

## Let's Practice Debating in English (Revised)

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

This text is a brief introduction to formal debate but also a more general introduction to argumentation. By the end of the text, readers will have learned to prepare for and engage in a formal debate. At the same time, those concepts and skills learned in this text are more widely applicable to a variety of communication situations when readers try to critically examine controversial issues and find better ways to defend their opinion developed through critical examination.

This introductory section tries to define debate, introducing a special kind of debate called "Academic Debate". Section 2 will discuss the nature and selection of topics for debate. Section 3 will go step by step through the process of preparing for a formal debate. Section 4 will examine the nature of arguments. Section 5 will explain how to organize speeches. Section 6 will briefly consider ethical aspects of debate.

Some of the rules and principles in this text are based on a particular style of Academic Debate, in which a specific topic for debate is announced well before the debate round and debaters are allowed to read manuscripts and quotations in speeches. If you are to practice a different style of debate, you should adjust accordingly. Still most of the principles and skills discussed here will be applicable to any kind of debate and more broadly to many other communication situations. Whether you may actually practice Academic Debate or not, it will be a great asset for you to develop the skills and attitudes in critical thinking and strategic communication outlined in this text.

#### 1.1. What is Debate?

Debate is a communication process in which participants argue for and against a given topic. There are many kinds of debate. Some people think of a business meeting. An employee proposes a new marketing plan but another opposes it. You and your friend may have an informal debate. You are talking about a plan for the coming long weekend. You suggest a trip to a spa resort but your friend disagrees. You can also debate by yourself. You are trying to make a future plan. "Do I want to go to a graduate school or to find a job in a company?" You consider good points and bad points about those two future plans. All these are daily examples of debate.

There are many reasons why people debate. The most important reason is to make the best possible decision regarding an opinion. How can we arrive at the best decision? We want to hear the best

possible defense of the opinion and best possible attack against the opinion before we decide. If someone tries his best to find reasons for the opinion and another tries her best to find reasons against the opinion, we will be able to hear enough information to make our decision. If they try to attack and defend each other's arguments, we will be able to hear better reasons for our decision.

Let me illustrate the point. Suppose an electric power company proposes the construction of an atomic power plant in your town. Some people in your town welcome the plan. Others oppose it. Still many others cannot make up their mind. There will be a town meeting about the plan of the atomic power plant. You are concerned about the safety of atomic power plants and want to speak up in the meeting. You will start preparing for the meeting. You call the power company and ask for information. You also find a group of people opposing atomic power plants in other areas and ask for information. You go to a library to find several books and articles in magazines discussing the safety of atomic power plants. By carefully reading all that information, you may arrive at a conclusion that the atomic power plant in your town will be dangerous. You then write up a short speech so that you can give it at the town meeting. You also study what your electric power company has to say about those safety questions so that you can criticize them as well as defend your opinion against possible criticism. In the town meeting, you and some others give opinions against the construction of the atomic power plant in your neighborhood. Some others present their opinions for the construction. You exchange some questions and answers about your opinions. You also criticize some of the points raised by the proponents of the construction. They also attack your opinion. There are more exchanges of opinions for and against atomic power plants.

In this illustration, debate is not only the discussions which take place at the town meeting but it includes the whole process of analyzing the question of the safety of the plant, searching for information, and preparing your speech and possible attacks and defense. At the end of this process, the audience is able to make the best possible decision. In this sense, debate is a special kind of argumentation by which issues are critically examined and a certain position is strategically defended. Argumentation skills can be applied in both producing and receiving messages in writing, public speaking, negotiating, and in other communication situations.

#### 1.2. What is Academic Debate?

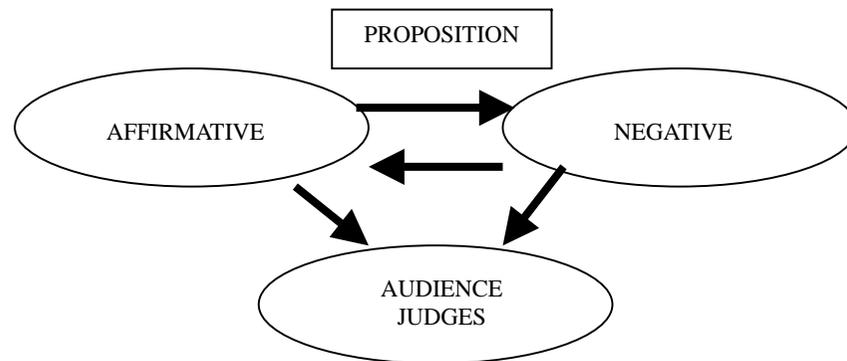
When you are using this textbook in class, you will encounter debate as educational exercise. This is called Academic or Educational Debate. Academic Debate is different from debate in the real world like the above debate in the town meeting. In the real-world debate, the purpose is often to decide the future plan of the participants. In Academic Debate, the primary purpose is educational training. Suppose we have a debate in this class on whether we should build an atomic plant in our town. Even if we decide to build it, it will not actually be built.

