Litera Speaking Club Framework

Objective:

- To enhance participants' English speaking skills through interactive discussions about different topics: culture, media, sports, education, environment, etc.
- To broaden participants' vocabulary and fluency in discussing diverse subject matters.
- To broaden participants' cultural knowledge and understanding.

Materials Needed:

- Stable internet access
- Zoom application/Cornell Zoom account
- Discussion prompts chosen by the leader of the speaking club (related to culture, media, sports, education, environment, etc.)
- Optional: presentation slides or multimedia resources featuring information related to the topic of the conversation

Lesson Plan: 50-60 minute Zoom session

Welcome and Icebreaker (5-10 minutes):
- Greet participants and briefly review the agenda for the meeting.
- Conduct a short icebreaker activity to warm up the participants and encourage interaction. For example, participants could introduce themselves and share one interesting fact about their life that may or may not be related to the conversation topic of that day

Introduction to the Topic (5-10 minutes):
- Present an overview of the theme for the day
- Share key objectives and expectations for the discussion

Topic Spotlight (10-15 minutes):
- Highlight key aspects, recent developments, and relevant vocabulary related to the topic.
- In this section, you can show short video clips, read through articles/article highlights, or share personal experiences

Group Discussion (30 minutes):
- Provide discussion prompts related to the topic of the day
- Invite participants to share their thoughts, experiences, or opinions on the topic.

- Encourage participants to share their perspectives and talk/respond to each other and not just to you
- If you are comfortable, you can even invite someone to lead the discussion
- Use and encourage the use of new vocabulary and expressions related to the discussed topics
- Provide feedback and language support as needed to help participants improve their fluency and accuracy.

Reflection and Closing (10 minutes):
- Lead a brief reflection session where participants can share their thoughts, insights, and takeaways from the discussion.
- Summarize key points discussed during the meeting.
- If able, provide participants with additional resources that they can study on their own

Note: Adapt the lesson plan duration and activities based on the specific needs and preferences of the club members. Encourage active participation and create a supportive environment where everyone feels comfortable expressing themselves in English.

Volunteer Expectations

As a facilitator of a language conversation hour, there are several expectations and responsibilities to ensure the success of the session and the engagement of participants. Here are some key expectations:

Main expectation: Facilitate one 50-60 minute Zoom speaking club session per week
Target audience*: college-age students and adults in Ukraine
Scheduling: Please provide your availability to the Litera Outreach team for proper scheduling; if you are unable to facilitate a speaking club on one of the days, please let us know in advance so we can cancel or reschedule that meeting. Be available to be contacted via email by the Litera Outreach team.
Privacy: As a general rule and for the benefit of our volunteers, we discourage speaking club volunteers from sharing their personal email, contact number, or social media pages with speaking club participants. If the speaking club participants want to contact the facilitating volunteer, they should reach out to litera4ukraine@gmail.com.
Litera student leaders:
- Mallory (meg375@cornell.edu)
- Maryna (ml2327@cornell.edu)

General expectations:

Create a Welcoming Environment:
- Foster a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere where participants feel comfortable practicing their language skills and expressing themselves.

Set Clear Objectives:
- Define clear objectives for each conversation hour, whether it's practicing specific language skills, discussing particular topics, or simply improving fluency and confidence.

Plan Engaging Activities:
- Prepare 1-2 engaging activities and discussion prompts to stimulate conversation and cater to different learning styles and proficiency levels.

Encourage Participation:
- Encourage active participation from all participants by asking open-ended questions, prompting discussions, and giving everyone an opportunity to speak.

Provide Language Support:
- Offer language support and guidance to participants as needed, including clarification of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Manage Time Effectively:
- Manage the time of the conversation hour effectively to ensure that you are within a timeframe of approximately one hour

Facilitate Group Dynamics:
- Foster positive group dynamics by facilitating interactions, mediating conflicts, and ensuring that everyone has a chance to contribute to the conversation.

Offer Constructive Feedback:
- Provide constructive feedback to participants on their language skills, communication style, and areas for improvement, while also offering praise and encouragement for their efforts.

Cultural Sensitivity:
- Be culturally sensitive and respectful of participants' backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences, and encourage cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

Promote Learning Resources:
- Recommend learning resources, such as books, online courses, or language apps, to help participants continue their language learning outside of the conversation hour.

Adaptability:
- Be flexible and adaptable to the needs and preferences of participants, adjusting activities and topics based on their interests and feedback.

Lead by Example:
- Demonstrate enthusiasm, patience, and a positive attitude toward language learning, serving as a role model for participants.

Seek Feedback:
- Solicit feedback from participants to assess the effectiveness of the conversation hour, gather suggestions for improvement, and ensure that their needs are being met.

Speaking Club Rules

Respect:
- Respect each other's opinions, perspectives, and backgrounds.
- Avoid interrupting others while they are speaking.
- Listen actively and attentively to fellow club members.
- Use inclusive language and avoid discriminatory or offensive remarks.

Participation:
- Encourage active participation from all members during discussions and activities.
- Give everyone an opportunity to speak and share their thoughts.
- Contribute constructively to discussions by providing relevant insights and ideas.

Language Use:
- Speak in English during club meetings to practice language skills.
- Encourage the use of clear and understandable language.
- Support language learners by offering assistance and providing feedback in a constructive manner.

Open-Mindedness:
- Keep an open mind and be receptive to different viewpoints and perspectives.
- Embrace diversity and cultural differences within the club.
- Be willing to learn from others and explore new ideas.

Punctuality:
- Provide the Litera team with your availability for the speaking clubs
- Arrive on time for club meetings and activities.
- Notify the Litera Outreach team in advance if unable to attend a meeting so that the meeting can be canceled or rescheduled

Confidentiality:
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of club members.

