

In the Classroom

Teaching Debate to All Students: Adding the Physical Element

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Abstract

Debate is almost universally acclaimed as an excellent activity for language students, yet it is not implemented in many EFL programs because of perceptions that it is too difficult for teachers to teach and for general students to learn. There is a feeling among many teachers, either conscious or unconscious, that debate is an elitist activity for only the top level of the best students. Yet, all students can benefit from some formal debate experience, and this paper introduces a way for teachers to teach formal debate in an engaging style that allows all students to garner the positive effects of the debate activity. This paper first explains the value of debate, then describes an interesting way to teach debate using the metaphors of brick laying and boxing.

1 Introduction

Debate is almost universally acclaimed as an excellent activity for language students (Davidson, 1996; Fukuda, 2003; Krieger, 2005), yet it is not implemented in many EFL programs because of perceptions that it is too difficult for teachers to teach and for general students to learn. There is a feeling among some teachers, either conscious or unconscious, that debate is an elitist activity for only the top level of the best students. Yet, all students can benefit from some formal debate experience. This paper introduces a way for teachers to teach formal debate in an engaging style that allows all students to garner the positive effects of the debate activity. This paper first explains the value of debate, then describes an interesting way to teach it by using the metaphors of brick laying and boxing to add a physical component to the teaching and learning of debate.

2 The Benefits of Debate

Lieb (2007) lists the values of debate:

1. It requires students to develop cognitive and linguistic abilities (Krieger, 2005).
2. It helps students to develop argumentation skills (Krieger, 2005).
3. It helps students to develop analytic-critical thinking skills.
4. It helps students to develop the ability to examine their own ideas and opinions critically.
5. It helps students to develop the ability to express and defend their ideas (Davidson, 1996; Fukuda, 2003).
6. It helps students to discover weaknesses in other people's arguments (Davidson, 1996).

Lieb (2007) adds that it helps students improve their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. (Read Lieb's article for a more detailed explanation of the benefits of debate.)

Dewar (2011) cites studies that show debate can actually increase a student's IQ. She goes on to describe research by Kuhn and Powell (2011) on the benefits of debate for adolescent students. Two groups of lower income sixth grade students in the same school in the US participated. One group was enrolled in a class that focused on debate (the debate group). The other group was enrolled in a similar class, but the activities were teacher-led discussions and essay writing (the discussion group). At the end of the three years all students took an essay test. Here are the results they found:

1. The debate group submitted more arguments that mentioned the claims of the opposite position, what Kuhn and Powell called "dual-perspective arguments."

2. The debate group discussed the costs and benefits of their positions, what Kuhn and Powell called "integrative perspective."

3. The debate group was better able to think about what kind of data was needed to resolve the issue.

It is clear from these three findings that debate offers benefits and is relevant to the goals of an academic program at universities. However, some teachers claim that it is only the best students who would be able to do the activity. To counter this, Lieb (2007), Izumi (1995), and Le (1995) all show ways for even low level students in Japan to garner the benefits of debate.

3 Introducing a New Model of Teaching Debate

Previously, debate was mainly considered a cerebral activity. In an attempt to make debate accessible to a lower English ability class, a more physical approach was considered by the author for use in his discussion class. This approach was based on theories underlying Asher's Total Physical Response (TPR) and kinesthetic learning modality theory, described below.

3.1 Total Physical Response (TPR)

Total Physical Response is a language teaching/learning method created by James Asher in 1977. Asher wrote:

A reasonable hypothesis is that the brain and the nervous system are biologically programmed to acquire language, either the first or the second in a particular sequence and in a particular mode. The sequence is listening before speaking and the mode is to synchronize language with the individual's body. (1996, p.2)

TPR is "a method of teaching language using physical movement to react to verbal input in order to reduce student inhibitions and lower their affective filter" (Shearon, nd, p. 1). It claims to improve long term language retention and to reduce student stress. Its claim to reduce stress is based on the fact that it is a natural way to learn a language that does not involve textbooks, tests, or homework, and that it does not require the learner to produce the language immediately (Shearon, nd, p. 1).

