

ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook for Enhancing Islamic University Students' Argumentative Skills: Strengths, Challenges, and Alternatives

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of generative Artificial Intelligence has opened new possibilities for improving speaking and debate instruction in higher education. This study aimed to investigate the implementation of "ChatGPT-based Debate Coursebook" in a second-semester Debate and Critical Thinking class, focusing on its strengths, challenges, and proposed improvements from both students and classroom observers. This research employed a qualitative case study design, involving 7 student participants and 2 observers from the English Education Department at a State Islamic University in Indonesia. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, and field notes. In addition, data analysis involved thematic coding, frequency analysis, and triangulation of data sources to ensure trustworthiness. The findings indicated that the coursebook provided clear structure, strengthened argumentation skills, and increased engagement, particularly through the integration of ChatGPT for independent practice and feedback. Nevertheless, several challenges emerged, including limited class time, initial difficulty understanding the Australasian Parliamentary Debate format, uneven or excessive reliance on ChatGPT, and limited live feedback. Students and observers recommended the addition of multimedia support, clearer scaffolding for ethical AI use, structured practice schedules, improved pronunciation and fluency activities, and more explicit assessment rubrics. Based on these insights, the study recommends developing AI-assisted materials that are multimodal, ethically guided, and supported by stronger lecturer scaffolding to balance AI use and foster deeper critical thinking.

KEYWORDS:

ChatGPT;
Debate coursebook;
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Introduction

Argumentation skills are a crucial academic competency for students, particularly those in English Language Education study programs, as they involve clearly conveying claims and reasoning, coherently evaluating evidence, and critically responding to opposing arguments. Debate-based learning has long been viewed as an effective approach to improving students' critical thinking, oral fluency, and interactional skills. As emphasized by Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), oral communication instruction must integrate linguistic, pragmatic, and discourse dimensions to enable students to participate in complex, authentic communication activities, including academic debate.

However, in higher education classrooms in Indonesia, debate instruction often faces structural obstacles, such as heavy course loads, limited time for speaking practice, and limited opportunities for individual feedback (C.-H. Chen et al., 2022; Young & Shishido, 2023; Zhai & Wibowo, 2023). These conditions prevent many students from optimally developing their argumentative skills. In these circumstances, the integration of educational technology, particularly artificial intelligence, emerges as an alternative for expanding practice opportunities, providing modeling, and delivering faster, more personalized feedback. This principle aligns with the views of Creswell (2014) and Creswell and Creswell (2018), who emphasize that educational innovation must accommodate technological developments while offering contextual, structured, and student-centered learning strategies.

The use of digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in language education has received widespread attention for its potential to expand access, personalize instruction, and intensify language practice. Several studies and research studies have shown that digital-based tools, including online learning, interactive multimedia, and language models, can support oral production practice, self-paced practice, and provide faster feedback than traditional methods (Alsied, 2019; Colavizza et al., 2022; Crompton & Burke, 2023; Mahdi, 2022). Recent research has also examined the role of large language models and applications such as ChatGPT in providing conversational simulations, task scaffolding, and contextual language suggestions (Bond et al., 2024; Fan & Zhang, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). These collective findings suggest that technology innovation can expand practice opportunities while encouraging independent learning, provided it is integrated with a clear pedagogical design (Crompton et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2022).

One such innovation is the development of the ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook. This debate teaching material systematically integrates ChatGPT as a pedagogical tool to help students brainstorm, develop arguments, practice delivering speeches, evaluate argument structure, and obtain automated feedback. Effective coursebook design for oral skills must integrate clear communicative objectives, structured activities, performance models, and assessment tools. The literature on materials development emphasizes the importance of alignment between learning objectives, instructional materials, activities, and assessments (J. W. Creswell, 2014; Scarino & Anthony, 2012; Sunarko et al., 2021). Regarding technology integration, several studies recommend that digital coursebooks include interactive modules, guides for using digital tools, and independent activities that utilize audiovisual media and speech recognition applications (Alsied, 2019; Mahdi, 2022; Veselá, 2023). Research also suggests that when AI is included as a curricular component (rather than simply an add-on), the design should consider the learning flow: pre-debate (scaffolding), during practice (simulation/chatbot), and post-debate (reflection and revision) so that AI can function as an effective pedagogical partner (Guo et al., 2022; Ranalli, 2021; Richards & Richards, 2014).

Theoretically, this approach aligns with Celce-Murcia et al. (2010), who argue that the oral communication framework emphasizes the need for modeling, step-by-step practice, and support for communication strategies. This model also aligns with the communicative and task-based learning design principles proposed by Richards and Richards (2014), which state that learning materials should provide space for meaningful language use and opportunities to respond interactively to input.

Recent studies indicate that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly large language models such as ChatGPT, is accelerating in higher education and language learning. Numerous studies emphasize AI's significant potential as a pedagogical tool capable of delivering personalized learning, improving learning efficiency, and expanding access to language-based interactions. For example, Almogren et al. (2024), Alshammari and Alshammari (2024), and Bond et al. (2024) demonstrate that ChatGPT can improve learning quality through rapid feedback, in-depth explanations, and the ability to simulate authentic conversations. Research by Crompton and Burke (2023), Dempere et al. (2023), and Giglio and da Costa (2023) also demonstrates that ChatGPT supports student engagement, particularly when used as a scaffolding tool in solving complex language-based tasks. However, several other studies, such as Heilinger (2022), Mitchell and Krakauer (2023), and Strzelecki (2024), highlight the risks of technology dependency, potential model bias, and content accuracy issues, indicating the need for caution in its implementation.

