THE AAA OF MULTILINGUALISM

Acquisition, Assessment & Application
of Multilingual Competence

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By Hannes Ben

LOCARIA

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
HANNES BEN

Hannes is a passionate polyglot with active knowledge of over 16 languages as a result of living, studying and working in 12 countries throughout his career.

Hannes was exposed to a multilingual environment from an early age. Born in Southern Austria close to the Italian border, German (primary) and Italian (secondary) were always his key languages. He was taught English from the age of 6 and throughout grammar school ('Gymnasium') Latin, French and Spanish were part of the curriculum and he had the opportunity to also dabble in Croatian and Hungarian studies.

From the age of 15, Hannes developed a keen interest in the complex Asian languages. As Asian languages were not offered in school, he developed his own self-study processes to get a taste of the complexities of Chinese and Japanese.

The university years enabled Hannes to fully focus on developing his Chinese and Japanese skills while also learning about other cultural, legal, political and literary elements of the two countries. His master's degree studies were entirely focused on high-level English, German, and Chinese conference interpreting training guided by active UN and EU simultaneous interpreters.

In 2006 Hannes entered the job market as a multilingual marketing analyst at a time when paid search and SEO were still in their infancy.

This allowed him from the early stage to develop tailored multilingual content creation processes adapted for the fast-growing digital channels which later expanded to paid social and programmatic display.

During the first 8 years of his career, Hannes had the opportunity to live, study and work in several countries to identify local language idiosyncrasies and prepare those languages for digital content creation of large-scale campaigns for many international brands. This allowed him to acquire active knowledge at a varying degree from elementary proficiency to native-level academic fluency in up to 16 languages.

All that work culminated in him founding Locaria in 2013 to address the shortfall in digital marketing performance that sub-optimal localisation practices were causing. Hannes has since been developing strategies and processes for multilingual digital content creation by combining analytical skills, digital technology and multi-faceted language production methodologies to improve multilingual online performance across a wide range of international clients.

His key focus areas are to drive international business development, innovation and technological advancement to ensure Locaria stays at the forefront in the multilingual digital media and language service industry.

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1. Acquisition

ACQUISITION

Whenever we read content in our mother tongue or first language (more information regarding the slight differentiation between those terms can be found further below), we become critical and often assume that whatever we produce in our language, it is to be considered the perfect-sounding choice of words.

We grow sensitive and emotional when others criticise our language production and often react very defensively. All reactions of this kind are normal, as we have all been using our mother tongue for a long time. In most cases, we received education to a high level in that language and use it in our daily lives to articulate any of our thoughts, feelings and ideas in an intuitive and effortless way.

Who decides what 'the perfect language' is? Is there a way to reliably and objectively assess somebody's language skills, regardless of whether it is their native or second language?

Just to be clear, I am not referring to the linguistic elements which should always be objective, such as grammar: I am referring to aspects like style, tone of voice, sentence structure, choice of words and idiomatic expression. Those are elements of language where right or wrong is not always so black and white.

In an environment where language is used professionally and clients often pay premium fees for top-notch linguists, what helps clients using languages services to ensure that linguists are, objectively speaking, "the best linguists"?

There is one question that all clients will ask: are all of your linguists native speakers?

While this is a fair question under most circumstances, there are many instances where requiring linguists to be 'native speakers' alone will almost certainly not lead to excellent language production.

What is a native speaker?

What defines a true native speaker?

Does it matter whether it is just a native speaker or a well-educated native speaker (WEN)?

Is it a given that any native speaker knowing another language can translate in and/or from their language into a second language?

FIRST, WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THE DEFINITION OF NATIVE LANGUAGE AND CLARIFY HOW IT DIFFERS FROM MOTHER TONGUE AND FIRST LANGUAGE.

MOTHER TONGUE vs NATIVE TONGUE vs FIRST LANGUAGE

We are all passionate and proud of the language(s) with which we have grown up. It is the language(s) that is close to our hearts and minds, so we feel comfortable applying it in any circumstance and throughout all areas of our life.

For many, the language to which they have been exposed, from the day they were born, is the only language used in their daily conversations, as well as in any professional environment. We usually call that main language our mother tongue, native language/tongue or first language.

Many dictionaries, encyclopaedias or thesauruses group those three terms together as total synonyms with 100% identical connotations.

However, in reality, there are differences between these three terms which, even though minimal and only apply to a small percentage of the population, are considerable to certain individuals.

