Debate as a Pedagogical Tool to Develop Soft Skills in EFL/ESL Classroom: A Qualitative Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Soft skills development is seen as paramount in the 21st century knowledge economy but pedagogical tools to realise it are scanty. Thus, this study describes how debate, as a pedagogical tool with three stages (i.e., pre-debate, actual debate and post-debate), can develop the soft skills prescribed in the Malaysian Soft Skills Development Module (MSSDM). The key informants were five debate experts with debating experience and have taught All-Asians Parliamentary Debate (APD) for at least two years in the EFL/ ESL contexts in the ASEAN region. A semi-structured one-on-one interview was used to gather the data. To triangulate the debate experts' perspective, a focus group interview was conducted with six classroom debate students from three ASEAN countries. The transcribed data were analysed using data analysis flow model where the data were condensed, sorted out, focused, organised and presented using the participants' verbatim words. In the findings, the participants discussed how the pre-debate, the crucial foundation stage to outline the team's case and arguments supported by evidences from rigid research, can develop all the soft skills in MSSDM, especially the teamwork and critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They also described how the actual debate, the most challenging stage because of the time limit in both speech and Point-of-Information, can develop soft skills, particularly quick critical thinking and effective communication skills. They also explained how the post-debate can develop the various soft skills by highlighting lifelong learning and information management and communication skills. From the findings, a debate pedagogical model to teach soft skills was developed.

INTRODUCTION

In this highly competitive globalised 21ˢᵗ century, human resource units have changed from choosing employees who are well equipped with only technical skills to those with a certain degree of both desirable soft skills known as employability skills and hard skills. In fact, many companies worldwide nowadays put a greater weight on soft skills over technical skills, while others consider them equally important or complementary to each other (Cranmer, 2006; Young & Chapman, 2011). Soft skills are "abilities and traits that pertain to personality, attitude, and behavior rather than to formal or technical knowledge" (Moss & Tilly, 2001, p. 44). They form a cluster of personal and people-oriented skills such as communication, teamwork, critical thinking, creativity and research skills, which increase individuals' chances for employability, job promotion and success. However, even if soft skills' crucial role is recognised in the workplace worldwide, in reality, there is a mismatch between graduates' acquired soft skills and the jobs' requirements.

In a survey conducted by the American Management Association (AMA) with 2,115 managers and executives worldwide, critical thinking was found to be a crucial skill for workers to have in order to contribute to their company's growth (The Nation, 2011). Workers need to have excellent critical thinking skills among other soft skills for them to adjust to new roles, identify and understand issues quickly and provide solutions effectively in the ever changing economy and job environment. However,

critical thinking is decried lacking by business people, experts, scholars and academicians among Thai students and graduates (Buranapatana, 2006; The Nation, 2011). Communication skill in English is another soft skill that Thai students and graduates reported to lag behind compared to their ASEAN counterparts (The Nation, 2013).

A study by People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP) found that four out of 10 new graduates seeking for a job were not hired because they lacked key skills such as critical thinking, initiative and effective communication skills (Rosero, 2012). It is not only in the Philippines, Thailand and other Asian countries that the lack of soft skills is a pressing societal problem but also all over the world, even in highly developed countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Buranapatana, 2006; Schleicher, 2012).

Research done in Malaysia discovered that there is a mismatch between the job market requirements and the acquired employability skills or soft skills of the graduates leading to unemployment (Hairuzila *et al.*, 2009; Hasyamuddin *et al.,* 2009; Riam, 2012). This mismatch is associated with the education sector imparting the wrong knowledge from basic education to higher education producing graduates who are generally technically skilled but lacking of soft skills such as communication and critical thinking skills (Hasyamuddin *et al.*, 2009; Shakir, 2009). With Malaysia's former Prime Minister,

YAB Dato' Seri Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi's recognition of human capital development as a vital driving force to push forward the country's economy, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) declared that all government universities of the country should include soft skills in the curriculum of their undergraduates (Shakir, 2009). Thus, MoHE developed the Malaysian Soft Skills Development Module (MSSDM) for higher educational institutions (HEIs) to implement. Universiti Teknikal Malaysia (UTeM) lists the following seven components adopted from MoHE: communication skills, critical thinking and problem solving skills, teamwork skills, lifelong learning and information management skills, entrepreneurship skills, professional ethics and morals, and leadership skills. MSSDM was therefore used as *a priori* framework in conducting this qualitative case study focusing on how debate could develop these soft skills after pilot studies had shown that these seven MSSDM soft skills could be developed through debates.

It is the responsibility of HEIs to develop soft skills such as those laid down in the MSSDM among their students in order to narrow the gap between graduates' acquired soft skills and the jobs' requirements in the ASEAN region. Narrowing such gap will help realise ASEAN's vision to push an integrated economy forward through the ASEAN Economic Cooperation (AEC). The region should give priority in developing its human capital just like the initiatives done in Australia and the European Union, which mandate the development of soft skills. Preparing the labour force to be attuned to the needs of the growing demand of the region for well-equipped human resources will greatly help realise the AEC 2020 objectives. For example, improving infrastructures, services, products and so on requires application of soft skills such as critical thinking and problem solving skills, teamwork and especially communication skills in English considering that each country in the region has its own languages other than English.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Even if soft skill frameworks such as the MSSDM are in place, the success of their implementation is still bleak for the lack of clear direction on how they would be taught, given the nature of soft skills which are so broad and subjective. Universities take their own initiatives in developing their own ways of implementing MSSDM as evident in the various literatures by Hairuzila *et al*. (2009), Hasyamuddin *et al*. (2009), Riam (2012), Ruhanita *et al.* (2012), and Sulaiman *et al*. (2008). Shakir (2009) pointed out that "the development of soft skills amongst undergraduates remains a difficult task as it involves less measurable elements…" (p. 310). Shakir further depicted the lack of critical thinking skills due to rote learning. She also explained the deterioration of English communication skills among Malaysian graduates brought about by the changes in the medium of instruction. She said, "This concern is well founded considering the expansion of the Malaysian economy in the era of globalization where

the use of English is universally required…" (p. 310). The studies of Ahmad and Siti Nur Kamariah (2009) and Hasyamuddin *et al*. (2009) used Problem-Based Learning (PBL) as an approach in developing soft skills in the HEIs. Although Hasmayuddin *et al*. (2009) concluded that PBL is an effective learning method in their mixed-method study, they mentioned only communication, leadership and problem-solving skills as the soft skills developed by PBL. The study by Ruhanita *et al*. (2012) used industrial training to enhance soft skills among accounting undergraduate students. Their study found that the top three soft skills the respondents enhanced during the 6-month industrial training were time management, oral communication and working in group. Critical thinking skill, which is considered a very crucial soft skill in the 21st century knowledge economy and is associated with debate in the literature, was ranked only 11th by the respondents. Thus, there is a need to explore more approaches, specifically a stand-alone pedagogical tool that may teach all the soft skills in MSSDM in one course or activity.

