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# **Teacher-Developed Materials for Language Teaching and Learning**

Universidad Externado de Colombia  
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*Yudi Carolina Rodríguez Galindo*

## **The Argumentative Competence through In-Class Debates on Social Issues\***

### **La competencia argumentativa mediante el debate en clase sobre aspectos sociales**

Astrid Núñez Pardo  
María Fernanda Téllez Téllez

#### **Abstract**

The present qualitative descriptive case study, carried out with 18 undergraduates from the fourth and the second levels, in an EFL classroom of a private university, explores the progress in the development of their argumentative competence through the design and the implementation of in-class debates, and characterises their arguments. The instruments used for data gathering were teachers' field notes, video and audio recordings, and a survey. The pedagogical intervention of the study entailed the design and implementation of six contextualised workshops and subsidiary worksheets for in-class debates to develop undergraduates' argumentative competence. The findings

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(\*) Based on the book *Using Debates in the Classroom: A Pedagogical Strategy for the Development of the Argumentative Competence in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language*. (2012). Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad Externado de Colombia. It has been revised and improved to set an example for in-service teachers enrolled in the emphasis on English didactics of the Master's Programme in Education.

evinced that the four-level undergraduates built their argumentative competence by acknowledging the need of elaborating arguments to sustain their view points, using their own background, and resorting to verbal and non-verbal language; and the second-level undergraduates developed it by pondering their life experiences. The study also suggested that, the fourth-level undergraduates jointly constructed and offered rich support for their arguments by exemplifying the debatable issue. They resorted to authorities in the field, identified cause and effect relationships and incurred in fallacies of generalisation (prejudices and opinions) and arguments against the emotions of the debaters. The second-level undergraduates featured their arguments by reflecting on their life experiences and incurred in fallacies of generalization based on their personal opinions and insufficient evidence.

**Keywords:** argumentative competence, argumentation, the concept of an argument, the debate

### Resumen

El presente estudio de caso cualitativo describe cómo se desarrolla la competencia argumentativa, y caracteriza los argumentos de 18 estudiantes de pregrado, de cuarto y segundo nivel de la clase de inglés en una universidad privada, a través del uso del debate en clase sobre temas de interés social. Los instrumentos de recolección de información fueron notas de campo, videos y grabaciones de audio y una encuesta. La intervención pedagógica del estudio implicó el diseño e implementación de seis talleres contextualizados con sus respectivas hojas de trabajo para fomentar el debate en clase y el desarrollo de la competencia argumentativa de los estudiantes. Los resultados evidenciaron que los estudiantes de cuarto nivel desarrollaron su competencia argumentativa reconociendo la ne-

cesidad de elaborar argumentos sólidos para defender sus puntos de vista, recurriendo a situaciones de su contexto local y empleando lenguaje verbal y no verbal; y los estudiantes de segundo semestre la desarrollaron reflexionando sobre sus experiencias de vida. El estudio también sugiere que los argumentos de los estudiantes de cuarto nivel se caracterizaron por la elaboración conjunta y el soporte suficiente mediante la ejemplificación, el uso de referencias de autoridades y las relaciones de causa-efecto; asimismo, incurrieron en falacias de generalización (prejuicios y opiniones) y de intervención contra las emociones de los polemistas. Los argumentos de los estudiantes de segundo nivel se caracterizaron por la elaboración de falacias de generalización centradas en sus opiniones personales y en evidencia insuficiente.

**Palabras clave:** competencia argumentativa, argumentación, el concepto de argumento, el debate

## Introduction

The reason to implement in-class debates to develop undergraduate students' argumentative competence in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at a private university in Bogotá, was to encourage students to respect their partners' thoughts and beliefs, accept individual characteristics, and improve research skills. The implementation of this pedagogical intervention was a response to the General Law of Education, article 115 (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, MEN, its acronym in Spanish, 1994), and to the expectations of the National Bilingual Program in Colombia (2004-2019), and the National English Program Colombia Very Well (2015-2025). All of them advocate the English-speaking proficiency of the citizens, as well as the vision of Colombian Education in which students cooperate in the solution of problems.

Being able to communicate in a foreign language demands continuous commitment from learners, and educational policies and institutions, EFL teachers and students. Correspondingly, the “Plan Sectorial de Educación 2004-2008 Bogotá: Una Gran Escuela – Proyecto Fortalecimiento de una Segunda Lengua” from the Secretary of Education (SED, its acronym in Spanish, 2004) promoted strategies for students to communicate in a foreign language. Likewise, the Ministry of Education (MEN, 2006) established competence standards in foreign languages to fulfil individuals’ communicative requirements to interact as citizens of the world. Furthermore, the Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (n.d), has set a focus on effective arguments for the independent user (common reference level B2) who can “account for and sustain his [her] opinions in discussion by providing relevant explanations, arguments and comments; .... [and] giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view” (p. 35). Finally, the *Estándares Básicos del Lenguaje Bogotá* (MEN, 2003), as well as the *Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras* (MEN, 2006), strengthened argumentative functions setting reading and writing standards for the last grades (eighth to eleventh) regarding the featuring of descriptive and explicative strategies for argumentation, the identification of pros and cons in an argumentative text, structures of argumentative texts, and production of argumentative texts related to personal issues and school subjects. Then, there have been continuous requirements from educational institutions that compromise efforts from learners and EFL teachers in the quest for argumentative competence.

Argumentative competence and critical thinking are two interrelated endeavours. On this matter, Sachs (2000)



remarked on the importance of developing students' argumentative competence to help them become independent and respectful critical thinkers capable of taking into consideration others' points of view and strengthen their decision-making abilities. Thus, by educating undergraduates able to reflect, organise their thinking, and express their opinions, supporting them with valid reasons, we foment the construction of meaning, promote class participation, enhance their language skills, and educate respectful, solidary and self-reliant critical thinkers with possibilities to build a more respectful and including society.

Along this paper, the reader will find the statement of the problem, the theoretical foundations, the methodological design that encompasses the instructional and the research designs, the findings, the conclusions, the pedagogical implications and questions for further research.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the undergraduates' interest in addressing relevant socio-economic issues within the EFL classroom, we noticed they struggled to express and support their ideas with evidence, which made their limitation to build arguments evident to hold debates in class. We took class observation notes kept in a teacher's journal and administered a survey (See Appendix B) to ratify the identified problematic situation. Acknowledging that the argumentative competence allows speakers and listeners to exchange their views, and respectfully persuade others about opposite or completely different points of view, provided a solid evidence (Calderón & León, 1996; Freeley & Steinberg, 2000; Weston, 2004), we privileged the development of this competence in undergraduates whose academic profile contemplates it, and posed the following research questions.

**Main Question.** How is the argumentative competence developed through the implementation of in-class debates on social issues in an English course for undergraduate Accounting students at a private university?

**Main research objective.** To explore the development of undergraduates' argumentative competence through the design and the implementation of in-class debates.

**Related Question.** What are the characteristics of students' arguments when debating points of view?

**Specific research objective.** To describe the characteristics of students' arguments when debating social issues.

## Setting

We conducted this study at Universidad Externado de Colombia, a private higher education institution, whose mission is to educate citizens that contribute to the development of a better society and rescue the dignity of the country. It advocates the respect for values, diversity, identity and human rights, and its humanistic philosophy; for these reasons, it is committed to the teaching and research of social sciences.

At this university, the English Programme offers five 96-hour levels of instruction, and students start to attend English classes in the second academic semester. Students learn both English for General and Specific Purposes (EGP and ESP) centred on making meaning and the communicative functions of the language. In reference to language, Richards and Rodgers (2001) conceived it as a means of communication in which functions correspond to what the speakers mean. In light of this, in-class debates on social issues imply the use of EFL to accomplish its communicative functions such as conveying meaning, exemplifying, enquiring from others, offering supportive information from diverse sources, and persuading among others.

## **Rationale**

We expect our study to contribute to the development of our students' capacity to construct their argumentative competence in the foreign language through in-class debates. This implies the conscious selection of controversial issues, reflecting and enquiring about them, analysing the information critically, and elaborating arguments and counter-arguments that allow them to defend viewpoints with pertinent and reliable evidence.

We also believe that our study offers us an opportunity to enhance our pedagogical knowledge and teaching practice as we deal with an array of theories, develop contextualised materials, critically scrutinise information, and become permanent learners. Besides this, we hope to provide the local community of EFL teachers with an innovative and challenging pedagogical strategy to help their students construct their argumentative competence through in-class debates.

Finally, this investigation is pertinent to the Research Line on Materials Development, ascribed to the research group Critical Pedagogies and Didactics for Social Transformation. It proposes two sorts of innovations within the EFL classroom context. First, the design and implementation of contextualised workshops and subsidiary worksheets for the development of undergraduates' argumentative competence through in-class debates, in a private setting where students can afford non-specific commercial materials. Second, the academic endeavour of helping the undergraduates build their arguments on social issues, an aspect not often addressed in current English classes. Last but not least, these pedagogical innovations foster respect, equality, solidarity and inclusion, as guiding principles of both the research line on materials development and the private university where the study was accomplished.

## **Theoretical Foundations**

In this section we address the underlying theoretical foundations of the current study. Argumentative competence (framed within communication and communicative competence), argumentation and the concept of argument, and the debate and its benefits.

### **Communication**

Since it is an attribute of human beings to communicate among them though verbal and non-verbal language, we have framed the communicative competence within the concept of communication. According to Kövecses (2000) and Piaget (2000), communication is a biological process. Vygotsky (1978) considered it as social interaction whereas Greenspan and Benderly (1998) conceived affection as a factor of cognitive growth leading to communication. Therefore, communication is the source of verbal and non-verbal expression, reflection, analysis, interpretation, and coherent argumentative interaction as sustained by Monroy and Buitrago (2003), it is a means of contrastive perception. Debates incorporate all these conceptions since participants interact, use previous knowledge and involve feelings when debating social issues.

### **Defining the Communicative Competence**

Communicative competence is essential in personal and professional life. To this respect, Hymes (1971) highlighted this competence as an accurate personal communicative performance in mother tongue, whereas Canale and Swain (1980), and Bachman (1990) extended this ability to both mother tongue and foreign languages. Moreover, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages CEF (Council of Europe, n.d) determined that it is composed by linguistic competence, which deals with language structures,

lexicon and phonetics, morphology, reading and writing skills; sociolinguistic competence that refers to the understanding of socio-cultural contexts to succeed as a competent interlocutor; and pragmatic competence, which focuses on learners' discourse coherence and cohesion that enable them to understand and decipher interlocutors' intention. Consequently, communicative competence is crucial for citizens to skilfully interact within their contexts of action.

### **Conceptualising the Argumentative Competence.**

The Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior (ICFES, 2006) renamed and incorporated professional competences as follows: (a) interpretative competence as reading comprehension; (b) proposal-making competence as the ability to formulate hypothesis, and (c) argumentative competence as the ability to test hypotheses (as cited in De Zubiría, 2006). Within these competences, the argumentative one implies developing complex thoughts to analyse the reliability of assumptions.

