

# **An Analysis of the Cicero English Debate Tournament 2004-2006 and Its Implications for Coaching High School Students for Competitive English Policy Debate**

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## **Abstract**

Since 2004, the Taipei City Department of Education has held an annual English policy debate contest for high school students, called the Cicero Debate Tournament. Because of this interscholastic event, the long neglect of debate as a pivotal pedagogical vehicle in the high school English curriculum in Taiwan may finally stand a chance for change. While the competition warrants applause for its attempted goals, it is unclear to what extent its participants had grasped the spirit and essence of a competitive English debate. To address that question, an analysis was conducted on ten debates obtained from the Tournaments between 2004 and 2006 with a focus on structure and content. It was found that: (a) While the debates overall followed the superstructure of a policy debate, i.e., situation-problem-solution-evaluation, there were many inadequacies and deficiencies concerning the strategies for constructing and organizing the contentions in individual speeches; (b) there were misunderstandings of the purpose and functions of cross-examination; (c) there was insufficient and improper use and presentation of evidence; and (d) there was flawed or fallacious reasoning. Suggestions are then made for future participants in the Tournament or any English policy debate. Besides a content analysis of the debaters' performance, the paper also discusses the pedagogical merits of debate in the ESL/EFL curriculum, and reviews the local research on English debate in the hope of achieving a better understanding of the purposes of the Tournament and the study's findings.

**Key Words:** English debate, the Cicero English Debate Tournament, policy debate, content analysis, high school

## INTRODUCTION

Scholars and researchers abroad have long advocated the educational values of debate (see Parcher, 1998, for a thorough discussion). Indeed, as one of the oldest teaching methods, debate has not only been popularly employed but also empirically proved as an effective pedagogical tool for the knowledge build-up of a subject or other educational skills, at different educational levels, and in a wide array of academic disciplines, including ESL/EFL instruction (e.g., Byron, Goldstein, Murthy & Roberts, 1993; Huang, 2002; Iverson & Hoerer, 2001). Despite its esteemed status and popularity in many countries like the US, UK, Japan, China and Korea, debate is rarely seen in schools in Taiwan. This is even more the case for English debate at the secondary educational level. Except for its occasional employment as a lively method for practicing English or a forum for expressing one's opinion (Johnston, 1994), English debate is generally not found in the curriculum or in intra/interscholastic extra-curricular activities in high schools in Taiwan.

The ignorance of debate as a potentially valuable pedagogical vehicle particularly in high school EFL education in Taiwan might have finally begun to change, because since 2004, the Taipei City Department of Education has promoted English debate by holding an annual English debate competition called the Cicero English Debate Tournament. With the establishment of this tournament, the Taipei City Government has officially acknowledged debate as a viable means of English language learning. While the local educational department should be commended for their vision of debate as a

valuable pedagogical tool for students' cognitive development and language enhancement, it is however not clear to what extent the high school debaters participating in the competition had indeed acquired the spirit and essence of English debate. For the past and future participants of this tournament to fully benefit from this forensic experience, a detailed analysis of high school students' performances in the tournaments is called for. To do so, an empirical study was conducted, which critically examined 10 debates of the Cicero Tournament from 2004 to 2006.

In the following sections, the local studies on English debate are first reviewed in an effort to foreground and shed light on Taiwanese high school students' performance at this English debate tournament. The results of an analysis of high school students' performances at the Cicero Debate Tournaments are then presented. Finally, implications for coaching Taiwanese high school students English debate are addressed.

## **LOCAL RESEARCH ON ENGLISH DEBATE**

Chinese educator's reservations toward debate as a form of communication (Her, 1993) and their heavy reliance on a transmission mode of learning has resulted in only a scant amount of local research on English debate. Among them, Her (1993) addressed the reasons debate was incorporated into the curriculum in the English Department at National Taiwan Normal University, and urged instructors of English debate to work on students' self-confidence and

be aware of how cultural bearings, such as stress on face and harmony, de-emphasis on active pursuit of truth, respect for social hierarchy, and influence of gender and personality, may affect students' perception of and performance in English debate. By comparing and contrasting debate with discussion, Ing (1997) delineated the demarcating characteristics of debate, which pertain to the role of debater, and the proposition, structure, atmosphere, outcome and delivery style of debate. Besides the characteristics of debate, activities that can effectively prepare college students for engaging in English debate were introduced. Similarly, Chi (2000) acknowledged the importance of debate and detailed a ten-step debate training she developed for college English majors and students with high English proficiency, which include choosing topics suitable for debate, acquiring research skills, summary writing, group discussion of major issues and contentions, debating, and watching the debate recording.

Two studies were found that empirically documented the pedagogical merits of English debate. Chi (1996) conducted a study examining the effect of debate in both speaking and writing classes. Eighteen freshman English majors from National Chung Cheng University in Taiwan participated in the study. The study revealed that despite the difficulty in finding the vocabulary and expressing ideas precisely, all participants gave positive evaluations of participating in debate and progressed in their linguistic performance. Lee (2005), in a 12-week study with 21 junior English majors from National Tsing Hua University, investigated the effects of debate on oral communication skills. Participants were randomly divided into a control and an experimental group. For the first six weeks, the control

group was taught public speaking by using a discussion format, and the experimental group, a debate format. After six weeks, the two groups switched instruction to receive the other format of teaching. The results showed that while it cannot be concluded if debate can help students improve faster than other oral tasks, those participating in the debate workshop first and the discussion workshop later progressed more than those participating in the discussion workshop first and the debate workshop later. Students also professed that the speaking practice in debate had led to their progress and confidence in public speaking and that besides public speaking they had also learned organizational, rebuttal, critical thinking, research, note-taking, and teamwork skills.

Judging from the limited local research on English debate, all of which dealt with its implementation at the tertiary educational level, English debate enjoys at best a marginal status in secondary schools in Taiwan. What this phenomenon possibly suggests is a lack of understanding and experience among high school teachers and students of English debate as a rule-governed, principle-based open forum for reasoned communication. With this implication in mind, the discussion now turns to the study of high school debaters' performance at the Cicero English Debate Tournament from 2004 to 2006.

## **THE STUDY**

As a pioneering effort to assess high school students' performance at city-wide English debate tournaments, the study aimed to pursue

two questions:

1. How did high school students perform at the Cicero English Debate Tournaments?
2. What should high school students and coaches heed in their future participation in a competitive academic English debate?

In the following, the nature of the Tournament is first delineated. The data and data-analysis method are then detailed. Finally, results of the analysis are presented and discussed.

