CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

5.1   Introduction

PSD made its debut in Malaysia in 1997. The objective for the introduction was to produce debaters who could speak off the cuff and rationalize points effectively despite being put under pressure with debating sides revealed only an hour before the actual debate.

Over the past 10 years, many claims have been made with regards to the realities of PSD. Many trainers still claim the need for spoon feeding whereas others rave about how PSD had produced critical and creative thinkers amongst their wards.

The Piala Dato Wira is an annual debate tournament that is open to all secondary schools in Malaysia. As a means to encourage students to use English in a co-academic capacity, it is compulsory for every district to hold a PSD competition. Winners from each district would go on to compete at state level before state champions move on to compete at zone level. Zone champions of the four zones will then face off until one is crowned National Champion.

Trainers in urban settings are relatively spoilt for choice when it came to speakers who are proficient in English. The situation is the total

opposite when it involves students in rural areas. Citing this as a reason, there are trainers who have adopted the 'Why bother?' attitude.

Teaching in a rural setting in Malaysia, this researcher's personal experience with PSD has revealed many facts and fallacies with reference to the multitude of claims made over the years. However, when looking for documentation on PSD in an ESL setting in Malaysia to verify these claims, the researcher noticed a gap.

This little research endeavour began because the researcher wanted to document how far debaters in a rural setting have adapted to the transition of traditional style debate to PSD. Furthermore, the researcher also wanted to document how debaters, who considered English a third language, were coping with the linguistic demands of PSD.

5.2   Findings

According to Ziegelmueller and Dause (1975, p. 183), SC are key to convincing a specific audience. Corder (1981) describes CS as systematic techniques employed by a speaker to express his (or her) meaning when faced with some difficulty.

Given that debate is 'goal oriented action' and this 'action' is taking place in a rural setting, this researcher decided to look at what kinds of Strategic Considerations (SC), are being used to win the debates, as

well as the role CS in the articulation of arguments in a setting where English is the third language.

The first part of the analysis (RQ1 and RQ2) reveals that these debaters are using three of the four classes of Strategic Considerations (SC) outlined by Ziegelmueller and Dause (1975, p. 183). Debate teams that emerged victorious did so by altering perception of both the analysis (SC1), and the advocate (SC2) and placing emphasis through formal procedure (SC3). The only class of SC not used was the one requiring emphasis through informal codes (SC4). In short, this researcher has concluded that in order to win a PSD in this setting, debaters must confidently engage in a continuous effort to alter the perception of the listener using the protocols stipulated within the time frame given while maintaining the formal dignity of the proceedings.

The second part of the analysis (RQ3 and RQ4) reveals that using CS during competitive debate could prove to be counter productive. Whilst CS help debaters overcome their communication problems and fix lexical gaps, it is deemed to have compromised the synthactical, lexical and phonological aspects of formal or Standard Malaysian English (ME). Other than that, the uses of certain CS like stalling and self monitoring strategies are said to impede the flow of speech.

Though it may not be encouraged during debate competition, CS would be useful inclusions during training sessions as they are both language and confidence building devices.

Debaters from three of the four teams observed showed a great degree of teacher dependence. Dependence in this context translates into dependence on the teacher for content knowledge, language structuring and role determining.

The more successful debaters in this setting were those groomed to work in a collaborative environment. A lot of encouragement and confidence boosting opportunities helped these debaters overcome the initial hurdles of using English outside the classroom domain. Coping with the transition from traditional style debate to PSD also went hand in hand with the trainer empowering her trainees to play their roles as individuals and as a team while continuously signposting advice and moral support.

Another plus point for the more successful debaters is having experience on their side. They knew what to do and when to use debate mechanisms effectively and that played a major role in utilizing the SC productively.

5.3   Recommendations

Debate trainers in rural settings may be able to produce champions if they begin grooming their debaters from as early as Form 1.

This would help produce debaters, who are confident and comfortable with airing their thoughts in public despite being under pressure. This would go hand in hand with altering the listeners'

perception of the advocate, or in this case, the debater (Ziegelmueller & Dause ,1975).

When a debater is confident, arguments will be articulated clearly and without hesitation.

Familiarising the trainees with the roles that each debater has to play at an early stage will provide debaters with more options and choices with regard to debate roles.

Ziegelmueller & Dause (1975) stress the ability to adapt to the opportunities and constraints presented during a debate are crucial to winning any debate. The sooner debaters are made aware of the components of PSD and its contributions to the to the overall dynamics and outcomes of the debate, the better it is for the team as a whole.

Inculcating CS into their training may bring about an awareness of the strategies available to them to overcome both real and perceived language hurdles. The use of CS in training will enable potential debaters from rural settings where English is the third language, to convey and interpret messages and negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific contexts (Brown, 1994, p. 227) and do it confidently. The trainer will also have to guide the trainees so that CS will be used to develop or enhance their command of the language and not become a permanent crutch.

Emphasizing the need to read and to be aware of what is happening in the world around them as a means to widen their world view must be done persistently from the moment they imply or indicate interest in

debating. Altering the perception of the analysis (Ziegelmueller & Dause 1975), can only be done effectively if debaters are well informed individuals. Furthermore, in an environment where English is rarely used, reading can be a source of new words and varied sentence structures.

Last but not least, debaters need to be groomed as collaborators. Emphasis through formal procedure (Ziegelmueller & Dause, 1975), can only work well when there is teamwork where debaters work to fortify their case as well as fill in any gap that may appear during the course of the debate. They need to understand that it takes a team to carry the trophy home.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

This research analysed the types of CS found in Parliamentary Style Debating.

A longitudinal study of structured CS inclusion in PSD training for a team in either a rural, or urban setting, and its implications on the team's performance at the end of a stipulated timeframe could be a matter for consideration.

Another area that can be looked into would be CS use among EFL users in Malaysia in both formal and informal settings. Furthermore, more studies should be done on CS used in general, outside controlled environments.