

Socratic Seminar: A Strategy for Critical-Thinking-Oriented Speaking Instruction in the Deep Learning Approach

Dyah Sih Pratiwi¹⁾, Bastian Sugandi²⁾

¹English Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung, Indonesia

email: sihpratiwi90@gmail.com

²English Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung, Indonesia

email: bastiansoegandi@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract: This study investigated the effectiveness of the Socratic Seminar in improving students' speaking skills and fostering critical thinking. An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was employed, with a quasi-experimental approach as the primary quantitative component. The participants were 30 vocational high school students, comprising 15 students in the experimental group and 15 in the control group. Data were collected through speaking tests, questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The Socratic Seminar was implemented as the intervention in the experimental group, with CAR used as a reflective process during implementation. The paired-samples t-test showed a significant improvement in speaking performance, $t(14) = 7.9553$, $p = 0.00000146 < 0.05$. An independent-samples t-test showed a significant difference in post-test speaking performance between the experimental and control groups, $t(28) = 2.97$, $p = .006$, with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.08$). The mean score increased from 2.80 to 3.56, with a mean difference of 0.76. Qualitative findings indicated that the Socratic Seminar encouraged students to express ideas, provide reasons and evidence, engage in reflective dialogue, and participate actively in discussions. The findings demonstrate that the Socratic Seminar is an effective strategy for integrating speaking development and critical thinking within a deep learning-oriented context.

Keywords: *Socratic Seminar, Speaking, Critical Thinking, Deep Learning Approach*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the learning context, speaking serves as a primary medium through which students express ideas, interact with others, and respond directly to various communicative situations. Therefore, language plays a crucial role in social interaction and everyday communication (Maretha et al., 2021). However, many students continue to experience difficulties in developing fluency, coherence, accuracy, and criticality in spoken communication. Effective speaking involves not only the ability to produce language but also the interaction between speakers and listeners as essential components of successful communication (Pratiwi, Prihatini, et al., 2025). Although speaking has been introduced as part of English instruction from the early stages of education, students still encounter challenges in practicing and developing their oral communication skills (Pratiwi & Prihatini, 2021). This difficulty is partly attributed to the status of English as a foreign language in Indonesia, which limits students' opportunities to use English extensively in their everyday lives (Maretha & Alrajafi, 2022). Consequently, students may lack confidence, hesitate, and experience difficulties in expressing ideas, arguments, and opinions logically, particularly in discussion and debate activities that require higher-order thinking. Developing speaking proficiency requires continuous and meaningful practice, as students need

repeated opportunities to use English in authentic communicative situations (Anggreini et al., 2023; Andriani et al., 2021). Such practice is particularly important to enable students to use English more naturally in everyday communication (Anggreini et al., 2023). In addition, grammatical competence constitutes an important component of effective speaking, as appropriate grammatical choices enable students to convey meanings accurately according to particular communicative contexts (Pratiwi, Sugandi, et al., 2025). Nevertheless, students often experience confusion when applying appropriate grammatical structures to different communicative situations, which may further affect their confidence and overall speaking performance.

This situation indicates that speaking instruction cannot simply focus on linguistic aspects such as grammar and pronunciation. There are some strategies that can be used by teachers in order to increase speaking skill (Alrajafi et al., 2022). An approach is needed that builds self-confidence, encourages courage to express opinions, and hones students' critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills include analyzing information, constructing arguments, evaluating opinions, and drawing logical conclusions—all of which are highly relevant to developing reflective and meaningful speaking skills. This is evidence that speaking is a need full effort both from teacher and students (Efiani et al., 2024). Therefore, a learning strategy is needed that can integrate language skills and thinking skills in a balanced manner. This enables students to go beyond basic English communication by expressing their perspectives critically, logically, and persuasively.

