

Same old story: fluency skills

Aim:

To provide students with practice of taking a longer turn in a conversation by using production devices and practising speaking subskills in the context of telling an anecdote about a memorable experience

To provide students with practice of active listening skills through practice of back-channeling in the context of listening to an anecdote about a memorable experience

Speaking focus: Fluency skills: speed and pausing hesitating, vague language.

Outcomes for students:

- Understand subskills required for fluent speech
- Apply subskills through telling an anecdote
- Build confidence in speaking fluency

Materials needed:

- Topics' prompts

Procedure:

Introduction – choose a topic

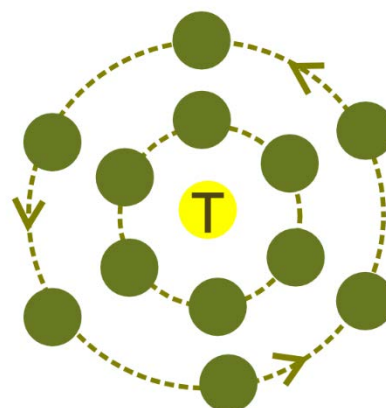
Ask students to choose a topic:

- **my last holiday**
- **a disastrous shopping trip**
- **an amazing trip**
- **a shocking day**
- **a memorable experience**

Give students a few seconds to think what to talk about but not longer than 1 minute - the activity is designed to help students develop their anecdotes.

1-2-3 3-2-1 Activity

- Set up the students in concentric circles facing each other. Students in the inner circle should be facing outwards towards a partner in the opposite outer circle
- Students in the inner circle (speakers) talk to their partner in the outer circle (listeners) about their chosen topic for 1, 2, and 3 minutes. Each time they use the questions asked by the listener at the end of each time limit to expand their story in the next retelling. Student use hesitation devices and vague language to keep speaking and develop their anecdote through each attempt.



- Students then condense the same story from 3 minutes back down to 1 minute trying to keep the ideas and details but increasing speed and improving fluency. Their final 1 minute anecdote should be an improved version of the first attempt in terms of interesting content and fluency.
- Listeners can use back-channelling but can't speak apart from this during the timed speaking tasks. When the time limit is up they ask the speaker questions to give the speaker ideas about what would be interesting to include in their story.
- Repeat the whole activity to give the Listeners an opportunity to speak

Instruction checking questions

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Who is going to speak? | <i>Students in the inner circle only</i> |
| • Should students tell a different story each time? | <i>No, the same story</i> |
| • What could you do if you need more time to think while you are speaking? | <i>Use hesitation phrases 'let me see', 'um', 'well', etc.</i> |
| • What could you do if you need a vocabulary word but do not know the word in English? | <i>Use vague language; 'thingy', 'those big shoe things that help you swim and dive in water'</i> |
| • How could you make your story shorter without cutting out details? | <i>Increase speed, combine ideas together, use contracted language etc.</i> |
| • Will the teacher correct mistakes at the end? | <i>No, the teacher is listening for how well you keep speaking and use hesitation phrases and vague language</i> |

Feedback tasks:

Student reflection questions

Compare your first and last 1 minute stories:

- Do you think you told your story more fluently by the end of the activity? Why or why not?
- What fluency subskills did you use to help you keep talking? (hesitation devices, vague language)
- How did they questions help you develop your story? Did you get some new ideas?

- What did you do to speed up your speaking to fit all your ideas into your story?

Teacher feedback without an accuracy focus

- Comment on the fluency subskills and how effectively they were used
- Say what you observed in terms of students developing their fluency skills and any interesting comparisons between the first and final attempts
- Comment on the content and details of the anecdotes, your natural reaction and any further questions.

Follow up activities:

- Students record their anecdote using the voice recorder on their phone. They listen back and notice any fluency features they used and opportunities to use more
- Students practise and record a 'final attempt' as homework which they send to the teacher for feedback
- Teacher feedback focuses on fluency skills and could be recorded spoken feedback or written comments

Any other info:

Possible introductory task to set the context and purpose for telling anecdotes:

Same Old Story!

