



# Factors Influencing English Speaking Fluency Among Second Language Learners

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This quantitative study investigates the impact of various factors on the English speaking fluency for L2 (Second Language) speakers. Through open interviews and questionnaire six factors—age, university education, teachers of English language institutes, teaching methods, dictionary usage, and note-taking—are examined. Participants were selected purposefully based on their proficiency level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Respondents selected were of A1 and A2 level according to CEFR test. Findings reveal that an early start in language learning significantly influences speaking fluency, while university education does not contribute positively due to limited opportunities for English interaction and exposure to incorrect input. Conversely, teachers in English language institutes play a supportive role in fluency development. The study concludes with suggestions for effective dictionary and note-taking strategies to enhance speaking skills.

**Keywords:** Fluency, English Communication, English Speaking, Second Language, L2, CEFR.

## Introduction:

English serves as a bridge connecting people across diverse regions, cultures, religions, and nations. Brown and Lee (2015) assert that it increasingly acts as a common medium for interaction among non-native speakers. Among the four language skills, speaking holds particular importance in communication (Zaremba, 2006). Chastain (1988) regards speaking as a crucial component in the development of language skills and the conveyance of cultural knowledge. Emphasizing accuracy, fluency gains prominence in achieving communicative objectives during conversations. Richards (2006) defines fluency as the ability to use language naturally in meaningful communication, even with limitations in one's linguistic proficiency. According to Fillmore (1979, cited in Nation, 1989), fluent speakers can express themselves without frequent pauses to think, demonstrating a command of both what to say and how to say it. Furthermore, Harmer (2015) underscores fluency's focus on conveying content effectively, while Baily (2003) characterizes fluency as the ability to use language swiftly and confidently, minimizing hesitations and unnatural pauses.

In today's interconnected world, proficiency in English speaking has become a necessity across various domains. As globalization continues to break down barriers between nations, English serves as the lingua franca of international communication, facilitating collaboration, trade, education, and diplomacy.

One of the primary reasons for the increasing importance of English speaking is its widespread adoption as the language of business. In multinational corporations, English proficiency is often a prerequisite for employment and career advancement. Employees need to effectively communicate with colleagues, clients, and stakeholders from diverse linguistic backgrounds, making English fluency an asset in the global marketplace.

Moreover, in the academic realm, English is the dominant language of instruction in many universities and research institutions worldwide. Students seeking higher education opportunities often need to demonstrate proficiency in English to gain admission to prestigious institutions or to excel in their academic pursuits. Additionally, scholarly publications and conferences predominantly use English as the medium for disseminating research findings, further emphasizing the significance of English proficiency in academia.

To identify participants, the researchers collaborated with English language instructors from institutes and the English language department. They utilized the Speaking Rubric Scale derived from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) by the Council of Europe (2001). This scale evaluates proficiency across five dimensions: range, accuracy, fluency, interaction, and coherence, categorizing language

proficiency into basic, independent, and proficient levels. Participants were specifically chosen from the advanced levels (C1 and C2) demonstrating high proficiency in spoken English.

### **Review of Literature:**

The significance of English-speaking fluency in both educational and professional contexts has prompted numerous studies to investigate various factors and interventions that may influence fluency development. Three notable studies by Bahrani (2011), Amirnejad (2015), and Tavakoli et al. (2016) shed light on different aspects of this area.

Bahrani's (2011) study explored the impact of technology and social interaction on English speaking fluency among Iranian EFL learners and Malaysian ESL learners. By comparing the effects of exposure to audio/visual mass media and social interaction, Bahrani found that exposure to media improved fluency more significantly than social interaction. This suggests that authentic sources of input, such as media, can play a crucial role in enhancing speaking fluency.

Amirnejad (2015) focused on the use of cell phone video recordings to improve the speaking fluency of Iranian EFL learners. Through a controlled experiment involving 40 elementary-level learners, Amirnejad demonstrated that self-video recording had a substantial positive impact on fluency and speech rate. This intervention allowed learners to engage in self-assessment and practice, leading to noticeable improvements in fluency.

Tavakoli et al. (2016) conducted a study examining the effects of a short-term pedagogic intervention on L2 speech fluency development among English for Academic Purposes (EAP) learners in the UK. The intervention aimed to raise awareness of fluency and teach strategies for improvement. Results indicated that learners who received the intervention demonstrated improved speech fluency compared to the control group. This suggests that targeted pedagogic interventions can effectively enhance fluency development in L2 learners.

Dinh Thị Bích Ngọc and Tran Thi Dung (2020) delved into identifying key influencers impacting the fluency of second-year students in their speaking skills. Their study unveiled three primary factors, each with subfactors contributing to fluency enhancement:

**Affective Factors:** This category encompasses moods, feelings, and attitudes towards language learning. It explores how students' emotional states and their perceptions of language learning influence their speaking fluency. **Performance Factors:** Under this factor, considerations are given to various performance-related aspects such as planning time and time pressure. Subfactors within this category include aspects like speed and skill, which directly impact fluency during oral communication. **Teacher Error Correction in Speaking Classes and Previous Studies:** This factor examines the influence of teacher error correction methods in speaking classes and how previous studies on oral English fluency have shaped students' learning experiences and outcomes.

By dissecting these factors and subfactors, the study provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of oral English fluency development among second-year students, shedding light on areas that educators and learners can focus on to enhance speaking proficiency.