### **Cicero Debate Tournament**

The Cicero Debate Tournament is an annual interscholastic English policy debate contest in which all high schools in Taipei are eligible to participate. However, because of some practical concerns related to managing the tournament, the number of participating teams for the past few years has been kept at 16. The most number of teams a school can field is two. The number of schools participating in this Tournament between 2004 and 2006 were 12 in 2004, 11 in 2005, and 11 in 2006. The Tournament in those three years consisted of two debate rounds and a final exhibition match. All 16 teams participated in the first round, and the eight winning teams moved on to the second round. Two of the final four winning teams (decided by drawing lots) then took part in the exhibition match. There were two teams, the affirmative and the negative, in each debate match, and two debaters on each team. The debate format adopted for the Tournament was adapted from cross-examination debate and was organized as follows: (a) First affirmative constructive speech (4 minutes), (b) Second negative cross examines first affirmative (2 minutes), (c) First

negative constructive speech (4 minutes), (d) First affirmative cross examines first negative (2 minutes), (e) Second affirmative constructive speech (4 minutes), (f) First negative cross examines second affirmative (2 minutes), (g) Second negative constructive speech (4 minutes), (h) Second affirmative cross examines second negative (2 minutes), (i) Preparation period for rebuttal speech (5 minutes), (j) Negative rebuttal (3 minutes), and (k) Affirmative rebuttal (3 minutes). With all eleven parts added together, each debate lasted for 35 minutes. The debate resolutions for the Tournaments from 2004 to 2006 were respectively “The Taiwanese government should take effective measures to eradicate elite education,” “Senior high schools in Taiwan should abolish the dress code policy,” and “The Taiwanese government should adopt stricter punishment to curb juvenile crime.”

### **Data and Data-Analyzing Method**

As a post hoc study, the data used for analysis were debates that had been video-recorded by Zhongshan Girls High School, the location of the Tournament from 2004 to 2006. Altogether 10 debates were obtained with the permission of Zhongshan High School and all the schools that had a team appearing in the recordings. Three debates were from the Tournament in 2004; 3 from 2005; and 4 from 2006. Among the debates collected for each year, one of them was the exhibition match, and the others were matches from the first and second rounds. The total number of debates analyzed, though accounting only for a small sample or about one-fourth (i.e., 10 out of 39) of the total matches from the 2004 to 2006 Tournament, seemed

to be representative of the overall quality and performance of the debates in the Tournaments as they were rather consistent with the author's impressions and notes taken of some other debates she judged in those three years.

All 10 debates were first transcribed for analysis. Major contentions and supporting arguments in the debaters' speeches were transcribed verbatim, while less important arguments and points were summarized using key words. To tap the participants' knowledge of the nature and essence of a policy debate, the focus of the analysis in this study was set to be the structure and content of the debaters' speeches and cross-examinations, instead of their linguistic performance (e.g., pronunciation, grammar, and diction) or delivery skills (poise, body language, and use of voice). In other words, debaters' performances were examined mainly for their discourse structure (i.e., superstructure of an argumentative discourse and structure of individual speeches), debate tactics and strategies, logic and evidence (i.e., ability to reason and use evidence), and knowledge of pertinent issues concerning the policy in the debate proposition.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Findings pertaining to the first research question, how high school students performed at a competitive English policy debate, are categorized into the superstructure of a policy debate, structure and content of individual speeches, purpose and content of cross-examination, use of evidence, and reasoning and fallacies of



reasoning. Answers to the second research question, what should future high school students and coaches consider when participating in an English policy debate, are presented under the category of suggestions for future participants.

### **Superstructure of Policy Debate**

Superstructure is the organizational plan of a text (both oral and written) and refers to the linear progression of the text (Connor & Lauer, 1988). The superstructure of formal debate discourse is referred to as the debate case format. Among the many case formats for a policy debate (e.g., need-plan, comparative advantage, criteria, and goal case, to name a few), the need-plan or traditional needs case is probably the most common and was also adopted as the case format for the Cicero Debate Tournament. The need-plan case basically says, “There is a problem, and here is the solution.” This case format requires both the affirmative and the negative to construct and organize their contentions around two major issues, i.e., need or problem, and plan or solution to the problem. Under this case format, the argumentative discourse structure of the affirmative typically adopts the structural units of problem, solution, and evaluation by arguing that problems exist in the status quo, then advocating a solution to the problems identified, and finally proving that the proposed plan would reduce or remove those problems. In the same vein, the negative would build their contentions around the affirmative case concerning the existing harms and proposed plan for tackling the harms. At times, a situation-problem-solution-evaluation discourse structure is adopted when the affirmative decides to start off

the debate by providing background information or defining key terms in the debate resolution, and the negative thus is given the chance to challenge the affirmative's definition (i.e., the issue of topicality) or the background information provided.

The data showed that the 2004 Cicero debates on the resolution that the Taiwanese government should take effective measures to eradicate elite education at the high school level and the 2005 debates on the resolution that senior high schools in Taiwan should abolish a dress code policy mostly adopted the superstructure of problem-solution-evaluation. This possibly is because in the 2004 tournament the key term "elite education" in the proposition had officially been defined as "star schools" and "gifted class," and in the 2005 tournament the term "dress code" in the proposition was commonly agreed as referring to school uniform. Consequently debaters saw little need to spend time defining the proposition and justifying its definition but began the debate by arguing the undesirable state or the problem in the status quo. Although there was little ambiguity involved in the meaning of those debate resolutions, this does not mean that no background information was required, such as facts and views, which could help orient the judges and audience to the problem later introduced. In fact, the historical background or cultural underpinning of star schools or the school uniform could be introduced in the situation slot and later woven into a claim in the problem area.

Different from the 2004 and 2005 debates, most of the affirmatives in the 2006 tournament debating the proposition that the Taiwanese government should adopt stricter punishment to curb

juvenile crime employed the situation-problem-solution-evaluation structure for their arguments. As the legal definition of the term “juvenile” is different from its common usage and as another term “stricter punishment” waits to be defined, the affirmatives added the structural unit of situation in the beginning of their speeches. In that slot, these teams defined the term “juvenile” (i.e., teenagers ages 14 to 18 since criminal code is not applied to those under 14) and/or announced their focus on a particular type of juvenile offender (i.e., juvenile recidivists and sequentially defined the term “recidivist”). Two affirmatives also introduced their operational definition (i.e., define the proposition with the content of their solution) for the term “stricter punishment.” Although the additional (situation) unit could have been better elaborated as will be discussed in a later section, it proved conducive to the audience’s comprehension and grasp of the proposition.

### **Structure and Content of Individual Speeches**

With an understanding of the superstructure of a policy debate, the discussion now turns to an analysis of the structure<sup>1</sup> of individual speeches of both the affirmative and the negative. As both sides established their cases primarily in constructive speeches, more attention is directed to the structure and content of the first and second affirmative and negative constructive speeches than that of the affirmative and negative rebuttal speeches.

