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„A conceptual discussion of 'fluency' and its implications for the EFL classroom"

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1. Introduction

The term fluency is frequently discussed as a prerequisite of successful oral communication. Its significant role in the acquisition of foreign language proficiency has been repeatedly highlighted within the literature on language learning and teaching, respectively. Due to the fact that "the mixing of language groups [has] accelerated to levels never experienced before", achieving a degree of speaking competence in a foreign language (or even in foreign languages) "is no longer simply a luxury" but rather an "economic and social necessity" (Segalowitz 2010: 161). Given this significant role, it is certainly of utmost importance "to think seriously about [oral] fluency" (ibid) and given implications.

This paper is intended to provide a detailed discussion of spoken fluency. Bringing together several perspectives and experiences, a framework of overall characteristics of fluent oral production will be established. Apart from a focus on specific fluency features, particular attention will be given to the implications for foreign language classroom instruction. For that matter eight Austrian EFL teachers were interviewed within a case study on respective teacher beliefs. In a presentation of relevant findings, theoretical considerations of the concept meet the practical needs of the language learner.

Evidently, oral fluency is considered most relevant by linguists, practitioners, and learners. However, the phenomenon has been only insufficiently defined within linguistic research. That is, definitions of oral fluency often lack "precision" (Wood 2001: 574) in the attempt to offer a comprehensive description of the concept. Without doubt, fluency is an "elusive notion" (Guillot 1999: 3) which is hardly to surpass in its complexity. Hence it is no surprise that the notion is often only vaguely defined "and used as a substitute for a group of aspects of proficiency in general" (Wood 2001: 574). Despite this present inconsistency as regards its definition, oral fluency is a performance phenomenon that has been repeatedly studied within research.

> The body of literature concerning fluency has identified key temporal variables of speech which can be linked to psycholinguistic aspects of performance and production (ibid.).

However, a predominant focus on temporal and sequential aspects of speech in the discussion of relevant fluency features has been severely criticised over the last decades. Only recently the issue of adequate definition has again received great interest among scholars in the field. And it is this issue that will be addressed within this paper.

2. Defining „oral fluency“

The term "fluency" is widely used. It is a term not exclusively bound to the discourse among applied linguists or language teachers as it commonly appears in every-day speech as well: *She speaks Spanish fluently. He is a fluent speaker of English. These learners have gained a high level of fluency.* The meaning of such phrases seems clear. However, when starting to consider the notion behind the term, an attempt to actually define what "fluency" means turns out to be less straightforward. When searching for a "definition of fluency" on Google, one is currently provided with an approximate number of 17.300.000 results covering and explaining the term in every possible context. To give an example regarding language use, the online *Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary* defines 'fluency' as "the quality to speak easily and smoothly" (www.learnersdictionary.com/search/fluency). The online version of the *Oxford Dictionaries*, on the other hand, offers the following definition of fluency: "the ability to speak or write a particular foreign language easily and accurately [...]", and "the ability to express oneself easily and articulately" (oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/fluency). Literature, too, offers a great many of more or less diverse definitions of that kind. Especially in the field of (applied) linguistics and language teaching, both theorists and practitioners have engaged in the discussion about fluency and its 'proper' definition. A lot of different viewpoints have been expressed, along with several descriptions, i.e. definitions, of the term.

According to Hedge (2000: 54),

> fluency is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation.

In contrast, Brumfit (1984: 56-57) points out that fluency is

> to be regarded as natural language use, whether or not it results in native-speaker-like language comprehension or production, […] seen as the maximally effective operation of the language system so far acquired by the student.

Rossiter et al (2010), in turn, lean towards the definition of Koponen and Riggenbach (2000: 6) in their article on "oral fluency" which they view as "the neglected component in the communicative language classroom". Their definition, though broader, seems relatively reminiscent of those often found in dictionaries (cf. Guillot 1999: 3):

> we define fluency as a performance phenomenon related to 'flow, continuity, automaticity, or smoothness of speech' (Rossiter et al 2010: 584).

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This list of various definitions from notable sources could be continued for an endless number of pages. However, finding **the one** and best definition of the notion discussed seems impossible – no matter how long the list or how intense the research. Instead of extending the list, it might thus be more fruitful to re-evaluate the definitions provided so far and compare individual sources for reoccurring descriptors of the concept. Unravelling such key defining elements could be another useful step in the attempt to comprehensively define fluency.

A closer look at the given sample definitions immediately reveals a number of considerations to be taken into account within such an attempt. These important points of consideration shall be identified and briefly discussed below. Additionally, this will point towards the chosen direction of this paper.

First and foremost, a distinction between the different forms of fluency within the context of language use needs to be taken into account. In this paper the focus lies on oral fluency, only. That is, fluency in writing or reading will not be part of the discussion. Apart from an overall distinction of fluency related to either writing or reading or speaking, Segalowitz (2010: 46ff.) provides an additional sub-differentiation which is to be considered highly relevant. That is, he keeps apart "three senses of fluency" (ibid. 47), namely cognitive fluency, utterance fluency and perceived fluency. All of these three subcategories are equally important constituents of oral fluency and must therefore be an integral part of a thorough consideration of the phenomenon. Explanations of these three aspects or meanings of fluency will be provided in the course of a more detailed discussion of the phenomenon (see chapter 2).

Another crucial parameter for defining the term fluency is the choice of target group to which fluency as a competence can and shall be attributed. In other words, a distinction between fluent L1 and fluent L2 speakers is especially decisive in this respect. Furthermore, the fact that there is a general discrepancy in the perceptions of fluency as an oral ability needs to be taken into account, as well. Perceptional differences and the distinction between L1 and L2 fluency will be discussed in more detail in chapters 3 and 4.1., respectively. Referring to this, it should though be highlighted that the attention will primarily be on the fluent language learner, i.e. L2 speaker. The knowledge and the competences a language learner has to acquire in order to become what is called "a fluent speaker", along with efficient means of teaching/enhancing oral fluency, will thus be the centre of the following discussion.

Looking once more at the sample definitions of fluency provided above, it is particularly noticeable that all of them are marked by a strong presence of vague terminology in the

specific attempt to describe fluency as a performance phenomenon of the skilled language user. "Using language easily and smoothly" or "expressing oneself articulately" and "without strain or inappropriate slowness", that is, "natural language use" (cf. definitions provided above) are all phrases that do, without doubt, describe the phenomenon in a plausible way. Kaponen and Riggenbach (2000: 7) argue that the general understanding of the term can be described with one underlying concept, namely "language is motion". That is, fluency has definitely something to do with fluidity of words and sentences, with ease of communication and easily moving units of speech. Still and that is the point, all of these defining phrases allow and do leave plenty of room for interpretation. And that is, of course, problematic. Unsurprisingly, the use of vague, i.e. problematic language, in descriptions of fluency, is not only representative in the samples provided above but can be called a general characteristic of most definitions of fluency provided in the literature over the last decades. Guillot (1999: 3) approaches this vagueness problem by labelling fluency as an "elusive notion". Her conclusion is as follows:

> Although the question of fluency is sometimes signalled as a problem area […], its meaning on the whole tends to be simply assumed, taken for granted, or elusively defined – explicitly or implicitly – as something like 'ease of communication' or 'smoothness of expression', that is to say in ways reminiscent of general dictionary definitions. (ibid.)

Of course, Guillot hereby explicitly and legitimately points towards a problem that cannot be denied: fluency is, indeed, hard to define. That is why some authors seem to consciously avoid the term "fluency" and prefer using related umbrella terms instead. In such cases, fluency is substituted by, or compared to terms and phrases such as "managing talk" (Thornbury 2011), 'conversational competence' (Thornbury & Slade 2006), 'automatic procedural skill' (Schmidt 1992), etcetera.

Neither intuition nor avoidance can serve as reliable means of defining fluency - even if both L1 speakers and language teachers may well have acquired a seemingly trustworthy feeling for fluent language use, allowing them to simply judge from what they hear (cf. Guillot 1999: 26). The question therefore is, whether fluency is assessable, that is, objectively measurable, at all. A look at units of measurement used in studies on fluency may help to answer this question as well as it may provide additional useful information for defining fluency.

2.1.   Fluency and its units of measurement

Even if an ultimate definition seems far from easily available when comparing different sources, the concept of fluency is agreed upon to be a crucial element of language use which necessitates investigation. Looking at various studies on fluency, including both early and recent ones, the literature mainly shows two principal, but distinct ways of treating the concept within investigation. Thus, one way of treating fluency is to view it as a conglomerate of temporal aspects influencing fluidity in oral production, i.e. speech. Another way, however, suggests leaning on fluency as an overall language proficiency phenomenon, or more precisely, treating it as **one** component of oral proficiency. This second view promotes a shift of focus from the mere speaker and the way their speech is processed in real time to the listener and their overall perception of the performance. (cf. e.g. Derwing et al 2009: 534, García-Amaya 2009: 68).

Considering these two principal ways of treating fluency in its investigation, García-Amaya (2009: 68) speaks of a generally greater focus on fluency as "the way speech is processed and articulated in real time" as opposed to treating it as a "vague concept of proficiency". Given this trend, many investigations "have been concerned with establishing the appropriate measures of fluency". (Kormos and Dénes 2004: 6). Certainly, quantitative measures have been considered most likely usable (cf. Segalowitz 2010: 5). In this sense, research has started to rely predominantly on temporal aspects as a basis for precise measurement of fluency:

> Fluency phenomena are of two basic kinds: *temporal variables*, such as speech rate, pause length and length of run (i.e. the mean number of syllables between pauses); and *hesitation phenomena*, such as filled pauses (e.g. *erm*), repetitions and self-corrections […] Of these, the ability to produce lengthy runs seems to be a defining characteristic of oral fluency. [Furthermore,] […] fewer repetitions, longer turns and faster speech rate are all indications of an increase in *fluency*. (Thornbury & Slade 2006: 216)

As can be inferred from the quote above, linguistic research on L2 fluency, in their baseline approach, has focused on the differentiation of more fluent versus less fluent speech. Obviously, such a differentiation has been predominantly based on temporal qualities of spoken performances (Segalowitz 2010: 29). Accordingly, Kormos and Dénes (2004: 6) identified three empirical strategies that have been commonly used by researchers:

> they either investigated the development of fluency longitudinally [...], or compared fluent and non-fluent speakers [...] or correlated fluency scores with temporal variables [...].

In contrast, quite different strategies have been suggested by those researchers who view fluency as one component of oral proficiency. Segalowitz (2010: 29) lists four of such alternative strategies and points towards the apparent shift in focus, as mentioned earlier:

— Differentiate more from less fluent speech on some basis independent of the speech features to be measured, for example, by listener ratings

— Use speech samples from speakers' L1 as baseline measures at which to contrast their L2 speech

— Take samples from the same speaker at different times during L2 development

— Define fluency a priori in some way (e.g. by educational level attained) and then investigate which features most influence the way listeners judge fluency

(Segalowitz 2010: 29-30)

Essentially, one of these alternative strategies focuses on a speaker's L1 performance as a reliable reference point for the assessment of their performance in the L2. This link between L1 and L2 performance is, however, neither new, nor exclusively bound to treating fluency as a concept of proficiency. As García-Amaya points out, second language investigations of fluency are actually based on methods that have been traditionally applied in psycholinguistic L1 research. (ibid.) That is, fluency studies mainly follow the "tradition of Goldman Eisler's *pausological* studies" of the 1960s, in which Eisler was able to show that hesitation is even common in L1 speech (ibid.). "In this sense", García-Amaya (2009: 68) continues,

> second language acquisition (SLA) investigations have also analyzed fluency in terms of temporal variables: words per minute (Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; [...] Segalowitz & Freed, 2004), words per second (Binnenporte, Van Bael, den Os, & Boves, 2005), and syllables per second (Temple, 1992), in combination with the production of "hesitation phenomena" such [as][sic!] unfilled and filled pauses (Freed et al., 2004; Lennon, 1990; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; and Temple 1992). Surprisingly, previous fluency studies in SLA literature treat speech rate as a rather definite measure and do not account for the existing range that learners show in their speech.

To summarise and complete, a list of these and other common units of measurement in research on fluency shall be provided below. This list serves as an overview and is taken from Segalowitz (2010: 6) who cites Kormos (2006: 163) as primary source for his adapted version:

Measure (units)	Definition
(1) Speech rate (syllables/minute)	60 sec./min. Times the total number of syllables divided by total time (including pauses) in seconds
(2) Articulation rate (syllables/minute)	60 sec./min. times the total number of syllables divided by total time (excluding pauses) in seconds
(3) Phonation-time ratio (percentage ratio)	Percentage ratio of time speaking to time to take the whole speech sample
(4) Mean length of runs (number of syllables)	Average number of syllables between pauses (period of silence ≥ 250 ms)
(5) Silent pauses per minute (number of silent pauses/ minute)	60 sec./min. times total number of pauses (periods of silence > 200 ms) divided by the total time speaking in seconds
(6) Mean length of pauses (seconds)	Mean length of all pauses (periods of silence > 200 ms)
(7) Filled pauses per minute (filled pauses/minute)	60 sec./min. times total number of filled pauses (pauses filled with uhm, mm, er, etc.) divided by the total time speaking in seconds
(8) Dysfluencies per minute (dysfluencies/minute)	60 sec./min. times total number of dysfluencies (repetitions, restarts, repairs) divided by the total time speaking in seconds
(9) Pace (stressed words/minute)	Number of stressed words per minute
(10) Space (ratio of stressed words/total words)	Proportion of stressed words to total number of words

(Segalowitz 2010: 6)

García-Amaya (2009) referred to above also uses these basic measures in his own study on second language fluency enhancement while, at the same time, criticising earlier studies for having a too narrow focus. As regards "the search for potential markers of L2 oral fluency" (Segalowitz 2010: 29) and the empirical work on factors contributing to an enhancement of a learner's level of fluency, García-Amaya (2009: 68ff.) suggests that an alternative procedure, above all including a focus on longer and multiple periods of speaking performance, would lead to more adequate and thus more reliable results. Even the investigation of four-minute sequences developed and conducted by Segalowitz and Freed (2004) is, from his point of view, not reliable enough as it still focuses on one short moment of production only. This could simply not cater for a reasonable interpretation of the overall fluency of individual

participants, so García-Amaya (2009: 68). His own study consequently follows his declared premise

> that measuring different turns is a more accurate way of calculating overall fluency measures for second language learners. (García-Amaya 2009: 78)

The study under consideration is, as already mentioned, an empirical investigation of potential fluency enhancement factors and shall briefly be presented. García-Amaya (2009) investigated 4 different groups of L2 Spanish learners (2 study at home groups: AH1, AH2, one group of learners participating in a so-called immersion programme: IM, and one group of learners who have spent some time studying abroad: SA) and analysed multiple, longer speech sequences of the individual participants, comparing all four groups with each other plus comparing each of them with a group of native speakers of Spanish (NS). The most important findings of the study were a significant "intrarange variation" within the L2 groups and a much better performance of the IM group in contrast to the SA group. Members of the IM group were able to perform with a higher speech rate, fewer filled pauses or repairs although having spent only 2 months in a target language environment, whereas members of the SA group had spent an average of 10.2 months abroad but showed a weaker performance. Additionally, he found that the IM group was in fact comparable to the NS group as regards "percentage of syllables in repetition per total syllables" and "percentage of syllables in repair per total syllables". This result led him to claim that the assumption of a "natural break in fluency between the AH groups, the SA/IM groups and the NS group" was nothing but a "superficial generalization" (ibid. 77f.).

Considering García-Amaya's main arguments, I would absolutely agree that a certain selection of time span is crucial for reliable results in research on fluency. However, as regards the question of adequate length to be chosen for a reliable investigation of a participant's second language fluency, there is certainly no invariable or fixed number of seconds to give. Researchers have dealt with this problem quite differently and the length of sequences chosen for an investigation of fluency reaches from a few seconds to four minutes and more. Besides, some authors only use one sequence of individual speakers' production, while others choose to analyse and compare two different speech sequences of one and the same participant. In any case, common sense tells us that focusing exclusively on one snap-shot, that is a few seconds or even minutes of oral production, may indeed not account for a representative picture of a learner's general capability as regards fluent language use in speaking.

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Irrespective of the setting and format of investigation chosen, there will always be more than one critical variable. In the case of García-Amaya's study (2009) the most important critical variable seems to be the 'investigation period'. However, it should be noted that variables are always intertwined at some point. Thus, I argue that a look at multiple longer sequences of oral production alone does not automatically guarantee absolutely reliable results. In other words, even if several sequences – instead of only one – are considered and investigated, there is still the question of which sequences to choose over others. What is even more, chosen content and context of the spoken samples under consideration (e.g. topic, type of conversational task/aim, audience/interlocutor) do, without doubt, strongly affect the outcomes as well. Several studies have proved that the choice of setting makes a significant difference. To mention a few findings, Tavakoli and Skehan (2005), for example, used picture description tasks to test the oral performance of L2 speakers of English and found that an increase of provided strategic planning time and a clearer line of action resulted in better performances. Pawlak, Waniek-Klimczak and Majer (2011), among others, investigated the effects of task repetition and were able to prove that fluency increased within a second or third go of one and the same speaking task. Likewise, Thornbury (2005: 85) highlights that "task familiarity, if not exact repetition" is a[nother crucial] factor in the development of fluency.

At this point, problematic features of scientific investigation of oral fluency are worth further elaboration. The analysis provided by Segalowitz is especially relevant in this regard. First and foremost, he (2010: 41) underlines that the operationalisation of oral performance is generally marked by strong inconsistency that has caused "variability in results and conclusive interpretations". Segalowitz (2010:42) here especially alludes to the "wide variety of [so-called] speech elicitation tasks" that is used among researchers. These speech elicitation tasks for fluency investigation include various forms of reading tasks, picture-description tasks, or story-retelling tasks. Some authors, on the other hand, use spontaneous speech samples that are either "obtained by asking participants to describe some experience they have had [...] or their opinion about some issue" (ibid, 44). The latter may "introduce unwanted sources of variability into the data" and therefore

> a more controlled technique [...] is to use a standardized interview [format] with a trained interviewer. (Segalowitz 2010: 44)

This variability in operationalisation leads Segalowitz (2010) to the conclusion that "there is certainly a need to standardise data collection and analysis procedures". From his point of

view, a standardisation must essentially include a general enlargement of sample size as well as a stronger focus on "individual differences in oral performance as revealed in L1 speech". Segalowitz (2010: 41), however, admits that even if all these requirements are met, it might still happen that we have to realise at some point that we are simply not able to form a truly valuable "set of highly consistent measures". The only thing that we know for sure by now is that

> researchers have [discovered various potential measures, but what they have] not discovered [are] universally applicable, objective measures of oral fluency. (Segalowitz 2010: 39)

Finally, there is still the question of perception: When can a learner's speech then be labelled "fluent", "more fluent", "less fluent", "not fluent", or "not fluent at all"? Which criteria are to be considered crucial for this venture? Is fluent speech exclusively related to proficiency, or to a certain level of it? And: How can such a judgment be put in relation to the individuality of both learner, i.e. speaker, and listener, i.e. judge? Without doubt, a calculation of temporal aspects is an effective means to hint at specific aspects of fluent language use but it can certainly not fully integrate all the relevant bits and pieces that together form what is called fluency and what is generally perceived as such.

Finding satisfactory answers to at least some of these open questions will be part of the aims for the following chapters. However, the discussion so far has shown that fluency and its measurement cannot be exclusively bound to one or the other principal way of treating it, as presented above, but must definitely include more than one dimension. In order to move closer to an overall understanding of the defining building blocks of fluency a twofold perspective, including both performance and perception of the phenomenon, seems necessary. Hence, the whole discussion brought at least one important but obviously yet unsatisfactory finding, namely that fluency, in fact, includes much more than a certain number of syllables per turn. Indeed, and as Riggenbach (1991: 439 quoted in Rossiter 2009: 399) puts it: "in order for there to be fluency […] many different conditions have to be met".

As fluency appears to be a component of language use that is even more complex than initially expected, it may be fruitful to revisit it from yet another, multidimensional perspective provided within the cognitive science approach to fluency. This approach will be presented within the following subchapter.

2.2.   Revisiting fluency from a cognitive perspective

In the following, the cognitive science approach to fluency will be introduced. This approach focuses on the underlying cognitive processes that enable a speaker to deliver fluent speech. Certainly, this focus might seem unrelated but is important for the following reasons: First of all, a cognitive perspective provides additional useful information as regards the nature of fluent oral production. Second: As the relevance of specific cognitive aspects of fluency will be addressed within further investigations, the cognitive science approach needs to be previously outlined. Finally, the cognitive science approach essentially serves to exemplify the benefits of an interdisciplinary perspective on fluency.

Being well aware of the concept's multidimensional nature and thus building on findings from various disciplines, cognitive science offers the following definition of fluency:

> Fluency in a second language is an observable characteristic of real-time speech behaviour. This behaviour reflects the execution of the neurological and muscular mechanisms that a speaker has developed over an extended period of time through socially contextualized communicative activities. The operation of these mechanisms reflects the cognitive and emotional states of the speaker at the time of speaking. Fluency conveys information that may be important to semantics and syntax of the speaker's utterances (Segalowitz 2010: 6-7).

In light of this multidimensional definition, cognitive science can be simply described as the collaboration of several disciplines in the attempt to study and understand the human mind (cf. e.g. Thagard 2012). Segalowitz (2010: 6) offers four overall participating fields including several (sub-)disciplines:

(a) Behavioural and brain sciences – including psycholinguistics, neuroscience, and cognitive psychology
(b) Social sciences – including anthropology, sociology, and sociolinguistics
(c) Formal disciplines – including logic, computer science, linguistics and artificial intelligence
(d) Philosophy of mind

The cognitive science approach began to rise in the mid-1950s. Subsequently, more and more complex viewpoints and "computational procedures" were expressed and applied in the attempt to understand how the human mind works (Thagard 2012).

Using knowledge from various disciplines does, of course, widen the scope of investigation as well as it "will (ideally) be more integrative [...] reveal[ing] a more global view that cannot be achieved by any one discipline alone." (Segalowitz 2010: 7) A cognitive science approach to

fluency has not yet been established but a framework for such an approach has been contemplated by Segalowitz (2010).

While I do not intend to describe or develop such an approach and framework, respectively within this paper, a look at the insights gained from a cognitive perspective seems most crucial within a conceptual discussion of the phenomenon. In other words, and as the previous comparison of several sources has shown, a comprehensive definition of the **theoretical concept** of fluency can only be one that is **not** limited to one perspective only. With this in mind, I support the idea of an interdisciplinary view on fluency, which also occurs to be an aspect of the cognitive science approach. This support is based on the following reasons:

First, an exchange of information across disciplines will facilitate a broader understanding of the concept.

Secondly, the concept fluency is shown to be marked by several interacting components, be it achieved knowledge or perceived outcome, be it speaking context, motivational aspects, or personal characteristics of the speaker, be it their general processing efficiency, speech rate, or confidence in using the L2 or be it their overall communicative competence, etcetera. This very short listing of a few components and factors influencing a speaker's oral performance (including their fluency) once again bolsters the complexity of the concept. In fact, several conditions or criteria may take over an important role in enabling both L1 speaker and foreign language learner to actually produce fluent speech. Accordingly, an investigation of these multiple components demands multiple perspectives, multiple instruments and multiple disciplines. Certainly, one discipline, or one way of treating the concept, may not reveal a fully elaborate, overall understanding of what fluency means and implies, respectively.

Thirdly, the vast amount of various definitions provided in the literature already reveals the inherent complexity and multidimensionality of the concept fluency. This inherent complexity and multidimensionality may explain why a universal or precise definition in a narrow and to the point fashion seems impossible. It may also explain why general definitions are marked by vagueness and abstractness in their use of language: "smoothness and ease", "native-like performance", "natural language use", "without hesitation", etc. Guillot (1999: 14) addresses this issue as follows:

> definitions of that kind inevitably describe a norm, represent an abstract ideal which does not necessarily stand the test of practice.

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Guillot (1999) herein draws attention to practice and questions the relevance of present theoretical definitions of the concept fluency for the practical implementation in a language-learning context. This is certainly a very important and legitimate interjection. Therefore, the idea to look at the concept of fluency from various, i.e. interdisciplinary perspectives is what may serve here as a reasonable and fruitful starting point.

Without doubt, referring to the **concept** of fluency, a definition can only be broad and integrative, no matter whether the focus is on L1- or L2 fluency. Several of these broad definitions of the **concept** of fluency have been presented within this chapter, while Segalowitz (2010: 6-7) certainly provides the most integrative version of such a definition, taking sufficiently into account the multidimensionality of the concept. Following Guillot (1999) in concentrating on the language-learning context, the aim now is to focus on the **notion** of fluency and on its practical implications. This aim necessitates a subsequent breaking down of abstract and vague elements of fluent speech ("natural language use", "ease of communication", "fluidity", etcetera) into operational goals for foreign-language learning and its context. In other words, it is necessary to unravel these rather abstract descriptions of fluency in order to provide a concrete informative basis for practitioners to be supported in their attempt to work constructively on the development and enhancement of their students' oral fluency. Therefore, within a first step, it will be important to determine actual features of language use that are considered characteristic of fluent speech, i.e. features of spoken language that are implied in descriptions such as "natural or smooth language use" (cf. e.g. Brumfit 1984: 56-57; Rossiter et al 2010: 584). This, in turn, will also demand a discussion and critical analysis of relevant knowledge to be achieved by both teacher and language learner in order for oral fluency to be developed, facilitated, and enhanced. Consequently, the question of concrete defining elements remains yet open and will thus remain part of the discussion within the following chapters.

3. Fluency and its perception- contribution factors of both speaker and listener

Usually, L2 speakers of English "need to be able to communicate effectively with both native and non-native speakers [...] in their daily lives." (Rossiter 2009: 396). Keeping their listeners engaged may be quite a challenge. Apart from personal factors such as poise, effective and adequate addressing, rhetorical skills and principal intuition in the intercourse with people, it is especially, and in the first instance, important for L2 speakers to feel confident and skilled enough in their use of the foreign language. In this respect, a speaker's fluency plays an

important role as it "contributes to ease of communication" (ibid.) Speaking in general, and fluency as a decisive part of it in particular are obviously no one-sided enterprise but always "intimately connected with [...] interactivity". In other words, it is "inseparable from the business of exchange". (Guillot 1999: 40-41) For a L2 speaker this means that

> whether monologue, dialogue, or *multilogue* (multiparty conversation), discourse is a cooperative affair. The speaker must hold the attention of his or her audience (Lennon 2000: 33).

Furthermore, it is the speaker's fluency which crucially influences his or her counterpart's "perception of, and response to [that] speaker['s] messages" (Guillot 1999: 41). Of course, the "interlocutor's own processing capacities, expectations and tolerance" do, as Guillot (ibid.) points out, additionally contribute to such a perception. Given that fluency is viewed as a "temporal performance phenomenon" (Rossiter 2009: 397) reliant on the speaker's level of proficiency and the listener's, i.e. interlocutor's perception plus evaluation, the interpretation of qualities such as "speech rate", "fluidity", "ease", or "effortlessness" is left on the listener's side as well. Lennon (1990: 391 in Rossiter 2009: 397), highlights the important role of the listener when he argues that

> fluency differs from the other elements of oral proficiency in one important respect. Whereas such elements as idiomaticness, appropriateness, lexical range, and syntactic complexity can all be assigned to linguistic knowledge, fluency is purely a performance phenomenon; there is (presumably) no 'store'. Rather fluency is an impression on the listener's part that the psycholinguistic processes of speech planning and speech production are functioning easily and efficiently. Dysfluency markers, as it were, make the listener aware of the production process under strain.

The important role of the listener as the primary judge of fluency is undoubted. What it actually takes to convince the listener, i.e. create a positive impression on them needs further elaboration. Lennon (1990: 391) above highlights the importance of easy and efficient speech planning and production, respectively. Additionally, he considers the absence of so-called dysfluency markers as decisive, in terms of a positive perception. He thereby addresses crucial aspects of oral language use, which are directly related to a speaker's abilities and skills. This interplay of performance and perception is most impressively illustrated by Segalowitz (2010). He (2010: 47) invites us to "consider the following statement: *Noriko speaks Inuktitut quite fluently for a Japanese*". Semantically-speaking, this sentence is potentially ambiguous. Pointing towards this ambiguity, Segalowitz (ibid.) works out three distinctive views that could each form the underlying proposition of such a sentence:

- The sentence could mean that Noriko has the ability to mobilize her cognitive system [(see 4.2.1)] for speaking Inuktitut in a highly effective and efficient manner, similar to what happens with native speakers of Inuktitut.

- The sentence may also mean that the utterances Noriko produces in Inuktitut have, objectively speaking, certain characteristics of speech flow in terms of rate, pauses, hesitations, and repair features that render the speech quite fluid [i.e. her utterances do not show severe dysfluency markers]

- Finally, the sentence could also mean that people who hear Noriko speak Inuktitut will infer, based on their perceptions of her speech that she has highly efficient cognitive skills for speaking the language, i.e., that she sounds like she is a "fluent" speaker.

Despite the fact that these "three meanings will more or less coincide and be mutually supportive" (ibid.), Segalowitz (ibid.) draws attention to the separateness of issues that these "three senses" actually address (ibid.). Hence, there is a need "to keep these three senses of fluency apart" (ibid.).

In light of this, Segalowitz (ibid, 47) decides to compartmentalise the rather imprecise one-word-concept of fluency and continues to work with the terms "cognitive fluency", "utterance fluency" and "perceived fluency" instead. Taking account of these three distinctive senses of fluency, a clearer understanding of the nature of inferences made within the perception of fluency shall be reached. A very useful graphical representation and description of these three interrelated domains is provided in a final summary of this "more nuanced way of thinking about fluency" (Segalowitz 2010: 50):
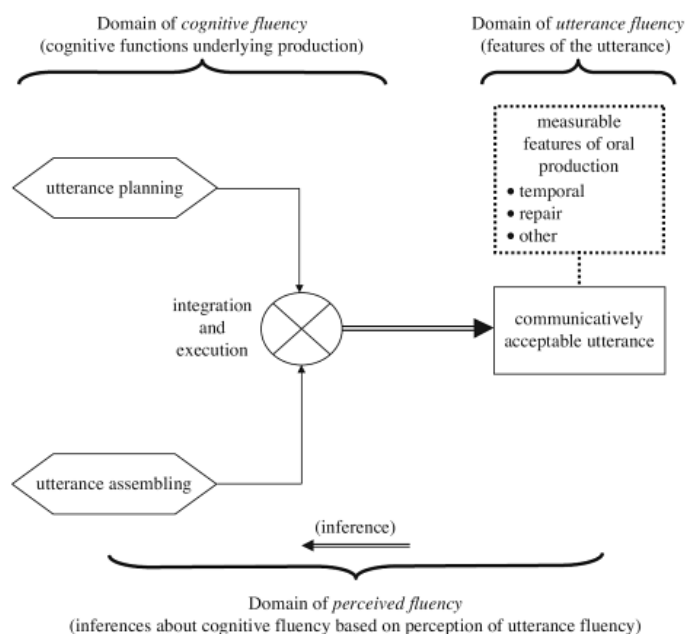

Figure 1: Domains of fluency by Segalowitz 2010

As represented in this graph by Segalowitz (2010: 50), the inferences made within the process of perceiving fluency relate to a speaker's abilities in oral language use, and more precisely, to their achieved levels of cognitive fluency and utterance fluency. In addition to what a speaker language-wise offers for a listener to be perceived, the listener's, i.e. judge's chosen approach towards such a perception is of equal relevance. That is, personal aspects of the judge, including their prejudices, their knowledge, and their experience, as well as their attitude have an important impact on the form of gained impression. These two sides of contribution – that of the speaker, on the one hand, and that of the listener, on the other hand will be both regarded as constitutive moments of fluency perception within further discussion.

