



Reason to Believe! - David Petrie



Aims:

- (1) To develop learners' ability to express opinions and beliefs
- (2) To provide an opportunity for learners to engage in extended debate.



Materials: Board & board pens.



Timings: Anywhere from 30 – 60 minutes, depending on how long you let things run!



Procedure:

- Lead in:**
- On the board, write the following: The tooth fairy / human beings are basically good / We will eventually cure cancer.
 - Ask learners what they think. Get some content feedback.
 - Then ask learners what the three things have in common (they are beliefs).

- Task Preparation:**
- Ask the learners to write down ten things they believe or believe in.
 - Allow approximately five minutes for this. It doesn't matter if they don't get ten.
 - Feedback: Give out board pens and ask individuals to write their ideas up – but no repetition allowed.

- Opt Out Stage:**
- Explain to learners in the main task they will be debating whether you should believe in these ideas or not. Bearing that in mind, is there anything they would prefer not to discuss? (e.g. some learners might not feel comfortable debating the existence of God). An alternative is to give small slips of paper and allow learners to anonymously tell you of their preferences.

- Language Input:**
- At this stage, you can elicit from the learners any phrases they think they might need to use in the debate, reformulate them where necessary, and extend with additional phrases or expressions. You could also revisit modal verbs for deduction or speculation etc.

- Debate Preparation:**
- Divide the class into two groups.
 - Group A has to find reasons to believe in the items on the board, Group B has to find reasons not to. You can also ask them to predict their opponents' arguments and prepare responses.

- Debate:**
- All group members should take notes to refer to later.
 - This is an opposition debate, so pair learners off – one from group A with one from group B.
 - To increase the confrontational aspect, seat them facing each other in two opposing lines down the middle of the room.
 - Tell them their job is to prove the other person wrong! And off they go!

- Feedback:**
- Throughout their debate, monitor for any language issues or examples of good language which can then inform an error correction / language feedback and reformulation stage at the end of the activity.