Likewise, Augustinienė, Bankauskienė and Čiučiulkienė (2010) stated that the argumentative competence implies "creating consensus about controversial issues, advocating proposals, facilitating behavioural commitment, and integrating identities" (p. 18). For Calderón and León, it entails using "language to form speech that shows our personal conviction about a given issue" (as cited in Pineda & Núñez, 2001, p. 35). In Pineda's and Núñez's (2001) words, it "is the capability that individuals have to perform something utilizing their abilities and knowledge" (p. 38). Thus, for this study, the argumentative competence is the capacity to express thoughts and support them with examples, factual information, reference to authorities in the field, analogies and cause-effect relationships to convince someone. In doing so, understanding what the concepts of argumentation and arguments entail

is central for the construction of the argumentative competence; two aspects that we address in the next section.

*Argumentation defined.* The British Council (2000) considered that argumentation is the result of a significant process in which students are aware of the importance of their position within a socio-cultural and political context, and are competent to recognise and appreciate their values and express their views as citizens of the world. In this regard, Greenspan and Benderly (1998) and Correa, Dimaté and Martínez (1999) remarked students' awareness to accept and handle challenges not only when solving problems, but also in other academic contexts in which the teacher leads the construction of argumentative competence and critical thinking. Hence, students should be able to assume a stand regarding a concern being discussed by expressing agreement or discrepancy with foundations.

Structuring our thinking and elaborating arguments imply providing reasons to back viewpoints. For Pineda and Núñez (2001) the argumentation process implies elaborating a discourse that offers support for conviction about an issue; discourse that is validated through debates. In Abella's (2017) words, "argumentation can be used to approach communication in a more critical way" (p. 23). Thus, when holding in-class debates, students can recognise reliable information and diverse influential attitudes from others, and decide about the best way to communicate their ideas in support of their stance in a critical way.

It is a duty of formal education to teach learners how to elaborate arguments to persuade others. Researchers such as Cox, Jaramillo and Reimers (2005), Greenspan and Benderly (1998), Karbalaei (2012), Suso (1994) agreed on the importance of a general commitment from school systems, including teachers from all fields, for the students

to have a model to follow and develop argumentative and emotional competences by participating in a range of controversial topics surrounding social issues. Monroy and Buitrago (2003) proposed the implementation of argumentative projects to foster critical academic interaction. Besides academic growth, Van Esmeren and Grootendorst (2002) contended that argumentation is a social skill that fosters interaction, confrontation, and proposal of alternative solutions to a given problem. Similarly, Facione (2011) maintained that debates allow participants to increase self-esteem and construct participative knowledge; Ramírez (2015) considered that debaters develop argumentative strategies as they “defend, explain and support a position” (p. 17). Montes (2017) pointed out that argumentative skills can be developed by modelling diverse kinds of arguments to students, encouraging them to write argumentative essays and teaching them how to identify fallacies. For our study, we selected five argumentation modes as determined by Weston (2004) and Cortés (2005): argumentation through examples, reference to an authority on the issue, establishment of cause-effect relationships, deductive reasoning and analogies.

*Conceptualising an argument.* An argument is not a mere discussion. It is the statement supported by valid reasons and proofs to influence or contradict the debater’s view, which is expressed impartially, and free from personal emotions to avoid possible misinterpretations. Vignaux (as cited in Silvestre, 2001) conceived a statement as formulation of a problem or situation, which leads to opposed positions with similar purpose and intention. Calderón and León (1996) claimed that an argument states a position about a controversial issue in debate as a cohesive communicative practice whereas Hunter (2009) attested that it requires “paying careful attention to the acceptability

and strength of the reasons one is considering" (p. 79). For Núñez and Téllez (2012) "arguments are generated in a particular context, elaborated from an opinion or point of view, supported with evidence and guarantees; and allow participants to debate with solid foundations or statements" (p. 34). Arguments should also find "balance between ours and others' assumptions without being opinionated and accepting the difference as a natural component in the discussion of controversial topics" (Ruiz, 2017, p. 21). Overall, in-class debates play a central role in fostering students' interaction, oral expression of their arguments (opinions backed by evidence) and rebuttals to persuade others with solid reasons.

This research responds to our university philosophy, the British Council's (2000) stance and Greenspan and Benderly's (1998) encouragement about institutional awareness and commitment to educate sensitive critical citizens, conscious of their role within a socio-cultural and a political context. In this case, fostering a respectful class atmosphere and implementing in-class debates aimed at developing students' argumentative competence.

So far, we have discussed the second theoretical foundation that informs this study, the following fragment describes the debate.

### **The Debate and its Benefits**

Debates are formal discussions of an issue between two or more participants that present and defend their arguments (Oxford Dictionary, 2010), which imply a process that regards multiple points of view to pursuit a judgment and convince others (Freeley & Steinberg, 2005); and "implicitly entails the notion of controversy" (Ruiz, 2017, p. 74). They have been effectively incorporated, as a teaching strategy, into several disciplines such as arts, humanities, social sciences and math (Kennedy, 2007) and have the potential to enhance EFL learners' communicative and



critical thinking skills. These considerations encouraged us to propose in-class debates in the EFL classroom to foster the development of undergraduates' argumentative competence. Hence, in-class debates constitute learning spaces that propose informed discussions on social issues, embedded in the social-cultural context surroundings the participants of the study, which aim at having them construct arguments supported by valid reasons and evidence to persuade others.

During the implementation, undergraduates from the fourth level debated the legalisation of abortion under all circumstances, the establishment of the death penalty to deter crimes against humanity, holding football world cups in developing countries, discrimination against minority groups when looking for a job, being a body liar, and femininities and masculinities. Similarly, undergraduates from the second level debated issues such as young criminal should be send to boot camps, advantages and disadvantages of having mobile phones, and pros and cons of cloning.

In-class debates encourage students' participation in class, especially when they are about topics that affect their lives. Debates allow them to express their thoughts, listen to the views of their classmates, and find common points to propose possible solutions to a particular problem. Indeed, Weston (2004) and Diestler (as cited in Pineda, 2003) referred to the structure of debated emphasising premises, reasons, and conclusions, as principles of the argumentative competence.

Several researchers ratified that debating implies both developing critical thinking communicative abilities, solving problems, and observing respect, solidarity, and cooperation among debaters (Combs & Bourne, 1994; Correa, Dimaté & Martínez, 1999; Hunter, 2009; Monroy & Buitrago, 2003; and Parcher, 1998). Moreover, Johnson, Johnson and Stanne (1995), and Johnson et al. (as cited in

Saldarriaga, 2004) sustained that it promotes students' collective work to achieve individual and group objectives, thereby creating opportunities for meaningful learning; and the Quail Roost Conference (1993) affirmed that debates allow undergraduates to develop research practices and the construction of arguments on significant social issues. All in all, "Debates afford many benefits besides promoting active engagement and mastery of the content" (Kennedy, 2007, p. 184). Since the pedagogical intervention that underlies this study requires individual and group efforts to attain common goals, agreements, and a final assessment of each session, we consider the development of students' argumentative competence as a source of language learning and efficient cooperation.

The discussion above has addressed the theoretical foundations of our study, the lines that follow deal with its methodological design.

### **Methodological Design**

In this segment, we describe both the research and the instructional designs envisioned to answer the research question: How is the argumentative competence developed through the implementation of in-class debates in an English course for undergraduate Public Accounting students? And its related question: What are the characteristics of students' arguments when debating points of view?

#### **Research Design**

Herein we present the research approach, type of study, the participants of the study, and the instruments used to collect data.

**Research approach.** The qualitative, interpretative, and descriptive approach frames this study. It is suitable to

identify a problem in a given social context and improve the unsolved situation (Burns, 1999, 2001; Sandin, 2003) and “to understand better some aspect(s) of the lived world” (Richards, 2003, p. 10), which involves observing “humans in natural and social settings” (Lichtman, 2006, p. 22) and “lived experiences of people” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 2). It requires “rigour, precision, systematicity and careful attention to detail” (Richards, 2003, p. 6) and favours the results obtained in a natural setting and procedures that allow interaction with the participants (Snape & Spencer, 2003). As our study is rooted in the identification of a current problem within an EFL teaching context, the systematic observation, description and interpretation of undergraduates’ behaviours and experiences while holding in-class debates, helped the teacher-researcher-text developers to make a better sense of the way in which undergraduates develop their argumentative competence.

**Type of study.** A case study is defined as “an empirical inquiry within its real-life context (Yin, 1994 p. 23) and “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (Merriam, 1988, p. 16) whose purposes “may be exploratory, descriptive, interpretive and explanatory” (Mariano as cited in Zucker, 2009, para. 10). In addition, it “investigates the way the instance functions in context” (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1976, p. 75), and identifies characteristics or processes (Bell, 1993), by paying attention to thorough observation, renovation, and examination of the cases studied and integrating the voices of the participants (Zonabend, 1992). By thoroughly describing and scrutinising the phenomenon using multiple data-gathering sources in its natural setting, we described and interpreted the development of the undergraduates’ argumentative competence while holding in-class debates. We also considered Stake’s (1995) procedural insights in what concerns to gathering information on the initial state of students, compiling and as-

sembling data during the pedagogical intervention and keeping records of changes caused by the intervention.

**Participants.** The participants of the study were the undergraduates and two teacher-researchers and text developers.

**Students.** The study was conducted with 18 EFL students of second and fourth semesters at a private university in Bogotá, aged between 17 and 21 years old, who signed the informed consent letter (See Appendix A) that guaranteed that their identity would remain private. Six female and three male students in second level, and five female and four male students in fourth level demonstrated special interest in joining the research experience. To select the participants, we used the convenience sampling technique (Stevens, 1996) in which the participants are chosen, based on their availability or approachability.

**Teacher-researcher and text developers.** We were two teachers who performed a three-fold role: As English teachers of the second and the fourth levels, we planned and delivered our class sessions bearing in mind our students language learning and affective needs and interest. As researchers, we took into account Hammersley and Atkinson's (1983) insight regarding the close relation of researchers with the context on study. Finally, creating materials for their classes is an endeavour that EFL teachers should undertake (Littlejohn, 2012; Núñez, Pineda & Téllez, 2004; Núñez & Téllez, 2009; Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2009; Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2012, 2017a, 2017b; Tomlinson, 1998). In other words, developing materials is natural attribute of teachers (Graves, 1997; Tomlinson, 1998), we designed and implemented both the six workshops intended for regular instruction and the corresponding worksheets focused on holding in-class debates, aimed at developing the undergraduates' argumentative competence.

**Data gathering instruments.** We collected the data through teachers' field notes, audio recordings and video recordings.

***Teacher's field notes.*** It is a valuable data gathering instrument highlighted by Hopkins (1995), for its practicality and reliability in the registration of permanent observation and variations generated by the implementation of in-class debates. As ascertained by Power (as cited in Hubbard & Power, 1999), two kinds of teacher's field notes were kept: "in the midst" and "after the fact" (p. 106). The former were taken while students were actually working on the debates, and the latter were taken once the students had finished debating (See Appendix C).

