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THE MODERN SOCRATIC METHOD: A STRATEGY TO ENHANCE INDONESIAN POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS' ACTIVE LEARNING IN ENGLISH SPEAKING COURSE

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Abstract

Lack of engagement, weak critical thinking skills, disfluency, limited vocabulary, timidity, and a preference for individual learning often lead to inactive participation in English-speaking classes. This study investigated the qualitative impacts of the Modern Socratic Method (MSM) on Indonesian Polytechnic students' active learning in an English-speaking course. Data were collected through complete participant observation and unstructured interviews, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. Credibility and transferability procedures ensured trustworthiness. The study was conducted over two semesters at Padang State Polytechnic with 54 students from two classes. Before the intervention, Class A and Class B obtained mean speaking performance scores of 50 and 60, respectively, both categorized as low. After the MSM was implemented, the means increased substantially to 85 (Class A) and 88 (Class B). The improvement was linked to MSM's emphasis on continuous questioning, interactive discussion, logical argumentation, risk-taking in expressing opinions, and peer collaboration. These activities enhanced students' fluency, expanded their vocabulary, strengthened critical thinking, built self-confidence, and fostered collaborative learning. The findings suggest that MSM can reduce reliance on lecture-based instruction in polytechnic English classes and improve students' self-efficacy in managing speaking anxiety. This method holds promise for broader application in higher education contexts where active participation is essential.

Keywords: *Active Learning; English Speaking Course; Polytechnic Students; Socratic Method*

INTRODUCTION

Active learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking classes is often hindered by disengagement, weak critical thinking skills, limited vocabulary, timidity, and overreliance on individual learning. Preliminary observations at Padang State Polytechnic

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revealed that many students participated passively, rarely asked or responded to questions, and avoided contributing to class discussions. This study therefore aimed to investigate the qualitative effects of the Modern Socratic Method (MSM) in enhancing students' active learning in an English-speaking course. The guiding research question was: *What are the qualitative impacts of applying the MSM on EFL students' active learning in the English-speaking course?*

Philosophically, the Socratic tradition values posing questions and engaging in debate over simply searching for answers. Well-crafted questions and structured debates can stimulate deeper learning, challenge uniformity, spark curiosity, foster collaboration, enhance engagement, and expand students' lexical repertoire (Johnson, 2012; Padma, 2014). For instructors, this approach also offers an effective means of developing, monitoring, and assessing students' speaking skills, comprehension, and critical thinking.

Despite these philosophical advantages, there is a notable gap in applying Socratic-based strategies within Indonesian polytechnic EFL contexts. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the Socratic method in general education, literature, or philosophy courses, with limited adaptation to language learning—especially in vocational higher education settings where communicative competence and practical skills are essential. Moreover, most existing EFL speaking instruction at the polytechnic level remains lecture-oriented, providing little opportunity for dialogic interaction or critical questioning. The present study addresses this gap by operationalizing a *modernized* Socratic method tailored to the specific linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical needs of Indonesian polytechnic students, thereby extending the method's applicability to a new and underexplored educational context.

Question-and-answer interaction provides several key benefits: (1) acquiring new knowledge and insights, (2) building interactive communication within the classroom, (3) activating prior knowledge, (4) increasing active participation in discussions, (5) engaging students in critical thinking, and (6) creating a more meaningful teaching–learning process. These elements are central to nurturing the ability to ask and respond to questions, participate in productive discussions, and seek solutions collaboratively.

The inspiration for this research was further strengthened by Laura Lee's (2019) teaching strategies on the *Edutopia* platform, which emphasize questioning, multiple perspectives, and reasoned debate as vehicles for meaning-making. These strategies align with the goals of improving speaking skills, engagement, comprehension, and higher-order thinking.

In practice, however, many EFL speaking classes still rely heavily on lecture-based instruction. While lectures can be valuable for presenting information, they often limit students' opportunities to question, discuss, or construct knowledge collaboratively. As a result, students may avoid expressing opinions, refrain from debating, and hesitate to propose solutions due to fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers. Cultural norms, low self-confidence, and limited questioning skills further reinforce this passivity (Tenney School, 2015).

