



Debate as an effective pedagogical tool

Dr. Abid el Majidi

Click <here> (right mouse button) and choose 'Format background'.
Choose 'File', add photo and click 'Close'.



Who am I?

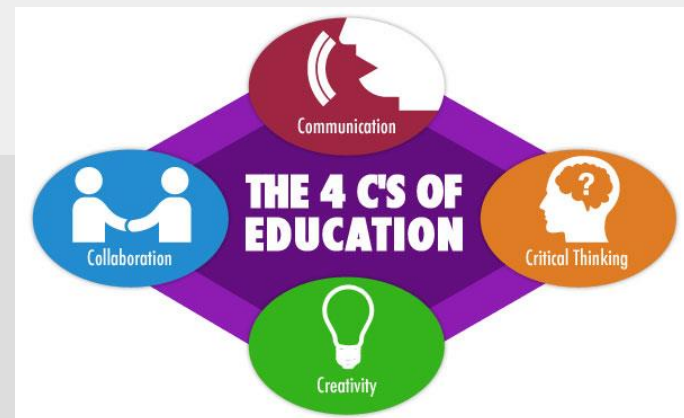
- ▶ A teacher of English at a secondary school.
- ▶ PhD about the potential of debate for speaking, writing and argumentation skills.

Personal experience with debate



Benefits of debate

- Public speaking
- Potential to help students develop 21st skills (Kennedy 2009)
- Etc.





Positive effects of debating in first language

Positive effect on debaters' reading, speaking and writing skills (e.g. Mezuk, Bondarenko, Smith & Tucker 2011; Littlefield 2001).

- Debaters (N = 9145, over 10-year period) outperformed non-debaters gaining on average more than 1 point on different skills.
- ▶ Academic attainment: debaters are more successful in high schools.
 - 90% of debating students graduated high school as compared to 75% of comparable students.



Can debate also improve language proficiency in foreign languages?

- ▶ Very limited research in second/foreign language contexts.
- ▶ But nevertheless promising (e.g., Lustigova's 2011).
- ▶ Most research is anecdotal.



Theoretical considerations behind debate as an effective L2 pedagogy

- ▶ Debates can generate a great deal of output (see Swain's output hypothesis, 1993).
- ▶ In-class debates involve rich and multilevel interactions that facilitate noticing gaps. These interactions can also benefit writing (Cho, 2017) (Long's interaction hypothesis, 1996).
- ▶ The presence of a real audience stimulates the development of writing skills of EFL learners (e.g., Turgut, 2009).

Theoretical considerations behind debate as L2 writing pedagogy

- ▶ Students hold a positive attitude towards debating as a pedagogical tool (e.g., el Majidi, de Graaff & Janssen, 2015, 2018).
- ▶ Etc...





Debate in class, how?

Development of debate task design through educational design research

- ▶ Three stages:
 - ▶ Pre-debate stage: preparation
 - ▶ During-debate stage: actual debates
 - ▶ Post-debate stage: feedback

Prior to debate

Selecting topics

- ▶ Assigning students to positive and negative teams
- ▶ Explain the debate format(s)

Pre-debate stage (Preparation)

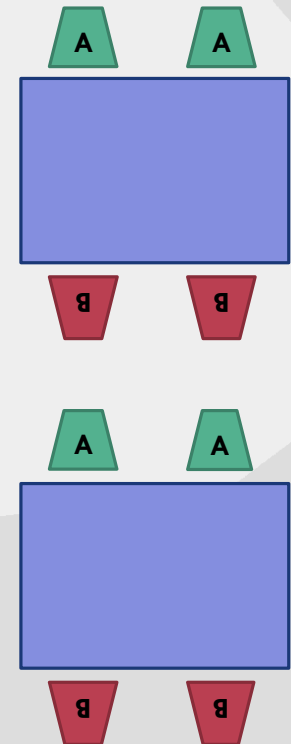
- ▶ Reading articles and summarizing them
- ▶ Writing cases
- ▶ Providing debaters with a list of common cohesive devices to use them in their cases





2/2 Debate format

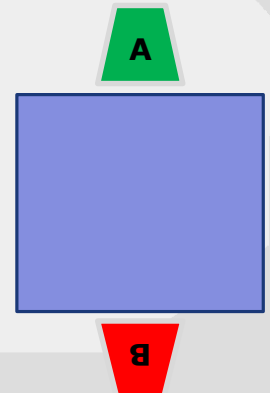
Constructive speech	
Team A: First speaker: Affirmative constructive speech	1 minute
Team B: First speaker: Negative constructive speech	1 minute
Team A: Second speaker: Affirmative constructive speech	1 minute
Team B: Second speaker: Negative constructive speech	1 minute
Preparation	10 minutes
Rebuttal	
Team A: Both speakers: Affirmative rebuttal	2 minutes
Team B: Both speakers: Negative rebuttal	2 minutes
Clash	5 minutes





