DEBATE TRAINING IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: TRENDS, STRATEGIES, AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS - A STRUCTURED LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract:

Debate training has become an influential instructional approach in the field of language education, contributing to the development of learners' communication abilities, critical thinking, and persuasive skills. As teaching methodologies continue to advance, the integration of debate as a teaching strategy has drawn increased interest due to its capacity to create dynamic learning experiences, encourage intercultural understanding, and strengthen spoken language proficiency. Although its advantages are widely acknowledged, there remains a need for a comprehensive investigation into the current practices, methods, and educational implications of implementing debate activities in language learning contexts. This systematic literature review (SLR) explores prior studies related to debate training within language instruction, emphasizing recent patterns, teaching techniques, and its broader influence on educational outcomes. The review adheres to PRISMA procedures to select, evaluate, and synthesize scholarly articles retrieved from high-impact academic databases, including Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), with a publication range from 2020 to 2024. A total of 13 relevant studies were identified and included in the final analysis. The results were organized into three main thematic categories: (1) trends in debate training, (2) strategies for implementation and (3) pedagogical implications. The analysis explores how debate is integrated into language teaching, the instructional methods employed, and the outcomes reported in second-language learning contexts. Findings reveal that debate training has increasingly been implemented using technology-assisted learning, collaborative frameworks, and structured argumentation models. Empirical evidence highlights improvements in language fluency, argumentation structure, and adaptability among students engaged in debate-based learning. Additionally, studies indicate that integrating debate into curricula enhances student engagement, intercultural

competence, and critical discourse abilities. However, challenges such as classroom management, accessibility, and teacher preparedness remain key considerations. The study concludes that debate training is a valuable approach in language teaching, offering a structured yet dynamic platform for enhancing

Keywords:

Debate, Training, Practice, Language Teaching, Language Education

Introduction

In recent years, debate training has emerged as a prominent pedagogical approach in language education, offering a dynamic alternative to traditional teaching methods. This growing interest stems from the need to develop students' linguistic proficiency in tandem with critical thinking, intercultural communication, and 21st-century skills. As educators seek innovative methods to engage learners more effectively, debate is increasingly recognized for its potential to transform language learning into a more interactive, student-centered, and cognitively enriching process (Dewangga et al. 2024).

A core issue prompting this review is the widening gap between language instruction and authentic communicative practice in many classrooms. While grammar-translation and rote memorization remain common, they often fall short in equipping learners with the ability to express ideas fluently and engage in real-world conversations. Debate training addresses this gap by promoting spontaneous speech, structured argumentation, and active listening—skills essential not only for academic success but also for global citizenship. Research shows that students involved in debate activities demonstrate significantly improved oral fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and self-confidence compared to peers in conventional classrooms (Aldosari and Alsager 2023).

The second pressing issue relates to the scalability and adaptability of debate training across diverse educational contexts. With increasing linguistic diversity in classrooms and the growing need for differentiated instruction, educators face challenges in designing debate activities that are inclusive and accessible to learners of varying proficiency levels. Additionally, the rise of digital learning environments has spurred new formats of debate— such as asynchronous forums and online competitions—which require updated pedagogical frameworks (Kerimbayev et al. 2023). These transformations call for a systematic evaluation of current practices to identify evidence-based strategies that enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of debate training.

This review therefore aims to synthesize existing literature on the trends, strategies, and pedagogical implications of debate training in language education. By analyzing empirical studies, experimental designs, and qualitative investigations from diverse educational contexts, this article provides a critical overview of how debate contributes to language acquisition and what best practices can be adopted for wider application.

Literature Review

Debate training is increasingly recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing language learning outcomes. A robust body of literature highlights its capacity to improve linguistic proficiency, foster critical thinking, and engage students more actively in classroom discourse.

This is especially pertinent in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, where oral communication is often underdeveloped due to limited practice opportunities. In a comparative study by (Waluyo and Abrar 2024), EFL learners who participated in debate-based instruction outperformed their peers in speaking and listening assessments by an average of 18%.

One of the most widely adopted formats in language education is parliamentary debate, which follows a structured three-phase process: pre-debate preparation, active debate, and post-debate reflection. This structure has been shown to improve students' argumentation, evidence-gathering, and collaboration skills. A study by (Kazemi 2021) involving 120 Iranian university students revealed that students exposed to debate formats scored 22% higher on oral proficiency tests than those using conventional discussion methods.

Debate training also aligns with the shift towards learner-centered instruction. This approach emphasizes active participation, critical thinking, and collaborative learning, making it an effective method for enhancing students' motivation. A study by (Naim and Haron 2024) found that students engaged in Arabic Language debates has been shown to support student development in two key areas: linguistic proficiency and personal growth—including increased self-confidence, soft skills, and intrinsic motivation.

