

DEBATES PRACTICE FOR BEGINNER STUDENTS OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

As of today, the idea of holding debates in student classrooms is not revolutionary. Debates are a formalised discussion based on preplanned speeches by participants who have directly opposite points of view on the issue under discussion in order to convince a third (neutral) party, called judges, that the arguments of certain participants are better than those of their opponents [1, p. 171]. From the fields of political and rhetorical discourse, debates were successfully transferred to educational discourse. As a teaching method, they are widely used in a variety of disciplines to develop oral communication skills, self-confidence, empathy and tolerance for different views, teamwork, logical and critical thinking of students, to form their argumentation skills, eloquence, leadership skills, etc.

The scientific literature devoted to the study of debates describes a large number of formats of conducting them. However, there is a certain set of structural elements typical of any debate format. These elements are as follows.

1. Statement – a topic, a subject of discussion.
2. The debater – a student with a predefined role.
3. Two sides of speakers – for and against the statement.
4. Concluding speeches of the parties that close the debates and sum them up.

The use of debates in teaching foreign languages is focused on the development of the student's personality, on the activation of their potential, which is achieved by using a personal-activity and communicative approach

in teaching foreign languages [2, p. 4]. Debate technology fully complies with the principles of these approaches and therefore is successfully used by foreign language teachers. The experience of using debates in teaching IT students has shown that this technology is more successfully used in groups of students with a level of foreign language proficiency which allows them to maintain communicative interaction in a very wide range of situations and contexts. However, as pedagogical practice has shown, the use of debates is also possible in groups of IT students, whose communication skills are limited because they are at the initial stage of learning a foreign language – they can exchange information exclusively on the range of topics studied, using sentences with simple constructions in their speeches.

The right choice of the debate format is one of the most important conditions for the successful application of this technology for teaching students. In groups of IT beginner students, it seems most appropriate to hold debates of a simplified organisational structure which allow participants to focus directly on the process of communication in a foreign language. Debates held in such formats are as close as possible to natural communicative situations. Also, debates of a simplified organisational structure are suitable for teachers who begin working with this pedagogical technology – debates have a multicomponent structure, and as practical experience is gained in applying the debate method in the educational process, it is reasonable to move from simple structures to complex ones.

Let us consider the examples of the debate formats that, in our opinion, are the most suitable for getting started with this technology.

1. One-on-one debates.

Practical experience shows that for the initial stage of working with debates, it is worth choosing the one-on-one format. With this format, there is no need to make efforts to perceive and analyse the statements of several participants, and students can concentrate only on formulating their own

thoughts and on the perception of their opponent's speech. When participating in one-on-one debates, students speak for a short period without preparation. Emphasis is placed on the application of basic speaking skills, without the need for complex vocabulary. The time allotted for the performance of each side can be changed based on the situation in a particular group of students.

2. Round table debates.

This format has a more complex structure in relation to the one-on-one debates. Additional participants are added: the "chairperson", who acts as a leader of the debate process, and the "neutrality", who does not take a position "for" or "against". One of the students with a higher level of foreign language proficiency should be chosen for the role of a chairperson. The speech "for" and the speech "against" are represented by more than one participant. The number of participants on each side must be the same. As the name implies, the format involves the arrangement of participants at a round table, or in places located in a circle. The time allotted for the performance of each side can be changed based on the situation in a particular group of students.

The format has the following features:

- the informal atmosphere of the debate reduces the fear of public speaking;
- the involvement of the majority of students of a particular group in a limited time is ensured;
- there is an opportunity to focus on the details of the issue under discussion.

3. Open forum.

This format is organised like public meetings to discuss a controversial issue. The chairperson announces the topic and asks participants to speak. The participants present their arguments. Often one of the given arguments is chosen and put to a vote at the end of the debate. A feature of the format is

that the participants are not required to speak, they can act as listeners – this ensures the development of speaking skills in conditions close to natural. Also, this feature helps to overcome the fear of public speaking. Participants have enough time to analyse each other's statements, which makes participation in debates more comfortable for beginner students.

The format has the following features:

- it is possible to involve a large number of participants in the process;
- it is possible to consider and repeat narrow questions of the material of the topic being studied;
- there is an opportunity to hold debates in the form of a role-playing game.

For the three formats described, it is important to announce topics well in advance so that participants have the opportunity to prepare. Firstly, it reduces the stress level of participants who, due to their individual characteristics, experience difficulties in the face of the need to speak out in public. Secondly, the preparatory stage makes debates more informative and will allow participants to gain new knowledge.

So, debates are a teaching method, which can be defined as a communicative situation modelled on the basis of a controversial issue, where participants hold different points of view and prove them to the opponent, while refuting their position. Most of the debate formats described by modern researchers are used to work with students who have well-developed skills of speaking in a foreign language. The article describes the debate formats that have been successfully applied in classrooms of students at the initial stage of learning a foreign language.

References

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