

**DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH DEBATES IN
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL CLASSES.**

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Annotation. *This article explores practical ways to develop speaking skills through discussion in middle-level classrooms. It outlines the structured format of the debate, including the formal opening statement, rebuttals, and the significance of the closing statement.*

Keywords: *debates, speaking skills, students, communication, benefits, critical thinking, enhancing knowledge, strategies.*

Useful communication skills, especially the ability to convey oneself distinctly and persuasively, are vital in today's interconnected world. Debates provide an excellent platform for honing speaking skills, and they can be particularly profitable for intermediate level students. Engaging in discussions helps students enhance their critical thinking, research abilities, organization, and delivery of arguments. This article explores the advantages of integrating debates into intermediate level classes and provides practical strategies for developing speaking capabilities through disputations.

Benefits of Debates for Intermediate Level Students:

1. **Critical Thinking Skills:** Debates require students to analyze and assess information from multiple viewpoints. By engaging in argumentations, students learn to think critically, evaluate evidence, and form logical arguments. They develop the ability to question presumptions and consider alternative perspectives, increasing their overall critical thinking skills.

2. **Research and Preparation:** Debates entail thorough research on the given topic. Intermediate level students can strengthen their research expertise by collecting relevant data, evaluating sources, and synthesizing key points. This process encourages students to delve deeper into the subject matter, broadening their knowledge base and fostering independent learning.

3. **Organization and Structure:** Debates demand careful organization and structure of arguments. Intermediate level students learn to outline their ideas, arrange evidence logically, and present coherent disagreement. These capacities



are invaluable for effective communication in diverse contexts, such as academic writing or public speaking.

4. **Speaking Confidence:** Engaging in debates assists students overcome the fear of public speaking. By way of regular practice, students gain confidence in expressing their opinions and ideas in front of an audience. They learn to express their thoughts in a clear, concise, and persuasive manner, fostering self-assurance and effective communication abilities.

“Debate in the foreign language classroom enables language to become a vehicle for communicating ideas for meaningful purposes rather than functioning solely as an object of study (Coyle, Hood, and Marsh 2010; van Lier 2005; Long 2007; Stryker and Leaver 1997; MLA Ad Hoc Committee 2007; Shaw 1997; Hedegaard 2005). Because competing positions evolve during the course of a debate, learners must pay careful attention to ongoing exchanges. In such a meaning-focused task, participants "are not simply displaying their control of particular patterns or structures or phrases, which would be a linguistic objective" (Willis 2004, 13). Rather, they are constructing meaning for a real purpose in order to learn the language. Likewise, debate forces learners to “push their linguistic competence to its limit as they attempt to express their ideas" (Swain 1993, 162) and negotiate meaning. Research conducted by J. Massie (2005) and Ulla Connor (1987) identifies the task of argumentation and debate as a valuable strategy for improving both L2 oral and written proficiency, particularly at the Advanced level”. 1

Strategies for Advancing Speaking Skills Via Debates

1. **Topic Selection:** Choose debate topics that are relevant, thought-provoking, and aligned with students’ interests and curriculum. Ensure the topics allow for a balance of different perspectives, encouraging lively discussions and diverse viewpoints.

2. **Pre-debate Preparation:** Allocate sufficient time for students to research and prepare their arguments. Encourage them to gather evidence, analyze opposing views, and develop logical reasoning to support their stance. Emphasize the importance of credible sources and critical evaluation of information.

3. **Structured Format:** Introduce a structured format for debates, such as a formal opening statement, rebuttals, and a concluding statement. Teach students how to construct a strong thesis statement, provide supporting evidence, and counter opposing arguments. Emphasize the importance of respectful and constructive dialogue.



4. Practice Sessions: Conduct practice debates in the classroom to provide students with opportunities to refine their speaking skills. Assign roles, such as speakers, moderators, and judges, to simulate a real debate environment. Encourage students to actively listen and respond to their peers, fostering effective communication and critical thinking skills.

5. Feedback and Evaluation: Provide constructive feedback to students after each debate. Highlight their strengths and areas for improvement, focusing on clarity of expression, organization, and persuasive techniques. Encourage self-reflection and peer feedback to promote continuous growth and development.

6. Reflection and Discussion: After each debate, facilitate a reflective discussion where students can share their experiences, challenges, and lessons learned. Encourage them to identify strategies that worked well and areas they need to focus on for improvement.

Conclusion: Incorporating debates into intermediate level classes offers numerous benefits for developing students' speaking skills. By engaging in debates, students enhance their critical thinking abilities, research skills, organization, and delivery of arguments. These skills are vital for effective communication and can be applied in academic, professional, and personal contexts. Through structured practice, feedback, and reflection, students can refine their speaking skills and become confident, articulate communicators. Debates provide an engaging and interactive platform for students to develop their speaking abilities and foster a deeper understanding of various topics.

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