

Chapter 67: Developing Oral Language to Increase Language Fluency

QUESTION:

How to develop fluency in English using oral language?

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Chapter 1: Introduction

English was and has been taught in Saudi Arabia as a serious foreign language and this can be attributed to the fact that it has been attached to the learning and teaching in the Saudi Arabia teaching system. Fluency was a term that has almost been ignored in the traditional way of learning EFL in Saudi Arabia. There are no speaking activities for practicing and improving fluency in class, and there is less syllabus and curriculum support, or even no supported processes for the guiding of fluency development. Typically, the EFL learners are mostly informed by their fluency accomplishment in an official English language expertise test. EFL tutoring has changed from the typical grammar-based model to communicative language teaching techniques in Saudi Arabia (Paquot, Grafmiller & Szmrecsanyi, 2017). The problem with the current Saudi Arabia EFL teaching model is that it is more based on understanding more vocabulary and grammar instead of focusing on fluency. This paper will focus on the most perfect plan in improving the state of English teaching in Saudi Arabia in accordance with the New Zealand way of teaching where EFL learning is mostly focused on improving the fluency of the learners.

For instance, English is a widely recognized international language as it acts as a useful tool for communication between various countries. In many states, EFL learning from the third grade in many primary schools to the tertiary levels is almost compulsory. To sum everything up, many students in Saudi Arabia have put their efforts and time into learning English. The spreading of English, promotion, and the communicative purpose have led to a vast number of EFL learners in Saudi Arabia. Statistics have proven that there is a very high number of these learners in Saudi Arabia;-more than 5 million learners. This number is dramatically increasing as their English communicative factor is the primary motivation factor, as people with excellent English-speaking abilities have a competitive advantage to gain education chances from overseas and to have a unique career pathway. The curriculum design being exam-based acts as the main barrier where class learning mostly contributes to the reviews instead of being done for real-life application.

Another problem that is still present is unbalanced delivery of the English Curriculum, and there is a large gap between teachers from the different regions in the country. Teachers assessing a large number of students is another current problem where they are not able to concentrate on a single student. Speaking fluency is promoted through practicing in the communicative activities that require all students to participate. The proficiency test is one of the assessing criteria among other international language tests.

There are these three questions that will be addressed throughout this research:

- Why is speaking fluently is so crucial for the EFL learners in Saudi Arabia?
- How to improve fluency through the communicative activities in situations where English is a foreign language?
- Whether speaking accomplishment in the practice work in a class will accommodate the actual conversations that need the same style and contents?

(Paquot, Grafmiller & Szmrecsanyi, 2017).

For instance, the EFL teaching system is one of the best as bench marked and many principles and its teaching methods can be applied to the Saudi Arabia teaching system to increase the efficiency of English learning.

Chapter 2: literature review

This name fluency is widely used in linguistic education, and the word fluent frequently appears in language assessment and testing. That seems like the term fluency is easily understood with very many definitions. Vongsila & Reinders (2016) defined this term for the situation where the speaker can use the appropriate structures of a language in the typical usage. That means speaking logically while putting concentration on the content delivery and not on the structure or the form of the language.

Coxhead et al (2015) argues that for students to have the aptitudes to speak fluently they need to make creative and imaginative use of language, speaking appropriately in a wide range of contexts, have the ability to produce the sentences semantically, reasoned and coherently and finally the ability to talk for a length of time with only a few pauses.

Defining fluency is not easy, and neither is measuring it. Trying to establish the limits of fluency is complicated, as it can be entirely a performance with the listener's feelings and impression. Oxford & Armerstorfe (2018) claimed that the lack of fluency is not attractive to the listener, distracting the attention of the listener for the message that is delivered by the speaker. This is the mirroring of the verbal ability of the speaker. Additionally, many scholars have tried to identify the longitudinal fluency development to distinguish the non-fluent and fluent language learners and the fluency in learning a language. Many researchers have assessed the number of words that one articulates per minute and the mean of the pauses that are made between different syllables in speaking. Therefore Coxhead et al. (2015), summarized speech rate as a gauge of measuring fluency as the speech rate indicates the overall fluency of speaking.

When considering the various ways in which fluency can be developed, Chang &

Millett (2017) recommended learners with slow speeds of speaking to take a text of about 180 words and read it loudly and practice it for many times. Then learners are encouraged to accomplish an objective of finishing the reciting content in one minute while trying not to lose the original content. From this context, speed is directly related to fluency. Toprak, Tugba and Yasemin (2015) also argued that EFLs should not be taught pronunciation, which makes everything complicated but should first understand the exact meanings of the words, Vongsila & Reinders (2016) anticipated the pair-taping to encourage EFL learners to be involved in

class because of the limited chances of speaking English once they are out of the course. Chang & Millett (2017) suggested conversation games, speaking lines, and talking zones to face the problem of L1 use in class.

