

## TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH DEBATES IN ESP CLASSROOM

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Nowadays, due to the globalization, being able to efficiently interact with overseas partners in the global arena is becoming increasingly important. At university a successful specialist in the field of international relations and international economic relations must acquire good speaking skills within communication competency.

Speaking is believed to be the most important and challenging skill to master. The success of mastering it “is measured in terms of the ability to carry out conversation in language speaking in an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information” [1]. Students must be given an opportunity to speak English in ESP classroom as much as possible accounting for the specifics of the specialty and the job-related communication skills to be acquired.

Being complex by nature, speaking is concerned with such key components as:

- pronunciation;
- lexis and grammar;
- coherence and cohesion devices;
- expressive devices;
- fluency and
- functional language.

The latter implies that effective speaking benefits from the negotiatory language we use to seek clarification and to show the structure of what we are saying, we often need ask for clarification when we are listening to someone else talk.

Among the numerous speaking activities used in ESP classroom, debates are seen as a valuable learning activity for teaching analytical and critical thinking, as well as providing students with a unique practice of using the language to solve job-related tasks.

Debate (Old French *debatre*, from *de-* “down, completely” + *batre* = *to beat*) [3] is defined by the Collins Dictionary as:

- 1) a discussion about a subject on which people have different views;
- 2) a formal discussion, for example in a parliament or institution, in which people express different opinions about a particular subject and then vote on it [4].

As a teaching technique, *debates* can be defined as a speaking activity in the form of a role play where students are divided in different sides of an issue and have to defend their opinions. Debating can be used in ESP classroom as a tool to make students boost their speaking skills in job-related situations. Practices can be organized in various ways.

In ESP classroom, debating enables mixed-ability students to use all English skills along with skills in delivery, presentation and vocabulary building. When learning a ESP for global communication, international economic relations students are required to confidently express their thoughts. Moreover, in order for students to be eloquent and persuasive, critical thinking and argumentation skills are essential. According to Richard Nisbett, “debate is an important educational tool for learning analytic thinking skills and for forcing self-conscious reflection on the validity of one’s ideas” [5, p. 210].

For debates to be successful, a traditional debate format should be stuck to:

- 1) describe the debate topic; it must be interesting and related to students’ future job;
- 2) invite students to choose their role either as proponents or opponents;
- 3) select an equal number of students to speak on each of the two debate teams (two to four people on each team); have the two teams sit in front of the class so that everyone can see them;

- 4) give the students time to prepare their arguments; they can use their notes but they are not allowed to read when making a presentation;
- 5) appoint one member on each team as the “captain” who gives their presentation first and summarizes the team’s views at the end;
- 6) set a three-minute time limit for each presentation;
- 7) after everyone has given their presentation, class members in the audience can question people on either team [4, p. 64–65].

If debates are practiced on a regular basis, students can improve their fluency, pronunciation and vocabulary significantly. Teachers’ role implies moderating and facilitating students’ learning. They provide feedback on students’ performance with focus on pronunciation, accent, intonation, vocabulary range, grammatical accuracy, functional language, body language. At the same time they evaluate how relevant the information is and whether it is presented logically.

So, debates as ESP teaching technique has a number of advantages over other speaking practices. Debating in ESP classroom enables students to gain speaking experience using all the “prerequisites” for effective oral communication. Furthermore, apart from providing meaningful listening, speaking and writing practice, debate is highly effective for developing critical thinking and argumentation skills.

### **References**

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## **CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ESP: THE ISSUE OF INTEGRATING LANGUAGE AND CONTENT**

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The Bologna and Post-Bologna processes in European higher educational institutions have shifted significantly educators’ views on teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP) at tertiary professional establishments with certain global, national and institutional ESP reform policies to have been implemented [6]. Numerous researches has been carried out recently covering both the high level of theoretical considerations within the context of up-to-date ESP instruction issues and a set of examples on useful classroom practices that could reduce substantially the scope of challenges for ESP teachers nowadays [1–8]. When discussing the issue of the abstract suggested the basic characteristic features of ESP (English for Specific Purposes), CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) and CBI (content-based instruction) are worth taking into consideration.

The ESP-approach is advantageous enough first and foremost due to the ESP syllabi designed to meet specific learner needs being related to or specifically designed for specific scientific areas with appropriate use of a different methodology than that of General English. What