

ISSN 1883-7409 (print)

ISSN 1884-0184 (on-line)



*Outside the Box:
A Multi-Lingual Forum*

Volume 8, Issue 1

Autumn, 2017

Articles

Wrongful Moves in Unfamiliar Meaning Spaces: Gesture Usage and Implications for Cross-Cultural Gestural-Pragmatic Failure 7

Bruce Miller

Narrative Similarities in Detective Fiction 19

Jeroen Bode

A Tentative Classification of Rhetoric in Japanese Linguistic Expressions in Advertising Contexts 25

Tetsuji Tosa

Language Learning and Teaching

Explicit Politeness: Language Instructors' Attitudes in Comparative Perspectives 31

Kiyomi Fujii and Etsuko Inoguchi

Capitalizing on the Strengths and Complementing the Weaknesses of Native and Non-Native English Speaking Teachers 40

Takaaki Hiratsuka

Recent Innovations and Improvements to Feedback and Collaboration Options for English as a Foreign Language Courses 49

George Robert MacLean

Preparing Students for a Debate Festival 60

David Kluge

The OTB Forum: A Multi-Lingual Forum

Volume 8, Issue 1

December 1, 2017

Copyright 2017 by The OTB Forum Editorial Board.

This material may be reproduced and stored in any retrieval system in any form, but we ask that readers give credit where due and thus cite the *OTB Forum* properly.

www.otbforum.net

ISSN 1883-7409 (print)

ISSN 1884-0184 (on-line)



Preparing Students for a Debate Festival

David Kluge

Nanzan Junior College, Nanzan University

Abstract: *Debate is generally accepted as a beneficial activity (Allen, Berkowitz, & Loudon, 1995, 1999; Barfield, 1989; Colbert, 1987; Semlak & Shields, 1977). Informal debate in the form of discussion is a common activity in EFL/ESL classes, but formal debate is rarely done, probably because of its perceived difficulty. This article describes a debate festival project that involves all the second-year students at a junior college in Japan, and focuses on how to prepare students for the debate festival.*

Keywords: formal debate, debate formats, festival

Introduction

The benefits of debate in preparing students for academic classes and teaching the essential critical thinking skills necessary for a good university education are generally accepted. Bellon (2000) reported on various research on the benefits of debate: research that shows that debate improves analysis, delivery, and organization skills (Semlak & Shields, 1977), improves scholastic ability (Barfield, 1989), and increases critical thinking ability (Allen, Berkowitz, & Loudon, 1995; Barfield 1989; Colbert, 1987), including an important meta-analysis showing the debate-critical thinking correlation (Allen, Berkowitz, Hunt, & Loudon, 1999).

Informal debate is a common activity in EFL/ESL classes, but formal debate is rarely done, perhaps because of a perception that formal debate is too difficult for the majority of students and a lack of confidence on the part of teachers in their ability to teach it. Among teachers who have familiarity with formal debate there is a reluctance to teach it as these teachers know that debate is a complex and complicated activity which takes a lot of time to teach well, and that would take up too much time in a course syllabus. In addition, there is a feeling among many teachers that the determination of “winners” and “losers” does not match with their educational goals of teaching. Whatever the reasons, the teaching of formal debate on a large scale is not usually done. This article describes a debate project that involves all the second-year students at

a junior college in Japan, and focuses on how to prepare the students for the debates.

Background

In 2015, the above-mentioned Japanese junior college, a coordinated course titled Learning Community containing six sections, decided to include a unit on debate that was spread over seven class meetings. This course involves all second-year students so the plan was to involve all 150 students in debate in the Fall semester of the 2016 academic year. Since the Learning Community course is not an English course, the debates were conducted in Japanese. (Debates in English were encouraged and practiced in Discussion in English classes.)

