# DEBATING IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASS

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# Who am I?

- ▶ A teacher of English at a secondary school.

- ▶ PhD about the potential of debate for speaking, writing and argumentation skills.

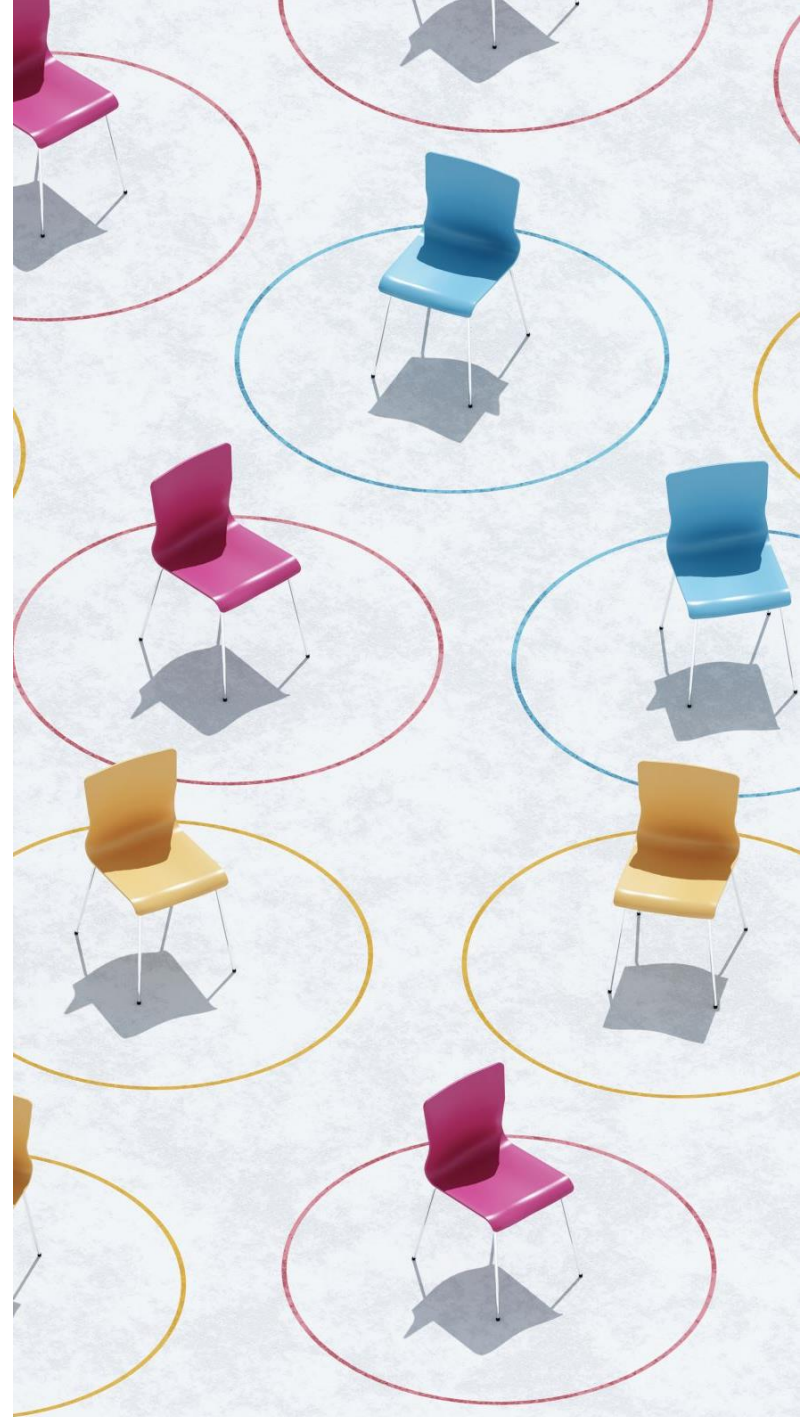# Personal experience with debate

# Benefits of debate

➢ Public speaking

➢ Potential to help students develop 21st skills (Kennedy 2009)

➢ Etc.

# 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

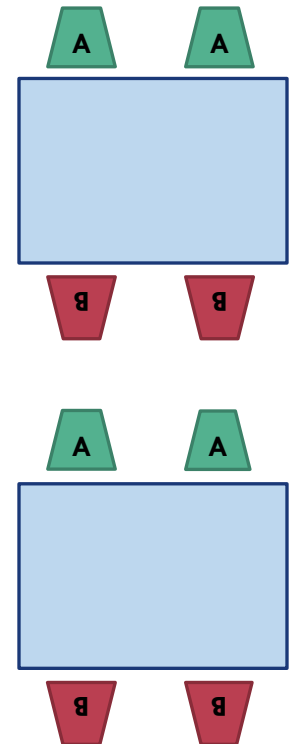| Constructive speech | |
|---|---|
| **Team A: First speaker: Affirmative constructive speech** | 1 minute |
| **Team B: First speaker: Negative constructive speech** | 1 minute |
| **Team A: Second speaker: Affirmative constructive speech** | 1 minute |
| **Team B: Second speaker: Negative constructive 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 |

A

B
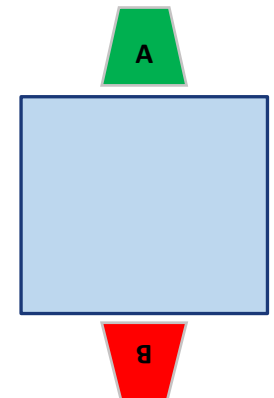
# Post-debate stage

▶ 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

- el Majidi, A., de Graaff, R., & Janssen, D. (2021). Debate as a pedagogical tool for developing speaking skills in second language education. *Language Teaching Research*, 13621688211050619.