3.1.　　Perceived fluency – temporal versus non-temporal variables

As already repeatedly emphasised, the equation of "fluency" with "speech rate" and/or "length of turn" holds strong. Consequently, so-called dysfluency markers, referred to by Lennon (1990: 391), are equally considered to be primarily related to temporal and sequential aspects of language use. The temporal factor is clearly a decisive one, not at least because

> the production and reception of speech inescapably proceed along a temporal axis. This makes temporal and sequential features of speech as inseparable a part of speech production and reception as the utterance and aural perception of sounds and words themselves. (Guillot 1999: 27-28)

Still, research on the perception of fluency proves what has been expressed before, namely that fluency is much more than simply a certain number of syllables within a certain amount of time. In other words, there is evidently more to fluency than exclusively temporal/sequential aspects. The question therefore is: "Which overall impressions of second language speech (temporal and non-temporal) [actually] affect listeners' judgement of fluency?" – A research question that has been formulated and addressed by Rossiter (2009: 400; 404ff.) within her study on "perceptions of L2 fluency by native and non-native speakers of English". Rossiter (ibid.) investigated the perception of three groups of listeners, including six native speakers ('expert' NSs), "with extensive ESL teaching experience", a "'novice' NS group of 15 students" and a group of "advanced non-native speakers" (NNSs), studying English as well. The speech samples to be rated by these groups were gathered from 24 ESL (English as a second language) learners when completing a picture description task. The individual speakers were recorded (Time 1) and the task was repeated 10 weeks after the first run (Time 2). Rossiter (ibid.) aimed at a thorough stimulus preparation and thus provided the

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listeners with "relatively uniform" speech samples from the beginning of the performances. "Episodes of initial dysfluency" were deleted and "the excerpts were randomly paired across time (T1/T2 or T2/T1)". Besides, in order to avoid evaluations being based on varying criteria, it was made sure that the listeners, i.e. raters knew what to expect. That is, they were shown the pictures of the task in advance. The actual procedure of the test was as follows: The listeners were given a "list of factors commonly associated with temporal fluency: speech rate, hesitation phenomena (e.g. unfilled or non-lexical filled pauses, repetitions, self-corrections), and formulaic sequences or chunks" and asked to write down their general impressions in their own words. Additionally, a "nine-point Likert-type scale (1= extremely dysfluent, 9 = very fluent)" was provided for each sample.

As regards the results, three findings are particularly interesting. Firstly, "the novice NSs' fluency ratings were significantly higher than those of the NNSs." (Rossiter 2009: 403). Secondly, "increased pruned syllables per second correlated with higher ratings" of speaking fluency, while, on the other hand, "increased pausing correlated with lower ratings of speaking fluency" (ibid.). Thirdly, answering the initial question, Rossiter (ibid.) found that all listeners, in their ratings, "appeared to be paying attention to the same features of oral production" (ibid, 407). Unsurprisingly, temporal aspects proved to be the most influential in terms of listener perceptions/ ratings, **but** non-temporal aspects have shown to have an impact as well. The latter, above all, include accurate use of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, as well as confidence in speaking (ibid, 406; 408-9). This result is highly interesting, not at least because the listeners were given a list of exclusively temporal categories to focus on. Rossiter (ibid, 406) presents this finding in detail as follows:

> Despite the fact that the listeners were asked to focus on temporal aspects of the oral production, approximately one-quarter of the negative impressions they recorded were classified as non-temporal (26% at Time 1 and 27% at Time 2).

The concrete results in terms of total number of instances of negative impressions related to both temporal and non-temporal aspects are summarised in table form (cf. ibid, 405-6). A copy is provided on the following page.

Judges' negative temporal impressions of speech samples as percentage of group total at Times 1 and 2

Time	Variable	Novice NS (n = 15)	Expert NS (n = 6)	NNS (n = 15)	Pooled (n = 36)
1	Pausing	333 (46)	132 (37)	235 (54)	700 (46)
	Self-repetitions	92 (13)	78 (22)	70 (16)	240 (16)
	Speech rate	111 (15)	51 (14)	49 (11)	211 (14)
	Non-lexical fillers	111 (15)	63 (18)	15 (3)	189 (13)
	Self-corrections	30 (4)	17 (5)	42 (10)	89 (6)
	Formulaic sequences	10 (1)	14 (4)	23 (5)	47 (3)
	False starts	35 (5)	3 (1)	0 (0)	38 (3)
	Total	722	358	434	1,514
2	Pausing	296 (49)	126 (40)	268 (53)	690 (48)
	Self-repetitions	61 (10)	72 (23)	86 (17)	219 (15)
	Speech rate	94 (16)	43 (14)	41 (8)	178 (12)
	Non-lexical fillers	105 (17)	42 (13)	17 (3)	164 (11)
	Self-corrections	25 (4)	23 (7)	77 (15)	125 (9)
	Formulaic sequences	8 (1)	7 (2)	15 (3)	30 (2)
	False starts	17 (3)	11 (3)	0 (0)	28 (2)
	Total	606	324	504	1,434

Note: All numbers in parentheses represent percentages.

Table 1 (Rossiter 2009: 405)

Judges' negative non-temporal impressions of speech samples as percentage of group total at Times 1 and 2

Time	Variable	Novice NS (n = 15)	Expert NS (n = 6)	NNS (n = 15)	Pooled (n = 36)
1	Pronunciation				
	Segmental	49 (28)	14 (11)	107 (44)	170 (31)
	Non-segmental	41 (23)	59 (46)	11 (5)	111 (20)
	Grammar	33 (19)	11 (9)	71 (29)	115 (21)
	Vocabulary	45 (26)	28 (22)	33 (14)	106 (19)
	Confidence	6 (3)	7 (6)	17 (7)	30 (6)
	Other	2 (1)	8 (6)	2 (1)	12 (2)
	Total Time 1	176	127	241	544
2	Pronunciation				
	Segmental	58 (26)	10 (11)	56 (28)	124 (24)
	Non-segmental	67 (30)	44 (47)	25 (13)	136 (26)
	Grammar	49 (22)	11 (12)	80 (41)	140 (27)
	Vocabulary	47 (21)	21 (22)	20 (10)	88 (17)
	Confidence	5 (2)	5 (5)	18 (9)	28 (5)
	Other	0 (0)	3 (3)	0 (0)	3 (1)
	Total Time 2	226	94	199	519

Note: All numbers in parentheses represent percentages.

Table 2 (Rossiter 2009: 405)

In conclusion, Rossiter (2009: 399) summarises the most important non-temporal variables found to play an important role in listeners' perceptions of fluent versus non-fluent speech as follows:

> In addition to the temporal factors identified as influence on perceptions of speaking fluency, general follow-up discussions with raters in L2 studies have suggested that fluency judgements may also be affected by non-temporal variables, such as accent

(Freed, 1995; Lennon, 1990), grammar (Freed), vocabulary (Freed; Lennon, 2000), intonation (Freed; Wennerstrom, 2000), and confidence (Freed; Lennon, 1990)

Finally, a simple example by Lin (2010: 183) may serve to illustrate the potential impact of one of these non-temporal variables on the perception of fluency. Lin (ibid.) thereby refers to the importance of distinct intonation and remarks the following:

> For instance, if a speaker intends to say 'it rains a LOT in the UK' but actually says 'it rains A lot in the UK', he/she does not come across as a fluent speaker, either.

In summary, the findings discussed within this chapter show that there is actually "a LOT" that might influence a listener's fluency judgement. In this respect, the concept of oral fluency once again turns out to be multi-integral and not only related to one or the other aspect of oral performance, only. Temporal factors are certainly to be considered one decisive component. However, an exclusive focus on temporal factors, such as speech rate will, in the long run, not suffice within a thorough analysis of the motives involved in positive fluency evaluation. In other words, these findings and impressions in fact further strengthen the awareness of the necessity of a multiperspectival view on fluency taking account of both **performance** and **perception** which are based, **among others**, on temporal aspects of language use.

The following subchapter will integrate these findings in a more detailed discussion of listener motives for labelling their counterparts' speech as "fluent". It can be anticipated that this discussion will further reveal additional significant factors influencing the assessment of oral fluency.

3.2. Perceived fluency – expectations and level of tolerance

As already highlighted, the relevant criteria of fluency perception do not only lie in the speakers and the speech they deliver, but also in the capacities and personal characteristics of their interlocutors who act as both listeners and judges. Above all, expectations drawn from background and experience, together with level of tolerance may be stressed as particularly important in this respect.

As addressed by Guillot (1999: 34), it is especially in the L2 context, where the interlocutor is likely to be confronted with language input that does not meet an "idealised norm". In other words, L1 listeners have to develop a capacity to process spoken language that is not resembling native-like accuracy or fluency (cf. ibid.). This is, however, not to say that L1

speech can be regarded as the absolute form of language use. In fact, such an assumption would be naive, as L1 speech does not represent such an abstract idealised norm, either. It cannot be denied that

> even native spontaneous speech is not error/mistake free, syntactically, lexically or socioculturally accurate, homogenous or even phonologically homogeneous (cf. dialects), let alone planned and formally cohesive [...] (Guillot 1999: 34)

A speaker always - and in what form ever - demands receptive processing of their counterpart in conversation. Obviously, the smaller and more distinct the skills-level of the speakers involved, the greater the demands of receptive processing. Given the case of conversation between an L1 and an L2 speaker, and given a sequence where the native speaker functions as listener,

> it seems plausible to assume that while the listener has a certain level of tolerance to the effort required, there must come a point when the processing operations become too demanding for the time available and begin to be perceived as infringing normal processing rhythms (Guillot 1999: 35).

As soon as these so-called processing rhythms are actually infringed, receptive processing inevitably turns more complicating and demanding. Thus we may speak of an advanced level of effort and attention to be invested by the listener in order to maintain successful conversation. Interestingly, it is not necessarily deficiencies in the linguistic competence on the speaker's side that may cause such severe infringement. Guillot (ibid.) confirms:

> Indeed syntactic errors/mistakes do not necessarily make great decoding demands when it comes to making sense of a message (Guillot 1999: 35).

That is, less grammatical competence or smaller repertoire of vocabulary on the speaker's side does not necessarily inhibit general communicative effectiveness. An attentive listener may even handle wrong choice of words, word forms, or word order up to a certain point. In other words, syntactic errors neither automatically result in communication breakdown nor necessarily inhibit (perceived) fluency.

Of course, and as always the case in conversation, communication depends on the active involvement of all participating parties. Obviously, maintaining conversation – especially if one interlocutor struggles a lot to express their thoughts – strongly depends on the interlocutor's level of perseverance and stamina, as well as on the listener's level of interest, tolerance and patience. In this regard, communicative competence may certainly help the

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speaker to compensate a given lack of linguistic capacities. Likewise, maintaining communication may be easier if the listener is ready to constructively support this process of negotiation. The latter implies the listener's ability to adjust to their counterpart in terms of needs.

In order to illustrate that communication can work despite a rather small level of linguistic competence a conversational sequence provided by Schmidt (1983) shall be presented. This sequence is taken from his study of a 33 year old native speaker of Japanese called Wes who emigrated from Tokyo to Honolulu. Wes is reported to having had no significant formal instruction in English before arriving in the United States. Thus, and as described by Schmidt (1983: 140) "his ability to communicate in English was minimal". Wes already had many Japanese friends in the US and therefore consciously avoided speaking in English at the beginning. However, "his professional life has required steadily increasing interaction with English speakers in a variety of situations" (ibid). Despite initial suffering of anxiety due to problems in language use, Wes managed to increase "his ability to communicate in English [...] at a steady and impressive rate" (ibid, 144). The following example of "small talk" is taken from the final period of the three-year investigation by Schmidt. Wes proves to be a good conversationalist (meaning both listener and talker) and Schmidt (ibid, 159) specifically highlights his ability to

> establish a relaxed, bantering tone with native speakers, in this case a married couple (M and G) whom he had met only a few minutes before at a hotel garden.

M:	I would like eggs benedict (to waitress) / that's the specialty (to Wes)
Waitress:	how about you?
Wes:	here eggs benedict is good?
M:	yeah
G:	{ it's the specialty
Wes:	yeah? / OK / I have it (waitress leaves)
M:	you never ate before?
Wes:	no, I ate before / but not this hotel
M:	it's very good over here
Wes:	but only just English muffin / turkey / ham and egg / right?
G:	right
Wes:	so how different? / how special?
M:	because it's very good here / maybe it's the hollandaise / I don't know
G:	maybe it's just the atmosphere
Wes:	yeah / I think so / eggs benedict is eggs benedict / just your imagination is different / so / this restaurant is belong to hotel?
G:	no / not exactly

{= overlapping utterance   (Schmidt 1983: 159-160; conversation tape, January 1981)

Wes's oral performance within this sequence is certainly not free of errors. Nevertheless, he successfully manages to keep up conversation. Wes is, as Schmidt (ibid.) describes "not a passive conversationalist". He has lost his initial shyness and manages to increase self-confidence in starting conversations with others in English. This can certainly be considered a big advantage. Schmidt (ibid.) additionally underlines "his skill in listening to what people say and picking up topics for further development".

Another sequence, a spontaneous narrative, even more impressively portrays his communicative competence. Due to this competence, communicative effectiveness is obviously not impeded by grammatical errors or problems regarding syntax:

> Wes: listen/today so funny story
> NS: yes/what happened?
> Wes: you know everyday I'm go to McDonald for lunch
> NS: yeah
> Wes: and today I saw so beautiful woman/so beautiful clothes/
>   make-up/everything/but/so crazy!
> NS: how?/ what do you mean?
> Wes: talking to herself/then she's listen to some person/ everybody watch/ but no one
>   there/then/somebody/local woman I think say 'are you OK?'/'can I help?'/but
>   beautiful woman she doesn't want talk to local woman/she's so snobbish!/ so funny!
> NS: Jesus
>
> <div align="right">(Schmidt 1983: 159)</div>

Here, Wes is not only able to tell a "well-formed story", including "attention getter (*listen*)", "orientation to time and place (*McDonalds*)", "result (*then somebody*)", "evaluation (*she's so snobbish*)", and "introduction of the complicating action with a teaser" (*so crazy*), etcetera, but he is essentially able to hold the interest and **attention of his listener** (Schmidt 1983: 159). That is why Schmidt (ibid.) concludes:

> The story is not only well formed but cleverly and funny, and on those grounds it compares well with good stories told by native speakers.

Interestingly, Thornbury and Slade (2006: 215) use exactly this speech sample provided by Schmidt (1983: 159) within a discussion on **fluency**. Focusing on the acquisition of L2 conversational competence, they agree that "the ability to carry on conversations is not just a reflection of grammatical competence" (Schmidt and Frota, 1986: 262).

This finding is certainly essential, not at least as it proves that a perfect command of the target language in terms of linguistic and grammatical competence is not needed in order to

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successfully engage in and successfully manage foreign language conversation. However, there are still a few questions left open within this discussion: Does having the ability to carry on conversations in a foreign language mean to be fluent in that language? What kind of, and how many conversational situations does a L2 speaker then need to carry on successfully, in order to be doubtlessly considered a fluent speaker? And: what is the lowest level of linguistic competence needed to actually carry on successful conversation? These are among the questions that still need further consideration.

For the moment, in dealing with perceived fluency and in focusing on the example of Wes and his achieved skills in conversation, it makes sense to look at the perceptions and judgements of Wes' common interlocutors. According to Schmidt (1983: 161),

> friends and acquaintances who are not in the language [...] teaching business generally evaluate Wes's English favourably, pointing out, for example: "I understand him a lot better than X, who's been here over twenty years"

Considering this statement, one important question arises: Can Wes's oral performance be classified as fluent language use, - or is it rather relatively/almost/more or less fluent, due to the given instances of linguistic errors, cases of unorthodox pausing (/), and "features of fairly unsophisticated interlanguage grammar" as noted by Thornbury and Slade (2006: 215)? Paradoxically, it is these problems in language use that are actually among those features that had a negative impact on fluency evaluation in the study by Rossiter (2009: 399) presented above. Is the case of Wes then a different one that is to be judged differently or are his friends/acquaintances simply trying to be nice when describing his language as favourably?

Searching for answers to this steadily increasing number of open questions I turned back to the work by Lennon and found a very helpful passage in one of his articles. Lennon (2000) therein sheds light on the decisive ability of the speaker to hold the attention of their interlocutor(s). It is this ability that Wes definitely possesses, and which Lennon (2000) considers a fundamental factor in the perception of fluency:

> A good touchstone of acceptable fluency is the degree to which the listener's attention is held. Such a view of fluency recognizes that assessment can only be made in context (Lennon 2000: 34).

These words are powerful in two respects. First of all, they once again question a stable and easily measurable notion of fluency by introducing the importance of context. Secondly, it is the thorough choice of words that may essentially enrich the whole discussion of the concept.

Lennon (ibid.), by consciously speaking of "acceptable [instead of overall] fluency" and "listener's attention [instead of judgement]" provides a perspective that is sensitive to practical application. By use of the modifier "acceptable" Lennon (ibid.) challenges the common assumption that there must exist something like fluency in the ideal sense. And ideal fluency in a normative sense is, as already expressed by Guillot (1999: 14), nothing but an abstract construct which does not stand the test of practice. That is why a definition of fluency in such an ideal sense will never be found. Something like ideal fluency is neither clearly delimitable, nor is it precisely definable. Perceiving and assessing fluency means to accept or not accept someone's oral production as 'fluent'. Such an assessment is based upon a restricted number of commonly used criteria. However, we can certainly not speak of one single and clearly defined or overarching norm to be simply applied independent of context. In fact, and as Freed (2000: 245) points out,

> Despite a cluster of agreed-upon components of fluent language use, there appear to be considerable individual differences in both the expression and the perception of fluency. The term fluency [implies] [...] both global and restricted interpretations that vary from context to context, speaker to speaker, and listener to listener, depending on a wide range of variables.

3.3. Perceived fluency – listeners' evaluation of oral performances

By addressing supportive literature, Lennon (2000: 29) illustrates general restrictions posed on fluency evaluation due to its given dependency on context, while at the same time confining attention to the demands imposed on both native and non-native speakers within such an evaluation:

> fluency can only be assessed relative to topic, situation, and role relations. Fillmore (1979) stresses that [even] in L1, speakers vary greatly in fluency according to topic and situation. The brilliant academic formal speaker may be a bore at a cocktail party; the tongue-tied pupil in the classroom may be the playground wit. What might rank as dysfluency in some situations may be acceptable in others: at a doctor's office, for example, it is acceptable for the patient to assume the nondominant role and not to initiate speech exchanges; but when making a complaint, such passivity would probably rightly be perceived as lack of fluency. Foreign language learners often find themselves at a loss for words when they are in a speech situation for which the classroom has not prepared them (Kasper 1982) or when they have to talk in the L2 on a topic that is unfamiliar to them (Möhle and Raupach 1993).

Given the fact that perceived fluency is relative to context and given the fact that fluency can hence not be evaluated according to an absolute norm, it seems plausible to assume that

fluency may actually and simply lie in the eyes of the beholder. Barbara Freed (2000) deals with this assumption in her article with the same title (*Is Fluency, like Beauty, in the Eyes (and Ears) of the beholder?*). Focusing on the common belief that students who study abroad "make the most progress in their language of choice" and are consequently considered "the most likely to become fluent [speakers]" (ibid, 245), Freed investigates subjective fluency evaluations of native speaker judges to see whether they are indeed able "to distinguish between students who had been abroad and those who had not" (ibid. 252). The results of her study confirm that such a distinction could actually be made by the selected judges, "at least for students who were not considered 'advanced' speakers of French" (ibid.). What is more, a detailed interpretation of the individual evaluations leads Freed (2000: 261) to the conclusion that what Sajavaara (1994) has remarked in one of her personal e-mails, namely that 'fluency is ultimately in the ear of the listener' (in Freed 2000: 261) "is [in fact] the most apt summary of [her] judges' evaluations (ibid.). This conclusion is primarily based on the gained insight that subjective fluency judgements do not only vary significantly but are additionally

> influenced by a variety of factors that extend beyond traditional factors of fluency, such as hesitation phenomena (ibid, 260-61).

In her study, such factors are reported to include, among others, "global perceptions of rhythm, vivacity, and tone of voice" (ibid.) which are, of course, "less quantifiable" (ibid.).

The fact that fluency judgements may be influenced by varying factors has been confirmed by several other studies (see e.g. Rossiter 2009, above). Such results, of course, further bolster the impression that fluency is indeed a complicated affair or, as Freed (ibid.) herself calls it, "a simultaneously vague and complex notion that includes a constellation of interactive features". The presence of various declared fluency factors, along with individual weighing of these factors by individual judges, shows that the assessment of oral fluency may indeed be ultimately dependent on a subjective evaluation of the individual perceiving listener. However, there is a "cluster of agreed-upon components of fluent language use" as Freed (2000:245) notices. Besides, the factors that are reported by individual authors to have an impact in addition to traditional ones (speech rate, absence of inadequate pausing, etc.) seem to circle around more or less the same speaker attributes: self-confidence, "comfort in the ability to converse" (ibid, 261), capturing and holding the attention of the counterpart (cf. the example of Wes in Schmidt 1983 et al) and a convincing level of language proficiency (pronunciation, intonation, grammar, vocabulary) (cf. e.g. the study of Rossiter 2009). In other words, there is in fact a lot that can be applied and improved by the speaker, i.e.

language learner, in order to meet at least common expectations of individual listeners and to thereby promote perceived fluency. This observation demands a change in focus from perceived fluency to utterance fluency, i.e. from the listener to the speaker. The following chapter will thus be devoted to specific features of fluent language use. In other words, priority is given to the following question: What must a speaker do in order to convince the ears of the beholder?

4. Features of fluent language use

As already stated, fluency is commonly treated as "one component of proficiency that contributes to ease of communication" (Rossiter 2009: 396). That is, fluency enables a speaker to hold the floor, keep interlocutors attentive and avoid communication breakdown (cf. ibid.). The question that is still open is: What kind of knowledge or what specific abilities are then to be considered relevant in order for a L2 speaker to be able to deliver a fluent speaking performance? Unsurprisingly, different authors list more or less diverse competences in answering this question. A comparison and thorough consideration of individual skills believed necessary for a learner to successfully, i.e. fluently, manage talk, led to my own version of such a catalogue of skills and knowledge, respectively. The results are presented in two lists that complement each other. The first one focuses on the basic linguistic requirements for speech production (see chapter 4.1.), while the second one (see chapter 4.2.) is an extended version, elaborating on the more specific skills required. As regards the literature used, Guillot (1999), Thornbury (2011), Yule (2006), and Hedge (2000) should be mentioned as primary sources for the establishment of both lists.

4.1. Basic requirements for fluent oral language production

KNOWLEDGE and COMPTENCES implied

- Basic language skills
    - Core grammar
    - Core vocabulary
        - high frequency items, GSL: 1000
    - Basic knowledge of pronunciation
        - at least: mastery of those features of pronunciation that inhibit intelligibility
- Basic ability to manage talk

Table 3: Basic repertoire of knowledge/skills needed for managing talk fluently

Within a first step of the analysis of the competences involved in fluent oral language production, I will focus on the basic linguistic needs of a L2 speaker as represented in table 3.

Obviously, for a L2 speaker to produce fluent speech a certain level of proficiency is inevitable. In other words, basic linguistic knowledge, including knowledge about vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation, together with basic knowledge about how to manage talk is a precondition for the production of (fluent) speech in a foreign language. Within the following, the role of vocabulary and grammar knowledge will be discussed in detail.

Without doubt, the importance of vocabulary as "an essential foundation to language learning" (Adolphs and Schmitt 2003: 425) has always been clear. Certainly, this also implies acceptable, i.e. intelligible pronunciation. One participant of my study (see chapter 6) highlighted the role of vocabulary in foreign language learning when comparing it with construction material: you need a certain amount of available bricks in order to build a house, such as you need a certain amount of proper words in order to communicate your thoughts.

But how many L2 words do language learners need to know in order to express themselves in a comprehensible, conversational, or, even more, in a fluent way? Adolphs and Schmitt (2003: 425ff.) assume that there are approximately 2,000 word families considered needed, in terms of "lexical resource" for everyday conversation in English. This number is based on "the main large-scale study into spoken discourse" (ibid.) conducted by Schonell et al in 1956. However, an investigation of CANCODE (Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English) and BNC (British National Corpus) led Adolphs and Schmitt (2003:436) to the conclusion that actually "more vocabulary is necessary [...] to engage in everyday spoken discourse". This finding correlates with that of Thornbury (2011: 34) who notes that a L1 speaker uses about "2,500 words to cover 95% of their needs". Second language learners, he argues,

> probably get by on a lot fewer, maybe half that number, especially for the purpose of casual conversation (ibid).

These figures are, of course, rough and there is great variation among different sources. The problem is certainly that some authors speak of **word families** when suggesting vocabulary sizes, while others merely stick to **words** - as can be seen in the examples above. In contrast to a single word, a so-called word family includes the "base word, its inflected forms, and a small number of reasonably regular derived forms" (Bauer and Nation 1993: 253f.). Thornbury (2012: 1; Part 2) is aware of that problem when claiming that "nevertheless, the

3,000 most frequent words in their most frequent forms, and only their most common meanings, might be a realistic target for most learners".

Returning to his statement about L2 speakers and their needs regarding everyday conversation, Thornbury (2011: 34) is convinced that a vocabulary size of at least the first 1000 of words most frequently used in English is necessary to cope with conversational matters of different kinds within daily chat. Increasing research of various available corpora offers relevant information on those words that may actually be considered top of high frequency. As a matter of fact, the availability of grand corpora has facilitated the creation of adapted versions of the so-called "General Service List", originally compiled by Michael West in 1953. Such lists are very useful in providing us with the most common words applied in both written and spoken language. By means of such lists, or more precisely, by means of corpus linguistics, researchers were able to show that the top fifty of such high frequency words in spoken English already serve nearly 50% of all conversational discourse (cf. Thornbury 2011: 22). Of course, the more words a learner has at hand, the better. Still, Thornbury (2011: 34-35) motivationally asserts that

> a working knowledge of the 1,500 most frequent words in English would stand a learner in good stead. Even the top 200 most common words will provide the learner [for the beginning] with a lot of conversational mileage since they include all the common question forming words, such as *where, why, when*[...], all the modal auxiliary verbs: *would, will, can* [...], all the pronouns, such as *it, I, me, you*[...], common deictic devices, such as *this, that, here*[...], common prepositions, such as *in, on, near, from* [...], the full range of spoken discourse markers, such as *well, oh, so, but* [...], common backchannel expressions, *really, no, what* [...], sequencing and linking words, such as *then, first, so, and, or* [...] common ways of adding emphasis, such as *really, very, just* [and] hedging (i.e. reducing assertiveness), such as *actually, quite, rather, sort (of)* [as well as] all-purpose words, such as *thing, things, place, time, way, make and do*".

In his articles "From word to phrase to sentence: a new approach to teaching grammar" Thornbury (2012: 1; Part 2) additionally highlights that it is especially important to teach these top 200 high-frequency words "as soon as [-] and as thoroughly as possible". In doing so, he explains, learners of English "will be getting their grammar 'for free'". Teaching words, and especially the "little" ones, with a focus on their "typical syntactic environments and [...] common collocations" (ibid.) is not only a common approach in language teaching these days but has actually proved to be an effective means of language acquisition. Obviously, there is not much use in having a word and its meaning ready while, at the same time, not knowing how to apply it within actual speech production. In other words, it is

important to provide learners with L2 vocabulary in context and thereby help them to acquire how and in which form individual words are put to use. Facing temporary "inability to call upon [this] knowledge" (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 11) when needed, is a natural event in the process of language acquisition and may thus reoccur at several stages.

Though being part of the learning process, this is what may cause a feeling of severe frustration among language learners. In this sense, Larsen-Freeman (2003: 13ff.) claims that grammar should be seen "as a skill rather than an area of knowledge". She even calls it "the fifth skill" (ibid.); a skill that needs practice, as do the others, in order for a learner "to overcome the inert knowledge problem" (ibid.). Larsen-Freeman's way of treating grammar, namely as something that is "not simply about form" (ibid: 14) but, more importantly, about meaning and appropriateness of use, has received considerable support among practitioners in the field of language teaching. Unfortunately, there is no room for a detailed discussion of Larsen-Freeman's work within this paper. Yet, her viewpoints on the spoken-versus-written-grammar debate shall be provided. Larsen-Freeman (2003: 19) argues as follows:

> After all, people do not speak in sentences. Yet, of course, people do speak grammatically [...]. While there are clearly overlaps between a grammar of written sentences and a grammar of speech, there are differences as well.

Certainly, the process of writing is totally different than the process of speaking – "with speaking you don't know, where you gonna end", so Leo van Lier in one of our seminar classes at the University of Vienna in 2011. Indeed, it is an indisputable fact that the pressure and open direction of real-time language use has produced specific characteristics of spoken texts. Looking at examples like the following taken from Larsen-Freeman (2003:74) may, as she mentions, lead to the assumption that written grammar and spoken grammar belong to different systems which consequently need to be taught/learned both (cf. ibid: 75):

Joe: Wanna go to the movies?

Jim: Sure.

Jo: Which one?

Jim: Doesn't matter.

Spoken language is marked by features such as ellipsis (see example above), "tails" (Carter and McCarthy 1995) as in "Can I have it first, the book?", and a generally more flexible word order. Of course, learners have to get used to that difference. However, grammatical features

of spoken language are not independently separate from those of written language. Larsen-Freeman (2003: 54), referring to the position of Leech (2000), concludes that both spoken and written grammar in fact share "the same grammatical repertoire, but with different frequencies"

To come to an end, vocabulary and grammar knowledge are, without doubt, among the most fundamental prerequisites for oral fluency to occur. The important point, however, is that even a small repertoire of words in context may suffice for beginners to manage talk successfully and deliver fluent sequences of speech. Still, it seems plausible to assume that an increase in knowledge potentially contributes to a higher level of fluency.

4.2. Specific competences involved in fluent oral language production

After having discussed vocabulary and grammar as two of the most essential linguistic requirements for spoken language use, I will now focus on the more specific components of a skilful oral language performance. Knowledge and competences involved in effective oral speech production are often summarised under the umbrella term "managing talk" (cf. e.g. Thornbury 2011: 8) In fact, managing talk successfully implies a variety of skills that, if known and applied, may support the speaker with tools and resources to facilitate the processes of speech production and communication. Specific knowledge/competence areas have been established and organised around specific headlines: "linguistic competence", "pragmatic competence", "discourse competence", "strategic competence", "communicative competence", "conversational competence", "communication strategies", "communicative language ability", "sociocultural knowledge", "genre knowledge", speech act knowledge", "discourse knowledge", "linguistic knowledge", "paralinguistic knowledge", "extralinguistic knowledge", "grammatical competence", "interactional competence", "managing talk"! (cf. e.g. Hedge 2000: 46-56 and Thornbury 2011: 11-26) - These are among the most common terms used in the description of learner needs as regards speaking. Somewhere in the middle of all these forms of knowledge and competences, lies the seemingly unimpressive headline "fluency" as an additional overall aim. As if the amount of terms is not yet enough, there are, of course, subcategories related to each of them (cf. ibid.).

It is clearly not my intention to undermine the relevance of any of these terms or notions, but I would argue that for a practitioner the wealth of terms used may be simply overwhelming and worrisome at first glance. Add to that the fact that there is obviously no consensus across

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researchers as to how these competence areas shall be organized in terms of general priority and particular inclusiveness of subcategories. Comparing several authors, the variation in listing and matching of respective terminology, potentially provokes the feeling that there is not even a consensus as to which aspects of language use belong to which overall category. Besides, the question that yet and always resonates is that of the specific implications for the language learner.