The pedagogical value of debate training extends beyond speaking skills. (El Majidi, De Graaff, and Janssen 2021) emphasized its impact on integrated language skills, including reading comprehension and writing clarity. Participating in debates requires students to research, synthesize information, and present coherent arguments, all of which contribute to higher academic performance. Similarly (Haddad 2024) found that students who participate in such dialogic interactions show marked improvements in self-regulation, argumentation skills, critical evaluation of statements, reasoning, emotional understanding, and adaptability. These elements not only contribute to enhanced academic performance but also support the development of integrated language skills, such as reading comprehension and writing clarity, as students learn to research, synthesize information, and present coherent arguments.

These empirical findings underscore the value and limitations of debate training, suggesting the need for adaptable models that support differentiated instruction, integrate digital tools, and provide professional development for educators. A summary of key studies and their findings is presented below (see Table 1)

Table 1: Summary of Key Studies on Debate Training in Language Education

Study	Respondent/ Participant	Context	Key Findings	Implications
(Waluyo and Abrar 2024)	90	EFL, Indonesia	18% improvement in speaking & listening	Structured debate improves fluency
(Kazemi 2021)	120	University, Iran	22% higher oral scores	Argumentation techniques are effective
(Naim and Haron 2024)	2 students	Secondary, Malaysia	Students improve	Arabic debate should be

(El Majidi et al. 2021) (Haddad 2024)	- 16 teachers	Meta-analysis EFL	Arabic speaking skills as well as self-confidence, soft skill and motivation Integrates all language skills EFL students recognized the value of improving critical thinking through discussing controversial topics in debates	integrated into curriculum, assessment, or co-curricular activities in schools Promotes critical literacy Debates not only a language exercise but also a cognitive development tool

Methodology

To ensure a systematic and transparent approach in addressing the research objectives, this study adopted the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. Although PRISMA was originally developed for systematic reviews in the fields of medicine and public health, its application was deemed appropriate for this study as it facilitated the formulation of clear research questions and guided the systematic search process through its 27 structured items (Moher et al. 2009). It consists of four major phases: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion & Analysis. Each phase was designed to progressively filter and refine the selection of literature, ensuring that only the most relevant, high-quality studies were retained for review. The figure 1 below provides a visual summary of the methodology, outlining the databases accessed, search strategies used, selection criteria applied, and the analytical procedures undertaken:
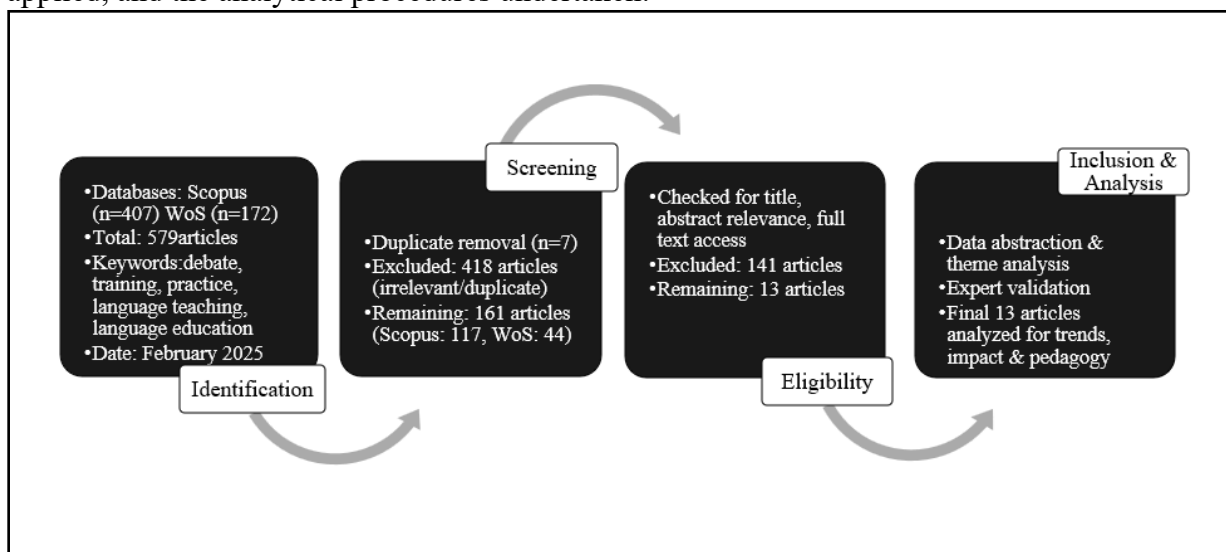

Figure 1: Visual Diagram of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Methodology

The following section elaborates on each phase presented in the SLR methodology diagram, providing a comprehensive account of the procedures undertaken in this study. It outlines the databases consulted, the rationale behind the selection of search terms, the timeline of data collection, and the criteria used during the screening and eligibility processes. Additionally, it details the techniques employed for data abstraction, thematic analysis, and expert validation. These steps were meticulously implemented to ensure the reliability, validity, and replicability of the review, thereby contributing to a robust analysis of current trends, pedagogical strategies, and implications of debate training in language teaching.

