Effective Teaching Methods for Developing Adult Learners' Spoken Foreign Language Skills: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The aim of this research is to critically examine the significance of adults learning a spoken foreign language and to explore the teaching methods that support this process. The study seeks to investigate the reasons underlying the importance of researching adult spoken language learning, identify why spoken foreign language proficiency is essential for adult learners, and analyse literature to determine whether specialised teaching methods are required for this learner group.

Methods. This paper presents the findings of a systematic literature review on effective teaching methods employed by adult educators in foreign language classrooms. Initial searches using relevant keywords identified scholarly publications in Web of Science and Scopus databases. Data extraction began with an analysis of titles, keywords, and abstracts, followed by a detailed full-text review. A systematic analysis of articles in these databases from 2015 to 2025 has been conducted to find out the quantity and quality of articles related to adult learners who learn to speak foreign languages. The selection process was carried out by using the Prisma method.

Results. Based on the reviewed literature, factors influencing teaching effectiveness are categorised into learner-related, educator-related, and institutional/system-related aspects. Findings indicate that novice adult language instructors benefit from targeted professional development to enhance pedagogical skills, particularly in integrating active learning strategies, learner-centred approaches, and communicative teaching methods.

Conclusions. The review highlights the methods for teaching spoken foreign language and growing need for research on effective teaching methods in online and blended foreign language courses.

Keywords: teaching methods, adult learners, spoken foreign language, oral foreign language, foreign language

Introduction

The fast improving generation of people nowadays notice the importance and advantages of lifelong learning (LLL) leading them throughout their life. It encourages them to relearn and improve what is forgotten and old, and gain new skills (Ginzburg & Daniela, 2024). These aspects are important in order to be knowledgeable, useful and competitive not only at work but also in general in life. For example, learning new languages might earn you a freedom for travelling independently, studying abroad or just communicating with foreigners. Though there is enough evidence of the positive impact of LLL to adults, there is still a lack of research on adult language learning, and specifically in learning a spoken foreign language. Therefore, a greater investigation of studying the most prominent teaching methods for learning a spoken foreign language is needed.

Moreover, the evidence of our society which is obviously aging (specifically, in Europe) is the changing number of older people from 65 years old that has been increasing steadily from 90.5 million in 2019 up to appr. 130 million in 2050 (Eurostat, 2025). Yet during this period, a huge percentage of people of 75-84 years is going to increase by 56%, while those of 65-74 years old will increase by almost 17% (Eurostat, 2025). Unfortunately (or not), these numbers testify to the fact that older generation should be more of concern for investigation in order to show more attention to the totality of the population instead of only researching about the younger generation, which, in fact, is becoming a minority. This might evidence the fact that adults also might need to work longer years and, therefore they need to keep learning for a better economic and social situation.

Surprisingly, researches in neuroscience prove that learning can be advantageous at any stage of life (Goldberg, 2022), and the effect will be equally important to children's ability to

learn. Even more, the process of learning when you are an adult increases neuronal regeneration which helps to avoid ageing. Therefore, it is essential to focus on exploring foreign language teaching methods used by teachers to successfully teach adults, e.g., speaking in a foreign language due to a lack of research about adults (as most research concern about children and students as language learners) (Bagdonas & Jankauskienė, 2017; Mačianskienė & Bijeikienė, 2018) there is a great necessity of investigating this field (i.e., adult education).

The object of this research project (i.e., topic – "Effective Teaching Methods for Developing Adult Learners' Spoken Foreign Language Skills: A Systematic Review"; Nr. 474; project – "Cilvēks, tehnoloģijas un izglītības kvalitāte"; Doctoral Studies in Educational Sciences at the University of Latvia) is teaching methods which are used by a teacher in teaching adults of a foreign language. The aim is to identify and highlight the most important, reliable and the best teaching methods which will successfully help adult learners to learn a spoken foreign language as documented in current scholarly sources.

The following objectives were set to achieve this aim: a) to perform systematic literature review by using the Prisma method; b) to conduct and present the most reliable teaching methods for adults when learning a spoken foreign language; c) to share adequate recommendations to the future research which will be related to adult learners learning a spoken foreign language.

Finally, this systematic analysis uses scientific articles found according to the identified keywords. These articles were found in Scopus and Web of Science databases whereas the wide range of different age of article publications will vary in order to receive the distinctions (or not) to differentiate teaching methods. The most suitable articles on the topic were selected to collect the best practices (teaching methods) in learning spoken foreign languages. Moreover, this study seeks to address several research questions, like: *RQ1*: Why is it important to investigate adults learning a spoken foreign language? *RQ2*: Why is it important for adults to learn a spoken foreign language? *RQ3*: Are there any specific methods in scientific literature for teaching adults a spoken foreign language? *RQ4*: Is there a need for specific teaching methods when teaching adult learners for a spoken foreign language? *RQ5*: What are the effective teaching methods mentioned in literature?

Methodology

This study employs a systematic literature review approach to identify, evaluate, and analyse the state of research on effective teaching methods for adults learning spoken foreign languages. The review was designed to identify, evaluate, and synthesise existing research

published between 2015 and 2025, providing a comprehensive overview of methods, strategies, and innovations used in adult language education. The systematic review method was selected because it allows for rigorous, transparent, and replicable synthesis of literature, ensuring that conclusions are grounded in evidence. The review was conducted in accordance with the *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines* to ensure transparency and rigor in the selection, appraisal, and synthesis of relevant studies (Page et al., 2021).

