

The Importance of Oral Competence in Language Learning

Rustamova Feruzabonu Ilkhomovna

French teacher of the Department of French Philology of Bukhara State University

Yomirchiyeva Madina Muhiddinovna

Student of Bukhara State University

ABSTRACT

The importance of oral proficiency in language learning is a key topic for linguists, educators, and language learners. This article will examine the importance of oral proficiency in the foreign language learning process and its impacts on communication, culture, and personal development. Learning a foreign language is a complex and multifaceted process that requires the acquisition of oral and written skills, as well as mastery of grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Oral proficiency is essential for learners seeking to express their ideas and communicate effectively with native speakers. This article highlights the importance of oral proficiency in language learning and explores strategies to improve proficiency.

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Learning a language means acquiring the ability to communicate in that language. A learner needs to communicate in a foreign language, understand its linguistic rules, and know its usage norms to adapt them to different communication situations. Clearly, communicating effectively in a foreign language is the ultimate goal of teaching and learning. To master communication in a language, it is essential to enhance two skills: listening comprehension and oral expression. Consequently, oral skills play a significant role in developing communication abilities, even in written communication.

Foreign language learning takes place through authentic and meaningful communication situations. To master the foreign language in the classroom, it is necessary to engage in various communication scenarios. Teachers must create spontaneous conditions or design situations where interactions are genuine and motivating.

Since language is both the medium of exchange and the tool for learning, it is crucial to provide learners with a stimulating and comfortable linguistic environment. Supports such as images, tangible components, labeled materials, and brainstorming-generated word banks contribute to linguistic connectivity. Similarly, the use of authentic materials, such as TV shows, theater, literature, videos, and songs, exposes learners to the diversity of written and spoken language. According to Robert, oral skills involve "teaching the specifics of spoken language and its acquisition through listening and production activities based on audio texts, preferably authentic."

Speaking a language is far more than knowing and producing some words; it also involves understanding the norms that govern sentence construction. Learners must be exposed to the language to understand the rules of word organization. Therefore, one of the goals of foreign language learning is to enable learners to express themselves in that language. Expression is one of the foundational stages of language learning. This study explains the importance of oral expression in language classes and describes its practices. Naturally, the main goal of learning a foreign language is to communicate and exchange, especially in light of rapid developments in technology, economics, and international relations.

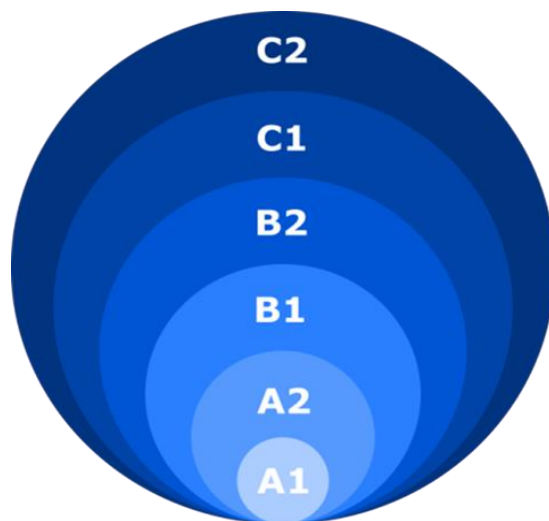
Oral competence occupies a central place in language learning, and its importance is undeniable. Here are some reasons highlighting its significance:

- **Effective Communication:** Oral competence enables learners to communicate effectively in the target language. The ability to express oneself clearly, understand other speakers, and actively participate in conversations is essential for building relationships, holding discussions, sharing ideas, solving problems, and interacting in various social, professional, and cultural contexts.
- **Practicing a Living Language:** Oral competence provides learners with the opportunity to practice the language authentically and in real-time. Developing oral skills helps learners get accustomed to pronunciation patterns, intonation, rhythm, and idiomatic usage, enhancing fluency and confidence in natural language use.
- **Social Interaction:** Oral competence plays a vital role in social and intercultural interactions. By mastering oral communication, learners can fully engage in the social life of the target linguistic community, interact with native speakers, and immerse themselves in the culture. This fosters interpersonal relationships, mutual understanding, and openness to new experiences.
- **Employability:** In many professional contexts, oral competence is a key skill sought by employers. Employees who can communicate effectively orally are often perceived as more competent, confident, and capable of collaborating with colleagues and clients. Oral competence can significantly impact job opportunities and career advancement.
- **Continuous Learning Ability:** Oral competence facilitates continuous language learning. By being able to communicate orally, learners can interact with native speakers, participate in discussions, listen to audio and video recordings, and use authentic resources. This constant interaction improves listening comprehension, enriches vocabulary, perfects pronunciation, and deepens language knowledge.

In summary, oral competence is crucial in language learning because of its role in effective communication, living language practice, social interaction, employability, and continuous learning. Mastering oral skills allows learners to develop holistic linguistic competencies and fully participate in the social, cultural, and professional life of the target linguistic community.

Speaking multiple languages is no longer just an asset today; it is almost a necessity. We live in a time when people are becoming increasingly mobile, and communication with foreigners is inevitable. The job market is an excellent example of the importance of language skills. Employers, regardless of the sector, seek individuals who can communicate worldwide in different languages. Certain tools developed within the Council of Europe have played a decisive role in teaching so-called "foreign" languages by introducing methodological innovations for curriculum design, notably through the development of a communicative approach. These tools identify linguistic needs and define the necessary knowledge and skills to reach a "threshold" of communication.

The CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) defines language competencies across six levels, from A1 to C2, grouped into three broad levels (basic user, independent user, and proficient user) or subdivided further according to local contexts. They are described using "can-do" statements. These levels did not suddenly appear in 2001 but are the result of long-term development.



The CEFR is a framework for assessing one's proficiency in a foreign language.

- A1 (Beginner):
 - Understand and use familiar, everyday expressions and very simple statements aimed at meeting concrete needs.
 - Introduce oneself or others.
 - Ask and answer questions about personal details.
 - Communicate simply if the interlocutor speaks slowly and clearly and is willing to help.
- A2 (Elementary):
 - Understand isolated sentences and frequently used expressions related to daily life (e.g., personal information, shopping, work).
 - Handle simple and routine tasks requiring basic, direct exchanges of information.
 - Describe aspects of one's background, immediate environment, and immediate needs in simple terms.
- B1 (Intermediate):
 - Understand the main points of clear, standard speech on familiar topics (work, school, leisure).
 - Handle most travel situations where the language is spoken.
 - Produce simple, connected text on familiar or personal interests.
 - Describe experiences, events, dreams, and ambitions and briefly explain opinions or plans.
- B2 (Upper Intermediate):
 - Understand complex texts on concrete or abstract topics, including technical discussions in one's field.
 - Interact spontaneously and fluently with native speakers.
 - Express ideas clearly, give opinions, and discuss advantages and disadvantages of options.
- C1 (Advanced):
 - Understand demanding, lengthy texts and grasp implicit meanings.
 - Speak fluently and spontaneously without searching for expressions.
 - Use language effectively in social, academic, or professional contexts.
 - Produce clear, well-structured speech on complex subjects, using organized discourse tools.
- C2 (Proficient):
 - Understand virtually everything heard or read effortlessly.

- Summarize information from different spoken or written sources coherently.
- Express oneself spontaneously, fluently, and precisely, differentiating subtle shades of meaning in complex topics.

It is important to note that specific difficulties with speaking skills may vary from learner to learner. Some learners may have difficulty with pronunciation, while others may struggle to develop ideas coherently. It is therefore essential for teachers to take these specific difficulties into account and provide appropriate activities and strategies to help learners improve their speaking skills at these levels.

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