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Аннотация: The article deals with using debates in English language teaching. Advice is given for teachers how to use debate tasks in the classroom effectively. Steps of organizing debate activities are described.

Дополнительная информация:

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USING DEBATES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

A *debate* is a formal discussion of a resolution or proposal with arguments for and against. Teachers of foreign languages can use it in class as a game in which two opposing teams make speeches to support their arguments and disagree with those of the other team [3]. This technique is good for generating excitement and interest in a topic. In-class debates do not just teach public speaking skills; you also develop critical thinking; research skills and organisation and prioritisation of information. They also present an opportunity to have your students engage with the material they are studying in different ways, forming and analyzing both the opinions of others, and their own. Moreover, debate tasks strengthen listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills because students are using English in meaningful ways for specific purposes. Debate activities help students practice various language structures, including those for expressing agreement/disagreement, asking and answering questions, expressing opinions and reasons.

Before working on such assignments students should be given advice on debating with others. It can include the following points. 1. Avoid the use of *Never*. 2. Avoid the use of *Always*. 3. Refrain from saying *you* are wrong. 4. You can say *your* idea is mistaken. 5. Don't disagree with *obvious* truths. 6. Attack the *idea* not the person. 7. Use *many* rather than *most*. 8. Avoid *exaggeration*. 9. Use *some* rather than *many*. 10. The use of *often* allows for exceptions. 11. The use of *generally* allows for exceptions. 12. *Quote* sources and numbers. 13. If it is just an *opinion*, admit it. 14. Do not present *opinion* as facts. 15. *Smile* when disagreeing. 16. Stress the *positive*. 17. You do not need to *win* every battle to win the war. 18. *Concede* minor or trivial points. 19. Avoid *bickering*, *quarreling*, and *wrangling*. 20. Watch your tone of voice. 21. Don't win a debate and *lose* a friend. 22. Keep your perspective – you are just *debating* [4].

The following steps may be used when including a debate task in the classroom.

Step 1: Identify suitable topics. Topics may be generated by the students or the instructor but must have opposing viewpoints [2, p. 21]. You can introduce the issue to be debated as a question. For example, you could give the students these questions:

- *Is it better to work a lot and have more income, or to work less and have more vacation?*
- *Is it better to tell dying patients who have incurable diseases the truth about their condition or to encourage them to believe that they might recover?*
- *Is it good for a society to have capital punishment?*
- *Is the growth of international modern pop style music a good thing?*
- *Should parents limit the amount of time per day children watch television?*
- *Are advertisements totally untrustworthy?*
- *Should the government financially support sports teams for the Olympics* [5]*?*

The issue can be introduced in the form of a statement:

- *Children should provide room and board for their aging parents.*
- *Studying grammar is more important than practising conversation skills.*
- *Lawyers should make a higher salary than nurses.*
- *Dogs make better companions than cats.*
- *Smoking should be permitted in public places.*
- *Television is the leading cause of violence in today's society.*
- *Females are better students than males.*

You may wish to supply some background to the issue and some relevant vocabulary.

Step 2: Identify a motion (or motions). The motion is the specific wording of the topic for the debate and appears in the form of a statement that students can agree or disagree with. Once the motion is set, each student will be assigned to one side of the issue [2, p. 21]. Put students into

small groups (teams) of three or four students, and either assign or allow them to choose an affirmative or negative position on the topic [5, p. 116]. Offer a framework of responsibilities for the students by providing them with specific roles that change daily within their groups. Many times students are unaware of the individual tasks that are necessary to complete an activity successfully as a group. Here are four examples of possible roles for students to perform in their groups:

1. *Planner.* Before actually beginning an activity, this student can sketch out the ideas of the group members to ensure that all students' ideas are expressed and seen visually, regardless of language abilities.

2. *Translator.* Armed with an English-English dictionary, this student has the responsibility of looking up words that are troublesome for all of the members of the group. The translator role helps all students learn academic vocabulary and build their competency for using reference materials.

3. *Group Guide.* This student ensures that the ground rules for group work are being followed and that the ideas of everyone in the group are being heard.

4. *Supply Supervisor.* This student gathers necessary materials before the activity is completed [1, p. 21].