Debate, "the process of inquiry and advocacy, a way of arriving at a reasoned judgment on a proposition" (Freeley & Steinberg, 2012, p. 6), has been known in the literature for its benefits particularly in developing students' multiple soft skills. For instance, Hall (2011) found that debate can enhance critical thinking and communication skills that include organisation of ideas, listening and confidence. Similarly, Yang and Rusli (2012) also discovered that debate

as a pedagogical tool enhances critical thinking and higher order thinking and study skills compared to traditional teaching methods such as lecture. Goodwin's (2003) findings also revealed that debate can develop communication skills, critical thinking, teamwork and collaboration, and open-mindedness. Nakano and Inoue (2004) and Akerman and Neale (2011) reported that debate could develop communication skills in English if it is not the first language of the students. However, debate is more commonly used as a competitive activity limited to just a few students, usually the proficient and advanced ones, rather than a pedagogical tool used in the classroom (Parcher, 1998; Snider & Schnurer, 2006; Akerman & Neale, 2011; Yang & Rusli, 2012).

Pedagogy is defined by Hardman (2008) as "a structured process whereby a culturally more experienced peer or teacher uses cultural tools to mediate or guide a novice into established, relatively stable ways of knowing and being within a particular, institutional context, in such a way that the knowledge and skills the novice acquires lead to relatively lasting changes in the novice's behaviour, that is, learning" (p. 65). Debate as a pedagogical tool adheres to the Activity Theory developed by Vygotsky, Leontiev and Ergestrom (cited in Hardman, 2008), which considers all parts of the whole activity leading to the student's learning or what Hardman calls "lasting changes" (p. 65). It is also supported by Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning as debate uses both lower order and higher order

cognitive skills including knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, evaluation and synthesis. Higher order skills are not covered in many classroom activities causing the students to end up in just remembering the facts but are not able to apply them to create new things.

Debate, as an ancient teaching method used by the Greeks 4,000 years ago (Darby, 2007), has been widespread as an extra-curricular activity in Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines, usually in the form of competitions but not as a classroom activity. It is one of the co-curricular activities mentioned by Sulaiman *et al*. (2008) to develop soft skills in Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. The preparation and delivery of arguments in debates give students the chance to develop their research skills, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, communication skills and self-confidence (Sulaiman *et al.*, 2008). Hairuzila *et al*. (2014) identified these as the skills emphasised by lecturers when integrating soft skills in the teaching of hard sciences in their preliminary study. Hairuzila *et al.*'s study also found that cooperative learning, problem-based learning and teacher-centred approach were the top three teaching approaches regularly used by lecturers in integrating soft skills. They explained that traditional teacher-centred approach in the form of lecture is used by lecturers handling big classes to cover the syllabus. However, the necessary soft skills that should be acquired by the students are neglected. One of Hairuzila *et al.*'s lecturer participants said:

Some of the technical courses especially engineering core subjects are 'highly technical' in nature. These are required and necessities to become professional engineers. Most of them are involved with 'technical mind challenge'. So it's not easy to blend all soft skills needed. (p. 29)

In order to address the issue of the lack of time to develop the soft skills in MSSDM by integration, as indicated in the studies by Hairuzila *et al*. (2009, 2014), more approaches in teaching soft skills aside from integration which is not feasible for large classes need to be explored. This study thus explored how soft skills could be developed through debates as a stand-alone pedagogical strategy in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL)/English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, where opportunity to practice English is limited. Hairuzila *et al*.'s study did not specify as to what medium of instruction that relates to communication skills was used in their study. Shakir (2009) pointed out that English is universally required for employment in Malaysia as graduates who are highly proficient in English "are able to make presentation to an international audience" (p. 310). However, one of the participants in the study of Zubairi *et al.* (2011) on English competency for entry-level employment in Malaysia said, "Nowadays, getting 7As and 8As is normal, and somehow it does not translate into an actual ability…it's a baseline but it does not really translate

into performance" (p. 17). In fact, some of the industries in their study made their own in-house impromptu assessment and training of English proficiency because recruited graduates might have scored high in national standardised tests but could not perform in actual English communication that incorporates critical thinking. Debate has the potential to address both actual performance in communication and critical thinking and problem-solving skills contrary to rote learning and learning for the test as evidenced in the literature (Goodwin, 2003; Kennedy, 2009; Hall, 2011; Yang & Rusli, 2012).

Furthermore, previous studies used quantitative and mixed methods which limited the understanding of how debate could develop soft skills. Goodwin (2003), using end-of-course evaluation through essay to find out the perspectives of students on classroom debate, reported that the preparation stage in debate was perceived by her participants as the best opportunity to listen to each other and they said that, "the real learning happened in the discussion" (p. 160). Goodwin's study conducted in the US, a native English-speaking country, led to the conceptualisation of this reported study in that the researcher extended the use of debate to the EFL/ESL context and critically examined not only the pre-debate and actual debate but also the post-debate stage which was not given attention in past studies. The paucity of literature analysing debate's three stages not given attention by researchers dealing with debate led to the conduct of this study in order to eventually

propose an alternative pedagogical model of teaching soft skills. Moreover, Yang and Rusli (2012), who researched on the use of debate to enhance pre-service teachers' learning and critical thinking, pointed out that the implementation of debate as a pedagogical tool and research on it is relatively limited.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As there is no single way and clear direction found so far to teach university students all the soft skills prescribed in MSSDM, as indicated in the previous studies, more approaches in teaching soft skills need to be explored. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe how debate, as a pedagogical tool with three stages (i.e., pre-debate, actual debate and post-debate) can develop the soft skills prescribed in MSSDM in the EFL/ESL contexts. From the perspective of five debate experts and six debate students from ASEAN countries, it emerged that the pre-debate stage is the most crucial as it is the foundation stage to outline the team's case and arguments supported by evidences from rigid research. The pre-debate stage can develop all the soft skills in MSSDM especially teamwork, leadership, lifelong learning and information management, as well as critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Another important pedagogical part is the actual debate, which is described by the participants as the most challenging stage because of the time limit in delivering their speech and raising and addressing POIs very quickly. The participants described

in details how this pedagogical stage can develop soft skills, particularly quick critical thinking and effective communication skills in English. They also described how the post-debate stage could develop the various soft skills by highlighting lifelong learning and information management and communication skills in English.