Fluency skills for telling an anecdote



1. Do you know someone who is really good at telling stories about their experiences? Why are their stories interesting?

2. Look at the picture. What do you think the man in the green jumper's fishing story will be like?

3. Read the text and choose the best answer

Some people are really skilled at telling stories and may have told the same story for 20 years or more – that is a lot of practice! As we retell stories, we edit them and add details based on our listeners' reactions and what we think is entertaining, funny and interesting. Selective memory can also sneak in, as we exaggerate details or leave out less interesting parts.

Why do you think we retell stories about our lives?

- To entertain or amuse our friends
- To share memorable experiences in our lives
- To remake our memories into better ones
- To lie to our friends and make ourselves look good

Aim:

For students to analyse, rehearse and perform a short skit/drama

Speaking focus:

Accuracy and fluency

Outcomes for students:

Increased confidence; collaboration and teamwork; opportunity to focus on meaning rather than form when speaking; improved pronunciation; expanded vocabulary and increased grammatical awareness

Materials needed:

- A short script (or set of scripts) appropriate for the level and context/interests of the group, with enough roles for each student to meaningfully participate
- if available, an audio or video model

Procedure:

1. Text comprehension
 - Watch/listen/read the text(s); answer comprehension questions/discuss meaning
2. Language analysis:
 - Draw attention to vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation
 - This could involve a focus on intonation, useful expressions/structures and errors common among the group
3. Rehearsal
 - If applicable, divide students into groups and assign plays and roles (groups could work on the same play or a set of different plays)
 - Focus on accuracy through drilling and repetition at first, progressing to a greater focus on meaning (artistic interpretation); incorporate peer and teacher feedback
 - Involve students in staging and blocking decisions as well as costuming/props
4. Performance
 - Perform for classmates; alternatively, other classes could be gathered as an audience for a special performance to raise the stakes.
 - Focus on meaning and communication
 - Peer and teacher feedback

Follow up activities:

- Performances could be recorded and analysed (individually, by peers or by the teacher) for strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback could then be incorporated into a further rehearsal and performance cycle.
- Students could work together (with teacher assistance) to write their own scripts.

Any other info:

This idea was adapted from an action research project conducted by Robert E. Nolan and Robert B. Patterson:

Nolan, Robert E., and Robert B. Patterson. "Curtains, lights: Using skits to teach English to Spanish-speaking adolescents and adults." *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2000, p. 6.

Useful links/resources (free):

- www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/features/drama Intermediate to advanced, with audio
- <http://www.aaronshp.com/rt/RTE.html> Intermediate to advanced; could be abridged
- <http://freedrama.net/short.html> Higher levels; good for idiomatic expressions
- <https://www.dramanotebook.com/plays-for-kids/skits-for-kids-2/> Lower levels
- Scenes from film/TV/radio with English subtitles/transcripts
- Audio recordings from course books with audioscripts

Pause for applause!

Aim:

To raise awareness of the use and benefits of pausing in fluent speech and provide students with practice of pausing

Speaking focus:

Use of pausing

Outcomes for students:

Understand some of the benefits of pausing

Understand that the use and position of pausing is a personal choice

Materials needed:

Example text below or any text which could be read aloud.

Procedure:**Introduction (2 mins)**

- Read the text aloud pausing as marked above and ask the group to count the pauses silently on their fingers

Example text:

Here's an exercise to help you learn to pause.

- Mark up your paragraphs / in this manner / into the shortest possible phrases. / First, / whisper it, / breathing / at all the breath marks. / Then, / speak it / in the same way. / Do this / with a different paragraph / every day.

Reference: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/five-ways-to-speak-like-obama/>

- Ask students how many pauses they counted. Note any differences and elicit some of the reasons for this (speaker may have not paused for long enough, different recognition of pausing)
- Elicit some factors which may affect the length of a pause (personal comfort levels and confidence, risk of losing your turn in a conversation or appearing strange if you pause for too long)
- Elicit some of the benefits of pausing (gives the listener time to process information, can be used to clearly mark clauses within a sentence, can enhance the dramatic effect or humour etc.)

Activity (5 mins)

Students take turns reading the text to their partner or small group and experimenting with the length of pausing.

The speaker wants the listeners to correctly count the number of times they pause. The pauses need to be long enough for the listeners to register them so they can count correctly. If the speaker pauses for too long and it is starting to seem like a speech, the listener(s) should start clapping.