1/1 debate format

Constructive speech	
First speaker: Affirmative constructive speech	1 minute
Second speaker: Negative constructive speech	1 minute
Preparation	5 minutes
Rebuttal	
First speaker: Rebuttal	1 minute
Second speaker: Rebuttal	1 minute
Clash	5 minutes



Post-debate stage

- ▶ Provide feedback on constructive speeches.
- ▶ Instruct students to provide feedback on each other's constructive speeches.

Rubric for the assessment of debate performance

	1	2	3	4	5
Constructive speech					
Rebuttal/clash					
Reasoning					
Fluency					
Vocabulary/Variation					
Grammar					
Preparation (2x)					

Studies about the effects of debate pedagogy on speaking and writing

Debate-speaking effects study:

El Majidi, A., de Graaff, R., & Janssen, D. (in press). Debate as a pedagogical tool for developing speaking skills in second language education. *Language Teaching Research*

► Debate-writing effects study:

El Majidi, A., de Graaff, R., & Janssen, D. (2020). Debate as L2 pedagogy: The effects of debating on writing development in secondary education. *The Modern Language Journal*, 104(4), 804–821.



Participants

- ▶ 8 classes ($n = 146$) from 3 secondary schools, including 87 females and 59 males.
- ▶ The classes consisted of vwo 4 and havo 5 classes.

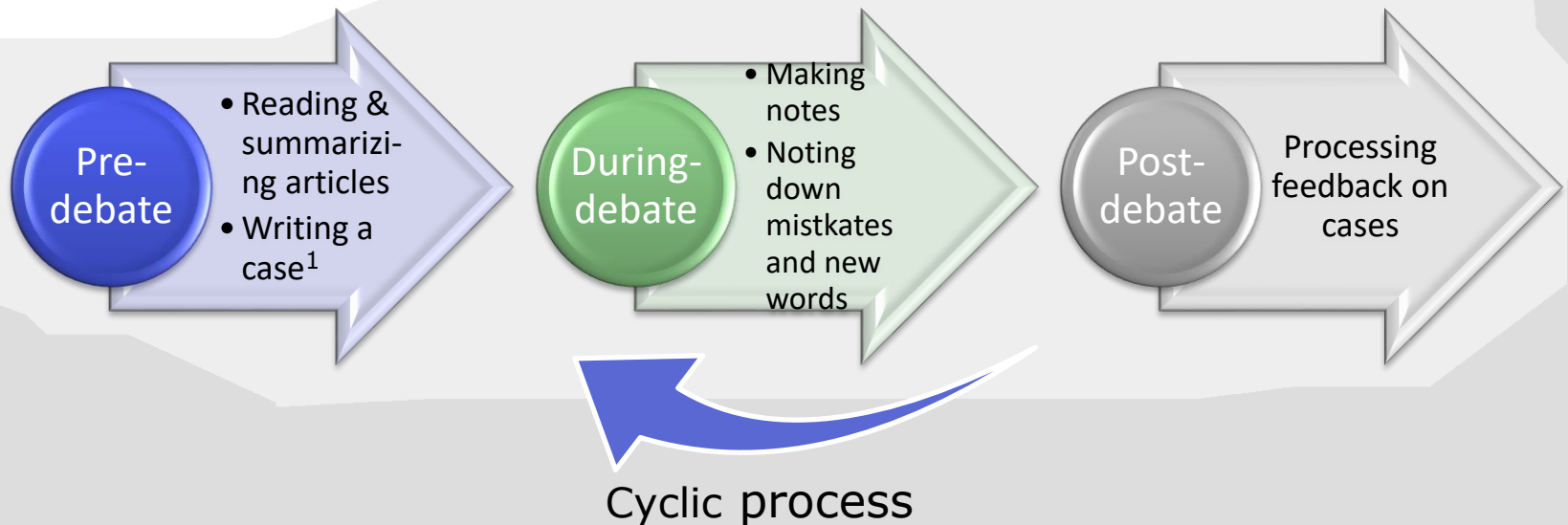


Design

- ▶ A pretest-posttest control group design.
- ▶ The intervention group participated in 10 structured debates (one per week), with each lasting approximately 50 minutes.
- ▶ During the debate session, the control group received typical instruction based on coursebooks.