Certainly, acquiring a degree of fluency means reaching a level of competence in speaking and this, in turn, implies knowledge on several levels. These different knowledge areas involved are then ideally transferred into respective abilities. Therefore, I would argue that we may actually use the plural form and speak of communication competences. Basically, these competences are available resources, so to speak, that may contribute to ease, effectiveness and fluency of communication. Although such competences inevitably presuppose knowledge, I will still consciously speak of "competences" only, and thus neglect the term "knowledge" within a subsequent discussion of specific abilities involved in fluent oral language production. My reasons for that choice are not only related to matters of simplification but also, and more importantly, they relate to my intention to highlight the **performance dimension** of speaking. In this sense I follow the tradition of Hymes (1972) who introduced the notion of "communicative competence" which is, in fact, intended to capture and summarise exactly this interplay of ability and knowledge. As Yule (2006: 169) states "communicative competence can be defined as the general ability to use language accurately, appropriately, and flexibly". To be more precise, it involves "the accurate use of words and structures", the appropriate use of language "according to the social context", and "the ability to organize a message effectively and to compensate, via strategies, for any difficulties" (Yule 2006: 169). In short, it involves grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence (which includes knowledge related to pragmatics), and strategic competence (cf. ibid.). These components are summarised within four questions: What is formally possible?, What is feasible?, What is appropriate?, and What is actually done, i.e. performed, and what does its doing entail? (cf. Hymes 1972: 281).

Individual such competences involved in both communication and fluent oral language production, i.e. performance, are listed and specified in table 4. As indicated on top of the list, the more of these competences are acquired and the more retrievable they are – which is certainly a question of practice – the more likely is a conversationally successful and fluent speaking performance. This is not to say that a L2 learner has to have acquired all and every

single aspect of these competences in order to be able to talk conversationally and communicatively effective or fluent, at all.

KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCES specified
(Increased degree of knowledge/competence → increased level of fluency)

- **Linguistic knowledge/competence**
    - **Grammar (productive and receptive)**
    - **Vocabulary (productive & receptive)**
    - **Pronunciation (productive &receptive)**

- **Mastery of managing talk**
    - **Ability to use word combinations**
      = having ready a repertoire of prefabricated formulas, including
        - Collocations
        - Formulaic sequences
        - Phrasal constraints, phrasal verbs
        - Idioms
        - Situational patterns (sentence stems and frames)
        - Discourse markers
        - Social formulas

    - **Pragmatic knowledge/competence** (form ←→ function)
        - Speech act knowledge
          (knowing specific ways to realise particular interactional moves;
              performing actions such as requesting, questioning, informing,
              giving advice, suggesting, etc. → adjacency pairs)
        - Register
        - Politeness

    - **Discourse knowledge/competence**
      = ability to create, develop and understand coherent conversation
        - Use of linking devices
        - Use of discourse markers
              Turn taking
                  Backchannel devices
        - Awareness of the cooperative principle
              e.g. Hedging

    - **Strategic knowledge/competence**
      = ability to avoid communication breakdown
        - Taking risks in using language
        - Using communication strategies
            - Negotiation of meaning
            - Paraphrases
            - Pause fillers
            - Vagueness expressions
            - Repetition
            - Reformulations

    - **Genre knowledge** (knowing how different speech events are structured)

- **Autonomy and automaticity (encouraging spontaneous, flexible language use)**

- **Trusting one's abilities / Confidence**

- **Awareness of fluency features**

Table 4: Specific knowledge and competences involved in fluent oral language production

Before turning to a discussion of selected competences as presented in table 4, there is one issue that needs to be addressed in advance, namely the importance of a distinction between communicative competence and fluency. Within the previous account I have talked about conversational competence, effectiveness and fluency in the same breath. This might misleadingly provoke the thought that these terms are synonymous. However, they are not synonymous, though, certainly, interrelated. Being able to manage talk, that is, having the competence to participate in conversation while managing to express oneself successfully, is definitely a defining element of fluency. In contrast, a learner's inability to cope with the unpredictable demands of spontaneous talk potentially causes severe frustration. Unpleasant pauses of silence, reoccurring hesitation, difficulty to get meaning across, inability to take turns, unintelligibility, communication slow-down, or even communication breakdown, in the last resort, are then among the worst-case-scenarios. Such scenarios do, in turn, not testify to what is called and understood by fluent language use. Fluency is, in other words, profoundly interdependent with communicative competence. But there is a need to be very precise here as the reverse of this statement would be misleading and, in fact, incorrect. That is, for there to be fluency, (a certain level of) communicative competence is inevitable, but, reversely, (a certain level of) communicative competence as such does not inevitably imply or guarantee fluency. Verification of this assumption is provided by Sajavaara (1987: 62) and the results of his observations. These led him to the conclusion that "good linguistic or communicative competence is [indeed] not always realized in fluent speech (cf. Sajavaara ibid. in Freed 2000: 244).

Such a conclusion turns even more legitimate within a reconsideration of the features of spoken language use which have been commonly reported by listeners to influence their judgement of a speaker's oral fluency. Among the most influential features in terms of positive listener evaluation are fast speech rate, adequate positioning plus adequate length of pauses, and lack of hesitancies. Furthermore, research has shown that even **rhythm, vivacity, and tone of voice** (Freed 2000: 261) as well as accent, vocabulary plus respective grammar, and **level of confidence** (Rossiter 2009: 399 et al) may have a considerable impact on fluency ratings (see chapter 3). A closer look at these most influential variables shows that they include features which go beyond mere communicative competence.

Finally, the following presentation and discussion of specific competence areas involved in fluent oral language production as presented in table 4 will provide additional information relating to this needed distinction between fluency and communicative competence.

4.2.1. Strategic competence

As pointed out before, communicative competence essentially involves linguistic competence. In case that competence is limited, a learner may use certain strategies in order to compensate for given deficiencies, i.e. they may apply strategic competence. The most common of these applied communication strategies are categorised and summarised in Dörnyei (1995: 58):

Avoidance or Reduction Strategies
1. Message abandonment—leaving a message unfinished because of language difficulties.
2. Topic avoidance—avoiding topic areas or concepts which pose language difficulties.

Achievement or Compensatory Strategies
3. *Circumlocution*—describing or exemplifying the target object or action (e.g., *the thing you open bottles with* for *corkscrew).*
4. Approximation—using an alternative term which expresses the meaning of the target lexical item as closely as possible (e.g., *ship* for *sail boat).*
5. Use of all-purpose words—extending a general, empty lexical item to contexts where specific words are lacking (e.g., the overuse of *thing, stuff, make, do,* as well as using words like *thingie, what-do-you-call-it).*
6. *Word-coinage*—creating a nonexisting L2 word based on a supposed rule (e.g., *vegetarianist* for *vegetarian).*
7. Use of nonlinguistic means—mime, gesture, facial expression, or sound imitation.
8. Literal translation—translating literally a lexical item, an idiom, a compound word or structure from L1 to L2.
9. Foreignizing—using a L1 word by adjusting it to L2 phonologically (i.e., with a L2 pronunciation) and/or morphologically (e.g., adding to it a L2 suffix).
10. Code switching—using a L1 word with L1 pronunciation or a L3 word with L3 pronunciation in L2.
11. Appeal for help—turning to the conversation partner for help either directly (e.g., *What do you call . . . ?)* or indirectly (e.g., rising intonation, pause, eye contact, puzzled expression).

Stalling or Time-gaining Strategies
12. Use of fillers/hesitation devices—using filling words or gambits to fill pauses and to gain time to think (e.g., *well, now let me see, as* a *matter of fact).*

Table 5: Communication Strategies (Dörnyei 1995)

In addition to the communication strategies mentioned by Dörnyei (1995), the following strategies must be mentioned and highlighted as well:

- Repair
- Repetition
- Reformulation/paraphrasing
- Wholesome borrowing of segments of the other speaker's utterance
- Negotiation of meaning (clarification request, comprehension check, etc.)
- Use of vagueness expressions
- Formulaic language use
- Use of discourse markers

These additional strategies are usually found under the labels "production strategies", "facilitation strategies", and "compensation strategies" (cf. e. g. Thornbury and Slade 2006: 220ff.).

Without doubt, the ability to apply communication strategies is most relevant as regards managing talk. On the other hand, overreliance on such strategies may have a negative impact on perceived fluency since linguistic competence (especially vocabulary and grammar) is among the most influential factors in terms of listener evaluation. Besides,

> overreliance on such strategies [...] could lead to premature fossilization of the learner's interlanguage (Thornbury 2011:39).

What is more, studies on fluency perception have shown that it is in fact "fewer comprehension checks" and "fewer repetitions", i.e. a reduction of communicative strategies, which mark a "smoother" way of using language. (cf. Thornbury and Slade 2006: 216 referring to Schmidt and Frota 1986: 216, et al)

On the other hand, in case a learner is grammatically competent, oral fluency is not automatically guaranteed, either. That is where the distinction between fluency and accuracy comes into play; a distinction that may be briefly but aptly illustrated by two contrasting, but familiar propositions (provided in Freed 2000: 244):

> 1) Joan knows French grammar perfectly, but she doesn't speak the language fluently.
> 2) John speaks French fluently but he makes many mistakes.

To summarise so far, neither strategic competence, nor grammatical competence guarantees fluent language use. Furthermore, the same is true for a high level of communicative competence as such. In other words, if a learner has gained overall sufficient communicative competence, referring to its full sense (i.e. grammatical-, sociolinguistic-, and strategic competence), they may still not be able to deliver a fluent speaking performance within the demands of a specific communication situation (cf. Sajavaara ibid. in Freed 2000: 244). Potential reasons include difficulties in processing or problems regarding the retrieval of necessary knowledge, unfamiliarity with topic or needed vocabulary (e.g. ESP), and a lack of confidence, etcetera.

Finally, as regards the features of fluent language use that are traditionally considered most fundamental, namely fast speech rate, adequate positioning/adequate length of pauses, and lack of hesitancies, communicative competence may certainly be helpful in meeting given

expectations related to these features. Taking, for example, the feature 'fast speech rate': If a learner is competent in L2 grammar, while at the same time being competent in using communication strategies, as well as able to identify when to say what in terms of adequate sociolinguistic behaviour, it seems plausible to assume that it is easier for them to achieve their communicative goals. In turn, it may be assumed that learners who have acquired communicative competence are able to provide listeners with an increased number of words per minute, i.e. they are able to deliver fast speech in the L2. Likewise, inadequate pausing or distracting hesitancies shall be easily avoided. The question, however, is whether a presence of these traditional fluency features is to be exclusively attributed to communicative competence. Indeed, there are a few arguments that may serve as counterevidence.

First of all, awareness of the fact that hesitancies and cases of individual pausing are even present in L1 use must be raised. (cf. Wood 2006; Goldman Eisler 1961) Furthermore, general individual differences in speech rate do exist in both L1 and L2 use. In order to make inferences about L2 speech rate, a comparison between L1 production and L2 production needs to be taken into account. (cf. Segalowitz 2010: 40). Considering speaker 1 more fluent than speaker 2 due to the mere fact that speaker1 speaks faster seems thus not reliable at all.

Apart from general and personal differences regarding the rate of speaking, insecurity, i.e. lack of confidence, must be considered equally decisive in terms of factors potentially causing a slow-down of speech rate (cf. e.g. Thornbury 2011: 39). Such insecurity may not only result in slower speech production but also cause increased hesitancies. Insecure L2 users usually tend to focus too much on getting everything absolutely right. In other words, the flow of speech production may be obstructed as these speakers are caught in thinking about the right or best way to communicate their thoughts. Freed (2000: 252) is consequently not able to demonstrate perceived fluency growth of the more-advanced participants spending a semester abroad (see more detailed description of her study on p. 26). One result of Freed's study (2000: 260) is particularly important for our discussion:

> There is also a tendency for students who have been abroad, especially those whose speech is more advanced, to attempt linguistic expressions that they sometimes find do not work: they reformulate their speech, producing more false starts than is evidenced in the speech of those who have never been abroad (Freed 2000: 260).

Given these insights, the initial discussion regarding the distinction between communicative competence and fluency can be readdressed. My final conclusion builds on Zhenhui's

statement (2010: 2) about communicative competence, while additionally providing the needed link to fluency. Zhenhui (ibid.) argues, as follows:

> Communicative competence involves principles of appropriateness and a readiness on the part of the learner to use relevant strategies in coping with certain language situations. Linguistic competence, then, is the basis of communicative competence. Without linguistic competence, there is no communicative competence. But communicative competence does not automatically result from linguistic competence. (Zhenhui 2010: http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/forum/archives/docs/99-37-3-g.pdf)

Communicative competence, then, is the basis for fluency. But, again, fluency does not automatically result from communicative competence, such as communicative competence does not automatically result from linguistic competence. Hence, both of them, linguistic- and communicative competence are part of the needed building blocks for fluency to emerge.

Among the abilities involved in actual oral production, three competence areas seem particularly important in terms of fluency. These are: "formulaic language use", "automaticity and autonomy", and "trusting one's ability, i.e. confidence" (cf. table 4). The importance of especially these areas arises from the "remarkable degree of agreement on the types of temporal variables to be tracked" (Wood 2001: 574) as shown by research on fluency. These temporal variables have already been part of the previous discussion (see above and chapter 1). Now, a link between these temporal variables of fluency and the actual components of fluent language production can be established. Wood's (2001: 575ff.) listing of the main "empirical correlates of fluency" once again reminds us of the fundamental temporal variables at stake:

- rate or speed of delivery
- length, frequency and location of pauses
- length of fluent runs between pauses

A positive fluency rating within a focus on these criteria is substantially related to the achievement level of a learner in three competence areas mentioned above:

- formulaic language use
- automaticity and autonomy and
- self-confidence in (oral) speech production

In short, these three competence areas may have a considerable impact on whether a speaking performance is perceived as fluent or not. The relevance of these areas is underlined within a more detail account below.

4.2.2. Formulaic language use

In the discussion of fluent oral language production there is one phrase that constantly reoccurs across literature: "to fill time with talk". Indeed, inadequate pausing together with too short runs (i.e. a small number of syllables between pauses) is what primarily denies a positive impression on the listener's side as regards the fluency of a speaker. Research on pausing in conversation has shown that L2 speech is generally marked by longer pause times compared to L1 production (cf. Wood 2006: 15). Nevertheless, it has been proved that both frequency and length of pauses may considerably decrease due to repeated speaking practice as regards L2 acquisition. (cf. ibid.) Furthermore, as regards the location of pauses in the comparison of L1 and L2 production,

> it has been shown that native speakers or highly fluent L2 speakers most often pause at clause junctures or between non-integral parts of a clause, while lower-fluency speakers tend to pause within clauses. (Wood 2006: 15)

Several strategies (see ch. 4.2.1.) may be used to fill pauses with talk in order to avoid uncomfortable silence, to gain planning time and/or to hold the floor. For example, "one simple way of filling pauses is by means of repetition" (Thornbury and Slade 2006: 216). Others include paraphrasing, the use of discourse markers, and general strategies to negotiate meaning or buy time – even by means of a simple phrase like "Well, let me think." Yet another way to fill pauses is "to rely on the use of 'ready-made or – pre-fabricated – units" (Thornbury and Slade 2006: 218) within speaking. Besides allowing the speaker to fill – and subsequently reduce pauses, these ready-made chunks additionally increase "the length and complexity of between-pause units" (ibid.).

> In real-time speech processing, where planning time is at a premium, these memorized 'chunks' offer speakers 'islands of reliability' (Dechert, 1983) where they can settle momentarily while they monitor input and plan subsequent output. (Thornbury and Slade 2006: 218)

Wood (2001: 582) is even convinced that a repertoire of such "memorized clauses and clause stems or frames" is the key to "native-like fluency". Indeed, being able to retrieve memorised

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fixed phrases and structures, while producing speech, should help learners to save time and effort which can then be used for other issues of communication. (cf. ibid., 582-583)

The question now is: What are pre-fabricated units, chunks or formulas and how can they be important in terms of fluency? As can already be inferred from the mere formulation of this question, there are, in fact, several terms around to refer to the (overall) concept of formulaic language. Weinert (2010: 2) speaks of "fifty or more alternative terms" to be found in the literature. Following Wray (2002), she confirms that "the label *formulaic*" is commonly used as an umbrella term while additional labels are introduced to account for "specific manifestations of the phenomenon" (Weinert 2010: 2). Whatever these manifestations are called, it is constantly highlighted in the literature that they are "an important element of proficient language use" (Li and Schmitt 2010: 23) and that there lies great potential in their use for learners wanting to achieve oral fluency. In Table 4 above (p. 30) the ability to use such strings of word combinations, or formulas – the way I prefer to call them – is integrated in the overall ability to manage talk. The main and most common types of such word combinations are additionally added. My selection of these main types correlates with that of Thornbury (2011: 13), and includes collocations, phrasal verbs, idioms, sentence stems and frames as well as discourse markers and social formulas.

As regards an overall definition of formulaic language as such both Thornbury (2011: 23) and Wray (2002: 9) provide useful explanations. Thornbury defines it as

> sequences of speech that are not assembled word by word but have been pre-assembled through repeated use and are now retrievable as single units.

Wray (2002: 9) is even more precise in defining a formulaic sequence as

> a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar

These definitions capture a decisive general assumption concerning formulaic language use, namely that formulas, that is sequences of fixed word combinations are stored "as wholes" (Schmidt 1983) in the mental lexicon, i.e. "as if they were single words" (Wood 2006: 13). According to Lin (2010: 178) the theory of holistic storage "is very powerful and convincing" as it, for example, gives explanation to "the phenomena of multiword utterances in child speech", to "distinctively fluent chunks" in the oral performance of L2 learners, and to so-

called "fossilized errors". Though "most widely accepted" (Lin 2010: 179), the theory of holistic cognitive storage has not yet been sufficiently proved. Diversity of approaches due to diverse foci in terms of sequence types (Forsberg and Fant 2010: 47) has led to "a range of results" (Columbus 2010: 196). Still, and despite ambiguous findings, "formulaic sequences appear to be ubiquitous in speech" (Wood 2006: 16). Furthermore, such sequences simply seem to cause less effort in both processing and memorisation. Schmidt (1983) and Bolander (1989), already in the 1980s, found that L2 learners acquired and used formulaic sequences of different kinds before having developed a reasonable amount of linguistic competence. To illustrate, Schmidt (1983: 150), in analysing an adult L2 learner of English called Wes (see chapter 3.2.), describes an increasingly "rich repertoire of formulaic utterances, memorized sentences and phrases" of this learner. Providing a number of examples, extracted from his recordings, Schmidt (ibid.) notes that these "high-frequency formulaic items" indeed "increase the appearance of fluency". The addressed items include the following:

> Hi! How's it? So, what's new? I beg your pardon...what did you say your name was? You know what...I tell you. You know what I mean? What can I do? Whaddya want? Whaddya mean? Whaddya doing? Do you remember? I told you before. Something like that. I dunno why. That's great, terrific! Sure, I would love to. Can you imagine? Thank you VERY much. Thank you calling.

As Schmidt (ibid.) notes,

> it is not always clear which of Wes's are memorized wholes, except for those which clearly exceed the limits of his acquired grammatical system, but it is clear that he has chosen this as a major language strategy. He listens carefully and extracts formulaic items from television commercials ('thank you *very* much' comes from a well-known tire commercial in Hawaii), from records ('what did you say your name was?) and from conversations ('you know what?...I'll tell you is an expression frequently use by a particular gallery owner). He comments frequently on phrases that he finds characteristic of friends and acquaintances and practices many of these consciously.

Wood (2006: 18 ff.) pointing towards the great flexibility of formulaic sequences as well as their potential relatedness to certain genres, investigated general functions and uses of formulas by collecting speech samples from ESL learners over a period of 6 months. The learners were asked to retell the story of individual silent film samples. The outcomes where then analysed according "growth of fluency" and "increased use of formulaic sequences". Mean length of run (MLR), and "formula/run ratio (FRR), calculated by dividing the total number of formulas in a sample by the number of runs", were the quantitative measures used. The identification of formulaic sequences to be analysed was based on "native speaker

judgement". Wood (ibid.) managed to determine five "categories of formula use [...] contributing to increased length of runs":

1. Repetition of formulas in a run
2. Use of multiple formulas to extend a run   ⎫
3. Reliance on one formula or filler repeatedly ⎭   strategic performance-related
4. Use of self-talk and fillers   ⎫
5. Use of formulas as rhetorical devices   ⎭   pragmatic/functional

<div align="right">(cf. Wood 2006:24)</div>

All of these 5 forms of use have shown to considerably extend individual runs of interlocutors. Two examples (Wood 2006: 24, 26) of analysed sequences shall be provided below:

<u>Repeating a formulaic sequence within a run to extend it</u>:

    S1: And he *came back* the cat *came back* to the his house and ah

Result: a run of 13 syllables, only one of which is a filler non-lexical item, *ah*

<u>Use multiple formulas to extend run</u>:

    S2/ sample 3: and make music

    S2/sample 6: he's make music by himself in his room.

Result: 11-syllable run of considerably greater complexity and descriptive effect

These and other findings certainly suggest the important role of formulaic language in the acquisition process of language learners. Furthermore, these findings support the assumption that longer fluent runs can, among other factors, be ascribed to a greater repertoire of formulas (cf. Wood 2006: 15) as such a repertoire helps learners to "balance skills, attention, and planning during speech" (ibid.). Even if it is not yet clear what kind of- and in what mode "representations of words" are stored in the mental lexicon,

> sequences of words such as *in the middle of*, pattern together with such frequency that it may be enough to treat them as single units in their own right. (Tremblay and Baayen 2010: 151)

Finally, the importance of formulaic language in both general language acquisition and fluency development must not be underestimated. This, in turn, necessitates a thorough consideration of implications for the language learning classroom, which will be part of the

following chapter. For the moment, I will continue with the other two competence areas that are, as mentioned, of particular relevance in the aim of achieving oral fluency.

4.2.3. Autonomy and automaticity

Within the previous lines several competences of a skilled oral language performer have been stressed and discussed. In summary, a skilled performer has acquired an adequate amount of vocabulary in order to express and decode meaning; they are intelligible in terms of pronunciation; have gained sufficient knowledge of how to combine words within syntactic constructions, which certainly also includes a certain degree of grammatical competence; and they are able to use communication strategies in order to manage talk. All of these competences proved to be significant in the judgment of a speaker's fluency (cf. Segalowitz 2000: 200 et al.) as they may display the performer's level of proficiency. One must not forget, however, that there is one characteristic of a skilled performer which certainly forms the basis of any skilled or competent performance – autonomy (cf. Thornbury 2011: 89). Speaking a language fluently, consequently, demands a certain level of autonomy. And autonomy in language use results from increased automaticity in language production. (cf. Thornbury 2011: 89).

Reaching the "autonomous or automatic stage" (cf. Fitts and Posner 1967, and Anderson 2004, both in Dörnyei 2009: 155) in learning a specific skill, such as speaking a L2 fluently "involves […] continuous improvement in […] performance" (ibid.). That is, as Dörnyei (ibid.) explains,

> the level of automaticity […] increases while cognitive involvement decreases, so much so that, as Johnson, Wang, and Zhang (2003) describe, learners often lose the ability to describe verbally how they do the task. Reaching this stage, however, requires a large amount of practice, and DeKeyser (2007) warns us that even highly automatized behaviors are not 100 per cent error-free. For example, communication breakdowns of varying severity regularly happen both in our L1 and L2, requiring the use of a range of problem-solving mechanisms that are usually called 'communication strategies'.

Dörnyei (2009: 155) thereby draws attention to the importance of practice in the progression towards automaticity. At the same time, he raises awareness of the fact that a reasonable amount of practice, ideally leading to automaticity does not guarantee consistent success in the application of any "well-established skill" (ibid.). Nevertheless, practice and repetition (see also 5.3.2.1.) certainly and decisively promote automaticity, which in turn increases

safety and self-efficacy in performance. Likewise, autonomy, in the sense of a performer's ability to autonomously find out what exactly it is in a specific performance of a skill that needs more training, plays a considerable role in this respect.

Importantly, and as regards the specific case of fluency enhancement in L2 learning, autonomy must not be confused with self-instruction (cf. Little http://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/gpg/1409) but understood as "capacity to self-regulate performance as a consequence of gaining control over [certain] skills" (Thornbury 2011: 90); skills that previously demanded much more effort and attention in terms of cognitive involvement.

Finally, gaining such a capacity, that is "achieving a degree of autonomy, however fleeting" effectively contributes to a simultaneous enhancement of self-confidence in language use (Thornbury 2011: 90) which, in turn and as already noted, is another substantial need in successful (oral) language use. Therefore, automaticity, bringing forth both autonomy and self-confidence, must be regarded as one important overall aim of the language classroom. And it is the teacher in their competence to react upon individual learner needs - implying an adequate choice of material and tasks - who may assist the learner in achieving what is summarised under the term automatic skilled behaviour.

In order to reach a greater understanding of how automaticity can be achieved, a more detailed look at the cognitive processes involved is necessary. Automaticity as "the hallmark of skilled behaviour" and as "a central notion in cognitive psychology" (Hulstijn, Van Gelderen and Schoonen 2009: 556) is defined and treated quite diversely in the literature.

> Many researchers have questioned [a] unitary notion of automaticity, defining it in different ways, including ballistic processing, parallel processing, attention-free processing, effortless processing, unconscious processing, and fast processing (ibid.).

The listing of chosen definitions within this quote once again displays that automaticity has something to do with a certain form of cognitive processing that is marked by smoothness and ease (cf. Segalowitz 2000: 201). This, in fact, allows us to immediately link it to the concept of fluency. And, indeed, "in the psychological literature fluency is usually treated under the labels of 'automaticity/ automatization" (Dörnyei 2009: 286).

Efficient processing, defined as central to the notion of automaticity, i.e. of automatic skilled behavior, means efficient operation of certain underlying, interacting cognitive processes. In

this respect, the differentiation between cognitive- and performance fluency is particularly relevant (cf. Segalowitz 2000: 202). Segalowitz (2010: 48) defines cognitive fluency as referring to

> the speaker's ability to efficiently mobilize and integrate the underlying cognitive processes, responsible for producing [fluent] utterances.

In contrast, the term performance fluency

> refers to the observable speed, fluidity and accuracy of the original performance that is our focus of interest, for example, as observed the act of […] speaking (2000:202).

To be precise, the act of speaking, i.e. (fluent) speaking performance implies what Segalowitz (2010:48) terms "utterance fluency". Utterance fluency, as opposed to cognitive fluency (see figure 1), is the "fluency-relevant features" of the utterance itself, such as "temporal, pausing, hesitation, and repair characteristics" (ibid.). These features of the utterance may be operationalised via individual means of measurement (e.g. speech rate), as presented in chapter 1 (cf. Segalowitz 2010: 48).

In addition to both cognitive- and utterance fluency, the role of both declarative and procedural knowledge is to be considered in a discussion about cognitive processing in general, and automatic skilled behaviour, in particular. Dörnyei (2009: 156-157), in focusing on these two forms of knowledge, highlights the importance of both of them within the acquisition of automatisation:

> When we talk about the acquisition and automatization of skills beyond infancy (including the learning of L2 skills), all the contemporary theories assume some interaction of declarative and procedural knowledge, with a move from predominantly declarative to predominantly procedural (Dörnyei 2009: 156-157).

As regards this shift, common consensus is that,

> automatization requires procedural knowledge. Proceduralization requires declarative knowledge and slow deliberate practice. The acquisition of declarative knowledge of a kind that can be proceduralized requires judicious use of rules and examples'. (De Keyser 2007: 107 in Dörnyei 2009: 288)

To summarise what has been pointed out so far, we can say that automaticity involves interacting cognitive processes allowing for efficient cognitive processing. Essential is a differentiation between cognitive and performance fluency. In the case of speaking, the latter includes so-called utterance fluency. Similarly, the acquisition of declarative knowledge

finally turned into procedural knowledge takes over an important role in reaching the aim of automatic skilled behaviour. Left open is, finally, a presentation and discussion of the concrete cognitive processes involved in speaking performance. The following subchapter will provide a model of the L2 speaking performance and its underlying cognitive processes. Special focus is, of course, attributed to fluency-relevant aspects.

4.2.3.1. Automaticity and the routinisation of cognitive mechanisms

In terms of fluency, two "complementary factors" (Segalowitz 2000: 201) "involved in the execution of complex cognitive activity" (ibid.) need to be envisaged: moment-to-moment decision making and routinisation of automatic cognitive mechanisms (cf. ibid.). The former is part of the needed attentional involvement of the performer.

Obviously, L2 use demands moment-to-moment decising making "in transforming ideas or information represented at one level into representations and actions represented at other levels" (Segalowitz 2000:201). That is, we transform our thoughts into written or spoken language within production and vice-versa within perception. Thereby an efficient and "fluent" operation of underlying mechanisms is necessary in order to prevent "loss of information or accuracy". (cf. ibid.)

These transformation processes, including focus of attention and decision-making, are as Segalowitz (ibid.) highlights

> essential to fluency since, without them, performance would become highly mechanical and insensitive to the demands of changing environmental conditions [and consequently] susceptible to error.

Finally, achieved automatic routinisation of all mechanisms involved allows the speaker to save "time and attentional resources" (ibid.) for other demands, such as the environmental conditions, referred to above, which are intrinsically subject to change.

Certainly, reaching automatic routinasiation is – as is cognitive processing with all its intricate mechanisms – much more a complex issue than might be inferred from the straightforward descriptions provided so far. Cognitive processes are, of course, exposed to a range of potential interference and distraction factors which increase the intricacy of efficient processing. Besides, even internal sources, such as the essential activation of the important control mechanisms for "evaluation and verification" inevitably slow down speed and

fluidity. As indispensable such mechanisms are, they also potentially inhibit immediate execution of (skilled) behaviour (cf. ibid.).

In order to illustrate the given complexity of efficient cognitive processing, Segalowitz's (2010: 8ff.) reworked version of one of the most "well-known [and 'widely cited'] model[s] for thinking about speaking" (ibid., 8) is provided below. This model is called the 'blueprint of the unilingual speaker', originally established by Levelt (1989) and adapted for the L2 speaker by De Bot in 1992. Using the adapted version of the model, Segalowitz (2010: 8ff.) develops a new graphical representation of the initial blueprint. This representation may be seen as "a summary of what could reasonably be called the consensus view of the linguistic, psycholinguistic, and cognitive issues underlying the [complex] act of speaking". (ibid.)