Mother Tongue

This is the language spoken by the people closest to you, from your day of birth or an early age (up to two), before you start to learn how to speak in more complex sentences when more than 2-3 words start to form sentences.

In most cases, this will be learnt from the mother, father, siblings and possibly some other relatives. It can, of course, also be an adoptive mother/father or anyone else who consistently takes care of the child from birth throughout their childhood.

There are several cases where a child is consistently exposed to two or even more languages, in which case, bilingualism/trilingualism is a possibility. However, depending on the complexity and differences between the languages acquired, not every language in the repertoire of a bi/trilingual person will achieve professional fluency. We will explore those situations later when explaining the different language grading systems in detail.

Native Language/Tongue

Native language refers to the language spoken in the environment that you live in from an early age. This is ideally from birth or at least before the age of 10, meaning that the person receives several years of education in the language spoken in the environment in which they live, to enable them to achieve absolute naturally-educated fluency.

First Language

Here, we refer to the language that a person uses the most in their life, whether at work or in their personal life. The first language is the strongest where several tongues are spoken. It is the language that can be used at an academic level or in any type of professional context. In this language, one can think of the best words and expressions at speed and with ease, as well as being able to paraphrase even complex terminology or structures in any scenario, even if a topic is not necessarily in one's area of expertise.

Now, why are those three terms – 'Mother Tongue', 'Native Language/Tongue', 'First Language' – often considered total synonyms?

It is simple: for the vast majority of the population, their mother tongue is the same as their native tongue and their first language. A child is most likely to be born to a mother and father speaking in the same language from birth and to grow up in an environment where the parents' language is the official language; plus, in most cases, the child is educated in their mother tongue and also works using their mother tongue.

However, there are many exceptions to this rule, which is why it is important to understand the differentiation. It is also important when evaluating and rating people who claim true bilingualism/multilingualism, to identify and categorise which is truly their strongest language.

EXAMPLES OF MULTILINGUALISM

Example 1

Multilingualism with languages differing hugely in terms of vocabulary, grammar and/or pronunciation.

A person of French descent was born into a French family based in Beijing, China. From birth, the only language that the person has been exposed to in the family, day-in, day-out, has been French.

The environment in which the person grew up was Mandarin Chinese speaking.

Friends met daily outside the family have been Chinese natives all their lives, so the only language used with friends has been Mandarin Chinese.

Since the age of 5, the child has been educated in an international school (up to university level), with purely English being spoken as the language of instruction.

In the case above, the mother tongue is French, the native language is Mandarin Chinese and the first language is English.

In many cases like this, the person will claim that their French language ability is at the same level as their English. The reality, however, is that only from the perspective of the pronunciation and daily conversational fluency will the person come across as a pure native speaker to a French person, having grown up in a French environment and being educated in a French school. The second the person is exposed to a professional environment, their vocabulary and speed of their language production inevitably lag behind the pure natives.

In the example mentioned above, the person has a wider colloquial/slang vocabulary in Mandarin Chinese than in French, as the variety and intensity of speech was higher in the environment in which the person lived, rather than just the hours spent with the family, where the topics and speech often revolved around the same subject areas. Furthermore, the colloquial vocabulary in Mandarin is very up-to-date and adapted to that used by the current young generation.

Despite having a possibly wider and very current vocabulary in Chinese, the person will not be able to use their Chinese professionally, due to their limited formal and technical vocabulary and literacy.

In Example 2, the case is slightly different.

Example 2

Multilingualism with similar languages in vocabulary and/or grammar and/or pronunciation.

A German person was born to German parents living in Italy. The mother tongue spoken with all family members from birth has been German, while the environment has consistently been Italian-speaking.

As with the previous example, the person has attended an international school from the age of 5, so English is the language with the richest and most advanced professional vocabulary.

However, what differs here is that for this person (and similarly other people with a set of European languages), whilst some aspects of German and English are similar, the person can also use German in a professional context, as well as English. Reading in German is mostly fine for them, but whilst writing in German is far from perfect, it is still possible as the alphabet is the same in Italian and their first language, English.

It is quite common amongst European languages that more technical vocabulary has similar roots, pronunciation and etymology, which is highly conducive to identifying and remembering complex terminology in more advanced fields.