Identification

The identification phase is a crucial initial step in conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), as it involves gathering relevant research articles from reputable databases. In this study, we utilized Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) two well-recognized academic databases—to identify scholarly works related to debate training in language teaching. By employing carefully selected keywords, we systematically retrieved records that align with our research focus. The keywords used in the search strategy include "debate", in combination with "training" OR "education" OR "practice", as well as "language teaching" OR "language education" OR "foreign language teaching". These keywords were chosen to ensure a broad yet targeted search, capturing studies that address various aspects of debate in language pedagogy (see Table 2).

Through the search process, a total of 407 records were identified from Scopus, while 172 records were retrieved from WoS, resulting in an initial dataset of 579 articles. The higher number of records from Scopus can be attributed to its extensive coverage of social sciences, education, and applied linguistics, as well as its indexing of conference proceedings, book chapters, and journal articles. Scopus is known for indexing journals from Elsevier, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and other leading academic publishers, which may explain the larger dataset. On the other hand, WoS is highly selective and focuses on high-impact journals, often indexed under the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and Arts & Humanities Citation Index (AHCI). This selectivity may contribute to the relatively lower number of retrieved records compared to Scopus.

The total dataset of 579 articles provides a strong foundation for the next stages of the SLR, such as screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion/exclusion processes. However, it is important to acknowledge that some articles may be duplicated across both databases. Therefore, in the next step, duplicate removal will be conducted to ensure that unique records are considered for further analysis. Additionally, a manual screening of titles and abstracts will help determine the relevance of each article in addressing the research question on debate training in language teaching.

Moreover, the identification of key trends within this dataset will allow us to assess the evolution of research on debate training, including the types of pedagogical strategies employed, the effectiveness of debate-based learning, and the technological advancements shaping debate training in language education. This step is critical in establishing the foundation for a systematic, comprehensive, and impactful literature review, which will contribute to both theoretical and practical understandings of the role of debate in language learning.

Table 2: The Search String

Database	Search String
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY(("debate") AND ("training" OR "education" OR "practice") AND ("language teaching" OR "language education" OR "foreign language teaching")) AND PUBYEAR > 2019 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) **Date of Access: February 2025**
WoS	TS= (("debate") AND ("training" OR "education" OR "practice") AND ("language teaching" OR "language education" OR "foreign language teaching")) and 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2023 or 2024 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) **Date of Access: February 2025**

Screening

The screening stage in the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) process plays a vital role in narrowing down the dataset by selecting studies that correspond to the established research questions. Out of the initial 579 records retrieved from Scopus (n=407) and Web of Science (WoS) (n=172), a total of 418 articles were excluded for reasons such as irrelevance, duplication, or not meeting the inclusion criteria. The process began with the elimination of duplicate entries (n=7) to ensure that only unique publications were retained for further analysis. Following this, a rigorous screening process was applied based on the research scope of debate training in language teaching, considering studies that focus on trends, strategies, and pedagogical implications. Studies were assessed based on their implementation and approach to debate training in language education, ensuring that only the most relevant contributions were retained.

The selection criteria prioritized empirical studies, original research, and peer-reviewed articles, while excluding conference books, book series, literature reviews, meta-analyses, and in-press articles that do not provide primary data. Additionally, non-English publications were excluded to maintain consistency and accessibility in analysis. The review focused on studies published between 2020 and 2024, ensuring that only recent and up-to-date research was considered (see Table 3). This time restriction is essential in capturing emerging trends, innovative teaching strategies, and contemporary challenges in debate-based language education. By prioritizing recent studies, the findings remain aligned with current educational practices, particularly in response to technological advancements and evolving pedagogical approaches.

After applying the screening criteria, 161 studies remained, with 117 records from Scopus and 44 from WoS. The higher number of Scopus-indexed studies reflects its broader coverage of social sciences and education research, while WoS contributed a more selective set of high-impact, peer-reviewed publications. This distribution ensures that the dataset maintains both comprehensiveness and academic rigor. The refined selection of articles now serves as the foundation for the eligibility and quality assessment phase, where each study will be further evaluated for methodological rigor, theoretical contribution, and relevance to the research objective of exploring debate training in language teaching.

