Verbal boxing
by Matt Bryer

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Age: Teenagers / Adults</th>
<th>Level: Upper Intermediate / Advanced</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time: Approx. 60 minutes</td>
<td>Objective: To practise phrases used when expressing opinion; fluency</td>
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<td>Key skills: Speaking, reading</td>
<td>Materials: A stopwatch; one copy of Worksheets 1 and 2 per student; one copy of Worksheet 3 for each student (cut-outs to be prepared before the lesson); one copy of Worksheets 4 and 5 per group of students.</td>
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This is a fun debating game that works best with groups of around ten people but can be adapted for larger/smaller classes.

Please note that the topics used in the debate could be sensitive subjects (gender and capital punishment) for some students and it is therefore advisable to only teach this lesson with a class that will not be offended by the material.

Procedure:

1. Tell students that they are going to practise the language used in debates and discussions. This lesson is a revision/consolidation and they should already be familiar with some of the language that will be used.

2. Hand out Worksheets 1 and 2 (Expressing opinion and Agreeing and disagreeing) and ask students to read both worksheets and then complete the exercise on Worksheet 2 in pairs.

Key:
- **I agree:** I totally agree with you.; Exactly!; I couldn’t agree more.; That’s true.; You’re absolutely right.
- **I agree with some, but not all, of what you are saying:** Perhaps, but …; That may be the case, however …;
- **I disagree:** I’m sorry, I can’t agree with …; I’m sorry, but I disagree.; I’m afraid that isn’t right …; Nonsense!; That makes no sense.

3. Split the class into three groups of 3-4 students. Ask the students if they know what a ‘motion’ is. Hand out the strips of paper containing the motion for either Debate 1 or Debate 2 (or choose a debate topic of your own) from Worksheet 3 to each group. Tell the groups to think of both arguments for and against the particular motion. Give the class about five minutes to brainstorm some ideas. Monitor and help with ideas.

4. Feedback quickly on some of the ideas the different groups have.

5. Hand out Worksheet 4 (Verbal Boxing) and explain that the class is going to have a verbal boxing match to see how good they are at debating. Make a joke about the fact that no actual boxing will take place. Students usually find this funny.

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6. Give students time to read the rules of Worksheet 4 and help with any vocabulary.

7. Give out the strips of paper on the other debate topic from Worksheet 3 to each group. Tell one group they are for the argument and one group that they are against the argument. Tell them that one person in each group should be elected as the boxer that they have ten minutes to prepare for the fight. The third group are the judges and will require the judges' scorecards on Worksheet 5. Tell them to prepare by brainstorming arguments for and against the topic. Go through the scorecards with them and explain what is expected.

8. When you are ready for the ‘fight’ (I usually find an audio clip from the Rocky soundtrack to make it more fun), clear space in the centre of the room and set up two chairs facing each other for the boxers to sit on.

9. The fight can be composed of three rounds. Use a stopwatch to time each round. How you structure the rounds is up to you. With more advanced groups you can let them debate freely but with weaker speakers allow one ‘boxer’ to express one opinion and then let the other respond.

10. Between rounds, boxers go back to their corners and talk to their team. The judges use this time to score each round. When the boxing is completed, the judges can give their feedback and explain who won the fight and why.
Worksheet 1

Expressing opinion

In certain situations, both at university and in our careers, we have to give our opinions and discuss subjects that we may disagree about. It is useful to know some of the correct language so that we can agree and disagree politely without causing offence.

Read some of these different ways of saying what you think about something:

- I believe that …
- I think that …
- I may be wrong, but I believe …
- It’s perfectly clear to me that …
- It’s my opinion that …
- In my opinion, …
Worksheet 2

Agreeing and disagreeing

Work with a partner to decide where to put the following twelve phrases of agreement and disagreement in the box below:

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Worksheet 3

Debate 1

Women are not capable of performing jobs in fields such as politics, economics and the military as well as men.

Debate 2

It is never acceptable to take another person’s life, whatever crime they have committed.
You are going to have a ‘verbal’ boxing match to show how good you are at giving your opinion and debating a topic.

You will work in teams of three or four. One person in your team will be the boxer. The other members of your team will work as the boxing coach and corner men who make sure the boxer is ‘fit to fight’. Your job is to help the boxer win the fight.

Your teacher will give you a ‘motion’ to debate and tell you which side of the motion you will argue. You will have ten minutes to prepare for the fight.

**Main points to think about:**

1. You need to think of as many different things to say as possible before the fight.
2. You should think about what the other team might say and how you can respond.
3. You must use the opinion, agreement and disagreement phrases that we have discussed.
Worksheet 5

Judge's scorecard

It is your job to give each boxer a score to decide who wins the fight. There are three categories:

- How good each boxer’s argument is
- Use of ‘expressing opinion’ and ‘agreeing and disagreeing’
- General English (grammar, vocabulary, fluency)

You will give each category a score out of five. For example, if you think a boxer did very well using debating language, you may give them 5/5 in the second category.

Boxer's name: __________________

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<th>Language use</th>
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TOTAL POINTS =

Other comments:

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