The Socratic Seminar is a dialogic discussion strategy in which students are invited to build understanding through an in-depth and reflective question-and-answer process. Unlike debate, the Socratic Seminar focuses on exploring students' thinking and developing deeper understanding of a text or topic (Bernasconi, 2010). It involves collaboration in listening, understanding questions, expressing ideas, and responding to others' opinions (Schmidt, 2023). The discussion begins with a central question and develops into further questions based on students' previous responses (Shumilina et al., 2022). In speaking lessons, however, students may experience difficulties not only in producing English accurately but also in generating, organizing, explaining, and responding to ideas, particularly when they are required to provide arguments and support their opinions with evidence. These difficulties indicate the need to integrate speaking practice with critical thinking, as critical thinking contributes to students' cognitive development (Utami et al., n.d.), and involves dimensions such as analysis, evaluation, interpretation, explanation, and self-regulation (Ramezani et al., 2016). As said before the students learn about do arguments of opinion based on the data they have before. So the students can give opinion based on deep analysis in one topic (Warliati et al., 2019). Students need to develop arguments and express opinions based on available data and deeper analysis of a topic rather than simply relying on personal assumptions. In this sense, critical thinking involves deeper understanding and reflection on the thinking process itself (Sanavi & Tarighat, 2014), enabling students to formulate responses based on facts rather than assumptions (Akatsuka, 2019). This implies that teachers should give greater attention to critical-thinking-based methods in classroom instruction (Ordem, 2016). and provide students with opportunities and learning facilities to engage in critical thinking (Guo et al., 2024). Therefore, the Socratic Seminar is considered relevant to speaking instruction because its use of facilitator questions and student-centered dialogue can provide opportunities for

students to express, analyze, justify, and respond to ideas based on evidence and different perspectives.

The implementation of the Socratic Seminar is further aligned with the principles of the Deep Learning Approach, a learning approach that emphasizes meaningful understanding, rather than simply memorizing or repeating information. Deep learning was focus active activity during the learning process, the process of met cognition, and critical thinking skill in learning process. In deep learning process, the students not only as center but also the students can more explore their opinion, argument, creativity, and solving the problems based on the topic (Fitriani & Santiani, 2025). The question can use who, what, why, when, and where for gaining information and detail reason the students' arguments (Ibarra & Cárdenas, 2022). However, previous studies have rarely examined how Socratic Seminars can simultaneously develop EFL students' speaking and critical-thinking skills through sustained, evidence-based dialogue.

This research implements the Socratic Seminar in critical thinking-based speaking learning within the framework of The Deep Learning Approach focuses on fostering students' awareness, meaningful engagement with content, and enjoyment throughout the learning process (Moeller & Moeller, 2015). In this study, the Deep Learning principles of awareness, meaningful engagement, and enjoyment were implemented through Socratic Seminar activities that encouraged students to question, analyze, express evidence-based ideas, and interact collaboratively, thereby promoting meaningful speaking and critical thinking.

Compared to previous studies that focused more on conventional techniques, this approach provides a more interactive and reflective learning experience, allowing students to build in-depth arguments through structured discussions; (Gunawan et al., 2024; Lintang Sari et al., 2022; Lipman, 2003; Mercer & Littleton, 2007; Wiggins & McTighe, 2017);. This study has new value by considering aspects of deep critical thinking integration designed to directly stimulate critical thinking through open-ended questions and in-depth dialogue (Kurniasari & Setyaningsih, 2020; Paul & Elder, 2020) a deep learning approach that targets increasing fluency in speaking and encouraging a more meaningful and sustainable learning experience (Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). An interaction-based implementation model provides practical guidance for teachers in implementing Socratic Seminars in communication-based classrooms.