Table 3: The Selection Criterion in Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2020 – 2024	< 2020
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Conference, Book, Review
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject	Social science, computer Science and Engineering	Besides Social science, computer Science and engineering

Eligibility

During the eligibility phase, 154 articles were initially selected for further review. At this stage, the titles and key content of each article were carefully examined to ensure they met the inclusion criteria and aligned with the research objectives. Following a detailed evaluation, 141 articles were excluded for reasons such as falling outside the research scope, having insufficiently relevant titles, containing abstracts that did not align with the study objectives, or lacking full-text access with empirical evidence. Consequently, only 13 articles qualified for the next stage of the review.

Data Abstraction and Analysis

A comprehensive analysis was used to review and combine different research designs, especially those based on quantitative methods, to identify important topics and subtopics. The process started with data collection, which formed the basis for developing themes. A total of 154 publications were carefully reviewed for key ideas and relevant content, as shown in Figure 2. The authors then analyzed important studies on debate training in language teaching, focusing on their methods and findings. To ensure a clear and organized approach, they worked with co-authors to develop themes based on the available evidence while keeping a record of their reflections, challenges, and insights during the analysis. Finally, the results were compared and validated to identify any inconsistencies. If there were differences in understanding, discussions were held to reach an agreement, ensuring the analysis was accurate and reliable.

To confirm the accuracy of the research problem, two experts reviewed the study—one specializing in foreign language education and the other in language teaching and training. This expert review was important in ensuring that each subtheme was clear, relevant, and well-structured while also validating the study's focus. Based on their feedback and suggestions, necessary adjustments were made by the author to improve and strengthen the study's analytical framework. The questions are as follows:

1. What are the current trends in debate training within language teaching?
2. How does debate training influence students' language proficiency?
3. What are the pedagogical considerations for integrating debate training into language teaching?
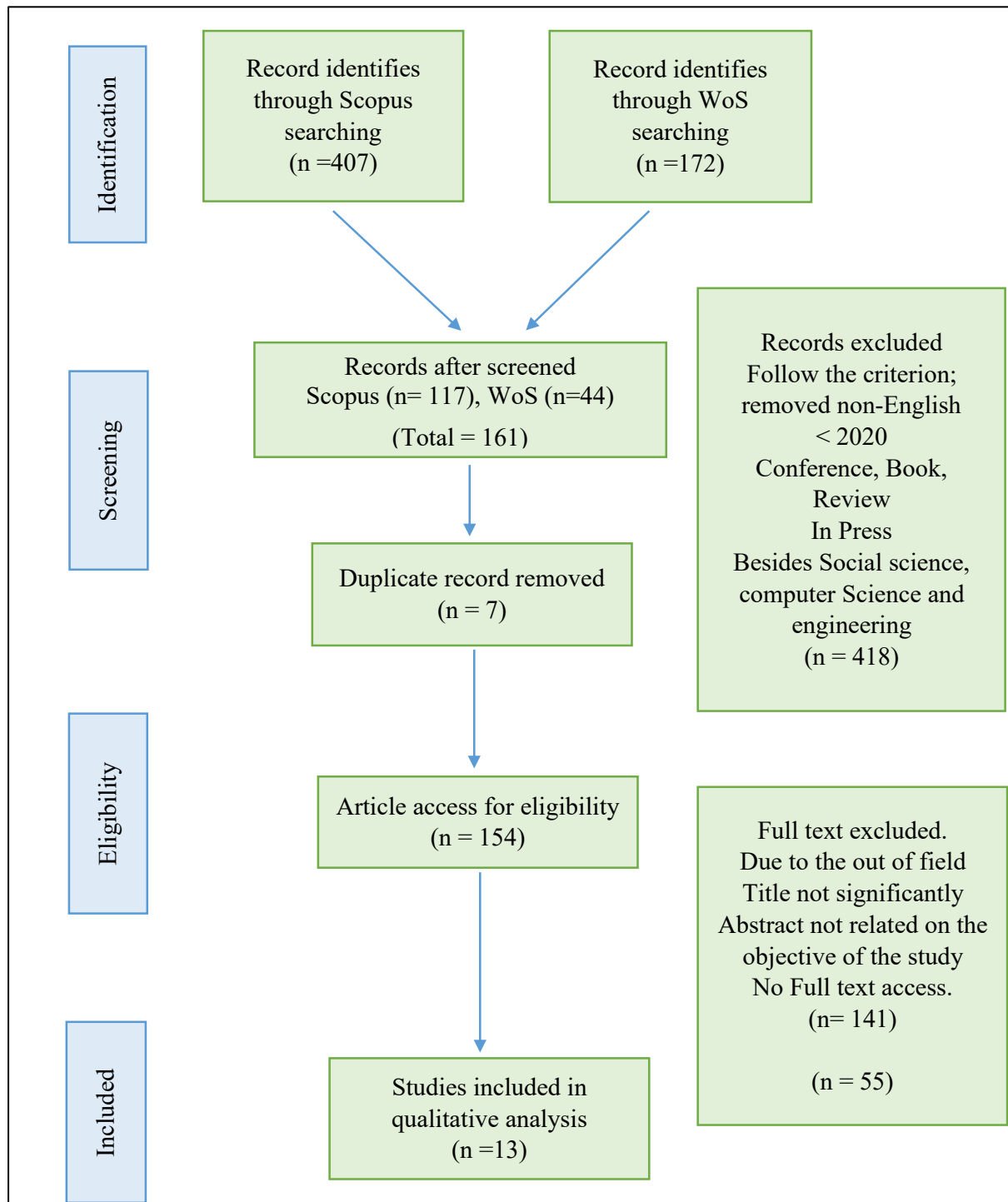
Figure 2: The Flow Diagram of the SLR