For both examples, it is important to note that, while both people were highly educated in their first language – here, English - they have not lived in an English-speaking country: therefore, their understanding of English slang, colloquialism, cultural references and local nuances is often limited and rather more passive (reading, listening) than active (used actively in their speech).

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A clear understanding of the differences between the mother tongue, native language and first language and ascertaining for yourself the true level of your assumed three 'main languages' is imperative when planning to apply your language skills in a professional context. For example:

In translation - into what language do I translate?

Participating in complex discussions - am I strong enough to quickly respond succinctly by using the most adequate vocabulary?

Writing literary or creative pieces of content - can I quickly and easily adapt my style for different audiences, using several different expressions and ways of paraphrasing?

Those are the kinds of questions that you must ask yourself. If you are unsure, do the following: take a complex piece of art (e.g. an abstract painting), give yourself 3 minutes and describe it with as much richness, fluency and structure by using as few redundancies (filler words) as possible and without any pauses.

Try to record it and then listen to it afterwards. Any professional linguist - and you - will quickly identify your strongest language, after listening to the recording.
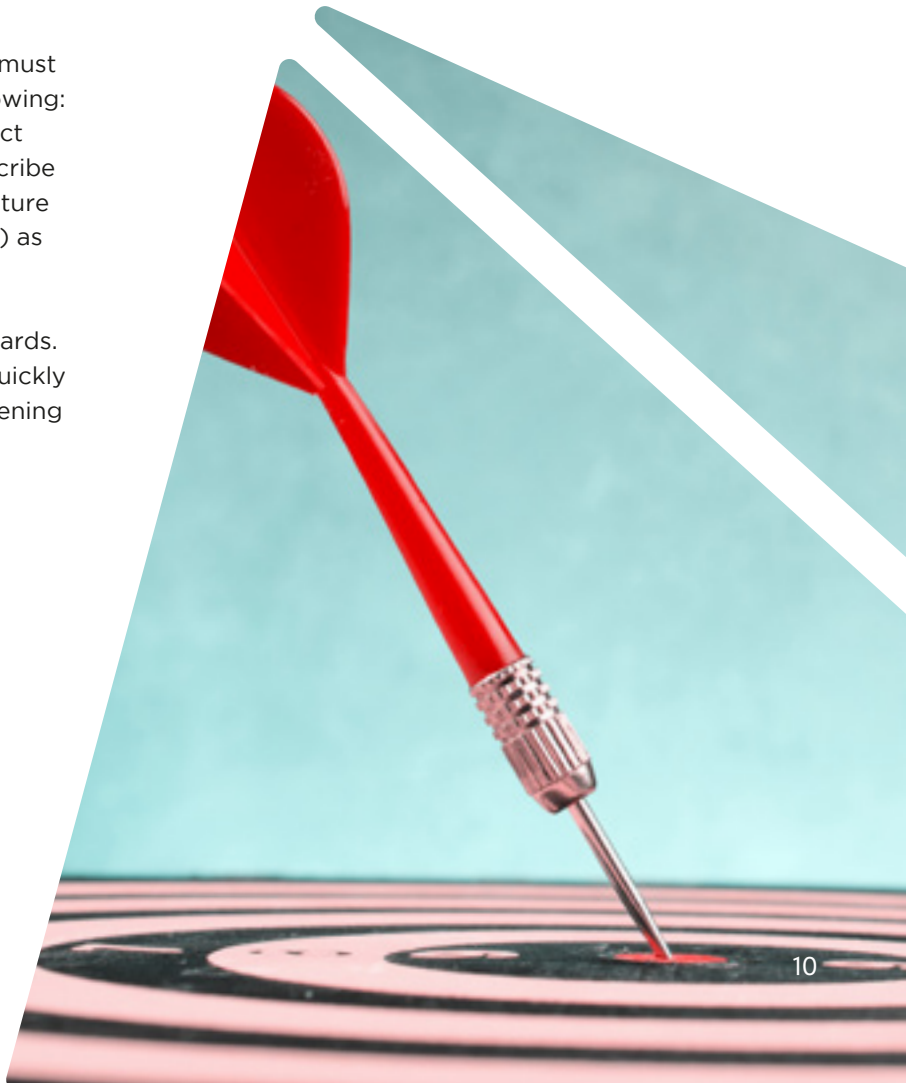
2. Assessment

LANGUAGE GRADING SYSTEMS

How about when we acquire languages in our life through active studying? How can anyone truly understand what level of proficiency they have reached?