Procedure

1. Speaker looks at the text and decides how many times they want to pause (They can pause in all the indicated places on the card or more or less. The reason for this is to highlight that use of pausing is a personal choice and there is no single right way)
2. The speaker reads the text and the listeners silently count the pauses on their fingers. If the listeners think a pause is too long they clap. In the first attempt students experiment with how long they can hold a pause before the listeners start clapping. This is too experiment with how long is too long to pause. In further practice attempts, success is when the listeners correctly count the speaker's intended pauses and there is no clapping
3. All students take turns and reflect on the most successful attempts

ICQS

- How many times should the speaker pause and where? Speaker can decide but should try to enhance understanding for example, pausing at the end of clauses helps)
- What should the listeners do? Listen and silently count the pauses on their fingers.
- When should the listeners clap? When they think the pause is too long
- What is a successful turn? When the number of pauses the speaker thinks they matches the listeners' number and there is no clapping!

Discuss (3 mins)

What do you think are some of the benefits of pausing?

What happens when there is too much pausing or the pausing is too long?

Compare how you felt about pausing at the beginning and end of the activity. Did pausing get easier for you? Why or why not?

How useful was this activity for you? Why?

Aim:
To explore opinions and possible alleviation strategies on the topic of video game addiction

Speaking focus:

- To increase fluency practice

Outcomes for students:

- speak confidently and express opinions clearly.
- respond to other's ideas and provide verbal feedback to peers
- use intelligible pronunciation patterns to ensure comprehensibility
- demonstrate critical thinking.

Materials needed:

- Flipgrid account (Teachers) <https://info.flipgrid.com/>
- Internet connection
- A digital device with microphone and camera e.g. mobile, tablet, laptop
- (Optional) Input video: Escaping video game addiction: Cam Adair at TEDxBoulder https://youtu.be/EHmC2D0_Hdg

Procedure:
This was designed as a flipped activity but could be used during class time.

1. Before class, students check the pre-lesson activity on *flipgrid*.
2. Students watch a TED Talk on video game addiction and answer the following questions.
 - What is your reaction to the speaker's ideas?
 - Do you agree with the speaker's solutions?
 - In your, opinion, what can be done to alleviate the issue of video game addiction? Who is responsible?
3. Students share their opinion with the class by making a short video response on flipgrid (maximum time: 90 secs)
4. Students watch at least 2 other students' video responses and comment (students can be in allocated groups).

Follow up activities:

1. In groups, students discuss the validity of the solutions suggested in the TED Talk and add their own possible solutions to the issue of video game addiction.
2. Students write an essay on the issue of video addiction highlighting the causes, effects and possible solutions.
3. Students create a social marketing campaign to reduce video addiction.
4. Students choose another topic and create a task for classmates using flipgrid.

Flipgrid allows teachers to provide criterion based feedback to each student focusing on areas such as content, quality of ideas and providing individualised feedback on pronunciation.

Any other info:

Flipgrid is an easy-to-use video response player which allows students as well as teachers to record and display videos on one web page.

There are endless ways to use flipgrid. Here are some other ideas

- Interview - students can record interviews with classmates, staff or member of the public.
- Discussion – students can continue to explore lesson topics, discuss ideas and share opinions outside the

classroom

- Reflection - students can record reflections on performance and learning goals.
- Pronunciation - Students can practice pronunciation and receive teacher and/or peer feedback.
- Feedback - teachers can provide formative criteria-based feedback to each students for speaking activities.
- Presentations - students can record group and individual presentations
- Tutorials -students can record 'how to' mini-tutorials for peers.

Aim:

To raise students' awareness of some of the conventions of turn taking in informal spoken interaction.

To raise awareness of and provide spoken practice of some useful phrases used in turn taking.

To provide freer spoken practice of turn taking skills in informal spoken interaction.

Speaking focus:

Turn taking in informal conversations. Coming to a group decision. Useful phrases for turn taking.

Outcomes for students:

Students will be more aware of and have practice of some common phrases to use in turn taking in informal spoken interaction.

Students will feel more confident about the conventions of turn taking in English

Quieter/shy students will gain more confidence to speak in group tasks

Students will get the opportunity to have spoken practice of the phrases

Materials needed:

A ball or a scrunched up piece of paper

Handout with useful phrases for turn taking

Discussion question for task

Procedure:

Teacher asks students the following questions:

Do you find having conversations in English difficult? If so, why?

What makes a good conversation?

What makes a bad conversation?