- Refrain from sharing personal information or sensitive topics discussed within the club outside of meetings.

Constructive Feedback:
- Provide feedback in a constructive and supportive manner.
- Offer praise for contributions and efforts made by fellow club members.
- Offer suggestions for improvement in a respectful and considerate way.

Safety and Well-being:
- Create a safe and welcoming environment where members feel comfortable expressing themselves.
- Report any concerns or incidents of harassment or misconduct to club officers.

Adherence to Club Policies:
- Follow the club's guidelines, policies, and procedures as established by club officers, Campus Groups, and Cornell University

Responsibility:
- Take responsibility for one's own actions and behavior within the club.
- Contribute positively to the overall success and well-being of the club.

Discussion Topics

What topics can I choose for my speaking club?

Culture and Traditions:
- Customs and traditions from different countries and cultures
- Cultural celebrations, festivals, and holidays
- Cultural Etiquette and norms

Media and Entertainment:
- Movies, TV shows, and music from around the world
- Social media trends and influencers
- Book reviews and literary discussions

Sports and Fitness:
- Popular sports and athletes
- Health and wellness trends
- Exercise routines and fitness goals

Education and Learning:
- Educational systems and learning methods
- Lifelong learning opportunities
- Study tips and strategies

Environment and Sustainability:
- Environmental issues and conservation efforts

- Sustainable living practices
- Renewable energy solutions

Technology and Innovation:
- Latest tech gadgets and innovations
- Digital trends and developments
- Ethical considerations in technology

Travel and Adventure:
- Travel destinations and experiences
- Travel tips and recommendations
- Cultural exchange and immersion

Health and Wellness:
- Mental health awareness and self-care
- Nutrition and healthy eating habits
- Stress management techniques

Career and Personal Development:
- Career goals and aspirations
- Professional development strategies
- Time management and productivity tips

Social Issues and Advocacy:
- Human rights issues and social justice movements
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion discussions
- Community service and volunteer opportunities

Current Events – ***please be mindful of this topic as it can be extremely sensitive for people living through an ongoing war.***
- Global news headlines and current affairs
- Social issues and activism

Food and Cooking:
- Culinary traditions and cuisines from different cultures
- Cooking tips, recipes, and food trends
- Food sustainability and ethical eating practices

Relationships and Communication:
- Interpersonal relationships and communication skills
- Conflict resolution techniques
- Love languages and emotional intelligence

Arts and Creativity:
- Visual arts, theater, and performing arts
- Creative writing and storytelling
- DIY projects and crafts

History and Heritage:
- Historical events and figures

- Heritage preservation and cultural heritage sites
- Oral history and personal narratives

Practical Language Practice

What are the practical topics and how can I use it in my speaking club?

Practical topics like ordering at a restaurant or making transactions in English are highly relevant and useful for language learners. Here's how you can incorporate them into your speaking club sessions:

Role-Playing Scenarios:
- Create role-playing scenarios where participants take on different roles, such as a customer and a server at a restaurant or a ticket buyer and a ticket seller at a venue.
- Provide scripts or dialogue prompts to guide the interactions and practice language specific to ordering food or purchasing tickets.

Vocabulary and Phrases:
- Introduce relevant vocabulary and phrases related to dining out or making transactions, such as menu items, ordering expressions, polite requests, and payment terms.
- Practice pronunciation and fluency by repeating and using these phrases in simulated conversations.

Cultural Customs:
- Discuss cultural customs and expectations when dining out or interacting with service staff in English-speaking countries.
- Explore topics like tipping etiquette, common restaurant customs, and cultural differences in customer service.

Real-Life Situations:
- Share personal experiences or anecdotes related to ordering at restaurants or purchasing tickets in English-speaking contexts.
- Encourage participants to share their own experiences and ask questions about unfamiliar situations they may encounter.

Interactive Activities:
- Organize interactive activities such as "order-taking" games or ticket-purchasing simulations where participants practice their language skills in a fun and immersive way.
- Provide feedback and guidance on language use, pronunciation, and cultural appropriateness during the activities.

Resources

Where I can find resources that I can use for the topics of my speaking club?

News Websites:
- Websites like BBC News, CNN, The Guardian, and The New York Times provide a wide range of current events and trending topics that can spark interesting discussions.

Short Documentaries and YouTube Videos
- Videos covering various subjects can serve as conversation starters for discussions on culture, society, history, and other relevant topics.

Magazines and Newspapers:
- Magazines such as National Geographic, TIME, The Economist, and Reader's Digest cover various topics, including culture, environment, technology, and society.
- Local newspapers may also offer insights into regional issues and events relevant to club members.

Online Forums and Discussion Boards:
- Platforms like Reddit, Quora, and Stack Exchange host discussions on a multitude of topics, allowing facilitators to gauge popular interests and gather ideas for discussion topics.

TED Talks:
- TED Talks cover a wide range of topics, from science and technology to education, culture, and personal development. The TED website provides a vast library of talks that can inspire thought-provoking discussions.

Podcasts:
- Podcasts on platforms like Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts cover diverse subjects and offer valuable insights and perspectives that can be discussed during club meetings.

Social Media Trends:
- Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram showcase trending topics and hashtags that reflect current interests and discussions among online communities.

Cultural Events and Holidays:
- Cultural events, festivals, and holidays celebrated around the world provide opportunities to explore different traditions, customs, and cultural practices.

Specialized Websites and Blogs:

- Websites and blogs focused on specific topics such as education, environment, technology, or sports can provide in-depth insights and discussion-worthy content for club meetings.