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<sup>1</sup> The function and components listed in the article for each speech are based on Greg Johnston’s *The Logic and Language of English Debate* (1994) and an Internet debate demonstration for non-English speakers (<http://debate.uvm.edu/watchdebate.html>).

***Affirmative constructive speeches.*** The first affirmative constructive speech generally consists of the following four components or stock issues: (1) establish the intent of the proposition (issue of topicality), (2) find a problem (issues of harm, inherency and significance), (3) suggest a solution (plan), and (4) prove that the proposal would reduce the problem (issue of solvency) (see *The Debater's Guide* [Ericson, Murphy, & Zeuschner, 2003] or *Getting Started in Debate* [Goodnight, 1993] for a detailed discussion of each stock issue). In other words, the superstructure of debate discourse earlier mentioned is adopted for the first affirmative constructive speech. With any of the components missing, the affirmative would fail to deliver in this speech a prima facie case (one that is complete “at first sight”), an obligation the affirmative is required to fulfill in a formal policy debate. With the absence of any component in this speech, the affirmative would also unwisely give the negative, judges and audience a chance to question the legitimacy of their case. Even if such a question or doubt is answered in a later speech, the affirmative case has already suffered and wouldn't be as strong as it could were it presented in its complete form the first time it is introduced.

The second affirmative constructive speech basically follows the same organizational pattern for it has to defend the affirmative case by strengthening its contentions. In addition, it has to answer the negative major arguments concerning the harm of the status quo and the solvency and disadvantages of the affirmative plan (see later sections for more discussion on those issues). While defending one's case and answering the opponent's attacks are categorized into two different responsibilities to be fulfilled by the affirmative in this

speech, they are not necessarily tackled in separate sections of the speech. In fact, they are more often addressed together than separately. In other words, whenever possible, the affirmative's answers to the negative's attacks should be integrated into the affirmative's rebuilding of their case. As for what is expected specifically of each responsibility, to strengthen one's case, the affirmative can submit more evidence and elaborate on its reasoning for their major contentions (i.e., the stock issues of topicality, harm, inherency, significance, solvency, and/or disadvantages), called extension (Prager, 2002). To answer the negative's contentions, the affirmative can dismiss its evidence or detect fallacies in their reasoning or arguments.

The analysis of the data showed that the contentions in these 20 affirmative constructive speeches were generally structured in the organizational order specified above. Yet, they were not without flaws or deficiencies. First, the intent of the proposition was not clearly established or adequately dealt with in some speeches. In the case of the "eradicating elite education" proposition, a major problem was that the two components of elite education—star schools and gifted classes—were not tackled with balance. Two affirmatives only dealt with "star schools" and overlooked "gifted classes." Interestingly, rather than challenging the affirmative's skewed focus and questioning the affirmative's position on the other elite component, the negative let the affirmative confine its case to only "star schools." For the proposition of "adopting stricter punishment to curb juvenile crime," the problem was that the term "stricter punishment" was not clearly defined. One affirmative defined the term as "hard training

plus education for rehabilitation.” Another affirmative team defined stricter punishment as a “stricter training program for punishing repeat offenders, somewhat like US boot camps.” Still another affirmative clarified stricter punishment as “stricter punishment for recidivists, meaning recidivists in juvenile probation cases must go to juvenile reform schools, and recidivists in juvenile criminal cases have to spend extended time in juvenile correction centers.” All three definitions were vague and unclear in their meaning of “stricter” (how harsh is it compared to the status quo) and/or “punishment” (form and details). The word “education” in the first definition may also incur questions concerning the issue of topicality, i.e., whether “education” can be qualified as “punishment.” The fourth affirmative, compared with the other three, gave the clearest definition of the term by proposing “limiting the range of the sentence that can be reduced from the current 10 to 5 years; no release before serving at least one-third of the sentence; and including community service in the reformatory center.” Despite a more concrete definition of the term, this affirmative still fell short in their treatment of the intent of the proposition since they failed to specify the type of juvenile crimes or offenders to which these punishments are applied.

Second, a great majority of the harms or problems were alleged instead of proved. For the “eradicating elite education” proposition, as Table 1 shows, among the 9 arguments contributed by 3 affirmative teams, which concern 6 different harms of elite education, only one was substantiated with concrete evidence (in this case, statistics); the other 8 arguments were unsupported assertions.

**Table 1**  
**Arguments on the Harm Issue for the “Eradicating Elite Education” Proposition in the 2004 Cicero Debate Tournament\***

Types of Harms Identified with Elite Education	Number of Affirmatives Arguing the Harm	Number of Affirmatives Proving the Harm
Students, due to the enormous pressure from school, commit suicide.	1	0**
Educational budgets and resources are unequally distributed.	2	1
Students are educated not as well-rounded people but as test machines.	1	0
Students cannot develop social skills needed in the world outside of school because they interact only with people of the same level.	1	0
Students cannot find their true interests because of emphasis on major subjects and neglect of other talents.	2	0
The gap between city and county schools is widened.	2	0

*Note:* \*The analysis is based on the constructive speeches of 3 affirmative teams from the tournament.

\*\*Only impressionistic data were given as support.

A similar case was found for the “abolishing the dress code policy” proposition in the 2005 Cicero Debate Tournament. Table 2 indicates that out of the 8 problem-concerned arguments, only 2 were supported, yet the evidence was weak and unconvincing. One affirmative provided the price of public vs. private school uniforms but did not explain why the quoted prices were considered expensive. The other affirmative cited the cost of the school uniform at a private school but did not contend that it was a typical example or that it could represent the majority of high schools in Taiwan. It should also

be noted that the last harm, “school uniforms inconvenience students,” was not inherent and therefore could be fixed with minor repairs within the status quo. In other words, the inconvenience itself could be removed by changing the regulations concerning when to wear the school uniform or PE sportswear to school and by improving the materials of the school uniform; both adjustments could be made with the continuation of the uniform policy.

**Table 2**  
**Arguments on the Harm Issue for the “Abolishing the Dress Code Policy” Proposition in the 2005 Cicero Debate Tournament\***

Types of Harms Identified with Dress Code Policy	Number of Affirmatives Arguing the Harm	Number of Affirmatives Proving the Harm
The school uniform policy violates human rights.	1	0
School uniforms are expensive.	2	2**
The school uniform policy stifles diversity, including individuality and creativity.	1	0
The school uniform policy prevents students from learning to dress properly.	1	0
The school uniform policy sustains the division between star and community schools.	1	0
The school uniform policy compels students to buy expensive accessories and wear them to school, which results in school being a place for fashion shows.	1	0
School uniforms inconvenience students for they have to change into sportswear for PE class in school and because school uniforms are hot.	1	0

*Note:* \*The analysis is based on the constructive speeches of 3 affirmative teams from the tournament.

