchy initially equate open disagreement with disrespect and therefore participate very cautiously. Through repeated British Parliamentary rounds with clear rules that focus critique on ideas, ensure equal speaking turns, and demand evidence-based reasoning, cadets gradually learn to distinguish intellectual opposition from insubordination, so that hierarchy is not removed but redirected into a professional rhetorical style aligned with institutional values and public-interest considerations, while lecturers maintain procedural authority yet explicitly invite challenge to arguments as part of responsible communication. As one cadet (CP5) summarized,

> "At first I only repeated safe points because I was afraid that correcting my friends or my lecturer would be seen as disrespectful, but after several rounds I realized that in debate I am allowed, even expected to attack the argument strongly as long as I use evidence, follow the rules, and stay polite."

Negative Cases

Although the six themes above were strongly supported across data sources, the analysis also identified several negative and divergent cases (Table 4). A small number of cadets remained anxious about public speaking, perceived debate preparation as burdensome, or felt overshadowed by more fluent peers, indicating that the benefits of debate were not uniformly experienced and depended on individual disposition and classroom management.

Table 4. Negative cases across themes

AREA	NEGATIVE PATTERN	DATA INDICATION	IMPLICATION FOR INTERPRETATION
Speaking confidence	A few cadets remained highly anxious about public speaking despite repeated debate exposure.	Mentioned in interviews and FGDs when participants described ongoing nervousness and fear of mistakes.	Suggests that debate reduces anxiety for many but not all learners, indicating a need for additional scaffolding for highly apprehensive cadets.
Linguistic accuracy	Some participants felt that focusing on argumentation led them to neglect grammar, and they worried about fossilizing	Reflected in comments about still struggling with grammar even as fluency improved.	Indicates a potential trade-off between spontaneous fluency and accuracy that lecturers must monitor.

AREA	NEGATIVE PATTERN	DATA INDICATION	IMPLICATION FOR INTERPRETATION
	errors.		
Workload and preparation time	A minority perceived debate preparation as time-consuming and competing with other academic and training demands.	Alluded to in FGDs when cadets described intense preparation procedures before debates.	Shows that debate is valued but can be experienced as burdensome, which has implications for scheduling and assessment.
Unequal participation	Some groups reported that more confident speakers dominated, while quieter cadets contributed mainly during preparation, not in the debate itself.	Implied in descriptions of role division where certain members took speaking roles repeatedly.	Highlights the need for structured role rotation and explicit participation norms to ensure equitable speaking opportunities.

The findings of this study show that British Parliamentary debate effectively supports police cadets' transition from scripted classroom talk to more spontaneous, structured English suitable for professional interaction, resonating with prior work in EFL and ESP contexts. Similar to studies in civilian universities, debate in this semi-military setting encouraged learners to organize arguments logically, respond under time pressure, and integrate evidence into their speeches (Kassem, 2021; Linguaggi, 2019; Zare & Othman, 2015). However, this study extends those findings by illustrating how debate operates within a hierarchical, discipline-oriented culture, where role clarity, turn-taking discipline, and obedience to rules can be leveraged to simulate operational decision-making in policing rather than merely academic discussion (Darwin & Semendawai, 2024). Unlike more egalitarian classrooms described in prior EFL research, cadets' willingness to take intellectual risk in this context appeared closely tied to clear procedural safeguards, selective error correction, and explicit institutional support for debate as a legitimate training arena (Zulfikar, 2023).

Linguistic gains identified in this study—enhanced fluency, clearer macro-organization, improved grammar and pronunciation, and expanded topic-specific vocabulary—align with earlier evidence that debate promotes integrated development of accuracy and fluency when combined with feedback and repeated practice (Oktaviani et al., 2020; Sahril et al., 2020; Waluyo & Abrar, 2024; Wariyati et al., 2024). This study nuances that pattern by highlighting tensions between spontaneous performance and accuracy: some cadets worried that focusing on rebuttals and speed might entrench grammatical errors, echoing concerns in the broader communicative language teaching literature regarding a possible fluency–accuracy trade-off. The presence of peer- and lecturer-mediated correction in pre-debate preparation, coupled with targeted feedback after rounds, appeared to mitigate this risk, suggesting that debate can foster both fluency and accuracy when embedded in a carefully scaffolded cycle of preparation, performance, and reflection (Rubio & Conesa, 2022; Syammdianita & Maharia, 2020). This supports the view of debate not only as performance but as a process-oriented pedagogy in which research, rehearsal, and debriefing are as critical as speaking time itself (Aclan, 2015; Linguaggi, 2019).