# 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

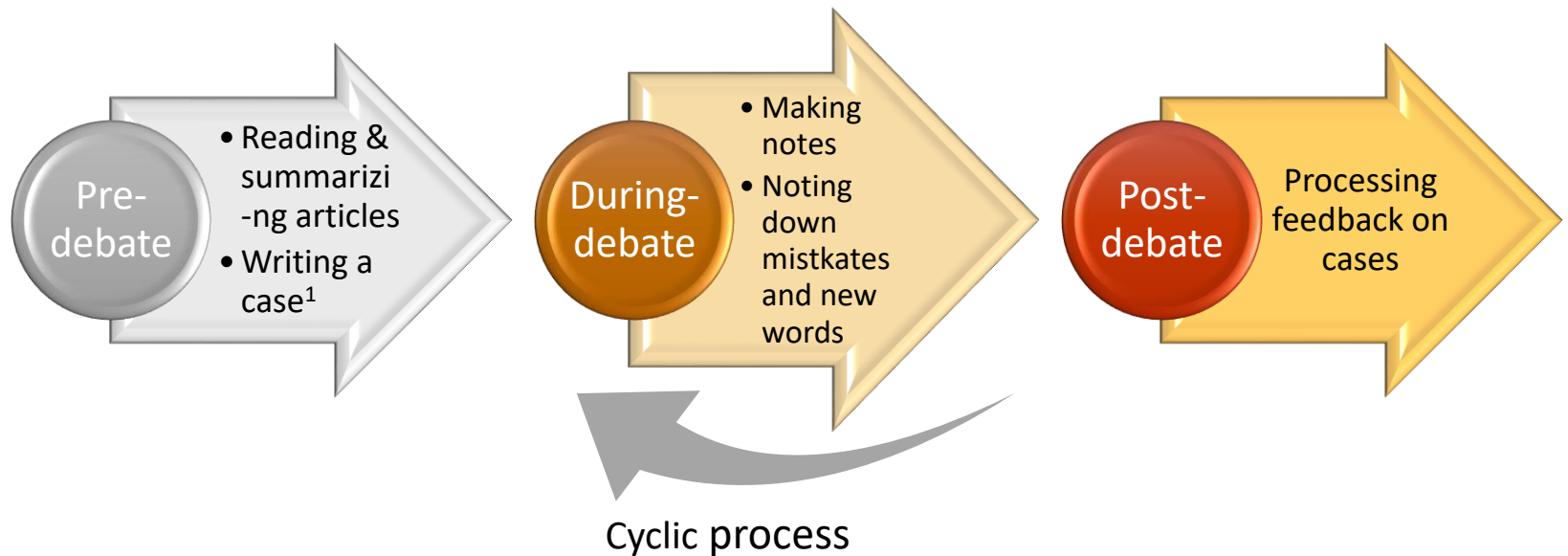A pretest-posttest control group design.

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

**Pre-debate**
- Reading & summarizi-ng articles
- Writing a case[1]

**During-debate**
- Making notes
- Noting down mistkates and new words

**Post-debate**
Processing feedback on cases

Cyclic process

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** | 1. Speed fluency (inverse articulation rate)<br>2. Mean length of pause<br>3. Number of filled pauses<br>4. Number of repetitions & number of repairs |
| **Syntactic complexity** | 1. global complexity (number of words per T-unit, MLT)<br>2. complexity by subordination (mean number of clauses per T-unit, C/T)<br>3. clausal/phrasal complexity (mean length of clauses, MLC) |
| **Lexical complexity** | 1. average word length<br>2. word frequency<br>3. measure of textual lexical diversity (MTLD) |
| **Accuracy** | 1. error-free clauses (EFCs)<br>2. lexical errors per 100 words<br>3. syntactic errors per 100 words<br>4. morphological errors per 100 words<br>5. prepositional errors per 100 words |
| **Cohesion** | 1. frame markers (e.g., firstly, secondly)<br>2. code glosses markers (e.g., for instance, in other words)<br>3. transition markers: (e.g., besides, although, because).<br>4. conclusion markers: (e.g., in conclusion, all in all)<br>5. markers diversity token: diversity of markers in terms of token<br>6. markers diversity type: diversity of markers in terms of type |

# Results

| Measures | Index | Intervention (*n* = 96) | | Control (*n* = 51) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Pretest | Posttest | Pretest | Posttest |
| Quantity | Speech quantity | 25.97 | 55.43 | 32.27 | 35.69 |
| measures | 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 | Global complexity | 13.83 | 13.40 | 12.80 | 13.98 |
| complexity | 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 (*n* = 96) | | Control (*n* = 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 |

# Why is debate 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).

# Why is debate an effective L2 pedagogy

▶ 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).

# Why is debate an effective L2 pedagogy?

▶ 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).

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# DEBATE IN VWO 4

Let's watch the debate

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# Activity