

報告

Progress Report on Joint Research Project to Introduce Debate into the English Classroom

英語授業におけるディベート活動の導入に関する共同研究 <中間報告>

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本稿では、ディベート活動を高等学校の授業で導入することによって、生徒にどんな変化があるのかに関する調査報告をする。この研究は、現場教師の協力を得ながら、平成30年5月から平成31年2月までにかけて行う。対象は高校1年生の英語表現のクラス及び高校2年生のコミュニケーション英語のクラスである。筆者は週1回授業に赴き、生徒に20分間のディベート活動や講義を行っている。ここでは、研究の途中経過として、これまで行った活動、事前アンケートの結果、生徒のディベートに関する感想や気づき、今後の展望などについて述べる。

1. Research topic

How to develop students' public speaking skills, decrease students' anxiety when speaking in English, and encourage critical thinking through a debate curriculum.

2. Goals of this research

The main goal of this research is to observe how teachers can develop students' communication and thinking skills through adopting debate activities in the classroom. The researcher, in conjunction with the main teacher, designs a debate curriculum and creates materials to teach students the basics of debate. Our hope is that this research can provide an easy-to-follow guide for teachers who are interested in incorporating debate into their English classes.

We also have several goals for students. Firstly, through doing debate, it is our hope that students can also gradually cultivate their public speaking skills in both verbal and nonverbal communication. Secondly, by providing students with frequent debating opportunities, we hope they will get used to speaking in English in front of a big group, thereby decreasing their anxiety when speaking in English. Lastly, using the argument format of debate, we hope this activity encourages students to think critically and consider both sides of any topic they are given, as well as try to find the reasons and examples to support both arguments.

3. Research content and progress

Participants

This research spans from May 2018 to February 2019. For this research project, the researcher is working with a veteran teacher at a high school in Kanagawa Prefecture. The teacher has been teaching at this school for ten years and has a good reputation with many of the students as

someone who teaches English communicatively. This year, the teacher is teaching English Expression to first-year students (once a week) and English Communication to second-year students (twice a week). As the researcher can only come on Tuesdays or Thursdays, the classes in which this research will be conducted are:

- 1) English Expression class, first-year, 16 students (Tuesdays, once a week, 90 minutes)
- 2) English Expression class, first-year, 32 students (Thursdays, once a week, 90 minutes)
- 3) English Communication class, second-year, 25 students (Tuesdays and Thursdays, twice a week, 90 minutes)

At the beginning of the year, the teacher and researcher informed students of this research project and received full consent from students' parents for permission to gather questionnaire, audio and video data from students.

Research Schedule

Table 1

Summary of Debate Research Schedule from May to December 2018.

Month	Content
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Explanation of research to students, collect consent forms ◆ Introduction to the basics of debate & debating in Japanese ◆ Introduction to debating in English & constructive speech frame
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Introduction to rebuttal & rebuttal speech frame ◆ Effective ways to make a rebuttal ◆ Pretest questionnaire ◆ Pretest on debate skills
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Distinguishing between good and bad reasons ◆ Debate practice
August – September	Summer break
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Review of debate ◆ How to summarize an argument ◆ Debate practice after class discussions on the same topic
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Debate practice after class discussions on the same topic ◆ Midterm questionnaire
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identifying the warrant for an effective rebuttal

Table 1 shows a summary of what has been done for each month from May to December. Although the format changes from week to week, here is the common format for how the research is currently carried out. First, the main teacher does his class for 65 minutes. This includes a range

of activities such as textbook reading, extra reading, grammar explanations, conversational activities, and discussion on topics related to either textbook or outside reading. Then, the researcher uses the last 25 minutes to do lectures and activities related to debate. Students usually debate in a group of three, with two debaters and one judge who decides the winner of the debate. Classroom observation data as well as student reflections seem to demonstrate that students are motivated to speak when there is a judge as this provides them an incentive to make their argument effectively in order to win the debate.

In the first semester, the researcher gave several lectures to introduce students to the basics of debate and arguments as well as frames they can use to create constructive and rebuttal speeches. As for the debate, the topics change each time and are usually related to what students have just read and discussed with the teacher. In June, the researcher also conducted a pretest questionnaire and pretest to measure students' debating skills. It was a debate task in which students had to present both constructive and rebuttal speeches, then rate their performance as well as those of their friends on aspects of delivery, structure and content.

The second semester focused mainly on giving students as much practice as possible with debating. In the first semester, we found that students were able to debate more easily if they had a discussion beforehand on the same topic. Thus, before debating, we always do a teacher-led pair and class discussion to get students thinking about one issue from various angles. These topics are usually chosen in advance, based on the textbook reading, or a reading from an outside source that the teacher would like to cover, or something the teacher wrote up himself. A midterm questionnaire on students' attitudes towards English and debate was also conducted in November.

Midterm Questionnaire Results

We conducted a midterm questionnaire in November to gauge the effectiveness of our research thus far. Our goals for this research are to help students cultivate their public speaking skills in both verbal and nonverbal communication, to decrease students' anxiety when speaking in English, and to encourage students to think critically and be able to consider both sides of any argument. Results from the questionnaire shows as follows:

Regarding the first and second goals of cultivating public speaking skills and decreasing language anxiety, there remains much work to be done as a majority of students still do not feel they can properly communicate their ideas in English. Table 2 shows students' answers for questions related to these two goals.