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of the Socratic Seminar, critical-thinking-oriented EFL speaking instruction, and the Deep Learning Approach. Previous studies have examined the Socratic Seminar primarily as a discussion strategy to promote critical thinking, student participation, or general speaking practice; however, limited attention has been given to its integration with speaking instruction that explicitly develops critical thinking through reflective dialogue, questioning, and evidence-based argumentation. Moreover, previous studies have rarely examined speaking performance and critical thinking within the same instructional framework using a quasi-experimental comparison supported by qualitative evidence. Addressing this gap, the present study implements the Socratic Seminar as a speaking instructional strategy within a Deep Learning-oriented framework and examines its effectiveness through pre- and post-speaking tests, comparison between experimental and control groups, and qualitative data from questionnaires, interviews, and observations. Thus, the study contributes empirical evidence on how dialogic and reflective learning can simultaneously support students'

speaking development and critical thinking in EFL contexts. Based on this research gap, the research questions are:

(1) How is the Socratic Seminar implemented in critical-thinking-oriented EFL speaking instruction?

(2) To what extent does the Socratic Seminar improve students' speaking skills?

2. METHOD

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, with a quasi-experimental approach as the primary quantitative phase and qualitative inquiry as the subsequent explanatory phase. The quantitative phase examined the effectiveness of the Socratic Seminar through a pre-test–post-test comparison between an experimental and a control class, while the qualitative phase provided deeper explanations of the quantitative findings regarding students' experiences, participation, and development of speaking and critical-thinking skills. Three Classroom Action Research (CAR) cycles were embedded within the experimental intervention as a reflective process to refine the implementation of the Socratic Seminar: Cycle 1 introduced central questions, guided discussion, active listening, and opinion sharing; Cycle 2 added clearer question prompts, vocabulary support, and evidence preparation; and Cycle 3 emphasized higher-order questions, evidence-based arguments, and independent peer interaction. The population consisted of vocational high school students enrolled in the relevant speaking course, from which two comparable intact classes were selected through cluster random sampling and randomly assigned at the class level to the experimental and control groups, with 15 students in each group. The experimental group received the Socratic Seminar intervention, whereas the control group received conventional instruction. Quantitative data were collected through speaking pre- and post-tests and a critical-thinking questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, teacher reflections, and documentation. The two phases were integrated by using the qualitative findings to explain and contextualize the quantitative results.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, there are five aspects used as a reference to measure students' speaking skills: fluency (F), accuracy (A), pronunciation (P), coherence (C), and interaction (I). Speaking assessment is based on a scale of 1 to 4, with the following explanation: 1 = Poor, 2 = Adequate, 3 = Good, 4 = Very Good. A comparison of average scores of students in each group is namely:

Table 1. *Pre-Test Comparison*

No	Average	Class	
		Experiment	Control
1	Fluency	2.73	2.80
2	Accuracy	3.00	2.87
3	Pronunciation	2.87	3.00
4	Coherence	2.73	2.80
5	Interaction	2.67	2.53
	Average Total	2.80	2.80
	Category	Quite Good	Quite Good

The pre-test results showed that the experimental and control groups had comparable speaking performance before the intervention. Based on the individual pre-test scores, the experimental group ($n = 15$) obtained a mean score of 14.20 ($SD = 2.93$), while the control group ($n = 15$) obtained a mean score of 14.07 ($SD = 3.33$). To determine baseline equivalence, an independent-samples t-test was conducted rather than relying solely on the similarity of the descriptive mean scores. The analysis showed no statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups, $t(28) = 0.116$, $p = 0.908 > 0.05$. This result indicates that the two groups had no statistically significant difference in pre-test performance before the intervention. Following the implementation of the Socratic Seminar strategy in the experimental class, both groups completed a post-test to examine changes in their speaking performance. The detailed pre-test results are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. *Post-test Comparison*

No	Average	Class	
		Experimental	Control
1	Fluency	3.47	2.80
2	Accuracy	4.00	2.87
3	Pronunciation	4.00	3.00
4	Coherence	3.33	2.80
5	Interaction	3.00	2.53
	Average Total	3.56	2.80
	Category	Good	Quite Good

The post-test results showed that the experimental group achieved a higher mean speaking score ($M = 17.53$, $SD = 2.75$) than the control group ($M = 14.13$, $SD = 3.48$). In terms of the five speaking components, the experimental group also obtained higher mean scores in fluency (3.40 vs. 2.87), accuracy (3.80 vs. 3.00), pronunciation (3.93 vs. 3.07), coherence (3.33 vs. 2.80), and interaction (3.07 vs. 2.53). These descriptive results indicate better speaking performance among students who participated in the Socratic Seminar intervention.