Intervention



1. In debate, a case is "a cohesive set of [written] arguments [prepared beforehand] that justify the side of the topic that they have been assigned" (Snider & Schnurer, 2006, p. 26). Students draw on cases during debates.

Procedures for debate-speaking effects

To measure the effects of the debate intervention on speaking proficiency, we compared oral opinion tasks elicited during pre- and posttests.

- ▶ We selected accessible topics (e.g., smoking should be banned) that were randomly assigned to intervention and control students.
- ▶ Before performing the task, the students in both groups received seven minutes to pre-plan their performance, and there was no time limit during the performance.



Measures

Measures	Index
Fluency	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Speed fluency (inverse articulation rate)2. Mean length of pause3. Number of filled pauses4. Number of repetitions & number of repairs
Syntactic complexity	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. global complexity (number of words per T-unit, MLT)2. complexity by subordination (mean number of clauses per T-unit, C/T)3. clausal/phrasal complexity (mean length of clauses, MLC)
Lexical complexity	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. average word length2. word frequency3. measure of textual lexical diversity (MTLD)
Accuracy	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. error-free clauses (EFCs)2. lexical errors per 100 words3. syntactic errors per 100 words4. morphological errors per 100 words5. prepositional errors per 100 words
Cohesion	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. frame markers (e.g., firstly, secondly)2. code glosses markers (e.g., for instance, in other words)3. transition markers: (e.g., besides, although, because).4. conclusion markers: (e.g., in conclusion, all in all)5. markers diversity token: diversity of markers in terms of token6. markers diversity type: diversity of markers in terms of type

Results

Measures	Index	Intervention (<i>n</i> = 96)		Control (<i>n</i> = 51)	
		Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Quantity measures	Speech quantity	25.97	55.43	32.27	35.69
	Number of words	59.22	128.44	67.88	75.17
Fluency	Inverse articulation rate	0.224	0.217	0.230	0.232
	Number of filled pauses	0.21	0.18	0.23	0.23
	Mean length of pauses	0.63	0.60	0.61	0.59
	Number of repetitions	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.06
	Number of repairs	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.04
Syntactic complexity	Global complexity	13.83	13.40	12.80	13.98
	Subordination	1.22	1.19	1.09	1.20
	Length	6.31	6.54	6.19	6.49
Lexical	MTLD	52.44	60.18	55.70	55.96
Complexity	Word frequency	3.20	3.12	3.18	3.18
	Word length	4.13	4.27	4.21	4.32

Highlighted means reached statistical significance (Multilevel analysis)

Results

Measures	Index	Intervention (<i>n</i> = 96)		Control (<i>n</i> = 51)	
		Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Accuracy	Error-free clauses	0.70	0.79	0.76	0.75
	Lexical errors	0.92	0.51	0.65	0.88
	Syntactic errors	0.94	0.48	0.85	0.56
	Morphological errors	3.00	2.42	2.48	2.39
	Preposition errors	0.46	0.25	0.57	0.41
Cohesion	Transition markers	3.58	4.56	2.75	3.85
	Frame markers	0.20	1.24	0.25	0.31
	Gloss markers	0.16	0.54	0.22	0.24
	Conclusion markers	0	0.17	0	0
	Diversity type	1.29	2.28	1.22	1.36
	Diversity token	2.71	4.61	2.33	2.70

Highlighted means reached statistical significance (Multilevel analysis)

Procedures for debate-writing effects

To measure the effects of our debate intervention on writing proficiency, we compared two free opinion tasks (as pre- and posttests).

- ▶ We selected two topics (capital punishment and abortion).
- ▶ Before performing the opinion tasks, the students in both groups received 25-minute preparation time and a preselected article.
- ▶ After 25 minutes, we collected the articles and gave the students 15 minutes to write down as many arguments as possible in support of their standpoints.



