DEVELOPING FLUENCY IN ENGLISH TO RURAL STUDENTS OF INDIA

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Abstract

English language is one of the international languages and widely spoken across globe. Moreover, it is the language of international business, law, science, technology, transport, economics, internet, etc. It is the medium of instruction in most of the schools, colleges, and Universities both public and private. In this scenario, learning English language and mastering the four skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are considered vital. The prime objective of this paper is to develop students' fluency, which is the sub-skill of speaking, in English Language and to identify the reasons of their lack of fluency and try to find solutions with special reference to the rural students of India. The paper also identifies where students are lagging, why they are lagging, the possible reasons of their lagging, etc. Finally the paper suggests certain techniques and thereby making rural students to become fluent in English language. These techniques also make them to communicate with each other fluently and effectively in the personal and professional situations of their day to day life.

Key words*: English Language, rural students, fluency, speaking, techniques.*

INTRODUCTION

We as language teachers know very well that students in the classroom know grammar structures, vocabulary, and they are able to write short phrases and paragraphs to some extent. When it comes for speaking, they failed miserably. This is because, even after studying English for several years, they do not have developed fluency in speaking. This lack of fluency is the cause of communication failure due to the receiver does not decode the message correctly since the interaction is interrupted by a lot of pauses and hesitations. The present paper traces a better application of the available resources in the teaching, learning and the development of fluency in the English classes. It also explores some techniques for fluency development which can be more beneficial or appropriate for students in the development of better oral fluency in the rural school students of India.

Definitions of the Term Fluency

Oxford English dictionary defines fluency as speaking or writing in an articulate and natural manner. E. Van and Alexander *(1977)* define it *as a r*easonable speech with sufficient precision, with reasonable correctness (grammatically, phonologically and lexically). Fluency can be thought of as the ability to keep going when speaking spontaneously (Gower, Phillips and Walters, 2004). Fluency means being able to communicate your ideas without having to stop and think too much about what you are saying" (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2003).

Students clearly transfer many of their speaking skills when they speak English language (Roger Gower et al; 1983: 19). According to David Crystal, (1993: 287) fluency disorder, in the language context, can be caused by the great lack of the ability to communicate easily, rapidly, and continuously. The following examples will summarize Crystal's views:

a. The abnormal repetition of sounds, syllables, or phrases;

e.g. p.p.please c.come here!

b. Sounds may be abnormally lengthened, e.g. sssee where the initial [s] takes a long time, often with unknown rhythm.

c. The speaker is often unable to release the articulated sounds. Instead, he uses facial expressions and body language.

d. Words and phrases may be left unfinished.

According to Nation and Newton (2009) the learning of a new language implies developing fluency as part of speaking skills, probably we can assume that this skill is one of the

main ones to develop to be able to maintain good communication and it allows, in a global sense, for the possibility to express an idea (Burns & Joyce, 1997). According to the process of learning, the first skill to be developed by a language learner is the speaking skill and to foreign language learners, it represents a hard challenge to accomplish.

The fluency disorder can be found in young children, deaf people and hesitant speakers which cause irregular speech. But it is possible to achieve fluency and accuracy through the knowledge of a significant number of English words and a good pronunciation. A fluent speaker, therefore, should control the sound system and the structure of a foreign language.

The Importance of spoken language

The spoken language is emphasized by the following points:

1. It is a fact that man started speaking before writing.

2. Everyone speaks his first language (L1) before going to school and learn the skill of writing.

3. There are a large number of illiterate people who can speak their native language without writing it.

4. The educated people do not practice writing daily, but they involved in everyday communication.

The importance of spoken language is further summarized in the following lines. In fact, language is the backbone of our life. With language we convey our opinions, information, ideas, thoughts, etc. from age to age, from one place to another and from one generation to another generation. With a spoken language, we express our feelings, needs, attitudes, and ask for our rights. Without spoken language, there would be no teaching, no songs, and no cries and even no communication. However, people differ in mastering the speaking skills. Some of them speak the language fluently and others commit a lot of mistakes while speaking.