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether the post-test difference between the two groups was statistically significant. The results indicated a significant difference between the experimental and control groups, $t(28) = 2.97$, $p = .006$, with a mean difference of 3.40 and a 95% confidence interval ranging from 1.05 to 5.75. Furthermore, the effect size was large, with Cohen's $d = 1.08$ and Hedges' $g = 1.05$. These findings indicate that the difference between the groups was not only statistically significant but also practically substantial. Thus, the Socratic Seminar intervention was associated with a large improvement in students' speaking performance compared with the conventional instructional approach.

Table 3. *t*-test calculation

No	Calculation aspects	Result	
		Experimental Class	Control Class
1	Calculate the average difference	0.76	0.00
2	Standard Deviation	0.37	0.32
3	Standard Error	0.095534	0.082624
4	t-count	7.955317	0
5	Degrees of freedom	14	14
6	p-value	0.0000014616	1.00000

Before conducting the parametric tests, the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance were examined. The normality test indicated that the data were normally distributed ($p = .200 > .05$), while Levene's test confirmed the homogeneity of variance, $F(1, 28) = 1.495$, $p = .232 > .05$. The analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26, with a significance level of $\alpha = .05$. Paired-samples *t*-tests were used to examine pre-test and post-test differences within each group, while an independent-samples *t*-test was used to compare gain scores between the experimental and control groups. In the experimental class, the mean score increased from 14.20 in the pre-test to 17.53 in the post-test, with a mean gain of 3.33 points. The paired-samples *t*-test showed a statistically significant improvement, $t(14) = 14.35$, $p < .001$. In contrast, the control class showed a slight increase from 14.07 to 14.13, with a mean gain of 0.07 points, and the paired-samples *t*-test indicated no significant improvement, $t(14) = 0.27$, $p = .792$.

To determine whether the improvement in the experimental group was greater than that in the control group, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted on the gain scores. The results showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups, $t(28) = 9.61$, $p < .001$. The experimental group obtained a substantially higher mean gain ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.90$) than the control group ($M = 0.07$, $SD = 0.96$). The effect size was also very large (Cohen's $d = 3.51$), indicating a substantial difference in speaking improvement between the two instructional conditions. These findings provide evidence that the improvement in the experimental group was significantly greater than that in the control group, supporting the effectiveness of the Socratic Seminar intervention in improving students' speaking performance. In contrast, the control class received teacher-centered instruction involving topic explanations, textbook-based exercises, vocabulary practice, and short individual speaking tasks, with limited opportunities for extended discussion, critical questioning, peer

interaction, and evidence-based argumentation, which may explain the relatively stable speaking performance observed in the control group.

The growth of students' speaking ability can be proved by interactive and discussion-based nature of the Socratic Seminar strategy. According to Mercer et al. (2004), In this study, open-ended questions encouraged students to express opinions, provide reasons, respond to peers, and clarify their ideas, resulting in greater participation. The observation score of 3.2, categorized as "Very Good," indicates that students were actively engaged and increasingly confident in speaking English. Thus, the Socratic Seminar supported speaking development by providing repeated opportunities for meaningful interaction, idea development, and analytical responses.

