

**The Role of Four Corners Strategy
in Improving Intermediate Students' Debates Performance**

Yaareb Qahtan Hameed

Assistant Lecturer

University of Anbar - College of Science

sc.yaarub2003@uoanbar.edu.iq



Abstract

One of the most important roles played by the Four Corners Strategy is to motivate students to debate. This strategy is characterized by the ability to activate discussions between groups and exchange ideas about a specific idea in order to reach an integrated solution and acquire new information. Thinking about information from four angles or four perspectives supports the main idea and enhances information. This study aims to reveal the role of the Four Corners Strategy in improving debate among students. The study sample consisted of intermediate school students in Ramadi City during the academic year 2023-2024. A teaching program based on the Four Corners Strategy was used, as well as a pre-test and post-test to collect study data. The results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference attributed to the Four Corners Strategy in improving the debate performance of the experimental group. However, the performance of the students in the experimental group was relatively better than the control group, but this improvement was not measured statistically. The study concluded that the Four Corners Strategy requires students to have a linguistic level that enables them to generate ideas and participate in dialogues. Therefore, this strategy was not successful at the level of intermediate school students, and the study recommends applying it to the preparatory and university levels.

Keywords: Four corners strategy, intermediate students, debates.

دور استراتيجية الزوايا الأربع في تحسين أداء طلاب المرحلة المتوسطة في المناظرات

يعرب قحطان حميد

مدرس مساعد

جامعة الانبار- كلية العلوم

sc.yaarub2003@uoanbar.edu.iq

المستخلص

من اهم الادوار التي تقدمها استراتيجيات الزوايا الأربع هي تحفيز الطلبة على التناظر. تمتاز هذه الاستراتيجية بخاصية تفعيل المناقشات بين المجموعات وتبادل الافكار حول فكرة معينة لغرض الوصول الى حل متكامل واكتساب معلومة جديدة. ان التفكير في معلومة من اربعة زوايا او اربع وجهات نظر يدعم الفكرة الرئيسية ويعزز المعلومات. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى كشف دور استراتيجية الزوايا الأربع في تحسين المناظرة بين الطلبة. تكونت عينة الدراسة من طلبة المدارس المتوسطة في الرمادي خلال العام الدراسي ٢٠٢٣-٢٠٢٤. استخدم برنامج تدريسي قائم على استراتيجية الزوايا الاربعة وكذلك اختبار قبلي واختبار بعدي لجمع بيانات الدراسة. كشفت النتائج عدم وجود فرق دال احصائيا يعزى الى استراتيجية الزوايا الاربعة في تحسين اداء التناظر لدى المجموعة التجريبية. الا ان اداء طلبة المجموعة التجريبية كان افضل نسبيا من المجموعة الضابطة الا ان هذا التحسن لم يكن قياسه احصائيا. استنتجت الدراسة ان استراتيجية الزوايا الاربعة تتطلب ان يكون لدى الطلبة مستوى لغوي يمكنهم من توليد افكار والمشاركة في الحوارات. لذلك لم تكن هذه الاستراتيجية ناجحة على مستوى طلبة المتوسطة، وتوصي الدراسة بتطبيقها على المرحلة الاعدادية والجامعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجية الزوايا الأربع، المرحلة المتوسطة، المناظرات.

Introduction

The four corners strategy is considered one of the best and most important educational methods through which students can be taught, evaluated, and their academic progress measured through fun and dynamic steps for male and female students. It is also suitable for use with all grades, especially primary school, where students have a high degree of physical activity. The teacher asks multiple-choice questions - the answers are identified in four corners in the classroom through a poster, for example, so that students can see them - the teacher reads the question and asks the students to write the answer on a piece of paper, then asks each student to head and stand in the corner that corresponds to his answer - the teacher provides final feedback each time to correct the answers to each question.

A controversial statement is displayed to the students or a question is asked to them. In each corner of the classroom, an opinion or response is posted. Students express their opinion or response by standing in front of one of the four statements, then talking to others about why they chose their corner.