TPR's most salient point is the use of body movement as an essential part of each activity. The theoretical basis for the use of movement stems from right brain/left brain differences. The left brain is considered responsible for logical and critical thinking, and things learned with the left brain way through explanation and discussion are put into short term memory, and can disappear quickly. The right brain is considered to be responsible for creativity, the arts, and sports. Things that are learned the right brain way,

such as swimming or riding a bicycle, are more easily put into long term memory. (Shearon, nd). TPR takes advantage of right brain learning through tying language with body movement.

3.2 Kinesthetic Modality of Learning

A second source of the theoretical basis for using gestures and body movement is the theory behind the kinesthetic modality of learning found in Gardner's multiple intelligences theory and Fleming's Visual Audio Kinesthetic (VAK) model.

Gardner published the theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) in 1983 (PBS, 2012). This theory states that all people have nine intelligences: linguistic, logical/mathematical, musical/rhythmical, bodily/kinesthetic, spatial, naturalist, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and existential. Logical/mathematical intelligence is often focused on in the teaching of debate, but what is of importance in this method of teaching debate is bodily/kinesthetic intelligence—using the body to learn (PBS, 2012).

Fleming developed his Visual Audio Kinesthetic (VAK) model in 2001 and it is based on Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) principles. This theory states that "most people possess a dominant or preferred learning style; however some people have a mixed and evenly balanced blend of the three styles: Visual learners, Auditory learners, and Kinesthetic learners" (James Cook University, 2012). Clark (2011) states that teachers need to present material using all three styles. This new method for teaching debate adds the Kinesthetic style to the often-used Visual and Auditory styles.

4 Step-by-step Description of Method

This method using bodily movement and gestures has been used successfully in several of the author's general level discussion classes for first year university students. In the courses where this has been taught, debate is the third unit. The first unit is small group discussion, the second unit is panel discussion where the small group discusses the topic in front of the whole class, and the third unit is debate. In the first unit the students select a topic and research it. They use the same topic for the panel discussion and the debate, so that by the time the debate comes around, students are very familiar with the topic.

The basic moves of debate are:

- ♣ to build a position
- ♣ protect the position
- ♣ attack the opposite team's position
- ♣ rebuild own position after attack
- ♣ review the arguments to show why your team won the point or won the debate.

What follows is a step-by-step description of how to teach these five moves of debate using this physical method.

STEP 1: Define Debate

First define debate for the students. Most EFL students think of debate as arguing against another person's opinion. According to the *Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary*, debate is “a discussion between people in which they express different opinions about something.” This is what often passes for debate in many EFL classes, but it is actually the exact opposite of debate. First of all, debate is not based on the debater's opinion. In fact, in formal debates the participants are encouraged to take a position which is opposite their own opinion in order to learn something about the topic, and to learn how to disassociate opinion from debate. In addition, debate is based on logic and supporting information. According to the more sophisticated *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (for native speakers of English), debate is “a contention by words or arguments: as

a : the formal discussion of a motion before a deliberative body according to the rules of parliamentary procedure

b : a regulated discussion of a proposition between two matched sides.” The main point here is that students are arguing for their position and against the opposing team's position—the debaters are not debating against people, but against positions according to a set of agreed-upon rules, and using supporting information.

STEP 2: Do Warm-up Activity: Taking Sides

This is a pre-debate activity that is used to teach two of the essential ways of thinking of debate: 1. “why our position is good” and 2. “why the other side's position is not good.” On the blackboard or whiteboard in the front of the room a vertical line is drawn that divides the classroom in half. On each side of the line write two opposing positions on a topic, for example “living in the city is good” vs. “living in the countryside is good.” Have students stand up and move to the side of the room of the position they agree with. After all students have moved, ask that people on one side think of three things that support their position. Anyone on the side should come forward to the dividing line and say one point. After three people say their points, ask the opposing side to come up with three things that support their position. Then go back to the first side and ask them to list three things that are not good about the position of the opposing position. Then ask the second side to come up with three things that are not good about the opposing position. This teaches students the difference between building up their own position and attacking the opposing position, and gives them a chance to practice this skill in a large group before having to do this with a partner.

STEP 3: Teach Basic Moves and Gestures

As was mentioned above in section 4, there are five basic moves in debate:

1. build a position

2. protect the position
3. attack the opposite team's position
4. rebuild own position after attack
5. review the arguments to show why your team won the point or won the debate.