Teacher tells students that in English we have ways of keeping conversations going, expressions to show people we want to speak and expressions to show that we are finished and we want another person to speak. Teacher tells students that this is called turn taking. Teacher tells students that they do it in their language too, but that the 'rules' might be a bit different and we will look at a few of them today. Highlights that these are for informal conversations and may not be appropriate for more formal situations.

Explain to students that they will have a question to answer as a group and they must come to a group decision by the end of the task. Hand out turn taking sentences/actions. Ask students to put sentences/actions into the following categories:

- Politely interrupting/ recognising the appropriate moment to get a turn and signalling the fact you want to speak

- Yielding a turn, signalling your turn is finished and offering the floor to another person
- Back channelling
- Offering a turn
- Signalling to get a turn

Model and drill with particular focus on intonation of sentences. Teacher elicits that for the polite interruption sentences, our voices go up as we want to talk and keep talking and when we are finished a turn and want to involve another person in the conversation, our voices go down to show we are finished speaking. Check meaning.

Show students the ball/scrunched up piece of paper and tell them that they must aim to hold the ball as equally as possible during the task. Tell students only the person holding the ball can speak. They can give the ball to someone else to have a turn or they can (politely!) steal the ball from someone if they want a turn. Model with a strong student if necessary.

Tell students they should try to use the phrases on their handout and tick them off as they go.

Give students the discussion task. For example:

Decide on the three best ways to improve your speaking skills outside the classroom (can give prompts for lower level students)

Imagine your friends are coming to Sydney for a holiday. What do you recommend them to do while they are here? (Can give pictures as prompts)

Decide on the best job for... (give students a profile of a jobseeker and some options for different jobs)

For MeetELT, ask group to discuss and decide on the topic and focus of the next MeetELT event in Sydney

Give the ball to one person in the group and ask them to start the discussion. Give them a strict time limit and tell them they must have come to a decision by the end of the activity.

Monitor for good language and intonation.

Ask groups for feedback at the end of activity. Give feedback on good use of expressions and intonation.

Follow up activities:

Can be used for future discussions in class.

Any other info:

Can ask students to repeat activity again without useful expressions in front of them.

Can show models of good and bad conversations.

Can elicit useful phrases from students for higher level classes.

Georgia and Deirdre – EF

Aim:

To help teachers and students identify and overcome fluency problems
To help teachers develop assessment and feedback strategies for fluency based tasks
To help teachers identify aims of different speaking tasks in order to help them isolate speaking sub skills

Speaking focus: e.g turntaking, feedback, correction etc

Assessment and feedback strategies for improving fluency

Outcomes for students:

To be able to identify problems with their fluency
To be able to identify improvement in their fluency

Materials needed:

N/A

Procedure:

- Present a range of speaking based tasks and ask teachers to identify the main subskill each assesses – improving fluency, communicative achievement, pronunciation, discourse management
- Identify the fluency based task as our focus for the presentation
- Ask/Elicit: “What are the qualities of a fluent speaker?” - Teachers to come up with can-do statements
- Ask/Elicit: If this were an in class task/assessment – what are the aims, what is the procedure? (Teachers to fill in partially completed lesson plan)
- Model task – Interview: students answer questions spontaneously and build on initial responses as fluently as possible
- Teachers to do the task in pairs
- Ask/Elicit: What would the feedback process be? (Teachers to fill in partially completed lesson plan)
- Question and Answer

Follow up activities:

The teachers will be given partially completed lesson plans for each of the other speaking tasks. If there is time – we will encourage them to consider the aims, stages and feedback process of each of these and use them in future speaking focused classes.

Aim:

To raise awareness and give students practice in the pronunciation of the minimal pairs /i/ and /i:/, including within number. As well as highlighting the pronunciation of auxiliaries and given students practice.

Speaking focus: Awareness raising and pronunciation.

Outcomes for students:

Understand the difference between minimal pairs especially long and short sounds
Recognise the pronunciation of auxiliary verbs

Materials needed:

Pictures and whiteboard

Procedure:

Minimal Pairs

T shows Ss first picture and elicits : "He bit the man"

T shows Ss first picture and elicits: "He beat the man"

T elicits hand gestures for each sentence

T says sentences randomly and students respond with the appropriate gesture

S repeat exercise in pairs

T repeats activity silently

S do activity silently in pairs

Repeat activity with *ship/sheep*

T shows Ss first picture and elicits : "She saw a sheep"

T shows Ss first picture and elicits: "She saw a ship"

Teacher demonstrates pulling long and short sounds from their mouth using their hands instead of using the hand gestures from earlier.

