Modern perspectives of approaching the concept of oral expression in French for students in Political Sciences

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Abstract
Nowadays, the teaching of foreign languages, in general, and of the French in particular, is considered insufficient to meet the general requirements, in the context of globalization and Europeanization. Moreover, it should be sufficient when it comes to applying the language in all the contexts of social life. Because the implementation of professional standards in academic education calls for the creation and shaping of the competences suitable for each domain by deriving primary competences, we consider it important to specify the competence of oral expression in the structure of standards of professional preparation. The importance of the oral expression competence is mentioned in specialized literature, by pointing that this competence is substantial for the professional preparation of the student in the University realm.

Key-words: oral expression competence, teaching French for academic purposes, academical goals, teaching-learning methods and technics, verbal communication.

Rezumat
Astăzi, predarea limbilor străine, în general, și a limbii franceze, în particular, este considerată insuficientă pentru a satisface cerințele globalizării și de europeanizare; mai mult ca atât, ea ar trebui să fie suficientă pentru utilizarea sa în diverse contexte ale vieții sociale. Deoarece implementarea standardelor profesionale în învățământul universitar solicită proiectarea și formarea competențelor de profil prin derivarea competențelor primare, considerăm important a specifica în structura standardului de formare profesională competența de exprimare orală, după literatura de specialitate, competența de producere orală/production orale, fiind indispensabilă pentru formarea profesională, în general și, cu atât mai mult, pentru învățământul superior universitar.

Cuvinte-cheie: competența de exprimare orală (CEO), limba franceză cu obiective universitare, cerințe academice, metode și tehnici de predare-învățare, comunicare verbală.

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The modern orientation of the educational process from the perspective of pedagogical phenomena which ensures the reform of higher education in the context of European integration offers a high value to the aspects of oral expression in a foreign language. Learning a foreign language of large usage, such as French, will strongly contribute to the professional formation of the students in the field of political sciences by exploring different subjects from political, economic, social and cultural life reflected in different contents, thus facilitating the determination of a student’s interest towards a specific professional option. Concerning the communicative education approached by the European Council (The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, European Language Portfolio) it underlines the pragmatic orientation of the communication focused on action based on cognitive, affective, volitional, behavioral resources and on the competences which the student who studies a foreign language has already formed. This way, the formation of oral expression competence for the students of a non-profile faculty based on learning French is a priority, because by knowing this language the student is getting familiar with the political, economic, social and cultural background of the country whose language he is learning, thus contributing to his progress as a specialist. As long as the implementation of professional standards within higher education requires the
designing and formation of profile competences by expanding the primary ones, we consider that it is important to specify the **oral expression competence** (oral expression competence/la production oral, according to specialized literature) within the structure of professional formation standard, this being vital for the professional formation in general and even more important for higher academic education.

The formation of oral expression skills for the students becomes possible by teaching/learning/evaluation of the French language (according to academic objectives) and requires formation of professional skills at the political level of public debates, monologues, dialogues a.o. on the one hand, and on the other hand, it requires the development of relational behavior, thus facilitating the integration of the future professional within the social and political life of the country. From this perspective, the formation of oral expression competence became an objective of theoretical and praxeological studies from Republic of Moldova, Romania, France, Canada, USA, Russia. Requirements of the society in which students enroll after the provision of a professional activity are becoming larger. Dialogue, speech, public debate means the process of interaction between individuals in which there is an exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, attitudes, emotions etc. Thus, oral expression / speech / oral communication includes first of all will and ability to analyze, argue, interpret, and finally to produce messages, to make oneself understood. Currently, there is an obviously increasing trend towards interactive methods, considered to be effective ways to meet the inner need of the subject /the student to exchange information and ideas, impressions and opinions, to externalize the relationship with others, which is a good opportunity for establishing socio-affective relations, mutual understanding and cooperation. Nowadays, language teaching in general, and French language in particular, is considered insufficient to meet the demands of globalization and Europeanization; moreover, it should be sufficient for use in different contexts of social life. International cooperation is mainly based on communication skills, especially oral, between people in state institutions or business people. Thus, teaching French as a foreign language has undergone a decisive change towards its valuing as language and language of diplomacy. In European Union countries, the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFL) is the central figure of recent political efforts meant to improve and modernize the didactics of modern languages. Acquisition of oral expression skills is quite difficult for foreign language learners. Oral expression and production of oral texts renamed after CEFL, is a skill that the student must acquire gradually, being lately expressed in many life situations. This can be expressed by an interactive relationship between a transmitter and a receiver, which also calls for the ability to understand each other; the purpose being reduced to intercomprehension through verbal expression, the transmitter being multifunctional. Receiver or recipient, in return must be knowledgeable, able to understand the message, to decode and deliver an answer / reply. The difficulties are not insurmountable, but it is a skill that requires rigor, working on pronunciation, rhythm and intonation, but also problems regarding understanding (interactive situations), oral grammar etc.