In this approach, there are physical actions or gestures connected to each of the five moves of debate, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 The Moves of Debate and Corresponding Actions

Debate Move	Actions (Gestures)
1. to build a position	Build a brick wall
2. protect the position	Boxing Guard stance
3. attack the opposite team's position	Boxing punches
4. rebuild the position after attack	Build a brick wall
5. review the arguments to show why your team won the point or won the debate	Review—moves arms around like a windmill to indicate going over something

All of the gestures above are described below, with a few extra gestures. An important note: in NONE of the gestures below (except the glove bump) should there be any physical contact. Have all the students stand up. First provide a model for students by saying the gesture and then doing it. Next have students repeat the word and gesture. Follow this pattern for each gesture several times.

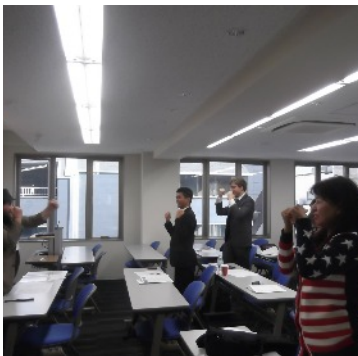


Figure 1 Repeating (Tokyo ETJ presentation)

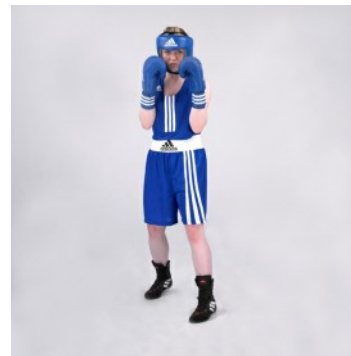


Figure 2 Guard Gesture (ABA, nd)

- A. Build and Rebuild: Build a brick wall by putting bricks in a row and putting bricks on top of each other.
- B. Protect (Guard): Boxing Guard—put elbows almost together and bring fists in front of face. (See Figure 2.)
- C. Attack (Boxing punches)

Not all of these punches need to be taught. Only the jab and one other punch is necessary.

1. Jab: From the Guard position, with the opposite hand that you usually use, make a short, quick punch.

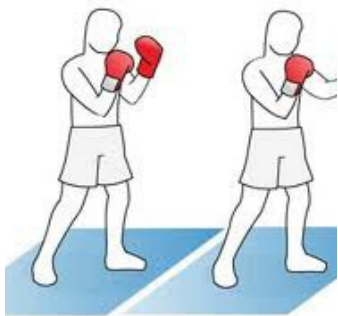


Figure 3 Jab (Talk Boxing, nd)



Figure 4 Jab (Toyohashi JALT presentation)

2. Cross/Straight: Usually done after a jab, using the hand you usually use, punch straight across to the others “face.”

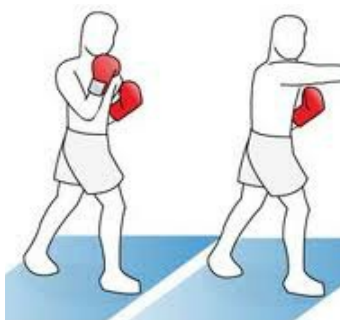


Figure 5 Straight/Cross (Talk Boxing, nd)



Figure 6 Straight/Cross (Tokyo ETJ presentation)

3. Uppercut-body blow: Using the hand that you usually use, bend the arm at the elbow, form a fist, and keeping the arm bent at a 90 degree angle and keeping the arm close to the body, swing the arm into the “body,” the “stomach,” of the opponent. (See illustration for Uppercut-chin below.)

4. Uppercut-chin (also called a knockout punch): Using the hand that you usually use, bend the arm at the elbow, form a fist, and keeping the arm bent at a 90 degree angle, swing the arm into the “chin” of the opponent.

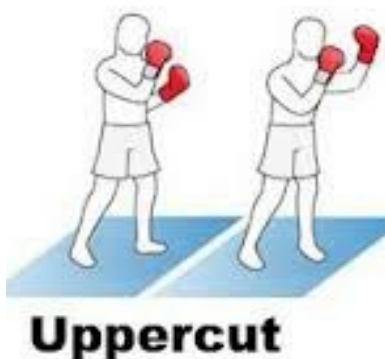


Figure 7 Uppercut-chin (Talk Boxing, nd)

5. Hook: Using the hand that you usually use, bend the arm at the elbow, form a fist, and keeping the arm bent at a 90 degree angle and keeping the elbow locked into position, swing the body so that the fist goes into the “body” of the opponent.