In the research of Toprak, Tugba and Yasemin (2015), fluency development is a concentrated meaning strand. The strand exists if the EFL learners are familiar with the content; the concentration is on loading the meaning, and there is some pressure to push the performance at speed. Accuracy or fluency, the purpose is widely debated, and the best way to understand them is to merge them into two different elements. Oxford & Armerstorffey (2018) state that there are four strands that they successfully categorized language learning into: reading and listening is called meaning-focused input while writing and discourse refers to meaning-focused output to form-focused instruction is focused on learning linguistic features. The final strand is fluency development. They equally share one-quarter of the class and the EFL learners are supposed to put 25% of their effort and time into each part.

Oral language:

Oral Language is the child's first, most important, and most frequently used structured medium of communication. It is the primary means through which each individual child will be enabled to structure, to evaluate, to describe and to control his/her experience. In addition, and most significantly, oral language is the primary mediator of culture, the way in which children locate themselves in the world, and define themselves with it and within it (Cregan, 1998, as cited in Archer, Cregan, McGough, Shiel, 2012) **Oral language and learning:**

Oral language is much more than speaking and listening. We think and learn through language – oral language is the basis for all thoughts and communication. Our oral language practices shape us as people and affect every aspect of our lives. Teachers have a crucial role in supporting students' learning through the ways they interact with students and help them to further develop the oral language skills they bring to school.(learning through talkNZ MOE,2009, p11).

Components of oral language:

Oral language is made up of at least five key components: phonological skills, pragmatics, syntax, morphological skills, and vocabulary (also referred to as semantics). All of these components of oral language are necessary to communicate and learn through conversation and spoken interaction. (Cultivating Knowledge, Building Language,2015, p15).

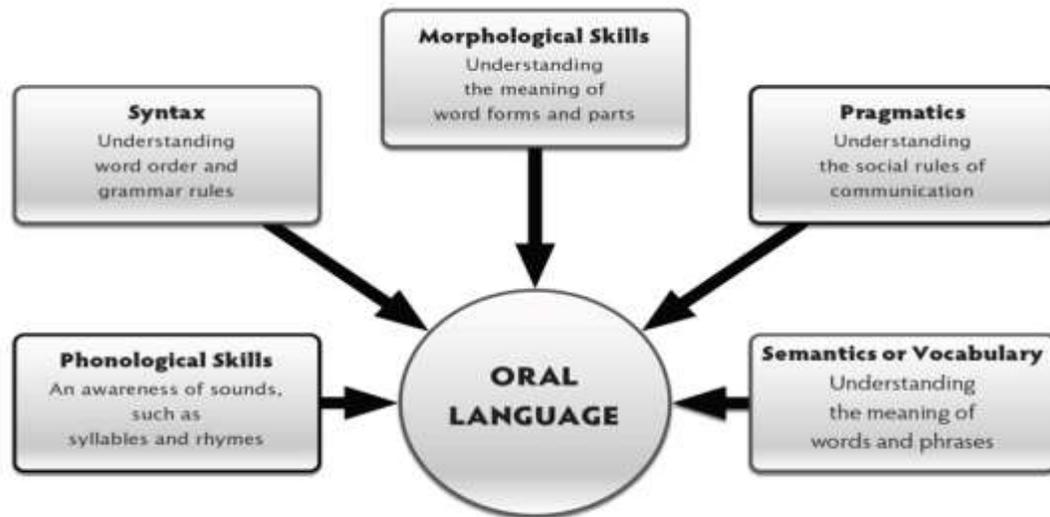


Figure 2.1 Components of Oral Language

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

While the literature review focuses on the fundamental theories of a topic, the research methodology is much concerned with the way ongoing research is to be conducted and how questions are to be answered. Furthermore, information gathering, and data analysis techniques are covered in this chapter. In this research, I am going to apply interviews and observation to conduct my data collection for analysis.

The research question involved is "how to develop fluency in English using oral language." The education currently used is the use of grammar and word memorization. The paradigm to research on the use of oral language is explained here. Some of the other questions in the study include; can literature-oriented activities, for example, choral reading assists in advanced ESL students improve their oral fluency capabilities?

Interviews

One way to undertake a research is by use of a qualitative research paradigm of interviews. Interviews are especially instrumental while conducting extensive research on a few numbers of individuals. "Conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation." (Boyce, 2006). There are three interview formats. Structured interviews always consist of predetermined questions that are answered by the interviewees in a particular order. In this method, data analysis is usually very easy to analysis. Unstructured interviews do not have a determined way in which to ask questions and therefore, may not be very reliable. They can also be prone to bias from the interviewees. The last form of interviews is the semi-structured interview that contains both structured and unstructured interview component. Complementary questions might also be asked to clarify something (Boyce, 2006). In this research, I will apply a semi-structured interview format to question four teachers.