\*\*One affirmative cited only one example for the cost of school uniforms.



The situation with unsupported harms was greatly improved in the 2006 Tournament. As Table 3 suggests, all claims about the severity of juvenile crime were supported with evidence, mainly statistics from the government. Although the deficiency of unsupported claims was amended to a great extent, the debaters' choice of evidence could have been strengthened. In one affirmative constructive speech, the debater started off by citing three cases where some juveniles committed or recommitted crimes of aggravated assault or robbery ("In September 2006, three teenagers hit three passers-by with a metal stick for no reason and the passers-by were seriously injured. In November 2006, seven teenagers robbed passers-by for their money; they committed more than 20 cases of robbery in just a week. In December 2006, a 16-year-old and an 18-year-old teenager robbed a bank because they needed money for gambling"). Yet for the purpose

**Table3**  
**Arguments on the Harm Issue for the "Adopting Stricter**  
**Punishment to Curb Juvenile Crime" Proposition**  
**in the 2006 Cicero Debate Tournament\***

Types of Harms Identified with Less Strict Punishment for Juvenile Crime	Number of Affirmatives Arguing the Harm	Number of Affirmatives Proving the Harm
The rates of certain juvenile crimes have gone up.	2	2
The harm inflicted by juvenile offenders has gotten more serious.	1	1
The juvenile recidivist rate has gone up.	3	3

*Note:* \*The analysis is based on the constructive speeches of 4 affirmative teams from the tournament.

of proving increasing rate or brutality of juvenile crimes, individual instances were not the best type of evidence to use. It would be a lot more convincing if statistics indicating a trend of increase in the number of juvenile criminal cases were provided.

Third, the affirmative plan was not detailed or well explained. Closely tied to the contentions concerning the solvency issue, the affirmative plan needs to be concrete, complete and comprehensible. For resolutions that call for adoption of some sort of program or policy, the affirmative plan needs to be structured around several planks, which identify who enforces the plan, what is to be done, and/or how the procedures are to be carried out. Among the three resolutions of the Cicero Debate Tournaments, the affirmative plan for the “abolishing the dress code policy” proposition was the simplest for its plan was just that, to abolish the policy. It needs to be pointed out that while advocating abolishment of a current practice, the affirmative is not obliged to propose an alternative plan to replace the status quo. Different from the “abolishing the dress code policy” proposition, both the “eradicating elite education” and “adopting stricter punishment to curb juvenile crime” propositions call for a detailed layout of a concrete, workable solution, which most of the affirmatives failed to deliver in their speeches. For the “eradicating elite education” proposition, all the affirmatives proposed to adopt community schools as the measures to eradicate elite education, and yet they did not delineate how students will be admitted to a community school, how classes will be divided, and/or what curriculum will be adopted in a community school. As for the “curbing juvenile crime” proposition, three affirmative teams failed to

detail the content of their punishments, and one affirmative, though describing what was to be done in their plan, could have provided still more details and explanation. Johnston (1994) in his book, *The Logic and Language and English Debate: A Practical Guide for Chinese Students of EFL*, cautioned learners of English debate, “If a proposition contains the word ‘should’ but the meaning does not involve some concrete action or change in the real world, then the proposition is one of value, and not of policy” (p. 3). Thus, when the affirmatives failed to propose concrete measures to be implemented when they are needed, it is as if they treated the proposition more as one of value than of policy debate, a serious blunder for a policy debate like the Cicero Tournament.

Concerning again the affirmative plan, another deficiency pertains to the way the affirmatives handled the solvency issue, i.e., proving that their proposal can solve or alleviate the harm produced by the current system. Just as there were no or limited details about the affirmative plan, there was little or no evidence to substantiate their plans’ ability to alleviate or eradicate the harms. This was a problem identified for almost all affirmatives in the Cicero Debate Tournament from 2004 to 2006. Rather than providing solid evidence that proves their proposal would work, the affirmatives assumed it would work and made unsupported assertions about what it would accomplish. In other words, it was only alleged that community schools, abolishment of school uniforms, reformatory and corrective programs for recidivists, and more jail time and community service could lessen the harms claimed. In one speech advocating stricter punishment for juvenile offenders, the affirmative cited foreign examples from Japan

and Singapore concerning lowering the age for juvenile offenders as the proof for the general idea of “stricter punishment.” But because the two Asian examples did not appear to relate to the affirmative’s vaguely worded plan (i.e., stricter punishment defined only as “harsher training programs like boot camps in the US”), the evidence cited from those examples was not conducive to proving the solvency of the affirmative proposal. This leads to another lesson to be learned: The evidence for the solvency of the affirmative plan has to be directly related to the content of the plan, and for that to happen, the affirmative actions have to be spelled out clearly, or no cogent arguments for the plan’s solvency can ever be made.

Finally it was found that the affirmatives were over all less adroit in making the second than the first constructive speech, which, by the way, is drafted in advance. This is evidenced by the fact that 5 of the 10 second affirmative speeches failed to tackle the two requirements for this speech, i.e., building one’s case and answering the negative’s arguments. Among these 5 affirmative speeches, 4 only contended their case, and only 1 responded to the negatives’ attacks. For the other 5 speeches that both contended their case and responded to the negatives’ contentions, they all first built their case then responded to the negatives’ attack, instead of integrating their counterarguments to the negatives’ contentions with their own claims. It was also found that when defending their case, the affirmatives mostly only repeated or reiterated the arguments made in the first constructive speech, instead of submitting new evidence, and when answering the negative major contentions, most affirmatives seemed incapable of detecting or unveiling flawed reasoning contained in the negatives’ arguments (for

more discussion on this point, see the section on “reasoning and fallacies of reasoning”).

***Negative constructive speeches.*** The first negative constructive speech aims to attack the affirmative case usually by (1) arguing the affirmative case is not topical, (2) defending the present system, and/or (3) proposing a counterplan (again, see Ericson, Murphy, & Zeuschner, 2003 and Goodnight, 1993 for a detailed discussion on negative case construction). While strategy one can be combined with strategy two or three, strategies two and three do not go together. As mentioned earlier, the negative can challenge the intent of the proposition when the affirmative chooses a debate area that is not within or only partially related to the proposition. More commonly, however, the negative in this speech would defend the status quo by challenging the stock issues of harm, inherency, significance, and solvency of the affirmative case. But it should be remembered that if the negative attempts to deny the existence of the harm, it cannot couple that argument with attacks on the inherency, significance or solvency issue, or the contentions will be self-contradictory. Apart from those stock issues, the negative can also reject the affirmative proposal by contending that it will result in greater ills than the problems it intends to solve, i.e., the stock issue of disadvantages. At times, the negative would in this speech concede that the present system should be changed but argue that their alternative proposal, termed as the negative counterplan, is better than the affirmative’s. Compared with defending the present system, a counterplan is a strategy more frequently employed by veteran debaters in advanced debate (Goodnight, 1993).

