

Teaching sustainability through debate

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“Debate is about change. We are constantly engaged in a struggle to better our lives, our community, our country, our world, and our future. We should never be satisfied with the status quo—surely something in our lives needs improving”

Alfred C. Snider, The Code of the Debater, 2008



“Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace... If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation...”

Martin Luther King, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, 1964

What is a debate?



“I realised that if we all speak out about what we think is wrong in society, we can change it.”

Ahmad Nawaz

Introduction to Classroom Debates

Structured Discussion

Classroom debates are a structured discussion format where students present arguments and counterarguments on a specific topic.

Two Opposing Sides

Students are divided into two teams representing opposing viewpoints on the issue being debated, allowing for a balanced discussion.

Research and Preparation

Students must research the topic thoroughly to develop strong arguments and prepare compelling evidence for their positions.

Respectful Dialogue

Classroom debates encourage students to engage in respectful dialogue with their peers, listening to different perspectives and articulating their own views.



Benefits of Debate for Student Learning



Critical Thinking

Students analyze arguments, evaluate evidence, and formulate their own reasoned positions.



Effective Communication

Students learn to articulate their ideas clearly, persuasively, and respectfully.



Problem-Solving

Students work together to find solutions to complex issues and develop practical strategies.



Bloom Taxonomy

Developing Critical Thinking Skills



Analyzing Information

Students learn to identify biases, evaluate evidence, and draw logical conclusions.



Asking Questions

Engaging in debate encourages students to formulate insightful questions and explore different perspectives.



Constructing Arguments

Debates help students develop the ability to build coherent arguments, supporting their claims with evidence and reasoning.



Problem-Solving

Students learn to analyze complex issues, identify potential solutions, and weigh the pros and cons of different approaches.



Fostering Effective Communication

1

Active Listening

Students learn to listen carefully, analyze, and respond thoughtfully.

2

Constructive Dialogue

They develop skills for respectful and productive conversations.

3

Persuasion and Argumentation

Students learn to present their views convincingly and respond to counterarguments.

4

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Students learn to communicate effectively through body language and tone.

Oracy framework



Arguments

STRUCTURING ARGUMENTS WITH 'PEEL'

Good arguments have a clear structure. It can help to plan your arguments by thinking 'PEEL':

Point – a short statement or headline that makes it clear what your argument is about

Explanation – an explanation of why the point is true, and why it is important

Evidence or example – a statistic or story that illustrates the point and makes it easier for the audience to understand

Link – a connection back to the point to bring everything together

Promoting Collaborative Problem-Solving

Shared Responsibility

Debates encourage students to work together. By pooling their knowledge, perspectives, and ideas, they can find creative solutions to complex problems.

Diverse Approaches

Classroom discussions allow students to explore a range of approaches and perspectives on a given issue. This fosters an understanding of different viewpoints and encourages open-mindedness.



Formative debate



Competitive debate

Formative debate

Argumentation drills

In order to develop argumentative skills, some exercises and drills may be helpful, such as the following adapted from English Speaking Union (ESU) website and from Baker, 2013:

- **The “Why” game**

A motion is launched by the teacher, such as: “Cannabis should be legalised”.

The class will ask “Why?” and each student will answer in turn providing reasons for the different arguments mentioned.

- **If I ruled the world**

In turn, each student will list the things he/she would like to do if he/she could rule the world, within certain time limits.

- **Three Things Wrong**

This drill is useful to practise rebuttal. The coach/teacher provides a one-minute speech

and the students in turn will have a 15-20 second speech highlighting three wrong elements of the teacher’s speech: Firstly... Secondly... Thirdly...

- **Defending the indefensible**

Students are given a motion which is impossible to defend.

Example: “No one should work”.

Defense: “Without working you cannot live a decent live”.

- **A moral dilemma**

Students are standing in two lines (Proposition/ Opposition).

They are given a moral dilemma, for example: “You find a bag full of money on a bench”.

In turns, the Proposition team will have to provide arguments to keep the money, while the Opposition team will show that it is better to report the event to the police and take the bag there.

Formative debate

The balloon debate

Among the various preparatory activities for debating in a foreign language, one of the most popular is the “**Balloon Debate**”, adapted from Russel Tarr’s blog¹² also mentioned “CLIL Activities” by Dale and Tanner, 2012 (see also Cinganotto, forthcoming).

Students must choose a historical character related to the period they are studying in history and carry out research on texts, or on the web, showing and witnessing the importance of the character and his/her impact on history, society, science, etc.