Beyond language form, the study confirms and extends evidence that debate strengthens critical thinking, argumentation, and socio-affective capacities such as self-confidence, collaboration, and active listening (Nurakhir et al., 2020; Timbu et al., 2022). Cadets' accounts of learning to analyze issues from multiple perspectives, marshal legal and empirical evidence, and respond quickly yet logically mirror gains reported in nursing, secondary, and university EFL contexts, suggesting that debate may constitute a transferable soft-skills platform across professional disciplines (Nurakhir et al., 2020; Rubio & Conesa, 2022). What distinguishes the semi-military law enforcement context is the direct perceived relevance of these skills to real-world tasks: cadets explicitly linked debate to giving briefings, defending operational decisions, and communicating with international stakeholders, thereby operationalizing ESP principles that integrate domain-specific content with language use (Baker, 2021; Nugraha et al., 2024; Wei, 2012). The present findings therefore help bridge ESP work in police academies, which has traditionally emphasized listening and reading for procedures, with more interactive, high-stakes speaking tasks (Nugraha et al., 2024; Wei, 2013).

At the same time, the negative cases identified in this study temper overly optimistic accounts of debate. Persistent speaking anxiety among a subset of cadets, perceptions of heavy preparation workload, and unequal participation within teams indicate that debate is not inherently inclusive or uniformly beneficial. These challenges parallel issues raised in previous studies where dominant students monopolized talk and less confident learners retreated to background roles, particularly when classroom norms for turn-taking and support were insufficiently explicit (Rubio & Conesa, 2022; Zare & Othman, 2015). In the semi-military setting, strict hierarchy may exacerbate this imbalance if rank or perceived competence discourages less fluent cadets from challenging peers. The data suggest that structured role rotation, explicit participation quotas, and affect-sensitive feedback are essential design features to prevent debate from reproducing, rather than reducing, communicative inequality. These insights contribute to debates in the literature about how to adapt active learning strategies for high-power-distance, exam- or training-intensive institutions (Darwin & Semendawai, 2024; Eralyanti et al., 2023).

Taken together, these findings support viewing debate pedagogy as a form of task-based, communicative instruction that is particularly suited to semi-military police education when accompanied by institutional alignment, lecturer expertise, and cadet preparation. At the theoretical level, the study adds to systematic reviews of British Parliamentary debate in EFL by presenting a context where debate is tightly coupled with occupational identity and disciplinary culture, thereby expanding the range of settings in which its benefits have been documented (Waluyo & Abrar, 2024). At the practical level, the results point to three nested domains of implication. At the institution level, curriculum designers and leadership in semi-military academies should embed debate-based tasks in ESP syllabi as core, assessable components linked to operational competencies, while also allocating sufficient time and resources to reduce perceived overload and ensure sustainability (Baker, 2021; Eralyanti et al., 2023; Wei, 2013). At the lecturer level, lecturers need targeted professional development in debate facilitation, including strategies for scaffolding argumentation, balancing fluency with accuracy, orchestrating equitable participation, and integrating reflective debriefing so that language, critical thinking, and affective outcomes are systematically cultivated (Linguaggi, 2019; Zulfikar, 2023). At the

cadet level, cadets are encouraged to engage actively in pre-debate research, peer coaching, and self-reflection on performance to maximize vocabulary acquisition, confidence building, and transfer of debate skills to real policing scenarios, while also learning to manage anxiety and support peers who may struggle with public speaking (Oktaviani et al., 2020; Timbu et al., 2022; Wariyati et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that British Parliamentary debate helps lecturers and cadets improve English speaking. It supports more spontaneous but organized speech, better accuracy, wider policing vocabulary, and higher confidence. Moreover, it builds critical thinking, research, teamwork, and active listening. In terms of command culture and critical expression, debate was described as temporarily softening rigid command norms by giving a clear, rule-based space where cadets could question and rebut arguments without being seen as disrespectful or insubordinate. Therefore, debate links language learning with both soft skills and safe critical expression in modern, internationally oriented policing.

However, these gains sit alongside structural limits in a semi-military academy. Because of strict schedules, hierarchy, and heavy training demands, debate cannot always run often or long enough. In addition, a small group still reported anxiety, high workload, and being overshadowed by stronger speakers. Consequently, the impact of debate also depends on how routines, assessment, and support systems enable student-centred learning. Furthermore, benefits were not equal across proficiency levels. Higher-level cadets took more floor time and handled complex rebuttals, while lower-level peers spoke less in formal rounds and worked more in preparation. As a result, debate can speed progress for confident speakers but may widen gaps unless lecturers enforce turn-taking, rotate roles, and provide language scaffolding.

Accordingly, debate should be a core, graded part of English for Specific Purposes in police academies, backed by policy, lecturer training, and planned preparation routines. At classroom level, lecturers can use role rotation (e.g., main speaker, reply speaker, researcher, chair), differentiated pre-task support, and clear participation criteria that value speeches, questions, summaries, and coordination. In addition, simple tracking tools—such as 5-point rubrics before and after debates and brief self-checklists—can add evidence of change over time. Looking ahead, longitudinal, mixed-method research that follows cadets into field service, and compares different academies and debate formats, can test how far these classroom gains transfer into real policing communication.

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