

Lesson #

Title: Attention-raising Activities for Fluency

Time frame: 1 hour

Number of participants: Ideally between 10 to 20 participants

Learning outcomes:

1. To understand the definition of fluency and what encourages or discourages its development in adult learners.
2. To understand what attention-raising activities are and how they are related to emotions.
3. To be able to use attention-raising activities in the foreign language classroom to improve fluency.

Lesson structure:

Introduction



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EASE



An Emotionally-intelligent Approach to
teaching Speaking in a forEign Language

Continuing
Professional
Development
Sessions

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INTRODUCTORY SLIDE

This session's introduction is a video of a 'non-native' speaker of English being asked what advice he would give to other non-native employees who often have to do public speaking for work. The man responds with a metaphor, saying that a footballer who runs slowly should pass the ball faster.

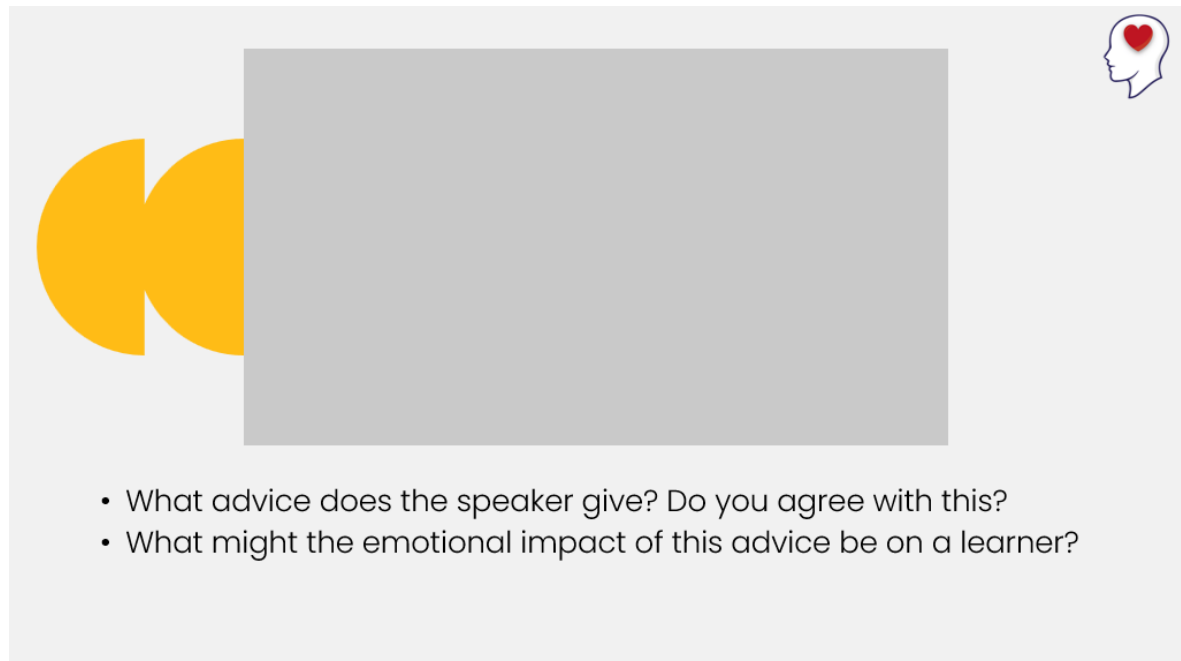
His best advice is to keep your speech short and simple; it's not the big words that will make you sound competent, but the clarity of your message. He also says that "practice, practice, practice, practice" makes perfect.

First, show the video to the participants, then engage in the discussion questions posed afterwards.

The first discussion question under the video (Slide 4) is a simple 'yes or no' question but also allows for some discussion about the topic of improving one's speaking skills in general. Note that this is not specifically about fluency yet and can be more general.

