

# The Debate on Labelling: A Debating Skills Exercise in English for Special Education Classes

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Debating skills are important in communication and speech development; not only in the native language but also in a foreign language. Among other benefits, debating can develop communication and speaking skills, as well as the vocabulary use of a particular topic, providing an opportunity for active learning. Therefore, debating can enhance foreign language learning; not only in general language teaching, for instance, in English as a foreign language (ELT or EFL), but also in content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and particularly in English for special purposes (ESP). Highlighting the significance and benefits of debating in education in general and in foreign language learning in particular, this paper describes a debating skills exercise in an English language course for special education students: a debate on labelling and classifying exceptional children, or students with disabilities and special needs. As distinct from formal debates conducted in the mother tongue, this activity employs simplified debating: the point is to develop communication and speaking skills in the foreign language, while also providing an opportunity for active learning of a subject, which could be useful in other courses, too.

**Keywords:** communication and speech development, debating skills, English language teaching, English for special purposes, special needs education