Bellon (2000) and Akerman and Neale (2011) stated that if debate was used in the non-English speaking context, it could improve students' communication skills in English. However, they recommended that more studies in the EFL/ESL context need to be done; thus, this study was conducted. Furthermore, the paucity of literature analysing debate's three stages led to the conduct of this study in order to propose an alternative pedagogical model to teach soft skills.

METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research design, selection and characteristics of informants, data gathering procedures and data analysis. It also presents how the study's trustworthiness was ensured and ethical issues were considered.

Research Design

As the study's purpose was to describe how All-Asians Parliamentary Debate as a pedagogical tool with three debate stages (i.e., pre-debate, actual debate and post-debate) can develop soft skills, it used the qualitative case study research design. Qualitative case study, according to Baxter and Jack (2008), "is an approach to research

that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources" (p. 544). Baxter and Jack explained that using a variety of sources ensures that the issue is explored not through a single lens but through multiple lenses to allow a deep understanding of the various facets of the phenomenon. Taking from constructivist paradigm, truth is relative and it depends on one's perspective (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003 as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study used the descriptive case study type as it describes how debate can develop the soft skills in MSSDM. Descriptive case study type is used to portray a phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008). As an in-depth understanding of how debate as a pedagogical tool can develop soft skills, qualitative case study research design is appropriate as case study would "allow researchers to capture multiple realities that are not easily quantifiable" (Hancock & Algozzine, p. 72).

Informants of the Study

The key informants of this study are debate experts who have been teaching debate using the All-Asians Parliamentary Debate (APD) format for at least two years. APD is the appropriate format for classroom debates with mixed English proficiency. As a simpler format with only two teams debating at one time, it allows the students to focus on the development of soft skills, particularly communication skills in English rather than on the complicated format. British Parliamentary (BP), for example, with four teams in each round is used by

advanced debaters usually in competitions. Other debate formats such as the classic Oxford-Oregon allows memorisation of speech; thus, it may encourage rote learning, while APD is highly interactive as POI may be raised and should be addressed during the delivery of the speech.

The five debate experts who also have prior debating experiences are from the ASEAN region in EFL/ESL contexts. Two are from Malaysia (ESL), two from Thailand (EFL) and one from the Philippines (ESL). Table 1 shows the demographic profile of this study's key informants.

In order to triangulate the debate experts' perspectives, a focus group of six students from the debate class in a university in north Malaysia was formed. The students took debate as a Listening and Speaking course taught intensively for four months, four times a week at 1.5 hours per day. The participants have few opportunities using English as they come from various countries in the ASEAN region, i.e. Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia. Their average institutional Test of English as a Foreign Language (ITP-TOEFL) score is 391, which is categorised as elementary or basic user, which is far below the minimum

English proficiency entrance requirement in the western universities (usually 500-600). Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the focus group participants.

The debate experts are from both ESL and EFL contexts, while all the focus group members are from EFL context in the ASEAN region. Using separate groups of individuals in a case study is supported by Creswell (2012). The main purpose of the representation is not to generalise so as to gain a better understanding of each represented case so that the various contexts to be richly described in the findings will increase their transferability to the readers or researchers who will be using this study.

Sampling Procedures

For a qualitative case study, purposive sample should be drawn to build a variety of perspectives from different samples, acknowledge intensive study opportunities (Stake, 2005) and increase data richness and scope from multiple perspectives (Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Patton, 2015). Formal sampling in the selection of participants, which required criteria, was therefore necessary. These criteria include prior debating experience with at least two years

TABLE 1
Demographic Profile of the Debate Experts

	Debate Expert (Pseudonym)	Country	Number of Years Debating	Number of Years Teaching Debate/ Coaching Debaters
1	Job	Thailand	6	4
2	Eric	Philippines	4	10
3	Prasit	Thailand	5	6
4	Joyce	Malaysia	3	2
5	Sonya	Malaysia	4	3

of debate teaching/coaching experience in the ASEAN region using the All-Asians Parliamentary Debate (APD). APD is a simpler debate format with three speakers on each side more appropriate in the EFL/ESL context with students of mixed English proficiency levels so that they will not deal with too many complexities. Similarly, the criteria for focus group consisting of debate students included from at least three different ASEAN countries in ESL/EFL context, with at least one semester of classroom APD experience, from three different intakes and from both genders.

The desired sample size for the one-on-one interview was two for each four ASEAN countries including Indonesia; however, it turned out that the other two who agreed to be interviewed in the Philippines have taught the more complex British Parliamentary (BP) format, instead of the simpler APD. This is the same with those contacted in Indonesia who revealed that they had used BP in teaching debate, and thus they were eliminated so that only those (five) who fit in the criteria and agreed to interview became the key participants of this study. For the focus group interview, there were only eleven ASEAN students within the three intakes that debate was offered in the study locale. Although eight confirmed to participate in the interview, only six students participated in the actual interview. Nevertheless, three to five participants are more manageable particularly to avoid confusion on identifying speakers and on the data transcription and analysis as many participants may confuse the data transcriber (Creswell, 2012; Tracy, 2013; Patton, 2015).

The best sources of data for qualitative research are those who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). Although there were only five key participants in this study, they provided rich data as all of them are experienced debaters excellent at supporting, explaining and substantiating their points extemporaneously. Data saturation desired to answer the study's research question was already reached on the third participant. Data saturation is an important factor to consider in data gathering and this is achieved when the participants say almost the same thing and any new data will no longer make a difference (Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Creswell, 2012; Tracy, 2013; Patton, 2015).

