Lynda Baloche et al. first introduce the idea of talking fishbowls. This activity consists of an inner and outer circle. Students discuss topics in the inner circle while the students in an outer circle observe. This introduces the idea of creative controversy. In another example provided, students prepare to debate one side of an issue in pairs and are then asked to create new arguments for the opposing point of view (44). It is revealed that through the creative controversy exercise students are more open to listening to opposing point of views. Students are also able to come to a consensus by evaluating the weaknesses and merits of the various arguments. They also learn the importance of evidence in supporting their arguments (45). The authors’ also link creative controversy to cooperative learning as students must work cooperatively to be successful (45). This would also benefit ELL/ESL students and students with exceptionailities, as it would allow them work with students who are stronger in the areas that they need more assistance with. Cooperative Learning is then broken down into five elements. These elements are: “positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing”(45).

This article explains the various benefits of creative controversy. One benefit is that this activity is student-centred. The teacher can be more of a facilitator rather than being seen as delivering the knowledge to students (48). Creative controversy also develops students’ collaborative skills. Students are asked to work together which requires listening, compromise and communication (46). These skills are transferrable to a variety of settings. Another benefit of creative controversy in the classroom is developing problem solving skills. Due to the fact that students must come to a consensus at the end of the debate, students must work together to come to a compromise. They have to carefully consider each argument and decide which arguments are the strongest.

Although there are many benefits to using creative controversy strategies in the classroom, there are a few challenges to consider before classroom use. As students will be working in groups, often in pairs, the teacher must come up with a method of ensuring individual accountability. As explained in the article, one strategy to ensure individual accountability would be to ask students to prepare notes beforehand that the teacher can review before students are grouped (46). Also as creative controversy activates a number of important skills, the teacher must be sure that students are developing these various skills or the skills must be introduced by the teacher before using creative controversy. Overall, as explained by the authors’, the benefits of using creative controversy are manifold.
The article explains that Piaget views conflict as bringing about higher level of development. Contradictions challenges what one thinks to be true. The author argues that contradictions can be both positive and negative and explains that the goal of the article is to define conditions that result in positive outcomes in the classroom (23).

The authors provided several tips when promoting conflict in the classroom. One is to pair students at different cognitive levels as these allows for increased developmental growth. Another tip explains that if students are at the same cognitive level studies show that the greater the conflict, the greater the developmental growth of the students (24).

Overall, creative controversy is seen as beneficial however, it is with a number of pitfalls which a teacher must avoid. The teacher must avoid creating a space where students become more defensive than rather open to criticism.

This article goes through great lengths to discuss the benefits of creative controversy in the classroom however, it appeals mainly to Piagetian theorist. Those who do not agree with Piaget’s point of view may find it difficult to see all the developmental benefits argued by the authors. The authors could have also included benefits outside of Piaget’s view point.

In conclusion, creative controversy is seen as an opportunity for students to interact in a way that may bring about controversy resulting in more benefits rather than harm. As the authors end the article, they admonish teachers to go ahead and try it!