Table 2

Questionnaire Results Related to Public Speaking and Language Anxiety

Original Question	English Translation	Results
あなたはクラスメート 全員の前で自分の考え を英語で話すことができ ると思いますか？	Do you think you can say your opinions in front of all your classmates?	“I think so” or “I really think so”: 32.9% “I don’t think so” or “I really don’t think so”: 67.1%
あなたは人前で抵抗なく 話すことができますと思 いますか？ 英語の 場合：	Do you think you can speak in front of others in English without hesitation?	“I think so” or “I really think so”: 30.3% “I don’t think so” or “I really don’t think so”: 69.7%
あなたはペアやグルー プで、英語で抵抗なく話 すことができますと思 いますか？	Do you think you can speak without hesitation in English in pairs or groups?	“I think so” or “I really think so”: 53.9% “I don’t think so” or “I really don’t think so”: 46.1%
あなたは間違いを恐れ ず英語をどんどん話す ことができますと思 いますか？	Do you think you can keep talking in English without being scared of making mistakes?	“I think so” or “I really think so”: 36.8% “I don’t think so” or “I really don’t think so”: 63.2%

With respect to debate, although students have received much practice in debating, a majority still feel that they are not able to make an argument and do rebuttals well. However, a majority also answered that they are able to think about and consider opinions and ideas that are different from their own. Thus, it seems that students have an easier time thinking about issues and arguments and are quite able to do so, yet when they have to communicate these thoughts in a debate, they experience difficulty in communicating their thoughts in a second language and so judge themselves unable to make arguments. Table 3 shows students’ answers for questions related to debating.

Table 3

Questionnaire Results Related to Debate and Critical Thinking Skills

Original Question	English Translation	Results
あなたは主張に適切な 理由や具体例を添えて 話すことができると思 いますか？	Do you think you can give appropriate reasons and examples to support your claim?	“I think so” or “I really think so”: 35.6% “I don’t think so” or “I really don’t think so”: 64.4%

あなたは話を聞いてすぐに、その内容を引用して議論をすることができますか？	Do you think you can listen to an argument and use what was said to make your own argument?	“I think so” or “I really think so”: 31.6% “I don’t think so” or “I really don’t think so”: 68.4%
あなたは自分のもともと持っている考えと異なる立場から、意見を考えることができますか？	Do you think you can think of ideas and opinions that are different from your own?	“I think so” or “I really think so”: 67.1% “I don’t think so” or “I really don’t think so”: 32.9%
あなたは他者の意見に的確に反論することができますか？	Do you think you can make an appropriate rebuttal to others’ arguments?	“I think so” or “I really think so”: 38.2% “I don’t think so” or “I really don’t think so”: 61.8%

Here are several comments from the questionnaire regarding how students feel about debate. One keyword that appeared numerous times was “difficult” (「難しい・難しさ」), with 27 students lamenting on the difficulty of doing debate. A word that appeared quite often along with the keyword “difficult” was “rebuttal” (「反論・反駁」) with 13 students mentioning this word. Here are several examples of students’ comments:

- ◆ “In the beginning, I thought debate would be hard but as we started doing it, I realized it was quite fun. Still, being asked to come up with a proper rebuttal right in the moment is quite difficult for me.” (最初は難しいと思っていたけど、やってみたら楽しかった。ただ、その場で反論を考えてそれを言うなどの臨機応変さが求められるものはまだ難しいと感じる。)
- ◆ “I’m glad I was able to practice saying my ideas logically. But if I am on the side that I don’t agree with, it’s hard to do a good rebuttal.” (自分の考えを論理的に話す練習になってよかった。自分が思っているのと反対の立場にいると、うまく反論できず難しいなと感じた。)
- ◆ “It’s really difficult to rebut others’ opinions.” (相手の意見を踏まえた反論がすごく難しい。)

Another word that also came up several times was “fun” (「楽しい・楽しかった」) with 13 comments. Here are several examples:

- ◆ “It’s easy for me to say my opinion but I realized it’s hard if I have to give a reason for that. Before I did debate, I didn’t think it would be fun but after we tried it, I found it quite interesting.” (意見を言うことは簡単だけれどその理由などを言うのが難しいんだなと気

づけた。ディベートもやる前は楽しくなさそうだったけれどやってみると楽しいと思った。)

- ◆ By doing debate several times, I realized I gradually came to be able to speak more so it's fun for me. (ディベートの回数を重ねていくうちにどんどん喋れるようになっていくのが分かって楽しいです。)
- ◆ By having to think of an opinion and reasons even for the side that I don't agree with, I was able to expand my perspectives and enjoy debate. (自分の意見とは違う立ち位置の主張をして理由を考えることで、より広い視野を持って、本当に楽しいです。)

4. Future prospects

At the time of writing, the researcher still has a little over two months left in this research. Based on the questionnaire results from November, students are still struggling with their insecurities and language anxiety when speaking in English. Although it may not be possible to alleviate all of students' qualms when speaking in a foreign language, the researcher and teacher hope to lighten students' attitudes towards their insecurities through further discussions on this topic. With regards to debate, although students have gotten used to debating, it seems they are still having a difficult time to come up with good arguments, especially when doing rebuttals. Thus, the researcher plans to use several classes in the final two months to teach students how to make an effective rebuttal. Also, in order for students to deepen their arguments, it is also necessary to teach them how to include clear and concrete examples in their argument. Final data points of posttest questionnaires and post-test debate tasks will also be conducted in February.