There are many levels to go through and many frameworks that offer tests to identify your capabilities. It is important to understand that those factors explain why the majority of language learners rate themselves incorrectly.

We will start with one of the most popular language grading frameworks:

CEFR: The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CEFR is a six-level scale system, covering three stages with two levels per stage: A1 to A2 (Basic User), B1 to B2 (Independent User), C1 and C2 (Proficient User).

CEFR: The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Here is a very brief explanation of each level:

A1 – Understand basic and brief sentence structures. Sentence connectors are mostly limited to 'and' and 'then'. Basic grammar with tenses has been studied, but there is limited control in active language production. Vocabulary covers simple everyday conversations, mainly referring to personally relevant topics. Speech is slow, with a lot of pauses to allow for thinking and the structuring of utterances.

A2 – Feel comfortable about using basic sentence patterns, including fixed phrases, which have been memorised. The basic grammatical structure reaches a more active stage, but the user is still slow in production and their content is riddled with mistakes. Conversations involving simple and short questions and responses are feasible, providing that the speaking partner speaks clearly and slowly, without the use of any slang or technical vocabulary.

B1 – Manage to get by using the language and be able to use limited vocabulary, to paraphrase and get meaning across. Listening comprehension still heavily depends on the clarity of the speaker, as well as the topic of discussion. Hesitation and pauses are still frequent, involving the repair of sentences during speaking as awareness of correct structures grows. The use of connector words has increased, compared to A1 and A2 levels, involving variations of 'but' and 'because'.

B2 – Similar to B1, but with clarity of speech using more accurate vocabulary and phrases, this significantly improves the conversation flow and provides topics of conversation that are general and relevant to the knowledge of the language learner. The repertoire of linking words together provides a much greater range of flexibility. B2 speakers feel largely comfortable using this language in a working environment, as it is produced at a reasonable speed and without too much hesitation, pause and correction, in that environment.

C1 – A broad range of vocabulary and great agility allows you to use words and phrases in a general, academic or professional environment. Despite having a high level of grammatical accuracy, errors may still occur, but they are mostly understood and quickly rectified. The language learner feels relaxed and comfortable communicating at any time and with ease unless faced with unfamiliar subject areas. Speaking partners can easily follow the language learner's speech, which is generally elegant, flows well and uses rich and adequate vocabulary.

C2 – Similar to C1, but language learners at this level have a strong active command of fine nuances, idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms and slang. They understand where and how to give emphasis, by using variations of words, the right tone of voice and accurate diction. There are no issues in listening comprehension, regardless of speed, accents or complexity.

The above summary of the description is not exhaustive. More detailed descriptions can be found on:

https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale

https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-3-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-qualitative-aspects-of-spoken-language-use

The CEFR is highly respected by professional language teaching institutions and is also often used by organisations to identify and categorise their staff's levels of language proficiencies.

Please note: some language learners may reach C1-C2 in spoken language proficiency but have zero or possibly A1-A2 level only in reading and writing skills. This is particularly the case for languages, with writing systems differing entirely from fully-mastered languages.

Many bilingual/trilingual individuals may speak all of their languages accent-free but would not even reach A1 level for reading and writing. This is mostly the case for multilingual people with Latin-based alphabet languages as their first languages and other languages, such as Chinese, Japanese, Arabic or Korean, as their mother tongue or native tongue (see the examples explained above).

The following language grading system is, in my opinion, one of the most professional, accurate and well-tested proficiency scales in existence. It is the result of years of research and observation of language learners, following a strict and highly intensive language training system, going from zero to near-native fluency.

The system I am talking about here is the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale.

ILR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCALE

The system was developed by the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) of the United States. FSI struggled for a long time to test its Foreign Service officers' true level of language fluency and quickly discovered that most did not have a level that was useful for their work. After many tests over long periods, teaching a range of different languages to well-educated English native speakers, a scale involving six levels ranging from 0 (=no functional ability) to 5 (=equivalent to an educated native speaker) was produced by an experienced team of linguists, language learners and researchers.

The FSI produced system was quickly recognised by several international organisations (e.g. NATO) and was later further developed by the Interagency Language Roundtable, finally resulting in what is now known as the 'ILR scale'.

The ILR expanded FSI's original system by including additional '+' levels, ultimately resulting in 11 levels: 0, 0+, 1, 1+, 2, 2+, 3, 3+, 4, 4+ and 5.