***Audio and video recordings.*** These instruments gathered attitudes, gestures, and spontaneous effects occurred in the classroom that let researchers observe participants' behaviour. Burns (2001) and Hopkins (1995) consented about the efficiency of both audio and video recordings to register students' response meticulously.

## **Pedagogical Design**

In this fragment, we address the pedagogical intervention, its general and specific objectives, the innovation of the pedagogical intervention, the theory of the nature of language and language learning, the methodological approach underlining the pedagogical intervention, the connection of the pedagogical intervention with the research inquiry and the pedagogical phases.

**Pedagogical intervention.** To foreground the decision of developing contextualised workshops and complementary worksheets that incorporate in-class debates aimed to develop the undergraduates' argumentative competence, the researchers acknowledged the need to create materials that were different from the ones offered by commercial

publishing. Commercial materials are “generic and not aimed at any specific group of learners or any particular cultural or educational context” (Howard & Major, 2005, p. 101). They are also underpinned by methodologies that disregard the comprehension of the particularities of the sociocultural context and the self-contextualisation and self-construction of pedagogical knowledge (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, 2003, 2001, 1994; Gray, 2000). Thus, by informing the materials with the socio-cultural realities of the undergraduates’ context, fine-tuning the methodology to their language learning and affective needs, and moving away from teacher-centred classes, both the traditional central roles of standardised materials and teacher-lead EFL classes might make the most of undergraduates’ initiatives to hold in-class debates.

Commerce-oriented textbooks, like any other product, have characteristics, aims and intentions. Such materials are featured by a “centralised and standardised view of what language teaching should be about” (Littlejohn, 2012, p. 290), they are aimed “at boosting commerce and the dissemination of ideas” (Gray, 2000, p. 274), and intended to yield bizarre results in developing the communicative competence in EFL (Gómez, 2015), and thus, unable to “meet the vast and changing needs of learners and classes around the world” (Allwright, 1981, p. 9). However, it would be naive to demonise all teaching materials, but rather sensible to propose the creation of teacher-developed materials, in an attempt to resist “the authoritarian imposition of socio-cultural values” (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p. 361), and the “manner in which uniformity is being imposed” (Littlejohn, 2012, p. 295). Considering input from both the undergraduates’ and the teachers’ voices, the subjects ultimately involved in teaching and learning EFL in our particular contexts, teacher-generated materials are more likely to be

appropriate and meaningful to help students build their own arguments when holding debates.

The aforementioned arguments are grounds for the pedagogical intervention of this study, which consisted of developing and implementing six contextualised workshops made up of five lessons each (vocabulary and grammar in context, reading and listening comprehension, writing and speaking about social issues close to students' reality), and the corresponding subsidiary worksheets to have undergraduates hold in-class debates with the purpose of meeting their needs (Núñez & Téllez, 2008). These materials aim at exposing students to language input and having them using it in purposeful communication (Willis, 1996), making learning take place, and developing their argumentative competence. Thus, we consider that the workshops and worksheets, which were aligned with the syllabus of the English Programme, exposed students to appropriate and contextualised language input, allowed them to work cooperatively, and provided them with possibilities to apprehend, use the language for communicative purposes (to express and defend their viewpoints), and interact while holding in-class debates on social issues they experience in their immediate context. Thus, contextualised materials respond to ground realities of everyday-human life.

**General pedagogical objective.** The main instructional objective of this intervention was to develop and implement six contextualised teacher-developed workshops and complementary worksheets to support both the undergraduates' language learning process and the development of their argumentative competence.

**Specific pedagogical objectives.** (a) To create spaces for debating social issues of common interest for students to express their arguments; (b) to sensitise students

about converting points of view into solid arguments, supported by evidence; (c) to provide students with language input and linguistic strategies to help them defend their viewpoints in an academic setting; (d) to familiarise students with the dynamics of debates; and (e) to negotiate students' ideas, beliefs, and thoughts taking into consideration the debaters' points of view.

**Intervention as an innovation.** In general, an innovation is a deliberate and planned process that is perceived as new and alleviates a problematic situation. An innovation is the result of "a deliberate and conscious effort that is perceived as new, as intended to bring about improvement, and has potential for diffusion" (Stoller, 1997, p. 34); "[it] is conscious, planned and involves some fundamental breaks with the known past" (Rudduck, 1991, p. 56); and it considers the individuals and their context (Markee, 2001). It also brings change addressed to improve, solve, or ease a given problem (Hannan & Silver, 2001); it applies "a new resource or approach that changes ... the social practice of teaching and learning" (Rogers as cited in Kirklan & Sutch, 2009, p. 10); it plays a central role "in MD and teacher-developed materials can be seen as an innovative practice in the EFL classroom" (Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2012, p. 24); and it allows teachers to "acknowledge the fact that it is possible to innovate in their EFL contexts through teacher-developed materials (Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2017a, p. 13). Therefore, all pedagogical actions deliberately carried out by EFL teachers, within their own teaching context, to help students learn, ease a learning shortcoming, develop a given language skill, or ability to use the language purposefully, are constituents of an innovation, which in this case concerns the design and implementation of workshops and worksheets to prompt in-class debates



on social issues aimed at developing undergraduates' argumentative competence.

**Theories of the nature of language and language learning.** A three-fold theory of the nature of language informs our pedagogical intervention: the interactional, self-expression, and culture and ideology perspectives. The interactional vision, in Richards and Rodgers' (2001) insight, "Is the vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social interactions among individuals" (p. 21). Hence, the interactional vision remarks on the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, which are pursued through the socio-linguistic exchanges expected via holding debates. Additionally, the self-expression vision allows undergraduates to make individual sense of the use of English to express their thoughts and ideas for realistic purposes (Tudor, 2001). Finally, through the cultural and ideological visions, the socio-cultural exchanges influence undergraduates' use of English in contextualised learning endeavours (Tudor, 2011) like in-class debates on social issues. These three perspectives are contemplated in the vision of the university where this study was conducted, which privileges a pluralist ideology, fosters respect for universal culture, holds to a liberal spirit, and favours equality in socio-economic conditions and respect for the fundamental rights. Thus, undergraduates are educated to freely express their thoughts and ideas, and assume a critical stance on the social issues that occur in their own contexts.

The theory of language learning for the present pedagogical intervention is habit formation to foster automaticity. Communication requires the knowledge of the language and the ability to use it in a fluent way (Tudor, 2001), and the use of EFL in in-class debates may support habit formation and foster communicative confidence.

**Methodological language teaching approach.** The approach that underpins this pedagogical intervention is cooperative learning (CL, henceforth), which implies creating a classroom atmosphere where the undergraduates are encouraged to learn with others and from each other. CL involves group work in which all participants are resources to achieve a common goal, develop a sense of responsibility, and reach construction of knowledge, higher academic performance, and social interaction (Calderón, 1987; Olsen & Kagan, 1992); and encompasses simultaneous face to face interaction (students interact during the development of learning activities), individual accountability (team accomplishment relies on the students' individual efforts), positive interdependence (failure or success in reaching a goal affects the group's outcomes), and equal opportunities to participate (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1998; Mac Cafferty, Jacobs & DaSilva, as cited in Kessler, 1992; Kagan, 1994). Consequently, CL allows undergraduates to find the way to share their thoughts, interact and express themselves spontaneously assuming individual commitment to fulfil group expectations, which turns the learning process into an opportunity for the social construction of knowledge (Golub, 1988; Leigh & MacGregor, as cited in Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, Leigh & MacGregor, 1992). In other words, when the teacher does not play the traditional central role of leading the class, and students are encouraged to work in groups and take the initiative in the completion of the proposed learning activities, there are far more possibilities for them to improve their performance when using EFL with communicative purposes.

Since CL fosters interaction among students to maximise social relationships and learning outcomes, they are encouraged to work in groups and plan the

in-class debates by searching pertinent information and assigning different roles to their classmates. This way, they could adopt an opposite slant about social issues, interact, express their views, their agreements or disagreements within a respectful classroom atmosphere, and provide valid reasons to support their stance. Also, students might seek a common aim bearing in mind their individual responsibility on debatable statements such as abortion should be legalised under all circumstances, discrimination against minorities when looking for a job should be abolished, and young criminals should go to prison instead of boot camps, among others.

**Relating the pedagogical intervention to the research inquiry.** Our research inquiry and the pedagogical intervention are closely linked. Rico (2005) remarked on materials that “involve different kinds of texts” since they help learners “to develop their competence through a variety of different activities” (p. 106). Both the workshops and the subsidiary worksheets proposed a wide variety of contextualised learning activities including the use of imagery and pictures, playing games, using vocabulary in context, reading and making sense of passages, listening comprehension activities, guided writing and speaking encounters, among others. Besides that, Richards (2005) contended that “effective instructional materials in language teaching are shaped by consideration of a number of factors, included teacher, learner, and contextual variables” (p. 1). On this subject, the design and implementation of contextualised teacher-developed workshops and complementary worksheets, based on the undergraduates’ needs and interests, bring them the opportunity to share their ideas and sources with their classmates while holding in-class debates in a friendly and stress-free learning environment.

**Pedagogical phases.** Four moments featured our pedagogical intervention. First, we designed and conducted a survey (See Appendix B). This instrument was relevant to identify and support the emergence of the problematic issue that underlies this research study. Since they are useful to find out precise information provided by the participants (Burns, 2001), we administered it to identify the participants' profile, their previous experience in holding in-class debates and their understanding on them. It also served as the onset to develop the pedagogical intervention. The answers provided showed that despite being high school graduate students, most of them were not used to debating issues at all. Second, we develop the contextualised materials (workshops and worksheets as showed below) addressing the undergraduates' needs, debating profiles and social issues of their interest. Third, we explored their argumentative abilities by asking them to debate a controversial topic without giving them any instructions to consider so they could demonstrate their ability to debate. Finally, we sensitised students to the concept of debate and five argumentation modes to provide them with instructional patterns accompanied with peer-interactive discussions and self-assessment.

***Workshop and worksheet samples.*** In the following pages, we present the contextualised materials we developed for the pedagogical intervention of this study.

## Workshop No. 2

### *Football World Cups: A Curse or a Blessing?*



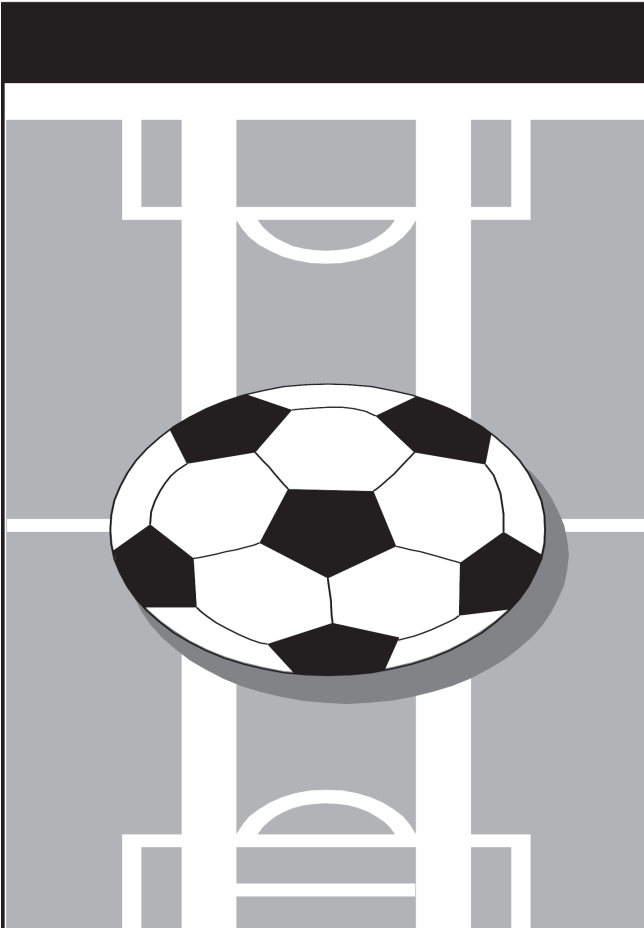
### **General Objective:**

To assume stances in favour or against the idea of holding football world cups in developing countries.

