

**ПОД- СЕКЦИЯ 6. Теория, практика  
и методы обучения**

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## **IMPROVING SPEAKING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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Teaching effective communication skills must be the cornerstone for any university curriculum. A student who can't communicate effectively will not be able to compete in the modern world. Social, economic, political and cultural changes in Ukraine, its integration into the world educational environment, implementation of the EU recommendations as for the competent specialist training are impossible without personal and professional development of a specialist who is able to adapt to multicultural, multilingual environment for the realization of personal and professional needs and to work in a complete harmony with the international community. And in its turn, this is impossible without achieving a high level of foreign language mastering in the process of professional activity. In the government strategic documents such as: the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (2014), the "National Education Development Strategy for the period 2012-2021", the "Project of Concept of Ukraine Education Development during 2015-2025" it is emphasized on training competitive specialists in the economic sphere who are able to speak fluently a foreign language as a means of international communication, to conduct oral and written business negotiations with foreign partners, to fill in the forms of financial documents, to make financial

agreements/reports, to discuss financial and economic issues taking into account current trends of economy development and to improve professional knowledge by means of reading a professional literature in a foreign language [1].

The globalization of English and a growing demand for good English-speaking skills in the job market in particular have been placing a greater emphasis on the learning of English speaking skills in Ukraine. The universities emphasize developing English skills for professional communication. English is one of the core subjects in universities and it is essential that students receive a good education in this subject. Since writing and speaking are such significant parts of the English language, the teacher is obliged to possess knowledge of how to improve students' proficiency in an efficient way. The question is how to use this knowledge when the teacher is supposed to compose different methods for lessons, evaluate the exercises and give proper feedback to the students [2].

Communication is an important skill for every modern student to master. With massive online social media usage changing how the world communicates, it's no wonder some struggle to properly communicate their thoughts and feelings and tailor them to the right audience. Advances in digital media, changing career environment and greater competition in colleges and workplaces makes improving student communication skills a must. Cramming tips the night before a job interview won't do the trick if students are trying to make an impression in the collaborative workplaces of the future. When it comes to acquiring indispensable communication skills, there's no time like the present [3].

How to develop communication or speaking skills? Just like any other skill set, communication is one that needs practice. There are different strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities. 1) One of the most common is to offer group presentations and assignments. Team-building exercises can also help students sharpen both oral and written communication skills. Not only does it offer students the chance to work in small groups, thereby reducing some of the pressure, but it also gives them the opportunity to debate their opinions, take turns, and work

together towards a common goal. 2) Ask open-ended questions. Because they require more than a one- or two-word response, open-ended questions are vital for inspiring discussion and demonstrating that there are multiple ways to perceive and answer a question. You might set a timer for short informal conversations and challenge students to use open-ended questions. For example, you might show students the difference in how much more information they can obtain by asking “What did you like best about the presentation?” rather than simply “Did you like the presentation?” 3) Use tasks and activities that foster critical thinking. Another task-based method for improving student communication skills is through critical thinking exercises. These can be done verbally or through written assignments that give students the chance to answer questions creatively using their own words and expressions. Classroom culture can be established by saying things like, “I listened to what X said, and actually it’s made me think differently—I’m starting to change my mind,” or, “I’m not totally sure yet, but I think .... What do you think?”

It is important to teach many communication skills, for example summarizing a discussion. Students need to know what a summary is. They may also need some sentence stems to structure summarizing a discussion (“The main points you raised were...,” “In summary, we talked about...”). They may also need practice judging when it’s useful to summarize a discussion [4].

One of the common problems faced by teachers is supporting quiet students. For them, increasing the amount of talk in classroom may be hard. A teacher has to invite such students into a discussion, asking them a question. You can also support quieter students by giving them a specific role, such as summarizer of the discussion. Encouraging them to speak in a supportive environment may give some quieter students the confidence they need to find their voice.

To sum it up, making students speak more English in class is not only a matter of "forcing" them to speak. This requires thorough preparation of proper teaching materials. A few tips for teachers in general: 1) reduce your TTT (Teacher Talking Time) in the classroom, by giving simple and clear instructions. Being a

teacher of English is different from being a lecturer. 2) Increase STT (Student Talking Time), eliciting students' participation. 3) avoid yes/no questions; ask questions that make students speak in order to make themselves clear. 4) be careful how you correct students. For instance, if you want to point out a mistake to a student, instead of saying "Oh! this is not correct, ..." or "You made a mistake, ..." etc. you'd better say "Very good try, but you'd better say/do ..." or "Nice try/beginning. Now why don't you ...?" 5) When students are having fluency practice (for instance, free conversation), which is totally different from pronunciation or grammar practice, never correct them, unless something really serious happens. Let them talk. Let them feel that they can communicate in despite of their mistakes in pronunciation, grammar etc. Praise them for speaking and show satisfaction. 8) don't forget that participating/speaking is what really matters in this situation, and when a student participates (answering questions, clarifying, helping other in English, arguing etc) accept that as something good, otherwise you will make your student shy and quiet (lack of participation). 9) for activities such as group discussion/debate, topics must be of students' interest and, the last but not the least, relevant to their field of study and future profession [5].

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