There are several characteristics of Academic Debate for maximizing its educational benefits. There are strict rules of speaking in terms of time, order, the use of evidence, etc. Judges often give criticism and advice for arguments regarding both contents and skills, as well as making a decision. Academic Debate is offered as one type of speech course at colleges and high schools in the United States and some other countries, where students are taught how to debate. It is also popular in extracurricular activities and there are local and national level competitions. In Japan you also find some classes using debate and tournaments (contests) both in the Japanese and English languages.

Debate has been practiced for a long time in Western societies since the time of Ancient Greece. It

is often used in classrooms and business training. Many leaders in politics, business, and academics learned debate. Many of the U.S. presidents and British prime ministers used to practice debate in schools and universities. In Japan, debating in English has an established tradition in extracurricular clubs (mostly called English Speaking Societies). More recently, the high school curriculum for English includes debate as one of the optional activities. Debate in Japanese is also becoming increasingly popular.

In a typical setting of communication for Academic Debate, the following elements are involved as in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Communication Setting for Academic Debate**

A debate as a verbal communication event is primarily conducted between two matched sides which are represented by two teams: the "affirmative" side to support the topic and the "negative" side to oppose the topic. The topic for debate is officially called the "proposition" or "resolution" (or sometimes called a "motion"). In classroom debates, students either sign up for those teams or the instructor may assign them to each group. In tournaments and contests, the participating teams consist of the same number of people and each team usually stands at least once on the affirmative side and once on the negative side.

The speakers (debaters) from the two teams in a debate then give speeches for and against the topic or they give pros and cons of the questions under debate. They take turns giving speeches to support their position. In some formats, they ask the other team questions after a speech (called "cross-examination"). In this sense, they communicate with each other.

The two teams not only communicate with each other but also communicate with a third party. In many cases, the debate is presented in front of an "audience". The affirmative and the negative teams try their best to persuade the audience to believe their side. There are also special kinds of audience, "judges" or "critics" (or "adjudicators"). The audience may give their decision at the end of the debate. Judges and critics also sometimes give comments and advice so that debaters can improve their analyses or speeches.

### 1.3. Format of Academic Debate

Academic Debate allows a variety of formats (such as the length and number of speeches). The

important point is that the affirmative and the negative sides have the same amount of time for their speeches. A full format in a tournament is given below. The length and number of speeches may be decreased to fit classroom purposes.

#### A Full Format of an Academic Debate

1st Affirmative Constructive Speech (1AC)	8 min.
Cross-Examination by the Negative Team	3 min.
1st Negative Constructive Speech (1NC)	8 min.
Cross-Examination by the Affirmative Team	3 min.
2nd Affirmative Constructive Speech (2AC)	8 min.
Cross-Examination by the Negative Team	3 min.
2nd Negative Constructive Speech (2NC)	8 min.
Cross-Examination by the Affirmative Team	3 min.
1st Negative Rebuttal Speech (1NR)	4 min.
1st Affirmative Rebuttal Speech (1AR)	4 min.
2nd Negative Rebuttal Speech (2NR)	4 min.
2nd Affirmative Rebuttal Speech (2AR)	4 min.
(10-min. flexible preparation time may be allocated to each team.)	

Preparation time is used to organize a speech before it is orally presented. In the flexible-time system, each team decides how many minutes to spend before a speech until the given time is used up. In the fixed-time system, a fixed amount of time (e.g., 2 minutes) is given before each speech except for the 1st Affirmative Constructive, which is prepared before the debate round. Cross-examination is conducted immediately after the speech.

#### Study Questions

1. Compare Japanese "tooron" and "debate" defined here. What are similarities and differences?
2. Compare "debate", "discussion", and "negotiation". What are similarities and differences?
3. What are the merits and demerits of making a decision in a classroom debate?

### 2. CHOOSING A PROPOSITION

Selecting an adequate proposition is essential for meaningful debate. A proposition is expressed in a clear statement that represents the affirmative side of the controversy. An official statement of the proposition is written as "Resolved: That. . ." Propositions may be about judgments of fact/value or about desirability of a policy/plan of action. For example:

- Resolved: That UFOs are spaceships from another planet. (FACT)
- Resolved: That private universities are better than national universities. (VALUE)
- Resolved: That school uniforms should be abolished. (POLICY)

The topic may be presented in a question form as in "Should school uniforms be abolished?" But a WH-question like "What should we do about our uniform?" cannot serve as a debate topic since it

does not draw a line between the affirmative and the negative grounds. There are four other points to consider when we decide a proposition.