## Before reading

1. On this football pitch / field, identify and locate the people that follow. You may need to draw some of them.

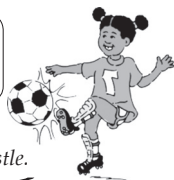
*the referee*      *footballers*      *the team manager*      *attackers or forward players*  
*the captain*      *the goal keeper*      *flankers or wingers*      *the link man*  
*defence players*      *mid-field players*      *substitute players (reserve)*



## 2. Work in pairs. Finish these definitions using your own words.



To write a definition, identify the three components: concept, class, and functions/ characteristics/ features.



*A Referee is a person who controls the football match/game by using a whistle.*

Concept

Class

function/ characteristic

The team manager: \_\_\_\_\_

A Defence player: \_\_\_\_\_

A Forward player: \_\_\_\_\_

The captain \_\_\_\_\_

The link man: \_\_\_\_\_

The goal keeper: \_\_\_\_\_

A free kick: \_\_\_\_\_

To be off side: \_\_\_\_\_

A fault: \_\_\_\_\_

A penalty: \_\_\_\_\_

The whistle: \_\_\_\_\_

A mid-field player: \_\_\_\_\_

Substitute players (reserve): \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Match each word or phrase on the left-hand side to each definition on the right-hand side.



*Making associations by relating new language to concepts already known.*



1. The pitch / field		To hit the ball with the foot, head or forehead.
2. To score		To score a goal in unlikely circumstances.
3. To kick or head the ball		To have the ability to do something.
4. To qualify for the final stages		Successful attempt at scoring and goals conceded by the goalkeeper.
5. To throw or pass the ball		A free shot at goal by the opposing team.
6. To create a goal out of nothing		To equal the score of a competitor.
7. To have the knack of		To gain a point or points in a game or contest.
8. Games won / games lost / drawn		To win an opponent conclusively or easily.
9. Goals for and against		To project the ball through the air.
10. Penalty shoot		The number of victories, loses and games tied or drawn (nil-nil).
11. Has a good engine		To pass the ball accurately to the player's feet.
12. Keep it on the carpet		A player with a lot of energy.
13. Keep it tight at the back		To play the ball along the ground.
14. Play to feet		To make sure the defence is well organised.
15. Keeps a clean sheet		To progress to the final positions of a competition.
16. To tie or draw		The field of play. Also called the pitch shot.
17. To walk over		The goalkeeper has not conceded any goals.



## Let's play on the spot!



- ⌚ Play the game *on the spot*. Organise yourselves into two big teams. Think of a catchy name for your group.
- ⌚ Put one chair at the front of the class, facing away from the board.
- ⌚ Point a representative to come up and sit in front of his/her group. When you are all seated, your teacher will write one word or expression learnt, on the board.
- ⌚ You can see the word or expression, but you cannot say it. Then, you are to describe it, or give examples, synonyms, antonyms or anything you can think of to help your team mate guess it as quickly as possible.
- ⌚ Every time a member of a team guesses, the whole team applauds and is rewarded with a point.

⌚ **Congratulations and celebrations!**

## While reading



*Deducing grammar rules by recognising their use and meaning in context.*

Read the following passage carefully. Underline the points in favour of football world cups and circle the contrast connectors.

*Despite* stirring sentiments among South Africans, Shakira arrived at the Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg. In regard to her decision to perform the official tournament song at the 2010 World Cup opening ceremony she said, "The FIFA Football World Cup is a miracle of global excitement, connecting every country, race, religion, and condition around a single passion". Then, she added "the song is a synthesis of the passion for soccer and what it arouses in people. It represents an event that has the power to unite and integrate, and that's what this song is about."

Indeed, football, soccer, champion leagues, cup competitions, tournaments and matches are all magic words that people roll round their mouths and flavour like a fine wine. Football is beyond doubt the most popular sport that has ever been practiced and the passion and excitement it gives is amazing! This wonderful sport touches *not only* kids, adolescents, the youth and adults, *but also* business men/women and the elderly.

All professional footballers earn their living by playing for the side clubs around the world. *However*, the best ones play in those leagues that offer the highest pay such as England's Premier league, Italy's Serie A, Germany's Bundesliga and Spain's La Liga. The best club sides also compete in continental and intercontinental cup competitions. *While* the European Football Federation

(UEFA) organises the champion league that groups the European sides, the Football Federation in Latin America organises the Copa Libertadores grouping the Central and South American sides.

*Even though* the football world cup is one of the most important sports events all over the world, it is generally held in developed countries. Such event usually results in higher income generation, greater possibilities for cultural exchange and foreign investment, improvements in political relationships, and increase in local infrastructure investment. *Although* underdeveloped countries dream of the opportunity to host a football world cup, it is a well-known fact that the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) does not put their teams and fans under the perils that poor countries offer.

To summarise, depending on the country's economic health and pride there is a hope: for poor countries, it is enough to qualify for the semi-finals *whereas* for the rich ones it is indispensable to qualify for the finals.

*Selected and adapted from*

<http://docslide.net/documents/workshop-on-football.html>

## Deducing the use of contrast words

Now focus your attention on the contrast words in bold in the previous passage and answer these questions:



What do we use contrast words for?

---



---



Where shall we place connectors such as **although**, **however**, **while** and **though**?

- ✓ **Although and even though** go at \_\_\_\_\_  
and we use a \_\_\_\_\_ between \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ **However** goes after a \_\_\_\_\_  
and we use a \_\_\_\_\_ immediately after it.
- ✓ **While** usually goes at \_\_\_\_\_  
and we use a \_\_\_\_\_ after the \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✓ **Whereas** goes in \_\_\_\_\_ and we do not use  
\_\_\_\_\_ between the two opposed sentences.
- ✓ **Though** is very similar to *but*; it often goes at the  
\_\_\_\_\_.

👉 Can you provide more examples of contrast connectors?  
Write them down on these lines.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Grammar in context: Joining two opposed ideas



*Clarifying new concepts  
using contextual clues.*

1. Work in pairs. On this grid, there are seven contrast sentences. Join the beginning of each sentence (marked with the letters a to h) with its respective ending (numbered from 1 to 8).



<p><b>a. While</b> many players in the 2010 Football World Cup showed a poor performance,</p>	<p><b>c. Although</b> Spain versus the Netherlands match on Sunday's tournament final (11th July) kept the world awaiting in agony,</p>	<p><b>e.</b> One of the most expected matches of this round was Diego Maradona's team (with Messi, Tévez and Verón interacting at their best) facing once again Germany in quarter finals.</p>	<p><b>g. Despite</b> Messi's comment and sights on Argentina's football team quality and talent,</p>
<p><b>b. Even though</b> the young Germany team's sights had been set on greater achievements than third place,</p>	<p><b>d. In spite</b> of reckoning Paraguay's victory at the quarter final match against Spain at Ellis Park Stadium-Johannesburg on Saturday July 3, 2010,</p>	<p><b>f.</b> The Argentinean team tried really hard to defeat its rock-solid contender and so not to let their fans down,</p>	<p><b>h. Despite</b> the outstanding reputation of the German Team,</p>
<p><b>1.</b> He couldn't score a single goal to lead his team to a better place in the tournament.</p>	<p><b>3.</b> it was finally settled four minutes from the end of extra time by Andrés Iniesta. Undefeatable Spain has been crowned as FIFA World Cup Champion 2010.</p>	<p><b>5.</b> Fernando Torres single goal brought the Spaniards to the 2008 Euro Cup Championship</p>	<p><b>7.</b> the true results of this amazing encounter were not enough to lead Paraguay to the final (Paraguay o-Spain 1).</p>
<p><b>2. However,</b> it was impossible for this solid candidate to lift this year's title, as Maradona had almost predicted.</p>	<p><b>4.</b> Last 9<sup>th</sup> July they got this place in a thriller in which Uruguay scored 2 and Germany 3. Khedira said they had a young team that could reach even more in the future.</p>	<p><b>6.</b> Diego Forlán from Uruguay and Thomas Mueller from Germany made it a four-way tie for most goals in the tournament in an entertaining battle for third-place.</p>	<p><b>8. but</b> Germany recorded an amazing result with a simply wonderful performance!!! Argentina 0-4 Germany.</p>

2. The sentences below compare two types of football fields: natural grass and artificial turf. Complete them by writing the appropriate ***contrast word*** in the space provided. Use the Word Bank.



Consciously applying a rule by using contextual clues.



However,  
Whereas

On the other hand,  
Even though

But

Not only..., but also

Although  
In spite of  
Despite  
while  
though

1. The world's best paid football players Lionel Messi, John Terry, Kaka and Thierry Henry prefer natural grass to play because it is safer. \_\_\_\_\_, I prefer artificial turf because the game is faster.



Diego Forlán

2. \_\_\_\_\_ the artificial turf surface looks like grass, dirt tends to stick to it.



Fernando Torres

3. \_\_\_\_\_ artificial turf can support between thirty to forty football games in a week, natural grass only bears three or four games per week.

4. Artificial turf is \_\_\_\_\_ expensive \_\_\_\_\_ harmful / damaging to players.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ causing stress on the players' joints, artificial turf allows for a faster and more dynamic game.

6. On the one hand, artificial turf needs little maintenance.

\_\_\_\_\_ it is rather expensive and just a few sports clubs can afford it.

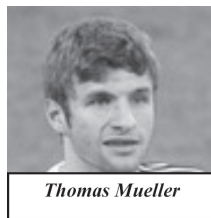
7. A natural grass pitch offers a few perils or dangers to players \_\_\_\_\_ artificial turf becomes slippery and dangerous in wet conditions.

8. Artificial turf may be a good alternative for sports clubs, \_\_\_\_\_ birds that are always looking for their food on the fields are misled and, obviously, nature is vanishing day after day.

9. \_\_\_\_\_ being more resistant, artificial turf is more expensive.

10. The football industry worries too much about pitch materials. \_\_\_\_\_, there is no need to actually fret for it to experience football euphoria.

11. \_\_\_\_\_ there wasn't anyone in the stadium, the football match/game started on time.