This overemphasis on teacher-centered delivery can result in missed opportunities for active interaction, peer learning, and deeper understanding. In contrast, the MSM prioritizes structured dialogue, critical questioning, and collaborative reasoning—practices that can address these gaps by fostering meaningful engagement and improving learning outcomes.

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In educational philosophy, engaging in respectful questioning, constructive debate, and logical problem-solving plays a vital role in shaping students' critical thinking and reasoning skills, ultimately contributing to the advancement of knowledge and improvement of human life. Historically, ancient sophists—renowned as educators—utilized philosophy and rhetoric primarily to entertain, persuade, and influence audiences, often encouraging participants to accept the speaker's perspective (Jarratt, 1991; Sprague, 1972).

Socrates, the classical Athenian philosopher, opposed the sophists' use of rhetorical persuasion, viewing it as a hindrance to authentic teaching and learning. He introduced the Socratic Method—also known as the Method of Elenchus, Elenctic Method, or Socratic Debate—which aimed to stimulate critical thinking by eliciting ideas from students and examining underlying assumptions (Clarke, 2019). This method, most effective when conducted through argumentative reasoning (Frans & Rob, 2004) and cooperative dialogue between teachers and students or among peers, has been practiced since the late 5th century as an alternative to rhetorical manipulation. In this approach, students actively pose and respond to analytical questions, fostering logical reasoning skills (Jarratt, 1991; Sprague, 1972; Liddell & Jones, n.d.; Vlastos, 1983; Frede, 1992; Salkever, n.d.; Guthrie, 1968).

Such active engagement aligns with discussion-based strategies, which encourage learners to process rather than merely receive information, develop critical thinking, and engage collaboratively under the teacher's facilitation (Cashin, 2011). Notably, Diogenes Laertius attributed the origin of the Socratic Method to Protagoras (Jarratt, 1991; Sprague, 1971).

Plato later expanded on Socratic principles through the concept of dialectic (Greek: διαλεκτική, *dialektikḗ*), a structured dialogue between individuals with differing viewpoints aimed at uncovering truth through reasoned arguments. Unlike "eristic" debate, which focuses on defeating an opponent's position, dialectic encourages objective truth-seeking and intellectual growth. This method involves three progressive stages: *thesis* (initial proposition), *antithesis* (counter-argument), and *synthesis* (resolution), commonly referred to as the Hegelian dialectic (Allen, 2005; Corbett & Robert, 1999; Mueller, 1958; Doyle, 2010). Although Hegel popularized the framework "Abstract → Negative → Concrete" (Hegel, 1874), its origins can be traced to Kant and later adapted by Fichte (Daniel, Fichte & Johann, 1993).

Schnitker, Emmons, and Robert (2013) emphasize that the thesis-antithesis-synthesis sequence resolves conflicts between opposing viewpoints, leading to a unified understanding. Both the Socratic Method and the Hegelian dialectic have proven effective in enhancing student engagement and active participation, encouraging learners to formulate insightful questions, present well-reasoned responses, and collaboratively solve problems during instructional discussions (Corbett, Edward, Robert, & Connors, 1999). Applied to English speaking courses in Indonesian polytechnics, these methods can promote critical thinking, communicative competence, and active learning.

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Pedagogical Approach of Active Learning

The MSM method has been pedagogically and theoretically the main reference in designing and developing the concept of active learning, which was then extended by John Dewey (1859-1952). Dewey asserted that "*Learning is an active process that must be experienced and constructed by students themselves through direct interaction with their environment*" (Dewey, 1916; Dewey, 1897). According to him, students build knowledge and appreciate learning when they are involved in real life with peers and the surrounding environment (Caspary, 2000; Martin, 2003). Similarly, Similar ideas were expressed by Maria Montessori (1870-1952), an Italian physician and educator, in her Scientific Pedagogy. Montessori emphasised the importance of mixed-age classes, student independence, and the opportunity to explore creativity without distraction in a specially designed learning environment (Montessori, 1912). These principles assert that education should be student-centred, facilitate hands-on experience, and encourage independent exploration. MSM adopts these core values by creating learning spaces where students are actively involved in the process of constructing knowledge through social interaction and critical reflection, making learning more meaningful and sustainable.