Statement of the Problem

The ability of middle school students to engage in dialogue or even answer a question is very limited and does not go beyond the question, and we often find that students face difficulty in completing their answer to the question despite knowing the answer, but their linguistic background, hesitation, and perhaps also the factor of shyness to speak in front of peers contribute to their inability to speak (Sawitri, 2019). Although many schools have integrated technology into education and exposed students to many real educational situations, the use of language and exchange of ideas is still weak (Khayat, 2023). A lot of research has been conducted and many strategies have been applied to strengthen the level of students in speaking, exchanging ideas, generating ideas, and dialogue to find solutions that result from the exchange of multiple ideas (Jameel and Mohamood, 2017). However, the level of middle school students is still weak in speaking and generating ideas (Ghafar and Amin, 2022). Teaching students to dialogue requires training them to use scientific methods for the purpose of building a good foundation through which students can learn effectively and avoid falling into acquiring informal concepts or phrases that may be informal, as well as distinguishing between American and British pronunciation, which is largely based on grammatical rules. In order to enable students to debate, exchange information and express their ideas, it is necessary to adopt scientific strategies (Khalil, 2018). After reviewing the literature conducted to develop students' ability to dialogue,

communicate and exchange opinions such as Kurnia (2018), Sawitri (2019), Chen (2022), Vionika (2023), Junita (2024) who found that the four corners strategy was the most beneficial for students in developing their performance in discussions between groups and exchanging ideas about a specific idea in order to reach an integrated solution and acquire new information. Therefore, the study seeks to reveal the effect of the four corners strategy in developing students' skills in dialogue, persuasion and finding solutions to various issues based on exchanging ideas from several different opinions that come together to create a dialogue of academic benefit.

The Aim

This study aim to

- 1- Reveal the roles of the Four Corners Strategy in improving students' debate.
- 2- The difference between male and female students' debate achievement who exposed to Four Corners Strategy.

The Hypothesis

To achieve the aims of the study, the following hypotheses have been set:

- 1- There is a significant difference between the students' scores of the experimental group who learn debate via four corners strategy and the students' scores of the control group who learn debate via the prescribed teaching method of the teacher's guide book.
- 2- There is a significant difference between the male and female students' scores of the experimental group in debate performance.

Significance of the study

Teaching students using the Four Corners Strategy enhances their ability to develop group communication skills by participating in peer discussions. It also enhances the effective teaching process that contributes to the participation of all students in the learning process and the generation and diversification of ideas for the purpose of continuing the dialogue. Also, the use of this strategy by English language teachers expands their awareness and academic competencies in identifying conversation learning strategies based on students' participation and effective interaction.

Limits of the Study

The outcomes of the study are limited to the following:

- 1- Location: the study was conducted at Fatima Bint Al-Yaman Intermediate School for Girls and Al-Awfiya Intermediate School for Boys in Al-Ramad City in Anbar Governorate - Iraq
- 2- Participants: The participants were 25 boys and 25 girls from 2nd grade.
- 3- Materials: the materials were from the English students' book.
- 4- The instrument: An instructional Four corners based instructional program was designed to teach the students of the experimental group.

Literature Review

The Four Corners Strategy is considered one of the most important effective learning techniques. It encourages students to interpret, generate ideas, solve problems, and learn cooperatively. It also motivates learners to engage in group discussion, accept the opinions of others, and accept constructive criticism (Tok, 2019). One of the most important roles played by the Four Corners Strategy is to motivate students to debate. A topic is

chosen and the four groups are asked to find solutions. The students in each group discuss and generate ideas about the topic. Then the teacher writes down the solution and opinion of each group and hangs it in a corner of the classroom. Then the students go to the corner that suits them and the proposed solutions and ideas are discussed. As a result of the students' discussion, a suitable context for the topic is reached. A joint decision is reached after exchanging discussions and ideas and arriving at a logical answer (Saracalaoğlu, 2019).