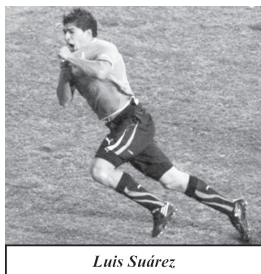
*Javier Hernández.*

12. Mexico has the 22-year-old striker Javier Hernández who has football in his blood \_\_\_\_\_

Uruguay has Luis Suárez who played a key role scoring the second goal during the match against South Korea.

13. The football pitch/ field lines had vanished because of the rain.  
\_\_\_\_\_ the referee managed to whistle the game pretty well.

14. The real heroes of 2010 Football World Cup are the Dutch and the Spanish, \_\_\_\_\_ just one of these favourite teams will become the world's best team.



*Luis Suárez*

15. \_\_\_\_\_ the Brazilian team made strenuous efforts at the 2010 World Cup, they were eliminated / defeated in the quarter finals by the Dutch team (the Netherland's team).

16. Uruguay president José Mujica is proud of national team performance at World Cup 2010 \_\_\_\_\_ semi-final defeat in Cape Town.



## Listening



*Differentiating between stated and inferred issues.*

**1. You will listen to a radio adviser reading a letter that Lucy sent to the radio counselling session. As you listen, fill in the blanks to complete the information.**

*Dear Karl:*

I would like to congratulate you for your helpful and exciting programme. I am a faithful follower of your counselling session because it does help lots of people to sort their problems out.

After several years of solitude and anxiety, I have decided to tell you my uncomfortable and tangling situation. My husband is a football nut. Every morning he grabs the newspaper and skims through the \_\_\_\_\_, checking out the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_. He reads the fine print about every \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as well. He can also recite the names and biographies of every important \_\_\_\_\_ from last century. For example, he can tell you everything about Pele to James David Rodríguez or Leonel Andrés Messi. He memorises most of the games' statistics too. He watches every \_\_\_\_\_ he can, even the games between "Millonarios and Santa Fe". Actually, we never go out on a Sunday afternoon or talk at night when the big games are on T.V. He gets so involved that he screams and roars at the T.V. screen. Sometimes he curses the \_\_\_\_\_ or the \_\_\_\_\_ so loud that our neighbours have called the police and we, our sons and me, had to buy earplugs. I think my husband is \_\_\_\_\_ to football, he even talks about it in his sleep. Anyway, I am a football widow. What can I do to have my husband back? I'm desperate, help me out. Thank you very much for your kind advice.

Yours,  
Lucy.

2. After listening to the tape twice, write (S) next to those details that are stated and write (I) next to those that must be inferred. Then, compare with your partner.

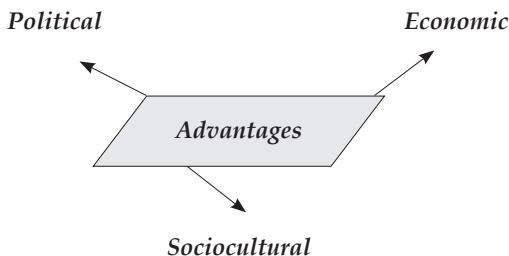
1. ○ Lucy regards Karl as a trustworthy person.
2. ○ Lucy's husband is an ardent admirer of a sport.
3. ○ Lucy's husband is deaf.
4. ○ The police have arrested Lucy's husband several times
5. ○ Lucy's husband unkindness made her look for counselling desperately.
6. ○ The radio counselling session Lucy has asked for help is her last resort.

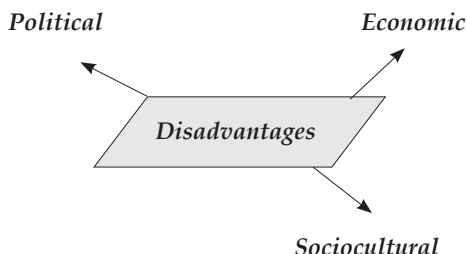
## Speaking



*Using the economic, political, and socio-cultural perspectives to state the pros and cons of an issue to persuade the audience.*

1. The topic of today's debate is Football World Cups to be held in developing countries like Colombia. First, work with a classmate. Write phrases and key words to help you identify and state pros and cons of the event mentioned before.





**2. Your teacher will divide the class into two teams: Team A and Team B. Team A is to be in favour of this kind of event and Team B is definitely against it. Provide solid arguments to persuade the opponent team.**

**Try to use the following expressions:**

**Saying you partly agree  
with someone.**

**Stating your point of view**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>◆ <b>Although</b> I see your point, I believe that...</p>                               | <p>➤ As far as I am concerned, ...</p> <p>➤ As I see it, ...</p>                                |
| <p>◆ You've got a point there.<br/><b>However</b>, ...</p>                                 | <p>➤ Personally, I think that...</p> <p>➤ I strongly believe that...</p>                        |
| <p>◆ <b>Despite</b> people's passion and happiness, FWCs...</p>                            | <p>➤ I see things rather differently myself...</p> <p>➤ From my personal point of view, ...</p> |
| <p>◆ That's quite True Anne, <b>but</b> don't forget that ....</p>                         |   |
| <p>◆ I am afraid I can't agree with you there,</p>   |   |
| <p>◆ <b>In spite of</b> careful security planning, FWCs bring about riots and violence</p> |   |

# Writing

1. Free write the *points in favour and points against* if football World Cups were to be held in underdeveloped countries.

Points in favour

✓

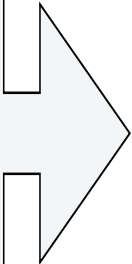
\_\_\_\_\_

✓

\_\_\_\_\_

✓

\_\_\_\_\_



Points against

✓

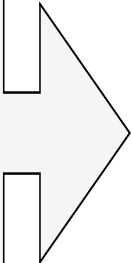
\_\_\_\_\_

✓

\_\_\_\_\_

✓

\_\_\_\_\_



## 2. You may need to use some of these expressions.

### Introductory paragraph

Write the general statement (introductory sentence), and the thesis statements which includes your position and the supporting aspects you are going to write about.

### Expressing points for and against

Introduce the points in favour of and against FWCs based on factual or sound evidence by writing:

- According to / based on a recent survey conducted by (a well-known company or person), some of the points in favour of FWCs are...
- On the contrary, there are some points against FWCs such as (mention at least three aspects), as affirmed by (author's name) in an article entitled “\_\_\_\_\_” and published in (Newspaper/ magazine).

### Concluding

To sum up,  
To summarise,  
The point I am trying to make is...



Now write your composition stating the points in favour and against football World Cups to be held in underdeveloped countries. Use some of the expressions given above.

*General idea and thesis statement:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Expressing points in favour and against:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Conclusion:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Debate Worksheet N° 1

Below, we present a sample of the debate worksheets designed and implemented in the English class prior to holding the class debates, which referred to the didactic unit being worked at that moment.

### Step 1: Getting familiar with the debate and modes of argumentation

In a debate, you are expected to assume opposing positions. Some of you will be asked to be in favour of the statement and others against it. This means that you must use polite expressions to interrupt, make your contributions and try to persuade your opponents.

You may need to use some of the following expressions:

Saying you partly agree with someone	Stating your point of view	<b>Interrupting politely</b>
<p>Although I see your point, I believe that...</p> <p>You've got a point there. However, ...</p> <p>Despite people's passion and happiness, FIFA World Cups, ...</p> <p>That's true Anne, but don't forget that ...</p> <p>In spite of careful security planning, FIFA World Cups, ... bring riots and violence.</p>	<p>From my point of view, ...</p> <p>As far as I am concerned...</p> <p>Personally, I think that...</p> <p>I strongly believe that...</p>	<p>Excuse me for interrupting you, but...</p> <p>Sorry to interrupt you, but I would like to say...</p>

**You can use five modes of argumentation. To do so, consider the following hints:**

1. Debate the topic from economic, political and socio-cultural viewpoints or perspectives
2. Use five modes of argumentation as follows:

*2.1 Referring to an authority in the topic:* A well-known author or expert, research studies or investigations, articles on academic journals or newspapers, and reliable web pages.

***Example:***

According to Hernán Peláez ...

Based on an article from the World Soccer Magazine ...

According to the Encyclopaedia of British Football ...

The University of ... carried out a research study on... and concluded that....

*2.2 Providing facts or statistical information:* This comes from research studies

***Example:***

In fact, Pelé is one of the greatest football players of all times; he scored 1281 goals in 1363 games during his professional life.

It is true that football is the world's most popular sport.

*2.3 Providing true examples:*

***Example:***

For instance, football is originally from England and has become a highly profitable enterprise.

*2.4 Identifying cause and effect relationships:*



**Example:**

If poor countries look for sponsorship, they can celebrate the FWC.

If the biggest companies in the country contributed with a fixed amount of money, our country could hold a FWC.

2.5 *Analogies*: Include here only significant similarities

**Example:**

Even though South Africa faced serious socio-economic problems, it was able to celebrate the 2010 FWC. Therefore, Colombia could do the same by carefully planning and financing this huge event.

**Step 2: Work in pairs. Choose one fact about football and discuss if you agree or disagree with the information given.**

1. Despite stirring sentiments among South Africans, Shakira arrived at the Oliver Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg and decided to perform the official song of the 2010 Football World Cup (FWC) in the opening ceremony. In regard to this she said, "The FIFA Football World Cup is a miracle of global excitement, connecting every country, race, religion and condition around a single position." Then, she added "The song is the synthesis of the passion for soccer and what it arouses in people. It represents an event that has the power to unite and integrate, and that's what the song is about.

2. Hernán Peláez, a Colombian leading football commentator, has said that all professional football players earn their living playing for the side clubs around the world. However, the best ones play in those leagues that

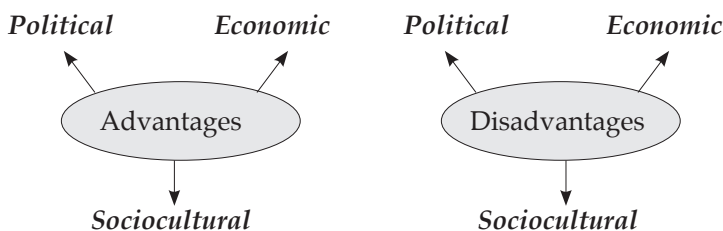
offer highest pay such England's Premier League, Italy's Serie A, Germany's Bundesliga and Spain's La Liga.

3. The Encyclopedia of British Football states that the decision of having nations playing in a World Championship and establishing the World Cup was taken in Paris in 1928. The FIFA controversially decided to hold the first World Cup in Uruguay in 1930, which meant a long and costly journey for European nations and initially, they all rejected to take part in it.

**Step 3: Work in groups of four people. Read this excerpt and say if it is a true example and suggests that football generates passion.**

The Spaniards were crowned European Champions in 2008 after 44 years. This championship is an example of teamwork and deserves a special celebration. For instance, Fernando Torres said, "It is to me the most important day in Spanish football in many, many years." Against the highly accomplished Germans, the Spaniards weren't intimidated. They scored the one goal they needed and set off chants of "ESPAÑA!" and "Ole, Ole, Ole!" at the final whistle. The entire Spanish team ran over to the huge rooting section of red and gold of the stadium to exchange hugs, while many of the skilled Germans collapsed in the turf.