The main reason to apply interviews and most-importantly the semi-structured is due to the advantage of collecting extensive information on the research questions. There is also a high chance of clarifying a problem or getting concise information from the interviewee (Boyce,

2006). I will make appropriate timing and also maintain a relaxed posture. "In conducting an interview, the interviewer should attempt to create a friendly, non-threatening atmosphere. Much as one does with a cover letter, the interviewer should give a brief, casual introduction to the study; stress the importance of the person's participation; and assure anonymity, or at least confidentiality, when possible."

Observation

Observation involves participating in an environment and study the behavior of a specific component, individuals or subjects. Most of the times, taking notes and recording is the most appropriate and effective way of collecting observatory data. It could either be in structured or unstructured data collection which encompasses a collection of predefined variables in a preset schedule or in a free manner where no predefined method or variables are applied respectively. I will extensively use observation throughout my research period. This is mainly due to the direct access to information and data required. The data is firsthand and as such very reliable ("Observation - Research-Methodology," 2019)

Data analysis methodology

The data collection methodologies to be used are the qualitative methods, and as such, appropriate paradigms for the analysis of the system is also necessary to make a meaningful representation of data. Deductive approaches will also be applied due to their relatively quick and easy to perform, and also useful where the participants responses are known. Thematic analysis will also be extensively used to identify patterns across the data that I will have collected. It characterized by the advantage of having a "theoretical flexibility" and incorporate both inductive and deductive data analysis after which themes will be drafted (Srivastava &

Thomson, 2009)

Chapter 4: result evidence

After conducting the research on the teachers and observing, the following wer the results I found.

On interview

"Can literature-oriented activities, for example, choral reading assists in advanced ESL students improve their oral fluency capabilities?" question result were as follows

75% of teachers	25%
Yes, it could	Probably / not sure

Other questions involved were "In your own Opinion what are the possible ways in which English fluency could be improved" the solution rating was as follows.

Question	Suggestion Frequency by Questioned teachers

Make English Friends	25%
Shadowing – involves recording, paying attention and listening to English native speakers	50%
Direct study with a teacher or tutor	75%
Practice speaking with others	50%
Study vocabulary and dictionary meaning	25%
Listening to English on daily bases	100%
Informal study	75%
Reading English articles, magazines and comics	25%
Watching English videos, songs and documentaries	50%
Mentorship (from advanced learners or native speakers)	25%

Observation

After observing the English teaching environment. The students involved were foreigners learning English and were not fluent in the language. The findings were

- Teachers lesson play a pivotal role in improving the student's fluency
- The wrong impression is given if fluency and accuracy of a language cannot be attained
- Constant speaking gradually improves speaking fluency and efficiency of a language by 40%. - Speech giving is a great way to improve student's participation and keenness while studying

English.

- some teachers remind students to speak loudly and articulate clearly.

Chapter 5: Discussions of the findings

Upon analyzing the data collected, most were found to support the self-motivation of individuals towards attaining the fluency and accuracy in the English language. Listening is the most vital and contributes most considerable in achieving fluency. From the literature review, different methods were stated as optimal in fluency achievement. Nation (2007) denotes that learning and reading have a pivotal role in the improvement of grammar. The same could be well supported by the research findings where 100% of the interviewee said

that listening to well-spoken English increases fluency with a significant margin. (Nation, 2007) Class interaction is also another way in which English perfection can be attained (Nation, 2007) interactions, mainly involving teachers and students and students by students can help expand English efficiency and knowledge. Other recommended methods and techniques of achieving the same were constant speaking of the language, which allows challenge oneself and improves the brain speed in analytical thinking and inference. (Gorsuch, 2011)

Other methods that were had a high frequency of best practices were shadowing, which involves listening to a fluent or a native speaker and try to find out their language and word usage. Watching English materials is also another way to achieve this goal (Gorsuch, 2011). This part differs slightly with what the literature review says. Teachers are also strong pillars of teaching English and their plan. I found out is of great importance. The teacher has to be well prepared to impart the best to the students. (Shields & Price, 2002)

I want to say that there is a room for further studies on how to enhance English fluency. More methods, such as the use of technology, should be investigated to find out how they could be of potential use.

According to my finding, I plan to implement the above-recommended finding in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- 1- Share my experience and findings with other teachers through workshops and training courses.
- 2- Increase the awareness of parents about the importance of fluency in English, which is the language of global communication and the language of the future.
- 3- According to the results I will intensify the English language listening to reach the goal which is fluency in the language.
- 4- Create an electronic application that combines language teachers, students and parents to provide them with audio and visual materials that contribute to language acquisition and development.

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