In order to achieve the objectives of teaching speaking and communication skills, English language teachers must diversify the application of teaching strategies that are exciting and motivate students to participate effectively. An efficient teacher is distinguished by his ability to diversify teaching methods, with the aim of motivating and arousing learners' attention and allowing students to participate and interact. The four corners strategy has proven successful in developing students' speaking proficiency and improving speaking skills (Aliffiani et al., 2018).

Concerning the students' roles, Walqui (2000) found that the Four Corners strategy gathered learners that have equal background and have the ability to share and collaborate and each one presents his idea about a certain topic to reach a solution that all the member of the group agreed on.

Also, Guillaume (2007) who proved that the strategy is considered a cooperative learning approach that help learners to reflect on their attitudes and then negotiate the viewpoints with peers.

Novrianti (2016) found that teaching EFL students the productive skills including speaking skills via the Four Corners Strategy has positive effect on the learners' speaking performance. Furthermore, Kurnia (2017) found that the application of Four Corner strategy increased the debate

ability in English language, this result is considered that the learners' speaking skill is improved.

Furthermore, Geraldine (2018) mentioned that Four Corners strategy can help learners to understand a new information from four different points of views. In addition, Yonantha (2018) conducted the significance of teaching EFL learners via Group Work strategy and the Four Corners strategy to improve students' speaking skills, the results revealed that the learners' speaking performances who studies speaking skills via the four corners strategy have gained higher marks than the students who learned via Group Work strategy.

In addition, Fraenkel and Wallen (2023) found that Four Corners is considered an effective teaching strategy that improved learners' speaking performance by engaging all the learners in a debate. from the above findings, it is clear that the Four Corners strategy is characterized by fun, authentic, and effective strategy that provides activities that enable learners to generate, concentrate and encourages them to reflect and correct themselves on a given subject. As a direct connection with the students, Junita (2024) conducted an interview, and based on the interview he found that majority of the learners lack of semantic, motivation, self-confidence, fluency, shyness, enthusiastic in speaking inside the classroom and interact with peers, thus he suggested to use the Four Corners Strategy to improve students' speaking performance.

The four corners strategy does not only improve learners' debate skills, but it can develop learners' speaking skills too. When students learn via this strategy, their self-confidence raise, when the learners fell that they can speak confidently they can develop their speaking skills, this led to improve debate skills (Asmara, 2019). When the students can declare about

their agreement or disagreement about a topic, this indicate that they can debate very successfully (Yonantha, 2018).

Previous Studies

Following are related previous studies that investigated the four corners strategis in teaching speaking skills

Junita (2024) investigated the role of the Four Corners strategy in improving students' speaking skill. The participants were 64 students from eleventh grade school students who were divided into two groups, namely the experimental and control group. The experimental group was divided into 4 groups. An instructional speaking program based on the Four Corners strategy was used. An achievement speaking test was used to collect the data. The results revealed that the four corners strategy has positive significant effect on students' debate and speaking skills.

Geraldine (2018) investigated the effect of the Four Corners Strategy in improving students' productive skills and motivation. The participants were from the 11th grade students. An achievement productive test was used to collect the data. The results revealed that the students of the experimental group scores were higher than the students of the control group. This indicate that the Four Corners Strategy has positive effect on students' productive performance and debate.

Methodology

The Population and the Participants

The population is all the 2nd intermediate school students at the Anbar Education Directorate. The participants were from 2nd grade intermediate students from Fatima Bint Al-Yaman Intermediate School for Girls and Al-Awfiya Intermediate School for Boys in Al-Ramad City. The

total number of the participants were 50 male and female students, table 1 shows the distribution of the participants.

Table 1: Distribution of the participants

School	Males	Females	Total
Fatima Bint Al-Yaman Intermediate School	0	25	25
Al-Awfiya Intermediate School for Boys	25	0	25
Total	25	25	50

Table 2: Distribution of the experimental and Control Groups

School	Experimental	Control	Total
Fatima Bint Al-Yaman Intermediate School	12	13	25
Al-Awfiya Intermediate School for Boys	11	14	25
Total	23	27	50

The Instrument

A speaking instructional program based on Four corners strategy was prepared. Also, a pretest and posttest were prepared to collect the data.