The FSI applies strict testing mechanisms to carefully assess the proficiency across all aspects of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The test is known as the 'FSI interview' and has to be taken for all languages a Foreign Service officer intends to use professional in any of his/her target markets.

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ILR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCALE

0 (= No Proficiency = Entry Level CEFR A1)

No reading or writing skills, unless the language studied is very close to native/mother/first language. Speaking and listening is limited to very few isolated words or phrases, with foreign-sounding and possibly hard to understand pronunciation.

0+ (=Memorized Proficiency = Upper Level CEFR A1)

Can recognise some letters of unknown alphabets, possibly read some words, phrases and numbers. Speaking includes fixed, memorised phrases and listening only goes so far as to understand simple phrases, assuming that the pronunciation was standard, with clear and slow speech.

1 – (=Elementary Proficiency = CEFR A2)

Active comprehension of simple written and spoken language, assuming sentences are simple and short, and topics are very familiar. Face-to-face conversations are possible if native speakers slow down significantly, although quite a lot may still be misunderstood. An utterance is riddled with mistakes and may, in many cases, not be fully understood by native speakers. Reading comprehension goes so far as to understand very simple structures combining several well-known words; such structures can also be actively produced by the language learner.

1+ (=Elementary Proficiency Plus = CEFR B1)

The language learner can get by when discussing predictable and simple every day subject areas, though with a lot of hesitation, insecurities and mistakes. Grammar is well understood, and tenses are applied, but active application of those skills is still limited, especially for the quick production of more complex temporal structures. Reading, and especially writing skills, will heavily depend on the complexity of the foreign writing system, but, generally, 1+ means that non-literary, clearly written content is sufficiently understood and can be produced to a comprehensible standard.

2 (=Limited Working Proficiency = Entry Level CEFR B2)

The language learner can read authentic material written by native speakers, as long as it does not include too many culturally specific references or complex idioms and relates to familiar subject areas. Content produced is generally understood by native speakers but requires correction to sound more natural. The main ideas of most everyday general conversations are understood well, unless native speakers' speech is unclear, with varying accents and possibly using complex, technical vocabulary. Speech may not be elaborate, but grammatical aspects have been fully studied and understood, including advanced syntax and irregularities.

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ILR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCALE

2+ (=Limited Working Proficiency Plus = Upper Level CEFR B2)

Reading content from a wide variety of subject areas is possible, whereas technical vocabulary is lacking. Written content is produced with accurate grammar and vocabulary, but there is often uncertainty about one or the other. Most conversations, whether personal or at work, are well understood. Paraphrasing is still common but is done at ease in cases where ideal vocabulary is not found. Content production at speed works for formal and informal speech, but cultural references, emotional sub-tones and nuances are often missed.

3 (=General Professional Proficiency = Entry Level CEFR C1)

Reading and listening covers technical and unfamiliar topics, as understanding can be derived from a strong existing knowledge base. Highly complex structures and idioms are possibly misunderstood and are also not accurately used in speech or writing. Mistakes, whether grammatical or lexical, do not interfere with any discourse, even during complex and fast speech.

3+ (=General Professional Proficiency Plus = Upper Level CEFR C1)

Similar to 3, but speakers often have very high knowledge of lexical, structural linguistic elements or cultural nuances, but not proficiency in all of them. Difficult localised, cultural thought processes are understood, and emotional clues are picked up, but there is still hesitation and uncertainty, especially when the aim is to use such skills actively at any time.

4 (=Advanced Professional Proficiency/ Full Proficiency = Entry Level CEFR C2)

Informal, formal, technical and literary content is understood in the written or spoken form. Speech, using a variety of structures adapted to different situations, happens at ease and is effortless, although pronunciation may not always be at a native level (from the perspective of any native accent). Different tones of voice and intonation are adapted to those of native speakers. Under pressure, certain imperfections may become more apparent.

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ILR LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY SCALE

4+ (=Advanced Professional Proficiency/Full Proficiency Plus = Upper Level CEFR C2)

Speakers at this level have very advanced control of vocabulary, idiomatic expression and a variety of syntactical structures. There is high precision in all aspects of language, even though some highly educated native speakers may recognise rare weaknesses in terms of cultural references, pronunciation, slang or other linguistic subtleties.

