



EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article examines methods for developing English speaking skills among Uzbek philology students, focusing on discussion-based techniques to improve fluency and communication. It addresses challenges like fear of errors and low motivation, proposing practical solutions to enhance classroom participation and intercultural dialogue.

Keywords: speaking skills, discussion method, communicative competence, English language teaching, philology students.

Today, with the rapid advancement of information technology and scientific progress in Uzbekistan, significant emphasis is being placed on foreign language acquisition as a crucial component of national development. The country's educational reforms have introduced comprehensive changes across all levels of English language instruction - from early childhood education to advanced academic programs - establishing clear proficiency benchmarks aligned with international standards while respecting local educational traditions [1]. These systemic improvements include the adoption of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) as a guiding methodology, the modernization of curricular content, and the development of contemporary teaching materials designed to meet global educational demands.

This strategic focus on linguistic development stems from recognizing English as the primary medium for international discourse, professional collaboration, and access to cutting-edge knowledge across various disciplines. The transformation of language education reflects Uzbekistan's commitment to preparing its citizens for active participation in an increasingly interconnected world, where multilingual competence serves as both a professional asset and a bridge to cross-cultural understanding [2].

The implementation of these reforms has created new opportunities for pedagogical innovation, particularly in higher education institutions training future language specialists. Modern approaches emphasize not only grammatical accuracy and vocabulary acquisition but also the development of practical communication skills that enable learners to function effectively in diverse linguistic contexts [3]. This paradigm shift in language education methodology responds to the growing need for professionals capable of operating in multilingual environments, both within Uzbekistan's borders and on the international stage.

Particular attention is being given to the enhancement of speaking competencies, which remain one of the most challenging aspects of language acquisition for many students. Educational institutions are actively exploring innovative teaching strategies to address this critical skill area, recognizing that oral proficiency serves as the foundation for meaningful intercultural exchange and professional communication [4]. The current academic environment encourages experimentation with interactive methodologies that promote active

language use, critical thinking, and spontaneous communication - all essential components of linguistic competence in the 21st century.

This article examines contemporary approaches to developing speaking skills within Uzbekistan's evolving educational landscape, with special consideration of effective techniques for overcoming common learning obstacles. The discussion will focus particularly on the application of discussion-based methods in philological education, analyzing their potential to enhance both linguistic proficiency and broader communicative competence [5]. By exploring these pedagogical innovations, we aim to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about optimizing language instruction in higher education settings.

The subsequent analysis will consider both theoretical frameworks and practical classroom applications, drawing upon international best practices while adapting them to the specific context of Uzbek higher education. Special attention will be given to the challenges faced by first-year university students as they transition to more advanced language study, and the strategies educators can employ to facilitate this critical stage of linguistic development [6].

Thus, for undergraduate students majoring in philology, considering national characteristics and their level of preparation, their English proficiency should reach B2+ by the first year. To achieve this goal, universities are actively working to improve English teaching methods. As practice and personal teaching experience show, existing challenges in teaching speaking skills are one of the main obstacles to effective communication in English. Therefore, studying the causes of these difficulties and ways to overcome them in teaching speaking skills is highly relevant.

This article examines the formation of speech skills and strategies to overcome the difficulties students face in developing speaking skills in English classes. Additionally, it explores methods for enhancing speaking skills among philology students through the "Discussion" method.

Many researchers note that speaking is one of the key components of learning English, being a productive type of speech activity that enables verbal communication. The goal of teaching speaking is to develop students' communicative abilities, such as: understanding foreign language statements in specific communication contexts, achieving speech tasks, or fulfilling communicative intentions; and engaging in verbal behavior while considering the sociocultural peculiarities of the English language.

To develop these skills, English classes should focus not only on mastering phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and stylistics but also on forming language skills and improving speech abilities. In this regard, E. V. Passov notes that all exercises in foreign language classes should, to some extent, be speech-oriented. Therefore, lessons should not only cover language theory but also be modeled in conditions that promote speech practice, helping to develop speaking skills. However, as practice shows, university teachers face certain challenges in teaching speaking, as it is considered a complex, integrated skill.

