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DISCUSSION AND DEBATE AS INTERACTIVE METHODS FOR DEVELOPING ORAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT.
This paper explores the role of discussion and debate as highly effective interactive methods for developing oral communication and communicative competence in foreign language classrooms. While traditional approaches often fail to provide meaningful speaking opportunities, discussion and debate engage learners in real-world communication by fostering fluency, logical argumentation, and strategic competence. The study distinguishes between the open, exploratory nature of discussions and the structured, argument-driven format of debates, highlighting how both methods increase student talking time and shift the teacher's role to that of a facilitator. Furthermore, the paper provides practical pedagogical recommendations for successful implementation, focusing on topic selection based on proficiency levels, language support tools, and balanced feedback structures. Ultimately, the integration of these interactive methods serves as a vital bridge between classroom-based language acquisition and real-life professional or academic communication.
KEYWORDS: Oral communication, communicative competence, discussion, structured debate, classroom interaction, pedagogical scaffolding, fluency.

INTRODUCTION

In the field of foreign language acquisition, developing oral communication has long been recognized as a core component of communicative competence. Traditional teacher-centred lessons, however, often limit student talking time by focusing primarily on the explanation of grammar rules, vocabulary memorization, or simple question-answer routines. Under these conditions, learners rarely find themselves in authentic situations where they have a genuine purpose to listen, respond, negotiate meaning, or defend their ideas. Consequently, a significant gap remains between a student's theoretical linguistic knowledge and their ability to produce spontaneous, extended speech in real-life academic or professional environments.

To bridge this gap, contemporary communicative pedagogy emphasizes the shift toward student-centred, interactive methods. Among these, classroom discussion and structured debate stand out as highly effective tools for increasing student talking time and facilitating cognitive growth. While closely connected, these two methods possess distinct structural characteristics: discussions are generally flexible, open, and exploratory, whereas debates follow a rigid, argument-driven format that demands the use of evidence, counterarguments, and logical reasoning. Brookfield and Preskill state that discussion helps learners become more reflective, more open to different views, and more careful in forming judgments [1; 22].

The purpose of this paper is to comprehensively examine the role of discussion and debate in fostering multifaceted oral competence. Beyond merely training fluency and accuracy, these methods simultaneously develop the core dimensions of communicative competence: grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic abilities. Furthermore, this study explores the essential conditions required for successful implementation—including careful topic selection, strategic grouping, explicit language scaffolding, and purposeful feedback. By analyzing these frameworks, the paper provides a

clear pedagogical blueprint for transforming language classrooms into dynamic environments that prepare learners for real-world communication.