Source: (adapted from Hainora Hamzah, Mohd Isa Hamzah, and Hafizhah Zulkifli 2022)

Table 4: Articles Selected for Inclusion in The Next Phase of the Review

No	Authors	Year	Title	Scopus	WoS
1	Chau T.H.H.; Lien B.T.; Kim H.T. (Chau, Lien, and Kim 2024)	2024	Analyzing Cultural Representation In An Efl Course Book Newly Applied In Vietnam Secondary Education; [Análisis De La Representación Cultural En Un Libro De Texto De Inglés Como Lengua Extranjera Recientemente Aplicado En La Educación Secundaria De Vietnam]	/	
2	Hameed P.F.M. (Hameed 2020)	2020	Communicative language teaching and the saudi EFL learners' communicative competence: An empirical and interventional study	/	
3	García-Sánchez S. (García-Sánchez 2020)	2020	Debates in English language education: A multimodal, collaborative ecosystem	/	/
4	Deliana D.; Ganie R. (Deliana and Ganie 2025)	2025	Using debates in teaching speaking to EFL learners: Perceptions of English department students	/	
5	Majidi A.E.; Janssen D.; de Graaff R. (Majidi, Janssen, and de Graaff 2021)	2021	The effects of in-class debates on argumentation skills in second language education	/	/
6	Hoffer M.S.; Gross B. (Hoffer and Gross 2020)	2020	Education to dialogue - part I. Dialectics as an educational tool for logic speech and debate clubs; [Educazione al dialogo-parte I: La dialettica al servizio della pedagogia nei logic speech e debate clubs]	/	
7	Liu W.; Wang Y. (Liu and Wang 2024)	2024	The Effects of Using AI Tools on Critical Thinking in English Literature Classes Among EFL Learners: An Intervention Study	/	
8	Yung K.W.-H. (Yung 2020)	2020	Using Public Exam Questions in Fishbowl Debate to Engage Exam-Oriented Students in Communicative Language Teaching	/	/
9	el Majidi A.; de Graaff R.; Janssen D. (El Majidi et al. 2021)	2024	Debate as a pedagogical tool for developing speaking skills in second language education	/	/
10	Liu M. (Liu 2023)	2023	Teaching Conversational English: Techniques for Unconscious Competence Versus Development of Thinking Skills	/	/

11	Vold E.T.; Brkan A. (Vold and Brkan 2020)	2020	Classroom discourse in lower secondary French-as-a-foreign-language classes in Norway: Amounts and contexts of first and target language use	/	/
12	Kudinova N.; Arzhadeeva D. (Kudinova and Arzhadeeva 2020)	2020	Effect of debate on development of adaptability in EFL university classrooms	/	/
13	Alzubi A.A.; Nazim M.; Ahamad J. (Alzubi, Nazim, and Ahamad 2024)	2024	Examining the effect of a collaborative learning intervention on EFL students' English learning and social interaction	/	

Findings

Out of the 13 articles selected for this review, publication years were distributed as follows: one article was published in 2025, four articles in 2024, one article in 2023, one article in 2021, and the remaining six articles were published in 2020. Regarding the journals, the articles appeared across a wide range of reputable sources. Specifically, one article was published in the *Multidisciplinary Science Journal*, while the others were each published individually in *Artseduca*, *European Journal of Education*, *Language Teaching Research*, *Journal of Pedagogical Research*, *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, *Asian EFL Journal*, *International Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning and Teaching*, *Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica*, *RELC Journal, System*, and *TESOL Journal*. This diverse distribution highlights the multidisciplinary interest in debate training within the field of language education.

A thematic analysis was subsequently conducted to synthesize the findings across these studies. Each article's results were individually reviewed, and findings with shared patterns or related issues were grouped together under a unified dataset. From this rigorous process, three overarching themes were identified:
(1) Trends in Debate Training for Language Teaching,
(2) Strategies for Implementing Debate in Language Education, and
(3) Pedagogical Implications of Debate Training.