The Concept in Mind was another proposal advocated in 1945 by the British philosopher Gilbert Ryle. This concept explored the differences between declarative and procedural knowledge. "Exploring or exploration leads the students to know," said Gilbert Ryle in his influential lectures. The effective way of possessing the knowledge is to practically know how to make use of the knowledge (Ryle, 1949). The children's cognitive development was the idea of the Swiss psychologist and educational philosopher Jean Piaget, placing emphasis on constructing knowledge through activity emerging from the students' experiences. Modifying, transforming, and operating were processes of constructing knowledge. Lastly, Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development was about the students' potential development of collaboratively solving problems with their peers (Chaiklin, 2003).

In conclusion, Dewey, Montessori, Ryle, Piaget, and Vygotsky proposed and advocated active learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, inquiry or enquiry-based learning, critical and creative thinking skills and HOTs of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The proposals and advocacies aim at engaging the students to actively or experientially participate in the course of action of learning when they are performing, in addition to listening passively. Performing things and thinking about the things they are performing are the critical aspects of active learning (Bloom, Krathwohl, & Masia, 1956; Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Renkl, Atkinson & Maier, 2002).

The nature of the active learning in the Socratic Method and the Hegelian's Dialectics strongly links to the students' concerns and tasks (purposive), reflects on the meaning of what is learned (reflective); teacher and students negotiate the learning goals and methods (negotiated); the students welcome the dissimilar multiple perspectives of learning the content (critical); students evaluate the tasks learnt with the intricacies encountered in the real-life and constructing reflective study (complex); considers the situation to establish the tasks (situation-driven) and engages the real-life tasks which reflected in the learning activities (engaged) (Barnes, 1989; Kyriacou, 1992).

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The principles of learning, on the other hand, are fully under the two maxims of "thinking it through", covering the principles of paying close attention to and thinking deeply as regards new information, and the second one is "making and using association", focusing on techniques for classifying, keeping in memory, and getting information back (Kerrey, 2017). Working collaboratively; discussing the instructional materials while playing the roles; engaging in case study; taking part in cooperative learning; engaging in meaning-making inquiry, action, imagination, invention, interaction, and hypothesising; and personal reflection and/or producing short written exercises are the forms of active learning affecting the students' deeper learning, understanding and transfer (Brant, Hooper, & Sugrue, 1991; Kapur & Bielaczyc, 2011).

In the MSM, asking insightful and productive questions is the trigger to stimulate students to actively engage in the teaching and learning process. The 5 Strategies applied to help students pose insightful and productive questions are as follows. The first is the TeachThought Learning Taxonomy. This strategy is applied to trigger and prompt the students to think critically. Establishing the student's critical thinking skills through function-thinking → the students think about the "object" work and self-making sense → how the student link and relate the object studied; Abstraction–Thinking → lead the students to think the object creatively (not in a traditional way); Parts–Seeing → observe the individual part of the object; Interdependence–Examining → how the students relate the object studied to other (similar and non-similar) objects and the Whole–See → perceive the 'object surrounded by context completely. The processes of thinking about the observed object assist the students in posing questions.

The second is applying the Digital Taxonomy Power Verbs of Bloom's Taxonomy such as Knowledge: list, describe, identify, etc.; Comprehension: distinguish, classify, etc.; Application: apply, demonstrate, etc.; Analysis: investigate, solve, etc.; Synthesis: compare, develop, etc.; and Evaluation: judge, evaluate, create, defend, critique, etc. The third is the Socratic discussion, and the fourth is the Paideia Seminar. Both propose a critical examination of ideas and ask the students to think theoretically. The fifth is the Question game. These questions help the students to creatively focus on solving the problem (Heick, 2020). The following images are the cycles of the student's Teach-Thought Learning Taxonomy and Question Game in the MSM (Heick, 2020).