TABLE 2
Demographic Profile of the Focus Group Participants

	Focus Group Participants (Pseudonym)	Gender	Country	Entrance ITP-TOEFL Score
1	Nisa	Female	Thailand	353
2	Intan	Female	Indonesia	387
3	Myo	Male	Myanmar	417
4	Kittipat	Male	Thailand	420
5	Chatri	Male	Thailand	393
6	Andre	Male	Indonesia	377

Data Gathering Techniques and Procedures

Semi-structured one-on-one interview (OOI), with the five debate experts who did not only debate but have taught debates, was the main data source to answer the research questions posed in this study. The participants were given a copy of the MSSDM framework a week before the interview to ensure understanding of soft skills. The one-on-one interview was based on a semi-structured interview guide allowing flexibility. Probes and follow-up questions were asked when the prepared questions were not satisfied, as suggested by Creswell (2012). The OOI, which lasted for an average of one hour 25 minutes, was audio-taped for higher fidelity and trustworthiness.

For the focus group interview (FGI), the participants were first asked to sign a consent letter and provide their demographic information. Then, the participants were told of the conduct of the interview, the approximate duration of the interview and that they should elaborate their answers in details as much as possible. They had been given a copy of the MSSDM framework a week earlier and also understood that probes or follow-up questions would be asked further for a more in-depth and rich information. The FGI as well as OOI were then transcribed and analysed.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The transcribed one-on-one and focus group interview data were coded using the template approach suggested by Crabtree and Miller (1999). In this analytical approach, the template was developed a priori based on a theoretical or conceptual framework and on the research question. In this study, MSSDM was used as the framework, thus the coding was based on MSSDM's seven soft skills which had been identified by the participants as developed by debating in the preliminary studies. King (2004) suggests that a priori code be developed after some preliminary exploration of data. The a priori codes developed in this study after the pilot interviews were communication skills (CS), critical thinking and problem solving skills (CTS), teamwork skills (TS), lifelong learning and information management (LL), entrepreneurship skill (ES), professional ethics and morals (EM), and leadership (LS). Meanwhile, the research question that guided the analysis was "How can debate as a pedagogical tool with three stages, i.e., pre-debate, actual debate and post-debate, develop soft skills indicated in MSDDM?" After two weeks, the coded data were revisited for recoding and evaluation of results. Following Miles, Huberman and Saldaña's (2014) data analysis flow model, the data were condensed, i.e. selected, focused and organised from the interview transcripts. Then, the condensed data were displayed using the participants' verbatim words and from these, conclusions were drawn. Data were interpreted following Boeije's (2010) and Creswell's (2012) definition of interpretation. Interpretation in qualitative research means that "the researcher steps back and forms some larger meaning about the phenomenon

based on personal views, comparisons with past studies, or both" (Creswell, 2012, p. 257). For Boeije (2010), findings are the "outcomes of the researcher's analytical activities (not the activities themselves) and consist of data and everything the researcher makes out of them, whether descriptions, theoretical models or explanations" (p. 196). In this study, the data were interpreted in the light of previous studies, theories and the researcher's personal views and explanations applying reflexivity.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness in this study, Guba's (1981, as cited in Krefting, 1991) model of trustworthiness was employed. Guba's model consists of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Triangulation, peer-debriefing, member check and appropriate interpretation were used to ensure credibility, the key strategy to achieve trustworthiness (Krefting, 1991) in this study's data gathering and interpretation. To increase the transferability and dependability of this study, thick description and data source triangulation and environmental triangulation with the participants from various countries were used. To fulfil confirmability, triangulation and reflexivity were applied in this study. Two types of triangulation used in this study include different methods (one-on-one interview and focus groups) and different types of groups (debate experts and students). Reflexivity is minimising bias by the researcher's focusing on the participants' meaning on how debate

can develop soft skills, not the researcher's own perspective, experience or meaning.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study to answer the following research question: "From the perspective of the debate experts, how does debate as a pedagogical tool with three stages, i.e. pre-debate, actual debate and post-debate can develop soft skills prescribed in MSSDM?" Consequently, from the findings of the study, a pedagogical model for teaching debate is proposed.

Pre-debate Stage

Teamwork skill. All the five debate experts consider teamwork as the top soft skill learned during the preparation stage. Job, Expert 1, a top debate adjudicator in tournaments in Thailand, debated from high school to college for six years and has been coaching university competitive debaters, teaching classroom debate to ESL/EFL students for four years and administering international programmes in a leading university in Bangkok. Job said, "Basically debate is a team sport. During the pre-debate task, the members of the team should help each other in gathering information and in brainstorming itself. So, teamwork is very important."

Sonya, a debate expert who is also one of the top national debate tournament adjudicators in Malaysia, highlighted proper coordination of team members as a crucial aspect during the preparation time. Sonya described how teamwork could be practiced

at the pre-debate stage, "Once we get the topic, we first discuss as a team as to how we gonna prepare like who's gonna research on this. Then, we start our research for a fruitful brainstorming and outlining of our model and arguments."

As described by the debate experts, preparation time is the most important part of the debate that necessitates collaboration as one member alone cannot be successful in the actual debate. The perspective of the debate experts on the importance of teamwork during the preparation stage is supported by the focus group interview with the debate students. Andre, a student from Indonesia, states, "Debate is like playing a football. Someone must do a specific job. And if someone is not prepared, he will affect the whole team." He further describes how teamwork is practiced during the pre-debate stage, "It's not good to debate if you don't have any idea about the motion. So we must research and discuss with our team, we choose information relevant to make our argument strong, which evidences support our side. We prepare together."

The perspective of Andre on classroom debating in terms of his description of how teamwork can be developed in pre-debate is not different from the view of debate experts who mostly shared about their tournament debating and coaching experiences. This finding is similar to that of Goodwin (2003) in terms of teamwork. Goodwin (2003) described well about how important pre-debate stage was although her analysis did not focus on stages. She reported that the small meetings were a comfortable place to brainstorm, ask questions and "bring different thoughts together" "to expand our limited capacities" (p. 160), allowing students to better work together than doing individually. One of Goodwin's participants said, "The debate and the small group preparation that preceded it was an extremely effective way to facilitate me actually doing the work" (p. 160). Goodwin's participants described the pre-debate stage as the real learning stage that is better than the actual debate. Although Darby (2007), Inoue and Nakano (2004), Kennedy (2007) and Lieb (2008) reported that teamwork is one of the many benefits of debating, they did not explain how it is developed.

