

## Oral Fluency: A Case Study of L2 Learners in Canada

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**Abstract :** Oral fluency in the target language is what many second language learners hope to achieve by living abroad. Research in the past has demonstrated the role informal environments play in improving L2 learners' oral fluency. However, living in the target country and being part of its community does not ensure the development of oral fluency skills. L2 learners' desire to communicate and access to speaking opportunities in the host community are key in achieving oral fluency in the target language. This study attempts to identify differences in oral fluency, specifically speech rate, between learners who communicate in the L2 outside the classroom and those who do not. In addition, as the desire to communicate is a crucial factor in developing oral fluency, this study investigates whether or not learners' desire to speak the L2 outside the classroom plays a role in their frequency of L2 use outside the classroom. Finally, given the importance of the availability of speaking opportunities for L2 learners in order to practice their speaking skills, this study reports on the participants' perceptions of the speaking opportunities accessible to them in the target community while probing whether or not their perceptions differed based on their oral fluency level and their desire to communicate. The results suggest that exposure to the target language and daily communication with the native speakers is strongly related to the development of learners' oral fluency. Moreover, the findings suggest that learners' desire to communicate affects their frequency of communication in their L2 outside the classroom. At the same time, all participants, regardless of their oral fluency level and their desire to communicate, asserted that speaking opportunities beyond the classroom are very limited. Finally, the study finds there are marked differences in the perceptions learners have regarding opportunities for learning offered by the same language program. After reporting these results, the study concludes with recommendations for ESL programs that serve international students.

**Keywords :** ESL programs, L2 Learners, oral fluency, second language

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