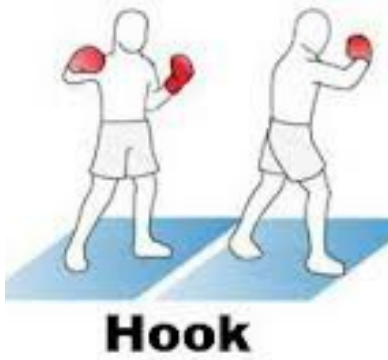


Figure 8 Hook (Talk Boxing, nd)



Figure 9 Hook (Tokyo ETJ presentation)

6. Roundhouse: Similar to the Hook. Using the hand that you usually use, with elbow straight and arm extended out from the body and to the side, form a fist, and swing the body so that the fist goes into the “body” of the opponent.

D. Review: Move both arms around at sides like a windmill.

E. Other Gestures

1. Bring it on: hold one or both hands in front of you with palms up and fingers together. Waggle fingers (together) back and forth while saying “Bring it on!”
2. Glove bump: Hold out one fist or both fists to opponent and one person hits the opponent's gloves on the top of the fists (usually seen just before a boxing match begins).
3. Small victory: Clasp hands together on one side of the face and move them back and forth a little.
4. Rocky pose: Raise both fists above head and dance. (See Figure 10.)

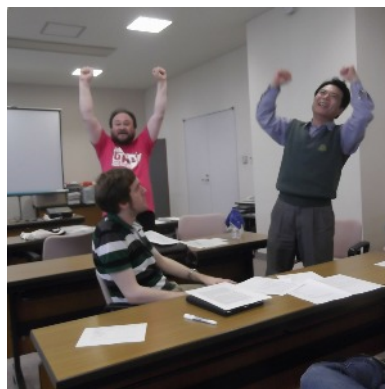


Figure 10 Rocky Pose (Toyohashi JALT Presentation)

STEP 4: Practice Basic Moves

Have the students practice the basic moves. There are four ways to do this. The first way is for the teacher to call out the gesture and the students repeat the name of the gesture as they do the gesture. (An

alternative is to have a student play the part of the teacher.) The second way is students can do this is by Shadow Boxing. Shadow Boxing is, as the name implies, a solo activity where the boxer boxes against his/her shadow. Students stand up and find a small bit of private space. As the students practice a gesture, they should say it aloud as they do the gesture. The third way to do this is by working with a trainer. One student plays the part of the trainer and calls out the move. The boxer repeats the move while doing it. The final way is Sparring. Sparring is practice with a partner, a sparring partner. This is like a practice match, with each boxer calling out the gesture as they do it. One way to structure these practice activities is to go from more directed activities to more free activities.

STEP 5: Explain the Debate Format

Any debate format can be used, or one can even be created. For purpose of demonstration, the style of policy debate that is used in US high schools and universities is used here to model the method. This model is described below.

Four people, divided into two 2-person teams (the Affirmative team and the Negative team), debate a topic, called a resolution. The policy debate resolution is in this format:

Resolved: The (some legislative body) should (do something). For example, “Resolved: The Japanese government should prohibit the use of nuclear power plants to create electricity.” The Affirmative team calls for a change from the present system. The Negative team supports the present system. The two teams give three kinds of speeches: the Constructive speeches (build your position, attack the other side's position), Cross Examination (ask questions of other side, but do not argue), and Rebuttal speeches (review the debate and show why your side won the point and the debate).

The order and the times of the speeches are shown in Table 2. The Standard Times are the times that are used in US high schools and universities, with the numeral on the left of the slash being the high school time and the numeral on the right of the slash being the university time for each speech. The recommended time is an adaptation of the high school/university times and is the recommended time for using this method in EFL classes.