The Instructional Program

The instructional program consists of 12 lessons. The rationale of the program is to train the students to generate ideas, using the language, defence their ideas, and take decision. The students exposed to different kinds of questions and statements that need to make desions (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly dsagree).

The program validity was extracted by distributing the program to a jury member who specialized in the field of applied linguistics and methodology. The jury members a greeed on most of the activites and disagree on two activities, thesetwo activities were not suitable to the students' levels in English, they need higher level and background. The jury modifications and suggestions have taken in consideration.

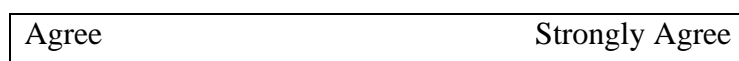
Pilot Sample

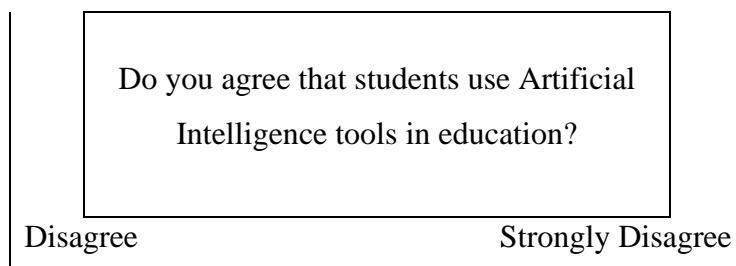
The researcher excluded 8 male and female students from the participants to represent the pilot sample. The results revealed that the clarity of the program and the test, the instructions, time required to answer the test is between 20-25 minutes, and the activities of the program are suitable.

The reliability of the program and the achievement posttest were verified by using test- retest method within 6 days. The re-test reliability was computed by using "Pearson correlation" between the two implementations of the tests, the internal consistency reliability values of the test was 0.89 and the values of the stability index were 0.86, which is considered a high reliability.

Procedures of the Study

The following steps were implemented to teach the students of the experimental group, the diagram explains the process:





1- The four corners strategy learning model was distributed to the students.

I asked the students to read the model and think about its content.

3- The students filled out the model by marking their degree of agreement with the paragraphs (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree).

4- When the students completed the model, I pointed to the corners of the class, read the first paragraph and asked the students to go to the corner that indicated their level of agreement.

5- After the students chose the corners that represented the level of their answers, I asked them to discuss a specific topic.

6- After the students in each group discussed (each corner), I asked the group representative to present what they reached as a result of their discussion and exchange of ideas.

7- After exchanging ideas and discussions. Read the second statement and ask the students to move to the corner that represents the level of their answer and to dialogue and exchange ideas among themselves, and the group representative also presents what they reached.

8- Repeat this process for all the paragraphs that have been identified. 9- Provide feedback on each paragraph that is discussed.

The Results

Results Related to the First Hypothesis

To verify the first hypothesis "There is a significant difference between the students' scores of the experimental group who learn debate via four corners strategy and the students' scores of the control group who learn debate via the prescribed teaching method of the teacher's guide book" mean scores, standard deviation, and t-value were used to calculate the data. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3: Mean scores, standard deviation, and t-value

Groups	N.	Mean	St.D	df	T- Value		Sig.
					calculated	Tabulated	
Ex. G	23	74.30	10.42	48	1.24	2.00	> 0.05
C.G	27	72.61	7.81				

Table 3 shows that mean scores of the experimental group is 74.32 with standard deviation 10.42 and the mean scores of the control group is 72.61 with standard deviation 7.81, and the degree of freedom is 48. Also, the calculated t-value is 1.24 and the tabulated t-value is 2.00, and the significant value is higher than 0.05. As the calculated t-value is less than the tabulated t-value this means that there is no significant difference between the students' achievement of the experimental group and the control group. This indicate that the first hypothesis is rejected.