Moreover, to ensure precision and relevance, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established prior to the search process. Studies were included if they: were written in English, in peer-reviewed journal articles, indexed in *Scopus* or *Web of Science*, and were published between 2000 and 2025, reflecting contemporary pedagogical developments. The initial selected time period was from 1990, as this was justified by significant social and linguistic developments in the Baltic region during that period (the post-1990 independence era reshaped societal needs for foreign-language competence, while the years surrounding NATO accession (2002) and EU accession (2004) intensified the demand for functional spoken English). However, given the volume of articles identified during the initial screening, it was ultimately decided to set the inclusion period to 2015–2025 to reflect contemporary teaching practices.

The study selection criteria are summarised in Table 1. In selecting the articles, the focus was on publications that examined teaching or instructional methods explicitly aimed at improving spoken English skills (e.g., oral communication, conversation, pronunciation, fluency).

Table 1
Criteria for the Selection of Studies

Criteria	*Inclusion criteria*	*Exclusion criteria*
Language	Publications written in English	Publications written in other languages
Type of publication	Journal articles	Books, conference proceedings, article reviews
Data bases	Web of Science; Scopus	Other data bases
Publication time period	2015-2025	Before 2015
Type of research	Systematic reviews; Theoretical conceptual studies; Empirical research studies (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods).	Other types of research
Target group	Adults (aged 18 and above) taking the non-degree language lessons (foreign/additional language) or degree language lessons	Children

Full-text paper availability	Yes	No
Answers to research questions	Provides or partially provides an answer to at least one research question	Does not answer research questions

Source. Own research.

Articles conducted in formal and non-formal educational settings (e.g., universities, language schools, community programmes) were selected for analysis. Exclusion criteria included reviews, conference abstracts, and studies focused exclusively on children or written English skills. A manual screening process was employed to identify relevant articles (Gunnell et al., 2022). At the beginning of the study, in order to carry out a systematic analysis, it is necessary to identify specific materials relevant to the chosen topic and its key terms. For this databases were chosen to start searching and checking what can be found. Chosen databases for investigation: *Sage Journal*, *Web of Science*, *Willy Online Library* and *Google Scholar*. Therefore, these databases should have helped us to understand the materials we can find for our topic.

Hence, the start for article searching was *Google Scholar*. At that point we checked if the topic (or key words) is on the scope and would help to find something important. Therefore, this variant showed us that there are too much material and we could not check all of it (the number reaches millions. Our second option was *Sage Journals* and this database worked perfectly and clearly. Unfortunately, it was still a lot of information, though less than in *Google Scholar*. In order to decrease the volume of material the dates of publication were checked in different time lapses from oldest to the newest. The number of articles and material decreased, of course. Even the key words were rechecked once more using singular or plural or separating some of the key words to see if the number would decrease or increase with a goal of finding less materials. Unfortunately, it still was too much to physically handle and check.

In the beginning *Web of Science* was similar to *Sage Journals*, because this database (with articles from 2000) also showed a huge volume of materials which could not be checked because it would take too long. On the other hand, *Willy Online Library* was not a recommended database for these keywords because there were some issues when it could not find information for the last keywords, and it was not clear if it was a system problem or there was no material for specific keywords. Therefore, this search was not very precise and clear.

All in all, it can be said that there are too many articles and materials for these keywords and this research should have been renewed using databases, like *Scopus* and *Web of Science*, because these databases have a lot of already checked articles. Also, it is clear that there is no

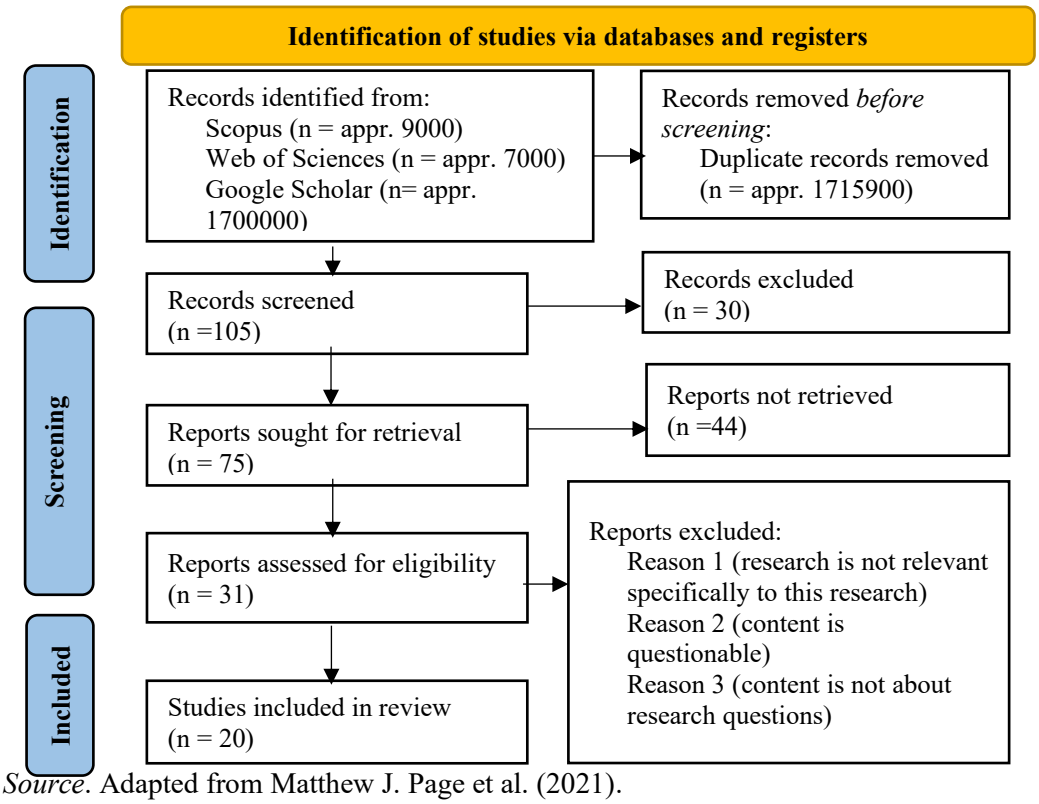
need to separate keywords because it will increase the chances to find more specific and precise research materials. Moreover, use of newer articles which were published since 2015 reasonably decreased the huge volume of material, which again, could be possibly physically revised. Hence, this part of an investigation was not successful because it helped us only to realise that there was too much material which we could physically read. Therefore, we chose just two databases (*Scopus* and *Web of Science*) and newer materials (from 2015), and not to separate the keywords.