Conversely, studies that focus more on integrating ChatGPT into language learning have found that ChatGPT consistently helps students produce more coherent text, improve language structure, and enhance metacognitive awareness (Babanoğlu et al., 2025; Castillo-Martínez et al., 2024; Chan & Hu, 2023). Similar findings are also seen in studies by Jiang (2022), Wang et al. (2024), and Yu et al. (2024), which highlight ChatGPT's effectiveness in providing intensive and adaptive language practice—something difficult to achieve with traditional methods. In the field of speaking learning, studies by Chu et al. (2022), George and Wooden (2023), and Sumakul and Hamied (2023) emphasize that AI models can help increase fluency, facilitate unlimited practice, and provide accurate performance modeling. However, several studies, including those by Wiwanitkit and Wiwanitkit (2024), Yongzhi (2024), and Yu et al. (2024), warn that using ChatGPT as an information source can raise validity concerns and undermine critical reasoning without appropriate supervision and instructional design.

Furthermore, studies in the Indonesian and Southeast Asian educational scope confirm that students' perceptions of AI are significantly influenced by digital readiness, institutional support, and the quality of the materials used. Studies by Chotimah (2022), Indrayadi et al. (2024), and Suryani et al. (2021) found that students tend to have positive perceptions of learning technology when the material presented is relevant, contextual, and facilitates active participation. Suciati (2020) and Suciati et al. (2021) specifically emphasize the importance of designing speaking materials that emphasize student-centered learning and intensive interaction, two aspects that can be strengthened through the application of AI. Agustin et al. (2012), Yanthi (2020), and Yuwita and Ambarwati (2023) emphasize that students' positive responses to learning materials and methods are crucial for the successful implementation of technology-based innovations. This is reinforced by McKay and Brown (2016), who emphasized that language materials must meet the principles of authenticity, contextual variety, and ease of access.

Finally, several more technical studies have examined the mechanisms underlying ChatGPT integration in language learning and higher-order thinking skills. Research by Annamalai et al. (2023), Celik (2023), Dizon et al. (2022), and Guo et al. (2022, 2023) found

that ChatGPT can be used to generate context-rich prompts, provide formative feedback, and simulate interlocutors in discussions or debates. Research by Liao and Lin (2016), Liu et al. (2022), and Ranalli (2021) demonstrated that the use of AI can enhance autonomous learning and strengthen students' accuracy in argumentative structure. However, several studies, including those by Pikhart (2021), Yang et al. (2022), and Zhai and Wibowo (2023), highlight that the use of AI must be guided by robust instructional design to prevent misconceptions, hallucinations, and passive learning. These complementary findings suggest that while ChatGPT has great potential to improve language and argumentation skills, its effectiveness is highly dependent on the quality of material design, integration patterns, and students' digital literacy levels.

Although previous research has explored the use of AI in English language learning, most studies have focused on writing, grammar correction, vocabulary learning, or general conversation. Research examining the integration of AI in debate learning remains very limited. More specifically, few studies have developed structured coursebook models that position ChatGPT not merely as a supplementary tool but as a core component of the debate-learning sequence. Furthermore, empirical studies on how students use ChatGPT in the argument-development process, how lecturers use the tool in debate teaching, and the pedagogical challenges that arise remain rare. There is a clear research gap in the literature, both in the realm of speaking material development and AI-based learning innovation (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010; Richards & Richards, 2014).

In light of this gap, this study seeks to develop and evaluate a ChatGPT-based debate coursebook for university-level Debate and Critical Thinking courses. Specifically, this research aims to achieve three objectives: (1) identifying the strengths of using a ChatGPT-based coursebook to support the development of students' argumentative skills, (2) identifying weaknesses or challenges that emerged during coursebook implementation, and (3) formulating recommendations or suggestions for improving pedagogical design and technology integration in AI-based debate materials. This research objective aligns with Creswell and Creswell's (2018) analytical approach, which emphasizes the need to understand user experiences, map learning issues, and generate findings-based recommendations.

The novelty of this research lies in three main aspects. First, this study is among the first to develop an integrated AI-based debate coursebook, rather than simply using ChatGPT as an additional tool. Second, this study offers an empirical analysis of how ChatGPT affects students' argument construction processes, interactional readiness, and debate performance, drawing on the oral communication and discourse development framework (Celce-Murcia et al., 2010). Third, this study provides practical contributions to curriculum development, material design, oral performance assessment, and lecturer training in the pedagogically responsible use of AI. For that reason, this study expands the literature on speaking learning, interactive teaching materials, and technology integration in debate teaching in higher education.

Method

This research employed a qualitative case study design to conduct an in-depth analysis of the use of the ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook to develop students' argumentation skills in a specific study program (J. Creswell, 2014; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The case study design was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore the real-world, complex interactions among students, lecturers, and debate materials integrated with AI technology.

This approach is suitable for understanding phenomena holistically, particularly regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and proposed alternatives that emerged during the learning process.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling, a deliberate selection based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Inclusive criteria included students enrolled in the Debate and Critical Thinking course, actively participating in debates using the ChatGPT-based module, and lecturers who are regularly involved in this course. Exclusive criteria included students or lecturers who were not involved in the practical use of the AI module or who were unwilling to participate in the research (J. Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). From a pool of 37 students, the researcher collected data from 9 participants: 7 students (6 debaters and 1 audience member) and 2 observers. Each participant was assigned a code to maintain anonymity, for example, S1-S7 for students and O1-O2 for observers.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were used to explore students' and lecturers' perceptions of the advantages, disadvantages, and suggestions for the ChatGPT-based debate module (Agustin et al., 2012; Suciati et al., 2021). Observations were conducted to record student-lecturer interactions during the debate activities, including how students used the AI module and lecturers' responses to its use (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Documentation included module materials, debate transcripts, lecturer notes, and relevant student work, which were used for data triangulation to increase the validity of the research results (J. Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

