

Title: Argumentation and Debate in the Foreign Language Classroom: Russian and American University Students Collaborating through New Technologies
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As demand in private and public sectors grows for Advanced and Superior level speakers, so too does demand for classroom instruction capable of producing requisite proficiency levels. While extended contact time with a target language in the form of an immersion experience either at home or abroad represents a tried and tested approach to facilitating language uptake, for many, such an approach presents an untenable option owing to monetary and/or time constraints. Alternatively, preliminary findings from this research demonstrate that innovative curricular design and development can produce measurable gains in the university foreign language classroom over the relatively short span of an academic semester. Participants in this research reflect learners of Russian at a US institution of higher education and learners of English at a Russian institution of higher education. Foreign language instruction for both groups centered around the format of debate, which encompasses matters of rhetoric, composition, and language functions consistent with Advanced and Superior proficiency criteria as outlined by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). A thorough description of the research methodology is provided, including an inventory of cohesive devices designed to facilitate extended level discourse, individual debate topics, and video-conference debate protocol. Assessment instruments used to measure language uptake among participants consisted of pre- and post-written proficiency testing and oral proficiency interviews in one's respective target language as administered by certified ACTFL raters, and pre- and post-oral proficiency diagnostic grids that detail a test taker's performance according to level-specific functions.

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