

Журавель В.В., Національний
університет оборони України імені
Івана Черняховського

SOME ASPECTS OF DEVELOPING FLUENCY IN THE ELT CLASSROOM

Fluency versus accuracy is a controversial issue that affects each and every English teacher. Indeed, it is this question that, regardless of their level, location, or leaning, English teachers return to over and over again. After long-lasting discussions «it is now very clear that fluency and accuracy are both important goals to pursue in CLT» [1,p.2], the question is how to identify what to develop & what success to measure in each particular classroom situation. The Communicative approach to teaching English is much in use nowadays due to the fact that by the end of the study our students need to be able to speak English & act successfully in unpredictable situations of live communication, which can often be of vital importance. This emphasizes consequently the importance of developing fluency, and especially speaking fluency which refers to the speech and smoothness of oral delivery in a narrow sense and to semantic density, sociolinguistic appropriateness, and creativity in language use in a broad sense of the term. We could speak also about other sorts of skill fluency, and all of them are of equal importance. Readers who don't read fluently devote much of their cognitive energy to decoding individual words and phrases, making it difficult for them to focus on meaning of what they read. Similarly, students lacking writing fluency devote lots of cognitive energy to forming

individual words or basic sentence structures, making it harder for them to focus on conveying their thoughts and feelings effectively.[4,p.1] Listening comprehension is considered to be one of the most difficult skills for EFL learners to acquire. Speaking is typically considered the hardest skill to acquire when learning a second language. Language learners continue to struggle in the development of fluency in speech production: in situations where the learner does not speak the language much outside the classroom, there are few opportunities for the development of speaking skills.

Fluency makes an important component of communicative competence and methodologists define it as the combination of four abilities: the ability to talk at length with few pauses, the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts, the ability to talk in coherent reasoned, semantically dense sentences, the ability to be creative and imaginative in language use.[3, p. 92] To sum up, speaking fluency is the natural language use, and it is 'aimed to develop a pattern of language interaction within the classroom which is as close as possible to that used by competent performers in the mother tongue in real life.[2, p. 48] The primary purpose of fluency activities is to help students practice language in listening, speaking, reading, and/or writing activities to so develop fluency in using the language in spontaneous communication. A fluency-oriented activity such as extensive reading and information gap aims to develop the students' spontaneous communications skills in using what they have already learned; students' attention is focused on communicating information and expressing ideas; their output may not always be predictable; their performance is assessed on how well ideas are expressed or understood; students' errors are not corrected unless it interferes with communication; tasks often simulate real-life situations. There have been developed strategies to use during fluency-oriented lessons which increase speech rate, i.e. sixty seconds strategy, 4-3-2 strategy, repetition strategy (also, with the use of recorder), speaking line strategy as well as the ones which enhance production: pause fillers, vagueness expressions, repeats, etc. There come seven principles to consider when designing and doing fluency building activities [5, p. 10]:1.Incorporate repetition; 2.Increase speaking time; 3.Prepare before speaking;4.Use familiar and motivating topics; 5.Ensure appropriate level; 6.Impose time limits; 7.Teach formulaic sequences. - One of the best ways to

increase fluency is to use the same language over and over. This does not mean simply repeating what the teacher says or doing substitution drills. It is important to change the audience or purpose when an activity is repeated.

Repetition can be incorporated into many speaking activities.

- Here are a few ways of helping students converse as much as possible:

- Have students work in pairs or small groups
- Encourage 100% English free conversation
- Promote English use outside of class

- Written planning done in silence before a speaking activity helps maintain focus on the act of speaking and creating meaning with an interlocutor. Examples of planning include taking notes on a topic for homework, composing written answers to interview questions before discussing them, etc.

- When focusing on fluency development in class, choose topics that are relevant and interesting to the learners, such as describing recent events and activities. A list of possible discussion topics (such as pets, hobbies and interests, friends, or family) can also be provided, from which students are free to choose.

- Fluency promotion activities should be at an appropriate level of difficulty in order to reduce the necessity of over-thinking while speaking. Activities that push students to use new and recently learned language have their place in the classroom, but are

not optimal for enhancing fluency. Fluency is best developed when already known language is put to active use.

- While creating a comfortable speaking atmosphere is important, it may be helpful to introduce a bit of intensity by setting time limits on conversation activities. This forces students to speak faster and pause less.

- It is important for fluency building that learners are taught chunks, collocations, and formulaic sequences [6, p. 213] to enable learners to automatically plug set phrases into conversations at appropriate moments. One such strategy is making frequent use of classroom English phrases and functional exponents i.e. for agreeing/disagreeing or stating opinions. Teachers must set up exercises and situations in which fluency can develop and flourish, encouraging learners to orally communicate in a positive and enriching environment inside and outside the classroom. This can

hopefully be achieved when we offer them the full range of communicative language tools and strategies along with sufficient language input and speech-promotion activities.

List of references

1. Brown, J.D.(2003). Promoting fluency in EFL classrooms. Proceedings of the II annual JALT Pan-SIG Conference, Kyoto, Japan. URL.<https://jalt.org/pansig/2003/HTML/Brown.htm>.
2. Brumfit, C.(1984). Communicative methodology in language teaching: the roles of fluency and accuracy. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
3. Fillmore, C.(1979). On fluency. In C.J.Fillmore, D.Kempler, W.S.Y.Wang (Eds.), Individual differences in language ability and language behavior (pp.85-102). New York:Academic Press.
4. Kellem, H (2009). Principles for developing oral fluency in the classroom, The language teacher 33./1(pp.9-11)
5. McCarty, R (2014).[Writing Fluency: A Key to Success on Next Generation Assessments](#) URL: <https://www.teachingchannel.org/blog/2014/03/31/writing-fluency/>
6. Wood, D. (2007). Mastering the English formula: Fluency development of Japanese learners in a study abroad context. JALT Journal, 29, 209-230.