- (1) The proposition should be controversial. The proposition should be phrased so that it may give more or less an equal chance of winning. Both the affirmative and negative arguments should be balanced. "Resolved: That the Hawks will win the baseball championship" may be an adequate debate topic in the beginning of the season but cannot be debated after the winner becomes obvious.
- (2) The proposition should be neutrally worded. "Resolved: That Japan should ban the sale of harmful cigarettes" presupposes the harm of cigarettes and thus unfairly favors the affirmative.
- (3) The proposition should indicate a change from the present system. In a typical setup, the affirmative side is an advocate of change and the negative side is a defender of the present or the status quo. The affirmative has the burden of proof to show that the change is necessary; the negative side opposes the change.
- (4) The proposition should be suitable for the participants. The topic should be interesting to participants, not too easy nor too difficult both in contents and language in the process of research as well as writing and presenting speeches. In classrooms, reading materials from other classes may be used to decrease the students' burden of original research.

#### Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate

1. Write two possible resolutions for classroom debate. Attach a relevant article for each about the subject matter from newspapers, magazines, and Web sites (written in English).
2. Write three possible reasons for the affirmative and the negative of each resolution.
3. Discuss the relative merits of the candidate resolutions for the class debate. Choose the best one in class or group.

### 3. PREPARATION FOR DEBATE

This section follows the process of preparation for debate after the proposition is decided until the oral debate is conducted. The process is not linear but individual stages may be repeated a number of times. Debate is often conducted in teams and thus preparation is also shared by the group members.

#### 3.1. Analysis of Proposition

If you selected the proposition for yourself, you have already started the analysis. Otherwise, you must make a fresh analysis of the given proposition. This process involves interpreting the meaning of the proposition and finding the issues involved in the proposition.

##### 3.1.1. Interpreting the Proposition

Unless the meaning of the proposition is clear, we cannot have a fruitful debate. The first step of

analysis is defining the terms in the proposition and determine the meaning of the proposition as a whole. You must often go beyond finding dictionary definitions of the terms. If you are debating the topic "Resolved: That the Japanese government should prohibit smoking in public places," you should consider, for example, what constitutes "smoking" and "public places" in the controversy.

#### 3.1.2. Finding Issues

Both the affirmative and negative teams must consider all potential issues involved in the proposition. In a murder trial (Resolved: That X is guilty of murder.), both the prosecution (affirmative) and the defense (negative) must consider not only the physical act of killing but also motive, alibi, and other issues which are determined by criminal law. In Academic Debate, such issues must often be found in the nature of the controversy. In debating policy propositions, debaters and coaches have developed a set of standard issues (called "stock issues"). These stock issues help you systematically analyze the proposition. These issues are expressed in a question form and must be answered "YES" by the affirmative and "NO" by the negative. Let us briefly discuss the major stock issues.

- (1) Is there a serious problem that calls for change? The affirmative wants to show the quality and quantity of the problem(s) in the present system. It may also show that the plan will produce a significant advantage over the present system. (The lack of such an advantage is considered a problem in the present system.)
- (2) Is the problem inherently connected to the present system? The affirmative may want to show that the problem is caused by the present system or the problem cannot be solved without changing the present system. The negative could show that the problem is temporary or accidental to the present system.
- (3) Is there a practical plan to solve the problem? The affirmative must present a feasible plan within the frame of the given proposition. Technological, personal, natural resources may be at issue. Constitutionality and current political popularity of the proposed plan are not at issue because Academic Debate about a policy proposition examines whether the proposed plan would be desirable if it were to be carried out.
- (4) Would the affirmative plan solve the problem? Assuming that the proposed plan is indeed carried out, this issue examines the process of solving the problem or producing the advantage.
- (5) Are the advantages of the plan bigger than its disadvantages? This is an issue that should be raised by the negative side. It must show that the disadvantages are significant, unique to the affirmative plan, and also show how they would occur. The negative side tries to show that the disadvantages would be more significant than the problems to be solved.

#### Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate

4. Discuss possible interpretations of the chosen proposition. If necessary, find definitions of the terms in the propositions from dictionaries, encyclopedias, and subject-area textbooks.
5. Find issues specific to the chosen proposition. If the proposition is a policy, then use the stock issues to guide your analysis.

### 3.2. Research

Research is an important aspect of Academic Debate. In some cases, you can simply find information from your own knowledge. In most debates, however, you want to go beyond what you already know. You also want to find definitions, facts, statistics, and expert opinions to back up your arguments. In the beginning of preparation, you may want to conduct a broad/generic research to better understand the proposition and possible issues. Later, you want to look for specific information to support particular points in your arguments.

#### Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate

6. Make a tentative list of references (books, articles, and Web pages). Use a standard style sheet to format the list. This list is tentative and should be updated throughout the process of debating the same proposition.

### 3.3. Building Cases

A case is a set of arguments that supports the affirmative or the negative position. One proposition allows more than one case. For example, the resolution calling for the prohibition of cigarette smoking may be justified by a case of smokers' health risk, of passive smoking, or of fires caused by smoking. A few cases may be combined to make one case. An affirmative case may be based on an intolerable current problem or may be based on the attainable benefits currently ignored.