Describing How the Unit Was Created

Briefly, since the focus of this article is on how students were prepared for the debate, two of the six teachers of the course who had experience with teaching debate planned the unit and one of the teachers prepared the explanatory material in Japanese. Since the teachers agreed with Hansen (2007) that when planning a democratic debate unit for all students (as opposed to an elite debate unit suited for a small number of high level students), the format requires “intensive customization,” the two teachers created a format that included the flexibility of number of debaters per team of the All Japan High School English Debate Association (n.d.) with the interactive crossfire element of the National Forensics League’s public forum format (University of Vermont, n.d.), and modified the speaking times for all speeches to fit the abilities of the students and the

Kluge, D. (2015). Preparing students for a debate festival. *OTB Forum*, 8(1), 60-63.

requirement of the unit to have two debates during each 90-minute period.

Describing How the Debates Were Conducted

One section debated against another section. This was done three times. Each time the two sections debated a different proposition. There were no designated judges to declare the winners; instead, at the end of each debate the audience and debaters were required as homework to indicate which team won the debates and why they thought so. This non-indication of winners is why we labeled the project a debate festival rather than a debate tournament. For more details see the “Planning a Debate Festival” section (Kluge) of the article “Transformation through Speech, Drama & Debate” (Head, Kluge, Morris, and Rees, 2016).

Preparing the Students

The main purpose of this paper is to show how students were prepared for the debate festival. They were prepared in five different areas:

1. The differences between discussion and debate
2. The format of the debate
3. The basics of logic
4. The language of the debate
5. The issues of the particular debate topics

Each of these areas is discussed below.

Students Learn the Differences between Discussion and Debate

Students were introduced to debate by first distinguishing debate from discussion using the Table 1. The main point was that formal debate, unlike discussion, had a set number of speakers, a set order of speakers, a set task for each speech, with set time limits for each speech.

Table 1. *Differences between Discussion and Debate*

Difference	Discussion	Debate
1 Number of speakers	Not decided	Decided
2 Order of speakers	Not decided	Decided
3 Tasks of speakers	Not decided	Decided
4 Time limits	Not decided	Decided

Students Learn the Modified Debate Format

Students were then introduced to the modified debate format that the course teachers had devised, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2. *Modified Debate Format*

Activity	Time (min)
1. PRO Position	2
2. CON Position	2
3. Planning	2
4. Crossfire	2
5. CON Refutation	2
6. PRO Refutation	2
7. Planning	2
8. Crossfire	2
9. Planning	2
10 Grand Crossfire	6
11. Planning	2
12. PRO Summary	2
13. CON Summary	2
TOTAL	30

The PRO Position speech required the speaker to state the team’s position on the debate topic and show two benefits to the position. In the same way, the CON Position speech required the speaker to state the team’s position on the debate topic and show two disadvantages to the PRO position.

As can be seen in the table, no individual speaker was required to speak longer than two minutes. The Planning parts of the debate was where debaters could consult with other members of her team or could prepare for upcoming speeches with the help of teammates. There were four Planning sessions of two minutes each interspersed throughout the debate.

The Crossfires were interactive free discussion sessions between the two speakers who had just spoken, and the Grand Crossfire involved free discussion among all the debaters. The Refutation speeches required students to debate what previous speakers of the opposite team had stated.

Summary speeches summarized the debate and explained why the speaker’s team had won the debate. The entire debate was 30 minutes long and was facilitated by a timekeeper and moderator. Students were provided with a handout that laid out the

responsibilities of each speaker for each speech. Students practice the format and the specific tasks during the first four class meetings of the project.

Students Learn Basics of Logic

Some time was spent on the teaching of basic logic and fallacies, as shown in Table 3. In addition, other types of logic and fallacies (e.g., bandwagon, appeal to authority, misleading statistics) were taught, depending on the teacher.

Table 3. *Examples of Logic and Fallacies Taught*

Logic or Fallacy	Definition
Causality	<i>Factor A causes effect G</i>
Alternate Causality	<i>Not factor A, but factor B causes effect G</i>
Multiple Causality	<i>(Not just factor A, but factors B, C, D, E, and F cause effect G</i>
False Dichotomy Fallacy	<i>Not just item A or item B, but there exists a continuum or other choices</i>
Arguing ad hominem Fallacy	<i>Attack issues, not people</i>

Students Learn Language

Examples of the language students should use were provided through a handout of language to use in the project, URLs of transcripts of debates, and URLs of sample debates. Students practiced using this language in practice speeches and practice debates.