Figure 3 presents the distribution of the 13 reviewed articles across three major themes: *Trends in Debate Training for Language Teaching*, *Strategies for Implementing Debate in Language Education*, and *Pedagogical Implications of Debate Training*. Complementing this, Table 5 provides a detailed classification of each article according to its thematic focus. The articles are cited by author and year to ensure consistency with the reference list.
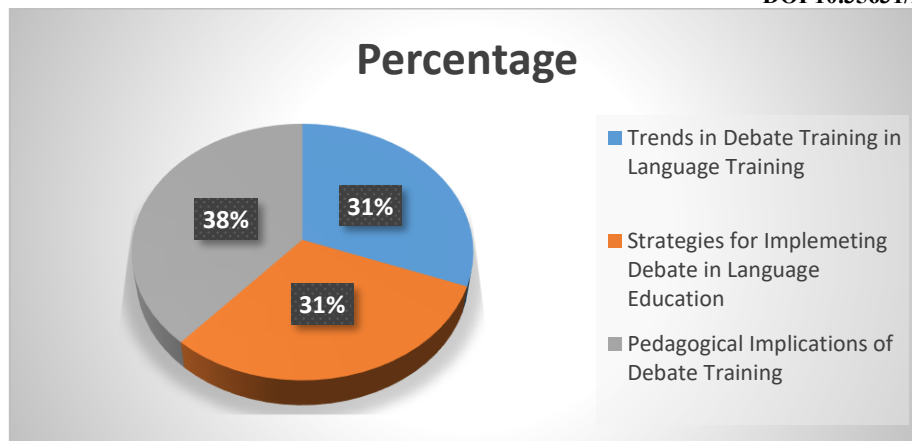
Percentage

- Trends in Debate Training in Language Training
- Strategies for Implemeting Debate in Language Education
- Pedagogical Implications of Debate Training

Figure 3: Distribution of Reviewed Articles by Thematic Category

Table 5: Classification of Reviewed Articles by Thematic Category

Theme	Article (Author, Year)
Trends in Debate Training for Language Teaching	Chau et al. (2024)
	Hameed (2020)
	García-Sánchez (2020)
	Vold and Brkan (2020)
Strategies for Implementing Debate in Language Education	Deliana and Ganie (2025)
	Majidi, Janssen, and de Graaff (2021)
	Hoffer and Gross (2020)
	Yung (2020)
Pedagogical Implications of Debate Training	Liu and Wang (2024)
	el Majidi, de Graaff, and Janssen (2024)
	Liu (2023)
	Kudinova and Arzhadeeva (2020)
	Alzubi, Nazim, and Ahamad (2024)

The findings categorized under each theme were then re-examined to ensure their alignment with the research questions guiding this review. The elaboration and discussion of these three themes are presented in the subsequent sections.

Trends in Debate Training for Language Teaching
The integration of debate training in language education has seen a transformation in recent years, reflecting shifts in pedagogical approaches and communicative methodologies. One of the significant trends observed in this area is the emphasis on cultural representation and intercultural communication within EFL classrooms. According to Chau et al. (2024), the incorporation of multicultural content in language learning materials is essential to developing students' intercultural communicative competence. However, findings from their study indicate that while textbooks incorporate international, local, and target cultural content, the actual intercultural interactions facilitated by these resources are often limited in both quantity and quality. This limitation suggests that debate training could serve as a pedagogical tool to enhance student engagement with cultural perspectives, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of diverse viewpoints. The authors recommend that EFL teachers supplement textbook materials with debate-oriented discussions to provide students with opportunities to

engage in meaningful intercultural exchanges, thereby bridging the gap between theoretical cultural knowledge and practical communicative competence.

The effectiveness of debate as a communicative strategy is further reinforced by empirical evidence demonstrating its positive impact on language proficiency. Hameed (2020) examined the effects of linguistic activities such as debates, role-playing, and quizzes on the oral proficiency of Saudi EFL learners. Findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in students' vocabulary acquisition and linguistic performance following structured debate-based interventions. The study highlights how interactive and dynamic learning environments, facilitated by debate and other communicative activities, contribute to enhanced linguistic quality and fluency. This outcome aligns with García-Sánchez (2020), who explored debate within a multimodal, collaborative learning ecosystem. The study demonstrated that debate fosters argumentative reasoning and communicative confidence, particularly when integrated with technology-assisted learning platforms such as CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) and MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning). The incorporation of multimodal tools enables students to actively engage in discussions, structure their arguments, and refine their linguistic output in a more interactive and immersive environment.