A negative case may be based on one or more of the following strategies:

- (1) Straight Refutation. The negative team tries to refute individual affirmative arguments and issues.
- (2) Disadvantages. The negative shows that the affirmative plan would produce serious disadvantages that would outweigh the affirmative advantages (or the problems that the plan would solve).
- (3) Defense of the Status Quo. The negative tries to show that the present system is working well or is capable of solving the problem that the affirmative has identified.
- (4) Counterplan. The negative could concede the problem of the present system but argue that an alternative plan (different from both the present system and the proposition) would solve the problem better than the affirmative plan.

Both the affirmative and the negative teams must present an entire case in Constructive Speeches (Section 19.1.3) and must not change or add major issues in Rebuttal Speeches. This rule enables debaters to develop arguments on focused issues.

#### Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate

7. Discuss possible affirmative and negative cases in groups. Even if your team does not want to use a particular case, try to develop it and then make a possible case against it.

### 3.4. Refutation and Rebuttal

This is a unique feature of debate that is different from more or less one-way communication of public speaking. But the same critical examination can be applied when you are simply receiving messages as a listener or a reader. Debate, or argumentation in general, is a process of approaching the truth through defending one's own opinion, attacking the other's, and further defending one's own in light of the opposition's refutation. Refutation and rebuttal also rigorously train your critical thinking and effective communication skills.

In a formal Academic Debate, "refutation" (= attacking) occurs in any speech except for the 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech. The principle is that you must respond to the opposition's argument in the earliest available speech; otherwise, you will be assumed to grant the argument. That is, silence is admission. In order to refute an argument, you can expose its weaknesses (lack or inadequacy of evidence and reasoning) or present counter evidence, which contradicts the opposition's argument.

The term "rebuttal" is used in two meanings. One is "rebuilding" your own argument, which is tried in response to the opposition's refutation of your argument. It occurs in the team's second or later speeches. You can rebuild your own point by refuting the opposition's refutation or adding new support to your argument/issue under attack.

The other meaning of "rebuttal" is used for the names of speeches in the second half of the debate round, i.e., rebuttal speeches. Rebuttal speeches may not present new major arguments but must develop already introduced issues and arguments. The last rebuttal speech of both teams also summarizes the entire debate from their respective viewpoints.

Preparation is important for effective refutation and rebuttal. You must anticipate the opposition's arguments and prepare against them. In a particular debate round, you must adapt the prepared arguments to the opposition's points. Such prepared arguments can be stocked in the form of "briefs", written arguments complete with evidence. Given below are two sample briefs in the debate "Resolved: That private high schools are better than public high schools." The first one is an affirmative team's brief to strengthen the argument that private schools are better. This could also be used to respond to some problems of the private schools that the negative may bring up. The second brief is another affirmative brief in response to a negative issue that "public schools are more economical because their tuition is cheaper than private schools." Since the affirmative cannot deny the fact, it tries to minimize the effect of the argument.

#### Sample Brief 1

Affirmative: flexibility  
 Private schools are ready to change.  
 Private schools are more flexible and ready to change.  
 The Asahi Shimbun (March 16, 1989) reports many changes in private schools in order to improve their images. They include changing school names, uniforms, and school mottoes.  
 This evidence shows that private schools can change in order to meet the changing needs of society. Therefore, private schools are better than public schools.

**Sample Brief 2**

Affirmative: tuition

Difference of fees is small.

(Negative: Public schools' tuition is cheaper.)

- I. Even if the tuition is more expensive in private schools, it is worth paying it. The quality of education is more important than its cost.
- II. The difference in tuition is small. The difference in tuition between private and public school is small in the total money parents spend on education.
  - A. The difference is about 1,000,000 yen for three years. According to the Ministry of Education's statistics in 1991, the total expenses that parents pay are about 310,000 yen in public high schools and 640,000 yen in private schools. The difference is 330,000 yen a year. That makes a total of 1,000,000 yen for three years.
  - B. The total money parents spend on one child from birth to university graduation ranges from 24,000,000 to 60,000,000 yen. This information comes from a study done by AIU Insurance, reported in the Asahi Shimbun, April 6, 1991.
  - C. The difference between private and public high schools is about 1.7 to 4% of the total money for one child. If a child goes to a public high school and then to a private medical school, the parents must pay much more than a case in which a child goes to a private high school. Therefore, the difference is not important.

**Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate**

8. Assign each member of the team one or two issues involved in the chosen proposition. Each member conducts research and two briefs for the affirmative and two briefs for the negative. The team will share those briefs and increase the stock while debating the same proposition.

**3.5. Writing & Presenting Speeches**

Preparation for oral presentations is necessary before the debate round and during the round. Before the round, the team must prepare the manuscript of the 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech. Each team must prepare briefs about all, or at least the major, potential arguments. Individual members must practice reading such manuscripts and briefs. During the debate round, debaters must take notes while listening to speeches, write down some notes for refutation, and organize their next speech by adjusting their prepared briefs.