In this study, qualitative data from interviews, observations, and documentation were analyzed using thematic coding procedures. The coding process was conducted in three stages according to Miles et al. (2014): (1) data condensation, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing/verification. In the data condensation stage, interview transcripts were reduced and then open-coded to identify relevant units of meaning. Next, axial coding was conducted to group the codes into main themes, including strengths, challenges, and suggestions. This stage resulted in analysis tables that included themes, sub-themes/codes, frequencies of occurrence, and representative quotes. In the data display stage, themes were presented as thematic tables, observation tables, and supporting graphs to demonstrate patterns of data recurrence, phenomenon intensity, and consistency across sources. This presentation enabled researchers to see relationships among categories and verify their findings. Finally, in the conclusion-drawing stage, the themes were critically analyzed to address the research objectives regarding the strengths, weaknesses, and proposed alternatives in the use of ChatGPT-based coursebooks. Coding was used to organize the data, tables were used to display the patterns of findings systematically, and the results were used to draw evidence-based conclusions. Furthermore, researchers ensured data trustworthiness through member checking with participants, discussions with colleagues, and checking for consistency across data collection methods (J. Creswell, 2014; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Suciati, 2020).

Research ethics were a primary concern, particularly regarding the use of audio recordings of student debates and analysis of interactions with the AI module. Participants provided informed consent prior to data collection, with an explanation of the study's purpose, the right to refuse or discontinue participation, and how the data would be used. Data was recorded, anonymized, and securely stored to protect participant identities, in line with ethical standards for qualitative research in higher education (Agustin et al., 2012; Miles, Huberman,

& Saldaña, 2014). With this design and method, the study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of ChatGPT's effectiveness in supporting debate learning, identify the module's strengths and weaknesses, and generate strategic recommendations for the development of AI-based teaching materials in higher education.

Results

Integrating AI-assisted materials into debate pedagogy has opened new opportunities for enhancing students' argumentative competence, particularly in higher education, where critical reasoning and structured communication are essential. The use of a ChatGPT-based debate coursebook provides a flexible and interactive learning environment that helps students organize ideas, practice rebuttals, and refine their language output with real-time guidance. Before examining the specific strengths observed throughout its implementation, it is important to highlight how this integration serves not only as a technological enhancement but also as a pedagogical innovation that reshapes students' engagement and learning processes. Table 1 outlines the key strengths identified from students' use of the coursebook during the debate learning activities.

Table 1. *Thematic analysis table of the strengths of the ChatGPT-based debate coursebook*

Theme (Literature-Informed)	Sub-Themes / Codes	Frequency / Highlight Quotes	Supporting Literature
Systematic Structure and Step-by-Step Guidance	Clear organization of debate roles (PM, DPM, Member, Whip), examples, progressive exercises	5/9 respondents highlighted clarity and structured progression: S1 stated, "Everything was explained with examples and a step-by-step process. This made me more confident when presenting."	Suciati (2020; 2021); Goh (2007); Sandra Lee McKay and Brown (2016) – emphasize structured scaffolding in skill development
Integration of Technology and Independent Practice	ChatGPT-assisted exercises, self-paced learning, and immediate feedback	6/9 respondents noted ChatGPT support: S2 stated, "I can immediately practice using ChatGPT whenever I want... makes the learning process more flexible."	Anton (2021); Crompton and Burke (2023); Almogren et al. (2024) – AI tools enhance independent learning and engagement in L2 contexts
Relevance of Topics and Critical Thinking	Contemporary debate topics, social-cultural issues, relevance to everyday life	4/9 respondents: S3 stated, "During practice, I not only learn English but also learn to think critically about current social, cultural, and political issues."	S. Chen (2021); Brandt (2020); Yulia (2017) – meaningful and contextually relevant topics foster critical thinking and argumentation
Support for Language and Argumentation Skills	Vocabulary, formal expressions, pronunciation exercises	5/9 respondents: S5 stated, "Includes ready-made expressions that can be applied directly to debates."	Thornbury (2005); Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016); Purwati (2019) – structured linguistic support improves communicative competence in debate

Inclusivity and Accessibility for Diverse Students	Gradual exercises, accommodates beginners and varied English proficiency	3/9 respondents: S6 stated, "All students can participate at their own pace... inclusive learning experience."	Indrayadi et al. (2024); L.-C. Lin (2016); Suryani et al. (2021) – differentiated instruction promotes participation across heterogeneous learners
Engagement and Motivation Enhancement	Interactive activities, stimulating ideas, boosts confidence	4/9 respondents: S7 stated, "Activities in the book are quite interactive. Students look more engaged in the discussion process."	Almogren et al. (2024); Anton (2021); Sandra Lee McKay and Brown (2016) – engagement and motivation correlate with skill acquisition and performance in argumentative tasks

Interview analysis revealed that the majority of respondents considered this coursebook superior for its systematic, easy-to-follow presentation, particularly in explaining debate roles such as Prime Minister (PM), Deputy Prime Minister (DPM), Member, and Whip. Five of the nine respondents emphasized that the examples, argument models, and step-by-step exercises made them more confident in presenting their arguments. They felt that the coherent explanations helped them clearly understand the different roles and the flow of debate.