METHODOLOGY

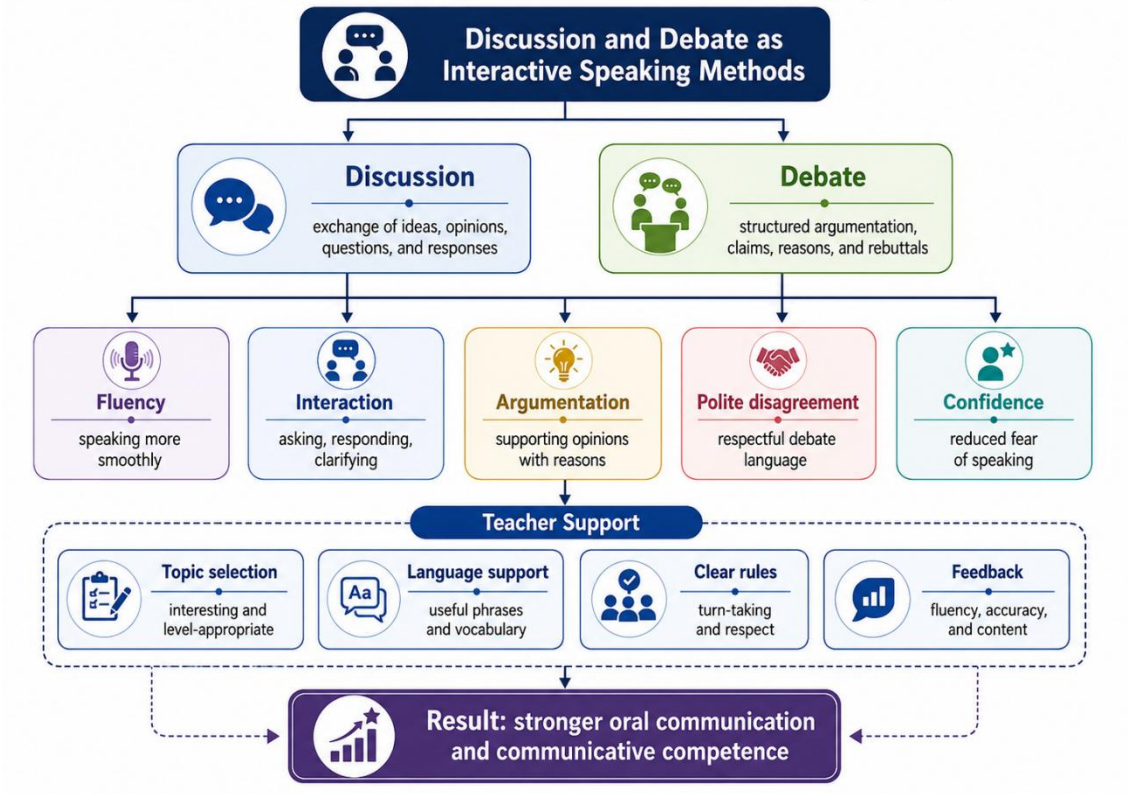
This study utilizes a qualitative and analytical pedagogical methodology to evaluate the operational dynamics of discussion and debate as interactive methods in the foreign language classroom. The methodology relies on structured theoretical analysis, analytical modeling, and taxonomic discourse classification rather than statistical empirical experimentation. The structural design of this research framework is divided into three functional phases: structural modeling of oral components, functional classification of target discourse, and systematic task configuration

3.1. Visual Analytical Modeling

The primary tool for examining how interactive methods facilitate language acquisition is structured visual analysis. As systematically modeled in Figure 1.2, the pedagogical mechanism operates along two parallel trajectories:

Classroom Interaction Variables**:** Evaluating the balance of interaction patterns (asking, responding, clarifying) and tracking teacher support mechanisms, which include topic selection, language scaffolding, setting clear interaction rules, and delivering balanced feedback. Core Speaking Competencies: Measuring specific target outputs, namely verbal fluency, interactional patterns, logical argumentation, structures for polite disagreement, and individual speaking confidence.

Figure 1.2. Role of Discussion and Debate in Developing Speaking Skills



3.2. Discourse Classification Matrix

To formally classify and track the linguistic output generated during interactive sessions, this study incorporates a functional-notional analysis of targeted classroom discourse. Based on the structural paradigm in Table 1.2.1, the research categorizes communicative output into eight explicit language functions necessary for free expression:

Table 1.2.1. Useful language for discussion and debate

Communicative function	Useful expressions
Giving an opinion	I think that… / In my opinion… / As far as I understand…
Agreeing	I agree with this point because… / That is true. / I share this view.
Disagreeing politely	I see your point, but… / I partly disagree because… / I am not sure that…
Asking for clarification	Could you explain what you mean? / Can you give an example?
Adding an idea	I would also like to add that… / Another important point is…
Giving an argument	The main reason is… / This can be proved by… / For example…
Responding to an argument	The opposing side says that…, however… / This argument is weak because…
Concluding	To sum up… / For these reasons… / Our final position is…

