

Teaching **English** training videos



Fluency

Effective communication

1 Before you watch

Fluency is the ability to communicate meaning without too much stopping or hesitating. In contrast to this, we can also talk about **accuracy**, which refers to the correctness of a student's use of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary.

Here are some things that students say about trying to be fluent.

- I worry about making mistakes.
- I feel very shy when I speak English in front of my classmates.
- I often don't have the words to say what I want and I get stuck when I don't know a word.
- I always want to ask the teacher if my English is correct.
- Sometimes I don't have any ideas about what to say, or the topic isn't interesting for me.
- I don't see the point of just chatting to my classmates in English.
- It depends who I'm talking to, if I'm with my friends I can speak more easily.

Do you think your students might agree with any of these comments?

What about you? Which things do you find it easier to talk about fluently in English? Are there any situations where you find it more difficult to speak fluently – in English and in your own language?

Make notes in the box. Work in pairs if you can.

2 Watch

Read the advice below. Which three pieces of advice are **not** particularly useful when focusing on fluency with students? Put a cross next to them.

- A** Tell students not to worry about making mistakes.
- B** Encourage students to use body language and facial expressions.
- C** Ask students to read out loud.
- D** Help students with intonation.
- E** Try to get your students to feel relaxed.
- F** Use fun activities, to get students talking.
- G** In the lesson, start with activities that focus on accuracy and move on to activities that focus on fluency.
- H** Interrupt students if they make a mistake.
- I** Ask students to talk about themselves, their ideas and interests.
- J** Ask students to try to speak as quickly as possible.

Now watch Programme 9 to check your answers. What else have you learnt about fluency? Discuss your ideas with a partner if you can.

3 Watch again

Watch again. Make notes under the following headings:

Effective communication

Useful practice

Freer practice

Change of focus

Personalisation

Achieving fluency

Work with a partner if you can and compare your notes. Look at the transcript on pages 104–105 and check your ideas.

4 Analysis and reflection

Planning a speaking activity

- a** Read this example of a teacher's plan.

What's the activity?

A debate: 'Mobile phones are useful for teenagers.'

How does the speaking activity fit into the lesson? What comes before it to help the students with the topic? What language/skills work comes before it?

This activity follows on from a reading skills lesson based on a text about the advantages and disadvantages of modern technology.

I have presented language on giving opinions and drilled it:

eg. I agree with you.

I totally disagree with you.

I don't know about that.

I can see that, but . . .

I believe that . . .

Students have worked in groups to make a list of advantages and disadvantages of mobile phones.

How are you going to organise the classroom and students? What is the seating plan?
How are the students going to work, in pairs/groups?

Students are divided into two groups. The chairs are arranged facing each other. Those who agree with the statement will sit on the right, those against will sit on the left.

Check that your instructions are simple and note them down. What time-limit will you give?

We are going to have a debate. What's a debate? (Elicit/tell students the answer)

Group A, you agree with this statement. Group B, you disagree. You have 15 minutes to prepare your arguments.

Elena and Rita you speak for group A. Ivan and Thomas, you speak for group B. (Select stronger students to give the speeches).

You will have two minutes to present your arguments. A will go first, then B.

(Give students time to prepare arguments, monitor by wandering around and giving help when necessary).

Now we will have the debate. First A and then B will present their arguments. Everybody listen and make notes about any questions or points to ask the other side.

Marco, you time the speeches and tell them when to finish. Remember they only have two minutes each.

Now group B you have three minutes to ask any questions to side A. And then side A will have a chance to ask questions. Marco, you check the time.

You must put your hand up to ask a question. You mustn't talk while another person is talking. Ok you can start. Group B, Who would like to ask a question? Hands up.

(debate continues and I make notes on language)

Here are some faces. Think about the arguments. Decide. Do you now agree or disagree with the motion? If you agree draw a happy face, if you disagree draw a sad face.

What language are you going to monitor for? Where are you going to stand, while monitoring?

I am going to sit to one side of the class and listen to the debate. I will note down good examples of language and any mistakes in vocabulary about technology. I will also note down mistakes in language for giving opinions. I'm going to write down the examples.

How are you going to do feedback?

I will hold a vote, using smiley and sad faces at the end of the debate. I will then write the good and bad examples on the board and ask students to work in groups to identify the sentences with mistakes and correct them. I will invite students to come and write the correct version on the board.

- b** Now use the questions to write your own plan for a speaking activity you are going to do in the next week or so.

What's the activity?

How does the speaking activity fit into the lesson. What comes before it to help the students with the topic? What comes before it in terms of language work/skills work?

How are you going to organise the class room and students? What is the seating plan?
How are the students going to work, in pairs/groups?



Check that your instructions are simple and note them down. What time-limit will you give?



What language are you going to monitor for? Where are you going to stand while monitoring?



How are you going to do feedback?



- c** When you have done the activity in class, think about how it went. Write notes in the boxes below.

What helped students speak fluently?

What did students find difficult and why?

What could you do to make the activity better, next time?

5 Additional activity

Using differences between people to encourage speaking

One way teachers can get students talking more in class is by making the most of the differences between people. Each student has different knowledge, different experiences and different interests and opinions. Asking students to find out more about these differences can be a motivating, meaningful and authentic way to encourage speaking.

These are some ways that teachers can use students' differences to create interesting lessons:

- Ask students to write general knowledge quizzes – a fun competitive element.
- Ask students to research a topic to present to the rest of the class.
- Questionnaires allow students to share different opinions.
- Ranking activities let students say how important different things are to them.
- Students may enjoy asking the teacher questions about his or her life – to find out real answers.

Creating a genuine information exchange during speaking activities ensures that students will be motivated to speak, and this can make speaking activities go more smoothly and successfully.

6 Suggested classroom activity

1 Discussion activities

Here are some stimulating discussion topics which have worked well with teenagers. The main features of these topics are that they:

- draw on students' personal experience
- ask students to reflect on their own culture and attitudes
- give students a concrete decision to make with their peers.

Teenage time capsule

Each group of students is going to bury a box in the ground for future generations to find. This box will contain five photos (or objects) which will tell young people in the future about life at the start of the third millennium in their country and/or school.

Students must choose their objects/photos together and each member of the group describes it to the rest of the class or another group. Explain why it is important and what it tells of life today.

Let the punishment fit the crime

Prepare a short description on cards (or board) of all the possible punishments in a school (e.g. writing lines, detention, letter to parents) and ask students in pairs or groups to add anymore they can think of.

Then give each group a list of things school students might do wrong (five or six) and ask them to order each act according to how bad they think it is, e.g. swearing at a teacher, not doing homework for three weeks, running in the corridor, smoking in the toilet etc. Now each group can discuss which type of punishment might suit each crime!

This generates lots of discussion on what exactly is unacceptable behaviour but also what the students and their schools think is acceptable punishment.

The ten-day trip

A group of English teenagers are coming to stay in the country or region. They have only got ten days to find out about your students' culture and see what is on offer.

Each group of students must plan an itinerary. It does not have to include all the tourist sights, they could go to a concert to hear local music or have a meal with a family or visit a school. Each must agree on the best introduction to their country and region for their visitors.

These activities first appeared on the Teaching English website, by Clare Lavery, British Council:
www.teachingenglish.org.uk/index.shtml

2 Speaking activity for younger students

Find someone who . . .

Each student writes the end of this sentence on their own piece of paper. The students then mingle and ask each other questions to find the answer to their own question.

These activities first appeared on the Teaching English website, by Sheryl Carvalho, Portugal
www.teachingenglish.org.uk/index.shtml