The findings indicate that the Socratic Seminar contributed to the development of students' critical thinking by engaging them in sustained questioning, dialogue, reflection, and collaborative interaction. Socratic questioning encouraged students to examine assumptions, clarify ideas, and provide reasons for their opinions, while dialogue required them to listen to and respond to different perspectives. These processes enabled students to reflect on their own arguments and revise or strengthen their ideas through interaction with peers. This finding is consistent with Alexander (2018), who argued that dialogic teaching promotes critical thinking through collaborative exploration and effective argumentation. Similarly, Alasmari (2021) noted that critical thinking develops when learners analyze information, construct logical arguments, and respond to different perspectives in communicative contexts. Thus, the Socratic Seminar supported both speaking and critical thinking by creating repeated opportunities for students to formulate ideas, justify opinions, evaluate responses, and communicate their reasoning in meaningful classroom dialogue.

Another important finding in this study was the improvement in accuracy and pronunciation. The results showed that pronunciation increased significantly after the implementation of the Socratic Seminar strategy. This finding aligns with Thornbury (2005), who argued that speaking ability improves when learners frequently practice meaningful communication in authentic contexts. Through continuous discussion and interaction, students became more accustomed to using academic vocabulary, appropriate pronunciation, and clearer sentence structures. In addition, recent research by Khajavy et al. (2023) found that communicative and collaborative positively influence learners' oral fluency, pronunciation, and speaking confidence in EFL classrooms. The similarity may be explained by the repeated opportunities for students to speak, listen, and respond during the Socratic Seminar, which increased their exposure to meaningful English use. However, the present study extends these findings by showing that pronunciation improvement occurred within a critical-thinking-oriented discussion rather than through pronunciation practice alone. This suggests that meaningful interaction combined with sustained discussion and peer response may simultaneously support linguistic accuracy and pronunciation while encouraging students to focus on the content and clarity of their messages.

The interview findings revealed that students felt more motivated and confident during speaking activities because they could express their ideas without excessive fear or pressure. This finding reflects the Deep Learning Approach, particularly its emphasis on students' active awareness, meaningful engagement, and enjoyment in the learning process. Students' increased confidence indicates greater awareness and active involvement in expressing and reflecting on their ideas, while their participation in meaningful Socratic dialogue demonstrates deeper engagement with the learning

content. The enjoyable and supportive discussion atmosphere also encouraged students to participate more actively. This finding supports the argument of Dewaele & MacIntyre (2014), who stated that supportive classroom environments reduce speaking anxiety and encourage learners to communicate more actively. The Socratic Seminar strategy created a collaborative learning environment where students respected each other's opinions and developed confidence in academic communication.

Findings of this research were also one line with several previous international research related to the implementation of Socratic Seminar and dialogic learning in language education. For example, Reznitskaya et al. (2009) found that dialogic teaching and Socratic discussion improved students' reasoning ability and classroom participation because students were encouraged to articulate ideas critically and collaboratively. Similarly, Murphy et al. (2009) reported that classroom discussion significantly contributes to students' comprehension, communication skills, and critical thinking development. These previous findings support the present study, which also found that Socratic Seminar positively affected students' speaking performance and intellectual engagement.

However, the current study also presents several differences compared to previous research. Previous studies mainly focused on the influence of Socratic Seminar on critical thinking or classroom discussion skills, whereas this research specifically examined its impact on speaking skills in critical thinking-based speaking learning. Moreover, this research provided more detailed assessment aspects, including fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, coherence, and interaction. The inclusion of observation, interview, questionnaire, and statistical analysis strengthened the evidence that the Socratic Seminar strategy improved not only students' speaking ability but also their confidence, participation, and academic discussion ethics.

Another distinctive finding of this research was the improvement in students' affective and psychomotor aspects. Students demonstrated increased self-confidence, respect for others' opinions, and improved speaking fluency during discussions. This result is consistent with Johnson and Johnson (2009), who explained that cooperative and discussion-based learning can enhance not only cognitive achievement but also interpersonal and communication skills. Overall, the findings suggest that the Socratic Seminar strategy supported the development of students' speaking skills and provided opportunities for critical thinking development. The strategy encouraged active participation, collaborative interaction, reflective thinking, and meaningful communication, making it relevant to speaking instruction in vocational high school contexts.