RESULTS

The analytical framework presented in Figure 1.2 demonstrates that discussion and debate function as complementary interactive speaking methods, each contributing to different dimensions of learners' communicative competence. Although both approaches promote oral production, they emphasize distinct aspects of classroom communication. Discussion primarily facilitates the exchange of ideas, questions, and opinions in a collaborative environment, whereas debate encourages learners to construct structured arguments supported by logical reasoning and evidence.The model further indicates that these two instructional techniques jointly enhance five fundamental components of speaking competence. First, learners improve fluency by producing longer and more spontaneous utterances during continuous interaction. Nation and Newton argue that fluency activities should encourage learners to use known language quickly and meaningfully [7; 151]

Second, frequent questioning, responding, and clarification contribute to stronger interactional competence, allowing students to participate actively in communicative exchanges. Brown notes that interactional speaking requires the ability to process what others say and respond appropriately [3; 275]. Third, debate activities strengthen argumentation skills by requiring learners to justify opinions with relevant reasons and examples. Fourth, exposure to expressions of respectful disagreement promotes pragmatic competence, enabling learners to express contrasting viewpoints appropriately without interrupting effective communication. Finally, repeated participation in interactive speaking tasks gradually increases learners' confidence**,** reducing fear of making mistakes and encouraging more active classroom participation.

The framework also identifies teacher support as a fundamental variable influencing the success of discussion- and debate-based instruction. Bygate points out that successful speaking activities require clear task design, preparation, and appropriate teacher support [5; 150]. Appropriate topic selection, language scaffolding, explicit classroom rules, and constructive feedback provide learners with sufficient linguistic and psychological support throughout the speaking process. Consequently, the interaction between learner participation and teacher guidance creates favorable conditions for meaningful oral communication. Overall, the analytical model suggests that discussion and debate operate not as isolated classroom activities but as interconnected pedagogical strategies that collectively strengthen learners' communicative competence. Canale and Swain emphasize that communicative competence includes not only grammatical knowledge, but also sociolinguistic and strategic abilities [6; 30].

DISCUSSION

The functional discourse classification shown in Table 1.2 illustrates that discussion and debate encourage learners to employ language according to communicative purpose rather than isolated grammatical structures. The analysis demonstrates that successful classroom interaction requires

learners to perform multiple discourse functions throughout the speaking process. Among the identified functions, giving opinions**,** providing arguments**,** and responding to opposing viewpoints constitute the core linguistic activities of interactive speaking tasks. Learners consistently employ opinion markers to introduce personal perspectives before supporting them with logical explanations and examples. Similarly, expressions of agreement and polite disagreement facilitate collaborative communication by enabling students to negotiate meaning while maintaining respectful interaction.

The analysis further reveals that clarification requests and idea-expansion expressions contribute significantly to the continuity of classroom discussions. These discourse functions encourage learners to elaborate on ideas, resolve misunderstandings, and maintain conversational flow. Moreover, the use of concluding expressions enables students to summarize arguments coherently, thereby improving discourse organization and overall communicative effectiveness. Therefore, the discourse classification confirms that discussion and debate promote not only grammatical accuracy but also functional language use, discourse competence, and pragmatic awareness, all of which represent essential components of successful oral communication.

The combined analysis of Figure 1.2 and Table 1.2.1 indicates that discussion and debate represent highly effective interactive methodologies for developing speaking skills in English language education. The findings demonstrate that these approaches simultaneously foster linguistic development, critical thinking, communicative interaction, and learner autonomy.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that discussion and debate represent highly effective interactive pedagogical approaches for developing learners' oral communication and overall communicative competence in foreign language education. Unlike traditional teacher-centred instruction, these methods create authentic communicative situations in which learners actively exchange ideas, defend opinions, negotiate meaning, and respond to alternative perspectives. As a result, students become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of linguistic knowledge. The analytical framework confirms that discussion and debate contribute to the simultaneous development of several essential components of speaking proficiency, including verbal fluency, interactional competence, logical argumentation, pragmatic awareness, and speaking confidence. Furthermore, the discourse classification matrix illustrates that learners employ a broad range of communicative functions, such as expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing politely, requesting clarification, presenting arguments, and drawing conclusions. These functional language patterns prepare students for authentic academic and professional communication beyond the classroom.

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