Here are some guiding questions:

- **When?**
Had an impact both in the short- and in the long-term
- **Who?**
Had an impact on a lot of people’s lives
- **Where?**
Had an impact over many countries
- **What?**
Had an impact on many areas of life—for example: politics, economics, society, religion...

The teacher will assign the roles:


- Audience
- Balloon passengers.

[Name of character]



Five reasons why I am historically important:

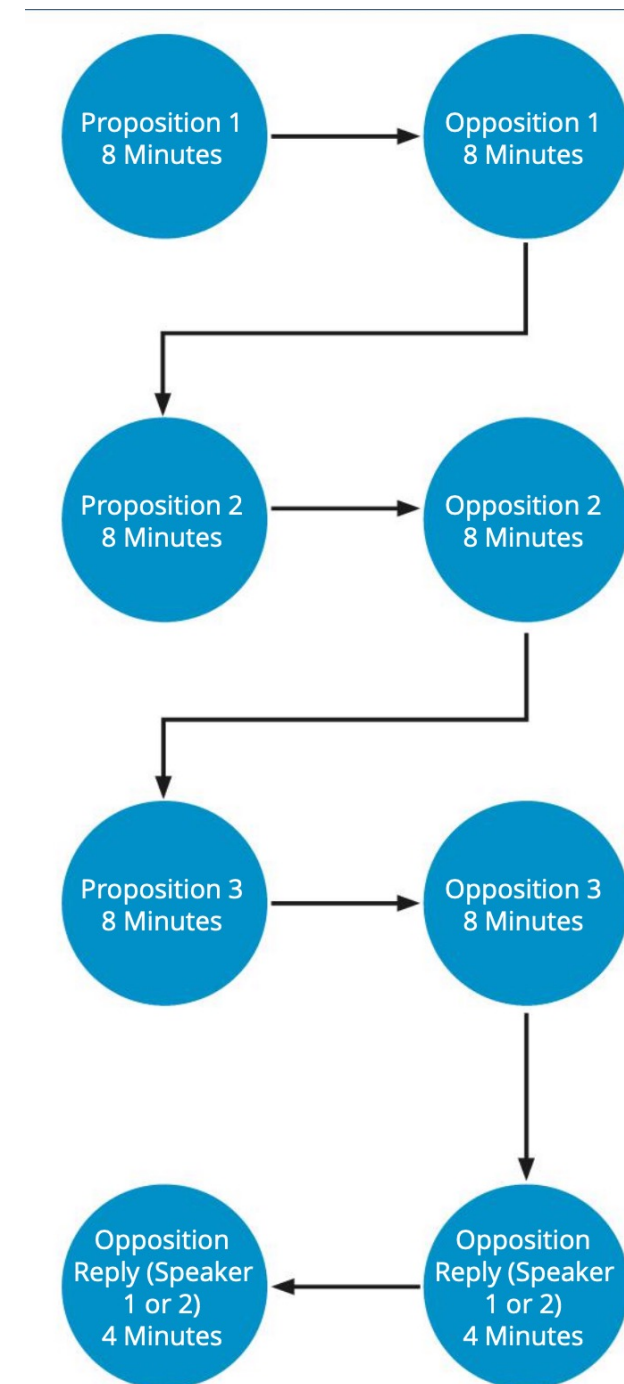
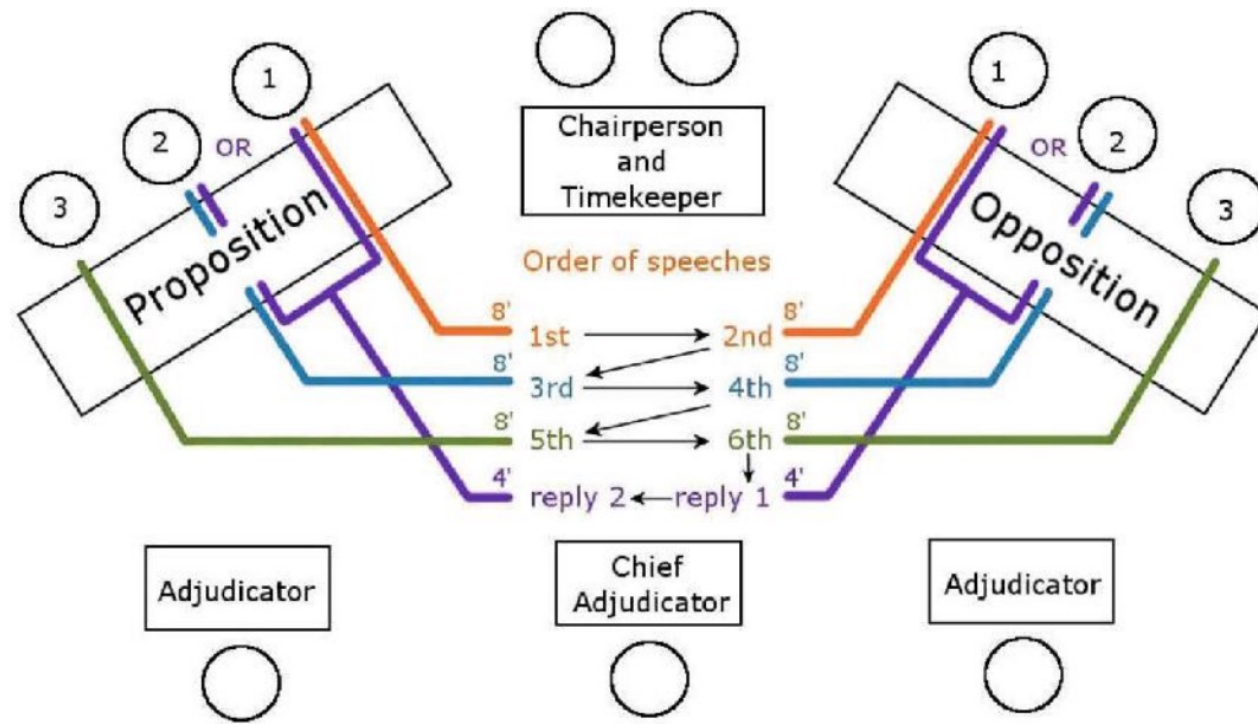
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