What is new about this version is that Segalowitz (ibid., 9) additionally locates and marks the stages "where L2 fluency issues of special interest might arise" (ibid.). These issues essentially include, so-called "fluency vulnerability" points, that is "potentially critical points where underlying processing difficulties could be associated with L2 speech dysfluencies"(ibid.). A reprint of Segalowitz's (ibid, 9) model is included below:

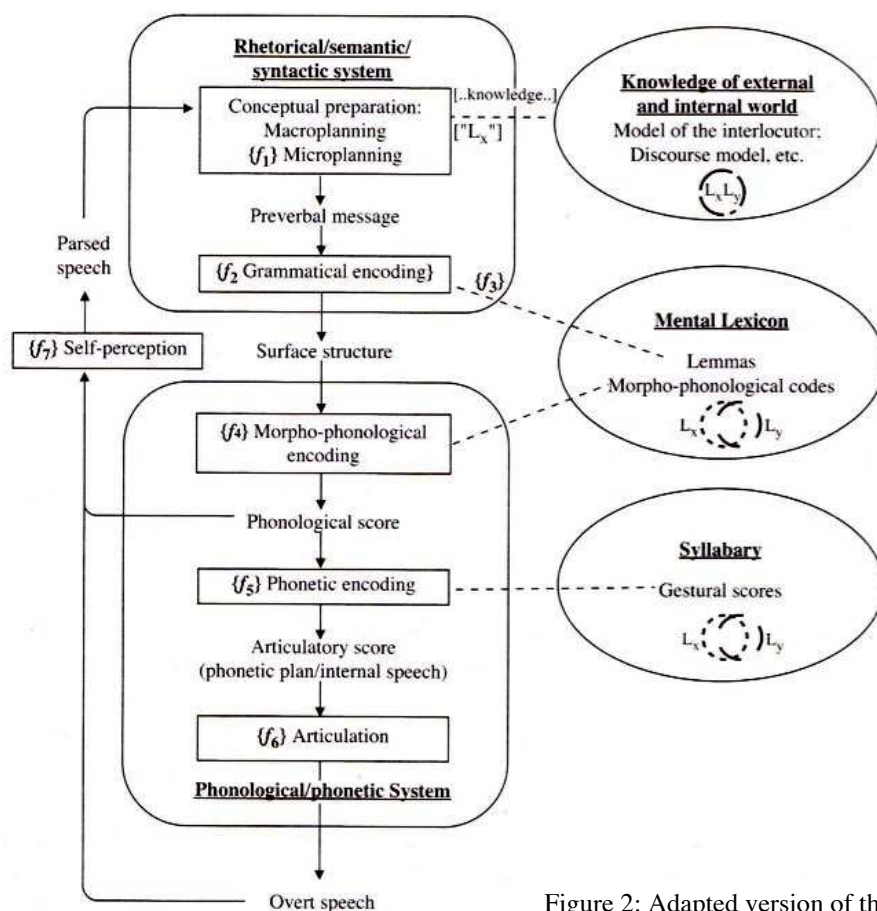Figure 2: Adapted version of the blueprint model
by Segalowitz 2010:9

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In this graphical representation "the dotted and dashed L_x and L_y circles refer to how information pertinent to languages (or registers) x and y are thought to be related to each other, where partially overlapping and fully overlapping circles indicate partially distinct and undifferentiated systems, respectively [...]". And "the {f} symbols [refer to so-called] fluency vulnerability points". (ibid.)

Two operating systems are represented as cooperating in the act of creating and converting an intended message into overt speech: the rhetorical/semantic/syntactic system, on the one hand, and the phonological/phonetic system, on the other hand. The core procedural elements of the speaking performance delegated by these two systems are categorised into 5 overall stages within the blueprint model. (For a detailed description of the processes involved in these individual stages and additional information see ibid, 9ff., Levelt 1999: 87f.; and appendix 2)

As already mentioned, Segalowitz (2010) additionally locates so-called "fluency vulnerability points" (marked by an f) in his version of the blueprint-model. These are essentially important to consider within a discussion on L2 speaking fluency and are therefore discussed within the following lines.

f_1 difficulties in microplanning

Roberts and Kirsner (2000, cited in Segalowitz 2010: 10-11) found that fluency levels in spontaneous, native speech decline within shifts of topic. Their conclusion is that oral production

> does not become fluent until the macroplanning process is complete and the system's resources are available solely to speech preparation and production processes (Roberts and Kirsner 2000: 153 in Segalowitz 2010: 11)

Segalowitz (ibid.) points towards the "implications for L2 fluency", noting that

> the more macroplanning a communicative situation requires, the more vulnerable the L2 speech will be to dysfluencies because of the diversion of processing resources. This means that L2 users who have difficulty carrying out microplanning in automatic fashion will need the extra time to make sure that macroplanning has been adequately completed before attempting to speak.

As explained by De Bot (1992, in Segalowitz 2010: 12) microplanning may cause severe efforts due to a lack of adequate lexical items within the attempt of figuring out "how to convey the intended construal" (ibid.) Even though, several communicative strategies may be

used to overcome such problems, "figuring out how to build correct construal information" might, as Segalowitz (ibid.) highlights, still negatively affect fluency, "for example, by slowing down the formulation of the preverbal message" (ibid.). It is therefore within the microplanning level where he already sees a potential "point of vulnerability to dysfluency" (ibid.)

f_2 / f_3 problems in the access of lexical items and grammatical realisations

The stage of grammatical encoding is marked by the process of turning the already created preverbal message into a surface structure. That is, the former conceptual construction is gradually transformed into a linguistically concrete outcome. Problems in the retrieval of needed linguistic resources, be they of lexical, structural or grammatical nature, may of course severely inhibit fluency in this endeavour and at this stage (cf. Segalowitz 2010: 12). Obviously, such a linguistic realisation demands specific knowledge. This knowledge can be recruited from the so-called mental lexicon, a "knowledge source encompass[ing] all the [...] families of related words including idioms and fixed expressions" grouped under the term 'lemmas' (ibid.). The process of thinking about and retrieving appropriate structures, word forms and combinations "for formulating the [intended] sentence" may, of course, also cause difficulties in terms of effective processing. (ibid, 13) In other words, there is another "point of possible vulnerability to dysfluency" (ibid.) at this stage, as a L2 speaker

> might find it difficult to retrieve and make use of the appropriate linguistic resources required for creating the correct grammatical foundation for the surface structure (ibid.)

f_4 reduced fluidity in the morpho-phonological encoding resulting in hesitations

Part of the conversion process of the intended message into overt speech is the development of a so-called phonological score, "contain[ing] information at a relatively abstract, phonological level" (Segalowitz 2010: 15) by the help of so-called morpho-phonological codes associated and stored with each lemma in the mental lexicon. The morpho-phonological encoding process cannot be described as having universal mechanisms independent of language-type due to the fact that it is not individual phonemes but the "syllable programs" that are to be considered decisive (ibid.). That is,

> the details of this process can vary from one language to another depending, for example, on whether the language in question is stressed timed (e.g., English) or

syllable timed (e.g., French) (Martin, 1972). Also, languages can differ in terms of the number of syllable programs they involve (e.g., English has a larger syllable repertoire than does Chinese or Japanese; Levelt, 1989). Levelt (1989) points out that normally this whole process proceeds in a highly automatic way and that (L1) fluency involves being able to look ahead appropriately (that is, not too far ahead) to build the phonological model of the word incrementally, as opposed to working in a strictly serial fashion, one element at a time. Levelt (1989, p. 24) gives the example of saying sixteen dollars, where the upcoming word dollars changes the stress within the word sixteen (thus, SIXteen [Dollars], and not sixteen). (Segalowitz 2010: 15)

Leaning towards De Bot's conclusion (1992) that this is a critical phase for L2 speech production, Segalowitz (2010: 15) argues that the phase of morpho-phonological encoding is indeed another potential fluency vulnerability point as "reduced fluency" of the process may be expected "manifesting itself in hesitations" (f_4).

f_5 / f_6 problems in morpho-phonological- and phonetic encoding, respectively

For a successful guidance of the "speech apparatus in producing the required phonetic events" (ibid.) the rather abstract phonological score finally needs to be translated into an articulatory score within the phase of phonetic encoding. That is where the knowledge source of syllabary comes into play. Again using the foundations provided by Levelt (1999: 110-111), Segalowitz (ibid.) explains that this source

> contains the gestural scores for turning phonological score information into motor plans for producing speech (ibid.) [In other words, it includes] such parameters as duration, amplitude, and pitch movement, and more global parameters such as key (range of movement in a phonological phrase) and register (pitch level of the baseline intonation)

The product of phonetic encoding, so to speak, is a phonetic plan for the realisation of intended meaning, "setting into motion the motor activity for articulating the message and creating overt speech" (Segalowitz 2010: 16). Segalowitz (ibid.) summarises that

> fluency issues can arise here if the speaker effortfully, as opposed to being able to automatically, attempts to select the appropriate gestural score ($\{f_5\}$ in Figure 2) and attempts to execute that score ($\{f_6\}$).

f_7 self-monitoring as potential locus of dysfluency

In the "operation of the processes identified in the blueprint" Segalowitz (2010:16-17), finally, points towards another "more global issue" that has an impact on fluency, namely

self-perception, and self-monitoring of one's own speech, respectively. Self-monitoring is considered "almost always" done by speakers, "at the many different levels" of the blueprint model as it helps to detect (planning) errors and aids in needed reformulations (ibid., 16 and Levelt 1999: 88). What is more, research of spontaneous L1 speech has shown that error detection causes self-interruption for correction (e.g. Seyfeddinipur, Kita, and Indefrey 2008 in Segalowitz 2010: 16). That is, speakers obviously tend to prepare for correction while keeping on production, i.e. "continuing to talk until ready to deliver it" (ibid.). Consequently potential hesitation time is minimised. Thus, Segalowitz (ibid.) infers,

> we see that in self-monitoring there can be a tradeoff between maintaining accuracy versus fluency in speech, and that L1 speakers appear to generally favor fluency.

He additionally notes that an interruption of speech fluidity and subsequent reduction of flow is, clearly, a by-product of self-monitoring. Finally, as regards speech production in the L2, he views self-monitoring – though depending on proficiency level and speaking circumstances – as "more frequent[...] and/or more cognitively demanding [...] than in the L1" (ibid.) This view is exemplified as follows:

> For example, in some circumstances it may be especially important to display optimal proficiency in the L2 and hence maximal self-monitoring may be called for. Speech rate in the L2 may also be reduced relative to the L1, perhaps to make it easier to self-monitor, or when self-monitoring reveals that more time is required to allow various encoding processes to operate accurately (Segalowitz 2010: 16-17).

4.2.4. Self-confidence

Without doubt, cognitive factors play an important role in language acquisition. Yet, there is even more to learning a language than merely an efficient operation of involved cognitive mechanisms. Accordingly, pedagogical research has shown evidence to propose that

> learning is not only determined by biological and cognitive factors but also depends on student's individual characteristics (e.g. ability, motivation, learning style and personality), their foreign language learning beliefs, their previous learning experience and, finally, the surroundings in which they learn (Nerlicki 2011: 183).

Such findings have contributed to a better understanding of the language learner, while at the same time opening up new fields of scientific research. One of these fields focuses on

"anxiety in foreign language speaking" which has, among other aspects, received a high degree of attention within the last decades of scientific pedagogical investigation (cf. ibid.).

Nerlicki (2011: 183ff.), and others treat anxiety as "a product of students' foreign language learning experiences and beliefs" which is considered to be simply but usually created by the plane hypothesis that "something can go wrong in oral communication". In fact,

> many sources of foreign language speaking anxiety come into being *before* the actual processes of speaking [and] actual problems on the cognitive plane during speech production are frequently the result of such anxieties (ibid, 183,184).

This assumption is illustrated within a schematic representation by Nerlicki (2011: 187), included below. The advantage of this illustration is certainly that it may account for both of the two general but distinct viewpoints on the role of anxiety, commonly chosen among scholars. That is, anxiety is usually either seen as the **cause** of negative results, i.e. negative performances, or it is seen as the **consequence** of such negative performances. However, the given representation does not exclude any position in the debate on whether it is actually cognitive problems (as supported by Sparks and Ganschow 1993) or anxiety (cf. e.g. Horwitz 2001) that leads to poor results in students' performance. Depending on the choice of starting-point all of the major research findings and hypotheses may be explained with the help of this simple but thoroughly convincing figure of the "circular dependencies between anxiety, cognitive processes, students' performances and evaluation" (Nerlicki, ibid.).
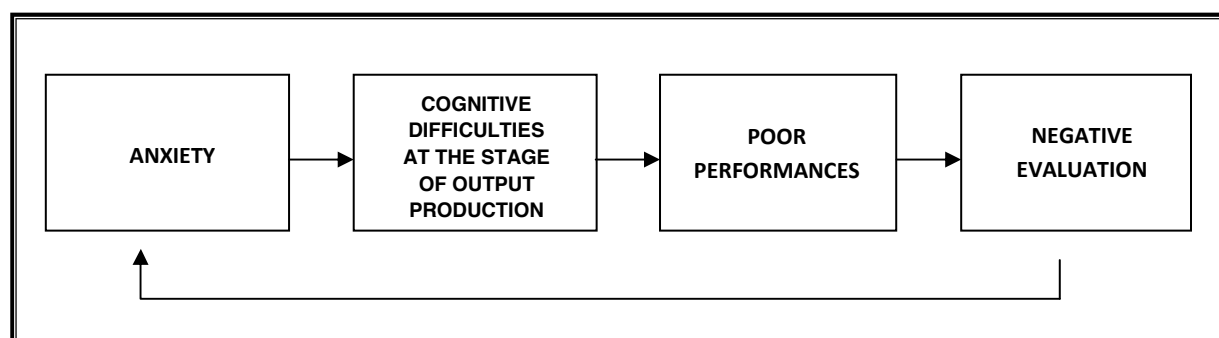
Figure 3: Circular dependencies between anxiety, cognitive processes, students' performances and evaluation (Nerlicki 2011: 187)

Studies on students' beliefs and stress-level induced by task or setting (e.g. Pekrun 1984 [et al] in Nerlicki 2011) have shown that feelings of anxiety (due to negative expectations) may in fact cause problems in linguistic production, as shown in the figure above (cf. Nerlicki 2011: 187). Poor performance and "negative personal or external evaluation" leading, in turn,

to an even greater level of anxiety are then among the most likely consequences (cf. ibid.). In order to break this vicious circle both level of anxiety and level of stress need to be reduced. Especially in the language classroom, it is necessary to provide students with what is so often referred to as 'a pleasant learning atmosphere'. That is, the classroom should become a setting where learners get rid of potential negative feelings or counterproductive beliefs which may both inhibit progress. Creating such a positive atmosphere is certainly not always as easy as it may seem in theory. We must not forget that an Austrian EFL classroom (higher education) consists of at least 15 individual students who naturally differ in personality, experience, and attitude while most likely bringing along even different competence levels due to distinct forms of previous education. Therefore, it is important for the practitioner to actually consider effective ways of promoting the establishment of such a supportive atmosphere. In this regard, I suggest leaning on the following guidelines:

- Raising awareness of the fact that errors and mistakes are a natural part of the learning process.
- Regularly pointing out what students already know and can do as regards FL use, but, on the other hand, also drawing attention to aspects that still need to be improved or even introduced.
- Giving constructive feedback, that is highlighting not only errors and mistakes but essentially naming what has been done well (i.e. praising)
- Catering for a respectful speaking culture where no one is laughed at if things go wrong
- Defining clear and manageable learning aims
- Facilitating automaticity and autonomy   (cf. e.g. Thornbury 2011)

These and other measures potentially lower anxiety while at the same time ideally increasing security and confidence among students. Feeling secure and confident in oral language use, that is, knowing about and trusting one's competences in speaking, as well as feeling safe in taking risks from time to time is what essential contributes to a fluent speaking performance.

As regards these necessary implications for a well-organised and supportive classroom setting, I will touch upon one aspect that seems particularly important to me, namely the impact of error-treatment.

Hedge (2000: 290) highlights the importance of adequate error treatment and well-considered teacher intervention in the FL classroom as follows:

> There is always a need to balance negative feedback on errors with positive feedback on the students' attempts to produce the [foreign] language, and this means consideration of affective factors and knowing 'when to push and when to stop'

As regards students' oral language performance, it is often far from easy for teachers to find and apply such a balance in practice. Literature on FLT generally proposes that mode of error correction and amount of intervention are principally to be guided by the chosen focus within speaking activities. That is, if the focus is on form, i.e. on accurate production, there will be a greater need for teacher intervention to secure correct usage, while in cases where the focus is clearly on fluency, too much intervention is considered counterproductive. As regards the latter, Brumfit (2000: 69) suggests that

> correction should have either no place or a very minor place in fluency work, for it normally distracts from the message or may even be perceived as rude. In fact (as [already] Corder [in] 1975 makes clear), error will be an inevitable part of the process of second-language development [...] (Brumfit 2000: 69).

Without doubt, constant negative feedback and immediate correction of every single error made by the learner is neither motivating, nor will it help them to establish confidence. Especially in terms of fluency enhancement, it is important that learners get the chance to produce language without being constantly interrupted. (cf. Thornbury 2011: 91) In other words,

> interrupting learners in 'full flight' to give them corrections seems to run counter to the need to let them experience autonomy. If the teacher is constantly intervening to assist their performance, whether by providing unknown words or correcting their errors, they can hardly be said to be self-regulating. And it may have the counterproductive effect of inhibiting fluency by forcing learners' attention on to accuracy (ibid.)

As Corder (1975 in Brumfit 2000: 69) above notes, errors are part of the learning process. In consequence, learners need to be informed by their teachers that it is in fact quite natural that things go wrong – at least now and then. If they are aware of this, their fear to speak in the FL might already decrease. Certainly, "a non-judgemental attitude to error on the part of the teacher" as well as a "supportive classroom dynamic" (2011:91) add to that and can thus be considered most beneficial. (cf. Thornbury 2011: 91) At the same time, an adequate amount of positive feedback on things that go well (cf. Hedge 2000: 290, and the guidelines for establishing a supportive classroom atmosphere presented above) may additionally help students to overcome potential speaking anxiety.

This is, however, not to say, that in fluency training errors or mistakes must not be corrected at all. Especially as regards mistakes (i.e. "a learners' momentary failure to apply what they already know" as opposed to errors, "representing a gap in knowledge") "a deft hint" may actually be effective in encouraging self-correction. Yet, teachers need to make sure that "the conversational flow is not threatened" (Thornbury 2011:92).

On the other hand, there are situations in which "some kind of more obtrusive intervention" is simply required in order to inhibit complete communication breakdown. These situations relate to instances where "learner's message is simply unintelligible" (ibid.). According to Thornbury (ibid.), in these instances it is most productive if learners are supported with "conversational repair" rather than being offered plain error correction: "Repair is facilitative, while correction can be construed negatively, as judgmental". Moreover, he (ibid.) points out that in case

> it is the learners themselves who are interacting, it may be [...] the other learners [who] can initiate the repair. This is more likely if the design of the task is such that mutual understanding is necessary if the task outcome is to be achieved [- such as] in a describe-draw task, for example, where one learner describes a picture to another, who has to reproduce it[;] a breakdown in communication should normally force some kind of repair process. Otherwise the task would never be completed.

In any case it is necessary that learners

> are equipped with the language with which to initiate repair, such as *Sorry, could you say that again? I didn't get that* and *What do you mean, X?* (ibid.)

Finally, there is of course more than supportive ad hoc repair in terms of means to be used in providing corrective feedback. Hedge (2000: 290-292) offers a few of the "options that exist for correction strategies". Some of them are listed below.

- noting down each individual's main errors on separate cards and giving these to them for reflection. If students keep a cumulative record of these cards they can monitor them to see whether some of their errors are gradually being eradicated
- recording the activity [...] and asking students to listen and see if they can identify and correct their own errors and those of peers
- making a note of 'key' errors, for example, those made by several students or those relating to a recent teaching point, and going through these with the class afterwards.
- noting down examples of errors and using these for a game in the next class.

In the end, error correction remains a delicate issue. As is often the case in FL teaching there is no standard or proper procedure to be applied. In any case, however it is important for

practitioners to realise that the way errors are being corrected may have a severe impact on learners' development as regards both language competence (accuracy + fluency) and self-confidence.

In the previous lines some of the requirements for effective fluency training have been addressed. The following chapter will elaborate on this issue and discuss further implications in detail.

5. Teaching oral fluency

Guillot (ibid.) in discussing "fluency and its teaching" criticises the non-specialised status of the term fluency while, at the same time, drawing attention to its high significance within effective language teaching. Oral fluency as a competence in language use is, in Guillot's view, not only a key aim in foreign language learning but also the figurehead of any language teaching institution.

Having discussed the notion of fluency in great detail within the previous chapters, it is time now to attend to its pedagogical implications. Starting with a presentation of common theoretical positions, this chapter will thus focus on effective ways to promote the development of oral fluency as a central learning objective within methodologically enhanced classroom practice.

5.1. From a theory of mind to present classroom practice

In SLA theory several distinct views on how to teach a FL have been expressed. It is these theoretical positions that ultimately form the basis for pedagogical choices. As regards the particular case of teaching speaking, Thornbury (2011: 39f) mentions three language learning theories that are to be considered most relevant in this respect: **behaviourist** theory (see historical account above); **cognitivist** theory; and **sociocultural** theory.

In behaviourist theory "modelling, repetition, and controlled practice", i.e. drills, are considered the key elements for SLA. As mentioned previously, "its popularized form, audiolingualism," gave rise to the three-phase procedure of presentation, practice, and production. Though initially created for grammar teaching, the PPP model has also been applied to the teaching of speaking (cf. ibid, 38).

Cognitive language learning theory, conversely

> rejects [this] [...] view of the learners as empty vessels waiting to be filled, and instead credits them with an information processing capacity, analogous to computers. [...] the learning of a complex skill, like speaking, is seen as a movement from controlled to automatic processing (cf. ibid.).

As regards classroom practice, guiding the learner "from **awareness-raising**, through **proceduralization**, to **autonomy**" (Thornbury 2011: 38) is the theoretical grounds suggested most effective within cognitive theory. That is, language learning starts with "conscious attention" on the learning of isolated rules or stages involved in a given procedure. Then, "repeated activation" is believed to encourage the creation of a "single manageable 'program'" of the individual steps of the given procedure. Finally, this 'program' is "integrated into existing knowledge" which is considered to cause a vital process of restructuring as regards the learner's linguistic system (ibid.).

In contrast, sociocultural theory holds it that language learning, no matter whether we refer to L1 or L2 acquisition is "mediated through social and cultural activity" (ibid.). By experiencing so-called "**other-regulation**", "that is, the mediation of a 'better other, whether parent, peer, or teacher", the learner is able to "**appropriate**" new knowledge via means of **assisted performance** (i.e. via scaffolding). As soon as appropriation takes place, "scaffolding can be gradually dismantled" and learners will find themselves in a "state of **self-regulation**" in which they are ultimately able to perform "independently" (cf. Thornbury 2011: 38.).

As Thornbury (2011: 39) notes, these three theories are distinct in their "conception of the [human] mind". However, he also and essentially points towards given similarities:

> each theory incorporates a stage which roughly equates with **awareness**, whereby the learner encounters something new. And each theory attempts to explain how this knowledge is integrated, or **appropriated**, into the learner's existing systems. And finally each theory accepts that at least some of this new knowledge becomes available for use: it is automated and the learner is **autonomous** (ibid.).

The foreign language classroom is intended to guide learners through these individual stages of the FL acquisition process. Respective activities are chosen to support learners within the ultimate aim of achieving fluency in oral language production. In the course of time, however, distinct pedagogical procedures were applied and believed effective in helping learners to achieve this ultimate aim of oral fluency.

5.2. Conversation, Communication and Speaking in the FL classroom – a short history

The use of "'conversations' as a [...] medium for contextualizing [foreign] language content" is a tradition in language teaching that already occurred in the 16th century when new arrivals in Britain where taught in the English language. Being well aware of the fact that competence in communication is among the main needs of the language learner, 'conversations' were initially presented in form of dialogues to be learnt by heart – a practice "that persisted through the 17th and 18th centuries". (cf. Thornbury and Slade 2006: 247-48). It was then with the "introduction of foreign languages into school curricula during the 19th century", when new teaching methods and approaches started to emerge. (cf. ibid, 248ff.) First, the focus on dialogues to be learnt by heart was being discarded and language classes now rather concentrated on "isolated sentences – typically highly contrived – for translation" (cf. ibid.). The effectiveness of this grammar-translation approach was, however, soon doubted. Educational reformers consequently reinforced a focus on real-life conversation, including more natural and longer strings of every-day spoken language to be prioritised within foreign language teaching. The so-called "Direct Method" was born. Even if the new teaching philosophy might have seemed both tangible and feasible, a look at teaching resources from the early 1900s (cf. e.g. Berlitz's First Book for Teaching Modern Languages 1906 referred to in Thornbury and Slade 2006: 248) actually reveals that examples of such supposedly more natural 'conversations' used to practice foreign language speaking sounded even more "stilted and contrived" than those used "three centuries earlier" (cf. Thornbury and Slade 2006: 248). The use of such "ill-suited models for spoken language" (ibid.), and the fact that most conversation classes consisted of controlled question-answer exchanges between teacher and student only (termed "oral methods of instruction") show how "loosely construed the concept of 'conversation' had [indeed] become. (cf. ibid, 250) In most cases, "conversation seems to have meant nothing more than a series of display questions" (Thornbury and Slade 2006: 251).

Evidently, these controlled question-answer-exchanges characteristic of the "Direct Method", are reminiscent of pattern drills used as a principal teaching procedure within the later applied audio-lingual method (cf. ibid, 251). Audiolingualism, initially called the Army Method (cf. e.g. Taylor 2013: http://www.tjtaylor.net/english/teaching-method-audio-lingual), established itself in the United States around 1950. Based on structural linguistics and behaviourist

theory, the audio-lingual approach aimed at "promot[ing] mechanical habit-formation through repetition of basic patterns" (Bowen 2000: 1).

Following Skinner's Behaviorism theory, pedagogical choices were based on stimulus and response procedures. Practitioners relied on "a system of reinforcement" to promote correct linguistic behaviour. On the other hand, incorrect language use was believed to be effectively reduced by means of negative feedback (cf. Tylor 2013). Spoken language was clearly in the foreground, as was accurate pronunciation and control of grammatical structures (cf. Bowen 2000). Patterns of common everyday conversations "were elicited, repeated and tested until the responses given by the student [...] [was considered] automatic" and correct. (Tylor 2013). Audiolingual techniques, such as so-called fluency drills were considered most effective in terms of fluency training. The underlying belief that fluency was reached by an increase in "learner's ability to link syntactic segments with ease" again became very popular in the 1970s (Hedge 2000: 54).

> For example, the teacher would set up a chain drill and provide each student with a different prompt which they would have to insert in the correct syntactic position, as in:

Students:	I went to the theatre last night.
Teacher:	My aunt's house.
Student 1:	I went to my aunt's house last night.
Teacher:	Visited.
Student 2:	I visited my aunt's house last night.
Teacher:	Yesterday. (Hedge 2000: 54-55)

An alternative to Audiolingualism is Situational Language Teaching. SLT is an approach that emerged around the same time but "on the other side of the Atlantic and in Australia" (Thornbury and Slade 2006: 252). At the core of this approach lies the view that language structures must be presented in respective situations where they are used – hence: situational language teaching. However, the term **situational** has not yet been sufficiently defined.

> By extension, *situational* came to mean any approach in which contextual factors were foregrounded and in which connected texts (almost always spoken) were the main means of presentation [...] More narrowly, situational English became associated with phrasebook-type English, consisting largely of transactional exchanges such as service encounters (ibid, 253).

Such transactional exchanges within specific situations obviously demand the application of specific vocabulary and respective structures – language features that came to be summarised under the term ESP (English for Specific Purposes). So-called ESP courses – for which there is high demand even these days – originally started in the 1970s as a response to the existing "needs of more specialised markets, such as businessmen, scientists and academics" (ibid.). As can again be inferred from the title, such courses have been organised situation-wise "(*Making an appointment; Meeting a client; Negotiating a deal*)" with a focus on respective models of interactional language use. These conversational models where mainly "designed to sensitize learners to different *registers* of spoken English" (cf. Thornbury and Slade 2006: 253).

The given emphasis on individual specific speaking situations as a means to contextualise appropriate language use "echoes the functional trend in British linguistics that had emerged in the 1930 with the work of Firth" (cf. ibid.).

> [I]t was Firth who was the first to claim that learning to use a language is a process of "learning to say what the other fellow expects us to say under the given circumstances" (1935/1957, p.28). (Thornbury 2013; online blog)

Halliday, in developing further the work of his teacher Firth, finally determined three substantial dimensions of any situational context which, in turn, shape linguistic choices. These include *field*, *tenor* and *mode* (cf. Thornbury and Slade 2006: 253).

Interestingly, and as Thornbury in his online blog (2013) notes, Situational Language Teaching had been implemented as a teaching technique long before Halliday presented his considerations regarding the situational context of language use. It was only in 1964 when he, together with his colleagues McIntosh and Strevens, provided a discussion of the "implications for [a situational] course design". (cf. Thornbury and Slade 2006: 253) And it was even two decades later when his famous work "Introduction to Functional Grammar" was finally released in 1985 (cf. Thornbury 2013).

In both Audiolingualism and Situational Language Teaching, controlled practice of sentence patterns was seen as the key means to promote successful oral communication in the FL. Free conversation, in its literal sense, was generally and consciously avoided and - if practiced at all - only part of the programme at very advanced levels (cf. Thornbury and Slade 2006: 254). In the course of time, however practitioners finally realised that "fluency [training] could not be deferred indefinitely" (ibid.). This, in turn, led to a thorough reconsideration of "the tightly

controlled presentation-practice (PP) paradigm" which had governed classroom practice since the inception of Audiolingualism. Experts agreed that it would be beneficial to include an additional stage of production (PPP) in order to account for freer practice of spoken language. Discussions and role-plays were then among the most commonly used activities within added 'production' practice (cf. ibid.).

With the introduction of a production stage grew the awareness of the learner's crying need to improve oral fluency by practicing spontaneous and free speaking. Practitioners had realised that even the activities used within PPP were not ideal in the sense of giving learners the opportunity to practice spontaneous and real-life speech. Hence a new approach was required. And this new approach came to be called Communicative Language Teaching.

The communicative language teaching movement of the 1980s was mainly influenced by Functionalism. Likewise, both the implementation of discourse- and genre analysis as well as the new concept of **communicative competence** put forth by Hymes (1972) played an important role in this respect. (cf. Thornbury and Slade 256). As noted in Richards and Rodgers (2001: 159):

> The Communicative Approach in language teaching starts from a theory of language as communication. The goal of language teaching is to develop what Hymes (1972) referred to as "communicative competence. Hymes coined this term in order to contrast a communicative view of language and Chomsky's theory of competence.

In contrast to Chomsky who concentrated on rather conceptional speakers' abilities that "enable them to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language", Hymes proposed a more comprehensive model of linguistic abilities with a focus on communication and culture (cf. ibid).

Accordingly, syllabuses of the time were organised around communicative functions. That is, grammar and structural patterns were no longer at the centre of instruction. (cf. ibid). For the first time, transcripts of real-life conversations were – though, of course very rarely – used as a resource for FL teaching. (cf. ibid, 255) Furthermore, new, communicative speaking activities were introduced. So-called information gaps and problem-solving activities are since then among the most popular ones related to CLT.

In a summary, and as Yule (2006:166) notes, communicative approaches are generally

based on a belief that the functions of language (what is it used for) should be emphasized rather than the forms of the language (correct grammatical or phonological structures.

Such a statement may, however, lead to severe misconceptions about communicative approaches in general, and CLT in particular. It may thus be wrongly assumed that teaching **form** is no longer existent within these approaches. In fact, CLT is an approach which in its principle philosophy of 'teaching how to use fluent language for meaningful communication' pays attention to all four skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Furthermore, correction and assessment of all skills is equally a part of classroom management. This, in turn, obviously presupposes practicing grammatical forms and its related functions. Thereby, contextualisation, authenticity, free production and individual learner needs (learner centredness) are given highest priority (cf. Mehlmauer-Larcher 2012). Learners are encouraged to practice language via the principle of trial and error (cf. Richards and Rodgers 2001: 172). That is, **risk-taking**, in the sense of trying to express meaning without sticking to what has already been taught, is what is constantly promoted and stimulated. This, for example, allows learners to practice and apply so-called communication strategies (referred to in chapter 4). As regards the activities used, sharing and transfer of information is clearly in the foreground. No matter whether role-play, information-gap, simulation, communication game, or jigsaw (the range of exercise types is "unlimited"), any activity used must have a clearly defined purpose behind them (cf. Richards and Rodgers 2001: 165, 169, 171). As can be inferred from above, CLT is a holistic approach where it is not the individual skills that are trained one after another but where learners are engaged in the training of several skills and subskills which are covered all at once. (cf. Johnson and Johnson 1998 in Richards and Rodgers 2001: 173)

One "'strong form'" that evolved out of CLT (Thornbury and Slade 2006: 267) is task-based language teaching (TBLT). In short, this approach emphasises tasks "as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching" (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 223). As further described by Richards and Rodgers (ibid, 226) TBLT is "motivated primarily by a theory of learning rather than a theory of language".