Penny Ur identifies four main types of difficulties in teaching speaking: psychological discomfort (students fear making mistakes and facing criticism, hindering their confidence); having "nothing to say" (students struggle to concentrate and express themselves in English); reliance on their native language (due to limited vocabulary and an unnatural communication environment); and unequal participation levels (some students dominate discussions, while others remain silent, especially in large groups).



Additionally, motivational issues arise: students may not understand the speech task, avoid group discussions, lack interest in learning English, or struggle to sustain communication in the target language.

Penny Ur suggests several ways to overcome these challenges: using group work to reduce discomfort and encourage practice, even with errors; employing motivating tasks and topics; providing clear instructions to help students understand speech tasks; and using language slightly below the students' proficiency level to promote fluency.

Thus, addressing these challenges can lead to positive outcomes. Lessons aimed at developing speaking skills should be conducted in a comfortable atmosphere where the teacher guides students and encourages language experimentation.

The question arises: What teaching methods can effectively overcome these difficulties? What techniques are most effective in developing speaking skills for first-year language university students?

An analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature, along with personal teaching experience, indicates that interactive and active learning methods—those that engage students mentally and independently, sustain attention, and develop speech—are essential for improving speaking skills. Among modern teaching methods, the interactive "Discussion" technique has gained widespread use for developing speaking skills.

The "Discussion" method is one of the most widely used techniques in English language teaching, aimed at organizing collaborative student activities, discussing instructor-proposed problems, and resolving controversial issues. In a general sense, a discussion (from the Latin *discussio*—consideration, investigation) refers to a group discussion of a topic. According to M. N. Pryakhin, a discussion is a procedure for reaching a consensus and resolving contradictions within a group. It can also be understood as a debate on a contentious issue based on reasoning and coherent argumentation, as well as a form of academic communication for acquiring new knowledge.

Mastering discussion skills helps students not only improve their speaking abilities but also prepares them for public speaking, international symposia, and conferences. This method can be successfully applied if the instructor is familiar with its implementation. Therefore, university teachers should understand the objectives, types, and stages of discussions to maximize their effectiveness in English language teaching.

The goal of using discussions in English classes is to apply linguistic and speech knowledge in practice, as well as to develop critical thinking, the ability to process information, identify key ideas, and provide supporting arguments. Many methodologists note that discussions activate students' speech and cognitive abilities, enhancing speaking skills and fostering English-language thinking.

Therefore, students must not only master the language as a communication tool but also learn to think in it. Discussions facilitate direct interaction among students, making this method highly valuable. Implementing this technique early in university education helps refine speaking skills and develop communicative competence, especially since first-year students have varying proficiency, motivation, and abilities.

Discussions can be spontaneous, free, or organized. Today, organized discussions—carefully prepared by instructors and conducted according to a set agenda—are commonly used in English teaching. Discussion formats include pair, group, and team participation. For



speaking skill development, formats such as roundtable discussions, forums, symposia, debates, mock trials, "fishbowl" techniques, and brainstorming are particularly effective.

Regarding discussion stages, while no strict rules exist, three main phases are generally recognized: introduction (preparation), problem discussion (main stage), and conclusion (summarizing outcomes).

In summary, the discussion method can effectively develop speaking skills among language university students. To achieve this, instructors must carefully prepare materials, considering the method's specifics, curriculum, lesson objectives, and topics. Additionally, structuring lessons progressively according to students' proficiency levels and basic discussion skills (reasoning and argumentation) is advisable.

Using the "Discussion" method in English classes offers several benefits: developing both linguistic and speech skills; preparing students to engage in open, constructive dialogue with local and international colleagues; and teaching them to create models of scientific inquiry and decision-making applicable in both professional and everyday intercultural communication.

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