**Step 4: Continue working in the same groups. The issue of today's debate is the viability of holding football World Cups in a developing country like Colombia. First, write phrases and key words to help you identify and state pros and cons of the event mentioned before.**



**Step 5: Read the debatable statement below.**

Football world cups should be held in developing countries like Colombia.

✓ **Decide whether you are in favour of or against this statement.**

All pictures and photographs were selected from:

<https://www.google.com.co/search?q=footballs+black+and+white&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi4-9O786baAhVnpVkkHVQOBqgQ7AKIMw&biw=1088&bih=510>

<https://www.google.com.co/search?q=footballs+black+and+white&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi4-9O786baAhVnpVkkHVQOBqgQ7AKIMw&biw=1088&bih=510#imgsrc=xc10lh57S5bftM:>

<https://www.google.com.co/search?q=black+girl+football+player+illustration&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj06sei9qbaAhVhx1kKHUcFBsgQsAQIKA&biw=1088&bih=510>

[https://www.google.com.co/search?q=south+africa+fifa+2010+illustrations&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=2IFD8KIFP7MFFM%253A%252COpQqHqX7IOQpFM%252C\\_&usg=\\_\\_kYSij25Zc9FArzf\\_0dTAtCd00rA%3D&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi9tM7T96baAhUfZlkKHS5KAKMQ9QEILTAB&biw=1088&bih=510#imgsrc=2IFD8KIFP7MFFM:https://www.google.com.co/search?q=south+africa+fifa+2010+illustrations&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=2IFD8KIFP7MFFM%253A%252COpQqHqX7IOQpFM%252C\\_&usg=\\_\\_kYSij25Zc9FArzf\\_0dTAtCd00rA%3D&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi9tM7T96baAhUfZlkKHS5KAKMQ9QEILTAB&biw=1088&bih=510#imgsrc=KAVuPvyaHv-IXM:](https://www.google.com.co/search?q=south+africa+fifa+2010+illustrations&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=2IFD8KIFP7MFFM%253A%252COpQqHqX7IOQpFM%252C_&usg=__kYSij25Zc9FArzf_0dTAtCd00rA%3D&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi9tM7T96baAhUfZlkKHS5KAKMQ9QEILTAB&biw=1088&bih=510#imgsrc=2IFD8KIFP7MFFM:https://www.google.com.co/search?q=south+africa+fifa+2010+illustrations&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=2IFD8KIFP7MFFM%253A%252COpQqHqX7IOQpFM%252C_&usg=__kYSij25Zc9FArzf_0dTAtCd00rA%3D&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi9tM7T96baAhUfZlkKHS5KAKMQ9QEILTAB&biw=1088&bih=510#imgsrc=KAVuPvyaHv-IXM:)

[https://www.google.com.co/search?q=illustrations+girls+and+boys+playing+football&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiGuJJe\\_KbaAhXEwVkkHST4CwoQ7AKlNg&biw=1088&bih=510#imgsrc=QmvWOGI7Apa\\_M:](https://www.google.com.co/search?q=illustrations+girls+and+boys+playing+football&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiGuJJe_KbaAhXEwVkkHST4CwoQ7AKlNg&biw=1088&bih=510#imgsrc=QmvWOGI7Apa_M:)

<https://www.google.com.co/search?q=waka+waka+shakira+photographs+africa+2010&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiCiOi1-abaAhUDyFkKHQ10B04Q7AKlPQ&biw=1088&bih=510>

<https://www.google.com.co/search?q=mandela+and+winnie+photographs+2010&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEWjKjPSI-6baAhUCmlkKHdhbAvYQ7AKlNg&biw=1088&bih=510>

[https://www.google.com.co/search?q=football+field+colored+illustration&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwvWn\\_qbaAhUlytlkKHTfJB5kQ7AKlNg&biw=1088&bih=510](https://www.google.com.co/search?q=football+field+colored+illustration&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwvWn_qbaAhUlytlkKHTfJB5kQ7AKlNg&biw=1088&bih=510)

[https://www.google.com.co/search?q=football+world+cup+2010+Spain+%2B+King+photographs&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEWjd2tvt\\_qbaAhVQtkKHjd3BNMQ7AKlRw&biw=1088&bih=510](https://www.google.com.co/search?q=football+world+cup+2010+Spain+%2B+King+photographs&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEWjd2tvt_qbaAhVQtkKHjd3BNMQ7AKlRw&biw=1088&bih=510)

Data Analysis

Data Analysis Procedures

We based our data analysis on the Grounded Theory Approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). It allowed us to conceptualise, provide theoretical support to alternatively support realities (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). In similar lines, Patton (2002) argued that “the grounded theory operates from a correspondence perspective in that it aims to generate explanatory propositions that correspond to real-world phenomena” (p. 489). Therefore, through the collected data we identified recurrent patterns, commonalities, differences and relationships derived from the implementation of in-class debates on social issues to develop the undergraduates’ argumentative competence. Also, we used some symbols to do the audio and video transcripts selected by the researchers as seen in the following table.

Table 1  
Transcripts Symbols

...	Short pause
eh	Hesitation and fillers

The analysis of the data gathered involved several procedures. We considered “naming, grouping, finding relationships and displaying” (Freeman, 1996, p. 102) as well as “sifting, organising, summarising and synthesizing the data so as to arrive at the results and conclusions of the research” (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 120). These procedures are associated with social interactions, their structure, and the continuous observation of changes and contrasts that helped us group and classify the data. To reduce data to comprehensible dimensions, we also

employed the colour-coding technique, as established by Stottok, Bergaus and Gorra (2011) to signal relevant issues (codes), concepts (relations among codes), and categories (relations among concepts), which in the end, according to Corbin and Strauss (2008, 2015) is to generate other ways of understanding organised data. With respect to the code, Saldana (2009) claimed it “is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and / or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data” (p. 3). Hence, colour coding helped us to identify our students’ arguments and the fallacies to recognise recurrent patterns in relation to the theory and our inquiry.

For validity and reliability of the findings, we triangulated the data following Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) approach: The theoretical triangulation (interpreting information gathered from several theoretical perspectives); the methodological triangulation (using diverse instruments to collect information); and the investigators’ triangulation (having more than one researcher gathering data and interpreting it).

### **Research categories**

We named four research categories to answer the main questions, three for English level four and one for English level two; and three additional ones to answer the related question, two for English level four and one for English level two as shown in the following table.

Table 2  
Research Categories

Main Question	Categories
How is the argumentative competence developed through the implementation of in-class debates on social issues in an English course for undergraduate Accounting students?	<b>Fourth level</b> Awareness of the importance of arguing Students' environment as a source for the construction of arguments Verbal and non-verbal language on the construction and presentation of arguments
	<b>Second level</b> Reflection on the students' life experiences to achieve argumentation
Related Question	Categories
What are the characteristics of students' arguments when debating points of view?	<b>Fourth level</b> Students' joint construction and delivery of strongly supported arguments Students' incurrence in fallacies of generalisation (prejudice and opinions) and rebuttal against emotions of the opponent
	<b>Second level</b> Students' fallacies of generalisation based on their personal opinions and insufficient evidence.

**Awareness of the importance of arguing.** Fostering students' awareness of their own background, their preferences, and learning strategies improve students' learning processes. According to Chamot, Barnahardt, Beard El-Dinary and Robbins (1999), encouraging students to consciously select and apply learning strategies that suit their learning styles plays a key role in helping them to self-assess their appropriation of knowledge and to become

more autonomous learners. In-class debates created a suitable environment and a good disposition towards class activities (Harmer, 2007; Titone, 1986). It also gave the undergraduates tools to understand the importance of elaborating arguments to achieve academic goals, discuss and defend their views on controversial issues. The inner motivation of the fourth-level undergraduates and their constant interest in finding reliable sources of information and clarifying aspects regarding argumentation modalities, such as the authority arguments from qualified sources (Weston, 2004; Cortés, 2005), and the language input necessary to debate, evidenced their awareness of the importance of arguing and of their own achievements along the learning process, as can be seen in the following excerpts.

Students took notes about how and why they were debating in class, and asked how to refer to known authorities in the field of the theme to be debated. They also borrowed from the teacher the PowerPoint file with the information about debating and different argumentative modes. ... students asked to be taught the expressions and linguistic tools that would facilitate their interaction in the debate. [sic]

*(Teacher's field notes)*

**S8:** Good afternoon. First, I'm going to ... to speak about the definition of violence eh... for the children, eh... We have a statistics of UNICEF that ... correspond to ... different eh ...types of violence and my colleague ... is going to speak about these statistics. [sic]

**S5:** We have...high physical violence, in 1994; it was 34.3% and in ...2005. it's 25.4%. [sic]

*(Audio transcription)*

**S3:** ...Defensoría del Pueblo in Colombia eh ... well they are very concerned about this topic because ... we live in a poor country and most of families are not really ... well off. [sic]

*(Video transcription)*

The continuous inquiries made by the students about the different argumentation modes, the linguistic interacting tools needed to debate, the spontaneous search for additional supporting material, and the previous written preparation of arguments evinced the students' awareness of the importance of arguing. Also, the participants resorted to sources of authority, like UNICEF and the Ombudsman office, and included figures/ facts to support their ideas on the topic being discussed, which demonstrates the spontaneous search of additional corroborating material. Having referred to the students' consciousness of the importance of arguing, the following segment describes the undergraduates' context as a source for their arguments.

**Students' environment as source for the construction of arguments.** The socio-economic context, of the fourth-level undergraduates, is the foundation of argument construction. This circumstance confirms Richard-Amato's (1996) insight about the influence of issues, and the relationship between students and teachers in stimulating the reasoning process. Similarly, the incidence of students' social and economic background in their interventions is stressed by Monroy and Buitrago (2003), which is plausible because they have grown in social communities whose events permeate their stances and slants, as shown below.

T: When working on the issues of femininities and masculinises, and the legalization of abortion under all circumstances, it was evident how students understand and establish relationships with their environment as a main source to express their ideas. When constructing arguments, students resorted to the information from their own context; for example, they referred to issues that are now present in our culture and to the existing laws. [sic]  
*(Teacher's field notes)*



**S9:** But I do believe that femininity has changed a little. Why? That is because nowadays the woman's rights are more important or more taken into account than in the past. I don't think that the girls, the women has changed his way of being so, that is just some things of culture and the way the culture developed. [sic]

*(Audio transcription)*

**S9:** ... if we analyse Colombia is an under developing country. ... As you say, most of the people who doesn't have the money of the lower status, they have most of the babies unwanted. So, what can we do? I think the problem could be solved, maybe improving social education. [sic]

**S9:** Well, as you may know in Colombia there is a law ... which ... permits abortion under three circumstances; when the foetus is badly formed, when the pregnancy is result from a rape, and if the mother's life is in danger. [sic]

*(Video transcription)*

The students' immediate context (their life experience within their country), use of referents in the domain from reliable sources (Colombian abortion legislation), and identification of cause and consequences (relating poverty and unwanted pregnancy) shaped students' arguments while interacting in a suitable classroom atmosphere that let them express themselves on their self-selected social issues. Next, we examine how students' verbal and non-verbal language influence the argumentative ability.