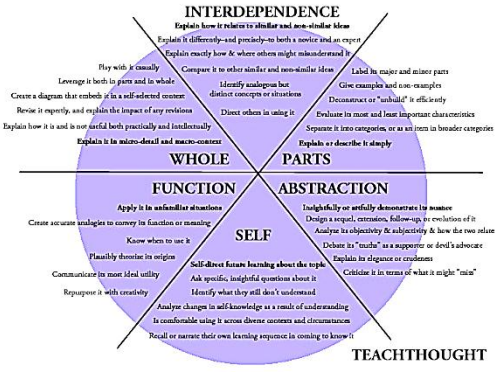

Image 1: Teach-Thought Learning Taxonomy (*Heick, 2020*)

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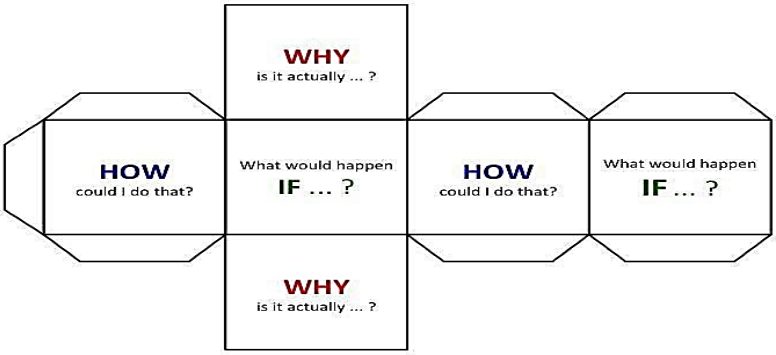

Image 2: Question Game (Heick, 2020).

The Modern Socratic Method (MSM) is an instructional approach in which students actively formulate and respond to questions. In practice, one student or group presents a thesis, others provide counterarguments (antithesis), and if no consensus emerges, a synthesis group—often the teacher or another group—mediates to resolve the issue. Questioning in MSM serves multiple purposes: clarifying ideas, challenging assumptions, examining evidence, exploring alternative perspectives, and assessing implications (Paul & Elder, 2006).

Questioning is central to learning, as it fosters critical and higher-order thinking, deepens understanding, stimulates curiosity, and enhances interpersonal communication (Flammer, 1981). It also enables students to engage meaningfully with information, regulate their learning interactions, and take greater responsibility for their intellectual growth. Questions may be classified in various ways, including open versus closed, real versus rhetorical, and text, memory, explanation, or relevance questions (Flammer, 1981; Ram, 2011). Each type serves distinct purposes, from interpreting references to drawing comparisons, clarifying anomalies, and establishing relevance.

In MSM, effective questioning involves clarity, brevity, and purposefulness—whether to master core concepts, acquire knowledge, or develop higher-order thinking (Trochim, 2020). Open-ended questions (OEQM) are preferred for stimulating discussion, debate, and creative thinking, while closed-ended questions (CEQM) can assess factual knowledge but should be supplemented with follow-up prompts to encourage deeper analysis (Worley, 2015; Worley, 2019; Ackley, 2010; Schuman & Presser, 1979). Integrating foundational and complex questioning develops comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation skills (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Armstrong, 2018; Bloom, 1956).

The MSM applies "Socratic Questioning" or *Socratic Maieutics*, encouraging students to scrutinize ideas, identify inconsistencies, correct misconceptions, and reflect deeply on concepts (Brunschwig & Lloyd, 2003; Paul, Willsen, & Binker, 1990). This aligns with Dewey's reflective inquiry, where questioning and discussion focus on uncovering meaning and truth in practical learning contexts (Holden & Schmit, 2002). In English speaking classes, MSM promotes respectful dialogue between differing viewpoints, avoids emotional or rhetorical manipulation, and emphasizes collaborative truth-seeking. The process follows three stages—thesis, antithesis, and synthesis—to resolve conflicts and refine understanding (Daniel, Fichte

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& Johann, 1993; Schnitker, Emmons, & Robert, 2013; Corbett, Edward, Robert, & Connors, 1999).

Ultimately, MSM is a structured method for eliminating weak hypotheses and fostering stronger, evidence-based conclusions, making it a powerful tool to enhance Indonesian Polytechnic students' active engagement and communicative competence in English speaking courses.