5 (=Functionally Native Proficiency – No equivalent in CEFR)

This refers to the same level as a very well-educated native speaker (WEN), with a very high level of native linguistic ability. Language, whether written or spoken, is not only accurate regardless of the subject, tone of voice or type of speech (formal, informal), but speakers can use highly imaginative, creative and metaphorical language while applying an immensely broad vocabulary, with precision and without hesitation. Language is produced with great flexibility and intuition. Very complex and abstract constructs of the language are understood, accurately analysed and, if required, actively used in relevant situations.

A detailed description of all ILR levels across all four categories (reading, speaking, listening, and writing), can be found here.

A comparison of ILR and CEFR can be found here.

BILINGUAL SPEAKER vs A LINGUIST AND TRANSLATOR

It is important to note, here, that reaching even the highest level in any of the above grading systems, in any of your second languages, does not automatically make you a translator or interpreter. It is a common misconception that being multilingual, especially having grown up with several languages, makes you an excellent translator or interpreter without any further training.

Translation requires you to take a thought, idea, and emotion from one language and re-create it in another. Whereas analysis is key in interpreting; in translation, perfection and absolute closeness to the source (as much as is possible) is imperative. In the language industry, translators are often described as having to be perfectionists, whereas conference interpreters have to be highly analytical and efficient.

Interpreting demands the ability to process and convert languages at speed and often the need to summarise the source content,

extract the gist and then reproduce the content in the target language while continuing to listen to the source. I have been told by a few professional interpreters that when asking true bilinguals to try simultaneous interpreting, they were considerably overwhelmed by the concentration required to process two languages simultaneously, on demand and at speed.

In the relatively new area of performance linguistics, content analysts must be creative but, at the same time, they need to understand the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of their marketing channels, to localise content that is driving results for their clients.

For any of the above specialisations – translator, interpreter, and content analyst – you must be passionate and excellent at producing content in your first language, but each specialisation also requires additional industry-specific skills – either linguistic fine-tuning/perfecting, efficiency or performance, respectively.
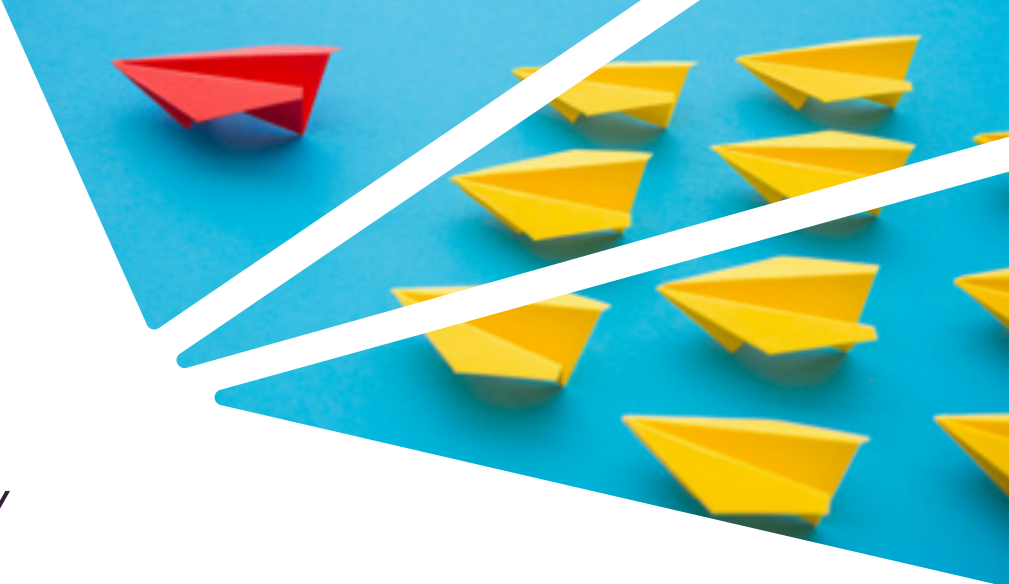
FLUENCY

After studying a language for a long time and possibly living in the country of the acquired language for several years, you may achieve a level which rivals or surpasses your mother tongue or native tongue, and hence, the second language becomes your first language. Such an achievement does not simply happen by osmosis. You must have been exposed to a variety of situations – colloquial, academic and professional, across many subject areas, including cultural and local specifics. In addition, you will need to be reminded of any imperfections by WENs and actively work on rectifying those over a long period.