To be more precise "pragmatic language processing" is seen as a prerequisite for foreign language acquisition. Following interactionist views, it is **negotiation for meaning** which is highlighted as it

provid[es] the psychological conditions whereby language *input* becomes *intake*, and [is] thus available for mental processing, and, ultimately, acquisition (Thornbury and Slade 2006:267).

Again authentic – in the sense of "real-world language use" is prioritised. Richards and Rodgers (2001: 225) mention four "key areas of concern" in task-based practice, and teaching, respectively:

1. analysis of real-world task-use situations
2. the translation of these into teaching tasks descriptions
3. the detailed design of instructional tasks
4. the sequencing of instructional tasks in classroom training/teaching

At the very beginning, when TBLT was first introduced as a pedagogical technique for teaching a foreign language, there was a predominant focus on "solo […] performance". Later so-called "team tasks, for which communication is required" became central to TBLT.

Four major categories of team performance functions were recognized:

1. *orientation functions* (processes for generating and distributing information necessary to task accomplishment to team members
2. *organizational functions* (processes necessary for members to coordinate actions necessary for task performance)
3. *adaption functions* (process occuring as team members adapt their performance to each other to complete the task)
4. *motivational functions* (defining team objectives […] to complete the task)

(Richards and Rodgers 2001: 225-226)

The central focus on actual **tasks** to be accomplished by language learners implies and means a central focus on **output**. The crucial role of comprehensible output is enshrined in the correspondent "Output Hypothesis" by Swain (1985). According to this hypothesis FL learners essentially need repeated opportunities to produce output in order to become fluent in speaking and writing. Hence, Swain's argumentation contradicts that of Krashen (1982) who instead of output defines comprehensible input as the main condition for second language acquisition (SLA) to take place. Swain's "Output Hypothesis" emphasises the need for learners to notice their personal gaps when producing output. In this respect, the interlocutor takes over an important role in providing needed feedback. This view is also held by Long (1980, 1996) who, in his hypothesis, sheds light on the importance of **interaction** as an overall mean to achieve language proficiency. Interaction, which crucially implies negotiation

of meaning, and negotiation of meaning, which, in turn, essentially implies conversational adjustments and repair work to avoid communication breakdown, is considered to best foster SLA. Both Swain's "Output Hypothesis" and Long's "Interaction Hypothesis" can be considered building blocks of TBLT. Still, and even if the main attention is on providing learners with opportunities to produce language, TBLT does not deny the important role of adequate input as an additional and necessary condition for SLA. In summary,

> TBLT proposes that the task is the pivot point for stimulation of input-output practice, negotiation of meaning, and transactionally focused conversation (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 229).

Helping learners to achieve communicative competence is, as already said, among the main objectives within communicative approaches to language teaching. One building block of communicative competence is the application of adequate **lexis**. As Richards and Rodgers (2001: 138) note, words and word combinations have, in fact, received growing attention in language teaching and learning. Especially the developments in corpus analysis have recently led to new findings regarding the considerable role of multiword units in both L1 and L2 acquisition (cf. ibid, 132, 138). These results finally led to the implementation of the so-called lexical approach to language teaching, which started to emerge around the 1980s and stresses contextual vocabulary use. That is, teaching so-called gambits, i.e. lexical phrases, is the basic principle in FLT. The general view behind this approach is a clear contradiction to the Chomskyan view of the "Syntactic Structures".

> Whereas Chomsky's influential theory of language emphasized the capacity of speakers to create and interpret sentences that are unique and have never been produced or heard previously, in contrast, the lexical view holds that only a minority of spoken sentences are entirely novel creations and that mulitword units functioning as "chunks", or memorized patterns form a high proportion of the fluent stretches of speech heard in everyday conversation (Pawly and Syder 1983 in Richards and Rodgers 2001: 133).

Although there already exists teaching material focusing on prefabricated units, or chunks (see chapter 4.1., p. 41), and although there are several corpora available to be used within classroom practice, there still seems to be no consensus among experts in terms of how a language theory based on lexis is best put into practice. (cf. ibid, 134ff.)

The teaching methods and approaches presented within this short historical overview of teaching speaking, and conversation, respectively serve as representatives of the main currents in FL teaching. However, it is important to clarify that former approaches did not simply

disappear as soon as newer ones were established. In other words, there have not been clear-cut boundaries between older and newer approaches. In contrast, elements of former approaches that are still considered valuable have remained an integral part of today's classroom practice. Besides, a constant reconsideration of- and reflection on given theories and techniques has resulted in the application of yet other pedagogical approaches, views and techniques.

As there is unfortunately no room for a presentation of such additionally applied teaching approaches and techniques, I will – after this presentation of the main strands – continue with a discussion of general methodological influences and related issues that are exclusively related to the teaching of fluency within the teaching of speaking. This discussion primarily aims to elaborate on the current FL teaching situation.

5.3. The current state of affairs - Methodological views and issues

As is exemplified above, teaching approaches or methods are generally based on linguistic and/or psychological viewpoints. Pedagogical choices are usually strongly linked to chosen viewpoints and teacher beliefs as regards effective second language acquisition. In general, theories of second language acquisition (SLA), or second language learning (SLL) are divided into reception-based and production-based theories versus input-output and interactive theories. (cf. Mehlmauer-Larcher 2012). Some of these theories have been previously outlined.

Current theories in SLA are integrative in nature as they promote a focus on both output and interaction, while at the same time appreciating the significant role of comprehensible input (cf. ibid.). Even though there has been a shift in focus as regards the overall goal in FL teaching and learning – namely a shift from mere mastery of structures to communicative proficiency – it is not the case that older theories or pedagogical techniques, such as pattern practice, have been totally ruled out within classroom practice of today. Despite a predominant presence of communicative approaches to foreign language teaching, today's practitioners actually find themselves in an era where a variety of SLA- and SLL theories with numerous proposed activities may be employed to broaden the range of pedagogical choices. Mehlmauer-Larcher (2012) in her lecture even speaks of a "cocktail era" where a mix of methods and approaches is currently considered a good way to teach foreign languages.

Nevertheless, it is "two major currents of thinking", as Anne Burns (1998: 103) recognises, which have ever since remained part of "the contemporary debate on the teaching of oral communication". That is, a focus on skills development for accurate production, on the one hand, and the use of free production activities to enhance fluent performance, on the other hand. This accuracy versus fluency distinction corresponds to the present dichotomy of direct/controlled- versus indirect/uncontrolled teaching approaches and procedures. While in so-called direct approaches 'language awareness' and 'consciousness-raising' is ' in the foreground, indirect approaches focus more on the enhancement of 'learner autonomy within "more 'authentic' and functional language use" (cf. Burns 1998: 103). Burns (ibid.) raises awareness of the complex relationship between these two principal "methodological positions":

> Pedagogical processes pertaining to the development of form and function – accuracy and fluency – will depend on differential contextual factors such as learner level and proficiency, teachers' knowledge and perception of learner need and progression, and the nature of the interactional responses produced within the context of the task, rather than on the general application of specific methods.

Several issues arise. Keywords, such as "learner needs", "oral fluency activity types" or "authenticity" become central. Though a detailed account cannot be provided, these issues will turn up again within the following pages.

For the moment, additional points as regards the fluency- accuracy debate need to be made. Burns' (1998: 103) argument that the specific method or approach applied in accuracy-, and/or fluency training is not the only parameter for success, seems more than legitimate. Nevertheless, a theoretical position as regards second language acquisition and second language learning is a fundamental basis for any pedagogical choice. Clearly, a consideration of individual viewpoints based on SLA theory must be an integral part of FL course design.

On the other hand, and irrespective of the kind of pedagogical view that is held in teaching (fluent) speaking, balancing fluency and accuracy training is considered vital in the attempt to reach a high level of oral proficiency. Speaking activities are generally presented as designed to promote one or the other. Hedge (2000:61) in referring to Brumfit (1984) establishes a link between fluency- and accuracy based tasks when summarising his view on the given issue:

> Brumfit (1984) sees these as co-existing but suggests that the balance would change over time. His suggestion is that one might expect to find a preponderance of accuracy-based work early on, for beginners, but that there would be a gradual shift in

emphasis as learners acquire more language and that upper-intermediate learners might be involved for a high proportion of class time in fluency work.

Of course, at a beginner's level it is in the first stance important to provide learners with L2 vocabulary as well as accurate language forms in order for them to be able to express themselves and make meaning. The main aim is to gradually develop further FL knowledge and capability by presenting how to use the target language. That is, correct or accurate use will be demonstrated and practiced.

However, given the fact that fluency and accuracy are inevitably interrelated (cf. features of fluent language use), it is questionable whether there is indeed a certain point or language level when actual fluency training shall be initiated. Or put the other way around: Is fluent language use really dependent on a specific proficiency level?

In the attempt to find an answer to this question and thus contemplating once more on what it actually means to deliver fluent FL oral production, I found a conversational extract in Hedge (2000: 54) that meant to exemplify fluent language use:

> **A** When will you be taking your driving test?
> **B** The day after my birthday.
> **A** And when's your birthday? Remind me.
> **B** September 27th.
> <div align="right">(Hedge 2000:54)</div>

Hedge (ibid.), in referring to this example, offers the following description of fluent language use:

> This ability to link the words and phrases of the questions, to pronounce the sounds clearly with appropriate stress and intonation, and to do all of this quickly, in what Johnson (1979) calls 'real time', is what constitutes fluency.

Condoning the fact that the example used by Hedge (ibid.) seems rather contrived to me, I would like to interpose my considerations via the use of another made-up conversational sequence that might occur between two beginners:

> **C** Hi!
> **D** Hi!
> **C** Ehm ...What's your name?
> **D** Linda.

C Eh?

D Linda.

C Ahh .. Linda. Hi Linda!

D What's your name?

C Lisa.

Assuming this short dialogue really occurred, and assuming it was to be rated in terms of fluency, I can see no reasonable argument why this performance, though involving very basic structures, should not be considered comparably fluent. Therefore, I would argue that fluency is and must remain a key aim of instruction from the very beginning on. Obviously, fluency means to make the best use of what has been already acquired at the very moment of speaking. (cf. e.g. Brumfit's definition of fluency, 1984: 56-57 provided in chapter 1) And, of course, the more words and forms retrievable, i.e. the higher the level, the more specific and detailed can a focus on fluency features be.

By all means, a distinction between accuracy and fluency is all but "difficult to maintain" (cf. Nation and Newton 2009: 152). As becomes clear from the description of defining elements of fluent language use, accuracy and fluency are inevitably intertwined. Though absolutely error-free production is not required in terms of fluency perception a certain level of accuracy is still conducive and thus needed. In other words, oral production that is marked by a high presence of errors will hardly be perceived as 'fluent'.

In this context, Skehan (1996: 49) introduces the notion of "undesirable fluency" by which he describes the undesirable phenomenon of learners relying on incorrect but convenient language forms that turn fossilised and are subsequently regularly employed within future speaking situations. Without doubt, such a process of fossilisation needs to be avoided.

Finally, the given two-level distinction between speaking activities designed to enhance either fluency or accuracy seems rather paradoxical. Accordingly, research has shown that the use of certain speaking activities originally designed to enhance fluency may also entail a considerable decrease of erroneous language production. Moreover, even increased complexity in terms of grammatical structures is likely to occur. (cf. e.g. Arevart and Nation 1991 in Nation and Newton 2009: 152). That is, why "a very useful further distinction [including all three dimensions, namely] fluency, accuracy and complexity (Skehan, 1998)" has been applied in later research (Nation and Newton ibid.). Finardi (2008:1), in discussing

this trend offers a short but precise description of each distinct dimension. Her descriptions are based on the findings of Skehan and Foster (2001):

> Most of the studies on speech production have concentrated on three different measures: fluency - conceptualized as the ability to sustain real-time communication through a focus on meaning; complexity - a willingness to use more challenging language, reflecting hypothesis testing and possibly restructuring of the language system; and accuracy – learners' orientation towards conservatism and control over more stable elements in the interlanguage system. (Finardi ibid).

Drawing on the results of various studies, Nation and Newton (2009: 152) conclude:

> Substantial increases in fluency also involve changes in the nature of the knowledge of language. [...] It is therefore not surprising that developments in fluency are related to developments in accuracy [and complexity].

The authors thereby refer to the so-called restructuring of a learner's linguistic system within practicing oral production. This process of restructuring ideally results in a reduction of errors due to an increased level of knowledge. Therefore, the restructuring of a learner's linguistic system is – not at least – regarded a major precondition for fluency to develop. According to Thornbury (2011: 38) this process of further development, based on a change in knowledge, is considered especially central to SLA in cognitivist theory. However, as Nation and Newton (2008: 152) note, it also plays an important role among those theories in which "repeated practice [is viewed] as the major determinant of development" (ibid.). The role of repetition in promoting L2 oral fluency is discussed in chapter 5, p. 77. Within the following section, individual types of so-called oral fluency activities will be presented.

5.4. Oral fluency activities

Within a review of related literature, Rossiter et al (2010: 586f.) identified five overall types of so-called "oral fluency activities". These do, in their focus, relate to the major features of fluent oral language production as discussed in this paper. Furthermore, the given categorisation of activities hints towards the various additional issues involved:

a) consciousness-raising tasks (i.e. to raise awareness of fluency features) (Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers, & Demecheleer, 2006);

b) rehearsal or repetition tasks (Bygate 2001; Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005; Lynch & Maclean, 2001; Nation, 1989);

c) the use of formulaic sequences (Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers, & Demecheleer, 2006; Ejzenber, 2000; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Towell, Hawkins, & Bazergui, 1996; Wood, 2006,2009; Wray, 2002);

d) the use of discourse markers (lexical fillers such as *so*; *you know*) (Guillot 1999; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992); and

e) communicative free-production activities (e.g., general speaking tasks without a specific focus, traditionally seen as fluency builders in L2 classrooms).

First and foremost, Rossiter et al (2010:588) draw attention to the importance of needs analysis in designing language instruction for oral fluency enhancement:

> The first step in developing instruction to promote fluency is to assess learners' oral productions to determine if fluency training is warranted and, if so, which aspects of fluency should form the focus of instruction.

Using a checklist with performance scales for a set of individual speaking tasks including monologic and dialogic language use in both controlled and uncontrolled settings, is recommended for determining the status quo of learners' speaking abilities. Unsurprisingly, frequency, location and length of pauses, together with speech rate are mentioned as primary rating categories (ibid.).

> Instruction may [then] include formulaic sequences to increase mean length of run and discourse markers to provide online planning time and reduce the length and frequency of silent pauses. Additional features could be integrated into classroom instruction to supplement free-production tasks, which alone are unlikely to have a significant impact on oral fluency (Rossiter et al 2010: 588).

Rossiter et al here point towards different types of activities used to train oral fluency. Strikingly, commonly used free-production activities are presented as hardly effective if not given a particular focus in terms of fluency features. In actual fact, communicative approaches that mainly concentrate on free-production have been severely criticised. Experts highlight the importance of partial guidance or at least clear focus in the application of free-production tasks as otherwise free production alone may not be effective in terms of making progress. Additional activities are seen as essential ingredients for adequate instruction that is aimed at enhancing oral fluency. Therefore, Rossiter and colleagues strive to highlight that there are several other means to work on "linguistic features that enhance oral fluency" – means that are not bound to traditional free-production activities. "Consciousness-raising, rehearsal or repetition, pre-task planning, and the imposition of time constraints on production" are mentioned as additional and vital procedures (cf. ibid, 593-594).

Indeed, numerous so-called oral fluency activities are available for use. Overall, they can be categorised according to the principal stages involved in fluency teaching as presented above (i.e. awareness, appropriation, and autonomy).

5.4.1. Awareness-raising activities

Due to a lack of specific knowledge or skills learners are doomed to face problems in delivering fluent speech. In such cases, so-called awareness-raising activities shall support learners in revealing individual "gaps" to be filled and finally made available for use in 'real time' speech. (cf. Thornbury 2011: 41)

The concept of awareness is one that derives from cognitivist theory (see above). It is argued that conscious awareness is a primary step within needed restructuring of the learner's linguistic system. Awareness as such, however, implies several additional processes. Thornbury (ibid.) explicitly mentions three of them: attention, noticing, and understanding. Schmidt's (2001) widely quoted 'noticing hypothesis' must be mentioned at this point. He therein suggests that conscious attention to L2 input features is a fundamental precondition for learning. Guillot (1999: 87), in this context, provides a related first rationale for exercises, including two important points to be met by the FL teacher:

First,

> Give students first-hand experience of general phenomena observed [...] (e.g. aspects of negotiation) – by way of further sensitisation;

Second,

> Give them the opportunity to test what they have observed in the way of strategies (e.g. strategies for filling time with talk, for interrupting, repetitions and reformulations, etc.), for selective practice.

In order to make learners aware of certain characteristics of fluent oral language use, different sources and means may be employed. Thornbury (2011: 43ff) lists the following possibilities when aiming to focus and work on selected language features:

- Using recordings and transcripts
- Using live listening
- Using noticing-the-gap activities

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In discussing available sources of that kind, Thornbury (2011: 43) points towards several inherent problems. First of all, he draws attention to the fact that recordings and transcripts designed for classroom use "are often only superficially representative of real spoken language". Being "typically pre-scripted [...] [,] performed by authors", and compiled to "display a pre-selected grammar structure", such spoken data is, in most cases, lacking spontaneity. Therefore we cannot speak of 'authentic' material. Furthermore, the language used in these prearranged conversational sequences is "almost always simplified to ensure intelligibility". That is, pedagogical recordings

> may lack such performance effects as pause fillers, back-tracking, and repair, and they seldom display characteristics of interactive talk, such as turn-taking, in anything but a rather idealized way (ibid.).

However, Thornbury (2011:43, 44) is well aware of the fact that authentic rather than pre-scripted or studio recorded conversation might be "less attractive for classroom purpose". Due to lengthy "ungraded language" use, including features such as overlaps, interruptions or asides, severe problems in terms of audibility may arise (ibid, 44). Finally, his suggestion is that "pre-scripted recordings should not be dismissed totally, therefore". Although marked by a certain "artificiality", they are definitely more audible as well as they have the advantage that language teachers can integrate reoccurring instances of specific language characteristics to be more easily noticed by their learners (cf. ibid.).

Aiming for a compromise, Thornbury (ibid) takes the chance to show what a useful script could alternatively look like by reworking such an example of a conversational sequence. He thereby combines both authentic and scripted elements to create an alternative version of a dialogue that seems less inauthentic. In other words, selected "features of naturally-occurring spoken language" are systematically integrated to ensure "pedagogical utility". To illustrate his points, all three versions of the given example are provided below.

Speaker 1: I went in and *bought some stupid* things this morning in Boots, twenty-five p, [laugh] for twenty-five p you could be as silly as you want to couldn't you? Silly aren't they? Oh what fun. Silly green nonsense. Children's bead earrings.
Speaker 2: You got green?
Speaker 1: I've got a green jumper *which I wear in the winter*
Speaker 2: Yeah that's fine
Speaker 1: *So I thought I would.* I'm – am very fond of my green jumper, silly pair of green earrings to go with it.
Speaker 2: Why not?
Speaker 1: It's a laugh. There was another lady there *looking through all the* stuff where I was and she said to me, 'Isn't it fun?' [laugh] and I said, 'Yes, *only twenty-five p,*' [laugh] Absurd.

Earrings 1 (authentic version)

Speaker 1: What nice earrings!
Speaker 2: I bought them this morning.
Speaker 1: Where did you buy them?
Speaker 2: I bought them in Boots.
Speaker 1: How much did they cost?
Speaker 2: Only twenty-five p.
Speaker 1: What a bargain!
Speaker 2: I'm going to wear them with my green jumper.
Speaker 1: What a good idea!

Earrings 2 (coursebook version)

Speaker 1: What nice earrings!
Speaker 2: Do you like them? Silly, aren't they? Silly green nonsense. I bought them in Boots this morning. Twenty-five p.
Speaker 1: What a bargain! Have you got something green to go with them?
Speaker 2: I've got a green jumper which I wear in the winter. So I thought I'd get some silly green earrings to go with it.
Speaker 1: What fun!
Speaker 2: I know. It's a laugh. Only twenty-five p!

Earrings 3

(source: Thornbury 2011: 43, 44)

Another source for awareness-raising can be material taken from the media, such as TV, radio or the internet. Again, potential cases of "highly colloquial", "meandering", or "idiomatic" language use are likely to impede comprehensibility. Therefore, classroom utility may, again, be legitimately questioned. Besides, supplementing transcripts are hardly ever made available. (Thornbury 2011: 45).

Thornbury (ibid, 46) also discusses the possibility to have learners transcribe material themselves. He thereby highlights the benefit of a needed repeated focus on particular features in doing so. Furthermore, he notes, that providing learners at some point with authentic, i.e. genuine texts of spoken conversation "can only be helpful" as learners at least become aware of the fact that "even proficient speakers have to make real-time adjustments". This is then where teachers can provide helpful support in showing learners how these adjustments are actually made (ibid, 47).

In addition to recordings and transcripts, the role of teacher talk must be emphasised. As a matter of fact, it is the teacher who caters for most of the spoken input in the FL classroom (cf. Dalton Puffer 2002: 9). Dalton Puffer (ibid.) notes that

> studies on the quantitative distribution of talk have tended to show overwhelmingly that it is the teachers who do most of the talking, even in classrooms with a strong learner focus (Cazden 1988; Mehan 1985 [...]; Chaudron 1988). This distribution of talk naturally has direct consequences on who nominates topics and how these topics are developed.

Despite the fact that critics have repeatedly argued against teacher talk, sharing the view that it would "stop the student from real learning" (cf. ibid.), Thornbury (2011: 57) is certain that "live listening" actually has considerable advantages. These advantages are summarised as follows:

> Listening to the teacher or a guest speaker, has the particular advantage of interactivity: the teacher can adjust her talk according to her perception of the learners' level of understanding, and the learners may interact to ask questions, clarify details, and solicit repeats, as well as simply signal they are understanding (through backchannel device, for example (Thornbury 2011: 57).

Furthermore, the "intrinsic interest generated by listening to someone [...] known" must be appreciated as a "much more powerful motivator than listening to a disembodied stranger" whose speaking performance was only recorded outside the classroom. What is more, with live-listening, learners are able to notice extra-linguistic features, such as facial expression or gesture that effectively supplement speech (Thornbury 2011: 57).

I would agree to Thornbury's arguments – provided that those practitioners delivering live input are aware of the fact that they act as role-models and provided that they take their role seriously – especially if they themselves are L2 speakers of the target language. Considering that the EFL classroom is in most cases the only setting where language learners can actually

use the target language, live oral input is without doubt an essential learning resource for them to be employed.

Last, but not least there is especially one activity type in awareness raising that has proved to be another good source for learners to notice where they stand in terms of proficiency level: so-called noticing-the-gap activities. These activities are intended to help learners become aware of the level of their own performance in relation to that of "a skilled practitioner" (Thornbury 2011: 62). That is, they are able to compare their "current competence [...] [with] the target" competence" (cf. ibid: 58). To exemplify,

> one way of engineering this is to adopt a task-based instructional cycle:
>
> - Students perform a speaking task to the best of their current ability.
> - They then observe skilled practitioners performing the same task, and they note features they would like to incorporate.
> - They re-perform the original task (or a similar one) attempting to incorporate the targeted features.
>
> <div align="right">(ibid, 62)</div>

5.4.2. Appropriation activities

In terms of appropriation, that is the process whereby learners' control of their own abilities in speaking shall be increased within classroom practice, it is once more the teacher who takes over an important role as regards providing support. Yet again, Thornbury's book (2011) offers useful information as he (ibid, 88) thoroughly examines such supportive means for appropriation to take place.

> The support may take the form of:
>
> - a model, which is repeated, as in drills or chants.
> - a writing task, which allows longer processing time than does 'live speaking'.
> - reading aloud from a text.
> - the teacher's scaffolding of the learner's talk by, for example, reformulating or translating learner utterance.
> - memorized, and rehearsed dialogues.
> - repeating a task, e.g. by doing it with different interactants.

At a certain point, however, a step-by-step reduction of support is considered key to success in the appropriation process. That is, reduced support – as soon as adequate – may serve to

"encourage a degree of independence" among learners, which, in turn, is needed for further development. The following examples of support reduction are mentioned (ibid.):

- removing the model, so that learners have to rely on memory.
- withdrawing teacher support.
- moving from the written mode to the spoken one.
- reducing planning time
- performing the task under more exacting conditions, e.g. to a time limit, or in public.

So-called appropriation activities include the whole range of communicative tasks (e.g. information gaps, jigsaw, and role-plays, etc.), activities that aim at dialogue building (e.g. by the use of scripts or prompt cards), but also so-called rewriting tasks (e.g. improving written dialogues) (cf. Thornbury 2011:63-88). Useful examples and descriptions of these activities are provided in Thornbury (ibid.) and Ur (2009: 120-133).

Finally, as regards the implementation of such communicative activities, task repetition and pre-task planning are frequently highlighted as useful means to foster oral fluency development. Their potential impact on students' progress will be discussed within the following.

5.4.2.1. Task repetition

Repetition receives great attention in the literature focusing on fluency enhancement. As Thornbury (2011: 85) remarks,

> repeating a task shows the most consistent and wide-ranging gains over all, although the jury is still out as to the extent that these short-term gains translate into long-term ones. That is, we still don't know whether appropriation results, leading [sic!] to long-term improvement.

In the first place, it was Bygate's study in 1996 which has stimulated the debate on task repetition. The considerable findings of this initial and of later studies are summarized to the point in Lynch and Maclean (2000), and in Finardi (2008), respectively. By means of a retelling-task which was repeated after some time, without Bygate announcing it, he was able to reveal improvements in production as regards L2 fluency, accuracy and complexity. Bygate (1996) reasonably assumes that within a first run, a primary focus on "heuristic planning of content" (Lynch and Maclean 2000: 224) seems to pose increased time pressure on the learner

in attempting to retrieve adequate lexis, language forms and structures needed to express the intended meaning. When repeated, however, content is no longer unfamiliar and attention can be devoted fully to linguistic realisation, ideally leading to more fluent, more accurate, and more complex units of production. These conclusions made Bygate (1996) hypothesise that due to a systematic manipulation and variation of task variables, including, for example, repetitive practice and changing audience or speaking partners, potential gains in oral proficiency are likely to be reached (cf. Lynch and Maclean 2000: 224).

Drawing on this assumption, namely that repetition allows speakers to focus on other language features within every new trial of the same task Bygate initiated a more detailed study on the effects of repetition in 2001. This later study has shown that repeating the same task indeed triggers improvements in language use. However, it has also turned out that effects do generally not persist within other types of task (cf. Finardi 2008: 1-2). Although improvements are especially related to complexity, fluency is equally encouraged (cf. ibid.).

One "well-researched" activity that is marked by repetitive practice is the so-called 4/3/2 technique, invented by Maurice in 1983. Nation and Newton (2009: 153) refer to this activity as one that, among others, meets needed requirements for fluency to develop.

> It combines the features of focus on the message, quantity of production (the speakers speak for a total of nine minutes), learner control over the topic and language used, repetition, and time pressure to reach a high rate of production through the decreasing amount of time available for delivery (ibid, 161).

In this activity or technique, two learners work together; one takes over the role of speaker and the other acts as listener.

> The speaker talks for four minutes on a topic while their partner listens. Then the pairs change with each speaker giving the same information [with the same degree of detail] to a new partner in three minutes, followed by a further change and a two-minute talk (ibid, 153).

The speakers are allowed to "perform without interruption" while getting the possibility to "make three deliveries of the talk". Obviously, the main aim of this procedure is to improve performance gradually from the first to the third run (ibid.). The organisation of the talk, involving choice of "ideas and language items" is done by the speaker themselves. The first two runs (4- and 3 minute talks) "allow [...] to bring these aspects well under control so that" the highest level of fluent production possible can be approached within the final 2-minute delivery. Repetition together with changing audience and clearly defined, decreasing time

limits are considered ideal conditions for reaching a high level of performance and fluency, respectively (cf. ibid, 154).

5.4.2.2. Pre-task planning

Pre-task planning is discussed as another influential component in the teaching of speaking skills (cf. e.g. Skehan and Foster, 1997; Foster und Skehan 1996). McCarthy and O'Keeffe (2004: 31) review related sources in the field and draw attention to the findings of Yuan and Ellis (2003) who, for a start, concentrate on the effects of pre-task planning on monologic production:

> Yuan and Ellis (2003) assert that pretask [sic!] planning positively aids learners' spoken production, especially with regard to fluency and complexity, albeit accuracy may not benefit so obviously.

Thornbury (2011: 85), in offering a summary of general research findings on factors influencing fluency, accuracy, and complexity of L2 oral production, clearly attests to this finding. Apart from task repetition it is indeed pre-task planning which turned out to have a considerable effect in terms of fluency development.

> Allowing time for pre-task planning enhances fluency, and this is manifested in faster speech rate and fewer silent pauses. Likewise pre-task planning has a positive effect on the complexity of the language that is produced, as manifested by more complex syntax and lexis – about ten minutes' online planning time seems to be optimal;

As recognised by Lynch and Maclean (2000: 223), "planning has been the focus of a series of studies" which aimed at "investigating the effect of different forms of pre-task phase on student performance". For example, in a study by Skehan and Foster (1997), three different tasks "with two planning conditions (10 minutes' planning time vs. no planning time)" were investigated. Thereby,

> performance was assessed through the number of pauses (as a measure of fluency), the percentage of error-free clauses (to measure accuracy) and the level of subordination (as a measure of complexity) (Skehan and Foster 1997: 185).

Largely, the authors were able to show that "planning had clear effects on almost all measures" (ibid.). These results, in fact, ad to earlier research findings,

> reveal[ing] that there is strong evidence of trade-off effects between the different dependent variables used, in that fluency, accuracy and complexity seem to enter into

competition with one another, given the limited attentional capacities of second language users (ibid.).

As regards fluency, in particular, given results allowed Skehan and Foster (1997) to confirm their first hypothesis, namely "that planning will be associated with greater fluency" (ibid, 191). As they note in their paper:

> The results are very consistent: planners pause significantly less frequently. One can conclude from these results that the hypothesis is confirmed (ibid.).

5.4.3. Working towards autonomy

As noted previously, autonomy is reached via increased automaticity (cf. e.g. Thornbury 2011:89) in the use of specific language features needed for 'real time' speaking performance. In this respect I have highlighted the importance of practice and repetition as indicated by Dörnyei (2009:155) in chapter 4.2.

In terms of research, Little (2008) points out that the

> attempts to theorise the process of 'autonomisation' […] have been strongly influenced by neo-Vygotskian psychology, which sees learning as a matter of supported performance and emphasises the interdependence of the cognitive and social-interactive dimensions of the learning process.

The implications for classroom procedure with a focus on speaking seem clear. First and foremost, it is necessary to provide learners with a setting where they feel safe to experiment with the FL in oral production. That is, without them being judged for every single error or mistake (cf. Thornbury 2011:91). Second, the classroom is to represent a supportive framework in which the teacher aids their learners in gaining confidence in using the FL autonomously. They may do so via "maximiz[ing] speaking opportunities" (ibid.), offering helpful input, and providing adequate material. This, in turn, includes the use of effective activities as well as the provision of constructive feedback on individual performances. Little (2008), in his own words, describes such a framework most impressively:

> The teacher's role is to create and maintain a learning environment in which learners can **be autonomous** in order to **become more autonomous**. The development of their learning skills is never entirely separable from the content of their learning, since learning how to learn a second or foreign language is in some important respects different from learning how to learn maths or history or biology.