Students' critical thinking was assessed using a nine-item questionnaire adapted from Facione's framework, covering interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale, with total scores ranging from 9 to 45. The questionnaire showed acceptable content validity ($CVR = 0.67-1.00$), satisfactory corrected item-total correlations ($0.42-0.76$), and good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$), indicating good reliability. In addition, the corrected item-total correlation coefficients ranged from 0.42 to 0.76, suggesting that all items contributed adequately to the overall construct. These procedures provided evidence that the questionnaire was sufficiently valid and reliable for describing students' critical thinking during the learning process. The results indicated that students in the experimental group generally reported high levels of critical thinking, with 6 of the 15 students (40%) categorized as "Very Good" and 9

students (60%) as “Good.” The scores ranged from 34 to 43, with an overall mean of 40.87, which fell within the “Very Good” category. These findings suggest that students demonstrated positive levels of critical-thinking-related responses during the learning process, particularly in interpreting information, analyzing and evaluating ideas, drawing conclusions, explaining reasoning, and reflecting on their thinking.. These statements were as follows:

"I express my opinion clearly during discussions," "My friends understand the meaning of my opinion," and "I respect my friends' opinions even if they differ."

The above evidence demonstrates that the Socratic Seminar strategy can encourage students to be more active in participating in class. Furthermore, students can express their opinions clearly and logically. This activity also fosters mutual respect in discussions, enabling students to develop their speaking skills. Some statements that received lower scores than before are as follows:

"I provide evidence or data when expressing my opinion." "I refer to reliable sources of information when speaking."

Although the score for this statement is lower than the previous one, it is still in the good category. This indicates that students have begun to develop their own arguments based on their existing knowledge. Different from the experimental class, in the control class, the Critical Thinking questionnaire results were dominated by the "Sufficient" and "Poor" categories. The total questionnaire scores ranged from 22 to 39. 4 students fell into the "Good" category, 6 students fell into the "Sufficient" category, and the remaining 5 students fell into the "Poor" category.

In other words, if expressed as a percentage, the data shows that 26.7% was "Good" category, 40% fell into "Sufficient" category, and 33.3% was "Poor" category. The overall average value for the control class was 30.8, which falls into the "Sufficient" category. The highest questionnaire score is found in the statement below;

"I respect my friends' opinions even if they differ," "I am open to views that contradict mine."

Meanwhile, the lowest questionnaire scores were found in the following statements:

"I am able to organize arguments in a logical sequence," and "I refute my friends' opinions with sound reasons."

Analysis of data above, it can be seen that students in the Control class have a positive attitude in addressing differences of opinion during classroom discussions. However, students in the Control class are still lacking in expressing their opinions with sound reasons.

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that there is a descriptive difference between the experimental and control classes. This can be seen in the difference in the average scores of the experimental and control classes. The average difference between the two classes is 10.07 points. This indicates that the critical thinking skills of the experimental class are higher than those of the control class. In other words, the

Socratic Seminar strategy can have a descriptive difference on the speaking skills of students in the experimental class

In this research, the researcher also conducted observations. The observation phase was conducted exclusively in the experimental class, consisting of 15 participants. Five aspects were assessed: (1) active participation, (2) academic language, (3) reflective questioning, (4) responses to arguments, and (5) discussion ethics. Each aspect was rated on a four-point scale, with 1 = Poor, 2 = Adequate, 3 = Good, and 4 = Very Good. The observation score for each student was calculated by summing the scores obtained across the five aspects and dividing the total by five to obtain a mean observation score. The observation rubric was reviewed by experts to ensure the relevance and clarity of the assessment criteria, and inter-rater reliability was examined, yielding a coefficient of 0.82, indicating good agreement between raters. Based on the observation data presented, it can be seen that 7 students fell into the "Very Good" category, representing 46.7% of the total student population. Meanwhile, 8 other students, or 53.3%, fell into the "Good" category, indicating that the majority of students demonstrated positive performance throughout the learning process.