METHOD

The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate the implementation of the Modern Socratic Method in enhancing Indonesian Polytechnic students' active learning in English speaking classes. This method was chosen because it allows for in-depth exploration of classroom interactions and students' engagement processes. The participants consisted of a purposive sample of English-speaking class students at a polytechnic in Indonesia, selected based on their availability, willingness to participate, and relevance to the research objectives (Creswell, 2012). The data collection process involved classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to obtain comprehensive insights into the teaching-learning dynamics (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Observations were conducted to record teacher–student and student–student interactions, particularly focusing on the questioning techniques, dialogue exchanges, and the flow of discussions during speaking activities. Interviews were administered to both students and the English lecturer to gather perceptions, experiences, and challenges encountered during the application of the Modern Socratic Method. Document analysis included reviewing lesson plans, instructional materials, and students' speaking performance records to triangulate the findings and ensure data validity (Patton, 2015).

The data analysis followed Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's (2014) interactive model, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data condensation involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying relevant information from the observations, interviews, and documents. The condensed data were then organized into displays such as matrices and thematic charts to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn by identifying patterns, relationships, and recurring themes related to students' active learning and speaking performance, followed by verification through member checking to enhance credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the research process, ethical considerations were observed by obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting their voluntary participation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study examined the impact of the Modern Socratic Method (MSM) on Indonesian Polytechnic students' active learning in an English-Speaking course. Compared to the traditional Fixed Lecture Method (FLM), MSM fostered a more interactive, student-centered environment. Under FLM, the lecturer controlled the instructional process, delivered most of the content orally, and served as the primary knowledge source. Student participation was

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minimal, interaction was limited, and learning focused mainly on cognitive outcomes through tasks and examinations.

In contrast, MSM encouraged shared responsibility for learning between lecturer and students, with the latter actively engaging in questioning, debating, and collaborative problem-solving. Lessons incorporated authentic materials, both online and offline, and placed balanced emphasis on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives. Students acted as co-creators of knowledge, developing ideas through thesis–antithesis–synthesis activities that promoted critical thinking, communication skills, and independent learning.

Quantitative results, measured through oral proficiency tests, showed substantial improvement. In Class A (n = 33), the mean score increased from 50 before MSM to 85 after its implementation. In Class B (n = 33), the mean score rose from 60 to 88. These gains of +30 and +28 points, respectively, reflect significant enhancement in speaking performance (see Table 1).

Qualitative analysis of classroom observations and interviews revealed that MSM improved students' active engagement, critical thinking, fluency, vocabulary range, self-confidence, and collaborative learning. Students reported feeling more motivated to participate and better able to articulate their ideas in English. Observations confirmed that the MSM created a dynamic learning environment where students assumed a more active role in the learning process.

Table 1. Mean scores before and after MSM implementation

Criteria	Class A (n = 33)	Class B (n = 33)
Before MSM	50	60
After MSM	85	88
Mean score gain	+30	+28

The identified qualitative effects of MSM on Polytechnic students' active learning in English Speaking course.

Image 3: Effects of MSM on the EFL students' active learning in English Speaking Course

Discussion

The Modern Socratic Method (MSM) significantly enhanced students' active participation in the English Speaking course by transforming them from passive listeners into active co-constructors of knowledge. One respondent reflected, *"I read various sources*

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beforehand, which helped me ask, answer, and discuss more confidently… the environment reduced my fear of speaking because it was collaborative and non-judgmental." This aligns with Paul and Elder's (2006) view that sustained, purposeful questioning fosters deeper engagement. By employing open-ended prompts and guided dialogue, MSM created an environment where students consistently formulated arguments, challenged viewpoints, and reflected critically in English, thereby strengthening both fluency and self-confidence.

In practice, MSM leveraged peer debates, think-pair-share activities, and collaborative problem-solving to ensure equitable participation (Wells, 1999). Unlike lecture-based learning, these interactions extended beyond teacher–student exchanges, fostering authentic peer communication. A comfortable atmosphere, where mistakes were reframed as learning opportunities, lowered linguistic anxiety—an effect supported by Zhang and Wang (2020), who found that MSM's open-ended questioning reduces affective barriers while enhancing fluency. Consequently, each session became an immersive language lab, where communication skills and analytical thinking developed in tandem.

The method also cultivated critical thinking by guiding students through structured reasoning processes. One learner noted, *"Before speaking, I now analyse the assumptions, explore counterarguments, and organise my main points."* This reflects the MSM's systematic approach, in which instructors design probing questions to stimulate multi-perspective analysis (Yang & Wu, 2012). Small-group exchanges allowed students to compare interpretations, while post-discussion reflections encouraged them to evaluate both their own reasoning and that of their peers (Dörnyei, 2001). As Brookfield (2012) and Facione (2020) argue, such metacognitive activities are central to higher-order thinking. Evidence from Zhang and Wang (2020) further supports that MSM can raise critical thinking scores by over 30% within three months, indicating its dual benefit for linguistic and cognitive growth.