As regards the implementation of speaking activities, such a framework requires teachers to make informed choices. Thornbury (2011: 90-91), in describing essential "criteria for speaking tasks" develops a catalogue of five "conditions [that] need to be met" for learners to regularly "experience autonomous language use" within the EFL classroom. These conditions are as follows:

- Productivity
- Purposefulness
- Interactivity
- Challenge
- Safety
- Authenticity

Productivity means that "a speaking activity is maximally language productive" in the sense that **all** learners are fully involved and engaged in FL production (cf. ibid, 90). In order to even enlarge FL production any activity needs to imply a certain purpose or goal that is to be reached. In short, there must be a clear, targeted outcome (cf. ibid.). Furthermore, "prepar[ing] students for real-life language use" involves that learners encounter any kind of audience when using the FL in speaking. No matter whether paired activity, team activity or solo presentation, "the possibility of interaction" is generally required to guarantee authenticity (cf. ibid, 91). Per definition, authenticity means that learners repeatedly get the chance

> to experience a quality of communication in the classroom that is essentially the same as communication outside the classroom (cf. ibid).

Certainly, this is not equally possible within every activity used. Thornbury (ibid, 91), in this context, notes the following:

> Of course, many classroom activities – such as drills and language games – can be justified on the grounds that they serve the needs of awareness-raising or of appropriation. But, in order to become autonomous, learners will need to experience [...] [what it means to] perform in real operating conditions, e.g. spontaneously, unassisted, with minimal preparation, and making do with their existing resources. [And] it also means that the kinds of topics, genres, and situations that are selected for speaking tasks bear some relation to the learners' perceived needs and interests.

Likewise, it is important for teachers to help learners achieve their full potential. That is, an adequate "degree of challenge" needs to be established so that learners may "draw on their

available communicative resources to achieve the outcome" (cf. ibid). Thereby speaking tasks should not impose too demanding requirements on individual learners, nor should they ask too little. Thus finding a happy medium seems most important in assisting autonomous language use. Such a happy medium, in terms of "the degree of challenge" (ibid.) additionally plays a crucial role as regards students' motivation.

> While learners should be challenged, they also need to feel confident [i.e. safe] that, when meeting [...] [the] challenges [of individual speaking tasks] and attempting autonomous language use, they can do so without too much risk. [...] Also learners need to be secure in the knowledge that the teacher – like a driving instructor – will always be there to take over if things get seriously out of hand (ibid.)

Finally, it is the foreign language classroom, with the teacher as its promoter that needs to provide learners with the amount of support needed to achieve predefined goals as presented above. A thorough selection of activities together with "a supportive classroom dynamic", as well as adequately applied error correction (see 4.3.), are among the most important criteria in paving the way for learners to reach autonomy, fluency, and ultimately proficiency in oral FL production and use.

To summarise, this chapter has presented main theoretical positions in SLA. Focusing on the specific case of teaching speaking, three language learning theories have been identified as particularly relevant: behaviourist theory, cognitivist theory, and sociocultural theory. The form of theoretical position is considered to have a strong impact on pedagogical choices. As we have seen, teachers may employ a whole range of activity types in order to encourage oral fluency development among their students. In terms of pedagogical utility, oral fluency tasks must fulfil five overall criteria. These are: productivity, purposefulness, interactivity, challenge, safety, authenticity. (cf. Thornbury 2011:90-91) Besides, it has been argued that fluency training shall involve three principal stages, namely awareness-raising, appropriation and autonomy. Specific activities may be implemented to focus on these individual stages. Finally, the important role of the teacher in providing needed support has been emphasised.

6. Teacher beliefs on fluency training – an empirical study

The previous chapters have looked at the phenomenon of oral fluency from various perspectives. As the discussion of different theoretical positions and research findings has shown, fluency is a key feature of oral language production that still lacks precise definition. In the past decades, both language experts and researchers have engaged in the attempt to

clarify the phenomenon's actual meaning while, at the same time, debating and working on effective means to teach it. Certainly, fluency is not only a theoretical issue but also, and above all, a practical need. In this sense, it is especially the foreign language teachers who in their expertise, beliefs, and experience have a substantial say in the matter.

As a key aim in foreign language teaching and learning, fluency is an important concern of today's classroom practice. Several guidelines for FL teachers have been established. Looking at the specific situation in Austria, it was mainly with the implementation of the 2006 curriculum for EFL, when a shift in focus as regards the teaching of speaking could be noticed (cf. Brock 2010: 348). Since then the enhancement of communication competence is considered most central in (E)FLT. In other words, teaching learners to effectively use the foreign language for diverse communicative purposes is now declared the primary teaching aim.

Fundamental guidelines in the attempt to reach this aim are provided by the so-called CEFR (The Common European Framework of References for Languages), which has formed the basis for syllabus design across Europe since its establishment in 2001. This framework includes an "explicit description of objectives, content and methods" to be employed by FL teachers within classroom management (CEFR 2001: 1) By reference to 6 "levels of proficiency" (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) with respective descriptors, "learners' progress […] [can] be measured at each stage of learning". In terms of the requirements as regards "overall spoken interaction" (cf. ibid, 74) fluency is repeatedly mentioned as a decisive component of skilled performance. Hence level-specific descriptors include several references to fluency. That is, each descriptor highlights one or the other related characteristic feature commonly associated with the term. Again, provided descriptions are rather vague:

A2$^+$: Can interact with **reasonable ease** in structured situations and short
   conversations […]
B2: Can interact **with a degree of fluency and spontaneity** […]
C1: Can express him/herself **fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly** […]

(CEFR 2001: 74)

In the context of these background conditions it is most crucial to examine both how individual teachers treat the concept of fluency, and how they actually approach working towards oral fluency with their students in the language classroom. Such an examination should reveal additional valuable insights that might contribute to a clearer understanding of the nature of fluency.

6.1.   Research questions

Investigating individual teacher's beliefs and experiences as regards the acquisition of oral fluency within the EFL classroom, this study focuses on the following questions:

(1) What kind of material and which types of activities are (preferably) chosen by individual EFL teachers to help learners enhance their speaking skills and acquire a degree of fluency?

(2) What are - from a teacher's perspective – the overall teaching objectives in promoting fluent speaking performances among learners of EFL? Which aspects/language features are considered most essential in teaching?

(3) How do individual EFL teachers define fluency?

6.2.   Subject data

Qualitative data was obtained from semi-structured interviews (cf. Dörnyei 2007: 136) with eight Austrian teachers of English as a foreign language. All of the eight participants teach at upper secondary schools located in Lienz, Eastern Tyrol. Basically, these schools prepare their student's for the so-called Matura, the Austrian school-leaving exam. Having passed this exam, students can enter tertiary education (university-level).

The timeframe set for each individual interview was 30 minutes. A catalogue of questions on teaching speaking in general, and on teaching fluency in particular had been prepared in advance. The subsequent interviews were held in the participants' mother-tongue, i.e. local dialect.

6.3.   Data Analysis

All eight interviews were recorded and transcribed. As regards transcription, the focus was exclusively on the content of individual teacher's answers and comments, and not on the linguistic dimension of their individual use of language. Hence, a detailed linguistic transcription was consciously omitted for practical reasons. In the aim to provide quotable material, dialect features were largely removed, as were extra-linguistic- or non-verbal features (e.g. pauses, laughs, and fillers). Finally, individual passages were organised around major categories to facilitate content-analysis. Each of these categories relates to one of the

given research questions presented above. The following presentation of findings elaborates on a number of highly relevant passages taken from the individual interviews. These are provided in their original, German version, while the main points are summarised in English.

6.3.1. Material and activities used within practicing speaking/fluency in EFL

All of the 8 teachers interviewed presented individual course books as their primary resource for classroom practice. Most of the teachers described these books as generally very useful in terms of exercises and activities provided for teaching speaking. However, a look at individual interviews revealed, that additional resources are also highly appreciated to supplement course book material. This is clearly expressed within the following two selected teacher statements:

Extract 1

a. Im Englischen ist man reich an guten Materialien. Man kann eigentlich mehr oder weniger nehmen was man will. Und das, was einem persönlich für die Vollständigkeit eines Unterrichts fehlt, muss man sowieso bei jedem Lehrmittel ergänzen. Die Lehrmittel sind sehr bunt, sie sind sehr vielfältig, man hat sehr viele activities zur Auswahl. (T$_4$)

b. Bis zu einem gewissen Grad bin ich schon zufrieden mit den Büchern. Es gibt immer Vor-und Nachteile […] Das perfekte Lehrbuch gibt es nicht. (T$_6$)

Complementing material is either taken from other schoolbooks, from specific qualified magazines or from the internet. Especially the internet has been repeatedly mentioned as a great source of inspiration within the preparation of speaking tasks for classroom use:

c. Heutzutage mit **Internet** und Computer hat sich viel getan. Man hat einen ganz anderen Zugang zu Materialien. Früher war man wenn man einen native-speaker als role-model gebraucht hat auf einen in der Klasse präsenten Muttersprachler angewiesen. Heute kann ich mir so vieles einfach herunterladen: **Videos**; **Reden** … auf jedem Niveau eigentlich- da hat sich viel getan. (T$_1$)

As regards the particular aim of fluency enhancement within the teaching of speaking, the teachers did not highlight any specific material used. Instead fluency training is presented as an integral and natural part of teaching speaking in general. That is, from the teachers' perspective, there is no clear-cut boundary between the teaching of speaking and the teaching of oral fluency. These two areas are rather identified as mutually supportive.

Table 7 below presents both the material used, and the activity types that are preferably chosen by the individual teachers to effectively work on their students' speaking skills and oral fluency. In chapter 5 several such types of oral fluency activities have been discussed. Among these were so-called free-production activities which are, in the first place, designed and used to promote automaticity and autonomy in spoken language use. It is this activity type that all of the 8 EFL teachers primarily referred to when independently asked about activities generally used to practice speaking skills. Overall, discussions and role-plays have shown to be preferably applied.

Table 7: Specific material and activities referred to by individual teachers

material + activities mentioned	T_1	T_2	T_3	T_4	T_5	T_6	T_7	T_8	x?/8T
course book	✓	✓	✓!	✓!	✓	✓	✓	✓	8/8
internet	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	5/8
TV/video clips	✓								1/8
radio (e.g. songs)		✓[1]	✓[1]	✓					3/8
magazines/books	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	7/8
free-production activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8/8
dialogues					✓			✓	2/8
role-play	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6/8
discussion	✓	✓!	✓!	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8/8
small groups	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8/8
whole class	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8/8
information-gap				✓	✓	✓	✓		4/8
opinion-gap				✓			✓		2/8
picture description	✓					✓			2/8
interview	✓	✓							2/8
presentation/speech	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓!	6/8
games				✓!					1/8
form-focused activities	✓			✓!					2/8
drills				✓[2]					1/8
self-recordings					✓[3]	✓[3]			2/8
images/ pictorial impulses	✓					✓	✓!		3/8

! especially emphasized/ preferably used

[1] using radio as a medium for listening to spoken language (e.g. songs as mentioned by T_2) and continuing to work with that input in diverse forms afterwards

[2] especially as regards pronunciation practice

[3] videotaping individual students' speaking performances for subsequent analysis (self-assessment)

As table 7 also shows, 3 out of 8 teachers frequently chose pictures and images to motivate oral language use among students. One of the teachers, T₇, notes that in his classes the provision of such impulses turned out to be even more motivating (in terms of encouraging learners to talk) than the provision of so-called prompt cards:

    d. Von meinem Gefühl her – also was die Schüler sehr gerne machen sind Bildimpulse. Bildimpulse zu verschiedenen Themen: relationship, health, was es halt so alles gibt. […] Und mir kommt vor, dass sie Bildimpulse sogar lieber haben als zum Beispiel Rollenkarten- da muss man schon wieder etwas lesen; aber bei einem Bild, da kann ich sozusagen gleich starten, und sie fühlen sich vielleicht von den Bildern auch mehr und schneller angesprochen, so zumindest mein Gefühl. (T₇)

Interestingly, neither of the teachers explicitly spoke of 'automaticity' or 'autonomy' as a target aim of given activities. However, one teacher's comment comes very close to the idea behind these two concepts:

Extract 2

    Das heißt auch, dass der Schüler nicht ewig im Kopf herum suchen muss: welche Vokabel oder was für eine Sprachkonstruktion verwende ich denn nun? - das ist sicher EIN wichtiger Aspekt […] (T₇).

This formulation of one of the teaching aims related to oral fluency aptly summarises what is meant by reaching the "autonomous or automatic stage" as referred to in Dörnyei (2009: 155).

In chapter 5 I also discussed so-called awareness-raising activities (see 5.4.1.). Among others, the use of spoken conversation scripts was presented as a useful means to raise awareness of spoken language features that contribute to perceived fluency and skilled performance (cf. Thornbury 2011: 43ff). Interestingly, the EFL teachers interviewed did not refer to such scripted material at all. However, when being asked whether a focus on spoken English in writing (in form of dialogues, for example) may have an impact on oral fluency development, 5 out of 8 EFL teachers actually agreed that a written version of spoken conversation might indeed help learners to develop and improve fluency. Related extracts of the interviews as regards this question are provided in the appendix. Two of the individual answers are included below.

Extract 3

    a. Ich denke schon … weil man versucht ja auch mündlich zu argumentieren und etwas darzulegen…und auch bei der mündlichen Matura diese paired activity, wo sie gegenseitig auch entsprechen argumentieren müssen, dann müssen sie natürlich auch

argumentative Strukturen beherrschen und die können sie dann ohne Weiteres, teilweise, oder zum überwiegenden Teil aus dem Schriftlichen herausnehmen, denke ich (T$_7$).

b. Das hängt vom Lernertyp ab. Einige kriegen viel durchs reine Hören mit; andere wiederum brauchen es 'Schwarz auf Weiß'. Das „dialogueschreiben"… also ich diskutiere das oft mit meinem Kollegen … ich meine, ich verstehe es natürlich, wenn man sagt, dass das nicht wirklich eine schriftliche Textsorte ist; auf der anderen Seite ist 'dialogue' eine super Form um Fragebildung zu trainieren … und für die Lerntypen, die das Schwarz auf Weiß sehen müssen: die switchen das um und nehmen das mit ins speaking … auch wenn das jetzt total „out" ist … wir nehmen das doch immer wieder mit hinein, weil es manchmal einfach hilfreich ist und sicher irgendwo seine Daseinsberechtigung hat (T$_8$).

The second passage, i.e. the answer provided by T$_8$, is particularly interesting. Somehow it seems to me that T$_8$ rather 'beats around the bush' when answering the given question. One explanation could be the following:

A look at current syllabuses based on the CEFR (2001) indeed reveals that teaching dialogues is no longer believed useful or "up to date". The reason being, that such written dialogues often lack authenticity as discussed earlier (see 5.4.1.). Considering the fact that it used to be common practice in foreign language teaching to let students learn dialogues by heart and then have them "act it out" in parrot fashion (see 5.2.), today's common rejection seems rather legitimate. Given this negative status of "dialogues" in contemporary FL teaching, it is not surprising why T$_8$ only reluctantly acknowledges a potentially positive impact.

But even if the traditional implementation of dialogues is now considered obsolete, there are still other, revised ways to use this form of text within a focus on speaking. In this respect, Thornbury's (2011: 43-44) suggestion to provide students with texts that include both scripted and authentic elements seems most valuable (see 5.4.1, p. 74).

Finally, and turning back to the issue of automatic/autonomous language use, two of the EFL teachers particularly stand out in using one technique that is especially considerable in terms of promoting self-assessment, namely videotaping. T$_5$ and T$_6$ report to use this technique once in a while to help learners to find out about both their strengths and weaknesses for themselves. Getting the chance to evaluate one's own performance and being able to refer back to recorded sequences of one's own oral production is certainly beneficial for both the improvement of speaking skills and the development of autonomy in language use. T$_5$

summarises the advantages of this technique, but at the same time draws attention to the fact that videotaping needs to be thoroughly planned. Besides, she highlights that this technique might not always be proper for classroom use as its success primarily depends on a groups' willingness and motivation to participate:

Extract 4

> Ganz tolle Erfahrungen habe ich eigentlich gemacht – in Wahlpflichtfach-Gruppen – mit Aufnehmen und nachher Selbstbeurteilung. Also sich noch einmal selbst beim Sprechen sehen, und selber sehen, wie machen sie also die ‚interaction' richtig: ob sie auf den anderen eingehen, ob sie sich selber zu sehr in Szene setzen, ob sie eben auch mit Körpersprache sprechen, wie's mit Wiederholungen ausschaut … und da merken sie dann selber ganz gut, ob und wo sie Fehler machen, und ob die Art wie sie sich selber geben, wirkt oder nicht. Man kennt das natürlich von sich selber, dass das am Anfang manchmal fast ein bisschen peinlich ist…also es muss eine Bereitschaft von der Klasse da sein, das zu machen … und das macht man ja nicht ganz am Anfang und das wird ja dann auch vorher noch besprochen. Und ich hatte das Gefühl, dass die Schüler das auch wirklich gern machen, wenn schon eine Vertrauensbasis da ist. Und der Sinn ist ja für sie durchschaubar: es geht ja nicht darum jemanden runterzumachen, sondern jemanden zu bestärken und jemandem eine Sicherheit zu geben und das funktioniert da eigentlich ganz gut, muss ich sagen (T_5).

6.3.2. Fluency development within the EFL classroom: requirements and needs

Table 8 illustrates requirements considered particularly important in the attempt to promote oral fluency among FL students. As can be seen, several objectives are mentioned in this context. These objectives point towards specific knowledge/competence areas involved in fluent oral language production. However, given objectives do not only refer to aspects that need to be improved by the individual learners themselves but also point towards respective duties and responsibilities of the teachers.

Table 8: Learner needs in terms of fluency development as defined by individual EFL teachers

explicitly mentioned requirements: Help learners…	T_1	T_2	T_3	T_4	T_5	T_6	T_7	T_8	x?/8T
to enrich vocabulary	✓	✓!	✓	✓!	✓	✓	✓	✓	8/8
to choose adequate register								✓	1/8
to be able to use linking devices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		6/8
to become aware of- and use					✓		✓		2/8

pause fillers									
to reduce pauses/hesitations via									
efficient paraphrasing		✓!	✓		✓		✓!	✓	5/8
discourse markers					✓				1/8
to have ready a repertoire of chunks	✓		✓	✓	✓!	✓	✓	✓	7/8
to memorise aspects via repetition	✓			✓!	✓!	✓			4/8
to become confident when talking in E	✓	✓!	✓	✓	✓!	✓		✓	7/8
to lose fear of making errors		✓!	✓		✓!	✓!		✓	5/8
to use language correctly	✓!			✓					2/8
pronunciation				✓	✓		✓!	✓	4/8
intonation					✓				1/8

! considered particularly important

In terms of linguistic knowledge, a growing repertoire of vocabulary and word combinations (chunks) is believed most essential for fluent spoken performance to be delivered in the FL. As regards the latter, phrases related to "agreeing and disagreeing" are frequently encountered as examples of such fixed phrases (cf. Extract 5a. and 5c. provided below). Besides, teachers mainly report to introduce fixed phrases in relation to a specific context or situation, such as telephoning, for example (cf. Extract 5b. below).

Extract 5

a. Spezifisch Phrasen üben - das mache ich schon, aber erst später. Und normalerweise ist es so, dass sich das eh einschleift … aber doch, doch diese „speaking strategies" sind ganz wichtig, vor allem dann in den höheren Klassen … und da sehen sie dann innerhalb kürzester Zeit „disagreeing" oder „agreeing in part" oder „objecting to something"… (T4).

b. Vorgefertigte Phrasen verwende ich vor allem dann, wenn es um telephoning, shopping oder später business communication, also Standardsituationen geht. (T1)

c. Redemittel und Phrasen werden in den Büchern immer eingeführt. Wenn es dann mal eingeführt ist und man übt das dann, zum Beispiel mit Bildern oder Situationen vergleichen- wo sie speziell jetzt zum Beispiel „agreeing und disagreeing" üben dann sitzt das ja deswegen nicht nur weil man es einmal gemacht hat, das heißt, man wird es später nochmal aufgreifen. Wiederholung ist also sicher wichtig. Vieles, wie auch pause fillers, nehmen die Schüler schon von dem auf, was man ihnen vorspielt, also in den Dialogen, und dass ich das einfach bestärke wenn jemand das dann selbstständig sehr gut macht: klingt sehr natürlich, klingt sehr authentisch. Also ich bestärke immer, dass es nicht negativ ist, wenn man so Pausenfüller wie „well", „can you repeat that, please" miteinbringt, die eigentlich nichts sagen, sondern dass das eben das Gefühl von fluency vermittelt. (T5)

Talking about fixed phrases used to express specific meaning within particular situations, 4 of the teachers highlight the need to constantly repeat these with their students. Overall, the teachers refer to the importance of speech act knowledge when further suggesting that learners should have ready a repertoire of phrases whenever attempting to "realise particular interactional moves", functions, and intentions:

> d. Häufig, gibt man bei diesen Redeübungen auch bestimmte Redemittel vor; damit das Reden leichter fällt. In der Oberstufe muss ich dann gewisse speech functions, wie „agreeing" oder „disagreeing" wiederholen und wenn ich möchte, dass das reproduziert oder im Mündlichen verwendet wird, und zwar nicht nur ein und dieselbe Phrase, dann muss ich das halt eben auch einfordern (T_6).

Furthermore, linking and paraphrasing are mentioned as vital language devices that need to be regularly trained. These devices, together with a repertoire of prefabricated formulas are considered most essential in the overall aim of managing talk successfully and avoiding communication breakdown. Managing talk implies that learners manage to keep up the flow of their production - even in case they lack a particular lexical unit or structure. As regards the latter, T_2 additionally highlights the importance of learners trusting their abilities and not hesitating to engage in spoken discourse even if language resources seem to be rather limited. Here we obviously have a reference to perceived fluency and the related expectations of interlocutors. In chapter 3.2 perseverance and stamina on the speaker's side were identified as decisive characteristics. Both characteristics are inevitable for successful communication and perceived fluency in the FL. In this respect, and as noted by T_2 it is crucial that learners are taught to use their resources in a flexible manner. That is, for example, that they know how to rephrase intended meaning if specific words or forms are currently not retrievable or simply unknown in the FL:

> e. Aber was mir besonders wichtig ist, ist wenn sie ein Wort nicht wissen, dass sie einfach lernen: „ich kann das umschreiben". Das Wichtigste ist mir einfach, dass sie lernen zu antworten, zu reagieren ... dass sie lernen mit der Sprache so zu jonglieren – auch wenn ein Wort gerade nicht präsent ist – dass sie es mit ihrem Englisch – das gut genug ist – auf eine andere Art und Weise umschreiben und ausdrücken können. (T_2)

Apart from efficient paraphrasing as one example of strategic competence to avoid communication breakdown (see chapter 4), and the application of linking devices to produce coherent speech (discourse competence; see ibid) it is also 'discourse markers' and 'pause fillers' (cf. e.g. Extract 5c.) which are mentioned within a discussion of language features and competences related to oral fluency. Furthermore, one teacher also refers to 'register' as an

important pragmatic dimension, which, in terms of adequate language use, may as well contribute to perceived fluency. Other components of managing talk as presented within chapter 4 (e.g. collocation, idioms, and vague language) do, however, not play a part in any of the teachers' personal comments.

Although not in the forefront, adequate grammar, pronunciation, and intonation are nevertheless appreciated by some teachers as additional parameters of perceived fluency (cf. e.g. Rossiter 2009: 399). Contrary to my expectations, however, the concept of 'spoken grammar' did not turn up, at all. Yet, it needs to be clarified at this point that I did not explicitly address any of the given fluency features myself but rather let the teachers explain what they consider important features of fluent language use in their own words. Further questions were then based on input provided by the individual EFL teachers themselves.

As the comparison of individual viewpoints and beliefs reveals, it is not only language-specific aspects that are associated with skilled oral performance. In fact, there is one extra-linguistic factor that has been largely and repeatedly highlighted by almost all of my interview partners, namely self-confidence. Again, without explicit reference on my part, 7 out of 8 teachers immediately and within a first point underlined that developing a degree of confidence in FL speaking is a fundamental prerequisite of oral fluency. Thereby individual remarks on self-confidence strongly relate to the need of anxiety reduction.

As table 8 shows, 5 out of 7 teachers underline the importance of confidence in speaking and, at the same time, emphasise the need of learners to lose timidity and fear of making errors.

Certainly, speaking anxiety might severely obstruct oral fluency achievement as has been expressed in the theoretical discussion of issues related to self-confidence in FL use (cf. Nerlicki 2011: 187 referred to in 4.2.4). In this regard, T_4 summarises essential overall requirements of a supportive classroom atmosphere:

Extract 6

> Das Wichtigste ist wahrscheinlich, dass man als Lehrer in der Lage ist in der Klasse eine Atmosphäre zu schaffen, wo jeder unabhängig vom Level seines Vorwissens partizipiert. Das heißt, es wird niemand blamiert, verhöhnt, verspottet, zynisch kritisiert, oder unhöflich unterbrochen … wenn diese vertrauensstiftenden Maßnahmen greifen – nach ein paar Monaten – dann quatscht jeder frisch, frei, fröhlich auf genau seinem Niveau dahin - und das ist das Ziel; weil dann macht man progress - wenn jeder auf seinem Niveau weiterkommt. (T_4)

In other words,

> the classroom should provide the right conditions for experimentation, including a supportive classroom dynamic and a non-judgemental attitude to error [...]. (Thornbury 2011: 91)

In general, all 8 teachers questioned agreed that learners must not be judgmentally criticised for their errors. Especially in tasks where the focus is clearly on fluency, correction is reported to be consciously kept at a minimum. With one exception, all of the teachers share the belief that too much interruption is all but productive in the attempt to enhance students' motivation to participate in activities focusing on oral language production. However, as regards the chosen modus of error treatment, great variation is to be noticed.

In terms of free-production activities, one teacher reports to have experienced great success in constantly applying so-called back-channeling. One of the other teachers finds that intervention is only necessary in case severe comprehension problems among interlocutors are being observed. And yet another one explains that he/she takes notes and makes corrections after student performances – and only afterwards. Finally, there is one teacher who argues that students' progress can only be fostered via immediate, conscious correction.

Nevertheless, all of the teachers highlight that learners need to be made aware of the fact that correction is not meant as a negative critique but rather applied to foster progress. Deciding on when and what to correct is certainly a delicate issue. As T_2 points out, it is ultimately "immer ein Abwägen in der jeweiligen Situation". In fact, most of the interviewees agree that correction of oral production is all about balancing reasons for and against it. In the end, it will always remain a difficult matter of experience and feeling:

Extract 7

> Das ist schwierig…weil auf der einen Seite kann ich einen Fehler – egal ob inhaltlich, grammatikalisch oder aussprachebezogen- nicht einfach so stehen lassen, andererseits kann ich aber auch einen Schüler oder eine Schülerin jetzt nicht einfach 'abwürgen'- und es ist im Prinzip ein 'Abwürgen' wenn ich sage: „dritte Person s" oder wenn ich jetzt wiederhole und sage „says und nicht say" oder wenn ich sage „information und nicht informations"…also es kommt manchmal vor, dass ich in einem Satz fünf Sachen ausbessern müsste…NUR…hört der Schüler dann auf zu reden und verliert die Lust daran, weil er/sie zurecht sagt: „Ich komme zu nichts, ich komme inhaltlich nicht weiter mit dem was ich eigentlich sagen will - weil sie mich so oft ausbessert. Und es sind ja jetzt echt oft wirklich gute Gedanken und Ideen, die halt einfach nicht hundertprozentig richtig rauskommen…Das heißt, ich versuche da abzuwägen und manchmal werfe ich eine Verbesserung ein und wir wiederholen die fehlerhafte Struktur dann richtig… meistens aber zeige ich Fehler nachher auf… **Also, über**

gewisse Fehler muss ich einfach hinwegsehen- zugunsten des Inhalts, zugunsten des Sprechtrainings (T3).

6.3.3. Definitions of oral fluency provided by EFL teachers

Finally, the 8 EFL teachers were asked about their personal definitions of the concept of oral fluency. The results are, of course, highly relevant as they may ideally offer new perspectives in terms of a needed working definition of the concept. In addition, they allow for a comparison of individual teacher's beliefs and suggestions provided by the literature.

Before presenting and discussing individual definitions, however, it is necessary to look back and re-examine the key-features of the definitions provided in chapter 1. As the comparison of several sources has shown, it is adjuncts, such as 'natural', 'smooth', and "with ease and without strain" which are commonly used to frame fluent language use. Three of the definitions provided in chapter 1 are recalled below:

(1) We define fluency as a performance phenomenon related to 'flow, continuity, automaticity, or smootheness of speech'. (Rossiter et al 2010: 584)

(2) Fluency is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation. (Hedge 2000: 54)

(3) [Fluency is] to be regarded as natural language use, whether or not it results in native-speaker-like language comprehension or production, […] seen as the maximally effective operation of the language system so far acquired by the student. (Brumfit 1984: 56-57)

In addition, a look at common units of measurement has been fruitful in the attempt to identify more concrete indicators of fluent oral performance. Thornbury and Slade (2006: 216) have been quoted in their summary of parameters usually chosen to measure oral fluency:

> Fluency phenomena are of two basic kinds: *temporal variables*, such as speech rate, pause length and length of run (i.e. the mean number of syllables between pauses); and *hesitation phenomena*, such as filled pauses (e.g. *erm*), repetitions and self-corrections […] Of these, the ability to produce lengthy runs seems to be a defining characteristic of oral fluency. [Furthermore,] […] fewer repetitions, longer turns and faster speech rate are all indications of an increase in *fluency* (Thornbury & Slade 2006: 216).

With this information in mind, I looked at the individual definitions of fluency provided by the 8 EFL teachers. The following designations of the concept were encountered when examining the collected data. The numbers put next to each designation serve as indicators for a subsequent categorisation.

- Continuous flow in language production
- Spontaneity [8]
- Intelligibility (explicitness/comprehensibility/ lucidity) [1] [2]
  - Using intelligible pronunciation [1]
- Being able to successfully express viewpoints, opinions, thoughts, ideas, attitudes, positions, etc. within reasonable time [2]
- Comprehension (i.e. sufficient perceptional skills) [1]
- Meeting interlocutor's expectations [1-9]
- Being able to respond in appropriate ways [4] [6]
- Realising given communicative purposes [2] [5] [7]
- Conveying content and making meaning, i.e. not to overuse set/empty phrases [ ]
- Being able to maintain conversation in the FL [2] [5]
- Having ready a sufficient repertoire of vocabulary and grammatical structures + respective phrases in order to deliver FL speech without severe hesitation, gaps or inadequately long pausing [1] [2] [3]
- Still knowing ways to express meaning when currently lacking FL words or structures (e. g. via means of paraphrasing) and applying them automatically [5] [8]
- Being able to express and link ideas in the FL [2] [4]
- Reacting appropriate to the specific situation/context [6] [7]
- Reacting within an appropriate amount of time [8]
- Managing the demands of spontaneous 'real time'- conversation [1-9]
  - Being able to follow the interlocutor's train of thoughts
  - Being able to successfully handle interposed questions, topic shifts, and longer turns
  - Being able to deal with problems concerning comprehensibility (i.e. asking for repetition, explanation, repair, etc.)
- Avoiding embarrassing, uncomfortable silences, i.e. inadequately long pauses
  - Being able to fill pauses [5]
- Showing interest and willingness to talk in the FL [ ]
- Trusting one's abilities and exploiting one's competences [9]
- Managing talk competently and without using the L1 [5]

This impressive list of requirements compiled out of the individual definitions provided by the EFL teachers once again illustrates the multi-dimensional nature of the phenomenon. Fluency

is presented as depending on several skills and competences. In fact, the aspects considered decisive by the individual EFL teachers relate to all relevant competence areas that have been listed in a previous theoretical account of the concept (see table 4, p. 34). To illustrate, individual requirements mentioned by the teachers are assigned to the given 9 competence areas as follows:

- Basic linguistic knowledge [1]
- General mastery of managing talk [2]
- Ability to use word combinations [3]
- Discourse knowledge/competence [4]
- Strategic knowledge [5]
- Pragmatic knowledge [6]
- Genre knowledge/competence [7]
- Automaticity/Spontaneity [8]
- Confidence [9]

Interestingly, phrases, such as "natural", "native-like", or "with ease and smoothness" are not used to describe fluency. Nevertheless, it is repeatedly emphasised that fluent oral production implies skilled performance and a steady flow of speech. Fluency is neither associated with error-free production, nor is it presented as reserved exclusively for a specific proficiency level (For individual definitions provided by the 8 EFL teachers see Appendix 2).

