

FIRST ATTEMPTS FOR INCREASING ACCURACY OF ESL LEARNERS

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Abstract. *This article is devoted to the description of sample steps to fostering accuracy in ESL learners. The author is dwelling on automaticity in language as one of the ways directly affecting fluency. It's also concerned that lesson should be restricted partly to short sentences that narrowly focus on the target grammar and/or vocabulary and partly including short games which gives wide opportunity to practice not only accuracy but fluency in language.*

Keywords: *fluency, unfamiliar material, the target language, grammar, pronunciation, fluency (pausing), and vocabulary (repeating words).*

There are a number of factors which affect fluency. To start, unfamiliar material results in less smooth, less quick language production. This is especially evident when the teacher first presents the target language (grammar, vocabulary, phrases, etc.). Students of all levels, when faced with new material, must process and practice it. A certain level of automaticity must be achieved before also gaining a level of fluency.

And what is automaticity? The term refers to the recall time on the target language. Students work towards producing the new structures naturally and with less thought. When students repeatedly practice a word, phrase, or sentence structure, then the new material becomes automatic. Students require less time to think about how to produce the language. Improved automaticity directly affects fluency.

It's important to note that too much information presented and practiced at once hinders fluency. For example, as students must become familiar with new material in the earlier stages of a lesson, they struggle with longer and richer sentences. In short, there's simply too much to juggle all at once.

Of course, the whole of the lesson shouldn't be restricted to short sentences that narrowly focus on the target grammar and/or vocabulary. However, restrictive practice at the start improves productive fluency later in the lesson. As the lesson progresses and students become comfortable and familiar with the target language, additional information for longer, richer sentences can be worked into the lesson plan.

Below is a variation of a fluency game you might have played in class. Not easy, but good fun. It's actually a very popular game in Britain, based on BBC radio comedy programmed of the same name: JUST A MINUTE.

The game is played in groups of four or five. One person in each group is the ‘chair’, the others are the players.

First of all, a topic is chosen – someone takes the floor and has to keep talking for one minute; the speaker must not hesitate / deviate from the subject / repeat words – the listeners can challenge the speaker at any time by calling out

– Repetition. – Deviation. – Hesitation

The chair decides whether a challenge is successful or unsuccessful. If the challenge is successful, the challenger takes over and continues to speak on the topic for however much time

remains. If unsuccessful, the player continues talking on the same topic for the time remaining. The winner is the speaker speaking after one minute.

The game is most challenging even for native speakers, so it may be a good idea to simplify the rules: how about ignoring hesitation to start with? There are more suggestions for other possible adaptations in the vid below.

This is a great game to help you improve your speaking.

Two or more people can play together. The first person chooses a topic, the second person has to start talking about the topic and cannot stop or pause. The other people listen for mistakes, if you spot a mistake, it is your turn to speak. Mistakes can be in your grammar, pronunciation, fluency (pausing), and vocabulary (repeating words) The person talking at the end of a minute gets a point, then you start again.

Conclusion. To conclude, the teacher must not only consider accuracy, fluency, and the balance of the two, but he must also consider both sides to language use. Focus too much on accuracy, and students are disengaged and unable to connect to the content. Focus too much on fluency, and students make so many mistakes that they cannot be clearly understood. There are a number of factors which affect fluency. To start, unfamiliar material results in less smooth, less quick language production. This is especially evident when the teacher first presents the target language (grammar, vocabulary, phrases, etc.). Students of all levels, when faced with new material, must process and practice it. A certain level of automaticity must be achieved before also gaining a level of fluency.

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