

More sanity savers for teaching languages are not just classroom tricks and activity lists. Sometimes what brings clarity and motivation is a reliable assessment that tells you exactly where learners are and what to practise next. Formal oral tests and clear can do statements can be powerful tools for teachers and independent learners alike.

Formal oral assessments: what they are and when to use them

If you need an official rating for job applications, college credit or to measure progress precisely, formal oral assessments are the way to go. Two well established options are the oral proficiency interview run by ACTFL via Language Testing International and computerised versions such as OPIC and the Computerized Oral Proficiency Instrument from the Center for Applied Linguistics.

These assessments are not a casual phone call. Trained raters guide candidates to their performance ceiling and provide a reliable, actionable level. They can be expensive and require identity checks or proctoring, so reserve them for when you really need an official result or a rigorous learning milestone.

Pros and cons at a glance

- **Pros:** precise placement, certified raters, recognised ratings for work or study.
- **Cons:** cost, scheduling and identity verification, logistical hassle.

Can do statements: the practical companion

Before booking any formal test, work with clear can do statements from ALTE or ACTFL. These statements spell out tasks learners can complete at each level and make progress measurable. Use them to set goals, design practice tasks and avoid surprises on test day.

- Choose a handful of can do statements to master before testing.
- Design short real life tasks that mirror those statements.
- Record practice responses and compare them to target performance.

More sanity savers for teaching languages include combining these formal

tools with everyday practice. Use can do statements to prepare, take a computerized interview for mid levels, or reserve a full oral proficiency interview for major milestones. These steps turn assessment from an administrative burden into a roadmap for real progress.

Quick checklist before booking a formal assessment

1. Align chosen can do statements with the test format.
2. Gather required ID and confirm proctoring needs.
3. Do mock interviews using recorded prompts.
4. Plan follow up study based on the rating you receive.

These methods are practical, rigorous and learner friendly. Treat assessment as a tool, not a judgement, and you will find it becomes one of the best sanity savers for teaching languages.

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