Just because it seemed that there were too many articles on each of these databases, it was decided to choose *Scopus* and *Web of Science* databases. These databases are well known and popular among scientists because there are a lot of reliable articles which also can be found on other databases.

Hence, as was done with other databases, we started taking keywords one by one to find all related articles to the topic. In this case there was a need to look through all of the materials in order to find out how many of them are suitable for the research. Those which are suitable, we added to the Excel file with details. Hence, more than 21 000 open access articles from 2015 to 2025 were found. It was too many to handle, therefore it was decided to use all of the keywords for the same search: OR adult learner, OR adult learners, OR foreign language, OR learning methods, OR teaching methods, OR oral language, OR spoken English, OR spoken foreign language, OR teaching and learning methods. The results showed only 105 documents which is already a good number to check physically. 75 of them are articles with open access. And it seemed that only 31 articles all in all could be read and only 20 of them are suitable articles for this topic. Only few were really similar to our topic and others would only add some ideas or details to the topic in some ways but not directly.

A comprehensive search was carried out in *Scopus* and *Web of Science*, with supplementary searches conducted through reference lists and grey literature sources. Each database requires distinct syntax and filter capabilities. Therefore, the search terms were adapted accordingly to maximise relevance. The final search was conducted in July 2025. Each database has its own specific syntax and search functionalities, the keyword combinations were adapted accordingly to obtain more relevant results. Hence, the search strategy combined keywords, including: Teaching methods AND Adult learners OR Adult learner AND a Spoken foreign language AND Foreign language.

Figure 1
PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram for Systematic Review



Source. Adapted from Matthew J. Page et al. (2021).

The methodological quality of the included studies was assessed using appropriate tools depending on the study design. Each study was independently evaluated by two reviewers, and quality ratings were used to inform the interpretation of results rather than as exclusion criteria. A narrative synthesis approach was employed to integrate findings from studies with diverse methodologies (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). The synthesis focused on identifying common teaching methods and their characteristics, reported effects on learners' spoken English proficiency, contextual factors influencing effectiveness. Themes were organised according to instructional approaches (e.g., task-based learning, communicative language teaching, technology-enhanced instruction) and learning outcomes (e.g., fluency, pronunciation, interactional competence) and where available, quantitative data were also summarised to illustrate effect sizes and outcome trends (see Table 3).

Theoretical Background

With this article review it became a question to understand what does a *method* and a *strategy* mean, because each author uses different categories for what is known as, e.g., a *method*. Researchers/authors from different countries mix up or synonymise these terms because of culturally accepted entitlement for the *method* in their countries, and therefore sometimes it becomes complicated to understand the real meaning while reading articles.

Hence, important terminology, like *method*, *strategy*, *language learning* and *language teaching* will be briefly explained due to their importance for this research.

Firstly, *language learning* and *language teaching* are two terms that can be regarded as synonymous because they are very tightly related one to another in education, specifically in language learning. Hence, *language learning*, by Molema (2024), is a process when a person acquires the ability of communicating in a new language, developing linguistically in communication, and culturally. While *language teaching* (or language education) can be understood as a process when instructions are given for a person to learn a language. And these two terms will be used as one synonymously in order to conduct the table of foreign language teaching methods (see Table 3), because teaching or learning methods basically are the same but differ only in the perspective and receiver (i.e., teacher or learner).

Moreover, there is still a need to define some other main concepts, like *approaches*, *methods*, and *techniques* in order to understand the examples of their kinds mentioned in reviewed articles. Authors Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers (2016) argue, that these three previously mentioned concepts should be understood hierarchically: *method* is conducted of *techniques* whereas the *method* is consistent with *approaches*. An *approach* is the level of specified assumptions and beliefs about language learning. On the other hand, a *method* is a level when theory gets involved into practice and when choices about particular skills are taught; and a *technique* is a level at which classroom plan is described. At this point it might be agreed that *techniques* have a broader meaning in definition, but can be called as *strategies*, as well.