The second question is more speculative; some possible answers include:

- *If learners worry less about using 'impressive vocabulary, they can focus more on their message.*
- *Learners might feel relieved to understand that little mistakes don't matter as much as the clarity of what they're trying to say.*
- *Learners could feel more secure knowing that if they practice enough, they could improve their speaking.*



The slide features a light grey background. On the left side, there is a yellow logo consisting of two overlapping circles. In the center, there is a large, solid grey rectangular area. On the right side, there is a small icon of a white head profile with a red heart inside. Below the grey area, there are two bullet points.

- What advice does the speaker give? Do you agree with this?
- What might the emotional impact of this advice be on a learner?

SLIDE 4

On the following slide (Slide 5), there are three further discussion questions on the topic of fluency and emotional barriers which might stop learners from developing it. If the participants in the session are not aware of the emotional barriers yet, let them know you will discuss it later on in the session.



Introduction

Discussion:

- What is your understanding of how to develop fluency in learners?
- In your experience, what are the biggest challenges with this?
- Which emotional barriers might stop a learner from developing fluency?



SLIDE 5

Content

This section (Slide 6) should provide theoretical knowledge about the session topic. Which content will you present and how will you present it?



Content

Improving fluency using an EI approach

SLIDE 6

The topic of this session is attention-raising activities for fluency, but first the content addresses what fluency is (slide 7) and which emotional barriers might stop a learner from developing it (slide 8).

Take the learners through the content slides (slides 7 to 10), answering any questions that come up and elaborating wherever you feel the need to. For example, you might feel the need to explain that connected (or rapid) speech happens when certain unstressed words in a sentence become weakened (like 'and' becoming 'n,' 'him' becoming 'im,' etc.) and thus almost blend together when speaking fluently. This will be discussed further in the session on teaching native-like speech features.

What is Fluency?



- Fluency is defined as “the capacity to produce speech at a normal rate and without interruption” (Skehan, 2009)
- Note that fluency refers to how well a learner communicates meaning rather than how grammatically accurate their speech is
- Learners can therefore be fluent without necessarily being accurate when speaking, so it is an important distinction to make when discussing oral production