Furthermore, the integration of ChatGPT technology was a key strength highlighted by six of the nine respondents. They stated that the AI-based self-paced exercises allowed for more flexible practice whenever needed. The use of ChatGPT was considered to help expedite the practice process, provide alternative feedback, and expand opportunities for practice outside of class, especially in large classes with limited practice time. Regarding the content, four respondents highlighted that the debate topics provided were relevant to social and cultural issues close to their lives. This not only increased learning engagement but also helped them practice critical thinking skills as they developed arguments. They considered topical issues to make the debate sessions feel more meaningful and relevant.

Another aspect considered strong was the support for language development and argumentation, particularly through the provision of debate-specific vocabulary, formal expressions, and pronunciation exercises. This finding was echoed by five respondents, who felt that this linguistic support helped them convey their ideas more clearly, politely, and academically. They considered this feature very helpful, especially for students with developing language skills. Moreover, three respondents emphasized that the coursebook was inclusive and accessible to students with diverse language backgrounds. The step-by-step exercises and activities, which could be completed at their own pace, allowed novice students to continue participating in debate lessons. This experience provided a sense of security, especially for students who had never participated in a debate competition before. Finally, four respondents stated that the coursebook increased engagement and motivation. The interactive activities, clear practice flow, and opportunities for individual and group practice made them more active in discussions. They felt more encouraged to express their opinions and participate in each debate session.

To complement the qualitative insights gained from interviews, classroom observations were conducted across five meetings to capture how the debate activities and the use of the ChatGPT-based coursebook unfolded in real instructional settings. These observations focused on key aspects of the learning process, including student performance,

engagement, language use, and the lecturer's role. The summary in Table 2 highlights the strengths consistently observed during the implementation, providing a clearer picture of how the coursebook supported students' argumentative development in practice. The following table presents the descriptive strengths observation results in a concise format.

Table 2. *Observation-based strengths summary table*

Observation Focus	Frequency (Yes/5 Meetings)	Descriptive Strength
Learning Objectives	5	Lecturer consistently explained session goals clearly
AI Tool Usage	4	Students actively used ChatGPT for argument building
Role Performance	5	Students correctly played PM, DPM, Member, Whip
Critical Thinking	4	Students showed logical reasoning and structured arguments
Student Engagement	5	High participation in peer discussion and debate activities

Observations during the five meetings showed that the lecturer consistently communicated learning objectives clearly, ensuring students understood the direction of the debate activities in each session. ChatGPT was also actively used, though not in all meetings, particularly to help students develop arguments. All students were able to correctly execute debate roles such as Prime Minister, Deputy, Member, and Whip. Critical thinking skills were quite strong, demonstrated through logical reasoning and structured argumentation. Furthermore, student engagement was very high, as demonstrated by active participation in peer discussions and in-class debates.

The Challenges in Using ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook for Fostering University Students' Argumentative Skills

While the implementation of the ChatGPT-based debate coursebook demonstrated several notable strengths, the observation and interview data also revealed several challenges that arose during its use. These challenges reflect not only the limitations of integrating AI tools into debate instruction but also the varying levels of student readiness, digital literacy, and language proficiency. Understanding these obstacles is essential for refining the coursebook and ensuring it more effectively supports students' argumentative development. The following table summarizes the key challenges identified throughout the learning process.

Table 3. *Thematic analysis table of the challenges of the ChatGPT-based debate coursebook*

Theme (Literature-Informed)	Sub-Themes / Codes	Frequency / Highlight Quotes	Supporting Literature
Time and Implementation Constraints	Limited class time / Overwhelmed schedule	4 (S1, S5, S7, O1) "Especially with the large number of students, I feel like I haven't had enough time for hands-on practice." (S1)	McKay and Brown (2016); Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016); Indrayadi et al. (2024)
Difficulty Understanding Debate Format	Complexity of APD structure / Need for simpler explanations	2 (S2, S4) "I found it quite difficult to understand the terms and structure of the Australasian Parliamentary Debate, especially at the beginning." (S2)	Suciati (2021); Thornbury (2005); Celce-Murcia et al. (2010)
Limited Feedback / Guidance	Lack of live or context-specific feedback from AI or lecturer	3 (S3, S6, S5) "Even though I can ask ChatGPT, sometimes I'm not sure the assessment because not all of my questions are answered." (S3)	Almogren et al. (2024); Alshammari and Alshammari (2024); Anton (2021)
Language and Proficiency Challenges	Formal / complex language, beginners struggle	2 (S4, S5) "Sometimes the language structure is too formal and complex for me as a beginner."	Goh (2007); Indrayadi et al. (2024); Suryani et al. (2021)
Student Engagement / Participation Issues	Unequal participation, reliance on peers	2 (S5, O2) "Some students tend to copy idea without developing their understanding." (S4)	McKay and Brown (2016); Sayogie and Adbaka (2022); Purwati (2019)
Technology / AI Integration Challenges	Adaptation to ChatGPT, uneven tech skills, internet issues	3 (O1, O2, S3) "Some students still have difficulty operating ChatGPT or don't yet understand how to utilize its AI features to their full potential." (O2)	Crompton and Burke (2023); Bhullar (2024); Bond et al. (2024)
Critical Thinking Development	Overreliance on AI may reduce originality / critical thinking	2 (O1, O2) "students appear to rely too heavily on ChatGPT's answers, resulting in a decline in the originality of their arguments." (O2)	Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016); Alshumaimeri and Alshememry (2024); Anton (2021)

The findings revealed several key challenges in implementing ChatGPT-based debate learning. Time constraints were the most common obstacle, as the large number of students meant that practical exercises were not always optimal. Some students also struggled to grasp the complex structure of the Australasian Parliamentary Debate, especially in the initial stages. Another challenge was the lack of direct, context-specific feedback from both the AI and the lecturer, leading some students to doubt the quality of their responses. Regarding language, some students felt the language structure was too formal or difficult, making it less suitable for their initial abilities. Participation issues also arose when some students copied their peers' ideas without developing their own understanding. Furthermore, not all students were accustomed to using ChatGPT effectively, and this was compounded by technical challenges, including unstable internet connections. Finally, there was a tendency toward overreliance on AI responses, which could reduce authenticity and critical thinking when constructing arguments.