Writing a debate speech is like writing a research paper for oral presentation (See Section 5 below). One piece of advice for effective writing is that you should write the manuscript within the grammar and vocabulary of your own English level. Of course, certain new words and phrases must be used depending on the subject matter and they may be found in a Japanese-English dictionary. But DON'T write your complete manuscript in Japanese and then translate it into English. If you use difficult words and structures in Japanese, you will not be able to accurately

translate them into English, unless your English is as good as your Japanese. If you translate word-by-word, the result will be something far away from communicative English. You must try to write in English from the beginning.

If you participate in oral debate rounds, speeches except for the 1st Affirmative Constructive will be extemporaneous, meaning that you must prepare them on the spot based on the prepared briefs and notes during the debate. As classroom practice, students may participate in "scripted debate" where the 1st Affirmative Speech is passed to the negative team, which writes the 1st Negative Speech in response and passes it back to the affirmative team, and so on. This exchange of written speeches itself is one form of debate. Those speeches then may be orally presented to the audience who will listen to them and evaluate the debate.

In orally presenting your speech, you must consider the oral delivery in public speaking. In debate, you are presenting your speech to the audience in a public place, even in a classroom; you are not talking to one another in a private conversation. You must speak loud enough and project your voice so that it may reach people in the back of the room. If you are using a microphone, you must adjust yourself to such a device. After practicing your speech a number of times, you should be able to keep some eye contact with your audience. You do not need to memorize your speech but should look at the audience from time to time. In public speaking, delivery (loudness, clarity, speed, body language, etc.) is often much more important than the pronunciation of individual words.

**Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate**

9. Write a complete 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech. Practice reading it.
10. Exchange the 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech and write a complete 1st Negative Constructive Speech. This speech must include both the refutations against the Affirmative Speech and the negative team's independent issues such as disadvantages from the proposed plan. Practice reading the speech.

**3.6. Taking Notes**

In order to accurately follow the development of the arguments in debate, for refutation and rebuttal as well as for judging, you should learn a special method of note taking called "flow sheet" (Figure 2). This flow sheet is also effective in planning arguments during preparation before the debate round.

affirmative	negative	affirmative	negative	
I. XXX A. XXX	1. XXX 2. XXX	XXX XXX		[To continue right.]
B. XXX			1. XXX 2. XXX	
II. XXX A. XXX	XXX		XXX	
[To continue below]				
	I. XXX	XXXX	1. XXXXX 2. XXXXX	
	II. XXXX	1. XXXX 2. XXXX		

Figure 2. Sample Flow Sheet

You should prepare large sheets of paper (or facing pages of your notebook) to have as many vertical columns as the number of speeches in one debate round. In the left-most column, you will write down the major points of the 1st Affirmative Speech from the top in an outline format. Refutations in the 1st Negative Speech are written down in the next column side by side with the matching affirmative points. If a particular affirmative point is not refuted, the place next to it should be left blank (See Point I.B in Figure 2). If the points of one speech cannot be written down in one column, you must use another sheet of paper. For example, the negative team's arguments about the disadvantage against the plan may be written down in a separate sheet of paper. You can use arrows to connect matching arguments if the connection is not apparent.

This flow sheet shows how a particular point is originally presented, responded (or not responded) by the opposition, and further responded, and so on. Such development of arguments is shown as a flow of notes on the paper from left to right. By reviewing this flow sheet, you can easily track down the flow of arguments during the debate and at the end of the debate. This flow sheet together with the tight organization of the speeches helps debaters and judges to develop and follow the highly complicated arguments in Academic Debate.

**Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate**

11. Listen to a sample debate (live or on video) and take notes on the flow sheet.

**3.7. Cross-Examination**

A typical Academic Debate format has a cross-examination period after each constructive speech. The purposes of questioning in cross-examination are (1) to clarify the opposition's points, (2) to expose weaknesses of the opposition's arguments, and (3) to set up a basis for your team's later arguments.

Cross-examination is different from speeches. The examiner can only ask questions and may not present arguments. Many students are confused with cross-examination and refutation in a speech. Although a major purpose of questioning is to weaken the opposition's arguments, you must do so

by asking questions. You are not allowed to make statements or read quotations in cross-examination. They should be in later speeches. In cross-examination, the affirmative and negative debaters directly confront each other as well as addressing the audience; in speeches, the speaker only addresses the audience. Thus, in cross-examination, you may ask "Did you say X in your speech?" directly addressing the opposition, but in a speech, you should say "The negative team (they/he/she etc.) said X in the 1st Negative Constructive" referring to the opposition as a third party.

**Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate**

12. Read another team's constructive speech and prepare a list of questions to ask.  
13. Make a pair of two students. One student reads his/her team's constructive speech and the pair will practice cross-examination.