Measures

Measures	Index
Fluency	1. Number of words produced in 15 minutes
Syntactic complexity	1. global complexity (number of words per T-unit, MLT) 2. complexity by subordination (mean number of clauses per T-unit, C/T) 3. clausal/phrasal complexity (mean length of clauses, MLC)
Lexical complexity	1. average word length 2. word frequency 3. measure of textual lexical diversity (MTLD)
Accuracy	1. error-free clauses (EFCs) 2. lexical errors per 100 words 3. syntactic errors per 100 words 4. morphological errors per 100 words 5. prepositional errors per 100 words
Cohesion	1. frame markers (e.g., firstly, secondly) 2. code glosses markers (e.g., for instance, in other words) 3. transition markers: (e.g., besides, although, because). 4. conclusion markers: (e.g., in conclusion, all in all) 5. markers diversity token: diversity of markers in terms of token 6. markers diversity type: diversity of markers in terms of type



Results

Measures	Index	Intervention (n = 95)		Control (n = 51)	
		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Fluency	Number of words	167.89	208.30	190.44	197.17
Syntactic complexity	MLT	13.33	13.58	14.22	13.76
	MLC	7.27	7.76	7.59	7.43
	C/T	1.85	1.76	1.88	1.85
Lexical complexity	MLTD	64.41	68.92	59.65	60.79
	Word frequency	3.16	3.13	3.15	3.15
	Word length	4.12	4.27	4.18	4.20
Accuracy	Error free clauses	0.66	0.75	0.69	0.72
	Lexical errors	1.65	0.87	1.36	1.21
	Syntactic errors	0.99	0.54	0.75	0.57
	Morphological errors	4.26	3.10	3.50	3.42
	Preposition errors	0.41	0.29	0.53	0.41
Cohesion	Transition markers	4.89	6.23	5.90	6.49
	Frame markers	0.71	1.91	1.10	0.65
	Gloss markers	0.52	0.66	0.53	0.55
	Conclusion markers	0.10	0.45	0.12	0.20
	Diversity type	1.80	2.67	1.98	1.88
	Diversity token	4.23	7.22	5.36	5.03

Highlighted means reached statistical significance (Multilevel analysis)



Discussion

In debate, learners write about purposeful content of relevance to them.

- ▶ The repetitive process of case writing (prior to each debate) created the opportunity for students to carry over what they gained from one debate to the next (in terms of language development).



Discussion

The debate environment stimulates the development of students' metacognitive awareness of processes that lead to language development.

- ▶ Learners' positive attitude toward debating, its competitive atmosphere, and the presence of a real audience (i.e., teacher and classmates and opponents) provide learners with extra stimuli to pay more attention to different dimensions of language use and content (argumentation).



THANK YOU FOR
LISTENING TO
OUR
PRESENTATION!

ANY
QUESTIONS



The link to the Phd thesis:

www.publicatie-online.nl/publications/abid-el-majidi/



Debate in vwo 4

- Let's watch the debate



References

Cho, H. (2017). Synchronous web-based collaborative writing: Factors mediating interaction among second-language writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 36, 37–51

El Majidi, A., de Graaff, R., & Janssen, D. (2015). Invest in what energizes students to learn: Investigating students' attitude towards debate in the foreign language classroom. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6, 924–932.

El Majidi, A., de Graaff, R., & Janssen, D. (2018). Students' perceived effect of in-class debates in second language learning. *The European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL*, 7, 35–57.

- ▶ El Majidi, A., Graaff, R. D., & Janssen, D. (2020). Debate as L2 Pedagogy: The Effects of Debating on Writing Development in Secondary Education. *The Modern Language Journal*, 104(4), 804–821.
- ▶ El Majidi, A., de Graaff, R., & Janssen, D. (in press). Debate as a pedagogical tool for developing speaking skills in second language education. *Language Teaching Research*
- ▶ Kennedy, R. (2009). The power of in-class debated. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 10 (3), 225–236.
- ▶ Littlefield, R. S. (2001). High school student perceptions of the efficacy of debate participation. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 38, 83–97.
- ▶ Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. Ritchie & T. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). New York: Academic Press.
- ▶ Lustigová, L. (2011). Speak Your Mind: Simplified Debates as a Learning Tool at University Level. *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science*, 4 (1), 18–30.
- ▶ Mezuk, B., Bondarenko, I., Smith, S., & Tucker, E. (2011). Impact of participating in a policy debate program on academic achievement: Evidence from the Chicago Urban Debate League. *Educational Research and Reviews*, 6(9), 622–635.
- ▶ Snider, A., & Schnurer, M. (2006). *Many sides: Debate across the curriculum*. New York: International Debate Education Association.
- ▶ Swain, M. (1993). The output hypothesis: Just speaking and writing aren't enough. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 50, 158–164.
- ▶ Turgut, Y. (2009). EFL learners' experience of online writing by PBWiki. In G. Siemens & C. Fulford (Eds.), *Proceedings of ED-MEDIA 2009–World Conference on Educational Multimedia, Hypermedia, & Telecommunications*.



Activity



**KEEP
CALM
AND
LET'S
DEBATE**