In addition, researchers Rebecca L. Oxford and Madeline E. Ehrman (1995) define *learning strategies* as actions made by a learner to make a learning activity easier, faster, more enjoyable, and effective in any situations. Hence, these definitions are like *matryoshka doll* because in each definition a person can find a sub-definition. And specifically for this research, we will use terminology, like *strategies* and *methods* for conducting a table. Therefore, there is a need to stress that authors from different countries use different terminology, though they have the same meaning. And now before delving deeper into a variety of methods let's look at Oxford's *language learning strategies* (i.e., *direct* and *indirect*) (see Table 2) which will help us divide methods from reviewed articles into sections to be understood better.

Secondly, Rebeca Oxford's *language learning strategies* will be used in this systematic review because they are still in use in its unique and clear distribution of different language learning *strategies* and its *methods* too. It is important to stress out that *direct strategies* are "utilised to attract the learners' attention into direct communication with form and meaning of

vocabulary items such as using a dictionary and word list" (Taghinezhad et al., 2016, p. 134). Therefore, the first group of *direct strategies* is called *memory strategies* which are used for storing and memorising new information. Oxford argues, that under this category there are four subsets of strategies, e.g., building mental linkages, creating images or sounds to the specific meaning, and applying action to the meaning (1990). E.g., when a teacher shows a picture, learners try to memorise what word this resembles. interestingly, Masoud Gholamali Lavasani and Fereshteh Faryadres (2011) state, that *memory strategies* are usually employed at the beginning of language learning process.

Table 2
Direct and Indirect Language Learning Strategies

Categories	
Direct strategies	*Indirect strategies*
Memory strategies	Metacognitive strategies
Cognitive strategies	Affective strategies
Compensation strategies	Social strategies

Source. Adapted from Rebecca L. Oxford (1990, p. 117).

The second subcategory of *direct strategies* is *cognitive strategies*. Prominent researchers Mega Lestari and Achmad Yudi Wahyudin (2020) correlate these strategies to the practice of receiving and/or sending messages, and analysing and reasoning. Learners who use these strategies tend to analyse strategies in order to understand the meaning and expression of the foreign language (Oxford, 1990). Basically, Ali Taghinezhad et al. (2016) state, that when a learner actively thinks about the learning process, e.g., reads and investigates a glossary to conduct his/her own glossary, then he/she uses a *cognitive strategy*. And surprisingly, Oxford also agrees that *cognitive strategies* are the most applied among language learners.

The third subcategory, *compensation strategies,* is to help learners to use that new foreign language even though they are not fluent speakers and have some limitations in expressing their thoughts. Moreover, Oxford states that, learners need to find a way of how to express their ideas in any way possible using the words and grammar they remember and know. C*ompensation strategies* motivate the learner to overcome boundaries in expressing himself/herself (Lestari & Wahyudin, 2020), as well.

On the other hand, there is also a category of *indirect strategies* which "help learners learn a language without directly getting involved in the target language" (Taghinezhad et al., 2016, p. 134). Oxford has divided *indirect strategies* into three subcategories: *metacognitive*, *affective*, and *social*. They are usually applied for general learning, e.g., for communicating

with others, motivating yourself and others, evaluating your own learning process, etc. Hence, all three *indirect strategies* will be explained further in details.

The first of *indirect strategies* is *metacognitive strategies* which are actions that give a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process (Oxford, 1990), and these strategies help students to develop an understanding of how they learn (Ajayi, 2024). Masoud Gholamali Lavasani and Fereshteh Faryadres (2011) argue that, a learner, who chooses to use this kind of strategy, plans learning and that helps him/her to evaluate the learning process, and at the same time to monitor his own errors and progress.

The second type of *indirect strategies* is *affective strategies*. These strategies interface with learner's emotions, values, opinion and motivation, and help to work with critical emotional moments, like anger, misunderstanding or shame about speaking aloud. Oxford (1990) explains, that the usage of these strategies means encouraging yourself, decreasing the level of anxiety, and all in all, also caring about your emotions. Hence, these learners usually motivate themselves, feel happy and relaxed while learning.

The last kind of *indirect strategies* is *social strategies* which is related specifically to learner's communication among people who use this target language (e.g., native speakers) (Lavasani & Faryadres, 2011). Once again, Oxford (1990) states, that these kinds of strategies consist of asking questions and answering, i.e., having a conversation. Hence, the fastest way of learning a new language is communicating in it.

Thirdly, after analysing Oxford's strategies we can look closer at the language learning strategies which are specifically used in *spoken foreign language learning*. But in order to begin with reviewed material, it becomes necessary to explain the aforementioned variety of terms precisely in this research in order not to confuse a reader. Here in Table 3 the broadest meaning of a definition is *strategies* (i.e., *direct* and *indirect*), whereas these strategies will be divided into different categories, like *methods*, *strategies* and even *techniques*. It will be so because of cultural differences of different researchers who use separate terminology for the same definition. Hence, these different *strategies* and *methods* from this article review will be differentiated according to Oxford's model. Hence, *strategies*/*methods* will only show the nature of a learning/teaching way. Also, it was decided that only clearly, precisely and non-traditional foreign language teaching methods will be conducted in the Table 3. Although, anything which belongs to traditional teaching will be explained in further paragraphs.