When looking at the list of requirements established by the individual teachers, two aspects stand out, as they are not explicitly included in the definitions of fluency taken from the literature. These are:

- Showing interest and willingness to talk in the FL
- Making meaning/ conveying content and not to overuse prefabricated phrases

Referring to the first point, T_5 emphasises choice of topic (to be covered within a speaking task) as an influential factor in terms of students' performance. That is, if students are not interested in the topic at all they might most likely perform below their capabilities. T_5 argues that it is necessary to offer students a broad spectrum of topics within speaking tasks in order to prevent a lack of motivation:

Extract 8

a. das ist natürlich nicht immer ganz leicht, weil natürlich verschiedene Leute ganz verschieden Interessen haben. Da ist es schon passiert, dass Schüler, die eigentlich kulturell sehr interessiert sind - und da ganz viel wissen - , sich weitaus schwerer tun, weil es ihnen einfach zu blöd ist, über Kleidung zu reden oder über Mode oder über

Popmusik oder über Sport…also das, was diese Schüler interessiert geht weit darüber hinaus was themenmäßig in dem Repertoire B2 drinnen ist. Natürlich nehme ich dann bewusst manchmal ein neues Thema mit hinein…das macht man natürlich in Klassen, wo mehrere Schüler sind, die sich für so etwas interessieren. (T$_5$)

Similarly, T$_2$ establishes a link between fluency and students' motivation. He/she agrees that the right choice of topics is essential in the attempt to foster motivation. Likewise, the provision of positive feedback, i.e. praising students whenever they perform well, may contribute to students' taking pleasure in speaking the FL and as T$_2$ argues, it may even contribute to an increase in fluency. Of course, both parties, that is, teachers and learners, are equally responsible for the development of motivation as well as they are for the achievement of needed skills in FL use.

b. Ich glaube einfach, wenn man Themen auswählt, die die Schüler zum Sprechen motivieren und viel positiv verstärkt, dann entwickeln die Schüler im Idealfall, wie zum Beispiel bei den Schülerinnen der 6s, eine Freude am Sprechen. Natürlich müssen beide Seiten mitspielen wenn fluency erlernt werden will, das heißt, es muss eine gewisse Arbeitshaltung von den Schülerinnen und Schülern da sein und ich als Lehrer muss ihnen auch die Gelegenheit geben, reden zu können. (T$_2$)

While the teachers mention specific given time-constraints to be met by their students, neither of them relates the concept of fluency to a certain number of syllables produced within a particular amount of time. In this respect, it is simply stated that excessive pausing needs to be avoided. Speaking of pauses, two arguments are particularly striking. As a matter of fact, they rather contrast with common opinion:

Extract 9

a. Das mit den breaks finde ich also **ich habe durchaus ein bisschen so eine Vorliebe für Leute, die nachdenken bevor sie antworten … also auch wenn diese breaks ein bissi länger sind; wenn die Antwort dann passt** … das ist jetzt auch gar nicht so unbritisch - einmal gar nichts zu sagen und dann loszulegen … dieser berühmter Van der Bellen-Effek … der ihn ja so beliebt gemacht hat, weil er damit den Eindruck hinterlassen hat, dass er nachdenkt bevor er etwas sagt. Ich habe keinen Stress beim Prüfen; ich bin jetzt viel zu erfahren, als dass ich mir denke, nur Quantität würde/wird in einer Prüfung zählen. (T$_4$)

b. Ich mache das jetzt nicht wirklich wissenschaftlich, dass ich jetzt speech-parts oder mir ein tape-script hernehme und dann analysiere; das geht eher allgemeiner, also was nehme ich wahr und wie gut geht's. Wirklich zu quantifizieren und zu schauen wie viele Pausen, wie lange, wie schaut's aus mit hesitations … das sehe ich nicht als meine Aufgabe und bei der Testung von speaking skills gibt es ja einen so langen Aufgaben-Katalog und alles was da jetzt auf uns zukommen wird bei der mündlichen Matura – das wird erst interessant werden; es gibt sehr wohl einen Raster, aber es ist ja

noch nicht im Detail geklärt, wie das ablaufen wird. Also da wird man das mit den Pausen und mit den hesitations irgendwie einbeziehen müssen aber **quantifizieren - ich glaube, dass hat noch keiner gemacht. Und Pausen zu machen – jeder Mensch – ich bin selber einer, der sehr oft „eh" oder so etwas sagt; das sind Angewohnheiten und das ist natürlich.** (T$_6$)

As regards perceived fluency, lack of pauses is not in the foreground for these two teachers. On the contrary, they highlight that pauses are part of natural language use. Besides, they claim, pauses also indicate that a speaker seriously considers when to say what and how. T$_6$ mentions another relevant point here, namely that using a language is always somehow a personalised matter. Some individuals speak slower, others faster; some repetitively use fillers such as "ehm", "you know", etc. while others do without them. And, finally, some speakers love to embellish while others rather prefer to express themselves in a clear and brief way.

In retrospect, it is these differences that made Segalowitz (2010: 29-30) suggest drawing on "speech samples from speakers' L1 as baseline measures at which to contrast their L2 speech" to receive valid information on a speaker's level of fluency in the L2. (see chapter 2.1.) In other words, such a procedure is required to make reliable inferences as regards a differentiation between "more fluent […] [and] less fluent speakers" (ibid, 30).

As regards the assessment of FL oral performance, Austrian teachers currently have to face considerable changes within the implementation of the so-called "new Matura". This new version of the Austrian school leaving exam essentially includes standardised testing formats for all subjects. Exam questions are now based on a catalogue of educational standards and centrally prepared for all Austrian schools. As regards the oral EFL exam, a new catalogue of assessment parameters is being developed as well. Teachers will have to assess their students' performances according to specific, new checklists. Thereby, differentiating "more fluent […] [from] less fluent [performances]" (ibid.) will be one of the central assessment criteria. Talking to the 8 EFL teachers, I had the impression that these changes are generally viewed as a great challenge. It seems as if there were actually a lot of open questions. T$_5$ und T$_3$ express their feelings and thoughts concerning the given issue as follows:

Extract 10

a. das ist mir übrigens immer noch nicht ganz klar, also bei der **Matura**, wenn da jetzt zwei ganz unterschiedliche Kandidaten bei der Matura sitzen – wenn einer den ganzen Redeanteil zum Beispiel wegnimmt, ja, was macht dann der andere, kriegt derjenige deswegen eine schlechtere Note weil er halt nicht so viel sagt oder nichts sagt.. Also

das ist für mich noch ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln, wo ich nicht weiß, wie man so etwas bewertet oder wie man eingreift … (T$_3$)

b. bei der Testung von speaking skills gibt es ja einen so langen Aufgaben-Katalog und alles was da jetzt auf uns zukommen wird bei der mündlichen Matura – das wird erst interessant werden. (T$_5$)

In other words, new testing formats and requirements mean new challenges for both students and their teachers. 5 out of 8 EFL teachers repeatedly draw attention to the fact that the requirements posed on learners of EFL within the "new Matura" are apparently more stringent than in past times. These requirements not only concern the teaching and learning of FL speaking, but also involve the other three skills, listening, reading and writing. As a result, individual teachers report that it is actually quite a challenge to both train- and sufficiently focus on all of the new testing formats within the given amount of time available (usually 3-4 hours a week). There is, certainly, a future need to deal with this issue in more detail. Thereby, one of the overall aims must be to develop further supportive means to aid both teachers and learners in coping with these new demands.

6.4. Interpretation of findings

The analysis of the interviews conducted within this study has shown that oral fluency is being viewed as a multidimensional skill by all of the 8 teachers. That is, the questioned EFL teachers listed several skills involved in fluent oral production and successful oral communication. Thereby, all of the knowledge areas discussed within a theoretical approach of the concept of fluency have been addressed.

In terms of research question (1), the analysis revealed that all of the 8 EFL teachers appreciate the great variety of speaking tasks available in contemporary sources for teaching English as a foreign language. Apart from material provided in course books, the internet and specific L2 learning magazines are commonly exploited to collect additional helpful suggestions for teaching speaking. While conversation scripts are not implemented, providing learners with written dialogues is largely regarded as useful in terms of fluency enhancement. Moreover, two teachers report of the advantages that accrued in videotaping learners' oral performances for subsequent analysis and self-assessment.

In general, group work is the preferably chosen format to practice oral language production. Discussions and presentations are leading in terms of commonly used speaking tasks. Thereby

a thorough choice of topics, stimulating students' motivation and interest, is considered essential.

Most strikingly, requirements and needs for fluent L2 production, as regards research question (2), include learners' confidence and willingness to participate. Learners' self-confidence in speaking is linked to the provision of recurring positive feedback by the teacher. This is, in turn, to be combined with a "non-judgmental attitude towards errors" (cf. Thornbury 2011: 91). On the other hand, providing students with interesting impulses and topics is considered essential in fostering motivation and willingness to participate in oral language tasks. Apart from requirements related to language competence, performing according to the expectations of listeners is equally highlighted as one of the overall requirements to be met by a so-called fluent speaker. Additionally, strategic competence, and especially paraphrasing, is emphasised as helpful means to avoid communication breakdown. Likewise, a sufficient repertoire of L2 vocabulary, phrases and structures is to be found among the listed prerequisites for fluent L2 production. However, one teacher clarifies that fluent performance means to make meaning and express oneself competently in contrast to merely delivering a range of empty phrases.

All of the 8 EFL teachers were asked about their personal definition of the concept. Interestingly, temporal and sequential aspects are not considered of prior relevance. Instead, fluid production, realisation of communicative purposes and flexibility in language use are listed as overall essential components of oral fluency.

7. Conclusion : Readdressing the definition problem within a final summary

This paper aimed at a detailed discussion of the notion fluency. Within a theoretical account of the phenomenon and a focus on related issues, fluency has proved to be a multidimensional aspect of skilled oral language production. The results gained in a study focusing on respective teacher beliefs, additionally added to the given complexity of oral fluency.

Within a focus on common oral fluency definitions in chapter 2, "temporal and sequential" (cf. e.g. Guillot 1999: 27-28) aspects of language production have been highlighted as overall determinants of fluency. To be more precise, absence of pauses and number of syllables produced within a specific amount of time are repeatedly emphasised as most significant factors in the literature. A look at typically applied units of measurement even reinforced the apparent significance of these aspects. However, several studies in the field revealed that

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other aspects, such as **rhythm, vivacity, and tone of voice** (cf. e.g. Freed 2000: 261) as well as accent, vocabulary plus respective grammar, and **level of confidence** (cf. e.g. Rossiter 2009: 399) may have an equally considerable impact on fluency ratings (see chapter 3). Besides, none of the eight EFL teachers questioned identified temporal aspects as the prior determinant of oral fluency. Rather, exploiting one's language abilities to make meaning in oral production and thus maintaining conversation competently were mentioned as principal requirements to be met by L2 speakers in the attempt to encourage perceived fluency.

In terms of "a more nuanced way of thinking about fluency", Segalowitz' (2010: 46ff.) sub-categorisation of the phenomenon into cognitive fluency, utterance fluency and perceived fluency was presented (see chapter 3). The need of efficiently interacting cognitive processes for automatic, i.e. time-saving cognitive processing, is thereby highlighted. Several so-called "fluency vulnerability points" (Segalowitz 2010: 9ff.) were identified. These points represent critical "difficulties in processing" that might cause a reduction of fluency in oral performance. Looking at fluency from various perspectives, as done within a cognitive science approach, together with a differentiation between fluency related to performance and fluency related to perception turned out to be most fruitful in a global discussion of the phenomenon.

In chapter 4 a list of key features of fluent language production is provided. As this list shows, it is actually several knowledge areas that are implied in fluent spoken performance. Apart from the acquisition of basic linguistic knowledge, which includes having ready a repertoire of L2 vocabulary and structures, managing talk fluently also means to acquire competences that go beyond the mere mastery of language production. That is, pragmatic-, strategic-, and discourse-/genre knowledge are equally decisive in the attempt to reach a degree of oral fluency in the L2. In this respect, an increase in knowledge and respective abilities is viewed as potentially provoking an increase in oral fluency. Also, a higher degree of knowledge – leading to increased competence essentially widens the scope of situations and topics in which learners are able to operate in a successful (fluent) manner. However, and as claimed in 5.2., achieving a degree of fluency is not dependent on learners to pass a level-specific barrier in terms of L2 proficiency. In fact, even a very basic command of the L2 may suffice in producing fluent sequences of L2 speech and thus in encouraging perceived fluency among listeners. In other words, oral fluency in the L2 is not exclusively dedicated to a high degree of proficiency, nor is it determined by error-free production.

The previous two chapters, 5 and 6, finally concentrated on implications for the teaching of oral fluency. A historical discussion of the role of speaking within language instruction from the beginnings of FL teaching until today has shown a steadily growing focus on fluency enhancement. Being one of the key aims in SLA these days, several implications for the (E)FL classroom have been identified. These essentially include "a supportive classroom dynamic and a non-judgemental attitude to error" (cf. Thornbury 2011:91). Furthermore, the provision of repeated possibilities to practice speaking is of utmost importance for L2 learners to develop a degree of fluency. Thereby it is vital to encourage an increase in learners' motivation (e.g. via means of providing interesting topics/impulses), and to successfully reduce potential speaking anxiety.

In the choice and application of speaking tasks and oral fluency tasks, respectively FL teachers need to pay attention to at least five criteria (productivity, purposefulness, interactivity, challenge, safety, authenticity) (ibid, 90-91). These task criteria put forth by Thornbury (2011: 90-91) need to be met so that learners repeatedly get the chance to "experience autonomous language use" (ibid). Ideally, constant practice and repetition of spoken language features foster automaticity and help learners to gain safety and confidence when confronted with the various demands of spontaneous, 'real-time' speech. Hence, a thorough choice of material together with a supportive classroom setting is what ultimately renders possible oral fluency development in SLL.

One of the overall aims of this paper was to provide a definition framework of the multidimensional phenomenon of fluency. Due to the fact that fluency is a complex, "elusive notion" (Guillot 1999: 3) it is no surprise that definitions taken from the literature, and discussed at the beginning of this paper, turned out to lack specificity in terms of concrete determinants. As a matter of fact, however, the inherent complexity of the term per se complicates – if not precludes – the attempt to formulate a clear and concise definition. Besides, the comprehensive nature and sheer breadth of the term can obviously only be vaguely expressed within a limited number of words.

Nevertheless, looking at the concept from various perspectives (e.g. perspective of the performer vs. perspective of the listener/ fluency in the L1 vs. fluency in the L2 / expert opinion of applied linguists vs. teacher beliefs) turned out to be most fruitful in the attempt to reveal relevant characteristics of fluent language use. In other words, several defining elements of the concept have been established within the given discussion. Despite the fact that a short definition does obviously not allow for a detailed description of all relevant

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features involved, there are still aspects that seem to be neglected within some of the commonly applied definitions of fluency. From my perspective, it is the following descriptions of fluency that cover such additional constitutive components:

- Fluency means skilled performance and skilled performance implies several competences
- Fluency means exploiting already achieved language competences
- Fluency means serious involvement in conversational matters
- Fluency means to manage talk successfully
- Fluency means effective avoidance of communication breakdown
- Fluency means being able to express oneself within a reasonable amount of time
- Fluency means to be flexible in order to avoid uncomfortably long pauses/ hesitations / hesitancies
- Fluency means 'automatic skilled behaviour'
- Fluency means effective cognitive processing
- Fluency means to apply time-saving means in fulfilling communicative purposes
- Fluency means stamina and perseverance
- Fluency means confident language use
- Fluency means the ability to react spontaneously to various demands of 'real time' conversation
- Fluency means to prevent underperforming due to adverse conditions (cf. Thornbury 2011:90)
- Fluency means the ability to cope with problems concerning intelligibility, comprehension, and retrieval of language items.
- Fluency means the application of strategies to "compensate for insufficient knowledge of the language system" (ibid, 39)
- Fluency means to "mobilize features of the target language knowledge-base under real-time conditions" (Thornbury 2011: 37)
- Fluency does not necessitate error-free production

In accordance with this list, I would like to highlight again that "speed alone is [obviously] not the only indicator of [fluency or] skilfulness" (ibid, 90). An overreliance on temporal and sequential features will thus not do in a comprehensive view of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, fluency is essentially context-dependent. That is, in order to make a statement about fluency or, more precisely about a speaker's degree of fluency, the context of speaking performance must be identified and considered first. In this respect, the following questions need to be addressed:

- Do we speak of L1 or L2 use?

- What competences has a speaker so far acquired?
- What is linguistically-speaking possible?
- What can/cannot be expected from the speaker?

- Who does the fluency rating?
- How competent is the listener/judge themselves?
- What kind of measurement is applied?
- How reliable are given assessment results and conclusions?

Drawing on the insights gained within this paper, I finally come to the following conclusion:

Oral fluency is "a performance phenomenon related to flow, continuity, [and automaticity]" (cf. Rossiter et al 2010: 584) of both monologic and interactional language use, which is commonly agreed upon to have "temporal and sequential features as its primary determinants" (cf. Guillot 1999: 27-28). The term is used in both first-and foreign language contexts, describing a decisive criterion of managing talk or text production, relative to the knowledge, skills, and confidence of the performer and highly dependent on the perception, skills, and knowledge of the given audience, assessors, or interlocutor(s) within specific contexts.

Ultimately, as regards the foreign-language context, I would suggest complementing the previous definition with the following lines:

Oral fluency in the L2 is the ability of a "skilled performer" (cf. Thornbury 2010: 90) to confidently and successfully produce and decode language – without lacking strategies to maintain conversation, and without hesitancy or hesitation being the cause of severe communication challenge for the interlocutors involved. Hence a fluent L2 speaker effectively exploits their knowledge and competences to realise communicative purposes in the target language.

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Appendix

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1. Conceptual preparation:

includes

- Macroplanning   (elaboration of communicative intention; selection of information to be expressed for realisation of communicative goal)

- Microplanning   (speech preparation, i.e. language choice, and execution; output: preverbal message to be understood as conceptualised structure, not yet formulated in actual words)

2. Grammatical encoding

- Giving linguistic shape to the preverbal message, i.e. specific choice of appropriate words and structural forms to convey communicative intentions;

The lexical concepts in the message will activate the corresponding syntactic words ('lemmas') in the mental lexicon. Their selection makes the syntactic frames available that should correspond to the semantic functions and arguments in the message. In grammatical encoding, the speaker uses this lexical-syntactic information to build up the appropriate syntactic pattern, the 'surface structure' (Levelt 1999: 88; Segalowitz 2010: 12).

3. Morpho-phonological encoding

- Process based on syllable program

- Output : phonological score = incremental pattern of phonological syllables, metrically grouped and marked for the tones they are participating.

As soon as a lemma is selected, its form code becomes activated. The speaker gets access to the item's morphological and phonological composition. This is the basic material for building up phonological words. In particular, it is used to generate a word's syllabification in its syntactic context. For instance, the word *comprehend* is syllabified differently in the phrase *I-com-pre-hend* than in the phrase *I-com-pre-hen-dit*. In phonological encoding, the 'phonological score' of the utterance - its syllabified words, phrases and intonation pattern - is built up incrementally, dogging the steps of grammatical encoding. (Levelt 1999: 88; Segalowitz 2010: 15)

4. Phonetic encoding

- Process of using gestural scores (stored in syllabary) to convert a phonological score into an articulatory score

- Output: articulatory score = construction of a phonetic plan for setting into motion the motor activity for articulating the message = spellout

Each of the syllables in the phonological score must trigger an articulatory gesture. Here we finally reach the repository of syllabic gestures that the infant began to build up by the end of the first year of life. Sometimes new or infrequent syllables have to be composed, but mostly speakers can resort to their syllabary. Phonetic encoding is the incremental generation of the articulatory score of an utterance. (Levelt 1999: 88; cf. Segalowitz 2010: 15-16)

5. Articulation

- the execution of the articulatory score by the laryngeal and supra-laryngeal apparatus ultimately produces the end product: overt speech. (Levelt 1999: 88)

The supporting knowledge sources for the individual stages 1 to 4 are represented in ellipse and include

- **world knowledge (stage1)**   encyclopaedic knowledge of the external world
  + knowledge of the interlocutor's internal state of mind
  + knowledge about discourse conventions

Encyclopaedic information is regarded as non- language-specific. That is, the efficiency of macroplanning processes is not dependent on the level of language mastery. This idea is displayed by two fully overlapping dashed circles for each L_x and L_y - appearing as one single circle due to complete overlap.

- **mental lexicon (stage 2/ 3)**   knowledge source for lemmas, i.e. word families
  including idioms and fixed-phrases (formulaic language)
  + morphophonological codes of each lemma for
  generating overt speech

Though language specific, different language lemmas are presumed to be represented in neurally related regions. That is both translation equivalents and related words within one language are assumed to be non-segregated in the brain. (cf. 13) This is displayed by partially overlapping circles for L_x and L_y in the blueprint.

As regards the information stored in the mental lexicon, the differentiation between **lexicon**, i.e. implicit procedural knowledge (predominantly part of L1) and **vocabulary**, i.e. explicit declarative knowledge (most relevant for L2; typically acquired through explicit instruction) is to be considered.

- **syllabary (stage 4)**   knowledge source containing gestural scores for turning
  phonological score information into motor plans for speech production
  (local paramteters: duration, amplitude, pitch movement; global
  parameters: key, i.e. range of movement in a phonological phrase, register
  = here: pitch level of the baseline intonation)

Different languages are assumed to make use of different repertoires of gestural scores – from similar to distinct. According to De Bot (1992 in Segalowitz 2010) it is only one articulatory system, but with segregated gestural scores, that is used by L2 speakers. He draws this conclusion from the fact that L2 speakers usually deliver foreign-accented speech. ("shown in [the model by Segalowitz, i.e.] Figure 2 by partially overlapping dashed circles")

2) Data: complete presentation of individual teacher's comments; categorised in table form

	Can a focus on spoken E in writing help to enhance oral fluency
T₁ yes	"**Dialoge** schreiben- kann man schon einsetzten um sich sicherer beim Sprechen zu fühlen…also es **trainiert auf jeden Fall dasVokabular**. Ich wähle dafür so alltägliche Situationen, wie „Ich kaufe etwas ein", oder „Ich bin in der Bank und will Geld wechseln", oder aber wir reden einfach drüber." „**Man muss eine gewisse Menge an Schreibübungen machen- je niedriger die Klasse, umso mehr muss man das drinnen haben. Ich schaue aber eigentlich immer bei jeder Lektion, irgendwelche Situationen zu haben- oft kriegen sie eine Hausübung zum Beispiel und dann lass ich diese vorlesen und dann gibt es ein Gespräch im Zusammenhang**. Das heißt, ich stelle noch drei, vier Fragen, die einfach nicht Teil der Hausübungen waren dazu, oder frag sie noch nach einem anderen Aspekt, damit sie einfach ein bisschen ins Reden reinkommen. Oder wir haben einen Diskussionspunkt, ein Thema, das einfach diskutiert wird- wobei ich sie dann manchmal zuerst in Gruppen diskutieren lasse und sie dann präsentieren lasse, was die Gruppe herausgefunden hat oder jeder in der Gruppe muss einen gewissen Teilbereich abdecken. Ich stell dann aber immer noch Fragen zusätzlich dazu. Das heißt, so, dass auch das Element drinnen ist, dass es, natürlich in den unteren Klassen für den Schüler mehr kontrolliert ist, dass der Schüler Ideen sammeln kann, dass er sich mit den anderen Schülern eventuell austauschen kann – aber dass ich trotzdem auch sehe, was passiert wenn der jetzt spontan reagieren muss. Das heißt, versteht er mich, kann er auf das reagieren einigermaßen adäquat, oder geht das nicht. Also, einfach ein bisschen kombiniert, einerseits etwas, wo ich eine gewisse Sicherheit habe, oder wo ich mir das vorher überlegt habe, und andererseits auch immer Elemente, wo sie spontan etwas sagen müssen."
T₂ yes	Spoken grammar in writing **hat glaube ich schon einen Einfluss auf oral fluency**…glaube ich schon. Ja.
T₃ no	**Ich glaube nicht, dass spoken language im Schreiben sehr viel für fluency bringt…gerade so Dialoge schreiben…das darf man ja nicht mehr geben…das ist dezidiert nicht level B2. Und aus** der Erfahrung…wenn ich so einen Dialog gebe, das sind so gekünstelte Sachen… Beispiel: du diskutierst mit deiner Mama ob du jetzt ausgehen darfst oder nicht….natürlich hat ein 14 jähriger oder 15 jähriger seine Sichtweise und weiß was Mama und Papa sagen würden…nur es ist so konstruiert…es ist natürlich ein letter of application jetzt auch konstruiert, wenn ich jetzt sage du möchtest gerne Cowboy in einer Ranch in Arizona werden…ist auch konstruiert…**da ist ein opinion essay schon viel mehr down-to-earth und zum eigenen Erfahrungshorizont passend**…
T₅ not given	Englische Filme schauen ist halt wieder das Rezeptive – wenn man nicht darüber redet, dann bringt das für die fluency nicht so wahnsinnig viel. Also das Wichtige ist schon immer, dass man immer wenn man listening Übungen von der CD macht, dass man an diese schon gleich eine speaking activity anschließt: Fragen beantworten, eine Zusammenfassung oder Wiederholung, ganz egal…**weil nur vom Zuhören lernt man nicht Reden. Nur vom Lesen lernt man nicht Schreiben. Es ist so. Es stimmt natürlich ich brauche zuerst den Text, wo ich ein Vokabular herausnehmen kann, mit dem fängt es an, aber das ist einmal Schritt EINS. Und die Leute sind sehr verschieden, es gibt die kommunikativen Typen, die wollen ja auch etwas sagen dazu und reden dann auch weiter.** Aber nur wenn die Schüler einen Film auf Englisch anschauen und sie reden dann nachher Deutsch darüber ist das für ihre Englische fluency nicht sehr zielführen. Da müsst man schon wirklich schauen, dass sie English reden.
T₆ yes	[T berichtet davon, dass in der **Unterstufe viele Phrasen in Dialogform geübt und auch memoriert werden. Es gibt oft ein acting out und dabei würden dann auch fluency Aspekte trainiert werden. Nachdem er diese Übungen als sehr sinnvoll beschrieb, scheint es naheliegend anzunehmen, dass er durchaus glaubt, dass ein focus on spoken language in writing – präsentiert anhand von Model-dialogues mit anschließendem acting out Einfluss auf die oral fluency hat. Zum writing meinte T noch:]** „Was das writing betrifft und die Anforderungen diesbezüglich bei der neuen Matura, finde ich, dass es eigentlich einfacher geworden ist. Die Erwartungshaltung ist relativ klar, nicht? Es gibt bestimmte text formats oder types und die Schüler müssen halt wissen, für einen essay ist das wichtig und für einen letter - sei es jetzt application oder complaint- brauche ich das oder das und ein report schaut halt wieder anders aus als ein article. Die schwierigste Textsorte wäre eh das „creative writing", wo sie eine „story" oder einen „narrative text" schreiben müssen, aber so wie es jetzt ausschaut sollte das eigentlich keine mögliche Textsorte bei der schriftlichen Matura sein."
T₇ yes	**Ich denke schon … weil man versucht ja auch mündlich zu argumentieren und etwas darzulegen… und auch bei der mündlichen Matura diese paired activity, wo sie gegenseitig auch entsprechen argumentieren müssen, dann müssen sie natürlich auch argumentative Strukturen beherrschen**

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	und die können sie dann ohne Weiteres, teilweise, oder zum überwiegenden Teil aus dem Schriftlichen herausnehmen, denke ich.	
T₈ depends	**hängt vom Lernertyp ab**…einige kriegen viel mit durchs Hören…andere brauchen es Schwarz auf Weiß… das mit dem „dialogue- schreiben"…also ich diskutiere das oft mit meinem Kollegen… ich mein ich verstehe es natürlich, wenn man sagt das ist nicht wirklich eine schriftliche Textsorte – **auf der anderen Seite ist „dialogue" eine super Form um Fragebildung zu trainieren…und für die Lerntypen, die das Schwarz auf Weiß sehen müssen.. die switchen das um und nehmen das mit ins speaking…auch wenn das jetzt total „out" ist… wir nehmen das doch immer wieder mit hinein… weil es manchmal hilfreich ist und sicher irgendwo seine Daseinsberechtigung hat.**	