While communicative language teaching has been widely promoted, there remains an ongoing debate regarding the role of the first language (L1) in second language (L2) instruction. Vold and Brkan (2020) analyzed classroom discourse in French-as-a-foreign-language classes in Norway and found that L1 use dominated classroom instruction, with target language (TL) use primarily limited to structured exercises such as greetings, vocabulary instruction, and speaking drills. The study underscores the lack of spontaneous target-language interactions, which may hinder language acquisition and communicative fluency. In contrast, debate training encourages active TL engagement, providing learners with a structured yet dynamic platform to practice real-time argumentation and discourse management. Findings from multiple studies emphasize that integrating debate-based learning activities could significantly enhance target-language exposure, thereby aligning language instruction more closely with authentic communicative practices.

Strategies for Implementing Debate in Language Education
Effective strategies for integrating debate in language education emphasize student engagement, structured instruction, and pedagogical adaptability. One of the most widely acknowledged strategies is the promotion of active participation in debate-based speaking activities. Deliana and Ganie (2025) highlight that debate fosters critical thinking, effective communication, and collaborative learning among English Department students. Their study demonstrates that incorporating interactive debate techniques enhances students' ability to articulate arguments coherently, increasing both their confidence and speaking proficiency. The findings suggest that lecturer-led debate strategies that emphasize structured discussion formats are effective in encouraging active student engagement, reinforcing the argument that debate is a valuable pedagogical tool for teaching speaking skills in second-language contexts. Similarly, Hoffer and Gross (2020) advocate for debate competitions as an educational tool for dialogue, arguing that structured debate practices cultivate relational and logical capabilities essential for linguistic and argumentative skill development. These studies underscore the effectiveness of debate as an instructional method in improving communication skills and active learning engagement in language classrooms.

Another widely researched strategy in debate-based language teaching is its role in enhancing argumentation skills, particularly in second-language learners. Majidi et al. (2021) analyze how in-class debate training improves the structural and qualitative aspects of argumentation skills among secondary school students. Their study employs Toulmin's argumentation model, revealing that debate instruction enhances sub-argumentation, rebuttal formation, and overall reasoning quality in both oral and written communication. This aligns with Hoffer and Gross (2020), who argue that dialectical methods in speech and debate clubs play a pivotal role in shaping logical reasoning skills for students in second or third language education. The results suggest that explicit argumentation training through debate is an essential component in strengthening critical discourse competencies in language learners. The ability to construct well-supported arguments not only facilitates language fluency but also equips students with the analytical skills necessary for academic and professional settings.

A further notable strategy involves using debate structures to integrate communicative language teaching (CLT) into exam-oriented learning environments. Yung (2020) explores the fishbowl debate format as a method to engage highly exam-oriented secondary students in Hong Kong. His study demonstrates that incorporating public exam questions into debate activities encourages students to apply their language skills in authentic communicative settings, effectively bridging the gap between CLT and exam preparation. Findings indicate that debate-based strategies create a positive washback effect, making language learning more meaningful and relevant to standardized assessments. This approach aligns with Deliana and Ganie's (2025) findings, which suggest that debate-based speaking instruction not only enhances communication skills but also fosters students' ability to think critically within structured linguistic contexts. These results reinforce the argument that debate can be an effective pedagogical approach for balancing communicative proficiency with exam-oriented instruction.

Pedagogical Implications of Debate Training

Debate training in language education has been recognized as a pedagogical tool that enhances multiple aspects of student learning, including critical thinking, adaptability, social interaction, and communication skills. One significant pedagogical implication of debate training is its potential to enhance critical thinking abilities in second-language learners. Liu and Wang (2024) conducted an intervention study integrating AI-assisted debate tools in English literature classes, demonstrating a statistically significant improvement in students' critical thinking compared to those who followed traditional methods. The findings suggest that integrating AI-driven debate training can strengthen analytical and reasoning skills, providing an interactive learning environment that stimulates higher-order thinking. Similarly, Liu (2023) examined how critical thinking and unconscious competence contribute to constructive discussions in debate-based learning, concluding that students rely more on critical thinking skills (79%) than unconscious competence (21%) when engaging in structured debates. The research indicates that critical thinking is more easily developed through debate-based discussions, making it a fundamental skill for effective argumentation in language learning. These findings align with el Majidi, de Graaff, and Janssen (2024), who demonstrated that debate scaffolds oral communication development, facilitating coherence, fluency, and linguistic sophistication in second-language education. Collectively, these studies suggest that structured debate-based instruction enhances students' ability to critically analyze arguments, refine their reasoning, and engage in deeper cognitive processing.

Another pedagogical impact of debate training is its role in fostering adaptability among second-language learners. Kudinova and Arzhadeeva (2020) investigated whether debate participation improved adaptability among first-year STEM students in a Russian university. Their findings indicate that students in the debate-integrated experimental group showed significant adaptability improvements, as measured by teacher-assessors and self-assessment tools. The ability to adapt linguistically and cognitively in response to diverse arguments and discussion formats underscores debate's role in preparing students for real-world communication challenges. These results resonate with Liu (2023), who found that students engaging in debates demonstrated improved spontaneous responses and higher comfort levels in flexible conversational contexts. Similarly, el Majidi, de Graaff, and Janssen (2024) emphasized that debate training enhances students' ability to construct coherent arguments in dynamic discussions, reinforcing adaptive language use. Together, these findings suggest that debate-based instruction fosters an adaptable learning environment, equipping students with the resilience and flexibility necessary for linguistic and academic growth.