In general, this article review with nineteen selected articles from *Scopus* and *Web of Science* data bases revealed that teaching a spoken foreign language is quite a new interest and only at the early developing stage, whereas mostly researchers/teachers experiment with "ways"

of how to teach spoken foreign language using advanced *methods*. , firstly there is a need to remember *traditional* or most used teaching *methods* in order to understand the contrast between them and the *spoken foreign language learning methods*. Hence, Waleska Barroso dos Santos Kramer Marques, et al. (2024) states, that the most known and used *methods* in traditional (general) foreign language learning are these: *grammar and translation method*, *direct method*, *audiolingual method* and *communicative method.*

Of course, these methods are only four, but there are many more, like *task-based method*, *content and language integrated method*, *cooperative method*, *total physical response method*, *natural approach method* and *silent way method* (Sanako, 2021), etc. These *methods* already explain themselves by their titles, like: *grammar and translation method* whereas the main objective is a teaching process of a written language, and the main point there is grammar and vocabulary. Using this method students analyse texts in a foreign language, or translate texts into their native language, and also write in a foreign language; *direct method* helps to mimic the learning process of learning as a native speaker when students try to communicate in real life situations. At that point students are presented in real-life situations. An *audiolingual method* supports the repetition and memorisation, listening and speaking in order to better communicate; *communicative method* mostly is used directly to communicate with others effectively for meaningful tasks individually or in groups (Barroso dos Santos Kramer Marques et al., 2024).

Hence, all of previously mentioned methods from a review are still in use (Islam & Stapa, 2021; Kallinikou et al., 2024; Li, 2022; Warchol, 2020; etc.), indeed. Though, there are a lot of methods in teaching and learning foreign languages, but with now evolving level of a spoken foreign language knowledge there is a demand to be better than “yesterday” therefore new methods specifically for learning a spoken foreign language arise through experiments and a new practice (Akay et al., 2025; Ding & Zhu, 2025; Ginzburg & Daniela, 2024; Harrison, 2025; Huang et al., 2025; Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019; Nash & Ramirez, 2025; Nguyen, 2025; Pituxcoosuvarn et al., 2025; Tsui et al., 2016; etc.).

Results of Systematic Literature Review

This chapter shares and analyses specific *methods* for learning spoken foreign language from *Scopus* and *Web of Science* databases. The articles from which the methods were taken are listed in the *Microsoft Excel file* (see Appendix), which can be opened by clicking on the icon (see Figure 2).

Surprisingly, the majority of the articles from *Scopus* investigate only one or two different methods whereas articles in *Web of Science* - at least a few different methods, and mostly from both databases all of these articles' target group was students who learn a foreign language because of college/university studies, or specialists (more of teachers in *Web of Science* articles). English was the most popular foreign language in both databases. Also, newer articles seemed to be from *Scopus* (mostly from 2025) while articles from *Web of Science* were from 2020. And basically, in all research it was mentioned that there is a need of further investigation because of a lack of information and wish to improve.

Interestingly or not, the majority of articles from both databases stated that oral language learning was the scariest part for students who were learning at universities, and there were some articles already related to new technologies because of the COVID-19 situation when students needed to learn remotely (i.e., home-school situation). Furthermore, both databases showed that there is a shortage of information about average people teaching (students mostly), and usually the methods are repeated in different articles. Surprisingly, in a majority of *Web of Science* articles you could find more information about the reasons, why people want to speak in a foreign language. A motivation is emphasised there as a very important factor in language learning.

Let us delve deeper into these methods found on this systematic review. Hence, here (below) in Table 3 it can be seen methods which are separated into different categories using Oxford's direct and indirect strategies differentiation. It can be clearly noticed that this article review found almost the same number of direct and indirect methods – 13 and 15 – which means that even though oral language teaching/learning is separate from general foreign language learning, it still uses approximately the same learning strategies and methods as in general language learning. These strategies directly help in learning a spoken foreign language (e.g., by speaking with native speakers or memorising and using specific collocations) and indirectly (e.g., by trying to motivate yourself or another person).

Therefore, it can be agreed that strategies which are used to learn, e.g., an English grammar, might also be used to become a better in speaking in a foreign language just by using these strategies and methods in different ways (e.g., instead of speaking with class-mates learners speak with native speakers). Of course, all methods are developing and improving into new different ones and specific ones for new goals (e.g., better speaking). Surprisingly, this oral adult language learning and the need to improve speaking is sufficiently new fashion now. Though, the methods, which will be discussed, are still questionable because not a lot of

research has yet been done. Therefore, next paragraphs will be only a review with some observations and opinion about that.

To begin with, interestingly, but one of direct strategies, *memory strategy*, in this research has only one method – *digital storytelling* by Emily Kallinikou and Iolie Nicolaidou (2019). On the other hand, it can be agreed that most methods mentioned here in one or another way also use memory strategy (e.g., *learning speaking through listening* (Islam & Stapa, 2021); *flipped classroom model* (Li, 2022) / *flipped learning* (Harrison, 2025)) by memorising what they heard or read. Moreover, there are two named methods for *compensation strategies*, like a *communicative method* whereas the importance goes to an approximation, coining words, self-repetition (Nash & Ramirez, 2025) and learning collocations (Islam & Stapa, 2021), and *total physical response method* (or *adaptive teaching method*) where the teacher tries to ask specific questions to a learner instead of asking the same repeated questions which makes speaking more goal oriented and logical (Q&A) (Huang et al., 2025).