Classroom observations also revealed several challenges that appeared during the implementation of the debate activities and the use of the ChatGPT-based coursebook. The summary below outlines the key issues observed across the five meetings.

Table 4. *Observation-based challenges summary table*

Observation Focus	Frequency (Yes/5 Meetings)	Descriptive Challenges
Learning Objectives	5	Although learning goals were clearly explained, some students still needed more time to connect these objectives with actual debate practice fully.
Debate Format Application	5	A few students showed confusion regarding technical aspects, such as speaking time and the flow of argument presentation.
Role Performance	5	Even though roles were performed accurately, some students relied on reading rather than delivering arguments more spontaneously.
Rebuttal and Clash	4	Not all students were able to produce strong rebuttals; some repeated points rather than creating a sharp clash.
AI Tool Usage	4	Several students depended too heavily on ChatGPT, resulting in lower confidence when required to speak without AI support.
Student Engagement	5	Despite high engagement, some students tended to dominate while others remained passive and followed their peers.
Language Fluency	4	A number of students still struggled with spontaneous fluency, especially during impromptu rebuttal sessions.
Pronunciation Support	4	Although AI tools helped, students continued to face challenges in pronouncing debate-related or academic vocabulary accurately.
Lecturer's Role	5	Limited class time made it difficult for the lecturer to provide in-depth, individualized feedback.

Observation data showed that although the lecturer clearly explained the learning objectives, some students still needed more time to connect them to actual debate practice. When implementing the Australasian Parliamentary Debate (APD) format, some students remained confused about technical aspects such as speaking time allocation and the flow of argumentation. While students performed their roles quite accurately, some still relied on the reading text, resulting in less-than-optimal spontaneity in their arguments.

Rebuttal skills also presented a challenge, with some students tending to repeat points already made rather than building a more engaging clash. Regarding the use of AI, some students appeared overly reliant on ChatGPT, which led to a lack of confidence when asked to speak without AI assistance. Student engagement was generally high, but participation was uneven, with some students dominating the discussion while others were more passive.

Regarding language skills, some students still struggled to achieve spontaneous fluency, especially during impromptu rebuttals, and still faced challenges pronouncing academic vocabulary or debate terms. Finally, limited lecture time made it difficult for lecturers to provide in-depth, individual feedback, resulting in some students' improvement needs not being fully addressed.

The Proposed Alternatives on ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook for Fostering University Students' Argumentative Skills

Research data revealed five key student needs for the development of AI-based textbooks. First, students emphasized the importance of multimedia support, especially video tutorials and practice examples appropriate to their level. Second, they desired more structured study guides, such as practice schedules or step-by-step instructions for using textbooks and applications. Third, there was a need for support in developing speaking skills, including tips for dealing with nervousness, debate strategies, and final projects such as debate simulations. Fourth, the most dominant need was for guidance on the ethical and effective use of AI, including example prompts, usage limits, and independent practice before using ChatGPT. Finally, students desired clarity in assessment, such as rubrics or more concrete evaluation indicators. These findings underscore the need for textbooks that are multimodal, structured, ethical, and focused on skills development.

Table 5. *Thematic analysis table of the proposed alternatives for the ChatGPT-based debate coursebook*

Theme (Literature-Informed)	Sub-Themes / Codes	Frequency / Highlight Quotes	Supporting Literature
Enhancement of Multimedia Support	Video tutorials / examples for level-appropriate practice	3/9 – “I really appreciate the barcodes and video examples in this coursebook. They are very helpful. I hope there are some videos for level of second-semester students like us.” (S1); “Step-by-step video tutorials for using ChatGPT for speaking practice would be helpful.” (S2)	Almogren et al. (2024); Alshammari and Alshammari (2024); Bond et al. (2024)
Structured Learning Guidance	Practice schedule / step-by-step instructions	2/9 – “I think this coursebook is quite comprehensive, but I wish there is practice schedule. It will be so great.” (S3); “The lecturer must guide the students well in using that coursebook and application.” (S6)	Anton (2021); Atlas (2023); Sayogie and Adbaka (2022)
Skills Development and Pedagogical Support	Tips for handling nerves / debate strategies / final project	2/9 – “There should be a special section with tips and tricks to make debates run more smoothly, e.g., how to handle nerves.” (S4); “It would be more interesting if we have a final project, such as a recorded debate simulation.” (S5)	Bhullar (2024); Bearman et al (2023); McKay and Brown (2016)
Ethical and Effective AI Use	ChatGPT usage guide / ethical considerations / independent exercises	4/9 – “Include more detailed guidance on how to use ChatGPT ethically and effectively.”; “Exercises should encourage students to construct arguments without AI first, then check with ChatGPT.” (O1); “Examples of effective prompts or recommended usage limitations are needed.” (O2)	Anton (2021); Atlas (2023); Sayogie and Adbaka (2022)
Assessment and Feedback Clarity	Rubric / clear indicators for evaluating understanding	2/9 – “It would be beneficial to include a rubric or clear indicators to assess students’ understanding rather than just repeating ChatGPT outputs.” (O2)	Almogren et al. (2024); Bond et al. (2024); Sayogie and Adbaka (2022)

Observation data from five meetings indicated that most learning components were well-executed, but there was still room for improvement. Learning objectives were consistently explained, although a written or visual summary would have been more effective. The debate format ran smoothly in most sessions, but students occasionally needed reminders or guidance, such as a checklist, to ensure all roles were fulfilled accurately. In terms of role performance, students were generally able to carry out their tasks, although additional role-playing exercises outside of class could have boosted confidence.