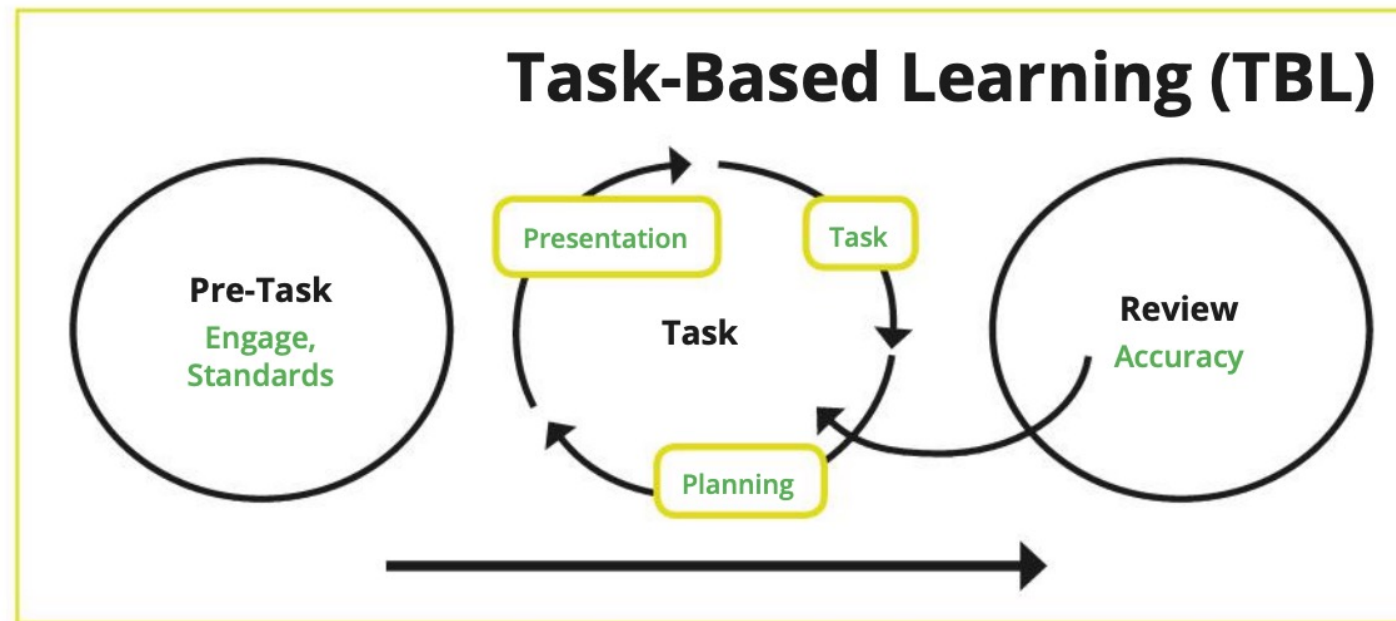
[replace the image above with something showing one of your character’s greatest moments / achievements, and explain why you chose this image in this box]