Continuing the first negative constructive speech, the second negative constructive speech will take the negative arguments and develop them completely. Similar to the second affirmative constructive speech, more evidence can be submitted and more explanation of reasoning can be provided in this speech. The affirmative's answers to the negative's contentions presented in the second affirmative constructive speech should also be addressed here.

Analysis of the 20 negative constructive speeches showed that 8 out of 10 negative teams chose to defend the status quo as their strategy for constructing the contentions in both constructive speeches, and only two negatives (in the 2006 Cicero Tournament) adopted the strategy of counterplan for arguing against the affirmative case. Just as the affirmative constructive speeches, some mistakes or defects were detected in the negative constructive speeches.

First, for the propositions of "eradicating elite education" and "abolishing the dress code," three negatives employed a strategy that was improper and questionable given the burden of rejoinder they had to bear as the negative in a policy debate. That is, these negative teams defended the status quo not by challenging the affirmative case on the harm/inherency/significance of the problem or the solvency of the plan but by contending the benefits or advantages of the status quo. Take the resolution of "eradicating elite education" for example, one negative team mostly argued the functions or purposes of elite education, stating "competition to get into star schools would make students work harder so that their knowledge is fortified and the society becomes more competitive," and "more creativity can be aroused when people of the same level of intelligence are put

together.” In the case of the “abolishing the dress code” proposition, two negatives argued the numerous advantages of adopting the dress code policy, e.g., “the dress code policy helps students be responsible,” “learning to dress in neat and tidy clothing is an important educational function of the dress code,” “the dress code helps lower students’ fighting and crime rates,” etc. Besides the fact that the great majority of the advantages claimed by the negative were not proved, the biggest problem with this approach, however, was that by arguing to keep the status quo, instead of rejecting the affirmative proposal, the negative did not directly respond to (or clash with) the affirmative case, leaving many affirmative contentions intact.

It is not clear if it was the nature of the proposition or better debate training, but the negatives in 2006’s Cicero Tournament showed more adequate and tactful strategies for their contentions on the “stricter punishment to curb juvenile crime” proposition. One negative, for example, contended the significance of the harm by citing the statistics released by the Ministry of Justice showing that the juvenile crime rate has actually steadily decreased in the past ten years (trend evidence). By adding that the reason the crime rate went down had to do with the government’s efforts to keep juveniles away from places with bad influences, the negative was claiming that the present system functioned well (defending the status quo) and that only adopting measures tackling the root of crimes, which stricter punishment cannot deal with, are the right direction to take for curbing juvenile crime. Similarly, another negative defended the current system by pointing out that prevention is the key to ultimately solving the problem and the existing care centers and emergency

shelters which provide help to abused or neglected children as high-risk groups for juvenile offenses served as a good model for prevention. In addition to negating the significance of the harm and/or acknowledging the merits of the status quo, all 4 negatives in the data from that year also questioned the solvency of the affirmative plan by arguing that the affirmative proposal failed to target at the real causes of the harm (e.g., psychological instability, family and peer influence, gang manipulation, and the mass media) and therefore would not solve the problems<sup>2</sup>. Here if the negatives had predicted and proved wrong the affirmative's reasons for adopting stricter punishment, e.g., juveniles' beliefs or perceptions that the stakes for crimes were not high, they could have argued even more cogently by dismissing those reasons and consequently questioning the solvency of the affirmative proposal.

Second, compared with other stock issues, the negatives seemed less familiar and adroit with attacks concerning the disadvantages issue. This is evidenced by the fact that many disadvantage contentions were buried among other arguments and presented either as a counterposition to negate the truth of the affirmative argument or, in those propositions that advocated abolishing the status quo, as the strengths of the current system as earlier discussed. In other words, they were not phrased as greater harms caused by the affirmative plan and presented with a clear focus on the stock issue of disadvantages.

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<sup>2</sup> However among them, only one team provided a clear citation of expert testimony ("a study done by Dr. Huang from the Central Police University which appeared in the periodical *National Police Reform*") for the causes they identified in the speech. The same team also cited the expert when arguing that the affirmative proposal would not curb juvenile crime.



When the negatives indeed proclaimed the affirmative proposal would bring about disadvantages, most of the disadvantages were, again, only alleged but not proved or adequately documented. For the “eradicating elite education” proposition, the negatives’ claimed, “community schools will make students lose motivation in learning because students want to fly [meaning wanting advanced materials] but were told to stay in their seat,” or “community schools will make the quality of education go down for students won’t focus on the basics in junior high since they will enter a school of the same level no matter how hard they study,” but neither the claims nor the reasons behind were proved with evidence. Similarly, when arguing that the high school dress code should not be abolished, the negatives stated, “with the high school dress code abolished, students will feel bad because they can’t afford to buy clothes that are expensive and fashionable,” “we found students from schools without uniform spending twice the amount of money annually on clothing,” “no dress code opens the door to obscenity and vulgarity,” and “no dress code results in students coming to school with improper clothing, which in turn creates a harmful, hazardous learning environment,” all of which were alleged and lacked proper support. The same deficiency once again was noted in the disadvantages contentions in the proposition of “curbing juvenile crime.” Most of the negatives failed to bear the burden of proof when asserting, “stricter punishment will only backfire, forcing juvenile offenders to make the same mistakes,” “the affirmative plan will only make teenagers pick up more bad habits, make more bad friends and some of them will end up being worse than before,” “being locked up for a lengthened time leaves juvenile

offenders with no support from family and friends when released, which leads them to commit crimes again,” or “building more facilities and putting juveniles in those facilities for petty crimes may lead to high increases in taxes, which may result in more poverty and consequently higher motivation for committing crimes.” The only instance of exception occurred in a debate on the “stricter punishment to curb juvenile crime” proposition; the negative refreshingly cited concrete evidence from an empirical study conducted in the US to prove the claim that stricter punishment actually exacerbates juvenile crime (“Half of the 800 randomly selected 15 to 16-year-old juvenile offenders who committed robbery were tried in adult court and half of them in juvenile court, and the ones tried in adult court had a higher post-release recidivist rate than those tried in juvenile court”).