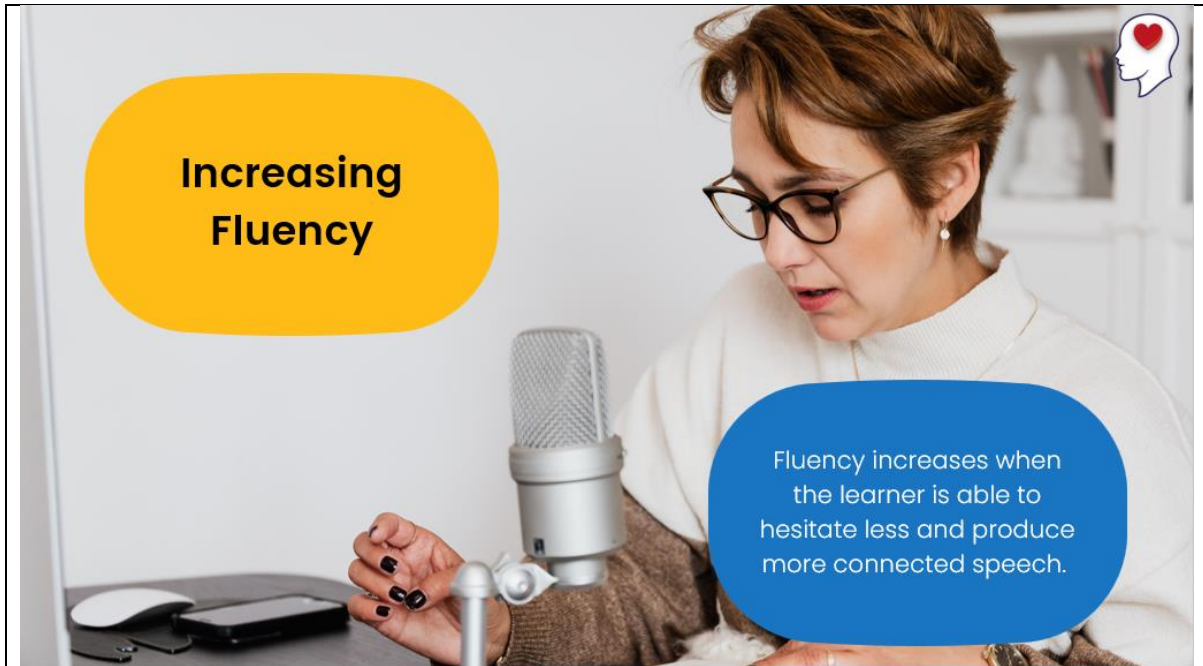
SLIDE 7

Emotional Barriers to Fluency



- Fear of being judged
- Lack of confidence in speaking
- Physical reactions to nervousness (voice cracking, stuttering)
- Awareness of weaknesses

SLIDE 8



SLIDE 9



Techniques
for Applying
EI to Fluency

- Self-reflection activities to identify weaknesses and goals
- Encouraging positive interpersonal relationships in the classroom to reduce embarrassment and foster a comfortable environment. Giving students rehearsal time before a speaking activity so they feel more confident
- Attention-raising activities to improve upon fluency



SLIDE 10

Following this, move to the section Techniques for Applying EI to fluency (Slide 10) and review the advice. The following slide (Slide 11 to 12) outlines Attention-Raising activities.

Attention-Raising Activities

- Sometimes referred to 'consciousness-raising,' 'awareness-raising,' or 'noticing'
- This is when a learner's attention is brought to a specific aspect of language (the pronunciation of the letter r, the use of the phrase by the way, connected speech phenomena, etc.)
- A key component of attention-raising is that the learner reflects on their own use of the language aspect being focused on



SLIDE 11

Attention-Raising Activities

- In speaking activities, attention-raising can be used to improve pronunciation, speed, use of native-like speech features, and other aspects that support fluency
- These activities are known to build confidence in learners' speaking skills



SLIDE 12

Sample activities

Slides 13 to 16 provide sample activities.

- *Partner Dictation*
- *Self-Recording*
- *Passionate Speech*

Slide 14 provides a 5-step partner dictation activity that can be adapted and used with various competencies from A1 to C2. The "Partner Dictation" activity requires identifying a text in advance

and printing it out (for face-to-face sessions). If you know your participants will be native speakers of the language they teach, try to up the difficulty of the chosen texts (or even make some words nonsense) to give them a sense of how a student might feel.



Partner Dictation

This activity can be done with any level and size class. All that is required is 2 different paragraphs of text (paragraphs A and B), chosen by the teacher at an appropriate level, and something to write with.

- Put the students into partners and explain that they will be doing a dictation. Give the partners paragraphs A and B and let them know they are not to look at their partner's paragraph.
- One partner reads paragraph A aloud slowly as the other writes it down. They are allowed to repeat words and even the whole paragraph, if requested by the writer.
- Next, it's the writer's turn to read their paragraph, paragraph B. They repeat step 2.
- The partners then compare what they wrote with paragraphs A and B, identifying mistakes and discussing the misunderstandings; usually the root is the reader's pronunciation or the writer's understanding. Either way, their attention is raised regarding a speaking issue.
- Lastly, each partner reads their paragraph aloud again, focusing on the elements identified in the previous step.

SLIDE 14

Slide 15 provides a 3-step outline of a homework activity where students will record themselves which provides material for a critical self-analysis identifying areas of improvement. Guidance should be given to learners by their teacher before embarking on the activity especially lower levels such as A1 to B2 and should be targeted to specific grammatical, lexical or pragmatic structures. For example, an A1 learner could focus on the contracted forms ("I'm", "You're", "She's" etc.) in simple sentences. Whereas B1 learners could focus on the pronunciation of words that lose a syllable (battery, chocolate, dictionary, etc.).