Competitive debate

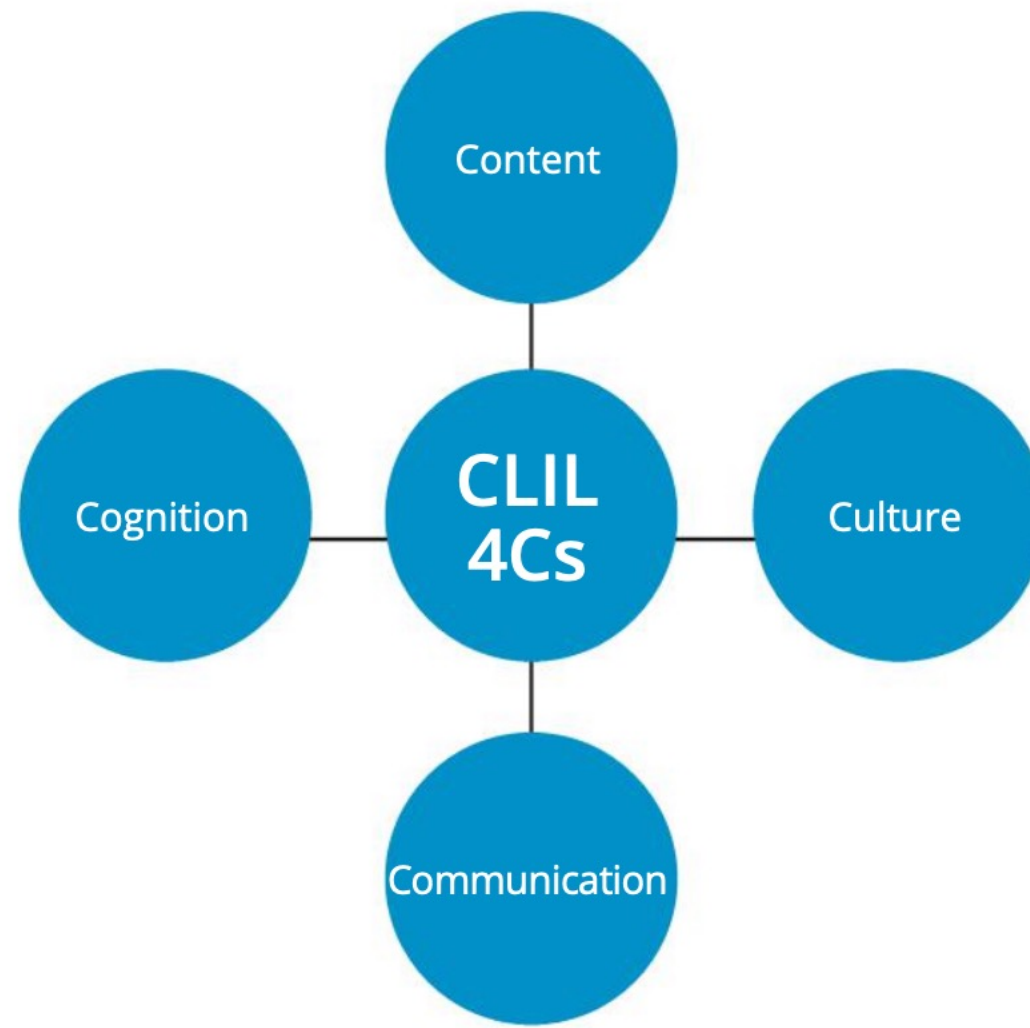
WSD



Debate for language learning



Debate for CLIL



Agenda 2030: The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The Agenda 2030 is a comprehensive framework for achieving a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

It outlines 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that address global challenges such as poverty, hunger, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation.

These goals are interconnected and require collective action from governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals to achieve by 2030.



Connecting Classroom Discussions to Global Challenges

1

Identify Challenges

Introduce students to real-world challenges.

2

Explore Solutions

Encourage discussions about potential solutions.

3

Advocate for Change

Empower students to become agents of change.

Classroom debates can spark discussions on relevant global challenges, like climate change, poverty, and inequality. Connecting these discussions to the UN's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals can help students understand the importance of global collaboration and sustainable practices. By exposing students to these challenges, we empower them to become responsible global citizens.

