THE INTEROPERABILITY OF COMPLEXITY, ACCURACY, AND FLUENCY EXERCISES IN DEVELOPING THE SPEAKING ABILITY OF EFL STUDENTS

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Annotation
When people want to know how many languages other people know, they simply ask what language they speak. They don't ask what languages they read or write mainly because speaking is predominantly on focus when it comes to learning foreign languages. Subsequently, this makes researchers do more research and find most optimal ways to develop students' speaking skill. This course of action started several decades ago in ESL and EFL field and have made a considerable progress so far. The researchers identified the phenomenon like complexity, accuracy and fluency based on the interdisciplinary studies. This articles briefly introduces the notions of CAF (complexity, accuracy and fluency) and the history of the progress made in this area while trying to draw conclusions on the sequence of those three subcomponents in teaching foreign languages.

The performance in L2 can be broken in three subcomponents: complexity, accuracy and fluency. Historically, researchers started learning the CAF around 1970s when they began investigating the complexity and accuracy in L1 acquisition (e.g. Brown 1973; Hunt 1965). At the same time, scholars made a distinction between the accuracy and fluency in L2 learners' speech (e.g. Brumfit 1979, 1984; Hammerly 1990). In the mid-90s, Skehan (1996, 1998) brought the three units together to define the success of speaking ability. At about the same time it started serving as indispensable assessment tools to measure the speech of L2 learners.

The complexity shows what kind of complex structures are being used in L2 learners' speech and accuracy indicates the grammatical accuracy of a speech while fluency denotes the flow of speech with minimum pauses. These subcomponents are interrelated in action because of various reasons. One of the reasons is the cognitive limitation as human cognitive capacity is limited to focus on all the three components at the same time, especially, foreign languages put extra pressure on working memory. Besides, it is a trade-off to practice one of them at a time mainly, because focusing on one cause to miss the other one or two entirely. Thus, designing the materials to target each of the subcomponents or which one to develop first are being a conundrum in the past couple decades.

When a learner tries to use a second or foreign language, "accuracy" is the degree to which their usage follows the correct structures. More often than not the measurement
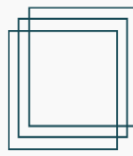
is taken to imply accurate grammatical use. For example, "I not go" would be considered grammatically inaccurate even though we could derive intended meaning. Accuracy can also be applied to the use of vocabulary by second language learners. For example, "I play skiing" is inaccurate because of the learner's decision to use the word 'play' as opposed to 'go'. Similarly, choices of pronunciation used by the learner are evidence of inaccuracy. For example, second language learners often use "won't" when they mean "want" and vice versa. These inaccuracies in the use of grammar, choice of vocabulary and pronunciation make accuracy quite easy for a teacher to measure a learner's progress and as such are often used in various assessments. Accuracy is not the only measure of proficiency in a foreign or second language. Consider activities where spontaneous verbal responses are elicited by the teacher. The teacher is looking for understanding and the ability to communicate effectively. This ability to be spontaneously communicative is called "fluency". One of the first academics to make this distinction between fluency and accuracy was Brumfit in the 1980s. Fluency is essentially how fast a learner can access and use the language in a well-paced smooth manner without awkward pauses.

In the 1990s, theorists began considering how elaborate and varied a learner's use of language was. This dimension is called "complexity". It is though a somewhat ambiguous and little understood concept. Theorists suggest there are two types of complexity: Cognitive and linguistic. Cognitive complexity is relative to and from the perspective of the individual learner (including for example their ability to remember, their aptitude and their motivation for learning). Linguistic complexity refers to the structures and features of the particular language.

Researchers have found that accuracy and complexity are linked in so far as they represent the level of internalized foreign language knowledge of the learner. Their knowledge is the scope of what they can draw on to form the language. Fluency, by contrast, is how much control and how fast the learner can access this knowledge. It is possible for a learner to be both fluent and accurate, but if the language they use consists of only simple structures, then we cannot really say their use is complex (or advanced).

It has been argued (Ellis 1994) that if a learner develops more fluency, it may be at the expense of accuracy and complexity. I've seen this with students, usually in those with bold and outgoing personalities. They are not scared to try and they speak out. Consequently, they learn to communicate and draw quickly on their knowledge but it's at the expense of the development of their grammar use. Nonetheless, I feel that those kinds of students do increase the complexity of their language use over time as they try to bring in new and more complex ideas. It is said though that how a student acquires knowledge is a different mental process to how they use it, so perhaps these outgoing students may be stunted when it comes to receiving new or complex information as opposed to actually using their existing knowledge. Meanwhile you may have students
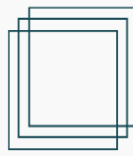
that are not willing to speak at all. Their anxiety about learning the language or propensity to focus too much on accuracy may hold them back when it comes to communication and fluency and indeed can block out their ability to take on new learning concepts.

Hatch (1979) discovered that foreign language learners don't necessarily focus on the same kinds of correction that a teacher does. We might expect the student to focus on the accuracy side, the grammar, but in fact students tend to be concerned with minor details like the use of vocabulary or an improvement in what they are trying to communicate. Similarly, with regard to students working on developing their speaking skills, a teacher may be focusing on accuracy and pronunciation whereas the students could well be concentrating on how well they are getting their message across and what lexical choices they are making in order to achieve this.

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