'I am fluent in…', is a heavily overused term, which language learners often apply when describing their capabilities across several acquired languages. **The truth is, that 'fluent' means you can produce content in any context at speed, with absolute ease and eloquence.**

It would be much more accurate to add an adjective to further describe the level of fluency; something which is often done by professional linguists:

Conversational Fluency

You can have everyday conversations.

Working-level Fluency

You can communicate fluently in the areas of work with which you are familiar.

Professional Fluency

You can converse fluently across a wide array of subject areas – formal or informal.

Native Fluency

You can use the language at ease across most topics, with absolute accuracy.

Well-educated Fluency

You can vary your speech, adjust it to different audiences and have an extensive vocabulary used adequately and with precision.

Academic - Native Fluency

Same as well-educated, but your vocabulary, syntax and idiomatic expression are highly sophisticated, technical and up-to-date.

Please always remember that fluency only really occurs if your listening comprehension at each level is as high as your active speaking capabilities. Training in one does not automatically lead to a high level in the other.

It is important to understand for yourself at which level you currently sit, admit it to yourself and then work out a clear strategy to get to the next level for the category that is important to you: listening, speaking, reading or writing. The higher you go, the harder it is and the longer it will take. Just living in a country will not get you to the top.

Why is that? It is because native speakers around you will get used to your level, as much as the language learners will grow accustomed to using the same vocabulary over and over again and simply paraphrase, in case she/he does not find the ideal term or phrase.

You need to force yourself to break out of your comfort zone, delve into new syntax, vocabulary and cultural specifics and constantly keep challenging yourself.

A high IQ and a photographic memory accelerate your understanding of grammar and vocabulary learning but developing an emotion for a word/ expression takes time. Your brain must rewire itself for your understanding of a language to move from your brain and extend to your heart. You have to feel like speaking from your heart naturally, without any conscious use of your brain.

MULTILINGUAL BLENDING

It is important to remember that while you may be perfectly fluent in several languages, you may not be able to switch smoothly between your languages, especially if more than 3 have been acquired. Acquiring a language similar to any of your existing language repertoire may seem easier but can often also lead to confusion and mix-ups.

If for instance, you have to switch between Spanish, Italian or Portuguese at speed, quite often, speakers who have acquired all three tend to merge syntax, vocabulary and idioms from the three, subconsciously.

The languages are full of false friends – words with the same pronunciation, but entirely different meanings. For example,

the Portuguese word 'esquisito' means 'strange', whereas the similarly sounding Spanish word 'exquisito', refers to being 'exquisite or excellent'.

If you're a native English speaker acquiring Mandarin Chinese and Japanese, achieving a decent level may be an exceptionally arduous task, but should you manage to do so, then it is less likely that you will merge words and sentence structures from one into the other, due to them differing immensely from each other.

When you have to use several languages in your daily life, the key is that you always try to capture the feeling that you associate with the given language, before switching into it. The emphasis is not on single words, but the overall idea.

3. Application

MAINTAINING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

We learned our mother tongue by listening and then imitating before we finally used it accurately. Strong listening and comprehension should always be given the most attention, as it sets the foundation for everything else.

Be patient and don't get frustrated. It can take years to understand an everyday conversational topic, discussed at a natural speed by native speakers.

Also, remember that regularity and self-discipline are crucial to success. Try to apply your linguistic skills to a variety of situations, a little bit every day, rather than several hours in one-go every month.

Once you reach ILR level 2, read one to two short news articles a day (10-15 mins). Ideally, try to find a news app which reads out the article, so that you can first listen and understand without a transcript, then later, consult the article to truly understand all aspects, 100%. Try not to translate! Instead, visualise images, emotions and stories in your head directly from the words/sentences heard.

Start with simple articles on familiar topics and then, once you reach the ILR 3+ level and higher, challenge yourself with cultural, technical or locally specific subjects, to broaden your horizons and, consequently, move onto the linguistic comprehension of local nuances and idiosyncrasies.

If your goal is to use a foreign language professionally every day for your personal and work life, you should aim to reach a level where you can switch on the news (for formal comprehension) or any streaming service, such as Netflix, Hulu etc. (for colloquial comprehension) and honestly understand at least 90% of it, without effort.

Language learning is a life-long exercise - whether in your mother tongue, native language, first language or any acquired foreign language. It brings with it a wealth of cultural knowledge and enjoyment and adds immense texture to the professional and personal lives of those who speak multiple languages.

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