Step 3: Research both sides of the issue. Graphic organizers may be useful in identifying what information is unknown. Students conduct research and sort through information to understand the arguments on both sides of the issue [2, p. 21]. Once resources have been collected, it is important that each group member have an opportunity to present their research and materials to the group for discussion. At that point, the group will need to decide if and how that information should be used, and assist members in supporting their arguments.

Step 4: Develop arguments and counter-arguments. A writing assignment may be used to develop arguments, and students can receive peer feedback by sharing their ideas in groups [2, p. 21]. Have each team prepare a case consisting of one or more reasons why they hold the opinion they do, explanations, and evidence (e.g., examples) that supports their view. (This is the phase of the activity that provides most of the speaking practice, so allow ample time.)

While developing arguments, students can collaborate and share ideas in groups to help identify the strongest arguments as well as the crucial weaknesses of a position. Students need to analyze critically all of the information presented and provide responses to counter-arguments. The teacher should clarify for the students that each argument consists of a stated reason followed by ample support. A strong reason has the following qualities: 1. It logically supports the opinion. 2. It is specific and states the idea clearly. 3. It is convincing to a majority of people [3]. The students ought to explain why some reasons are strong and others are weak based on the above criteria.

Students will need to know not only the strong arguments for their side, but also anticipate the other side's arguments in order to refute them effectively. Each team should brainstorms a list of strong reasons that their opponents could use [3].

Step 5: Debate. The debates may follow a variety of formats. Speaking times, number of speakers, and the emphasis on research may vary. Students should be prepared to answer questions and should practice key vocabulary ahead of time [2, p. 22].

For the debate phase, a Ping-Pong format may be recommended that follows lines of argument one at a time. The procedure for each line of argument is as following:

One affirmative team states one of its arguments (with explanation and support).

One negative team responds to the affirmative team's argument with either questions or a counterargument. The students must respond directly to the argument raised by the affirmative team – they cannot begin a new line of argument.

Either the original affirmative team or another affirmative team responds to the negative team, and so on, following the line of argument until development ceases and repetition sets in.

One negative team begins a new line of argument, and so on [5, p. 117].

An example of a possible debate format is shown below.

Speaker 1: Five minutes to present arguments for the motion.

Speaker 2: One minute of questions.

Speaker 2: Five minutes to respond and present opposing arguments.

Speaker 1: One minute of questions.

Speaker 1: Five minutes to respond and summarize position.

Speaker 2: Five minutes to respond and summarize position [2, p. 23].

Note that no new information may be introduced during the summary. Doing so may result in disqualification of the offending group. If either team feels that their opponents are introducing new information during the summary, they may challenge them immediately and request a ruling from the instructor.

As the teams develop a line of argument, the instructor should roughly keep track of the flow of the arguments in a flowchart on the board.

The "audience" aren't passive – there is an opportunity for them to question the speakers, and to give their own opinions from the floor. A chairperson and a timekeeper, who keep events moving, oversee the whole thing.

The floor debate section in this format allows for the students not speaking to question the speakers and give their point of view. Quieter students can be introduced to the concept of speaking by forming research teams, or can be given the role of chairperson or timekeeper to have them involved in the in-class exercise. And you can keep rotating the students, to make sure they all get the opportunity to fulfil all the roles.

Step 6: Review and reflect. Following the debate, students should reflect on what they have learned and on ways their opinions may have been reinforced or changed during the task. It is a good idea to answer the following questions: 1. Is there common ground between the opposing sides? 2. Are there areas where they think compromise is possible? 3. Which side do they agree with? 4. Why is the argument of one side more persuasive to them than the other?

As a written or oral exercise, participants and observers may comment on the most persuasive arguments presented on either side of the debate. Students will soon realize that there are multiple sides to any issue. Debating a conversational topic encourages students to look beyond their own beliefs and recognize other viewpoints. Participating in a debate incorporates lessons on tolerance in a meaningful way.

Class members in the audience may vote by secret ballot for a debate winner. Votes are to be based upon presentation quality only, and not upon personal agreement or disagreement with the position of a team. The instructor will also evaluate both teams and select his choice for the winner.

Using debates in class provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to become responsible for their own ideas, to learn to take intellectual risks, to become respectful of the ideas of others, to negotiate differences of perspective and to think critically.

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