**3.8. Evaluating Debate**

There are two major ways to evaluate debate. One is to decide the winner of the debate in light of the strength of the arguments. The other is to evaluate the essential skills in debating. The winner of the debate is decided by the judges. Sometimes the entire audience casts votes. The decision of the debate is usually based on the quality of the arguments presented in the debate. Judges ask themselves if the affirmative team has proven that the proposition is probably true. If the affirmative side was successful in doing so, it wins the debate. Otherwise, the negative side wins the debate. There is no tie. If there are several judges in the round (usually the odd number), they will individually decide the winner and the team with the majority votes wins the debate.

In making the decision, judges must only consider what the debaters said in the debate. They must disregard their personal opinion about the proposition or other issues in the debate. They must believe the debaters' arguments as long as they are supported by a reasonable amount of evidence and valid reasoning even if the judges themselves do not personally believe them. The other way of evaluation is to rate the quality of debating. If there is a ballot sheet with analytical categories such as analysis, evidence, reasoning, organization, and delivery, judges give scores to each category while the debate is in progress. The total scores are added for each team at the end of the debate. The judges may select the winner either based on these scores or regardless of them. These scores are used for feedback and sometimes for other purposes (selecting the finalists or top debaters in a contest).

**Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate**

14. Listen to/Watch a debate on audio/video tape. Take notes on the flow sheet and decide the winner.

We have introduced to you major stages of preparation and oral presentation of debate. If you have been through the Step-by-Step Tasks to Debate, you are now ready to participate in debate. In the next two sections, we will discuss more about two important aspects of debate: the nature of arguments and organization of speeches.

## 4. NATURE OF ARGUMENTS

Whether you are engaged in debating or public speaking, or any other argumentative situation, you must be aware of the nature of arguments in order to develop logical arguments. Arguments or arguing has two meanings: one in the sense of making an argument (= reason giving) and the other in the sense of having an argument (= disagreement). Throughout this text we are more concerned with the first sense (reason-giving aspect of argument) than the second. This section is particularly examining the reason-giving aspect of arguments. Understanding the nature of arguments is important not only for you as a sender of messages but also for you as a receiver of messages. In modern society with its overabundance of information, critical thinking abilities are essential and understanding the nature of arguments is the core of such abilities.

### 4.1. Structure of Arguments

An "argument", in its simplest form, consists of a "claim/conclusion" that the speaker/writer tries to advance, "evidence/data" that serves a ground for the claim, and a "warrant/reasoning" that connects the claim and the evidence. Figure 3 illustrates this simple structure.

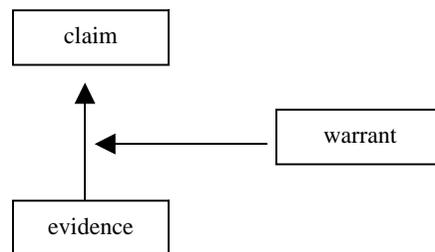


Figure 3. Structure of Argument

Let us examine an argument "Japan's atomic power plants are likely to cause serious accidents because those in Three Mile Island and Chernobyl caused big accidents." The claim is "Japan's atomic power plants are likely to cause serious accidents." The evidence consists of two pieces of information: the explicit one is "Atomic power plants in Three Mile Island and Chernobyl caused big accidents." The other implicit evidence is "Japan's atomic power plants are similar to those in Three Mile Island and Chernobyl." The warrant is an "analogy" by which we can claim a new similarity based on the known similarity.

### 4.2. Evidence

Evidence, or more broadly data or grounds that supports the claim, means both quotations from published sources (i.e., external evidence) and shared knowledge in this analysis. Since it is difficult to determine whether a particular piece of information is shared by all participants of a debate round, quotations from published sources are very important in Academic Debate. If a claim is once established in debate, it will then function as evidence for another claim.

Commonly used external evidence includes facts, statistics, and expert opinions. The following points should be considered to find quality evidence and critically evaluate evidence presented by others:

- (1) Is the evidence consistent with other evidence? If different sources disagree about the same point, one of them (or both) may be wrong.
- (2) Is the evidence consistent within itself? Inconsistency or contradiction within the same source is also a problem.
- (3) Is the statistics sound? If evidence is a statistic, you must apply standard tests of statistics such as those about the size and method of sampling, the way of asking questions in a survey, and appropriateness of the statistical measures.
- (4) Is the source of evidence competent? Was the author able to get access to the information concerned? Is the source updated? Is the author a qualified expert in the field? In this world of advanced science and exploding information, we cannot know everything by ourselves. We must rely on "experts" or "authorities" in a given field. But in discussing nuclear power plants, a famous movie director is not an expert even though he is an expert in moviemaking.
- (5) Is the evidence neutral? Isn't the source or author biased? Are there special interests involved? Will the witness gain benefits from his or her testimony? An engineer in a power company may be an expert in nuclear power but his/her statements about its safety are likely to be biased.