Table 2 The Order and Times of Speeches

Speech	Person	Standard Time	Recommended Time (Class)
Constructive	First Affirmative	8/9 minutes	3 minutes
Cross Examination	Second Negative	3 minutes	1 minute
Constructive	First Negative	8/9 minutes	3 minutes
Cross Examination	First Affirmative	3 minutes	1 minute
Constructive	Second Affirmative	8/9 minutes	3 minutes
Cross Examination	First Negative	3 minutes	1 minute
Constructive	Second Negative	8/9 minutes	3 minutes
Cross Examination	Second Affirmative	3 minutes	1 minute
Rebuttal	First Negative	5/6 minutes	2 minutes
Rebuttal	First Affirmative	5/6 minutes	2 minutes
Rebuttal	Second Negative	5/6 minutes	2 minutes
Rebuttal	Second Affirmative	5/6 minutes	2 minutes
		TOTAL: 64/72 minutes	TOTAL: 24 minutes

The recommended times for the classroom were calculated so that one debate group of four students could debate, while one debate group of four students would judge the debate. When the first debate is finished and the decision of the judges announced, the two debate groups change roles, and the group that debated first becomes the judges for the second debate. This allows for setup time and two debates within a 90-minute period.

STEP 6: Prepare for the Debate

Have students get together with their partner and prepare what they are going to say. Have students prepare speeches on what is good about their position and what is not good about the opposing position.



Figure 11 Preparing (Tokyo ETJ Presentation)

STEP 7: Practice the Debate 1

Go through the actions in the order of the actual debate, calling out the name of the speech and the debate moves as the gestures are done by students.

STEP 8: Practice the Debate 2

Go through the actions with the language students will have to use, of course, after the teacher models the language. (See Table 3 for actions and language.) One note: the person speaking should stand up, and the other debaters should sit down. The only exception is when doing cross examination, both the examiner and the examinee should stand up.

Table 3 How to Debate: Gestures and Language

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
(before debate)		Bring it on! Glove bump	Bring it on!

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
1. First Affirmative Constructive	3 min.	Begin Attack Support Build End	Good afternoon. Because __ we are resolved: ____ Point 1: “__.” Point 1: “__.” According to _____, Plan Point 1: “_.” Plan Point 1: “_.” Thank you. I am now ready for cross examination.

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
2. Second Negative Cross-X	1 min.	Jab/Guard	Who? What? When? Where? Why? How much?

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
3. First Negative Constructive	3 min.	Begin Attack Support Build Support End	We believe the present system is fine. Point 1: Our position is the present system is fine because _____. Point 1: The present system is fine because _____. According to _____, Point 1: Our position is the proposed system is not good because _____. Point 1: The proposed system is not good because _____. According to _____, Thank you. I am now ready for cross examination.

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
4. First Affirmative Cross-X	1 min.	Jab/Guard	Who? What? When? Where? Why? How much?

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
5. Second Affirmative Constructive	3 min.	Begin Build Support Attack End	Point 1: “_.” Point 1: “_.” According to _____, Plan Point 1: “_.” Plan Point 1: “_.” Thank you. I am now ready for cross examination.

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
6. First Negative Cross-X	1 min.	Jab/Guard	Who? What? When? Where? Why? How much?

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
7. Second Negative Constructive	3 min.	Begin Build Support Attack Support End	Our position is the present system is fine because _____. Point 1: The present system is fine because _____. According to _____, Our position is the proposed system is not good because _____. The proposed system is not good because _____. According to _____, Thank you. I am now ready for cross examination.

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
8. Second Affirmative Cross-X	1 min.	Jab/Guard	Who? What? When? Where? Why? How much?

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
9. First Negative Rebuttal	2 min.	Review Small Victory Conclusion	They said __, we said __ Clearly the Negatives won this point. Clearly the Negatives won this debate.

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
10. First Affirmative Rebuttal	2 min.	Review Small Victory Conclusion	They said __, we said __ Clearly the Affirmatives won this point. Clearly the Affirmatives won this debate.

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
11. Second Negative Rebuttal	2 min.	Review Small Victory Conclusion	They said __, we said __ Clearly the Negatives won this point. In conclusion, because of ____, clearly the Negatives won this debate.

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
12. Second Affirmative Rebuttal	2 min.	Review Small Victory Conclusion	They said __, we said __ Clearly the Affirmatives won this point. In conclusion, because of ____, clearly the Affirmatives won this debate.

