

## ACCURACY VS FLUENCY IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

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Language as the chief means of communication is not spoken in a vacuum. Knowing a language is not merely knowing the grammatical rules but also knowing when to say what and to whom, that is knowledge of how the system is put to use in the performing of social actions of different kinds. Accuracy and fluency are the two factors which determine the success of English language students in the future. It is a general problem faced by language teachers today, whether to focus on accuracy or fluency. Accuracy refers to the ability of the learner to produce grammatically correct sentences. The learner should not only know correct grammatical rules of the language but also able to speak and write accurately. Fluency refers to a level of proficiency in communication. It is the ability to produce written and spoken sentences with ease, efficiency, without pauses or a breakdown of communication. Generally language teachers have to deal with heterogeneous students having different language background and language skills, different world views, age levels, experiences and point of view. Some students are accurate in speaking and writing but hesitate to speak in public. On the other hand few students are fluent but not accurate. Every student wants to be accurate as well as fluent in speaking and writing. But there are many variables and kinds of learner and differences in classroom that makes teaching sometimes very challenging and interesting. It is a general problem with language teachers that they prefer focusing on grammar activity than on speaking activity. They believe that to learn a second language, grammar is the most important thing to learn first. But if we see how a child does learns his mother tongue or L1. We find that he learns simple words or sentences first by listening or repeating in different contexts. Eventually he starts speaking fluently at the age of three or four; he is able to express most of the things relating with the area of his /her knowledge without knowing the rules of grammar. She/he starts learning the rules of grammar when he enters in class 2 or 3.

In the case of L2 or second language English teaching methods differ in different boards. Like teachers of U.P. Board focus on accuracy or on grammar activities and literature section also focuses on writing correct sentences because it is the demand of the syllabus which is always accuracy based. In other boards like C.B.S.E. or I.C.S.C the teachers focus on fluency. They pay more attention to meaning and context and are less concerned with grammatical errors.

At the B. Tech level we have to deal with the students of both the kinds. Moreover we have to make a balance between accuracy and fluency. In reality accuracy and fluency are closely related, which leads to the notion that accuracy as well as fluency is necessary for successful communication. As language teachers, we should be able to explore along with our students not only grammar of forms but also grammar of functions. A grammar of forms makes us familiar with the grammatical structures and rules designed to show how the systems and subsystems of a language work. But a grammar of function puts together ( i ) the grammatical structures of a language and ( ii ) how these can be used by a variety of people in a variety of situations for interpersonal and organisational communication. But I feel that language cannot be learnt in isolation but within a social and cultural setting. So whether teaching grammar of forms or functions every activity should be contextual. For teaching grammar of forms dictogloss or grammar dictation and task based activities can be adopted. For teaching grammar of functions various activities can be adopted. Main thing is that we should provide them natural atmosphere or we should immerse them in the atmosphere so that they should speak naturally or not feel that they are doing something different. For this group discussion, mock-interview, role play, simulation, research paper presentation in seminars and conferences, debate and speech activities can be better option. In our language classes we go through many activities to develop accuracy and fluency in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Brumfit distinguishes between these two activities, “extensive reading is aimed at fluency but much intensive reading work is aimed at accuracy; free and situational writing exercises are aimed at fluency but all controlled and much guided writing is aimed at accuracy; listening exercises are aimed at accuracy but casual listening in the classroom has a major role as a fluency activity.” (Brumfit, 1984, p.53)

The learner is the most important person in the classroom. However, the learner loses his importance in the teacher’s anxiety to complete his syllabus or a lesson plan. Every teacher is concerned about the students’ progress or welfare but unconsciously his personality dominates and the class becomes teachers centred. The learner centred class treats students as a “tabula rasa” or a clear slate to be worked over and changed by new knowledge. The teacher becomes a guide or felicitator who promotes decision making and learner autonomy in the class. The learner centred teacher should focus on the following things in the class:

- a. Communication in natural and meaningful atmosphere.
- b. Integration of skills.
- c. Real life (authentic) material.
- d. Learning by doing.
- e. Class organisation- individual, pair/group/whole.
- f. Focus on meaning.
- g. Learner involvement.
- h. Teacher as felicitator.

- i. Extending language use beyond the class.
- j. Focus on using the language.
- k. Focus on the process as oppose to product.

Fluency based activities need to be introduced in the language classes and learners involvement should be increased. The teacher should motivate and create tasks for the language skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking and let them free to express themselves in natural classroom situation. As we live in Hindi speaking state we cannot expect from the student to be in a state of readiness in order to learn how to scan for pragmatic information, unless we provide them with a reason for scanning and involve them in different language tasks. To quote Johnson, “The first most central, and by now most generally acceptable implications of the nature of these processes, is that they can only be practised in a language teaching which is task-oriented.” (Johnson, 1979, p.199)

The second implication of these tasks and activities is the concept of information. In all types of language activities, the purpose of interaction is to convey information. In order to make a conversation interesting there should be an element of doubt and information gap activities.

In a second language classroom students should be free to choose what they say within “real time”. The concept of selection or the freedom of expression is the basic to the process of fluent communication.

The forth implication is to match what happens outside the classroom with the activities within the classroom. Outside the classroom the students constantly and spontaneously interact. They are not stopped when they mix two languages or two forms. But in the classroom teachers can monitor their own speech acts, and the speech act of their students. Sometimes we go to the extremes and an over emphasis on fluent language activity may result in errors which are caused by several different processes. These include:

- a. Interlanguage is the type of language produced by second and foreign language learners who are in the process of learning a language. Two types of transfer may occur. Negative transfer is the use of L1 pattern or rule which leads to an error or inappropriate form in the target language ( TL). For example, a Hindi learner of English may produce incorrect sentence I am here since Sunday instead of I have been here since Sunday because of the Hindi pattern. Positive transfer which makes learning easier and it occurs when both the native language and the target language have the same form. For example, French and English.
- b. Overgeneralization.-when a learner extends the use of a grammatical rule beyond its accepted uses. For example, use of mans instead of men.
- c. Communication strategy – it is a way used to express a meaning in the first language, the second or foreign language by a learner who has limited command of the language.
- d. Fossilization is a process which sometimes occurs in which incorrect linguistic features become a permanent part of the way a person speaks or writes a language. Aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary usage and grammar can be fossilized. Errors can be made by the learners due to many reasons but errors should be taken as significant evidence of development and learning. Teachers should not over emphasize

on accuracy and fluency because learners can lose their confidence. To sum up, accuracy and fluency both are the important factors for learning any language. And in the case of second language there should be gradual shift from fluency based activities to accuracy based activities. A language teacher should try to make his/her classes learner centred, every activity should be contextual and task-oriented and focus should be more on fluency first then an accuracy as in case we learn our first language.

#### WORKS CITED

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