This category distribution indicates that the majority of students achieved adequate to high levels of ability. No students fell into the "fair" or "poor" categories, indicating that overall, the observation results demonstrated positive student response and engagement in learning activities. The average observation score indicates that all students achieved achievement in the "Good to Very Good" category. This indicates that overall, students demonstrated positive attitudes, participation, and abilities throughout the learning process, supporting the effectiveness of the implemented learning strategies.

The average student score for the first observation aspect was 3.2, which fell within the "Good" category based on the predetermined scoring criteria. Classroom observations showed that students actively participated in discussions with their peers. They not only expressed their own ideas but also responded to the opinions and arguments of other students. Overall, 73% of the students met the criteria for active participation by expressing their opinions at least twice and responding to their peers' arguments during the discussion. These findings descriptively indicate that the Socratic Seminar provided opportunities for students to participate actively and express their ideas during the learning process.

In academic language aspect, data showed that the average score was 3.1. This achievement falls into the "Good to Very Good" category. In class, students appear capable of using English with correct structure and word choice. Based on observations, some students still use simple language. However, with the implementation of the Socratic Seminar strategy in class, some students who still experienced difficulties in this academic language aspect began to show improvement. The reflective question aspect received a score of 2.9. This falls into the "Good" category. Based on classroom observations during the discussion, 40% of students were able to ask reflective questions, which encouraged critical thinking. The majority of the questions posed by students were factual. This suggests that the potential for developing critical thinking skills is still very high if appropriate methods are used. The response to arguments aspect received an average score of 3.0. This score falls into the "Good" category. Some students were able to provide responses supported by logical and reasonable reasons. However, other students were unable to provide responses supported by logical reasons. Some responses to arguments were still descriptive and did not demonstrate strong arguments.

Attitude Discussion aspect was the highest-scoring aspect, with an average score of 3.5. This score falls into the "Very Good" category. Most students demonstrated positive behaviors during group discussions. These behaviors included listening attentively when peers expressed their ideas or arguments, not interrupting peers while they were speaking, and respecting differing ideas and opinions from other discussion partners. These observations demonstrate that classroom discussion activities can yield positive outcomes.

In this research, the researcher also conducted interviews as one of the instruments. The interviews included interviews with students and the English teacher in the experimental class. Four topics guided the interviews in this study: 1) Perceptions of the implementation of the Socratic Seminar method, 2) Students' experiences in critical thinking, 3) Benefits for Speaking Skills, and 4) Implications for Learning. The interview results for each topic are explained as follows; Interviews were conducted with 15 students in the experimental class and the English teacher. The interviews revealed a generally positive response to the implementation of the Socratic Seminar strategy in class. Nearly all students felt enthusiastic and motivated in learning English because they were able to express their ideas without fear or pressure. Discussing topics with peers on current topics related to everyday life made students more engaged and interactive, creating a lively discussion atmosphere.

Interviews with the English teacher in the experimental class revealed that the implementation of the Socratic Seminar strategy made students more interested in learning English in class. Students in the experimental class demonstrated a more active attitude in discussions, such as actively expressing their ideas, actively asking questions, and actively responding to arguments from peers who had differing opinions. The teacher also confirmed that the discussion activity using the Socratic Seminar strategy increased students' courage and confidence in speaking in front of the class. Furthermore, the critical thinking skills of the students in the experimental class developed.

The results of these interviews align with the findings of the researchers' observations. This further confirms that the aspects of active participation and discussion ethics are well-functioning. The Socratic Seminar successfully increased self-confidence, responsibility, and mutual respect among students in the experimental class.