Third, two negatives in the Cicero Tournament in 2006 proposed a counterplan in their second constructive speech, but the way they presented it detracted from its effect. One team suggested the establishment of a powerful and systematic welfare system for minors and offered practical measures like schools providing counseling for students troubled by urgent family problems, monitoring the behavior of students who undergo family problems, implementing after-school programs and programs over the holidays. The other team proposed that the government provide help to juveniles’ parents to improve the family environment, enhance law and moral education in school and increase the ratio of students to homeroom teachers and the number of professional counselors, strengthen the security forces to keep gangsters out of school, and tighten the regulations regarding media and facilities potentially detrimental to teenagers. As both teams had a

lot to contend about the cause of the harm and the solvency issue, they did not announce their counterplan strategy until the second constructive speech, leaving the affirmative, judges and audience perplexed about their stance toward the proposition. In this case, it was important that they announce in the first constructive speech their strategy of proposing the adoption of an alternative plan so that their other arguments could come together for an optimal effect in their counterplan. Choosing to contend the workability of the affirmative proposal by advocating their own plan, the negative, just as the affirmative, has to bear the burden of proof, meaning that they ought to provide evidence sustaining the solvency of their plan. However, neither team submitted the needed proof to show that their plan would work or work better than the affirmative proposal. It should also be noted that just as an affirmative proposal advocates one and only one change, the negative counterplan should promote one single change. Under this guideline, the counterplan in the first example, though containing multiple practical measures, aimed at changing the welfare system of minors within schools; the counterplan in the latter example, however, attempted to occasion multiple changes concerning different systems and thus was inappropriate.

***Affirmative and negative rebuttal speeches.*** In the rebuttal speech, the affirmative should present their arguments against the negative and explain why their case is not defeated and should be adopted. On the contrary, the negative should include in this speech their arguments against the affirmative and explain why the affirmative case is defeated and their proposal should not be implemented.

The analysis showed that overall the affirmatives and negatives

reiterated their major contentions in the rebuttal speech adequately. However, their speeches needed to be better organized around the stock issues, instead of firing off points in a disjointed fashion.

### **Purpose and Content of Cross-Examination**

Cross-examination is a time for the affirmative or negative to ask questions to clarify the opponent's contentions and to seek out or reveal the weaknesses in their contentions as preparation for arguments to be made later (Ericson, Murphy, & Zeuschner, 2003; Johnston, 1994). In other words, it can and often serves as the starting point for strategic and persuasive refutation presented in the speech that follows. Just as the job of the cross-examiner is to ask questions, the cross-examinee is expected to only answer questions if they are clearly and properly phrased. Based on these principles, some problematic or inappropriate practices were identified. First, in 7 out of 10 debates, the debaters, rather than asking questions to clarify or cast doubt on the opponent's contentions, were at times contending their own case or refuting their opponents' case. Since cross-examination is not a time for making contentions, the judges would have to disregard those contentions. Such misuse of cross-examination thus only resulted in a waste of time.

Second, instead of answering questions or asking questions to clarify the inquiry, the cross-examinee all of a sudden initiated a series of questions about the cross-examiner's case. One instance was found where the cross-examinee, in the midst of the cross-examination, took on dual identities and started to question the cross-examiner. As neither of the debaters was familiar with their

roles and responsibilities in cross-examination, it went on for quite a few exchanges before the cross-examinee was finally stopped by the cross-examiner. However by then, a significant portion of the cross-examination time had already been lost.

Third, by accident or design, complex questions (i.e., questions that have two or more propositions hidden in them) were occasionally found in cross-examination, which left the cross-examinee in a disadvantaged position when answering the question. For example, one debater asked, “Are you aware that there may be negative consequences if stricter punishment is adopted?” By answering either yes or no, the cross-examinee was admitting stricter punishment would bring about negative consequences and thereby inflicted damage to their case.

Fourth, for no obvious reasons (e.g., stalling or evading the question) the cross-examinee was often cut off in the midst of their answers. As a result, the cross-examiner wasted the time that had been spent on that line of questioning up to that point. In some cases, it cost the cross-examiner not just time; the interruption actually saved the cross-examinee as it came at a point when the cross-examinee was on the verge of exposing a weakness or fallacy in his/her earlier argument.

Finally, some answers to the questions were again simply alleged but they were passed as acceptable answers by the cross-examiner. This, for example, was seen in an instance where the cross-examinee, when asked about the evidence to support an earlier claim, simply flashed a piece of paper and replied, “Here it is,” and the cross-examiner also kindly and surprisingly cooperatively let the

cross-examinee off the hook by taking that action as a proof for possessing evidence for her claim.

### **Use of Evidence**

To establish a proposition of fact that lacks common presumption, debaters often must appeal to evidence, be it examples, statistics, or testimony. For the evidence to truly support a claim, it must be admissible, relevant, and sufficient (Johnston, 1994). Judging from the prevalence of unsupported assertions in the 10 recorded debates (see Tables 1, 2, and 3), it was found that most debaters failed to grasp the role evidence plays in arguments, which by definition, is a claim or contention supported with evidence or else termed as data (Goodnight, 1993; Toulmin, 1958). This explained many affirmatives' failure to contend the issues of harm, significance and solvency and many negatives' lack of success in arguing the disadvantages of the affirmative proposal or the solvency of their counterplan. The debaters' failure in acknowledging the importance of evidence in debate also prevented them from detecting and challenging unsupported claims in their opponents' speeches. As a result, many of the affirmative and negative cases, instead of being grounded on solid evidence, were built upon claims which in essence were sheer personal opinions, public impressions or bold presumptions awaiting further proof.

In the few instances where evidence was proffered to support the contention, the content or presentation of the evidence was often problematic. For one, most of the evidence was not properly documented. The source of the evidence was either not given or not

adequately cited, leaving the evidence inadmissible. This is exemplified in phrasings like “we found,” “in one study,” or “according to the statistics” as shown in the following statements: “We found students from schools without uniforms spend twice the amount of money on clothing annually,” “in one study, it shows students spend NT\$3000 on uniforms but NT\$ 6000 on casual wear per year,” or “according to [the] statistics, in the past recent 10 years the recidivism rate has continued to rise.”

Another problem concerns the debaters’ skills in examining and responding to the evidence. When faced with seemingly cogent evidence from the opponent, some debaters reacted by simply accepting without an effort to discern and challenge the evidence, others immediately negated the evidence by contending that it was a false analogy to compare the case in the evidence to the case under debate (see the discussion on “reasoning by analogy”). The problem with the first reaction is that the debaters admitted the evidence and therefore conceded the argument too quickly. While a claim without evidence is not a valid argument, a claim with evidence does not automatically make it a valid argument. The nature of the evidence is a key to whether a claim can be deemed an argument, and therefore debaters should not accept the evidence without ensuring its legitimacy by scrutinizing its relevance and sufficiency. Take for example the evidence, which was introduced earlier, that the negative cited for the claim that stricter punishment actually exacerbates juvenile crime (“Half of the 800 randomly selected 15 to 16-year-old juvenile offenders who committed robbery were tried in adult court and half of them in juvenile court, and the ones tried in adult court

had a higher post-release recidivist rate than those tried in juvenile court”). The affirmative could ask the negative to explain how being tried in adult court stands for a stricter punishment than being tried in juvenile court, and whether a different form of stricter punishment, exemplified in the affirmative plan, may have a different effect on the post-release recidivist rate. These questions would put the negative’s understanding of the evidence to test. If they did not understand the evidence critically and thoroughly, they would fail to sustain the relevancy of the evidence and thus be unable to score with the contention that the evidence was used to support. The problem with the other reaction of the debaters, i.e., negating the evidence by arguing that the case cited cannot be equated to the affirmative/negative case, because it concerns reasoning by analogy, will be discussed in the next section.