Fluency and vocabulary development were also evident outcomes. Students reported moving from hesitant, grammar-focused utterances to more spontaneous, connected speech: *"Now my speaking is no longer stiff… reading authentic sources for our topics expands my vocabulary without rote memorisation."* This is consistent with Brown's (2007) assertion that meaningful, content-driven interaction accelerates both lexical acquisition and oral proficiency. Continuous exposure to authentic materials and topic-based debates not only enriched vocabulary but also encouraged flexible language use in real-time exchanges.

While MSM demonstrated strong results, its effectiveness depends on careful implementation. Teachers must design thought-provoking questions, manage balanced participation, and maintain a supportive environment (Paul & Elder, 2006). Some students—particularly those with low initial proficiency or high anxiety—may require gradual scaffolding to adapt to its demands. Additionally, while the current context involved small class sizes, future research should explore MSM's transferability to larger or online settings, where managing equitable dialogue may be more challenging.

Overall, this study reinforces MSM as a comprehensive strategy for enhancing active learning in EFL speaking contexts. By integrating linguistic practice with critical inquiry, it addresses both the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning, preparing students not only for academic success but also for effective participation in global communication (Zhang & Wang, 2020).

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The Modern Socratic Method (MSM) supports English fluency through a combination of spontaneous practice, cognitive preparation, and a relaxed, supportive environment. Frequent, direct speaking practice in MSM enables learners to respond naturally to open-ended questions such as, "What do you think about this in your culture?"—prompting spontaneous expression rather than memorised recitation (Nation, 2013). Allowing students a short pause of three to five seconds before responding helps them think directly in English, minimising translation from their mother tongue (Ellis, 2015). Additionally, by avoiding excessive correction of grammatical errors, MSM fosters an atmosphere in which mistakes are seen as part of learning, reducing anxiety and encouraging risk-taking in speech (Dörnyei, 2001). These factors collectively nurture not only fluency but also the self-assurance to speak regularly.

Beyond fluency, MSM strengthens comprehension by integrating vocabulary acquisition into engaging, content-rich discussions. Topic-based dialogues, such as those on "ethical issues in technology," expose students to specialised terms—like "privacy," "computer program errors," and "internet footprints"—in meaningful contexts (Schmitt, 2010). Learners consolidate their understanding when they rephrase complex ideas in their own words or defend their viewpoints (Webb & Nation, 2017). Through debates, presentations, and reflective exchanges, comprehension develops naturally, supported by repeated, purposeful use of language. Over time, this approach builds both a broader lexicon and more sophisticated patterns of thought in English.

Various structured activities within MSM are designed to balance practice with observation. In "Socratic Circles," for example, students alternate between an inner circle engaged in active dialogue and an outer circle observing and analysing peers' strategies (Copeland, 2005). Other formats, such as "Fishbowl Discussions" and "Structured Academic Controversies," offer opportunities to experiment with new vocabulary in dynamic, yet organised, conversational settings (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011). These activities maintain the dual benefits of focused practice and reflective learning, ensuring that language growth is accompanied by the development of analytical skills.

The transformative impact of MSM is evident in both qualitative accounts and quantitative outcomes. A large-scale study by Li and Wang (2019) involving 200 Chinese learners found that MSM users increased speaking speed from 85 to 120 words per minute, improved academic speaking scores by 45%, expanded vocabulary diversity by 30%, and reduced filler sounds such as "eee" and "emm" by 60%. These changes were significantly greater than those achieved through traditional methods. However, such gains depend on sensitive implementation; as Vygotsky (1978) noted, effective scaffolding requires aligning question difficulty with learners' current abilities to prevent frustration. When managed well, MSM not only develops fluency and vocabulary but also fosters the confidence necessary for deep thinking and effective communication (Swain, 2005).