- Let the students know that they will be doing some self-analysis using a recording device – this should be done in a quiet space if possible. You can pre-assign a text to read aloud or let them choose their own; it should take about 1 minute to read and be appropriate for their language level.
- You can either select a speech aspect to focus on, or let the students choose their own after doing one cold reading of the chosen text and identifying points where they'd like to improve.
- After identifying a point of improvement, the students will re-record themselves, analysing whether that aspect has improved. This should be repeated about 3 times, but more times may be necessary if it is a point of particular difficulty for the student.

Self-Recording



This is ideally a homework activity and can be highly individual to the learner (depending on how you assign it). This activity encourages learners to build confidence by identifying a part of speech that they struggle with and doing targeted practice with it on their own.

SLIDE 15

Slide 16 invites the student(s) to pick a controversial statement and speak about it for a minute. See the APPENDIX for sample statements. This activity is more suited to more advanced learners who possess the vocabulary to frame arguments in a logical and coherent fashion using sophisticated vocabulary and discourse markers. The teacher / instructor should attempt to play devils advocate and this should be established before the activity begins.



Passionate Speech

This activity is ideal for one-to-one lessons and requires a timer of some kind. It can also be done in more advanced-level classes (B2+) as a partner activity, as long as you preface how to give feedback sensitively.

- The teacher (or one partner if during a class) uses a set of statements numbered 1-20. The statements are of somewhat controversial nature (ex. Household work should be split equally between partners, no matter how much either one works).
- The student picks a number randomly from 1-20 and the teacher (or partner) reads the statement.
- The student speaks about the topic for at least one minute, timed, while the teacher takes note of about 5 to 8 corrections or points of improvement. These should be specific and achievable corrections; otherwise, the activity might become more frustrating than useful for the student.
- The teacher (or partner) gives the feedback to the speaker
- The speaker answers the same question again, focusing on the feedback given.
- If being done in class, the partners can take turns answering questions in this way.

SLIDE 16

Conclusion

Slide 17, invites participants to reflect on the presentation and the themes within by asking questions to encourage discussion about the potential emotional impact of attention-raising activities.



Conclusion

- How can you use attention-raising activities in your own classroom?
- Which sample activity did you find the most useful? Which did you find the most stressful?
- What might the emotional impact of these types of activities be on a learner?

SLIDE 17

Bibliography and resources for further learning

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Notes for the facilitator:

Note that the topic of this session is very specific and might not be very well-known among the participants, so it may require a bit of background research in order to elaborate on the questions they may have. It is suggested to read through the bibliography materials before conducting the session.

Printable materials:

On the next page

APPENDIX

Passionate Speech

Controversial statements sheet

1. Being vegan is the right thing to do.
2. The death penalty is sometimes justified.
3. Household chores should be split equally between partners, no matter how much either one works.
4. Drug addicts should be helped, not punished.
5. Religion has its place in the government.
6. We should heavily tax the richest 1% of people.
7. School uniforms should always be required for schoolkids.
8. Social media is a terrible influence on most people, but especially teenagers.
9. Men should get paternity leave from work when they have a child.
10. Cats are superior to dogs.
11. A little bit of narcissism can take you far in life.
12. We shouldn't stress over what could happen 5 years from now.
13. Children under 14 years old should not be allowed to have a mobile phone.

14. The biggest problem in the world right now is climate change.
15. Teachers shouldn't give homework – it's a waste of your free time.
16. Royal families shouldn't exist anymore.
17. A major goal in anyone's life should be to find a partner who makes them happy.
18. Men shouldn't express their emotions too much; it's not manly.
19. Fast food should be banned because it's addictive and causes obesity.
20. World hunger can easily be solved if just 1 or 2 billionaires would try and solve it.