

Chapter 4

Ethical Communication and Argument–Centered Education Can Enhance Transnational Education and Promote a More Ethical and Civil World

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ABSTRACT

This chapter briefly introduces and demonstrates fifteen debate-related analytical and compositional tools that can be implemented in language arts courses such as writing, public speaking, and debate. Based on classical rhetoric and solidly grounded in pedagogical research, these exercises are already in use in both the English language learner (ELL) and native English-speaking environments. Combined with the larger philosophical tenets of ethical communication, which reminds speakers and writers to be mindful of the positive or negative effects their words can have on the societies in which they live and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a suite of interconnected concepts extracted from the conventions of competitive debate that can be of significant benefit to teachers and learners within the Transnational Education (TNE) community. A philosophy of Ethical argument, a detailed pedagogical framework, a review of the most excellent literature available, and a brief demonstration of 15 classroom activities are provided. The information in this document is sufficient for institutions and individual educators to begin a deliberate shift to a more argument-focused approach to teaching. Data will be presented showing that such a shift can be a helpful method of improving educational outcomes. Furthermore, these concepts can be imple-

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mented with minimal investment in cost and resources. Therefore, adopting some or all of the pedagogical principles provided here could reasonably become a part of any TNE institution's educational strategy.

BACKGROUND

In 2008, the author of this chapter started his teaching career in China with little experience and, therefore, not much confidence. Additionally, the international context brought significant cultural barriers, which meant that prospects for success in this chosen field were sometimes in doubt. However, during the second teaching year, an unexpected turning point came from an assignment to take over as the coach of the university's competitive debate team. This required attending a week-long training session in Beijing provided by a well-known national publishing company.

The annual event brought together hundreds of coaches, students, and adjudicators from every corner of China and nearly every continent. Additionally, well-known argument scholars and national-championship-winning instructors from Singapore, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia were also present.

Each year, a full day was set aside for teacher-to-teacher interaction. During these sessions, best teaching practices were shared and exchanged. Since each lecturer was also a debate coach, the presentations revolved around how debate-related techniques could be fused into day-to-day teaching practices. With these lessons learned and applied, the author of this chapter quickly began to see improved interaction and enthusiasm in his classes. With these argument-centered methods, students were learning more and displaying greater competence and confidence, especially regarding writing and public speaking. Thanks to this "debatification" process, success as university-level writing and public speaking teacher was no longer in doubt.

In 2015, the author moved to a newly founded university almost exclusively focused on sending its graduates to further studies in western countries. This meant the responsibility to prepare students to write, speak, and communicate confidently was a significant part of the teaching responsibilities. However, there was a more significant problem developing that would affect future teaching styles.

The world was beginning to change during those years. Words like "deglobalization" and "decoupling" were starting to be heard regularly. Previous international trends that helped bring people together were starting to be reversed. In accordance with the university's mission statement, which is in part "to bring together East and West," the school's leaders wanted to produce young people who might one day be part of the solution. With this purpose in mind, the author began a formal academic inquiry into ways in which the argument and debate-centered approach could be effective in the classroom and valuable to society and the world beyond.

Ethical Communication is the result of this multi-year inquiry. It is a mixture of formal debate techniques combined with principles that guide educators and students in directions conducive to a more peaceful world. It is designed to equip students with communication and listening tools that will help prepare them for global citizenship.

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