### 4.3. Warrants

It is often unlikely that you can find evidence which exactly shows your claim. You must prove your claim with available evidence. If there is a gap between the claim and the evidence, there is an inferential jump from the evidence to the claim. A warrant is a justification that guarantees such a jump, or a bridge that connects the evidence and the claim. Warrants are processes of inference or rules in logic, which are valid or invalid. The following sections will discuss three common types of warrants.

#### 4.3.1. Analogy

In our earlier example of an argument about atomic power plants, the claim that Japan's atomic power plants are likely to cause serious accidents based on evidence that the atomic power plants in Three Mile Island and Chernobyl caused serious accidents. The warrant is analogical reasoning like "if two things are similar in known features, they must be similar in unknown features."

In the warrant of analogy, those two compared phenomena must be similar in their "essential" features, "essential" in the sense of being relevant to the claim being made. In the argument of atomic power plants above, those atomic power plants must be similar in their structures and safety measures so that the analogy about accidents will be valid.

#### 4.3.2. Generalization

This is a logical process of making a generic statement based on a number of specific examples. For example, in order to prove a claim "There is a defect in the brake installed in the cars Model X of Maker Y," you may be able to find evidence "Mr. A's Model X had a defect in its brake. Ms. B's Model X also had a defect in its brake. Mr. C, Ms. D, and Mr. E had Model Xs and they had defects in their brakes." The warrant that justifies a jump from specific examples to a generalized conclusion is an assumption of regularity among the cars of the same model. Usually we can

assume that different cars of the same model have the same design and thus the same problem if any.

When we use the warrant of generalization, we should be careful about such factors as whether the quantity of examples is enough, whether such examples are typical to the group in question, and whether there are some serious counterexamples that cannot be ignored.

#### 4.3.3. Cause-Effect

If there is a causal relationship between an element in the evidence and an element in the claim, the warrant is of cause-effect. There are two kinds of cause-effects inferences. One type of inference is that you have evidence to show the existence of cause. You can prove the claim that shows the effect of that cause. The other type is the inference to the opposite direction. If you have evidence to show the effect, you can infer the existence of the cause that brought about that effect. If the relationship is one-to-one, the both directions of inference are warranted. But if the relationship is not one-to-one, you must use a caution.

Suppose that a causal relation has already been proven in the evidence that says, "habitual smoking causes lung cancer." If you have evidence "Mr. A is a habitual smoker," you can support your claim "Mr. A will probably develop lung cancer." On the other hand, you cannot prove the claim "Mr. B is a habitual smoker" based on the evidence "Mr. B had lung cancer." For there are other possible causes of lung cancer.

In a policy proposition, causal warrants are often used in proving the issue of solvency (the plan would solve the problem). As a result, caution is necessary. If the proposition is to prohibit smoking and the problem in the status quo is lung cancer, the elimination of smoking would not solve all the lung cancers. Habitual smokers like Mr. A above may have already inhaled enough carcinogens so it is too late for such people. Lung cancer caused by other factors is also outside the solvency. The affirmative can only solve lung cancers which may be caused in the future because of relatively new exposure to smoke.

You can sometimes use statistical "correlations" between the two phenomena whose "causality" cannot be proven. A correlation is weaker than causality but you can still build many of the arguments in debate based on such a relation.

A special note is necessary before leaving this section. "Proof" in debate is different from "proof" in mathematics or in formal logic. Proof in debate is a matter of "probable truth." You only need to show that your claim is probably true based on your evidence and warrant. Even if there is one counterexample to your proof, it will not destroy the whole of your argument. You must also avoid strong statements such as "My proof is perfect" or "The opponent's argument is completely wrong."

## 5. ORGANIZATION OF SPEECHES

Effective debating requires a logical and easy-to-follow organization of speeches. Much of this is common to formal essays such as research papers. In this section, first, the organization of a whole speech is illustrated with an example of the 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech. Second, the organization of a unit of refutation and rebuttal is discussed.

### 5.1. 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech

A debate speech is a kind of speech in public speaking, thus, consisting of Introduction, Body, and Conclusion. Introduction includes a statement of position (= thesis statement) and a roadmap of major points in Body (= preview or blueprint). Body consists of several major points, which are then supported by subpoints. Each point is equivalent to a paragraph consisting of a topic sentence and support/details. Conclusion of the speech summarizes (reviews) the already-discussed major points with a concluding statement of the team's position.

When you organize your speech during preparation, outlining is very helpful. Some of you may want to write an outline first and then convert it into a full speech. Others may want to start writing a rough draft and convert it into an outline to examine its organization.

The following outline and speech manuscript are for the 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech in the debate "Resolved: That private high schools are better than public high schools."