T says sentences randomly and students respond with the appropriate gesture

S repeat exercise in pairs

T repeats activity silently

S do activity silently in pairs

Auxiliary verbs

Teacher has 2 columns of sentences on whiteboard:

One column has sentences with auxiliary verbs:

| Column A | Column B |
|--------------------|------------------|
| I've got a dog. | I got a dog. |
| I'll sleep in. | I sleep in. |
| He's had a nap. | He had a nap. |
| We'd go to London. | We go to London. |

Numbers

| Column A: oO | Column B: Oo |
|--------------|--------------|
| Thirteen | thirty |
| Fourteen | forty |
| Fifteen | fifty |
| Sixteen | Sixty |
| Seventeen | Seventy |
| Eighteen | Eighteen |
| Nineteen | ninety |

T elicits words for each column

T says sentences randomly and students respond with the appropriate gesture

S repeat exercise in pairs

T repeats activity silently

S do activity silently in pairs

Follow up activities:

Pronunciation Journey from Pronunciation Games and activities.

Any other info:

These activities are very versatile of can be done remedially or when presenting grammar or vocabulary after a speaking activity or when presenting grammatical structures.

Virginia Mawer – EF

Aim:

To help teachers to increase student communication in the classroom
To teach a methodology that can be provided to students for their own study
To increase creative use

Speaking focus:

Using new vocabulary
Transferral of skills (reading/writing into speaking)

Outcomes for students:

To learn classroom and study techniques for controlled speaking practice through to freer use of target language.
To build confidence in speaking

Materials needed:

Any coursebook or authentic material being used in your lesson

Procedure:

Here are the steps that I drill into my students.

- 1) If it's a written text, they'll do some prediction on the topic. This activates what they do already know, and helps them relate what they're about to learn to what's already in their world view.
- 2) Then they'll do a variety of skimming and scanning tasks to try to get an understanding of what the text is about in general.
- 3) Fill in gaps/choose words/do the language thing. You can make this stage easier or harder by providing the words or not.
- 4) Provide answers if this is not inherently within the task.

Don't stop there!

- 5) Practice step A – easy testing. If you're testing vocab, one partner could have the book open in front of them and say the new word.
- 6) Practice step B – harder testing. This would be where a definition is given and the students need to remember the exact word (possibly even spelling). The partner who is listening has their book closed and would need to provide a definition. If they feel the language is super new/difficult for them, they can get the first letter given to them.
- 7) Testing partner creates a sentence using the language and say 'bzzzzzz' and students need to say the new word or phrase (altering the tense/form if possible) or whatever that should go in the gap (no looking for this part)! Further to this, the 'producing student' then has to repeat the entire sentence from memory.

Note: Students should ask each other which practice stage they'd like to start on. If they feel confident, they can tell their partner to go straight to the hardest task. They can cycle through this process-I think it's nice to watch students fluidly swing between hard and easy, depending on their confidence, areas of interest, energy levels or experience.

- 8) Extension activity 1 - both students close their books and performing all these steps again
- 9) Extension 2-tell stories using as much of the new language as possible
- 10) Extension 3 – create own gap fill that is read to a different partner
- 11) Extension 4 - Students create the longest sentence with as much of the language as possible
- 12) Go wild – any task of their choice-Students can be sooooo creative if given the chance

Follow up activities:

Encourage students to meet together after class in a café, park or pub and use the techniques learnt in class to practice the language learnt in class.

Any other info:

What are the benefits?

Student-centred = the sts are doing all the interacting i.e. the onus is completely on them

High demand learning = sts are given a real life, large goal (using natural words and phrases)

Communicative = more engaging for sts

High stakes = social motivation to engage and do your best and supportive in getting students further than they are.

Creative=students modify and play with language

Focuses on learning outcomes =actually practices the thing you want them to practice

Confidence building = staged improvement that can be seen.

Models independent learning = sts are presented with a methodology that can be replicated outside class

Fosters positive class relationships and partner work

Instant classroom management= Students know what to go on with if they finish quickly.

Everyone improves from their own starting point and at their own pace.