Students Learn Issues

As was mentioned before, there were three different debate topics, or resolutions:

1. Resolved: The Japanese government should establish a 10,000yen fine for citizens who do not vote in public elections (National Association of Debate in Education, 2011).
2. Resolved: The Japanese government should abolish the temporary worker system (National Association of Debate in Education, 2008).
3. Resolved: The Japanese government should increase the number of skilled foreign laborers (National Association of Debate in Education, 2014).

These resolutions came from Japanese junior high school and high school debate sites (see References and Resources), and were deemed appropriate because they were developed for beginner debaters, which fit the profile of the students in the debate festival project.

Students divided themselves into three large groups, one for each resolution, and each large group divided itself into two sub-groups, one PRO and one CON. Each large group studies the relevant sites for their resolution.

In their large groups and sub-groups students practice what they should say about the issues, what the other side might say, and how to respond.

Conclusion

This article explains how one tertiary institution implemented a debate project where all second-year students participated. The reflections of the students written after each debate show that students both enjoyed and appreciated the benefits of the debate festival project.

The lack of judges required students to decide for themselves who won each debate, thereby enhancing the learning available to students. It was a relatively long project, but it demonstrated that democratic debate, when appropriately set up and when students are adequately prepared, allows all students to reap the benefits of debate.

References

- All Japan High School English Debate Association (HEnDA). (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://henda.global/english/>
- Allen, M., Berkowitz, S., & Loudon, A. (1995). A study comparing the impact of communication classes and competitive forensic experience on critical thinking improvement. *The Forensic of Pi Kappa Delta*, 1-8.
- Allen, M., Berkowitz, S., Hunt, S. & Loudon, A. (1999). A meta-analysis of the impact of forensics and communication education on critical thinking. *Communication Education*, 48(1), 18-30.

- Barfield, K. (1989). A study of the relationship between active participation in interscholastic debating and the development of critical thinking skills with implications for school administrators and instructional leaders. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 50-09A: 2714.
- Bellon, J. (2000). A research-based justification for debate across the curriculum. *Argumentation & Advocacy*, 36(3), 161-175.
- Colbert, (1987). The effects of CEDA and NDT debate training on critical thinking ability. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 23, 194-201.
- Hansen, J. (2007). Teaching debate in Japan: A review of resources and materials to meet the demands of teaching Japanese English learners. *Bulletin of Osaka Women's Junior College*, 37, 67-78.
- Head, P., Kluge, D., Morris, R., Rees, G. (2016). Transformation through speech, drama & debate. In P. Clements, A. Krause, & H. Brown (Eds.), *Focus on the learner* (pp. 314-322). Tokyo: JALT.
- National Association of Debate in Education. (2008). 第13回ディベート甲子園 中学校, 高校論題解説 [13th Debate Koshien High School Division]. Retrieved from <http://nade.jp/files/uploads/08koukou-kaisetu.pdf>
- National Association of Debate in Education. (2011). 第16回ディベート甲子園 中学校論題解説 [16th Debate Koshien Junior High School Division]. Retrieved from <http://nade.jp/files/uploads/11chugaku-kaisetu.pdf>
- National Association of Debate in Education. (2014). [19th Debate Koshien High School Division]. Retrieved from http://nade.jp/files/uploads/第19回ディベート甲子園 高校論題解説%2020140305_最終校_.pdf
- Semlak, W. D., & Shields, D. C. (1977), The effect of debate training on students participation in the bicentennial youth debates. *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, 13(4), 194-196.
- University of Vermont. (n.d.). Public Forum. Retrieved from <https://debate.uvm.edu/dcpdf/PFNFL.pdf>

About the author: David Kluge, Nanzan University, has been involved in debate for over 45 years as a debater, coach, and teacher. He is the founding coordinator of the Speech, Drama, & Debate SIG. His interests also include composition, oral communication, and materials development.