Students' personal reflections further illuminate these benefits. One participant recalled that before MSM, fear of ridicule over imperfect grammar often limited their participation. However, after responding to a controversial topic like the legalisation of abortion, they were encouraged by their lecturer's focus on the value of their ideas rather than the precision of their language. This shift in feedback culture made them feel "listened to and

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appreciated," ultimately emboldening them to speak more freely. Such experiences underscore research findings that valuing content over form can reduce speaking anxiety by almost half while increasing willingness to participate by 60% (Zhang & Wang, 2020).

Confidence-building in MSM follows a gradual trajectory. By progressing from simple prompts to complex, hypothetical questions, students can track their own growth (Vygotsky, 1978). Self-evaluation strategies—such as recording and reviewing one's spoken contributions—make progress tangible, reinforcing motivation (Murphey, 2001; MacIntyre et al., 1998). Small-group formats also reduce performance pressure, allowing students to focus on meaning-making in a supportive setting (Oxford, 1997). Evidence from Indonesian universities shows that willingness to participate in discussions rose from 35% to 82% after adopting MSM, accompanied by improved debate skills and reduced communication apprehension (Widodo, 2015). While teacher patience and topic selection remain important factors (Nunan, 1999), well-executed MSM can simultaneously cultivate communicative confidence, critical thinking, and argumentation skills (Young, 1990).

Collaboration is central to MSM's effectiveness. In one account, a student described how peers helped refine their ideas during a group discussion on abortion: a simple initial point was expanded by others adding data, refining arguments, and jointly reaching a conclusion. Such exchanges embody MSM's collaborative ethos, where learners co-construct knowledge through shared responsibility (Paul & Elder, 2006). Empirical data show that MSM can boost student cooperation by up to 65% over conventional methods, especially in attentive listening and reciprocal knowledge sharing (Zhang et al., 2021). Peer support emerges organically, with more proficient classmates modelling argument structures and vocabulary choices (Vygotsky, 1978). Post-discussion evaluations further promote reflective improvement (Wells, 1999), while rotating roles within groups ensures equitable participation (Brown, 2007).

Practical techniques like "Fishbowl Discussions" and "Constructive Controversies" enhance this cooperative dimension. In these formats, learners alternate between active debate and observation, or prepare opposing arguments before engaging in structured rebuttals (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Research in Indonesian contexts has shown that such methods can increase meaningful peer interactions by 45%, improve use of communication strategies by 60%, develop stronger listening skills, and heighten confidence in expressing opinions (Widodo, 2018). Nonetheless, group-based MSM requires careful time management and explicit training in discussion norms (Yang et al., 2022). When implemented effectively, it develops not only fluency but also collaboration skills, both of which are vital in academic and professional settings (Chen, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The Modern Socratic Method (MSM) has demonstrated strong potential to enhance Indonesian polytechnic students' active engagement and communicative competence in English speaking courses. By integrating open-ended questioning, structured dialogue formats such as Socratic Circles and Fishbowl, and reflective discussion, MSM fosters active participation, critical thinking, and meaningful peer interaction (Paul & Elder, 2019; Mercer & Howe, 2012). Students became more confident and fluent by focusing on content over

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grammatical perfection, using authentic language in varied contexts, and engaging in repeated speaking opportunities (Harmer, 2015; Richards, 2017).

This approach also cultivates collaborative skills through peer scaffolding, constructive feedback, and negotiation of meaning, thereby improving the quality of responses and deepening mutual understanding (Brown, 2015; Byram, 2020). While these outcomes are promising, effectiveness may vary depending on teacher readiness, cultural context, and student motivation (Dörnyei, 2001; Nation & Macalister, 2020).

By merging cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning, MSM offers more than language instruction—it equips learners with higher-order thinking and communication skills relevant for academic and professional success in a global era. Future studies could examine its scalability in diverse EFL contexts, its long-term impact on learner autonomy, and strategies for effective teacher training to ensure sustainable implementation. With thoughtful adaptation, MSM can serve as a transformative model for modern English speaking instruction in Indonesia and beyond.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Design of Research Methodology, Implementation of MSM in Classroom, Key Data Collection, Qualitative Data Analysis, Writing of Research Report. **Author 2:** Literature Review and Theoretical Framework, Quantitative Data Collection, Qualitative Data Analysis, and Data Visualisation and Publication.

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