### **Reasoning and Fallacies of Reasoning**

Reasoning is what connects the evidence to the general claim by explaining why the evidence supports the claim (Goodnight, 1993). Fallacies of reasoning are faulty reasoning, which may occur accidentally or deliberately. Reasoning and fallacy of reasoning are two sides of a coin. In other words, for each type of reasoning, there are corresponding fallacies of reasoning. Among the various types of reasoning, the debaters were found to be less familiar with or commit more fallacies in causal reasoning and reasoning by analogy.

***Causal reasoning.*** In the process of reasoning by cause, one infers that a certain factor (a cause) is a force that produces something (an effect), i.e., effect-to-cause reasoning, or that something (an effect)



is an outcome that is produced by a factor (a cause), i.e., cause-to-effect reasoning. To test the existence of a causal relationship, one can ask if the alleged cause is relevant to the effect described, if the cause is the sole or distinguishing causal factor, if there is reasonable probability that no undesirable effect will result from this particular cause, if the cause is capable of producing the effect, if there is a counteracting cause, and if the cause is necessary (i.e., without the cause, the effect cannot exist) or sufficient (i.e., if there is the cause, there will always be the effect) (Freeley, 1993). A negative answer to any of the above questions suggests a faulty causal relationship between A and B or a false cause fallacy.

When debating “elite education should be eradicated” and “the dress code policy should be abolished,” some affirmatives contended the status quo had led to certain harms when in fact there was no clear causal relationship between the two, and thus committed a false cause fallacy. Take for example the argument that the high school dress code stifles diversity, one affirmative asserted a causal relationship between school uniform and students’ individuality. By applying the tests aforementioned to this argument, the causal relationship between school uniform policy and stifling of students’ individuality can be sustained only if the school uniform is relevant to the stifling of students’ individuality, if school uniform is the sole or distinguishing causal factor, and if it is either a necessary or sufficient condition for stifling students’ individuality. However, it was difficult, if not impossible, for the affirmative to submit a proved affirmative answer to any of those questions. The common presumptions for the cause of Taiwanese students’ not showing individuality pointed to cultural and

curricular factors like a collectivistic orientation and educational style, but not the school uniform. The school uniform, if anything, might have fed on but was hardly a sole or distinguishing factor occasioning such an effect. Besides, it was obvious that the school uniform policy cannot be easily established as either a necessary or a sufficient condition for the problem of stifled student individuality because students who don't wear uniforms do not necessarily reveal their individuality and those who do wear uniforms are not necessarily oppressed from showing their individuality. For those reasons, the affirmative claim of a causal relationship between the school uniform policy and students' individuality was highly questionable. As many other similar fallacies were found in the affirmatives' contentions on the harm issue (see Tables 1 and 2 for more examples), debaters ought to familiarize themselves with the nature of causal reasoning and think twice before issuing a causal argument.

When utilizing causal reasoning, some debaters were also found to have mistakenly deemed contending a sufficient condition to be the same as contending a necessary condition in a cause-effect argument. As two conditions indicate very different causal relationships, arguing a cause is a sufficient condition cannot be equated with arguing a cause is a necessary condition for some effect. This mistake, for example, was seen in a debate where the negative successfully contended that the school uniform (the status quo) led to improved student conduct and school safety (desirable outcomes) and therefore proclaimed that they had automatically successfully argued abolishing the school uniform (removal of the status quo) would result in student misdemeanor and deteriorating school safety (dismissal of those

desirable outcomes). A similar fallacy was committed by another negative when after arguing that elite education resulted in students' knowledge being fortified and the society being competitive, they contended that eradicating elite education would bring about just the opposite effects.

***Reasoning by analogy.*** Reasoning by analogy was commonly employed by debaters when citing evidence from other regions or countries to support or reject a proposal to be implemented in Taiwan. For the “abolishing the dress code policy” debate, teams cited studies from the US, e.g., schools in California or Chicago, as evidence for supporting the adoption of a school uniform. For the “adopting stricter punishment to curb juvenile crime” debate, teams used evidence from Japan, Singapore and the US to either advocate or oppose to stricter punishment. Here two problems were found regarding the way such reasoning was employed and responded to. As the process of reasoning by analogy consists of making a comparison between two similar cases and inferring that what is true in one case is true in the other, the advocate must be careful to determine whether significant and critical points of similarity exist and whether points of differences are not critical between the cases compared. With these principles in mind, local evidence is usually more cogent than foreign proof, and thus, if existing, should be considered first. However, in the school uniform debate, none of the teams utilized evidence either for or against the uniform policy from local educational documents. Second, just as the advocate has to discern and weigh the similarities and differences between the two cases compared, the opponent cannot challenge or reject such reasoning simply on the basis that the

evidence comes from a different region or foreign land. Like the advocate, the opponent has to base his/her questioning or refutation on the same grounds that serve as tests for such reasoning, i.e., are there significant points of similarities, are the points of similarity critical to the comparison, and are the points of difference noncritical? Two of the four teams in the “stricter punishment” debates rejected their opponents’ evidence from a foreign locale simply because of its presumed foreignness, which for the guidelines mentioned above was not insufficient and therefore unconvincing.

To sum up, a content analysis of altogether 10 debates from the 2004 to 2006 Cicero English Debate Tournaments has shown that while the overall debate format followed the superstructure of a policy debate, i.e., (situation-) problem-solution-evaluation, there were many inadequacies and deficiencies concerning the strategies for constructing and organizing the contentions in individual speeches. The affirmatives, for example, made mostly unsupported statements about the harms in the status quo and the solvency of their plan; they often failed to detail their plan; and by not extending their case and not integrating the contentions of their case with the attack of the negative’s case, they were relatively unskillful in making the second constructive speech. Similarly, the negatives left much room for improvement. By contending the strengths or reasons of keeping the status quo, the negatives often failed to meet the burden of rejoinder, i.e., responding to and clashing with the affirmative case. Their not framing their attack clearly as the disadvantages issue (i.e., arguing a greater harm resulted from the affirmative plan than the status quo) and not substantiating their disadvantages contentions with proof

greatly weakened their case. The negatives also lacked sufficient understanding of the nature and functions of a counterplan, thus leaving it a strategy with little bite on the affirmative case. There were also many misunderstandings of the purpose and misuse of cross-examination, including making contentions during cross-examination, asking complex questions, cutting off the cross-examinee improperly and unwisely, and allowing assertions to pass as legitimate answers. Finally, there was insufficient use and improper documentation of evidence, and there was fallacious reasoning, such as false cause, and unconvincing arguments by analogy.