Result Related to the Second Hypothesis

The second hypothesis states "There is a significant difference between the male and female students' scores of the experimental group in debate performance", mean scores, standard deviation, and t-value were used to analyze the data. Table 4 shows the results.

Table 4: The males and females mean scores, standard deviation, and t-values

Groups	N.	Mean	St.D	df	T- Value		Sig.
					calculated	Tabulated	
Females	12	76.17	9.01	21	0.56	2.00	> 0.05
Males	11	74.13	10.03				

Table 4 shows that mean scores of the female students is 76.17 with standard deviation 9.01 and the mean scores of the male students is 74.13 with standard deviation 10.03, and the degree of freedom is 21. Also, the calculated t-value is 0.56 and the tabulated t-value is 2.00, and the significant value is higher than 0.05. As the calculated t-value is less than the tabulated t-value this means that there is no significant difference between the male and the female students' achievement of the experimental group. This indicate that the second hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of the Results

The results of the first hypothesis shows that there is no significant difference between the students' achievement of the experimental group and the control group, this result indicates that the students who studied using the four corners strategy had a very slight benefit in developing debate. This benefit did not appear statistically (when relying on the statistical data accurately) because the statistical data proved that there was no statistical difference, but it can be noted that the arithmetic mean of the two groups is slightly higher than the arithmetic mean of the control group. This result can be attributed to the fact that the debate skill requires students to have a high level of English, and that middle school students in general have an average level of English. Generating multiple ideas and making a decision to answer a problem requires students to have a vocabulary store

that enables them to debate. The lack of an effect on developing the debates skill among students who studied the conversation skill using the four corners strategy can also be attributed to the students' inability to employ what they learned, and the fear factor of speaking and participating in debate had a significant impact on the students, in addition to the fact that the techniques that students were required to apply in using the four corners strategy were somewhat difficult for the students' linguistic level. It seems that the students' background in dialogue and exchanging ideas in general is insufficient and they are not trained in debate even using the mother tongue. This was reflected in debate in English. Therefore, the researcher believes that the students need a longer training period in order to achieve the goals and develop their debate abilities.

This result is consistent with the results of Kurnia (2018), Woodside, et al. (2018), Yonantha (2018), and Ahmadi (2022) who found that there is no significance difference of using the four corners strategy in developing students productive skills. while the result is inconsistent with the results of Kurnia(2018), Bächtold, et al. (2023), Ceneciro, et al. (2023), Vionika (2023), Childs (2024), and Junita (2024) who found that the four corners strategy has a positive significant effect on students speaking, debate, and productive skills.

The results of the second hypothesis revealed that there is no significant difference among students' debate performance that can be attributed to gender. This result support the result of the first hypothesis, that the four corner strategy does not influence students' debate performance, also there is no superiority between the male and the female students in debate performance. This result may due to the fact the researcher was able to successfully control the extraneous variables that might indirectly affect the results of the study, and the teaching of the

students by the researcher (the same instructor taught males and females) had a significant effect in controlling the gender variable.

This result is consistent with the results of Ceneciro, et al. (2023) and Escudero-Tena, et al. (2023) who found that there is no significant difference between male and female in speaking skills students due to learning via four corner strategy.

Conclusion

It is inferred that for students who learn via the Four Corners Strategy must have a high level of language and a linguistic background characterized by having a large vocabulary, as well as the ability of students to use the language correctly. The Four Corners Strategy is one of the effective strategies in learning debate and encourages students to use the language and generate new ideas about a specific topic. It also motivated students to make a decision and talk about it in English, which is something that students had not practiced before. It was an enjoyable experience for them, as students were engaged in the activities and interacted with them positively. In addition, the Four Corners Strategy reduced students' anxiety and encouraged shy students to participate and interact positively. Furthermore, using the Four Corners Strategy to develop debate requires a high level of language, as well as sufficient time and long practice so that the learner can adopt a new habit.

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