Table 6. *Observation-based proposed alternatives summary table*

Observation Focus	Frequency (Yes/5 Meetings)	Descriptive Proposed Alternatives
Learning Objectives	5	Lecturer consistently explains goals; could add written summaries or visual aids to reinforce objectives for all students.
Debate Format Application	4	APD structure mostly followed; occasional reminders or checklists can help ensure all roles are performed accurately.
Role Performance	4	Students perform roles correctly most of the time; additional role-play exercises outside class may enhance confidence.
Rebuttal and Clash	3	Some gaps in effective rebuttal; suggested to provide model rebuttals and mini-practice sessions.
AI Tool Usage	4	ChatGPT used actively but unevenly; recommend a structured guide or tutorial on using AI features for practice.
Student Engagement	5	High engagement overall; could be improved by small-group rotations or peer mentoring to ensure all students participate.
Language Fluency	4	Fluency generally adequate; suggest pronunciation drills and targeted language support integrated in exercises.
Pronunciation Support	3	AI-assisted pronunciation helps some students; could add guided practice sessions or pronunciation videos.
Lecturer's Role	5	Lecturer facilitates well; proposed alternatives include more individualized feedback and monitoring AI use.
Critical Thinking	4	Logical argumentation observed; could provide scaffolding or structured argument templates to strengthen reasoning.

Regarding rebuttals and clashes, weaknesses remained, as not all students were able to provide effective rebuttals; providing rebuttal examples and short exercises could have helped improve this. The use of AI was quite active but not yet widespread, requiring structured guidance or tutorials for optimal utilization. Student engagement was very high across all meetings, but could be improved through small group rotation or peer mentoring.

In terms of language, fluency was relatively good but still needed support through pronunciation practice and more targeted language assistance. Pronunciation support via AI proved helpful for some students, though additional guided practice sessions or specialized videos could have improved outcomes. The lecturer's role was deemed highly effective and

could be strengthened by providing individual feedback and monitoring AI usage. Finally, critical thinking skills were evident through logical argumentation, but could be enhanced by providing scaffolding or more structured argumentation templates.

Discussion

The Strengths in Using ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook for Fostering University Students' Argumentative Skills

Research findings from both student and observer perspectives indicate that the use of the ChatGPT-assisted debate coursebook significantly improved students' debate and speaking skills. From the students' perspective, the coursebook's main strength lies in its systematic structure, which coherently presents explanations of debate roles (PM, DPM, Member, Whip), examples of arguments, and step-by-step exercises, helping them understand the flow of debate more clearly. This explanation relates to the scaffolding concept in language learning, as proposed by Goh (2007), Suciati (2020), and Suciati et al. (2021), who emphasize that structured material can improve confidence and speaking performance. Another strength is the integration of ChatGPT as a self-practice tool, which is considered to enhance flexibility and independence in learning, consistent with the findings of Almogren et al. (2024), Anton (2021), and Crompton and Burke (2023), who highlight the role of AI in providing rapid feedback and increasing language learner engagement. Debate topics relevant to social and cultural issues were also considered to foster students' analytical skills, supporting the arguments of Brandt (2020) and Chen (2021) that meaningful contexts can foster critical thinking.

These findings were reinforced by observational data, which showed that across five sessions, the instructor consistently communicated learning objectives clearly. At the same time, students demonstrated a strong understanding of debate structure and roles. The consistent mastery of debate roles-evident in the performance of the PM, DPM, Member, and Whip-indicates that the systematic design of the materials was effective in guiding students' understanding of argumentative flow, consistent with McKay and Brown (2016), the notion of the importance of structured learning in speaking. Furthermore, observers noted that students actively used ChatGPT to develop arguments, check vocabulary, and improve pronunciation, supporting the literature indicating that AI can enhance the quality of independent practice and encourage learners to become more autonomous. The very high engagement in the AI-based group discussions and exercises suggests that the interactivity of the materials and technological support can increase motivation, aligning with the findings of Almogren et al. (2024) and Anton (2021). Furthermore, the development of critical thinking skills, as evidenced by rebuttals and argumentation, demonstrated that students not only understood the debate format but also processed information logically, supporting the views of Chen (2021) and Yulia (2017) regarding the role of debate in improving analytical skills.

In conclusion, the synthesis of student and observer findings indicates that the ChatGPT-assisted debate coursebook was effective in creating a structured, interactive, and relevant learning environment that supported the development of intellectual and linguistic skills. The combination of material scaffolding, AI-based support, and contextual topic design has been shown to strengthen students' debate performance in structure, argumentation, and participation.

The Challenges in Using ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook for Fostering University Students' Argumentative Skills

The research findings indicate that while the ChatGPT-based coursebook offers many advantages, both interview data and classroom observations revealed several challenges that require attention in its implementation. From the students' perspective, the main challenges relate to time constraints and implementation burden, particularly due to the large number of students, which means not all students receive adequate practice opportunities. This finding is consistent with Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) and McKay and Brown (2016), who explain that learning to speak requires a substantial time commitment for optimal practice. The complexity of the Australasian Parliamentary Debate (APD) format also presents a challenge, particularly for beginning students who struggle to understand the terminology and flow of the debate, as Thornbury (2005) emphasizes the need for additional scaffolding for complex speaking structures. Another challenge arises from limited feedback from both AI and lecturers, as ChatGPT is not always able to provide contextual evaluation, in line with the findings of Almogren et al. (2024) and Anton (2021) regarding the limited accuracy of AI feedback in performative contexts such as debates. Students also reported language difficulties, particularly with the formality of academic expressions, supporting Goh's (2007) accounts of the linguistic challenges faced by EFL learners. Furthermore, uneven participation and a tendency for some students to copy ideas without in-depth understanding were also evident, as noted by Purwati (2019) and Sayogie and Adbaka (2022) regarding heterogeneous classroom dynamics.