Critical thinking and problem-solving skill. The other soft skill developed during the pre-debate is critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Prasit, a debate expert, explained:

> *Critical thinking is the core identity of debate. Debate is all about squeezing your brain, to be logical, to give reasons and evidences, to outwit the opponents… we have to solve a certain problem, define the motion, address the issues on the given motion so we've got to analyze a lot.*

Prasit underscored the importance of analysis to solve the problem in the given motion or topic. He also mentioned the paramount value of preparing for both sides and predicting the possible arguments of the

opposing side. From Prasit's point of view, problem-solving cannot be separated from critical thinking when it comes to debating. As part of the pedagogy, the pre-debate stage necessitates a great deal of analysis or critical thinking as students need to solve a problem in a motion they choose or assigned to them. In the Activity Theory, all parts of the activity should lead to learning and even the pre-debate stage of the debate realises this due to the nature of debate itself that requires systematic preparation.

Job, who is also a debate expert, shares the same idea with Prasit when he describes the aim of debate, "We need to scrutinize issues. We should identify how we're going to attack the other team. So, it's very important to have critical thinking skills and eventually problem solving because the aim of every debate is to solve a problem." Job defines and describes the relationship between critical thinking and problem-solving as used in MSSDM. Intan, from Indonesia, supports this relationship from debate students' perspective. She said, "The team will be thinking of a solution to a problem and how they can handle the arguments of the other team. So basically, they must prepare for two sides –how they can attack what the other side will be saying."

The experience of debate experts and the debate students do not differ. They both provide an understanding how the pre-debate stage can be an important platform for developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. For both debate experts and students alike, it is not only about preparing for both sides of the debate but providing "a better solution." Proving that a team's solution is better than the other team's requires a lot of critical thinking skills in that the team members need to analyse what makes their model better by providing evidences, as well as comparing and contrasting the team's model against the opponents' model. If debate is introduced in the classroom, rote learning, as Shakir (2009) calls for to be changed in the educational system, can be addressed. Davies (2006) argues that infusion (embedded or partial) approach to critical thinking is better than no treatment approach but not better than full treatment approach, i.e. teaching of reasoning and logic like debate. Therefore, debate as a pedagogical tool realises all the levels of Bloom's taxonomy in that students use the knowledge and information they research, analyse and synthesise information and create models to solve a problem. Critical thinking and problem-solving that uses higher-order cognitive skills is what Munzenmaier (2013) said as the taxonomy is intended for, i.e., what teachers have to reach when designing teaching objectives so that critical thinking, a highly needed skill to survive in the 21st century knowledge economy, will be realised.

Lifelong learning and information management. Sonya describes her experience on how lifelong learning and information management can be developed during the preparation stage of the debate.

> *When we prepare for our arguments, we need to research a lot to gather information from various sources*

and decide which info is relevant to our case or strongly support our case. We prepare for both our case and the possible arguments of the opponent so we need to open up our mind to ideas for or against our case.

Lifelong learning and information management is associated by both debate experts and students to research skill. Research skill is one of the top benefits of debating that emerged in the findings of Akerman and Neale (2011) and the participants of this study justified how it can be synonymous with lifelong learning and information management. From the perspective of the study's participants, the pre-debate stage requires debaters to research and manage relevant information from various sources with the topic assigned to them. This necessity leads to the development of this important soft skill, lifelong learning and information management.

Communication skill. The participants explained how communication skill is developed during the preparation stage. Job, for example, emphasises on the need for coherence during the actual debate which can be achieved only through proper communication during the pre-debate stage. When students prepare for the debate, they indeed develop their communication skills as they need to talk with each other so that their arguments will cohere or link to each other and that they will not duplicate the points of their team-mates. Sonya, who is

also a debate expert like Job, shares a very important pedagogical aspect of learning English in her statements below.

In the preparation for the debate, I need to read a lot and reading not only increased my knowledge or my ideas but also improved my vocabulary. Because when I read, I get lots of new information and meet new words and I try to remember them. I write the new words I learn and try using them during the debate and even after.

Sonya's improvement in communication skills, particularly from reading and specifically her gaining of vocabulary by the necessity to research prior to debate, is also confirmed by Kittipat. As a Thai student who has limited opportunities to practice English, Kittipat attributes his learning of unfamiliar and difficult words in English to his debating. He said, "In debate, especially when we're given academic topics we never know before, we have to research a lot. By reading a lot, we got a lot of information[s] and new words, new vocabulary to improve our English."

Vocabulary development is what Sonya and Kittipat attributed as a major aspect of the pre-debate stage mainly achieved by the extensive reading required during the pre-debate. Vocabulary is necessary not only in reading but also in speaking, listening and writing. According to Wilkins (1987), "without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can

be conveyed" (p. 135). Sternberg (1987) said that it is common knowledge that people learn most of their vocabulary by reading. Furthermore, Krashen (1993) stated that, "reading is the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers" (p. 23). Like Krashen (1993), Hadley (2000) believes in contextualised language learning and teaching. In debate, the unfamiliar words are used in context that facilitates learning. Sonya writes the new words she learns and uses them in context during the debate.

Andre also said, "Debating helped me not only with my speaking and listening but also in reading and writing. Obviously, we have to speak and listen a lot, and of course, read a lot before the debate. But for writing, it helps me to quickly organise my ideas and support my points with evidences to make it [them] strong. Also I gain a lot of ideas and words by debating that can help me a lot when writing." Participants also said they have to remember not only the ideas but also the new words they have learned to be more effective in delivering their speeches. This finding is related to the Input Hypothesis by Krashen (1987), i.e. that once learners are exposed to comprehensible inputs, they acquire those and incorporate them with their interlanguage system. This is also supported by the Noticing Hypothesis of Schmidt (1986, as cited by Richards, 2008) proposing that for learners to acquire new forms from inputs, it is necessary to notice such forms in the input. If the students are conscious in gaining more words to add to their repertoire or in improving their grammar, for example, they notice unfamiliar words and new structures they encounter while reading or listening.

Other soft skills developed in the pre-debate stage

Leadership is another soft skill that can be developed during the pre-debate stage according to the debate experts and debate students. Sonya described the role of a leader in the context of debate as someone who sets the direction of the preparation stage, which predicts the success of the team in the actual debate. Prasit, on the other hand, explained how redundancy and overlap of arguments can be avoided during the debate through the direction of a good leader at the preparation time. He said that it is the leader who sets the team split prior to the debate so that there will be no overlap in the arguments to be delivered by the team members. Like the debate experts, Nisa points out that if there is a team, there should be a leader to guide the group particularly on the assignment of topics to prepare. Intan also said that "If there's no leader when we prepare it's not well organized, no clear direction." How leadership can be developed was not described in the previous literature; thus, this finding will provide illumination on how debate can develop leadership. Parcher (1998) admits the dearth of studies relating debate to the development of leadership. He only mentioned the survey conducted by Klopf in 1967 in Freedom and Union magazine. Klopf found out that

among the 160 leaders as respondents, 100 had debated and 90 of these 100 believed that their debating experience helped them a great deal in their leadership role although there is no explanation how it helped them.