Speech	Time	Actions	Language
(after debate when judge/s announce the winner)		Rocky pose	

STEP 9: The Debate

Have students go through the actions and say their arguments. That is, have students do a debate. Students should be in debate groups of four students made up of two opposing pairs. Students in each pair should choose their role: first or second. For example if they are on the affirmative side one student will be first affirmative and the other second affirmative. If they are on the negative side one student will be first negative, the other second negative. The person speaking does the gestures and actions while speaking. Sometimes, if students have difficulty doing the gestures while speaking, they can preface their speaking with the gesture or action, and then speak. Teachers can give hints to the students who are speaking by doing the gesture or action.

5 Beyond Basics

Once students have gone beyond the basics described above, then more advanced concepts can be taught. One helpful area that will help students do debate is the area of logic. Logic can be taught within the debate unit, or can even be taught sometime before the debate unit. Two basic groups of logic should be taught—what is correct logic and what is poor logic. Examples should be given of each type. A few examples of correct logic would be Causality (A causes B), Alternate Causality (A does not cause B, C causes B), and Multiple Causality (not only A causes B, but C, D, E, and F also cause B). Some examples of poor logic could be False Choice (“You either do A or B”—no, you can do A, B, C, D, or E.) or Bandwagon (“Other people are doing A so we should do A, too.”) Websites that give other examples of logic and poor logic (fallacies) can be found in the appendix.

In addition, the concept of basic stock issues could be introduced. The stock issues are the five basic issues that the Affirmative side must provide in order to win the debate:

Significance: The position or plan of the Affirmative side has to be shown to be a significant change from the present system.

Harm: The present system has parts that are harmful and must be fixed.

Inherency: There is something stopping the present system from adopting the position or plan of the Affirmative side.

Topicality: The position or plan of the Affirmative side is clearly on the topic of the debate.

Solvency: The plan of the Affirmative side must solve the problem their position states exists. (Dumas, 1983).

6 Weaknesses of the Approach

There are some weaknesses of this approach to teaching and learning how to debate. First, there is the mixing of metaphors—brick laying and boxing. The two metaphors do not match, yet both are important to the concept of debate. Second, in the international sector that is EFL teaching in Japan, there are many people from countries other than the US who are not familiar with this format of policy debate. The solution is to modify the procedure and use a format that is familiar, or learn the US format. Third, in workshops for teachers, inevitably someone says that even this approach is too difficult or too complicated for their students. The solution to this problem is to modify the method. Finally, in the workshops for teachers, someone always says that he or she is offended or disturbed by the violent image of boxing, and would like to use a different metaphor, like tennis. Of course, teachers are free to modify this approach to the extent of changing the

metaphors, but the other sports metaphors mentioned in the workshops (tennis, soccer, etc.) do not fit well with the formal debate model.

7 Conclusion

This paper on a new way to teach debate first gave the rationale for making the change, looking at Asher's TPR method, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences model, and Fleming's Visual Audio Kinesthetic model. The paper went on to describe in steps how to do the new method of teaching debate to make it accessible to all students. It goes without saying that teachers should modify the procedure to fit their situation. Teachers may be surprised at how well their students learn the “difficult” and “elite” activity of debate.

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Appendix Resources

Debate

- Basic Concepts for Teaching and Learning Debate. Joseph W. Luckett, <http://library.hokusei.ac.jp/bunken/hokusironshu/ronshu/bun/bun45%2843-2%29/bun45_7.pdf>
- Basic Debating Skills. <http://www.actdu.org.au/archives/actein_site/basicskills.html>
- Basic Introduction to Policy Debate. <<http://www.cs.jhu.edu/~jonathan/debate/ceda-l/archive/CEDA-L-Nov-1993/msg00125.html>>
- Effectiveness of Debate in EFL Classes. Makiko Ebata. <<http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare/articles/551-effectiveness-debate-efl-classes>>
- Hold a Class Debate. Melissa Kelly. <<http://712educators.about.com/cs/lessonsss/ht/htdebate.htm>>
- National Forensic League: Policy Debate. <<http://www.nationalforensicleague.org/asp/documents/MetaPage.aspx?metaid=113>>
- SDI Encyclopedia. <<http://sdiencyclopedia.wikispaces.com/>>
- Stock Issues (Wikipedia). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stock_issues>
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- Teaching Debate in Japan: A Review of Resources and Materials to Meet the Demands of Teaching Japanese English Learners, Jerrod Hansen. <http://www.wilmina.ac.jp/ojc/edu/kiyo_2007/kiyo_37_PDF/05.pdf>
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