Table 3
Spoken/Oral Foreign Language Learning Methods

Number	*Strategy*	*Type of strategy*
		Direct strategies (Oxford, 1990)
Number	*Memory strategies*	
1	Digital storytelling (Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019)	
	Cognitive strategies	
2	Cognitive movement (Warchol, 2020)	
3	Cognitive-interactionist methods and sociocultural theory (Namaziand, et al., 2024)	
4	Digital storytelling (Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019)	
5	Task-based learning (TBL) (Islam & Stapa, 2021)	
6	Self-regulated learning (Islam & Stapa, 2021)	
7	Learning speaking through listening (Islam & Stapa, 2021)	
8	Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Akay et al., 2025)	
9	Flipped blended learning (Ginzburg & Daniela, 2024) / Flipped classroom model (Li, 2022) / Flipped learning (Harrison, 2025)	
10	Suprasegmental instruction (Yenkimaleki & Van Heuven, 2021)	
11	Segmental training (Yenkimaleki & Van Heuven, 2021)	
	Compensation strategies	
12	Communicative method (approximation, coining words, self-repetition (Nash & Ramirez, 2025), collocations (Islam & Stapa, 2021)	
13	Total physical response or Adaptive teaching (Q&A) (Huang et al., 2025)	
		Indirect strategies (Oxford, 1990)
Number	*Metacognitive strategies*	
1	Self-assessment (Huang, 2015)	
2	Self-feedback (Huang, 2015) / Technology-supported peer feedback (Ding & Zhu, 2025) / Teacher feedback by Pabro-Maquidato (2021) (Nguyen, 2025)	
3	Promoting self-regulated learning (Islam & Stapa, 2021)	
4	Individual preparation (scribbling down prompts by Pabro-Maquidato (2021), rehearsal and paraphrasing by Chou (2018)) (Nguyen, 2025)	
5	Automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology (mobile assisted language learning [MALL]) (Liu et al., 2022)	

Number	*Strategy*	*Type of strategy*
6	Natural language processing in Artificial intelligence (AI) (Li, 2022; Pituxcoosuvarn et al., 2025)	
7	Intelligent oral dialogue system (Liu, 2021)	
	Affective strategies	
8	Peer support, and positive thinking (Nguyen, 2025)	
9	ARCS motivation model (Zhu & Huang, 2023)	
10	Reformed method (Warchol, 2020)	
	Social strategies	
11	Communication between both the foreign language learners and the native speakers (Hu et al., 2025)	
12	English speaking environment both inside and outside the class (Islam & Stapa, 2021)	
13	Regular practice of speaking by Pabro-Maquidato (2021) (Nguyen, 2025)	
14	Interacting with colleagues (+ an English-speaking facilitator) (Tsui et al., 2016)	
15	Cooperative learning (CL) (Islam & Stapa, 2021)	

Source. Own research.

Other than that, there were a lot of named methods for *cognitive strategies* (see Table 3), like: *cognitive movement* when students learn vocabulary and structures in a specific context that resembles their real jobs (Warchol, 2020); *cognitive-interactionist methods* and *sociocultural theory* means that when learner is autonomous, he/she decides, learns through experiences, understands and has self-esteem (FLLSE) about learning, is engaged and is willing to communicate (Namaziand et al., 2024); *digital storytelling* is when a learner is involved between narration and multimedia elements, e.g., pictures and videos for conveying information to others (Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019); *task-based learning* (TBL) starts when students are given tasks that makes them to concentrate and use a language for exchanging thoughts (Islam & Stapa, 2021); *self-regulated learning* involves learners to work independently as motivated participants in a learning process (ibid); *learning speaking through listening (ibid)*; *content and language Integrated learning (CLIL)* is when learning is combined with instructions, e.g., explaining cooking techniques (Akay et al., 2025); *flipped blended learning* (Ginzburg & Daniela, 2024) / *flipped classroom model* (Li, 2022) / *flipped learning* (Harrison, 2025) is when learning and teaching process is delivered is face-to-face in class and online which becomes more convenient because some tasks, like video watching or recording yourself becomes faster at home than at class; *suprasegmental instruction and segmental training* are focused on perception and production practice, and these, by the way, are the oldest methods of teaching pronunciation and reading aloud, and giving pronunciation instructions, as well (Yenkimaleki & van Heuven, 2021). *Cognitive strategies* were the most popular strategies in *direct strategies* category.

In addition, in *indirect strategies'* category one of two the most popular strategies by researchers was *metacognitive strategy* with a lot of different methods, like *self-assessment*

where students were following their progress and results (Huang, 2015), valuable *feedback* (Huang, 2015; Ding & Zhu, 2025) from themselves, peers and teachers to solve problems or check mistakes for better results, promoting *self-regulated learning* (Islam & Stapa, 2021) and *individual preparation* by, e.g., scribbling paraphrasing (Nguyen, 2025), *automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology* (mobile assisted language learning (MALL)) (Liu et al., 2022) whereas an installed system tool helps to evaluate student's daily speaking with the scores the system gives (fast evaluation/testing shares fast answer to a student and teacher), *natural language processing* in artificial intelligence (AI) (Pituxcoosuvarn, et al., 2025) which uses the recording software *CoolEdit* to regularly record and sample student results, and then to conduct English oral performance assessments (Li, 2022), like *task-based settings, pre-task collaboration, corrective feedback, and collaborative mobile interaction* (Taboo Talks - a word-guessing game - human and AI interaction in a word-guessing game) (Pituxcoosuvarn et al., 2025), and *intelligent oral dialogue system* (Liu, 2021) which helps to evaluate learners' communication abilities online too.