**What exactly is meant by the term oral?** In language teaching, „oral“ is designated as the "area of foreign language teaching, which includes teaching and learning the specificity of an oral language through audio and oral expression from authentic audio texts etc.” (Robert, 2008, 156). Therefore, when teaching, the problem of developing oral expression does not intend so much to characterize the oral activity or surface aspects of speech, but rather "to know the different practices of oral speech and its relations with the written speech." The idea would be to focus on a variety of oral, or more precisely, different strategies of oral communication, knowing that
they vary depending on the speaker and context of communication. In fact, the approach towards the oral expression as a legitimate object of teaching requires clarifying the speech as a reference for pedagogical exploitation and a broader characteristic linguistic specificities and skills involved in its practices. Maurer raises another aspect of the problem when he refers to oral teaching "the relationship between knowledge acquired at school and social knowledge", meaning the correlation between the formal and non-formal education. This means that the teaching and learning of oral expression in educational institutions must be correlated to everyday communication situations within the society. So, oral expression is not only a correlation between speaking, listening and communicating. In his Guide Belin de l'enseignement, F Desmons teaches that "oral expression involves working with sounds, rhythm, intonation and it is important for the student to become familiar with these tools and to gradually acquire" (2005, 30). So, acquiring communication skills involves not only to respect the general skills of learning a foreign language (savoir, savoir-faire, savoir-être, savoir apprendre) but also to respect the habits and know-how of his own language, respecting the statement of the target language with its pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, grammar, to understand and speak the new language in specific situations of real life. Any student who wants to learn a new language imposes himself the main objective to master the speech and then the writing of the language. Let us not forget that the first foreign language teaching methods required good knowledge of phonetics, a solid vocabulary to be the foundation of a communication based on dialogue. In modern oral expression to the concept of imitation or repetition can be added acts of speaking and knowledge needed by the student that no longer serve as goals but mean to achieve certain objectives. Contacting a different language than that spoken in a familiar environment is possible if the student realizes that the access to this language is necessary to start a conversation with another individual in another country, on everyday topics, for justifying and arguing ideas. So we go from memorizing sounds without a specific meaning to the repetition of idioms, without identifying words separately, then to the correct reproduction of sounds, the transition from oral to written statements in order to build phrases in the new language. The student is enrolled in simple oral exchange situations in order to achieve complex situations in developing targeted oral expression skills. Each oral message starts with small ideas in the form of information, different opinions or feelings with well-defined objectives depending on the student's age, role and social status. It should have a logical structure to combine with concrete examples and clear and relevant conclusions. The immediate oral message produces effects on the listener, accompanied by gestures, gaze, facial expression, voice. Oral expression may include the non-verbal aspects (gestures, signs, smiles, various expressions gestural communication adapted to the situation), voice (volume, articulation sounds, voice or intonation flow for communication to be made explicitly), pauses, silences, glances (to check the level of understanding of the message delivered). Oral expression or verbal communication involves a message, offering multiple media comprehensiveness, is circular and permissive, is strongly influenced by situation and occasion, by individual characteristics of the transmitter, possess the attributes of necessity.

**Its objectives are:**
- capturing attention and raising awareness
- using etymologies, classifications, synonyms, comparisons
- proving usability.

**Its functions are:**
- to emphasize the verbal communication -can supplement verbal message;
- can contradict certain aspects of verbal communication;
- regulates the communication flow;
- repeats and updates verbal communication purposes;
-can substitute nonverbal aspects of communication- nonverbal means might represent a feedback in communication (inattentiveness, mimic-wonder, drowsiness). The importance of nonverbal communication results from the fact that, for example, affective attitudinal contents are transmitted with it in 55% (38% - paraverbal, 7% - verbal).