### **Suggestions for Future Participants**

With respect to the second research question, what future high school students and coaches should heed when taking part in an English policy debate, the above analysis has led to the following suggestions:

First and foremost, debaters from both sides need to conduct a comprehensive and thorough issue analysis of the resolution. This includes identifying and investigating the stock issues concerning the debate resolution, such as the nature, inherency and significance of the harm, and the details, solvency, feasibility and disadvantages of the plan. This also means an understanding of what issues to be brought forth on whose initiative, what issues can go hand in hand, and what issues work only independently. Only by conducting a thorough issue analysis can the affirmative present a well-planned and believable prima facie case, and the negative be fully prepared with

clear and effective strategies to challenge and refute the affirmative case. In addition to researching and building their case on the stock issues, debaters should also structure and present their contentions around those issues to strive for the best comprehension of the judges and audience on the case.

Second, debaters need to support their contentions with evidence, or their contentions carry little, if any, weight. A contention may start but never end with an opinion or presumption; for any opinion or assumption to play a role in debate, it should first be verified by concrete, solid evidence. Just as debaters should make supported claims, they are also expected to detect and challenge any unsupported arguments given by the opponent during the debate or found in a source when preparing for the debate. Only when both sides ground their contentions on valid evidence can there be a meaningful forum for reasoned advocacy, critical inquiry and rational communication, which is what debate really is. Targeting at this most prevalent and consistent problem in the Cicero Debate Tournament in the past few years, this reminder hopefully can help elevate the overall quality of the debates in the Tournament.

Third, debaters should receive training on citing and analyzing of evidence. When presenting the evidence, the debater needs to include the source where the evidence was found, which may include the author, publication, and date of the publication. To analyze the evidence, the debater should be able to distinguish different types of evidence and their functions, and learn the guidelines for using and testing evidence. With such training, debaters will be able to tell when to use which type of evidence for what purpose and to cite the

evidence properly to ensure its relevance, sufficiency and admissibility.

Fourth, to prevent fallacious arguments, introduction and analysis of various types of reasoning is also a must. Attention should be given particularly to causal reasoning and reasoning by analogy for they have been frequently misused. When learning about reasoning, debaters also need to be reminded of staying away from several common fallacies, such as false cause and false analogy.

Fifth, the purpose and goals of cross-examination and the guidelines for the cross-examiner and cross-examinee should be better grasped. Debaters should refrain themselves from making contentions during cross-examinations. Being a cross-examiner, debaters should not ask complex questions and should be persistent and patient with their inquiry. Being a cross-examinee, debaters should respond to the questions and whenever needed, substantiate their answers with proof.

There are also specific suggestions regarding the affirmative and the negative case. For affirmative debaters, in the first constructive speech they need to be circumspect with their intent of the proposition by providing a reasonable definition and a justifiable treatment of the proposition; they need to detail their plan by tackling its different planks, and they need to seek out evidence for the harms they identified in the current system and the solvency of the plan they claimed. In the second constructive speech, affirmative debaters ought to remember to both build their case and refute the negative's contentions and, whenever possible, to integrate their refutations of the negative case with arguments of their own case. For negative debaters, they need to fulfill their role as the negative not by arguing

the advantages of the status quo but by challenging and rebutting the affirmative case. In other words, as the negative they need to occasion an adequate amount of clash between their and the affirmative cases. They can do this most efficiently by predicting different affirmative cases and contriving corresponding strategies prior to the debate. The negative strategies may include arguing the topicality, defending the status quo, dismissing the affirmative plan, and proposing a negative counterplan. Among these options, negative debaters need to familiarize themselves particularly with the last two. To dismiss the affirmative plan, the negative can contend the issue of solvency or disadvantages. To argue for a counterplan, the negative has to declare concession on the issues of harm, inherency, and/or significance and conceive an alternative concrete action. For both strategies of contending the disadvantages or the counterplan, the negative must bear the burden of proof by supporting their claims with evidence. Whatever strategy they eventually choose should guide their contentions throughout the debate so that there are clear and consistent focuses in all speeches.

## **CONCLUSION**

Because of the Cicero English Debate Tournament, years of neglect or misunderstanding of debate in the high school English curriculum in Taiwan now has a chance to be addressed and redressed. If the Tournament has really marked the beginning of such change, the analysis of the participants' performances in the past few years'



competitions indicates that English debate at this point remains highly unfamiliar, if not totally unknown, to the great majority of high school students and teachers, and that there is indeed a long way to go before the essence of debate can be fully grasped and the benefits fully enjoyed. This speaks loudly for more forensic training in the formal or extra-curricular curriculum not only for future participants of this debate competition but also high school students in general. Only by so doing can such a meaningful interscholastic event live up to its full potential.

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## 2004 至 2006 年 「西賽羅盃高中英語辯論比賽」賽事分析 及對指導政策性英語辯論之建議

### 摘要

自 2004 年至今，台北市政府教育局已連續四年舉辦名為「西賽羅盃」的政策性英語辯論比賽。也因為該賽之舉辦，英語辯論——一個具高度教學價值但在台灣長久被忽略的口語活動——終有機會在北市高級中學中獲得些許注意。「西賽羅盃英語辯論比賽」之誕生及其用意固然值得嘉許和肯定，但參賽同學是否確由比賽中領略辯論之精神及本質，卻有待檢驗。為此，本文研究分析自 2004 至 2006 年間共十場賽事，並將研究焦點鎖定於辯論結構與論點內容。分析發現固然辯論之整體架構大致依循政策性辯論所採用之「背景-問題-方案-評估」的公式結構，但細部內容及組織卻有諸多缺失或不足，如辯論政策之欠缺和運用不當、交叉質詢之誤解與誤用、證據使用不足和引用不確實、以及論述中思維不合邏輯之謬誤。文中並就如何導正前述缺陷，提出若干建議。此外，本文亦就辯論對英語學習之助益及台灣本地之英語辯論研究做一摘要及評述，以進一步了解「西賽羅盃英語辯論比賽」成立之目的及參賽同學之表現。

關鍵詞：英語辯論 西賽羅盃英語辯論比賽 政策性辯論  
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