Professional ethics and morals (EM) is covered in debate by certain choices of motions, i.e. in the principle or value-judgment debate, according to the participants of this study. Sonya describes how EM can be developed during the pre-debate stage using LGBT issue as an example. She said, "We tackle ethical and moral issues, understanding why people do what they do and why people believe what they believe and how we can tell whether it's morally right or wrong." For the participants, EM can be developed by discussing both sides of moral and ethical issues. Sonya further explained that, "We're given the opportunity to evaluate the issues, not necessarily supporting or condemning LGBT…we know it's a taboo in Islam religion…and standards for morality and ethics always come in the discussions to promote understanding and respect." Sonya also shares that debating can make students open-minded, not just conforming or condemning but deeply understanding both sides of the issue to make well-informed ethical choices.

Chatri, an engineering student, also showed how EM can be developed by looking into the possible effects of unethical practice to the society or the humanity. In debating on human cloning, Chatri said he realised that people should be responsible to the society and be concerned on the effects of human inventions that might possibly ruin humanity. Clarkeburn (2002, as cited in Ozolins, 2005) posited that higher education should train students to be ethically sensitive and be able to be logical or to reason well because ethics courses by themselves are not enough to inculcate good characters and good virtues. Debate can develop this sensitivity as Goodwin (2003) reported, as well as logical reasoning based on what the participants of this study described. Ozolins (2005) believes that ethics training among university students will expose them to handling moral dilemmas they might face within their chosen fields of profession when they graduate. Indeed, debate can develop students' characters and concern to moral issues not only affecting them but also their fellowmen through carefully designed motions. It is the responsibility of educators to develop not just critically thinking individuals but also ethically sensitive and morally upright citizens who think not only of their own benefits but of the humanity.

Like professional ethics and morals, entrepreneurship skill (ES) can be developed by debating with certain motions or topics, according to the participants of this study. The participants describe how it can be developed at the pre-debate stage. Prasit explained that ES can be developed with any motion related to business or economics or even politics that may touch on creation of business opportunities such as the motion, "This house would appoint Myanmar as future ASEAN chair." He said that this motion deals not only about the political condition of Myanmar in relation

to ASEAN, the debaters discussed about the business opportunities for the Burmese people and for the whole ASEAN block that may be opened if the country would be chair. Debaters discussed how the motion could create jobs if investors would be allowed to enter the country should leaders change their political ways. Prasit said that it is through the discussion during the brainstorming that ES can be developed particularly the ability to identify business opportunities and create jobs. This study's finding does the groundwork in terms of entrepreneurship skill as it is able to establish and describe that, indeed, debate as a pedagogical tool can develop entrepreneurship skill which is not identified in previous studies on debate.

The Actual Debate

The participants of this study consider the actual debate as the most challenging part. They claimed that the actual debate is equally important as the pre-debate stage in terms of developing soft skills although the way these skills are developed vary in each stage. Communication skills and critical thinking skills are more important during the actual debate while teamwork and lifelong learning, critical thinking and information management are crucial in the preparation stage. However, the participants recognised that the seven soft skills in MSSDM can be developed during the debate although they vary in the way they are practiced. This section will discuss only on how the top two soft skills prescribed in MSSDM can be developed at the actual debate stage.

Communication and critical thinking skills. Communication skill and critical thinking skill emerged as among the top two soft skills in MSSDM identified by the participants of this study developed at the actual debate stage. Job explained, "Students have to be able to effectively discuss their own analysis in their arguments. Because no matter how good they are during the preparation stage if they cannot relate the information to the set of judges then they will still not win." Job portrayed the inseparable function of communication skill, critical thinking and problem-solving skills as debaters need to analyse in presenting their arguments. This connection between communication and critical thinking skills is also described by Myo, a debate student from Myanmar.

> *Before, I closed my eyes to remember what I memorized before the debate. But this is not good because if we debate, we interact with our opponents. They stand up to ask POI [Point of Information] so I don't see them. Then if you memorize what you say, you will lose everything. My teacher in debate said I should not to read what I write, only see it or, or glance sometimes. Then I also answer POI and I like it. I'm not afraid anymore like before in my first time.*

Not only Job and Myo did present the relationship between communication and critical thinking skills, Chatri, a debate

student from Thailand, also said, "During the debate, you will learn how to solve a problem and communicate with others. I have no chance like this before in my high school, so I'm afraid to say what I think but in debate class, I learn to say my opinions." For Chatri, communicating and thinking critically go simultaneously to show the complexity of debate as an activity. He also needed to remember what he read during the preparation time to present at the actual debate when he speaks and listens to his opponents. Debaters also outline their points by writing notes during the preparation stage. Thus, there is an integration of skills that Brown (2001) suggests for communicative language teaching and learning, as well as task-based language teaching, i.e. incorporating the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) when teaching the target language. Ellis (2003) points out that language learners need to solve a problem and practice complex language functions like they use the language in the real world. Chatri further shared his experience about learning English communication skills implying his need for a more complex and challenging communication activities other than just games back in high school, as follows:

I hate my teachers in English always playing game all the time. I could not learn much in playing only in the class like the teacher was lazy and teach us very simple. But in debate, we have to think a lot and speak very long and response to

the POI. It's very good way to learn real communication and best way of thinking solution for problem very fast and speak more effectively.

Chatri pointed out a very relevant point to classroom pedagogy, particularly in language teaching when playing games is involved. While playing game is a fun way of teaching language, it could not occupy all the learning time particularly for advanced students who need more challenging lessons so they would not plateau in their learning (Richards, 2008). Munzenmaier (2013) suggests that Bloom's Taxonomy be fully used in any classroom activity if meaningful and useful learning is desired. Chatri claimed that debate is a good way to learn communication skills as it requires a great deal of critical thinking skills, which means the activity itself encourages the natural way of using language and language use does not separate lower and higher cognitive skills as they are intertwined. For Chatri, communication involves responding to interlocutors such as answering POI which uses analytical skills at the same time applying previously acquired knowledge and improving fluency in speaking which cannot be achieved by games alone.