Debating Environmental Sustainability



Climate Change Solutions

Students examine potential solutions, evaluating their effectiveness and feasibility.



Plastic Pollution Impacts

Students engage in a lively debate about the environmental impact of plastic waste in oceans.



Renewable Energy Options

Students explore the benefits and challenges of transitioning to renewable energy sources.



Sustainable Agriculture

Students discuss sustainable agricultural practices to protect biodiversity and conserve resources.

Exploring Social Equity and Justice

Diverse Perspectives

Class discussions can explore how different groups experience social equity and justice.

Students can examine systemic inequalities and injustices, challenging biases and promoting understanding.

Global Challenges

Debates can address global issues like poverty, inequality, and discrimination.

Students can explore solutions and actions that promote social equity and justice worldwide.

Discussing Economic Development and Growth

1. Global Interdependence

Explore how economic growth in one region impacts other countries, fostering a discussion on global trade, investment, and development.

2. Sustainable Practices

Analyze how economic growth can be achieved in a sustainable way, considering environmental and social factors, such as resource management and ethical labor practices.

3. Inequality and Development

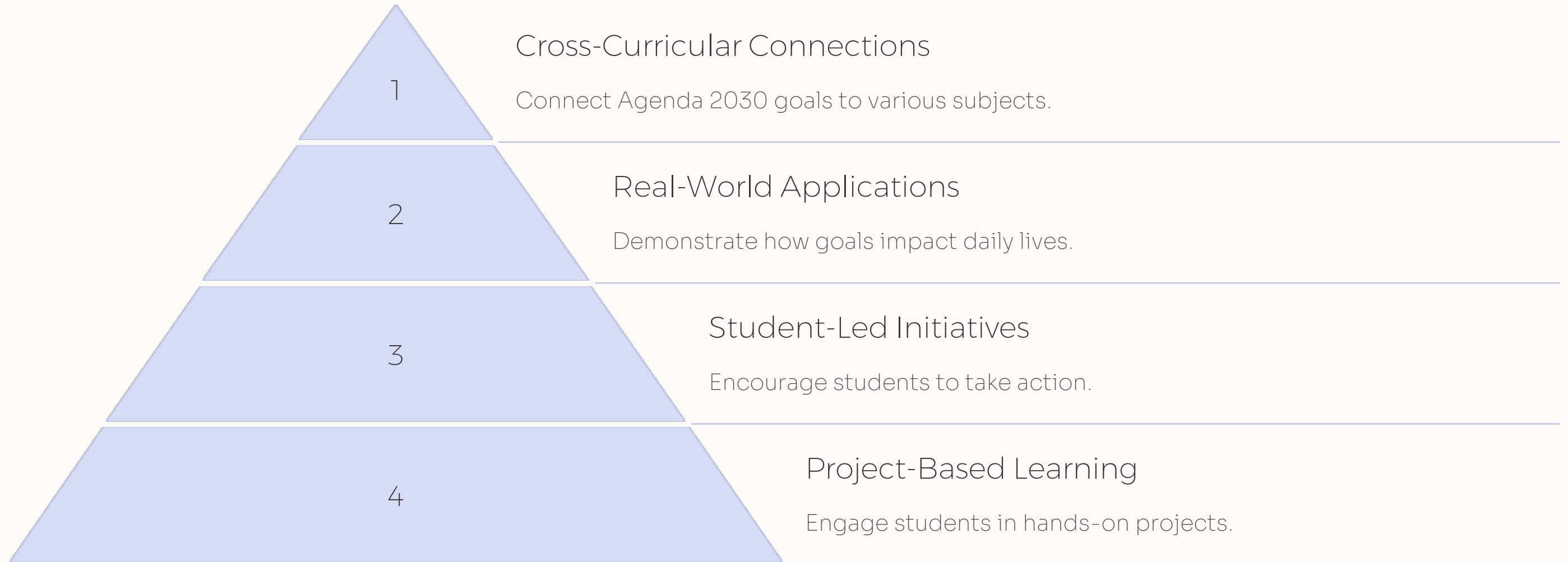
Examine the role of income inequality and poverty on economic growth and how governments can address disparities through social programs and policies.

4. Technological Advancements

Discuss the impact of technological advancements on economic growth, considering innovations like artificial intelligence and automation, and their implications on job markets.



Incorporating Agenda 2030 into Lesson Plans



Integrate Agenda 2030 into lesson plans by connecting it to various subjects. For example, discuss climate change in science class or explore economic inequality in social studies. Demonstrate how these goals impact daily lives and encourage students to take action through project-based learning initiatives.