Interestingly, *social strategies* also prevailed with its methods, like *regular communication* with native speakers, colleagues and peers in that foreign language not only in classroom but outside, (Hu et al., 2025; Islam & Stapa, 2021; Nguyen, 2025; Tsui et al., 2016), *cooperative learning* (CL) (Islam & Stapa, 2021) when learners work together in peers or in groups to reach the same goal. Moreover, there is also a sign of *affective strategies* mentioned in articles which show the importance of methods for *emotional support*, *positive thinking* (Nguyen, 2025), and *motivation* (*ARCS motivation model* (Zhu & Huang, 2023)) to stimulate the four core factors of confidence and satisfaction. And *reformed method* by Adam Warchol, 2020) suggests listening exercises, discussions, use of diagrams, jokes, and texts textbooks, et. for a better pronunciation.

All in all, there can be seen the same prevailing strategies and methods for learning a spoken foreign language as learning foreign language in general, because in order to learn or increase the level of spoken language, learners should, e.g., listen to audios, read and write down the ideas, speak and participate in dialogues, and so on. The difference in methods can be seen with the influence of IT and AI because they help to evaluate speaking online and at home faster. Methods which are specifically used for learning speaking also increase the individual abilities to learn alone. Moreover, methods, like *task-based learning* suggest having a goal before doing a task because it gives the reason for speaking; *feedback* is as well, in use as a modern method because it explains your mistakes and helps to improve that way. This review also indicated that *affective strategy methods*, like *pair support* can increase the

motivation which always helps in learning. Almost all authors mentioned that one point of a good communication is a pronunciation which is important in a spoken language learning. Indeed, there is a need not to forget that basically all methods are experimental or reused from traditional language teaching, therefore it is a must to have further research to understand the qualitative methods in a spoken foreign language learning/teaching. And finally, the research questions and answers will be shortly discussed in the next paragraphs.

RQ1: Why is it important to investigate adults learning a spoken (oral) foreign language? Improvement in life is a very important and integral part of human life. Without any kind of mental and professional growth, there will be no future achievements in life for better opportunities. Especially now, when society in Europe is aging (Eurostat, 2025). The older generation (adults) need to learn their whole life (LLL) in one way or another, e.g., if you want to be promoted at your work, travelling solo, or simply just to study abroad, etc. Moreover, as was mentioned before, there is more research about children as learners than about adult learners (Bagdonas & Jankauskienė, 2017; Mačianskienė & Bijeikienė, 2018), therefore it means there is less information about the best ways of how to teach older people instead of children.

RQ2: What are the reasons for adults to study a spoken foreign language? There are a lot of reasons why adults should learn or increase their foreign language skills, but the main and the most often mentioned reasons from reviewed articles are these: to improve oral communication, e.g., at university and college (Akay et al., 2025; Dagtan & Caraboglu, 2021; Islam & Stapa, 2021; Li, 2022; Liu, 2021; Nash & Ramirez, 2025) and for a better professional communication (e.g., gastronomy: Akay et al., 2025; gynaecology: Tsui et al. 2016; pedagogy: Nguyen, 2025), or for a better pronunciation (Warchol, 2020;) and understanding of others (Liu et al., 2022;). Also, if we look at other logical reasons, there we can see more reasons, like a wish not to get old (i.e., to keep the brain plasticity), to be knowledgeable, to communicate with new friends abroad, to find a better job, etc.

RQ3: Are there any specific methods in literature for teaching adults a spoken foreign language? The analysed articles contain both confirming and contradictory responses. There are not too many specific methods for teaching a spoken foreign language, but rather the *old* methods in newer ways, e.g., using new technologies as advantageous teaching ways (e.g., digital storytelling [Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019], flipped learning [Harrison, 2025], AI, CLIL-based model [Akay et al., 2025], etc.).

RQ4: Is there a need for specific teaching methods when teaching adults of a spoken foreign language? This research helped to show that *old* teaching methods (e.g., traditional

teaching (Barroso dos Santos Kramer Marques, et al. (2024)) which are still in use are still important because they keep teaching learners about the background knowledge (e.g., reading books helps not only to expand one's vocabulary but also to strengthen the structure of sentences, writing not only helps to practice the brain to put ideas in a logical sequence but to express ideas freely, etc). Therefore, old and well-known methods can be still useful for teaching foreign languages and specifically spoken language skills, but we cannot forget that the world is developing teaching and learning must change and adapt in order to reach better education. Covid-19 was a great example of how teaching institutions and teachers needed to improvise and adapt teaching (not only language teaching) to remote teaching. Hence, we can clearly admit that old methods, experimental methods and new methods might help adult foreign language learners to speak better.

RQ5: What are the effective teaching methods mentioned in literature? This research review showed some of learning methods as more advantageous, like *self-oriented learning*, *online listening* and *speaking while recording*, *checking for your own mistakes*, *evaluating yourself*, etc.), *digital storytelling* (Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019), *flipped learning* (Harrison, 2025), *teacher-student interactions* (Huang & Dai, 2025), *AI intelligent learning situation* (Li, 2022), *communication in English both inside and outside their classroom* (Slam & Stapa, 2021), *task-based approach* (Islam & Stapa, 2021). Although there are a lot of methods including already many used before and even now, and some modern (related to IT), there is still no clarity about which of them are effective.