The participants of this study claimed that POI is the most challenging part of the debate as they would not be able to determine what point would be exactly raised by their opponents yet they need to address it on the spot during their speech; otherwise, they would lose points for not engaging with their opponent. Andre

said, "What I like most about this debate is the POI because asking and answering question smartly in just seconds, within the allowed time, is so challenging." Andre implied that POI is challenging because the speaker may be disrupted anytime during his speech to answer a POI raised so he/she must answer and this will distort the flow of any prepared speech requiring focus. The time pressure is considered by students as a good motivation for them to practice their communication skills within limited time. This can be related to Dornyei's (2001) language learning motivation theory in which learners could be motivated by challenging activities. If the activity is too easy, such as in the game described by Chatri, students would not be interested in learning, so the time pressure and the complexity of the activity could push them to perform because they are challenged. Although some students might see POI or debate in general as threatening at first, quick analysis of challenging situations in the knowledge economy is highly required. Thus, Torff (2006) recommends the explicit teaching of critical teaching skills.

Debate's interactive nature fits in the ASEA|N EFL/ESL classroom well because in the real world, memorised speech is not the norm as people communicate with each other in a spontaneous way without reading a note. Richards (2008) argued that for students with advanced proficiency not to plateau in their language, they should be provided with learning opportunities that would make them motivated to learn and improve. Debate prepares students to be communicative in the 21st century job market when communication is of utmost importance in presenting ideas and answering on-the-spot questions. Even if engineers and entrepreneurs have brilliant ideas, if they are not able to communicate them to their stakeholders, such plans will not work as teamwork is necessary and communication is indispensable in any organisation.

The Post-Debate Stage

The post-debate is the stage when adjudicators give oral adjudication, comments and suggestions to the debaters intended to make the debaters improve in their next debate rounds. In this section, three major soft skills will be discussed as to how they can be developed at this stage.

Lifelong learning and information management. The participants of this study described how lifelong learning and information management can be learned at the post-debate stage. Sonya shared her perspective as follows:

> *At the end of every debate, we're excited and curious what the adjudicators would tell us. Of course, we learn a lot from them as they are trained in adjudicating. Secondly, when adjus [adjudicators] tell us our strengths and weaknesses during the debate, we become open-minded in order for us to improve in the next rounds. They also tell us how we can improve managing our information like what relevant*

info we could have highlighted or the irrelevant info we should have omitted from our speech.

Sonya mentioned about becoming open-minded in order to learn and understand different sides of what debaters believe in or the ideas they hold for themselves. This finding is consistent with that of Goodwin (2003), Hall (2007) and Kennedy (2009), who reported that debates could make students broad-minded and open to new ideas because debating open up for many possible interpretations of issues. Without such open-mindedness, students could be one-sided and would not respect others' ideas and opinions. This open-mindedness, according to Goodwin (2003), leads to empathy. Sonya also said debaters are eager to listen to how the judges assess their performance. It is the time when debaters are presented their strong points as well as their weak points so that they can improve in the next debates. Thus, debate as a pedagogical tool satisfies this curiosity for learning from various sources including from the adjudicators who serve as the mirror of the students' debating performance. The post-debate stage is the debriefing after an intense argumentation so it is the stage intended for 'enlightenment', as Darby (2007) refers to it. Darby said that after the completion of each week's debate, learners and their instructor leave the classroom better in expressing their personal opinions on issues affecting them being enlightened by both sides of the debate.

Critical thinking skill. Job said that assessing the entire debate can help debaters to be critical and open-minded to see how they performed. Metacognition is necessary in learning as it is the way individuals evaluate themselves after performing or doing a certain task. It can also be related to Gardner's (1983) Intrapersonal Intelligence when people have the ability to assess themselves to reflect and monitor their own progress, thoughts and feelings, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. This monitoring needs critical thinking as it is an evaluation or assessment of oneself. In Bloom's Taxonomy, assessing, comparing, monitoring and evaluating fall under the higher order thinking skills which are suggested to avoid rote learning and achieve meaningful learning outcomes.

Communication skills. Communication skill is seen as very important in the actual debate and the participants of this study still consider it important at the post-debate stage. Job described the process of communication in terms of listening that involves processing of information. Moreover, Job also mentioned about the chance given to debaters to ask questions to the adjudicators and interact with their team-mates and opponents at the post-debate stage. In the interaction model of language teaching, interactions of teachers with their students or among small group of students help learners perform better academically as genuine dialogue or interactions are more beneficial than traditional teacher-centred classrooms. Interaction model facilitates language learning of students

rather than controlling it while encouraging the development of higher-order cognitive thinking skills (Levine & McCloskey, 2013).

This study's participants recognised the importance of communication skills in terms of listening to the adjudicators they viewed as a source of learning. In the Input Hypothesis by Stephen Krashen (1987), language input from listening or reading is considered very important in learning the target language. Krashen states that the best language input (i) is something that is understandable to the language learners but should be a step beyond their current level of understanding or competence ($i +$ 1). Krashen encourages a natural way of using the language, thus the teacher's role is to provide enough input that will make the students interact with one another to promote understanding and use of language. Communication activities should include negotiation of meaning for students to practice more complex structures to enhance the language acquisition process. If better and more learning outcomes are desired, more inputs should be provided and debate qualifies as good quality and abundant input not only for language learning but also in terms of content.

The findings derived from the analysis of the interview data focused on the soft skills developed through the debate format with three stages, namely, pre-debate, actual debate and post-debate. The findings highlighted the themes or the specific pedagogical techniques and method as pedagogical tool for enhancing soft skills.

Proposed three-stage debate pedagogical model

From the findings on how debate can develop the soft skills prescribed in MSSDM from the perspective of the debate experts and triangulated by debate students, the following pedagogical model was developed to teach soft skills using debate in the EFL/ESL classrooms with mixed language proficiency. It is an alternative model in teaching multiple soft skills in the EFL/ESL classroom or whatever context it may be applicable. This pedagogical model is a major contribution of this study to the body of literature to teaching both debate and soft skills. As pedagogy means a structured process in the teaching-learning situation designed by an experienced individual to teach a novice (Hardman, 2008), pedagogical tasks in this study refer to the specific activities required in each debate stage to perform the main task, i.e., debate. Adhering to Vygotsky's Activity Theory, debate requires the performance of inter-related pedagogical tasks towards the completion of the main task, and in this case, the actual debate. Even the post-debate stage is geared towards improvement of debating skills and eventually development of soft skills. All the mini-tasks such as the researching and brainstorming are directed to soft skills development.