#### Sample 1st Affirmative Speech Outline

- |      |                                                                                |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I.   | Private schools promote variety in education.                                  |
| A.   | Variety in education is good.                                                  |
|      | 1. People have different opinions and values.                                  |
|      | 2. The education before World War II was responsible for the war.              |
| B.   | Private schools are freer than public schools.                                 |
|      | Public schools are controlled by the Ministry of Education.                    |
| II.  | Private schools make more efforts to improve themselves than public schools.   |
| ..   |                                                                                |
| ..   |                                                                                |
| ..   |                                                                                |
| III. | Private schools are more active in international exchange than public schools. |
| ..   |                                                                                |
| ..   |                                                                                |
| ..   |                                                                                |

A completed manuscript will look like this:

#### Sample 1st Affirmative Constructive Speech

We believe that private high schools are better than public high schools. There are three major reasons: (1) Variety in Education; they offer variety in education, (2) Efforts to improve; they put more efforts into improvement, and (3) International exchange; they play a more active role in international exchange. Let me explain them one by one.

Reason number one, variety in education. Private schools promote variety in education. Subpoint A. Variety in education is good. First, people have different opinions and values. If schools teach the same things in the same way, students will suffer some potential psychological damage. Second, the uniformed nationalistic education before World War II was responsible for the war. Japan must not repeat the same mistakes. Private schools are the key to stop the revival of the nationalist.

Subpoint B. Private schools are freer than public schools. So they offer more variety in education. Private schools are guaranteed by law to promote their founders' spirits and individuality, as is reported by the Asahi Shimbun, January 11, 1993: "On the other hand public schools are controlled by the Ministry of Education through prefectural boards of education." Therefore, the variety in education provided by private schools is good.

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For these three reasons: variety in education, efforts to improve, and international exchange, private schools are better than public schools.

This kind of debate speech has a very short Introduction and a very short Conclusion partly because of the time pressure. They also assume that the participants including the audience members know the topic very well and that they listen to the speech carefully with taking notes. Otherwise, like in a demonstration debate in a school festival, you must give a longer Introduction with some background of the resolution and a longer Conclusion to help the audience remember the major points.

## 5.2. Refutation Unit

When you are refuting or rebuilding an argument or an issue, a prototypical pattern of organization of "refutation unit" is helpful. A generic pattern is given first and then a sample part of a speech is given.

### Organization of Refutation Unit

1. Locate the argument to attack.
2. Summarize the argument to attack.
3. Give your response.
4. Support your response.
5. Conclude the response.

The example given next is based on a brief given earlier (Section 19.3.4). Most of the speeches in debate are made up of a number of these units.

### A Sample Unit of Refutation in Speech

About the negative team's third argument, cost. They said that tuition is cheap in public schools. I have two responses. First, the quality of education is more important. Even if the tuition is higher in private schools, it is worth paying it. Quality is more important than cost in education. Second, the difference in tuition is small. . . . [Supporting evidence is omitted here.] Thus, the difference is not so important. Therefore the negative side cannot say that public schools are better because of lower tuition.

## 6. DEBATE AND ETHICS

Since debating skills are powerful tools in communication, we must also be concerned with the ethical responsibility of those engaged in debate. The abuse of debating skills has been criticized as sophistry since the beginning of Academic Debate in Ancient Greece. More recently in Japan, a spokesperson of a cult religion group attracted people's attention when he was called liar for his abuse of the debating skills learned in college. When you practice debate you should be aware of your ethical responsibility. You must also learn to expose the problems of "liars" when they try to erroneously defend unjustifiable positions.

Some people worry about the practice of debating both sides in Academic Debate when the same person or team defends one position in one debate and attacks that position in another debate. We must understand that Academic Debate is different from real-world debate in that students are debating for the sake of learning and training. They can develop an unbiased attitude by looking at both sides of the question. Even in real-world debate, some speakers serve as devil's advocates so that the question can be rigorously tested. So debaters who are arguing against their own belief are by no means unethical or irresponsible. In debate, speakers are playing a role of either supporting or denying one position. After you have debated both sides of the question, you will be able to broaden your view about the question and will be able to come up with a better-informed opinion of your own.

In Academic Debate, especially in competitions such as tournaments, we must be especially careful about evidence. In competition, quotations from books and articles are crucially important for defending one's position. Debaters must be responsible for the accuracy of information given in debate. If debaters were to distort or fabricate evidence, they would be severely penalized. The rule is that debaters must record sources of information as accurately as possible and give them (if truncated) in their speeches. Debaters are also encouraged to question the sources of information presented in their opponent's speeches.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This text covers the essentials of debating, especially Academic Debate in which the critical examination of arguments and their rhetorical presentation are important. As the old saying goes, practice is important in debate as well. Even if you do not have a chance to participate in debate, try to apply your critical thinking skills in other communication situations. The best thing, of course, would be to participate in debate in some form; a short format adapted to your class period, an exchange of written speeches, or even an e-mail debate or Web-based bulletin board debate are all possibilities. We hope that you can enjoy debate to some degree in your lives.