Structuring Classroom Debates

1

Establish Clear Topics

Start by defining focused topics that are relevant to the curriculum and students' interests.

2

Define Debate Format

Choose a structure that allows for balanced arguments and encourages active participation from all students.

3

Set Ground Rules

Establish clear expectations for respectful discourse, active listening, and constructive feedback.





Tips for Effective Moderation and Facilitation

Active Listening

Pay close attention to all participants' arguments and perspectives.

Fair Ground Rules

Establish clear expectations for respectful discourse and turn-taking.

Encouraging Participation

Invite all students to contribute their ideas and perspectives.

Time Management

Keep track of time and ensure all perspectives are heard.



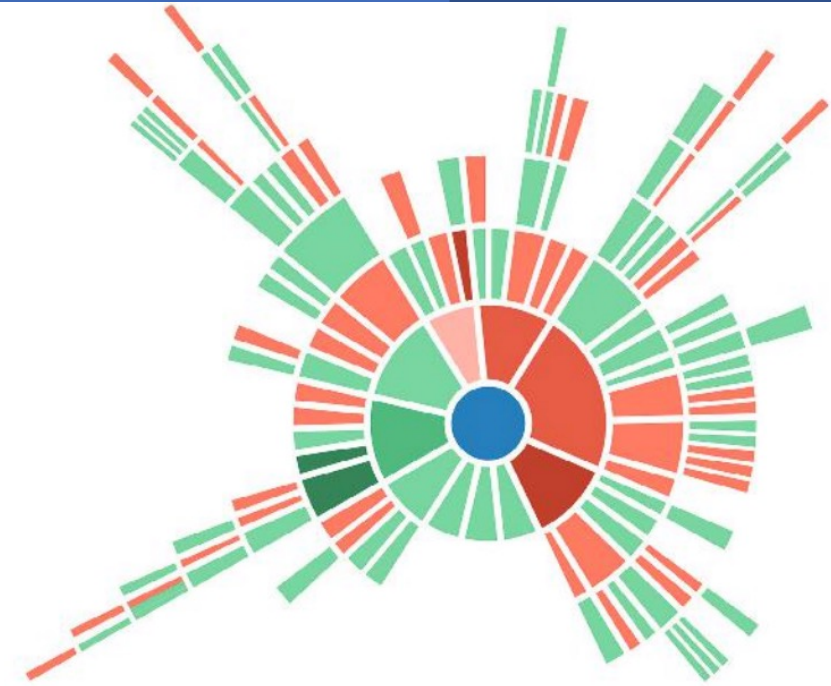
Assessing Student Learning and Participation

Method	Description
Rubric	Evaluates individual contributions and participation in the debate
Observation	Tracks active listening, argumentation, and collaboration
Self-Assessment	Reflects on individual learning and contribution to the discussion
Peer Feedback	Provides constructive criticism and insights from classmates

Assessment

STANDARD	OVERALL (/100)	STYLE (/40)	CONTENT (/40)	STRATEGY (/20)
Exceptional	80	32	32	16
Excellent	76-79	31	31	15-16
Extremely Good	74-75	30	30	15
Very Good	71-73	29	29	14-15
Good	70	28	28	14
Satisfactory	67-69	27	27	13-14
Competent	65-66	26	26	13
Pass	61-64	25	25	12-13
Improvement Needed	60	24	24	12

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Social media platforms should not be regulated by the government.

Pros

Cons

Regulation may be biased. 13

Social media companies decide what's acceptable content. 11

People would be hard-pressed to know what is true and what is not, necessitating the need for even more prudence on the internet which some people don't have. This would target the less tech-savvy generations. I.E. people over 60 currently. 10

Social media platforms need people to regulate them in order to ensure that their terms and conditions are followed. 12

If it was regulated by the government who knows what sort of information could be suppressed/stolen it would be a type of forced viewing on content only the government likes. Also in the sense of stolen data, the government would be able to learn anything about anyone and then wipe that person from the face of the internet. 10

Regulation could prevent the spread of fake news. 12

If social media were regulated, governmental bodies could use it to further their own political agendas. They may seek to remove things detrimental to their own campaigns and promote things beneficial to their campaigns. 10

If social media platforms should not be regulated then neither should television, newspapers, or radio. 12



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We support young people to build the speaking and listening skills they need to thrive. Our membership brings together a community that values the power of shared language and global friendship.

LISTEN

The Handy Little Guide to Debate

How to foster debating skills in the EFL class

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THANK YOU!!

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