Error-correction

T₁	Mir ist wichtig, dass sich die Schüler trauen- **sie werden nicht geschimpft – was ich aber schon mache - was wir in den Prüfungen nicht mehr machen dürfen- ich bessere alles aus.** Ich erkläre auch manchmal zwischendurch Grammatik- wenn gerade Fehler passieren- weil ich mir auch denke auch das bringt mehr, als wenn ich Grammatik-Übungen mache, die auch wieder so aus Sätzen bestehen, die der Schüler eh vermutlich nicht selber verwenden wird- das hat auch seinen Platz im Unterricht. Aber wichtiger sind die Sachen, wo sie selbstständig reden und wo sie das ja auch verwenden müssen und wo man ihnen dann sagt: alternativ, das wäre die bessere Ausdrucksweise, das ist zwar verständlich, aber das könnte man so und so auch sagen." **Ich korrigiere immer bewusst**. Ich sage aber den Schülern von vornherein, dass das weder Notenauswirkung hat- das sind deklarierte Situationen die Auswirkungen und ich sage ihnen auch, dass das nicht persönlich zu nehmen ist. Meistens sind sie das nach ein paar Wochen gewohnt- also dass das nicht eine Kritik ist, oder so etwas, sondern dass sie das nochmal wiederholen sollten- auf das lege ich auch wert- also auf das korrekte Wiederholen – selber. **Wenn ich sie unterbreche und etwas korrigiere dann müssen sie es nochmal korrekt wiederholen**. Je niedriger die Klasse (level) umso mehr. **Also in den höheren Klassen lass ich sie mehr reden, und sag dann im Anschluss: das, das und das war verbesserungswürdig oder die Wortstellung hat nicht gestimmt aus den und den Gründen. Das geht dort auch mit größeren Einheiten, die ich dann nicht unterbrechen muss… aber in den 1. Und 2. Klassen speziell unterbreche ich eigentlich schon.** „Wenn zwei Schüler in einer Gruppe mit einander reden, korrigiere ich normal nicht, dann schreibe ich mit und wiederhole wesentliche Fehler anschließend mit der ganzen Klasse als Wiederholung…..Wenn es nicht Fehler sind, die bedeutungsunterscheidend sind, dann ist es so, dass es trotzdem immer noch verständlich bleibt….**Also, außer es ist offensichtlich, dass der eine den anderen nicht mehr versteht, dann muss man natürlich eingreifen.**"	In general specific to level
T₂	Fehlerkorrektur beim Sprechen passiert **bei mir- wenn ich jetzt ganz ehrlich bin- nicht nach einem Schema**. Ich glaube, dass es dafür nicht unbedingt ein Schema gibt. Ich glaube das muss man situationsabhängig beurteilen. **Es gibt schon Situationen, wo ich bewusst korrigiere**, also wenn jetzt zum Beispiel ein Fehler passiert, wo es mir ein bisschen die Haare aufstellt, oder so, ..aber dann mache ich das auch nicht zur Dramatik, weil damit würde ich ja das Gegenteil…das wäre ja dann wieder kontraproduktiv…dann wiederhole ich vielleicht nochmal einen Satz, so dass der Schüler merkt, das war jetzt falsch, aber ich sage jetzt nicht: „Du, das war jetzt falsch" sondern ich sage: „Aha, so you think it should be taught….wenn er teached gesagt hat oder so…dann kneiselt er vielleicht, dass da jetzt ein Fehler war. Aber ich mache ihn/sie jetzt nicht bewusst, direkt drauf aufmerksam: „so das war jetzt falsch." Oft, wenn das jetzt wirklich eine spannende Diskussion ist- mit super Argumenten und er/sie jetzt voll im Redefluss ist, dann wäre es genauso kontraproduktiv, ihn oder sie zu unterbrechen, weil dann redet er/sie vielleicht nicht mehr weiter. Ich kann vielleicht zum Schluss nochmal zusammenfassen und ich sage es dann richtig, dann hören sie vielleicht heraus, was falsch war… **aber das glaube ich ist <u>immer ein Abwägen in der jeweiligen Situation</u>**- so sehe ich das. **Aber immer alles auszubessern ist** sicher **kontraproduktiv**. Man muss da sicher oft drüberstehen, auch wenn du dir denkst: „Uhh, das war jetzt ein großer Patzer"…das musst du als Lehrer einfach mal stehen lassen und dir denken: „Was ist dir jetzt wichtiger?" und „Mir ist jetzt etwas anderes wichtiger".	In general back-channelling
T₃	Das ist **schwierig**…weil **auf der einen Seite kann ich einen Fehler – egal ob inhaltlich, grammatikalisch oder aussprachebezogen- nicht einfach so stehen lassen, andererseits kann ich aber auch einen Schüler oder eine Schülerin jetzt nicht einfach abwürgen-** und	In general

	es ist im Prinzip ein Abwürgen wenn ich sage: „dritte Person s" oder wenn ich jetzt wiederhole und sage „says und nicht say" oder wenn ich sage „information und nicht informations"…also es kommt manchmal vor, dass ich in einem Satz fünf Sachen ausbessern müsste…NUR…hört mir der Schüler dann auf zu reden, weil er sagt: „Ich komme zu nichts, ich komme inhaltlich nicht weiter mit dem was ich eigentlich sagen will…weil sie mich so oft ausbessert. Und es sind ja jetzt echt oft wirklich gute Gedanken und Ideen, die halt einfach nicht richtig rauskommen…Das heißt, ich versuch da **abzuwägen** und dass ich so zwischendurch einfach mal sag, also im Redefluss drinnen, dass ich halt sage: „say-says" und wir wiederholen das halt dann richtig. **Also, über gewisse Fehler muss ich einfach hinwegsehen- zugunsten des Inhalts. Andererseits, wenn es jetzt nur um einen Satz geht, zum Beispiel bei einer Hausübungskorrektur, dann sag ich schon: „Das heißt nicht say sondern says". Passt.** Beim Maturatraining oder bei Referaten oder einer Art Vortrag…Monolog, da unterbreche ich nicht. Weder inhaltlich noch grammatikalisch…und auch die restlichen Zuhörer unterbrechen nicht…da mache ich mir dann einfach **Notizen**. Referate gibt es normalerweise eher in der 7., 8. Klasse. Manchmal wenn mir vor kommt, die Klasse ist bereit dafür, oder jemand will lieber ein Referat halten als eine mündliche Wiederholung, dann biete ich die Möglichkeit an…aber verpflichtend in der 5. mache ich das nicht. Weil das für viele wahrscheinlich eine riesen Hürde wäre…also ich fahre da nicht Vollgas rein.	ex. specific to level
T₄	**Verbessert werden die Schüler bei mir beim speaking sowieso <u>immer nur im Nachhinein</u>. Alles andere wäre sehr unhöflich. Man fällt niemandem anderen ins Wort. Da blockt er ab.** „Was macht denn die auf der anderen Seite- die hört nur auf meine Fehler"- **so lauft ja Kommunikation im Alltag überhaupt nicht**. Ich weiß schon, dass ich Lehrer bin und dass ich beurteilen muss…das kann aber natürlich so über das Hintertürchen dann auch. Und so entsteht vertrauen. Und ich rede nur mit jemandem, dem ich vertrau. Wenn ich durch die Stadt gehe, und ich sehe jemandem den ich nicht vertraue, mit dem quatsch ich nicht. Das ist ja pure Psychologie. Jetzt kann man sagen, Schule ist nicht ganz so frei, aber man muss schon mit jemandem reden wollen. …und dann quatschen sie gegenseitig…der eine die einen vier Arme, der andere die anderen vier Arme. **Der Lehrer macht nix anderes als durchgehen und sich so gewisse Strukturen die noch nicht gehen, dritte Person s und so weiter aufschreiben, vorne hinschreiben und gibt dann noch ein paar Minuten, wenn das fertig ist um das zu besprechen..da nehmen wir das Schulübungsheft und schauen nochmal zurück**…dann die Aufgabenstellung dass man das vor dem Publikum macht. Und da nimmt man am Anfang in den niederen Klassen natürlich Leute, die nicht so ängstlich sind, die sozusagen jetzt zeigen was sie schon können. …und dann sage ich: das Strichlein ist deswegen da, weil man die Zunge sieht, könnt's euch erinnern an die ersten Stunden…so erkläre ich das halt immer…. dann male ich nochmal das Zeichen auf der Tafel und das Gesicht dazu und dann stehen wir echt alle da…und machen, das „th"…"ok. This is not heals sondern health…" **und dann müssen sie alle gemeinsam sechsmal wiederholen und dann wird coram Klasse, sozusagen, parliert.**	In general
T₅	**Gleich im Anschluss an eine Gruppenarbeit** sage ich: das und das ist mir aufgefallen- Achtung- das sollte nicht passieren. Das nimmt natürlich nicht jeder auf, aber manche nehmen es auf und es ist einfach meine Aufgabe, das dann zu sagen- also vor der ganzen Gruppe, weil gewöhnlich wenn ich es irgendwo gehört habe, dann ist das gleiche Problem irgendwo anders vielleicht auch aufgetaucht. Und für jemanden, der dieses Problem nicht mehr hat, ist es eine Bestärkung, dass er das richtig gemacht hat. Videotaping…also es muss eine Bereitschaft von der Klasse da sein, das zu machen… und das macht man ja nicht ganz am Anfang und das macht man ja dann aus: also, was weiß ich, im März machen wir das einmal. Und ich hatte das Gefühl, dass sie das auch wirklich gern machen, wenn schon eine Vertrauensbasis da ist. Und der Sinn ist ja für sie durchschaubar- es geht ja nicht darum jemanden runterzumachen sondern jemanden zu bestärken und jemandem eine Sicherheit zu geben und das funktioniert da eigentlich ganz gut, muss ich sagen. **Beim monologischen Sprechen** mache ich mir **Notizen**. Ich unterbreche sie nicht während des Sprechens, sondern ich mache mir Notizen und was wirklich wichtig ist sage ich dann im Anschluss und da versuche ich natürlich auch, **das Positive zuerst zu sagen und dann: das ist mir aufgefallen…** **Mir ist ganz wichtig, dass sich die Schüler und Schülerinnen trauen. Und ich versuche da auch, dass ich nicht Fehler verbessere – sondern, dass ich einfach durch eine Rückfrage dann vielleicht- also das selber richtigstelle, was sie falsch gesagt haben und das nehmen sie normalerweise sofort auf.** Ich habe in der 5. Zwei Schüler, die sich sehr schwer tun mit Sprechen, also fast eine leichte Sprechhemmung haben…und wenn sie sich so schwer tun, dann rede ich nachträglich nochmal unter vier Augen mit ihnen und gib ihnen noch ein paar Redemittel, die sie dann speziell üben müssen.	In general ex. specific to level

T₆	Correction ist zum gewissen Grad sinnvoll. Der Zweck einer solchen group- oder pair- activity ist ja, dass die Schüler einfach reden. Ideal ist die Übung ja wenn eine kommunikative Absicht dahinter steht, es geht also darum etwas erfolgreich zu kommunizieren und im Idealfall fragen die Schüler ja nach, auf Englisch, wenn etwas nicht klar ist. Aber **dabei geht es ja nicht um den einzelnen Fehler. Ich kann natürlich auftretende Fehler nachher thematisieren- und das ist zum Beispiel ein Punkt, der ganz besonders bei Role-plays wichtig ist. Es gibt nichts Schlimmeres, wenn es jetzt eine Diskussion gibt, mehrere Leute reden, und ich bessere die Zeit aus und erwarte dann vielleicht auch noch, dass der Schüler den Satz richtig wiederholt. Das wäre unnatürlich.** Wenn mir ein paar Probleme auffallen, dann mache ich mir **Notizen.** Es gibt ja oft Fehler, die viele machen und dann bespricht man halt nachher: Warum ist das falsch. **Aber es gibt für nichts, und auch für die correction keine verbindlichen Regeln. Aber während der Übung selber korrigiere ich kaum.** Es sei denn, nehmen wir an es geht jetzt darum irgendeine Zeit oder Struktur zu üben, und ich sehe, dass die Schüler das falsch verwenden muss ich natürlich sofort eingreifen, weil dann üben sie ja den pattern falsch. Aber man muss auf alle Fälle eben situationsgerecht reagieren, das meine ich.	In general
	Wenn die Schüler merken, dass **das Ausbessern nicht im Vordergrund steht** und ich sie dadurch, dass ich selber auf Englisch spreche, dann auch dazu ermuntere… und das Thema für sie interessant ist, dann motiviert sie das und dann machen sie das auch gerne. Die role-plays die ich mache, die sind auch zu eher anspruchsvolleren Themen, und ich habe sehr wohl festgestellt, dass die Schüler das auch genießen, wenn sie sich in eine Rolle versetzen können und meist gibt es da ja dann ganz kontroverse Rollen.	
	Bei allen speaking activity ist es wichtig, dass ich mich als Lehrer sehr wohl interessiert zeige, aber so wenig wie möglich eingreife. Ich spiele auch nicht sehr gerne mit – also oft gibt es ja einen der die Diskussion leitet – weil wenn ich da einfach auf der Seite stehen und zuschauen und genießen kann was einige Schüler schon können und mir dann Notizen machen kann ist das super- da ist **der language assistant oft eine große Hilfe**…weil wenn ich jetzt in der Mitte sitze und mir immer Notizen mache, dann schaut das auch nicht gut aus…"wah, jetzt schreibt er schon wieder"…also das ist nicht unbedingt eine ideale Situation nicht.	in general
T₇	**Aussprachefehler korrigiere ich immer sofort.** Ich versuche ihnen immer wieder zu sagen, dass meine Korrektur nichts mit irgendeinem Tadel oder was zu tun habe, sondern dass ich nur dann die Möglichkeit habe ihnen einen Hinweis zu geben, oder sie zu korrigieren – das kommt jetzt drauf an, wie man das sieht – wenn ich sie natürlich auch im Unterricht und vor der Klasse drauf anreden kann. **Aber das ist eine Sache der Gewöhnung…und sie spüren das auch so: Er bessert mich schon aus...aber das meine ich nie als Tadel…weil sonst würden sie mir ja verschrecken und dann reden sie ja gar nicht mehr.** **Bei role-plays versuche ich immer, wenn es irgendwie geht, ohne dass ich sie zu sehr unterbreche und zu sehr in ihrem Redefluss stoppe, versuche ich immer sofort zu korrigieren…weil ich ja dann auch wieder vergesse drauf, was war da hinten los, oder so. Wenn ich sehe oder merke: „Oh damit haben mehrere Schüler Probleme" dann schreibe ich mir das auf und thematisiere dass nochmal in der folgenden Stunde.**	
	Ich meine, man strebt immer auch nach möglicher, grammatikalischer Korrektheit – wobei ich allerdings da ein bisschen, wie soll ich sagen, flexibel bin, weil wenn ich jetzt da nämlich ständig eingreife und wirklich ständig gemäß der Grammatik die Korrektness, wenn ich so sagen darf, einfordere, dann natürlich kann ich nicht erwarten, dass das dann ein fluency ist. **Man muss da – vielleicht auch wenn es manchmal dem Lehrerherz ein bisschen zusetzt – ein bisschen nachgeben und sagen: okay das war jetzt nicht ganz exakt richtig und das war jetzt vielleicht gerade nicht die exakte present perfect in dem Fall oder ein Adverb hat gefehlt oder sonst was, aber da muss man sich – glaube ich halt- ein bisschen zurücknehmen, damit man, sozusagen, ihnen nicht den Spaß nimmt** in dem man sagt, dieses Adverb war falsch, da hast du die Zeit falsch, da war die word order falsch, da kann ich mir nicht vorstellen, dass da der Spaß dann bleibt, gel. **Natürlich, man kann Fehler nicht ganz ignorieren, aber man hat einen Fokus, und wenn die Übung eine fluency- Übung ist, dann tritt das halt in den Hintergrund und hat dann irgendwann mal wieder einen Fokus auf Grammatik.**	
T₈	Ich korrigiere nicht immer…**ich denke das zu viele korrigieren nur am Sprechen… wenn der Schüler merkt, er wird nur korrigiert macht er den Mund nicht mehr auf…ich lasse die Schüler reden…solange sie die message rüberbringen ist es ok…sobald der andere nicht mehr versteht, muss ich korrigieren.** Bei der group work lasse ich die Schüler mehr oder weniger frei arbeiten…dann bei der presentation…wenn Fehler passieren…dann korrigiere ich diese natürlich…aber ich lasse es nicht in die Bewertung einfließen…	

	What is fluency?
T₁	Fluency ist einfach grundsätzlich, dass ich **spontan auf eine beliebige Frage** zu einem Thema, das jetzt nicht ganz speziell ist – ich meine, wenn mich jemand über Flugzeugschrauben in Deutsch fragt, dann werde ich auch passen müssen – aber zu einem allgemeinen Thema **je nach Niveau**, dass ich da einfach spontan **reden**, meine **Ideen** oder gegebenenfalls meine **Ansicht** - was auch immer dann die genau die Themenstellung ist- sagen kann, so, **dass es wirklich verständlich für mein Gegenüber ist**. Das muss jetzt nicht absolut fehlerfrei sein; wenn ich keine Vorbereitungszeit habe; aber das ist für mich- und **einfach spontan reagieren können**, wenn ich in der Sprache angesprochen werde, dann reagiere ich spontan und **gib Antwort und sage das, was von mir erwartet wird**…das ist für mich eigentlich fluency.
T₂	Fluency, being fluent **heißt flüssig sprechen**. Für mich bedeutet das auch, wenn ich zum Beispiel im Gespräch bin und mein Gegenüber stellt mir eine Frage, dass ich zum Beispiel, ja, inhaltlich muss ich vielleicht oft nachdenken - bei einer anspruchsvolleren Frage- dann würde ich im Deutschen sagen: „Warte mal, das ist gar nicht so einfach, was du mich da fragst. Da muss ich mal nachdenken." Wenn der Schüler dann im Englischen auch sagt: „Well, let me think…that's not so easy" und so weiter und so weiter. Und dann kommt was…also, **er kann dann relativ spontan reagieren und sich so ausdrücken, dass ich es als sein Gegenüber verstehe, dann ist das für mich…relatively fluent…würde ich sagen…dann ist schon viel erreicht**. Und, ich sage, eine gewisse Zeit über inhaltliche Aspekte nachzudenken braucht man ja im Deutschen auch… und im Deutschen sage ich das ja dann auch….und wenn der Schüler dann reagieren kann… **Being fluent in der Fremdsprache ist für mich, dass ich dann, wenn ich im Gespräch mit jemanden bin, und der eine sagt was, und ich will was darauf antworten oder sagen, und wenn ich das dann schaffe….ich sehe das so simple….dann bin ich fluent.** **Jeder hat seine Eigenheiten, und spricht in unterschiedlicher Geschwindigkeit, also das sind meiner Meinung nach nicht die Dinge an denen ich fluency aufhängen oder messen kann. Mir geht es darum, wenn ich in der Fremdsprache das erreiche, dass derjenige sagen kann was er sagen will - dann finde ich das super.** Wenn ich es als Englischlehrerin schaffe, dass meine Schüler vom Urlaub im Sommer zurückkommen und sagen: „ Mei Frau Professor, ich muss Ihnen was erzählen, ich war jetzt drei Wochen auf Korfu, ich habe dort mit den jungen Leuten, die ich dort getroffen habe, die ganze Zeit nur Englisch geredet und das hat super funktioniert…dann denk ich mir: fein, dass klappt gut mit deinen Schülern und dann freue ich mich – das ist für mich „being fluent".
T₃	Fluency ist für mich einfach … **sich in der Fremdsprache flüssig ausdrücken zu können. Das heißt, einen genügend großen Wortschatz zu haben, ein genügend großes Wissen an grammatikalischen Strukturen**: Fragstellung, Verneinung…Zweifel ausdrücken und diese Sachen… das ist für mich fluency. Und auch, wenn ich jetzt ein Wort nicht weiß, dass ich dann nicht 2 Minuten warte bis mir das einfällt, sondern es schaffe, das **mit Umschreiben zu umschiffen**… so wie man mit einem native-speaker in einem Land wo man alleine ist und keinen Zweiten hat, der Deutsch spricht…wie man sich dort ausdrücken würde…**einigermaßen ohne gröbere Pausen und Lücken.** …. das ist mir übrigens immer noch nicht ganz klar, also bei der **Matura**, wenn da jetzt zwei ganz unterschiedliche Kandidaten bei der Matura sitzen – wenn einer den ganzen Redeanteil zum Beispiel wegnimmt, ja, was macht dann der andere? Kriegt derjenige deswegen eine schlechtere Note? - Weil er halt nicht so viel sagt oder nichts sagt.. Also das ist für mich noch ein Buch mit sieben Siegeln, wo ich nicht weiß, wie man so etwas bewertet oder wie man eingreift…
T₄	**Fluency bedeutet, dass ich in der Lage bin mehrere Ideen aneinanderzureihen** und dann aber sofort wieder – wenn es jetzt eine dialogische Geschichte ist – also die neue Matura zielt ab auf monologisches Sprechen, also sechs, sieben Minuten zu irgendetwas präsentationstechnisch…was natürlich für die schwachen Schüler – gibt es ja auch – sehr anspruchsvoll ist. **Fluency bedeutet aber auch, dass das funktioniert, was wir zwei jetzt gerade machen, nämlich, dass ich die Gedankengänge eines anderen in der Spontankommunikation nachvollziehen kann; wenn ich sie nicht nachvollziehen kann, dass ich nachfragen kann, und dass ich mich blitzschnell auch auf Zwischenfragen und so weiter auch einstellen kann. Fluency hat auch etwas mit <u>Spontanität</u> und so weiter auch zu tun.** Das mit den **breaks** finde ich also ich habe durchaus ein bisschen so eine Vorliebe für Leute, die nachdenken bevor sie antworten… also auch wenn diese breaks ein bissi länger sind…wenn die Antwort dann passt…das ist jetzt auch gar nicht so unbritisch – einmal gar nichts zu sagen, zu überlegen und erst dann was zu sagen…dieser berühmter Vandabellen-Effekt …der ihn ja so beliebt gemacht hat; weil er den Eindruck gemacht hat, dass er nachdenkt bevor er was sagt. Ich habe keinen Stress beim Prüfen... ich bin jetzt viel zu erfahren, als dass ich mir denke, nur Quantität würde…wird in einer Prüfung zählen.

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T₅	**Fluency heißt für mich, dass keine peinlichen Pausen entstehen. Pausen können schon sein. Pausen können oft etwas verstärken oder besonderes Gewicht auf das legen, was nachher kommt. Aber es soll nicht das Gefühl entstehen, dass der, der sprechen soll, nicht mehr weiter weiß.** Und das müssen die Schüler lernen. Manche können das erstaunlich gut. Die, die es nicht so gut können, lernen dann auch von denen, die es gut können. Diese können dann etwas nochmal aufgreifen, was vielleicht eh schon gesagt wurde, und das vielleicht nochmal anders formulieren, oder dann eben auch wenn es ein dialogisches Sprechen ist, den Ball einfach weitergeben… **Und: dass trotzdem etwas gesagt wird; dass es nicht nur bei Floskeln bleibt, sondern dass inhaltlich auch etwas da ist**. Aber da müssen normalerweise eben die Impulse helfen. Die Aufgabe muss auch so sein, dass sie für den Schüler bewältigbar ist.

Fluency kann man unterrichten, das kann man schon üben- durch Vorbilder und Hilfsmittel, die man den Schülern gibt und auch durch Selbstkontrolle kann man das natürlich schon fördern.

Wenn man spontan auf eine Aufgabe eingehen kann, die in dem Bereich von Oberstufen-Wissen eben da liegt. Da haben wir ja dann unsere Themenkreise, die sich auf Welt-Themen – wir haben das früher Wald-und-Wiesen-Themen genannt – beschränken und da müssten sie dann **das Vokabular auch haben** und das ist natürlich nicht immer ganz leicht, weil natürlich verschiedene Leute ganz verschieden Interessen haben. Da ist es schon passiert, dass Schüler, die eigentlich kulturell sehr interessiert sind und da ganz viel wissen, sich weitaus schwerer tun, weil es ihnen einfach zu blöd ist, über Kleidung zu reden und über Mode und über Popmusik und über Sport…also was diese Schüler interessiert geht weit darüber hinaus, was themenmäßig in dem Repertoire B2 drinnen ist. Natürlich nehme ich dann bewusst manchmal ein neues Thema mit hinein…das macht man natürlich in Klassen, wo mehrere Schüler sind, die sich für so etwas interessieren. Aber das Problem ist, dass die Arbeiten und Aufgaben bei der schriftlichen Matura zentral gestellt werden. Und da ist heuer zum Beispiel aufgefallen – das ist jetzt von Speaking ein bisschen weg – dass sich einige sehr gute Schüler mit diesem umgangssprachlichen Jargon von einigen listening texts sehr schwer getan haben, weil das nicht ihr Niveau ist; diese Schüler hätten schwierigere Sachen leichter bewältigt, als dieses umgangssprachliche „Geplänkel". Aber man muss halt beides können und man kann sich ja auch bei einem Wald-und-Wiesen Thema beweisen…

T₆	**Fluency ist einfach die Fähigkeit spontan und sachlich richtig und situationsgemäß zu reagieren und eine gewünschte kommunikative Funktion auszuüben, ja, und ohne die Muttersprache zur Hilfe zu nehmen. Fluency ist sozusagen ein Ziel. Dieses perfect command - das gibt es ja praktisch nicht. Also wir als Lehrende und Lernende, also ich lerne ja noch immer die Sprache – jetzt lerne ich die Sprache schon seit 40 Jahren und bin NOCH nicht wirklich perfekt …also es gibt immer Grenzen und man ist ja ohnehin nie wirklich absolut zufrieden.**

Ich mache das jetzt nicht wirklich wissenschaftlich, dass ich jetzt speech-parts oder mir ein tape-script herhole und dann analysiere, das geht eher allgemeiner, also was nehme ich wahr und wie gut geht's. Wirklich zu quantifizieren und zu schauen wie viele Pausen, wie lange, wie schaut's aus mit hesitations …das sehe ich nicht als meine Aufgabe und bei der Testung von speaking skills gibt es ja einen so langen Aufgaben-Katalog und alles was da jetzt auf uns zukommen wird bei der mündlichen Matura – das wird erst interessant werden. Es gibt sehr wohl einen Raster, aber es ist ja noch nicht im Detail geklärt, wie das ablaufen wird. Also da wird man das mit den Pausen und mit den hesitations irgendwie einbeziehen müssen – aber quantifizieren? – ich glaube, dass hat noch keiner gemacht. **Und Pausen zu machen – jeder Mensch – ich bin selber einer, der sehr oft „eh" oder so etwas sagt, das sind Angewohnheiten und das ist natürlich.**

T₇	**Fluency heißt für mich, dass man relativ spontan – mit mehr oder weniger Vorbereitungszeit – eine Fragestellung oder ein Thema so umreisen kann – argumentativ oder beschreibend; je nach Fragestellung – dass ich dem Kommunikationspartner gegenüber klar machen kann, was meine Absicht, mein Plan, mein Argument, mein Standpunkt. Das heißt also: ein effektives Klarmachen von Haltungen, Denkhaltungen und Standpunkten in einer entsprechend kurzen Zeit**…entsprechend kurze Zeit auch wieder nach der Vorgabe. Meine Hauptaufgabe ist ja die Schülerinnen und Schüler einmal primär auf die Matura vorzubereiten – auf die formalen Aspekte, aber letztlich ihnen auch die englische Sprache so weit beizubringen, dass sie danach auch wirklich profitieren von dem Schulbesuch - im Leben danach, wie man so schön sagt, ja. Das heißt, das ist verschieden, bei der Matura gibt es Übungen, wo sie sich in wenigen Minuten bewähren müssen, mit einem Partner, einer Partnerin, in der paired activity – wenn es so bleibt, ja, also da ist es dann relativ kurz **und da ist fluency für mich, wenn jemand da in der Zeit klar aus dem eigenen Vokabelpool schöpfend erklären kann, wo er oder sie steht. Das heißt auch, dass der Schüler nicht ewig im Kopf herum suchen muss, was für ein Vokabel oder was nehme ich denn jetzt her**…das ist sicher EIN wichtiger Aspekt, aber auch die **Aussprache, sprich die Verständlichkeit**; wenn ich einem native speaker gegenüber spreche und ich habe da dieses „th" nicht, dann bin ich ja auch nicht fluent, weil dieser versteht mich dann ja nicht also das ist schon **mehrschichtig** aber vor allem dieses Beziehen von Standpunkten und dieses Formulieren meiner Meinung gegenüber einem anderen, das ist einmal wichtig und dass das innerhalb einer angemessen Zeit passiert und nicht immer mit hesitations und dem Ringen nach Wörtern und so weiter.

Auch Umschreiben können ist ganz wichtig, deshalb bin ich auch ganz, ganz penibel dahinter – die Schüler mögen das zwar oft nicht, aber sie sehen es dann, umso älter sie werden, ein … dass ich also wahnsinnig viel der gesamten Vokabeln, die sich im Unterricht neu ergeben … die lasse ich immer umschreiben, also, schon Übersetzung auch, aber ich möchte immer, dass sie sie umschreiben – dadurch, glaube ich, kann man das

	trainieren. Sie mögen es zwar nicht so gerne, aber ich gebe da nicht nach.
T₈	Hmmm…schwierig….schwierig zu Definieren…also…**fluency ist für mich wenn jemand schön fließend spricht, keine längeren Pausen im Sprechfluss hat oder die Pausen auch dementsprechend füllt**…dass keine Leerläufe entstehen…es gibt Leute die Lesen: Yesterday ……I….was…..at….school….and…we…had… und das ist genau das Gegenteil… **Im freien Sprechen ist es mir wichtig, dass der Schüler auf eine Fragestellung fließend antwortet; dass ich den Sinn verstehe; dass die Aussprache passt, und dass er es eben schön fließend heraus bringt** …Ich hatte jetzt zum Beispiel einen Fall in einer vierten Klasse, da haben wir das Thema „space travel" behandelt und ich habe ihn gefragt: What do you think?- Would'nt it be better to send a robot to Mars instead of a human being? – Viertklässler … und er sagt zu mir: „Yes…if a human flies it might burn…" Also da hab ich dann gesagt: „Horch X du bist in einer Vierten…"

Abstract

This paper looks at the phenomenon of oral fluency from various perspectives. Following a discussion of relevant theoretical accounts and research findings, a framework for the classification of the characteristics of fluent oral language production is developed. Thereby both the specific competences needed by a speaker to come across as a fluent FL user, and the respective expectations of a listener are envisaged.

Looking at individual definitions of fluency provided in the literature, fluency has turned out to be an "elusive notion" (cf. Guillot 1999:3). That is, individual descriptions, such as "communicating with ease", "natural language use", or "smooth production" (cf. ch. 1) have remained vague. In terms of individual available definitions, it is temporal aspects of oral production that are generally considered as the prior determinants of fluency. However, as the discussion of empirical findings related to fluency perception has revealed, non-temporal aspects seem to be of equal relevance. These aspects, for example include tone of voice, level of confidence, and use of grammar. (cf. Freed 2000: 261 and Rossiter 2009: 399). Taking into account these additional factors, a list of specific competences needed for a fluent performance in the L2 is developed and presented.

Apart from a focus on specific features of fluency and competences involved in fluent oral language production, this paper also looks at respective implications for foreign language classroom instruction. Within a case study on respective teacher beliefs, eight Austrian EFL teachers were interviewed. In a presentation of the findings, theoretical considerations of the concept finally meet the practical needs of the language learner.

Ultimately, and building on both the insights gained from both the theoretical discussion of the concept and the practical investigation of individual teacher beliefs, a new definition of the multidimensional concept of oral fluency is presented within the final chapter of this paper.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit setzt sich mit dem Begriff „oral fluency" (zu Deutsch: Sprechflüssigkeit) auseinander. In einem Vergleich verschiedenster Quellen der Fachliteratur werden bedeutungsrelevante Charakteristika des Begriffes herausgearbeitet. Wie sich zeigt, sind es vor allem temporäre Merkmale der Sprachproduktion, wie etwa eine gewisse Anzahl an Silben pro Minute, die als vordergründig relevant betrachtet werden. Ein Blick auf neuere Forschungsergebnisse zeigt jedoch, dass gerade auch nicht-temporäre Aspekte eine wesentliche Rolle bei der Wahrnehmung von flüssigem Sprachgebrauch spielen. So wurden zum Beispiel Aspekte wie Selbstbewusstsein, Intonation oder Grammatik von mehreren unterschiedlichen Versuchspersonen als maßgebliche Bewertungskriterien angegeben (vgl. Freed 2000: 261 und Rossiter 2009: 399). Im Sinne einer umfassenden begrifflichen Auseinandersetzung, wird also sowohl die kompetenzorientierte Umsetzung einzelner Merkmale flüssigen Sprachgebrauches als auch die kriterienspezifische Wahrnehmung außenstehender Zuhörer diskutiert. Was die notwendigen Kompetenzen eines Sprachschülers für den flüssigen Gebrauch der Fremdsprache betrifft, so wird eine Liste relevanter Kompetenzbereiche präsentiert.

Im weiteren Verlauf der Arbeit wird die praktische Relevanz theoretischer Aspekte erörtert. Dabei werden notwendige Rahmenbedingungen für die Erreichung des Zieles „Sprechflüssigkeit" im Fremdsprachenunterricht aufgezeigt. Die Ergebnisse einer Studie, in der acht Englisch-Lehrer zum Thema befragt werden liefern die hierfür notwendigen Einblicke.

Basierend auf den Erkenntnissen, die im Rahmen der gesamten Auseinandersetzung mit dem Begriff gewonnen werden konnten, wird abschließend eine praxisorientierte Definition von „fluency" gegeben.

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