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Debate-Based Development Of Metacognitive Speaking Strategies In Teaching English To Non-Philology Students

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Abstract: This article explores the effectiveness of debate-based instruction in developing metacognitive speaking strategies among non-philology students learning English. The study emphasizes the role of structured debates as an interactive pedagogical tool that promotes learners' awareness of their own cognitive and communicative processes during oral speech production. Through debate activities, students are encouraged to plan, monitor, and evaluate their speaking performance, which contributes to the enhancement of fluency, coherence, argumentation skills, and critical thinking. The paper highlights how debate-based learning fosters learner autonomy, reflective thinking, and strategic competence, making it a valuable approach in English language teaching for non-philology students.

Keywords: Debate-based learning; metacognitive strategies; speaking skills; English language teaching; non-philology students; communicative competence; critical thinking; learner autonomy.

Introduction

In recent years, English language teaching in non-philological higher education institutions has increasingly shifted from purely linguistic outcomes toward the development of higher-order cognitive and self-regulatory skills. While debate-based instruction has already been widely studied in relation to communicative competence, fluency, motivation, and confidence, its potential role in fostering learners' metacognitive speaking strategies remains insufficiently explored. Metacognition, understood as learners' awareness and control over their own learning processes, plays a crucial role in effective oral communication, particularly in academic and professional contexts. Therefore, this article aims to examine the theoretical foundations and pedagogical significance of developing metacognitive speaking strategies through debate activities in English language classes for non-philology students.

Theoretical Foundations of Metacognition in Speaking

The concept of metacognition was first systematically introduced by J. Flavell, who defined it as knowledge about one's own cognitive processes and the ability to regulate them. According to Flavell, metacognitive activity includes planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's performance during task execution. In the context of second language acquisition, later scholars such as Wenden, O'Malley, and Chamot expanded this concept by emphasizing metacognitive strategies as a key component of successful language learning. Wenden argued that effective language learners differ from less successful ones primarily in their ability to consciously plan their learning, monitor their language use, and reflect on outcomes. O'Malley and Chamot further classified learning strategies into cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective categories, identifying metacognitive strategies as the highest level of control mechanisms that regulate speaking behavior. From this perspective, speaking is not merely spontaneous language production, but a complex process requiring conscious decision-making, self-monitoring, and strategic adjustment.

In speaking activities, metacognitive competence manifests through the ability to anticipate communicative goals, select appropriate linguistic resources, manage time and turn-taking, monitor clarity and coherence, and evaluate the effectiveness of one's spoken performance. These components are particularly relevant in debate tasks, which require structured reasoning, strategic interaction, and continuous self-regulation.

Debate as a Pedagogical Tool for Metacognitive Development

Debate-based instruction naturally creates conditions that stimulate metacognitive engagement. Unlike traditional question–answer speaking tasks, debates require learners to plan arguments in advance, anticipate counterarguments, and select persuasive language strategies. During the debate, students must monitor their speech in real time, adjust their responses according to opponents' arguments, and manage communicative

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breakdowns. After the debate, reflection and evaluation phases encourage learners to analyze their performance critically.

Educational researchers such as Kuhn and Crowell have emphasized that argumentation and debate promote reflective thinking and self-regulation. According to Kuhn, engaging learners in structured argumentative dialogue enhances their ability to think about their own thinking, which directly corresponds to metacognitive growth. Similarly, зарубежные исследователи such as Anderson and Harris highlight that debate tasks foster learners' awareness of discourse strategies, audience expectations, and communicative effectiveness.

Within the Uzbek pedagogical context, researchers including N. Kholmatova and D. Rakhimova have pointed out that non-philology students often experience difficulties in oral English not due to lack of vocabulary or grammar, but due to insufficient strategic control over speech production. From this viewpoint, debate activities serve not only as speaking practice but also as a mechanism for developing learners' self-regulatory competence.

Pedagogical Value of Debate-Based Metacognitive Instruction

The integration of debate into English language instruction allows teachers to shift focus from surface-level speaking accuracy toward deeper cognitive engagement. When debates are systematically organized, students learn to set speaking goals, plan discourse structure, and evaluate communicative outcomes. This process contributes to the formation of autonomous learners capable of managing their own speaking development beyond the classroom.

Moreover, debate-based metacognitive instruction supports learner autonomy, critical thinking, and academic readiness. Non-philology students, who often require English for professional and academic communication rather than linguistic specialization, particularly benefit from such an approach. By internalizing metacognitive speaking strategies, learners become more confident and strategic communicators in diverse real-life contexts.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that debate activities provide a rich pedagogical environment for developing metacognitive speaking strategies. Unlike traditional speaking exercises, debates integrate planning, monitoring, and evaluation into a single communicative event. This holistic structure aligns with contemporary views of language learning as an active, self-regulated process.

Furthermore, focusing on metacognition allows researchers and practitioners to move beyond frequently studied constructs such as communicative competence or fluency. It opens new research perspectives by linking language pedagogy with cognitive psychology and learner autonomy. As a result, debate-based metacognitive instruction represents a promising direction for future research and practice in English language teaching.

Conclusion

This article has explored the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of developing metacognitive speaking strategies through debate activities in teaching English to non-philology students. Drawing on classical and contemporary research in metacognition and language learning, it has been argued that debate-based instruction effectively supports learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their spoken performance. Consequently, debates should be viewed not only as communicative activities but also as powerful tools for fostering self-regulated and reflective English language users.

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