In conclusion, this systematic literature review revealed that there is not much precise information related to this research topic about teaching methods specifically suitable for adult learners who would like to learn a foreign spoken language effectively. Specifically, there is almost no information for average adult people (mostly about students in higher education), like mothers and fathers, who work and want to learn a foreign language just for independent travelling or communicating with foreigners or just for those who want to learn something new, like a foreign language. Therefore, further investigation and experiments should be done in the future.

Limitations and Discussion

The systematic review highlights several limitations in the current research on teaching adults a spoken foreign language. A primary challenge is the conceptual ambiguity in the literature: terms such as method, strategy, and technique are used inconsistently across studies, which complicates efforts to synthesise findings or draw precise conclusions about the best

practises. Additionally, research on a spoken language learning for adults remains underdeveloped, with the majority of studies focusing on general or written foreign language acquisition. This indicates that a spoken language learning is still an emerging field, and many methods are experimental rather than empirically validated.

The limited number of empirical studies further constrains the reliability of existing evidence. Many proposed methods – ranging from digital storytelling to AI-assisted oral evaluation – are innovative but lack experience testing in diverse adult leaner populations. Moreover, the technological requirements of some modern methods pose practical constrains, as not all learners or institutions have access to the necessary tools or infrastructure. Finally, much of the literature is context-specific, reflecting particular countries, learning environments, or demographic groups, which restricts the generalisability of findings.

Despite these limitations, several future trends emerge. There is a clear movement toward technology-enhanced and AI-supported methods, including automatic speech recognition, intelligent oral dialogue systems, and mobile-assisted learning, which provide immediate feedback and facilitate individualised practice. Simultaneously, instructional focus is shifting toward spoken communication, emphasising fluency, pronunciation, and interactive competence rather than exclusively written language skills.

Adult language education is increasingly adopting task-based and learner-centred approaches, such as flipped classrooms and self-regulated learning, which foster autonomy and authentic language use. Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the importance of affective and social strategies: motivation, emotional support, peer collaboration, and cultural awareness are becoming integral components of effective teaching. Hybrid and blended learning methods are also emerging, offering flexible combinations of in-class and online instruction that accommodate diverse learner needs.

Finally, the review underscores the need for rigorous empirical validation of experimental methods. Future research should systematically evaluate the effectiveness of spoken language teaching strategies across different adult learner population and contexts, with attention to measurable outcomes such as communicative competence, pronunciation accuracy, and learner motivation. Collectively, these trends indicate a gradual but clear shift toward evidence-based, technology-enhanced, and learner-centred approaches in adult spoken foreign language education.

Despite these limitations, the systematic approach ensures a rigorous and comprehensive overview of current research, providing a foundation for identifying effective teaching methods for adult spoken foreign language learners.

Conclusions

The review confirms that adult learners have unique needs and motivations when acquiring s spoken foreign language. Spoken language competence is essential for real-life communication, professional interaction, and social integration. Investigating adult language learning helps educators design teaching methods that cater to learners' cognitive, affective, and social needs, ensuring that learning is meaningful, goal-oriented, and applicable in real contexts.

Adults prioritise oral communication because it is directly linked to practical, everyday use, such as conversations at work, travel, or social interaction. Spoken language learning emphasises fluency, pronunciation, and communicative competence rather than only grammatical knowledge. This type of learning encourages immediate application and interaction, fostering faster and more functional acquisition of the language.

Yes, the review identified several methods specifically targeting spoken language acquisition. These include both traditional methods adapted for oral use (e.g., communicative methods, total physical response) and innovative approaches such as digital storytelling, task-based learning, flipped classrooms, content and language integrated learning (CLIL), and AI-assisted oral evaluation tools. Most methods incorporate Oxford's direct and indirect language learning strategies, including memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.

There is a clear need for targeted methods that focus on oral communication, learner autonomy, and personalised learning. While many general language learning strategies remain relevant, adult spoken language learners benefit from methods that emphasise interaction, goal-oriented tasks, real-life practise, immediate feedback, pronunciation, and motivational support. The integration of technology and AI tools has become especially important to provide individualised evaluation and enhance learning outside the classrooms.

Moreover, this review highlights a range of effective methods for adult spoken language learning, like: direct strategies are memory-based methods (digital storytelling, listening, and repetition), cognitive methods (task-based learning, self-regulated learning, CLIL, flipped classroom), and compensation methods (communicative method, total physical response); indirect strategies are metacognitive methods (self-assessment, feedback, planning, use of AI-assisted oral evaluation), affective methods (motivation models, emotional support), and social methods (cooperative learning, regular communication with native speakers). These methods enhance learner's communicative competence, autonomy, motivation, and practical ability to use the language in authentic situations.

Finally, this systematic literature review revealed that there is not plentiful and precise information related to this research topic about teaching methods specifically suitable for adult learners who would like to learn a foreign spoken language effectively. Specifically, there is almost no information for average adult people (mostly about students in higher education), like mothers and fathers, who work and want to learn a foreign language just for independent traveling or communicating with foreigners or just for those who want to learn something new, like a foreign language. Therefore, further investigation would be important and useful for adult language learning in the future to be improved.

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