Based on the analysis of the interview results, it appears that classroom discussions using the Socratic Seminar strategy improved the critical thinking skills of students in the experimental class. The interviews revealed that most students explained that they had become accustomed to expressing ideas and objections using polite and logical language. Students in the experimental class reported being able to present objections supported by logical and justifiable reasons. Students not only presented objections based on their own thoughts, but also began to present objections by adding data, concrete examples from everyday life, and asking reflective questions to deepen the discussion of a topic.

Teacher interviews revealed that they also observed an improvement in students' critical thinking skills. This was evident in the reflective and logical questions students posed in the experimental class. Their responses to other students' arguments were also logical and reasonable. Teachers were able to assess that the Socratic Seminar strategy not only encouraged students to speak in front of the class but also encouraged students to think analytically and logically. The findings above are consistent with those observed in the experimental class during the implementation of the Socratic Seminar

strategy. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Socratic Seminar is effective in developing critical and logical thinking skills in the students in the experimental class. Students in the experimental class agreed that the implementation of the Socratic Seminar strategy had a positive impact on the development of their speaking skills in class. Students explained that they became more fluent, spontaneous, and confident in expressing their opinions in public, especially during group discussions. The habit of using academic language enabled students to develop a more structured academic vocabulary when expressing ideas and questions during discussions and other academic activities. Another confirmation from student interviews was that they not only experienced an improved understanding of academic language but were also able to manage appropriate intonation and volume during group discussions.

Teacher and student interviews supported the observation findings, indicating that the Socratic Seminar positively influenced students' speaking performance. Students showed improvements in intonation, volume, vocabulary selection, fluency, and accuracy as they became more accustomed to using academic language during discussions. The interviews also revealed broader benefits: affectively, students gained confidence and respect for different opinions; cognitively, they developed greater analytical and critical-thinking skills before expressing ideas; and psychomotorically, they demonstrated improved fluency and accuracy in academic speaking. These findings confirm that the Socratic Seminar contributed not only to speaking development but also to students' cognitive and affective engagement in the learning process.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings, the Socratic Seminar supported the development of students' critical-thinking-oriented speaking skills. The experimental group's mean speaking score increased from 2.80 to 3.56, while the control group remained at 2.80, and the pre-post improvement in the experimental group was statistically significant ($t = 7.96$, $p < .001$). The improvement was particularly evident in accuracy and pronunciation, while classroom observations showed active participation with an average score of 3.2 ("Very Good"). The qualitative findings also indicated increased confidence, fluency, idea development, and learning independence, as students became more engaged in expressing opinions, responding to peers, and constructing evidence-based responses. The questionnaire and observation findings further indicated relatively high levels of students' critical thinking, particularly in interpreting information, analyzing and evaluating ideas, explaining reasoning, and reflecting on their thinking. Overall, these findings suggest that the Socratic Seminar provided opportunities for speaking development through increased oral practice and critical, reflective, and collaborative dialogue, although the evidence for critical-thinking development is primarily descriptive and qualitative rather than based on an inferential comparison.

The Socratic Seminar provides a communicative and collaborative learning environment that supports students' speaking development, particularly in confidence, fluency, and accuracy, while also providing opportunities for critical and reflective engagement. However, this study has several limitations, including its small sample size, restricted EFL context, limited research setting, and lack of assignment, which may limit the generalizability and causal interpretation of the findings. In addition, the evidence of critical thinking was primarily based on self-reported questionnaire responses, classroom observations, and qualitative data, rather than a direct inferential

measure of critical-thinking development. Therefore, the findings regarding critical thinking should be interpreted cautiously. Teachers may consider the Socratic Seminar as an alternative strategy for speaking instruction by designing challenging open-ended questions, encouraging evidence-based responses, and ensuring active participation. Future research should involve larger and more diverse samples, randomized or stronger quasi-experimental designs, multiple research settings, and more objective measures of critical thinking, as well as explore the integration of the Socratic Seminar with digital technology and project-based learning.

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