As shown in Table 3, the first column shows the three stages of debate with the corresponding pedagogical tasks in the second column and the target skills for each stage in the third column. In the pre-debate stage, team discussion on what to research

is crucial. Once the team-members have gathered relevant information through research, they brainstorm to identify issues, design and propose solutions and models and outline their arguments and counter-arguments. The leader will assign the team split so there will be no overlapping of arguments and consistency, and thus, coherence among members will be achieved. The team members will have to structure their speech, deciding which ideas to come first and next, and how they will signpost

TABLE 3
Three-Stage Debate Pedagogical Model to Teach Soft Skills

DEBATE STAGE	PEDAGOGICAL TASKS	TARGET SOFT SKILLS
PRE-DEBATE	Team discussion on what to research Researching collaboratively and individually on the topic Brainstorming with team-members to identify issues, design and propose solutions and models Preparation/Outlining of arguments and counter-arguments /Team-split Speech preparation – structuring, prioritising, signposting	Teamwork Lifelong learning and information management Critical thinking and problem-solving skills Leadership Communication skills Professional ethics and morals* Entrepreneurship*
ACTUAL DEBATE	SPEAKER Speech delivery with rebuttals/ presentation of case/model/ arguments/counter-model/counter-arguments Accepting Point of Information (POI)/Quick analysis and response to POI NON-SPEAKER/TEAM-MATE Note-taking while listening to the speech Collaboration with team-mates for consistency NON-SPEAKER/OPPOSITE SIDE Note-taking and analysis to outline rebuttals/counter-arguments Raising POI to weaken a strong point given by the speaker Sharing of ideas in response to important points raised by the speaker	Communication skills Critical thinking and problem-solving skills Lifelong learning and information management Teamwork Leadership Entrepreneurship* Professional ethics and morals* (*= Depending on the choice of motions)
POST-DEBATE	Listening to the adjudicator's comments and suggestions on how to improve debating techniques, speech structure/organisation, delivery and effective language use Debriefing and discussion with team-mates, adjudicator, and opponents for improvement of analysis, use of information, logic, raising or responding to POI, etc. Reflection on how to address issues; define the motion; improve research, preparation teamwork and other aspects of the debate	Communication skills Critical thinking and problem-solving skills Lifelong learning and information management Teamwork Leadership

so that they will be easily followed by their audience.

In the actual debate, each team member will take turn to deliver a speech in seven minutes. While one debater delivers a speech, any of the opponents can raise a POI which the speaker needs to address if he/she decides to accept it. Based on APD rule, every speaker needs to accept at least two POIs and this aspect is where interaction is ensured and memorisation is discouraged. The speakers are also required to give a rebuttal during the speech which requires active listening, engagement and quick analysis among the debaters. Collaboration among team members is also necessary at this stage and the leader facilitates the flow and order of the debate.

The post-debate stage is the debriefing session where the adjudicator presents the strengths and weaknesses of both sides and each speaker. It requires the debaters to listen to comments and suggestions for their improvement in the next rounds, and thus they need to reflect on their own performance in terms of matter, manner and method as the criteria for judging. At this stage, the debaters are also given the chance to ask questions to the adjudicator and discuss with their team-mates and opponents.

With each debate stage serving different purposes to develop the various soft skills in MSSDM and requiring the debate participants different roles to perform, this pedagogical model adheres to the Activity Theory that considers the entire learning community with specific and congruent roles to play at a time. For example, while one speaker is delivering a speech, others are listening, note-taking and analysing for their rebuttals or POI and the adjudicator is doing the same things for her/his comments and suggestions later. It also conforms with Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning in that the students go through certain stages of learning. The preparation stage is laying the foundation for the whole debate process as the learners acquire knowledge through research and brainstorming then they actualise such knowledge to build their case supported by evidences during the debate. They compare and contrast their models to defend their side and weaken the other side's arguments by rebuttals and POIs, and strengthen their own side through reasons, examples, analysis and synthesis. Applying the knowledge the learners gained during the preparation and analysing, synthesising, evaluating and creating models during the actual debate, as well as evaluating and analysing at the post-debate are higher order cognitive skills in Bloom's Taxonomy.

CONCLUSION

The participants of this study consider the pre-debate stage as the most crucial in terms of laying the foundation of the team's case and arguments supported by evidences from rigid research and they have shown how the soft skills in MSSDM can be developed at this stage. They consider the actual debate as the most challenging part because of the time limit in both speech and POI that require fast critical thinking and effective communication skills. They described how

these skills can be developed during the actual debate. They have also shown how the post-debate can develop the various soft skills. Thus, to answer the Research Question, "How can each debate stage – pre-debate, actual debate and post-debate - as a pedagogical tool develop the soft skills prescribed in MSSDM?", each stage can develop various soft skills prescribed in MSSDM in different ways as described by the participants. In this paper, only the top soft skills for each debate stage were presented with the participants' verbatim words, except in the pre-debate stage where all the seven soft skills in MSSDM were described. For the actual debate, only the top two soft skills (i.e., communication and critical thinking skills) were presented in the findings due to space limits although the participants described how debate could develop all the seven soft skills. In the post-debate, the participants described how the five soft skills, i.e. lifelong learning, critical thinking, communication skills, teamwork and leadership, can be developed. In this paper, however, only the first three were presented.

As the participants described how debate can develop multiple soft skills using the three-stage debate, a pedagogical model was developed and proposed to be used not only in the ASEAN countries but in any EFL/ESL classrooms, where the soft skills mentioned in this study are needed and applicable. The issue that debate is seen appropriate for advanced learners in both critical thinking and communication skills which are commonly used in tournaments with usually well-developed students

have been addressed in this paper as the focus group participants were from the elementary language proficiency level. Not only this pedagogical model can develop communication and critical thinking skills, but all the soft skills outlined in the MSSDM. Therefore, debate can be used as a stand-alone pedagogical tool to develop soft skills. If used in the classroom, it can prepare graduates to face the challenging 21st century globalised workplace, particularly in the ASEAN region.

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