*Metacommunication* is the emergence of implications of message that cannot be directly attributed to the meaning of words. According to the purpose of communication, we can distinguish:

- accidental communication, which provides information to someone else without the intention of teaching something; subjective communication, through which a person directly expresses emotional states which he feels he has to share instrumental communication, which provides information intentionally aiming receptor’s behavior change.

**The barriers of expression can be:**

- divergent experiential funds of participants;
- educational differences;
- differences of interest regarding the message;
- differences in the level of intelligence - a lack of mutual respect;
- difference of age, sex, race or social class;
- differences in the mastery of the language - the transmitter’s lack of communication skills;
- lack of listening skills of the receiver;
- closure in terms of background information;
- stereotypes;
- distortion (differences in repertoire, imprecision of language, misinterpretation);
- overloading.

In specialized literatures we also attest other barriers of expression:

- provision of advice: advice is usually an insult to the intelligence of others.
- e.g.: *If I were you, I would say ...*

- criticism
- e.g.: *You have nobody to blame for the mess in this room.*

- diagnosis: is labeling someone’s behavior without hearing the essential about the him/her:
- e.g.: *You’re doing this just to irritate me.*

- distraction or deviation from the problem:
- e.g.: *Do not insist, please / Let’s talk about something more pleasant!*

- tiring interrogatory:
- e.g.: *When did it happen ?, Today, Where were you ?,
- logical reasoning: when we are stressed we offer solutions into anger:
- e.g.: *If you hadn’t bought the car, we could now pay rates to the bank!*

- moralization: causes resentment and calls insincerity.

- labeling: adversely affects the transmitter and the receiver as well.
- transmission of orders, judgments, blackmail.
- reinsurance:
- e.g.: *Do not worry. I can handle myself.*

- threatening:
- e.g.: *If you do not stop the noise, I'll keep you all in class after class.*

Teaching foreign languages shows another typology of oral expression /communication: positive and negative. The features of **positive communication:**

- persons are accepted (are assertive) - have compatible temperaments;
- do not use non-verbal communication that lead to communication bottlenecks;
- message is important;
- use well-known symbols and the same language;
- the spoken language is known by those who are listening;
- the ambient noise is at an acceptable level to enable communication;
- Shared understanding is not based on stereotypes or on discrimination.

Positive verbal communication becomes **negative** when:

- thoughts and feelings are expressed in ways that humiliate, degrade, diminish or affect the other person;
little or no respect is shown for the needs and feelings of others;
− are failing in expressing thoughts or feelings honestly and express in a way that others do not pay attention to.

Among the oral forms of activity are: the summary, dialogue / monologue, formal / informal dialogue, expository / demonstrative monologue, narrative / descriptive / dialogue communication, public speech, rhetoric exclamation and interrogation, roundtable, interview, colloquium and verbal debate. This way, 1st and 2nd year students, the A2-B2 level ones, deal with progression pattern formation process that includes three steps ascending from the viewpoint of complexity: talk about the subject x; dialogue on the subject x in situation y with the z role; dialogue on the subject x in situation y with the z role in order to. Oral expression also requires a variety of skills for all students who are experiencing difficulties in learning. According to the CEFL, oral communication competence has several components: "linguistic component, socio-linguistic component, pragmatic component" (CEFL, 2001). Or, Berlin Teaching Guide (2005: 19-20), which includes views of Sophie Moirand (1979) where communication involves linguistic component (rules that the student get messages with), discursive component (Types of speech adapted to the situation of communication), referential component (reference areas), socio-cultural component (socio-cultural communication rules).

This paper is only a modest approach to the concept of oral expression, as at the beginning, given that this topic brings controversy in the academic field. In our opinion, speaking of academic medium, students of political science, from the 1st and 2nd years, oral expression in all its forms plays a crucial role in the development of student’s personality and professional training. Even if they have a sufficient amount of knowledge, they do not have proper oral expression skills in French specialty, namely for oral expression in a foreign language will open their doors to the community, whether domestic or international, in academic or employment fields; finally this skill remains a mean of externalizing, a defense weapon and a method of integration into a community.

This way, the conditions, may not be so favorable for learning, should become a proper framework where the student is able to learn all the oral / verbal mechanisms. So when reaching to overcome shyness barrier, he/she can build his/her speech, can start a conversation with another student on a specific subject respecting all the rules of a communication situation, can learn to build the message in such a way as to be understood by the receiver. Briefly, the student should be able to go from his simulated ego to his genuine ego, then to his personal one, bringing arguments and ideas after an exercise of discovery, analysis, and synthesis.

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