**Verbal and non-verbal language on the construction and presentation of arguments.** Speakers require linguistic and para-linguistic components to construct their arguments. On this matter, Calderón and León (1996), Grijelmo (2000) and Mercer (2001) highlighted "the power of words" either to defend their arguments, or to convince people. The data showed that besides verbal language, our students used body gesture to complement what they were saying and make themselves understood.

While for Mulholland (1991), “Body language ... includes proximity, touch, gestures, look, speaking turns, support sounds, etc.” (p. 50), Kuhnke (2007) underscored that “your body movements reveal your thoughts, moods, and attitudes” (p. 1). Correspondingly, as Hatch (2001) remarked, “When we observe the speakers, we obtain much more information than the one obtained through words” (p. 275). In other words, as the undergraduates in the fourth level conveyed their ideas, their facial gestures and body movements added clearness and emphasis to the verbal message. Indeed, when debating, our students used both verbal and non-verbal language, as can be seen in the following transcriptions.

**T:** When debating, most students complemented their verbal language with facial gestures and body movements; this was something we studied in the first workshop of this course entitled *Are you a Body Liar?* which students enjoyed and apprehended pretty well while working on the workshop. [sic]

*(Teacher's field notes)*

**S3:** So, I don't find really discrimination in this job (frowning and shrugging, indicating I can't see the point).

**S1:** No, (extending her index finger). God doesn't want it, a baby to be here.

**S9:** OK. You've got a point there, but have you ever think about this kind of country? (Raising his eyebrows in an inquiring way). How is it? How is the social welfare, in general? The growth we have?

**S1:** It's too bad (nodding to show agreement) so, it's too bad. [sic]

*(Video transcription)*

**S9:** But the situation; we could improve that situation! (coupling hands as to show concern) [sic]

*(Audio transcription)*

In addition to fostering interaction and communication, letting undergraduates express their points of view and

defend them by resorting to both verbal and non-verbal language, and building their self-confidence to connect their thoughts to those of other people (Greenspan & Benderly, 1998), in-class debates allowed undergraduates to build arguments to defend their beliefs, values and actions (Freely & Steinberg, 2000). This implies that the undergraduates' skills and knowledge of the world, especially their ability to keep the discussion going, using non-verbal language to complement their verbal language, gave rise to arguing, negotiating, and proposing ideas.

We have explained how personal skills influence the undergraduates' construction of the argumentative ability. The next part is devoted to the first category of the second-level undergraduates.

**Reflection on students' life experiences to achieve argumentation.** Individual life experiences and reflection on them constitute a source of learning and a variable to broaden the vision of the world and offer concrete context-bound reasons for the construction of arguments in the second-level undergraduates. As posited by Resnick and Glaserfeld (as cited in Roschelle, 1995), previous knowledge as essential to build new knowledge. While Chamot et al. (1999) considered that to solve tasks, prior knowledge gives information about the topic, the world and the linguistic forms required, Clavijo (2007) contended that people learn through interaction with their environment. In respect of the difference in the undergraduates' speech, Gee (2002) identified primary and secondary speeches, the former acquired at home, and the latter learned at school or with others outside home, whereas Pineda (2003) deduced that the first discourse corresponds to the use of Spanish, and the secondary one to the use of English. Moreover, Brouwer, Gerritsen and De Haan (1979), consider that teachers play a crucial role in understanding what students want to express, especially when they resort to unfamiliar lexicon in the target language. The

second-level undergraduates built new ideas based on what they have already experienced and learnt in their context, and used real or tangible reasons as a source in the construction of their arguments. The next instances corroborate the preceding variables.

Sudent 10, according to his experience and knowledge, he compared the situation in 19<sup>th</sup> century when mobile phones did not exist. By that time, people did not have the chance to communicate with others permanently. Conversely, nowadays, mobile phones have become an addiction. [sic]  
(*Teacher's field notes*)

S12: For example, the people in the past have to arrive at the homes for call and in this moment the mobiles phone are commode and if you don't have a mobile phone you feel uncomfortable. [sic]

S9: In my opinion boot camps is not a solution for the person young criminals because they have other opportunity "ingresar?" to get into society. [sic]

S7: Eh in Colombia the politicos don't say they approve the cloning ...and in this moment at the Congress ... the politicians are following the process that approve cloning in the different process about the preserve the human society. [sic]

(*Audio transcription*)

S14: I think that a person that do a crime eh need a second chance ... For example, problems family, ... many problems ... in the society that leads the person to do something. [sic]

(*Video transcription*)

We have described students' reflection upon previous knowledge and life experiences as valuable resources to elaborate their arguments, despite differences in language speech. The following lines address the three categories we identified for the related question.

**Students joint construction and delivery of strongly supported arguments.** This first category answers

the related question regarding the characterisation of undergraduates' arguments. It evidences how the fourth-level undergraduates jointly constructed and offered rich support for their arguments mainly based on three modes of argumentation (exemplification, reference to authorities in the field, and causes and effects relationships), preceded by a conceptualisation of the in-class debate to be held. Cooperative work fosters academic performance and linguistic and social competences (Landone, 2004); the inter-negotiation process foments giving feedback to others (Ribé, as cited in Ochoa, 2006), privileging the functional use of the language, not the formal linguistic aspects (Smith, as cited in Ochoa, 2006), and opening "opportunities for the development of empathy" (Kennedy, 2007, p. 184). Therefore, the undergraduates worked cooperatively observing the parameters given to construct arguments, as explained in the pedagogical intervention, and created a respectful learning atmosphere.

Regarding the preceding conceptualisation of the in-class debate, the undergraduates did briefly elaborate on the social issue to be debated indicating the different medical, religious and societal stances they had assumed. As respects conceptualisation, Cortés (2005) claimed that effective arguments must hold to a clear definition of concepts before starting the debate, which in our perception helped the undergraduates to clearly structure, build and deliver three modes of arguments. In reference to exemplification, Pineda (2003) suggested that by giving examples students undergo a process of association with the local context that helps them support their arguments. To support students' views based on the references in the domain, they used reliable information, bibliographic sources, and virtual references from recognised authors. Among the modes of argumentation, Weston (2004) stated arguments of authority as those that come from knowledgeable personalities that have looked into the

issue in question. The undergraduates were also able to analyse the outcome of an act or action by identifying cause and effects relationships. The following examples illustrate the aforementioned aspects.

**T:** The students tell their teacher the roles they are going to perform in the class debate. They also ask her if they can start by giving the concept and examples at the international level, and the teacher tells them that it is a good idea to contextualize the topic to be debated and suggests that they should limit it to the national level. [sic]

*(Teacher's field notes)*

**S1:** Today, our discussion is about abortion. We have the medical point of view, that's S7 and S8; we also have the law opinion, that is S9 and S2; we have the religious point of view, that is S7; and we have the point of view of the society in general that's S5, S4 and me. So, we are going to start with the religious point of view. [sic]

**S6:** Well, as it is said in the Bible, according to James 2: 26, ... the body without the spirit is dead. So, we can start by defining abortion. Abortion is the removal or expulsion of an embryo or a foetus from the uterus. [sic]

**S9:** Well, as you may know in Colombia there is a law .... which permits abortion under three circumstances; when the foetus is badly formed, when the pregnancy is result from a rape, and if the mother's life is in danger.

**S1:** I think that the law should change because I prefer to have people to perform a safe abortion than an unsafe abortion ... *if* you are going to leave the baby in adoption, you don't know if he is going to... have a good life. So then, don't have the baby and I think it is the better option. [sic]

**S7:** A woman should be informed of what it is the abortion, because many women ... practice the abortion without knowing what is the condition in different hospitals *for example*, here in Colombia exist many places where practice the abortion without hygienic conditions.

**S4:** Well, I think abortion should be legalized in other circumstances because ... *if* the abortion is not safe and non-sanitary circumstances it is causing more deaths.

S5: if we legalise abortion we are going to become like rabbits and it is bad for the society. Legalisation is going to become permission for irresponsible sexual relations and it is going to be bad.

S9: If we analyse Colombia is an underdeveloped country. So, I think we don't have the wealth in our country to treat all these kind of women ..., as you said, most of the people who doesn't have money have most of the unwanted babies. So, what can we do? I think the problem could be solved maybe by improving social education. [sic]

S8: I think that one advantage is that the women are able to decide to have a ... correct abortion, ... the women go to hospitals that are specialised and is a safe abort and ... let them know of institutions that adopt these boys. [sic]

(Video transcription)

S2: It would be right if we first give a definition and the types of discrimination, and then we can start with the impact of gender, religious, racial and handicap discrimination in minority groups when looking for a job. The Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 SD 1785 prohibits three types of discrimination (showing her three fingers) and that have the prohibited group of discrimination, prohibited type of discrimination and places where the discrimination takes place.

S9: Ok, for example, if you are a woman, and you have a low pay..., we can see that is a discrimination, and that is against the law. So, I believe that that is one of the discriminations that we can see every day..., so, what do you think?

S5: If you allow me, I'd like to say that in the job secretary most of the people who work in that post are women. So, it is eh... gender discrimination ... For example, here at the university all the secretaries are women.

S1: Do you think that this increase in violence eh... is because of lack of education in our society?

S5: I believe that it influence violence ... for example, eh... family problems, education eh... and lack of respect. I believe, because today eh...government have several punish for high physical violence, people look for eh... other kind of violence, I mean psychological violence. [sic]

(Audio transcription)

The discussion hitherto helped to characterise the three modes of argumentation built by the fourth-level undergraduates. The next fragment is devoted to the incurrence of generalisation fallacies, which also characterised their arguments.

**Students' incurrence in fallacies of generalisation (prejudice and opinions) and rebuttal against emotions of the opponent.** This second category also answers the related question; it refers to the fourth-level undergraduates' generalisation based on prejudice, opinions, and rebuttal against emotions of the opponent, which constitute fallacies. On the subject of fallacies, Hamblin (1970) asserted that "a fallacy is a fallacious argument" (p. 224) that leads individuals to make mere unsubstantiated statements. Regarding the conceptual underpinnings of the fallacy of hasty generalisation, Walton (1989) declared:

This kind of faulty reasoning is often associated with stereotypes and prejudice. A common error in reasoning is to fail to take into account that many generalizations of the most common kind are subject to exceptions in circumstances that are not ordinary. (p. 163)

In the same spirit, Millward (as cited in Cortés, 2005) argued that the construction of arguments based on individual interpretation of the world (prejudice) and attacking the person not the argument are common argumentative fallacies. Furthermore, Freeley and Steinberg (2000) and Weston (2004) maintained that an argument is not a personal slant but rather an evidence of the issue discussed. In the haste of defending their viewpoints, acting impulsively and without balancing several informed considerations students' speech contained fallacies, which are evident in the excerpts below.