Observation findings corroborated the interview data. Although the learning objectives were clearly communicated, some students were still unable to connect them to actual debate practice. Observers also noted that technical confusion with the APD format persisted even though the debate roles had been correctly played, indicating that structural understanding still needed to be deepened. In terms of performance, students still appeared to rely on the text rather than present arguments spontaneously, which is consistent with students' reports of language difficulties and limited feedback. Another critical challenge is overreliance on ChatGPT, which leads to low confidence when speaking without AI assistance. This challenge is the same as the concerns raised by Alshumaimeri and Alshememry (2024) and Anton (2021) regarding the risk of diminishing originality and critical thinking skills if AI is used without control. Other aspects, such as the dominance of some students in discussions, spontaneous fluency issues, and challenges with academic pronunciation, also emerged in observations, corroborating previous findings that heterogeneity in student ability and readiness affects the quality of interactions. Even the role of lecturers is constrained by time constraints, resulting in not all students receiving in-depth individual feedback.

The integration of student and observer data indicates that the main challenges in using ChatGPT-based debate coursebooks include time constraints, the complexity of the PPE format, variations in language proficiency, participation gaps, over-reliance on AI, and limited feedback. These findings are not only consistent with the literature but also provide clear direction for design and implementation improvements during the product revision phase of R&D research.

The Proposed Alternatives on ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook for Fostering University Students' Argumentative Skills

Research findings regarding proposed improvements indicate that both students and observers emphasized the need for enhanced multimodality, clearer learning structures, and improved pedagogical support to optimize the use of the ChatGPT-based debate coursebook. From the students' perspective, the most prominent alternative was the need for multimedia support, such as example videos, tutorials on using ChatGPT, and debate models appropriate for second-semester students. This suggestion aligns with the findings of Almogren et al. (2024) and Bond et al. (2024), which show that multimodal elements, including videos and interactive demonstrations, can improve comprehension and engagement in AI-based learning. Students also emphasized the need for more structured learning guides, such as practice schedules and step-by-step instructions, which is reinforced by the literature from Anton (2021) and Atlas (2023), which indicates that technology-based learning requires targeted scaffolding to maximize its effectiveness. Furthermore, students desired more explicit skills support, including strategies for coping with nervousness, debate tips, and a final project consisting of a recorded debate simulation, which is consistent with the findings of Bearman et al. (2023) and McKay and Brown (2016) on the importance of performative practice and reflection in developing speaking competence.

The most important suggestion from students was the need for guidelines for the ethical and effective use of ChatGPT, including example prompts, usage limitations, and exercises that encourage students to construct arguments independently before validating them with AI. This fully aligns with the concerns in the literature by Anton (2021) and Sayogie and Adbaka (2022) regarding the risks of AI dependency and the importance of ethical literacy in technology-based learning. Furthermore, students proposed clearer assessment rubrics and indicators that align with Bond et al. (2024) and the recommendation that AI-assisted materials require a transparent evaluation system to avoid assessments that mimic AI output.

Meanwhile, observation data strengthened and broadened students' perspectives by providing practical suggestions based on class performance. Observers noted that although learning objectives were always well-explained, providing written or visual summaries could aid student retention. In implementing the debate format, checklists or technical reminders were deemed essential because some students still erred in the flow and timing of the APD, in line with the principle of structural scaffolding by Thornbury (2005). At the performance level, the observer suggested additional role-play exercises outside of class, as well as providing rebuttal models and mini-sessions to improve the quality of the clashes. This is consistent with the findings of Bearman et al. (2023), which showed that focused practice improves argumentative performance.

Furthermore, language skills remained a concern, so the observer recommended fluency and pronunciation drills, as well as additional videos to articulate debate terms. This is consistent with the literature of Goh (2007), who emphasizes repeated practice for fluency, and regarding the need for phonological support for early learners. In using ChatGPT, the observer noted variations in students' technical abilities and suggested structured guidance on AI features, reinforcing the student findings and the recommendation of Crompton and Burke (2023) that technical mastery is crucial for the success of AI-based learning. The observer also emphasized the need for strategies to ensure equitable participation, such as small-group rotation and peer mentoring, which has been supported by McKay and Brown (2016) in the context of collaborative classroom dynamics. Finally, the lecturer was deemed to have facilitated the course effectively. Still, observers suggested providing more

individualized feedback and monitoring AI use to ensure ethical and non-excessive practices. In general, the student and observer suggestions demonstrated a unified direction: the development of the ChatGPT-based debate coursebook during the revision phase should strengthen multimedia elements, learning structure, AI literacy, support for debate and language skills, and the evaluation system. Integrating these recommendations will create a more comprehensive, ethical, and responsive coursebook that better addresses the characteristics and needs of first-semester students.