Developing students' fluency:

Learning to speak a foreign language fluently requires more than knowing its syntactic and semantic rules. In addition, learners should acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use the language in context of structural interpersonal exchange in which many factors interact (Halliday, 1973). Therefore it is difficult for EFL learners, especially the adults, to speak the target language fluently and appropriately.

Developing fluency involves not only verbal communication but also paralinguistic elements such as gestures, body language, facial expressions, etc. to convey a message directly

without any accompanying speech. Brown (1994: 241) argued that: "there is tremendous variation cross-culturally and cross-linguistically in the specific interpretations of gestures and body language." Due to the lack of the linguistic environment, exposure to the target language, and contact with native speakers, students' performance is weak in spoken English and fluency.

Techniques to develop oral fluency:

The term technique is defined as "a single activity that comes from a procedure" (Darrin, 2015). So we can understand that a technique is a way of doing something by using special knowledge or skill. In other words, techniques in the language classroom are the actions that teachers implement to achieve certain goals. Consequently, the four techniques selected to facilitate the development of fluency of rural students are:

1. Fluency Circle
2. Information Gap Activities (to be more specific "role plays"),
3. The 4/3/2 Technique and
4. The Storytelling with Pictures.

1. Fluency Circle:

The *fluency circle* consists of practicing dialogue in an active way. The goal of this technique is to internalize and learn some useful structures and expressions to communicate in a second language in a fluent way. Students receive pre-established dialogues by the teacher, and then they organize themselves in a circle with an inner and an outer part. The students in the inner part of the circle will play the role of the A character of the dialogue, and the students in the outer part of the circle will play the role of the B character of the dialogue. After the completion of the dialogue, students with the B character will move to the left and the students in the inner part will not move. After this the teacher stops the activity, and they will try to say the dialogue just looking at their partner when they speak. After this, the students will try to personalize the dialogue using a similar conversation (Celce-murcia et al., 2014).

The purpose of this technique is to make students practice many times the same dialogue and, in this way, help them develop better fluency rehearsing and repeating structures and expressions until they can recreate or use them differently by adding or changing different information from that initially provided.

2. Information Gap:

The second technique is called *Information Gap:* the specific activity is role play. In this, one student has the information that another does not have. In this process, they negotiate meaning to complete the whole information or scene. In this technique, the teacher provides students with some cards indicating the specific role and information related to a character. They have to perform the role using their previous knowledge and using the information written it in the cards to complete the information requested for one of the characters. After that, students select another card and change the role to start again (Celce-murcia et al., 2014).

3. The 4/3/2 Technique:

The *4/3/2* is another useful technique to develop fluency, and it is focused on the message of the topic. This takes into account the quantity of production. The teacher selects a topic on the basis of students' interest. Then the students have to talk about this topic for around 4 minutes. After that, students deliver the same topic, but the time is reduced to 3 and then 2 minutes. In this activity, students have control over the language and quantity of production. The purpose of this technique is to increase the rate of production using the time as pressure (Nation & Newton, 2009).

4. The Storytelling with pictures:

The *storytelling with pictures,* which consists of creating a story from some pictures presented in class. In this activity, the teacher divides the class into groups of four students and then he or she provides them with some different pictures. Each student has to pick one picture from the file and start to create a story. One student of the group takes notes. The teacher sets a time limit to finish the story. At the end, each group tells the complete story created. This technique has the purpose to make students think and talk as fast as they can, using the vocabulary and expressions learned in classes (Bailey & Savage, 1994).

CONCLUSION:

It is pertinent that the development of new strategies to complement a continuous enriched vocabulary with good fluency has been a challenge for teachers. That is why studies made by many researchers underpin the importance of fluency during the learning of a second language. Mora and Valls-Ferrer (2012) pointed out that fluency development is one of the main goals of formal language instructions, but sometimes the development of fluency is not successful due to the lack of exposure to the language. Therefore, the contents and techniques to

help to develop fluency must provide enough practice and exposure to the students to the real language. To provide the students enough opportunities to practice what they have learned is essential in order to improve fluency in speaking. The techniques mentioned contribute to understanding why fluency is an essential sub-skill to have a good communication in English.

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