**T:** Despite students' effort to defend their viewpoints with solid reasons, they still incur in generalisations, they sound highly opinionated and attack the emotions of the opponent. [sic]

*Teacher's field notes*)

**S1:** Oh! It is too easy to you to say that! No, no, no, it is very easy to you to say that because you were not there, you were not the person that was rapped. It was me! And you don't know what it feels and how could God let that happen to me just because he want it? I don't think so (shaking her head) [sic]

**S6:** If God wants to save the child and if God wants to save the mother, and not the baby, he will do it. [sic]

*(Video transcription)*

**S3:** Well, principally this right is that we as adults eh... we have to give the children all that they need to grow up. Like my parents, they give me everything I need. [sic]

*(Audio transcription)*

Having addressed the features of the arguments elaborated by the fourth-level undergraduates when debating social issues, the next category addresses the characteristics of the arguments elaborated by undergraduates of the second level.

**Students' fallacies of generalisation based on their personal opinions and insufficient evidence.** This is the third and last category that answers the related question in terms of featuring the arguments constructed by the second-level undergraduates. Prior to explaining the fallacy of generalisation, a standing issue here is the teachers' assistance to have undergraduates work in groups, one in favour and another against the debatable statement, which leads undergraduates to cooperative interaction, collaborative learning, and mutual support in class discussions. As respects interaction, Hakamäki (2005) remarked the teacher's role in fomenting interaction

between teacher and students, and in tactful error correction. Thus, teachers should generate collectively constructed learning environments in which learners spontaneously find their resources to hold in-class debates.

Unlike supporting their points of view with true examples, references to authorities in the field, and cause and effect relationships, the second-level undergraduates made generalisations while trying to build their arguments to debate on social issues. In respect of hasty generalisation, it is an unplanned fallacy of faulty based on scanty evidence in which the debaters draw conclusions without providing valid reason to support and defend their points of view. As respects fallacies, Hamblin (1970) and Walton (1996) elaborated on the seemingly valid aspect of a fallacy that raises apparent acceptability of a conclusion drawn by a generalisation through the influence of suggestion. In Walton's words (1989), "In this kind of superficial thinking, the arguer seems to jump too quickly to a conclusion in a less than thoughtful way" (p. 163). Thus, this error in reasoning to accomplish effective arguments, might be the result of the undergraduates' limited awareness of the importance of the debatable issue, linguistic knowledge, experience in holding debates, or time devoted to search for supporting evidences. The following transcriptions depict how the undergraduates used their knowledge of the foreign language, non-verbal language and the mother tongue to express their opinions and suggest conclusions.

**T:** Students asked the teacher about the words in Spanish such as "resocialización, entorno, cumplir." They looked at the teacher several times to feel approval, to confirm expressions and to translate words into English. [sic]

**T:** I invited the students to work in groups for and against sending young criminals to boot camps, most of them spontaneously expressed their points of view of view, committed themselves to assuming particular roles and assumed them seriously. [sic]

T: The teacher's role becomes relevant to assist students in finding linguistic resources in the foreign language. [sic]

(*Teacher's field notes*)

S1: They [the children] can to work because we need to respect the rights. How do you say *incurren*? [sic]

S1: In this case do you think ...eh criminals ...are this because they have a problem? They don't have a good family or a good society ... good possibilities. They has a big problem and the solution not is ... Teacher how do you say apartar?

T: to set apart [sic]

S14: Is important from a point of view of ... a criminal ... in the boot camp the people is hurt by ... the police because they are separate of the society. The people that do a crime need help, ...not only separate the society because this is to do bad this is bad for the criminal.

(*Video transcription*)

S7: In my opinion boot camps is not a solution for ... young criminals because they have other opportunity to *ingresar*? (raising eyebrows)

T: Get into society, to be readapted into the society.

S7: ... to get into society

T: If you think that boot camps are not the best solution, what do you think is the solution for young people that commit crimes?

S7: There is other solutions ... work eh *comunidades*.

T: communities

S7: communities ... social work, eh... similar activities. [sic]

(*Audio transcription*)

## Conclusions

As part of the implementation of in-class debates to develop the undergraduates' argumentative competence, we provided students with theoretical insights regarding the debate and five argumentation modes (Weston, 2004). We also encouraged them to become collaborative team members (Calderón, 1987; Olsen & Kagan, 1992), with

equal opportunities to interact, participate and contribute to reaching the team's objectives (Jacobs & DaSilva, as cited in Kessler, 1992; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1998; Kagan, 1994) when debating social issues. In-class debates allowed us to observe undergraduates' awareness of the importance of arguing, motivation increase about debating, and evolution in the construction of their argumentative competence.

In addition to raising consciousness of arguing, in-class debates allowed the fourth-level undergraduates to acknowledge the need to support their viewpoints, use their individual background, resort to verbal language (Calderón & León, 1996; Grijelmo, 2000; Mercer, 2001) and non-verbal language (Hatch, 2001; Kuhnke, 2007; Mulholland, 1991), as well as the second-level undergraduate to reflect on their life experiences when elaborating arguments. The main features of the jointly constructed and delivered arguments built by the fourth-level undergraduates were exemplification of the debatable issue, the reference to authorities in the domain, the identification of causes and effects relationships (Weston, 2004), and the incurrence in fallacies of generalisation (prejudice and opinions) and arguments against the emotions of the debaters (Hamblin, 1970; Walton, 1989). Regarding the arguments of the second-level undergraduates, they were characterised by fallacies of generalisation based on their personal opinions and scarce evidence.

Besides fostering the undergraduates' reasoning and the argumentative competence, in-class debates may turn into an innovative pedagogical contribution for the EFL community of teachers to foment students' interaction, use of functional language, self-confidence and agency, group work and search for reliable sources. Likewise, the undergraduates benefitted from the study, as they perceived personal and academic growth. In-class debates also integrated learners and teachers, and

strengthen participants' self-confidence, mutual respect and support. Similarly, by designing contextualised workshops and worksheets to support the development of the undergraduates' argumentative competence, the two English teachers, researchers and materials developers that conducted this study continue advocating MD as "a true resource for teachers to respond to students' needs and foster institutional innovation in language teaching" (Nuñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2012, p. 25). Moreover, by resisting the use of decontextualised and standardised materials, teachers become producers, not consumers, of context-bound teaching resources that are responsive to the particularities of their teaching settings. Such materials offer more possibilities to create effective teaching and learning settings (Núñez & Téllez 2009; Núñez et al., 2009). Last, but not least, the implementation of contextualised materials allowed the English teachers to improve their teaching practice (Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2012, 2017a, 2017b) since they became fully aware of the implications of carrying out research to see teacher-designed materials in action and in interaction with the undergraduates in the quest for developing their argumentative competence.

**Limitations.** Needless to say, that building the undergraduates' argumentative competence in an academic semester, composed of three and a half months, is not enough. Such competence demands constant opportunities to hold formal discussion around social controversial issues, accurate search for pertinent information, knowledge of the argumentation modes, time and skills to interpret and structure thoughts, and cognitive efforts to elaborate points of view supported by valid reasons. Nonetheless, our students did their best in exploiting in-class debates on social issues in the quest of developing their argumentative competence.

**Questions for further research.** After concluding our study, a couple of questions emerged in relation to written arguments. First, it would be interesting to study the extent to which the development and implementation of argumentative writing worksheets support students' construction of arguments. Likewise, in reference to the construction of oral arguments, another possibility would be to characterise students' perceptions of their surroundings as they are revealed in the dynamics of holding in-class debates.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter**

#### **Students of English Levels II and IV**

School of Accounting

Universidad Externado de Colombia

Dear Students,

We would highly appreciate your valuable participation and cooperation to carry out our Research Study intended to be awarded the Master's Degree in Education with Emphasis in Human Development and Values in our Alma Mater.

Our research study aims at exploring how the argumentative competence in a foreign language (English) is developed through the implementation of class debate with undergraduate students of Accounting. First, we will have the presentation of the project to make students aware of the importance of this project, followed by a survey conducted to typify them in what concerns to their previous experience with class debates and their perceptions about debate planning and performance. Likewise, the participants will take part in the workshops, followed by worksheets, in which the use of strategies will foster the development of argumentative competence, and allow related data gathering and its corresponding analysis.

We are looking forward to having your acceptance and accomplishing our study successfully.

We anticipate and thank your favourable response and cooperation.

Cordially yours,

**Astrid Núñez Pardo**

Coordinator of English Programme  
Faculty of Education  
English Teacher- Level IV

**María Fernanda Téllez Téllez**

English Programme Teacher  
Faculty of Education  
English Teacher – Level II

## Appendix B: Background Survey

### Universidad Externado de Colombia School of Education- English Programme

Dear Students,

We are currently doing a research project to observe and analyse the way in which students develop the argumentative competence through the implementation of class debates on issues of social interest. Thus, we would appreciate your cooperation in completing the information below whose purpose is to collect data that allows the teachers of the second and fourth levels of the English programme to obtain the profile of their students regarding the concerned issue.

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of years studying English: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Did you study in: (put a tick)
  - a. A bilingual school (English) ☐
  - b. A school with emphasis on English ☐
  - c. A public institution without English emphasis ☐
  - d. A public institution with English emphasis ☐
  - e. A school or an English institute abroad ☐
- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4. Have you been a teacher assistant/helper at school? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Did you hold debates at school?                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
6. If your answer to question (5) is affirmative, choose issues you worked on
  - a. Problems in the city ☐
  - b. Urban communities ☐
  - c. Environment ☐
  - d. Crime ☐
  - e. Occupations ☐
  - f. Citizenship ☐
  - g. Politics ☐
  - h. Other ☐

7. Before holding the debate did you...
- a. review your class notes about the topic of the debate? ☐
  - b. review the corresponding unit in the textbook? ☐
  - c. discuss it with a classmate? ☐
  - d. read about the topic in other sources? ☐
  - e. other? \_\_\_\_\_ ☐
8. When debating the issues, did you...
- a. express your opinion? ☐
  - b. give examples? ☐
  - c. interrupt you classmate politely? ☐
  - d. listen to your classmates' ideas? ☐
  - e. change your mind after listening to your classmate's ideas? ☐
  - f. try to persuade your classmates? ☐
  - g. Other? \_\_\_\_\_

We would appreciate if you give us permission to include this information in the document we intend to submit for publication. We plan to use a fictitious name to protect your privacy. If you accept, please write the name of your choice in the space provided: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for making the time to answer this survey.





## Appendix C: Teacher's Teacher's Field Notes

<b>School:</b> <b>Population:</b> <b>Students:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Topic:</b> Piloting	<b>Complementary Materials:</b> Photocopies Video clips Flash Cards	<b>Workshop No 1:</b> Social Networks
		<b>Section: 1</b>		
<p><b>Main research question:</b> How is the argumentative competence developed through the implementation of in-class debates on social issues in an English course for undergraduate Accounting students at a private university?</p> <p><b>General research objective:</b> To explore the influence of both the design and the implementation of in-class debates in the development of undergraduates' argumentative competence.</p> <p><b>Related Question:</b> What are the characteristics of students' arguments when debating points of view?</p> <p><b>Specific research objective:</b> To describe the characteristics of students' arguments when debating social issues.</p>				
<b>General Observations</b>			<b>Analysis</b>	