Beyond cognitive and adaptability benefits, debate also strengthens social interaction and collaborative learning. Alzubi, Nazim, and Ahamad (2024) conducted a quasi-experimental study to examine the impact of collaborative learning interventions, including debate-based group activities, on EFL students' language acquisition and social engagement. Findings revealed a statistically significant improvement in English language proficiency, teamwork, and peer learning in the experimental group. This study highlights that debate training, when integrated into collaborative learning environments, enhances students' ability to articulate thoughts, work in groups, and participate in meaningful discussions. These results correspond with Liu and Wang (2024), who observed that AI-driven debate activities encouraged interactive discussions and fostered peer-to-peer engagement in literature classrooms. Furthermore, Liu (2023) found that students involved in debate-based conversational practice displayed greater engagement in dialogue, with increased opportunities for peer negotiation and argument refinement. These findings suggest that debate training plays a crucial role in cultivating social intelligence, collaborative problem-solving, and interpersonal communication skills among second-language learners.

Discussion
This study set out to systematically explore the trends, strategies, and pedagogical implications of integrating debate training into language education. Based on the synthesis of 13 reviewed articles, it can be concluded that the objectives of this review have been successfully achieved. The findings highlight that debate training represents a transformative pedagogical shift, supporting both linguistic proficiency and cognitive development in language learners.

One of the most significant contributions of debate training is its ability to bridge the gap between theoretical language learning and real-world communicative competence. Traditional language classrooms often provide limited opportunities for students to engage in extended, authentic discourse. In contrast, structured debate activities foster a dynamic environment that encourages spontaneous language use, critical reflection, and interactive learning, thereby addressing a key shortcoming in conventional language pedagogy.

A notable trend identified is the growing emphasis on intercultural communication. Although cultural elements are incorporated into many language textbooks, these often fail to offer the experiential engagement necessary for developing true intercultural sensitivity. Debate training

addresses this gap by promoting the exploration of culturally relevant topics, encouraging learners to articulate diverse perspectives, and cultivating a deeper appreciation for global viewpoints. Through this process, students not only enhance their cultural awareness but also refine their rhetorical and argumentative strategies.

Technological advancements have further broadened the pedagogical potential of debate training. Digital platforms such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) now enable multimodal communication, real-time feedback, and collaborative learning beyond the traditional classroom. These innovations allow learners to rehearse arguments, respond to counterclaims, and refine their language skills in authentic, interactive environments, thus enhancing fluency, coherence, and critical engagement.

Beyond cognitive and linguistic improvements, debate training also fosters the development of essential social and interpersonal skills. Participating in debates promotes teamwork, negotiation, empathy, and peer collaboration—competencies that align closely with the principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). By constructing arguments collaboratively and engaging in reflective group discussions, learners enhance their social intelligence and build supportive learning communities.

Recommendation

This review highlights the importance of integrating debate training into language education across multiple levels. Academically, debate should be incorporated into curricula and teacher training programs to foster linguistic proficiency, critical thinking, and intercultural communication. In the industry, digital education providers are encouraged to develop AI-assisted debate modules to enhance learner engagement in online platforms. Nationally, education policymakers should embed debate training into language learning frameworks to nurture globally competent, analytically skilled citizens. Strategic support for debate initiatives will strengthen educational innovation, workforce communication skills, and intercultural understanding essential for national development.

Conclusion

This review affirms that debate training holds substantial promise as an instructional strategy in second-language education. Its wide-ranging benefits extend beyond vocabulary acquisition and grammar practice, offering learners a dynamic platform to develop fluency, argumentation skills, intercultural competence, and critical thinking. Unlike conventional instructional approaches, debate actively engages students in meaning-making processes, fostering deeper cognitive involvement and sustained language use.

The evidence suggests that students who participate in debate-oriented activities demonstrate significant improvements in linguistic coherence, analytical reasoning, and adaptability in diverse communicative contexts. Moreover, debate fosters resilience in discourse, enabling learners to engage confidently with differing opinions and complex arguments—skills that are increasingly relevant in both academic and professional domains.

Despite its benefits, the successful implementation of debate training requires careful consideration of instructional design, teacher readiness, and resource availability. Educators must be equipped to guide structured debates effectively and integrate them meaningfully into

curriculum goals. Future research should explore innovative debate models, particularly those that leverage digital tools and address context-specific challenges in language learning environments.

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