Based on findings from students and observers, further development of the ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook needs to focus on several key strategies to make the material more effective, adaptable, and relevant to the needs of beginning learners. First, the development of multimodal content should be prioritized, particularly the provision of video tutorials, level-appropriate debate examples, and demonstrations of how to use ChatGPT for speaking practice. Literature shows that multimodal input improves conceptual understanding and learning engagement (Almogren et al., 2024; Bond et al., 2024). Second, more structured learning guides are needed, such as practice schedules, weekly roadmaps, and explicit steps for using AI-based applications and assignments. This learning structure has been shown to increase learning autonomy and reduce confusion in technology-based classrooms (Anton, 2021; Atlas, 2023). Third, because debate is a performative activity, it is important to include support for speaking skills, such as tips for managing nervousness, debate strategies, mini-rebuttals, and final projects such as recorded debate simulations. This approach aligns with recommendations in the literature emphasizing performance-based learning and reflection (Bhullar, 2024; McKay & Brown, 2016). Fourth, the aspect most emphasized by students was the importance of ethical and effective use of AI. Therefore, textbooks should provide examples of prompts, usage limitations, guidelines for verifying information, and independent practice before using ChatGPT to check or refine. These guidelines are crucial for preventing over-reliance and maintaining original thinking (Anton, 2021; Sayogie & Adbaka, 2022). Fifth, both students and observers assessed the need for clarity in assessment, including the addition of rubrics, achievement indicators, and performance examples to each unit. This way, students have clear benchmarks and do not rely solely on ChatGPT output (Bond et al., 2024).

Furthermore, observers also highlighted the need to strengthen engagement and ensure equitable participation through group rotation, peer mentoring, and enriched role-play and rebuttal exercises. Skills such as fluency, pronunciation, and logical reasoning can be improved through guided drills, pronunciation videos, and scaffolding argument templates. In general, this recommendation emphasizes that the development of AI-based textbooks must not only integrate technology but also provide pedagogical scaffolding, clear instructions, and a balance between independent practice and lecturer supervision. By integrating these aspects, the ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook has the potential to become a more comprehensive and ethical learning resource, capable of supporting the holistic development of students' debate competencies.

Conclusion

This research aims to develop and evaluate a ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook in the Debate and Critical Thinking course for second-semester students. Based on data from students, observers, and field observations, three main conclusions were drawn to address the research problem. First, this research indicates that students' needs in developing AI-based debate materials include multimodal, structured materials that provide clear pedagogical support. Students require sample debate videos, tutorials on using ChatGPT,

practice schedules, speaking tips, and guidance on the ethics and effectiveness of AI use. These findings emphasize that the integration of AI in debate learning must be accompanied by pedagogical scaffolding to ensure the technology truly supports the learning process. Second, the implementation of the ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook in class demonstrated that this material effectively increased student engagement, supported independent speaking practice, and enriched their understanding of the structure of the Australasian Parliamentary Debate. However, several challenges emerged, including limited class time, difficulty understanding the debate format, reliance on ChatGPT, and varying levels of technological proficiency among students. Field observations also indicated that despite high engagement, there were still disparities in participation and difficulties in rebuttal, spontaneous fluency, and pronunciation accuracy. Third, this study identified several alternative improvements proposed by students and observers, including the addition of level-appropriate videos, step-by-step guides, specific skill exercises (e.g., rebuttal and debate strategy), clearer assessment rubrics, and ethical guidelines and strategies for using ChatGPT. Furthermore, mechanisms are needed to increase equitable participation, provide individual support from lecturers, and examine the potential decline in originality due to reliance on AI.

From the lecturers' perspective, the use of ChatGPT in English debate instruction has been particularly effective in addressing the challenges of teaching large classes with varying levels of ability. Lecturers noted that prior to ChatGPT's implementation, limited lecture time often prevented students from providing adequate practice and feedback. ChatGPT provided students with opportunities to practice independently outside of class, allowing for more face-to-face time to focus on deepening debate strategies, clarifying concepts, and evaluating performance. Lecturers also observed that students were better prepared for debate sessions because they had previously simulated argumentation with ChatGPT. This finding aligns with scaffolding theory from a sociocultural perspective, which emphasizes the importance of learning support to help students achieve higher levels of competence (Vygotsky, 1978). Furthermore, lecturers assessed that ChatGPT served as a consistent practice partner, providing examples of arguments, rebuttals, and case development in the Australasian Parliamentary Debate format, ultimately helping students understand debate regulations that were previously unfamiliar to most participants. However, the lecturers also emphasized that ChatGPT cannot completely replace teachers' roles, as guidance is still needed to verify information accuracy, contextualize arguments with local issues, and foster students' critical thinking and originality. Therefore, lecturers view ChatGPT as an effective pedagogical support tool when used in an integrated manner, with adequate mentoring and academic reflection, rather than as a substitute for instructor-led learning.

In summary, this study demonstrates that using ChatGPT to develop debate materials can increase access to practice, expand practice opportunities, and strengthen student engagement, especially in large classes and with limited practice time. However, its effectiveness depends heavily on sound pedagogical design, ethical guidelines, and the controlled use of AI to continue encouraging critical thinking and student creativity. Based on the research findings, several suggestions can be put forward for further development. The ChatGPT-Based Debate Coursebook needs to strengthen its multimodal aspects by adding videos, tutorials on using ChatGPT, debate simulations, and step-by-step guides to make it easier for students to follow the learning process. Lecturers are encouraged to provide more intensive scaffolding, particularly to help students understand the structure of the APD, strengthen rebuttals, fluency, and pronunciation, and monitor the use of AI to prevent a reduction in students' original thinking. Students are also advised to use ChatGPT as a support, rather than a primary source, by first practicing without AI before validating

arguments. Furthermore, future researchers can explore the use of more sophisticated AI features, such as automated assessment and real-time feedback, and conduct comparative studies to assess the coursebook's effectiveness across different competency levels. By implementing these suggestions, it is hoped that the integration of AI in debate learning will become more effective and sustainable.

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