Building upon these studies, the current research aims to further explore factors influencing English speaking fluency among L2speakers. Through structure questionnaire and open interviews and purposive sampling, the study aims to provide valuable insights and practical recommendations for enhancing English speaking fluency among L2 speaker.

### **Scope of a Study:**

The study focuses exclusively on postgraduate students enrolled in MMS programs within Mumbai city. Specifically, participants undertaking English speaking courses at A1 and A2 proficiency levels were chosen for inclusion in the study.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To understand growing importance of English communication in India
2. To understand factor affecting oral English communication
3. To analyse role of age, university education, teachers at English language institutes, teaching English, dictionary, and note taking in improving English speaking fluency.

### **Hypothesis:**

The implementation of effective teaching methods by English language instructors significantly enhances the oral English speaking fluency of students.

### **Methodology of Study:**

#### **Sample:**

The study targeted students enrolled in the third and fourth semesters of the MMS program. Specifically, students experiencing difficulties with fluency in oral communication and actively participating in English

speaking classes at a small institute with the goal of improving their employability were chosen for inclusion in the study.

### Sample Size:

A total of 500 questionnaires were initially distributed among the targeted population. 12 questionnaires were identified as biased and hence excluded from the analysis.

### Sampling Technique:

Purposive random sampling was employed for study.

### Data Collection:

#### Primary Data:

Questionnaire: It was distributed among the selected sample of 500 employees, with 488 responses analysed. Individual Interview: Conducted to gather more detailed insights from a subset of participants, supplementing the questionnaire data.

#### Data Analysis:

1. To what extent do you believe your university education contributes to your English-speaking fluency?
  - a. Not at all
  - b. Slightly
  - c. Moderately
  - d. Significantly
  - e. Extremely

#### University Education Contribution

Sr. No	Options	Responses of number of students	Percentage
1	Not at all	97	19.9
	Slightly	195	40.0
	Moderately	114	23.4
	Significantly	36	7.4
	Extremely	46	9.4

**Interpretation:** 40% of respondents are of opinion that university curriculum contributes slightly to improving English speaking fluency

2. How would you rate the effectiveness of English language instructors in language institutes in enhancing your speaking fluency?
  - a. Very Ineffective
  - b. Ineffective
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Effective
  - e. Very Effective

#### Effectiveness of English Language Instructors

Sr. No	Options	Responses of number of students	Percentage
1	Very Ineffective	42	8.6
	Ineffective	36	7.4
	Neutral	17	3.5
	Effective	306	2.7
	Very Effective	87	17.8

**Interpretation:** 81% of respondents believe that effective instructor can influence the oral communication of the candidate

3. Effective teaching methods helps in improving your English-speaking fluency.
  - a. Very
  - b. Ineffective

- c. Ineffective
- d. Neutral
- e. Very Effective

### Effective Teaching Methods

Sr. No	Options	Responses of number of students	Percentage
1	Strongly Disagree	31	6.4
	Disagree	46	9.4
	Neutral	28	5.7
	Agree	285	58.4
	Strongly agree	98	20.1

**Interpretation:** 78% of respondents believe that effective teaching methods helps in improving your English-speaking fluency

4. How often do you use a dictionary or language reference materials to aid your English-speaking practice?
- a. Never
  - b. Rarely
  - c. Occasionally
  - d. Often
  - e. Always

### Reference Materials to Aid your English-Speaking Practice

Sr. No	Options	Responses of number of students	Percentage
1	Never	166	34.0
	Rarely	195	40.0
	Occasionally	18	3.7
	Often	59	12.1
	Always	50	10.2

**Interpretation:** 40 % of respondents believe that dictionary or language reference materials aid very little for your English-speaking practice?

5. Rate the importance of notetaking during English language learning sessions in improving your speaking fluency.
- a. Not Important
  - b. Slightly Important
  - c. Moderately Important
  - d. Important
  - e. Extremely Important

### Notetaking improving your speaking fluency.

Sr. No	Options	Responses of number of students	Percentage
1	Not Important	56	11.5
	Slightly Important	51	10.5
	Moderately Important	30	6.1
	Important	182	37.3
	Extremely Important	169	34.6

**Interpretation:** 72% of respondents believe that note keeping during English language learning sessions in improves your speaking fluency.

**Hypothesis:** The implementation of effective teaching methods by English language instructors significantly enhances the oral English-speaking fluency of students.

$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{E(O-E)^2}{E}$  Where:

- $OO$  = Observed frequency
- $EE$  = Expected frequency

- The summation is performed over all response categories.

Determine the Degrees of Freedom:

$df = (\text{number of rows} - 1) \times (\text{number of columns} - 1)$   $df = (\text{number of rows} - 1) \times (\text{number of columns} - 1)$  Here, we have 5 response categories, so the degrees of freedom will be  $df = (5 - 1) \times 4 = 4$ .

### Significance Level ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05.

$\chi^2 \geq 9.488$ , we reject the null hypothesis

Hence effective teaching methods by English language instructors significantly enhances the oral English-speaking fluency of students.

### Conclusion:

University education, however, did not appear to contribute significantly to fluency enhancement. Participants attributed this to limited English-speaking opportunities in classrooms, exposure to incorrect language input, and a lack of access to native English speakers within their university environment. Conversely, English language institutes and teachers were seen as beneficial in improving English fluency, providing supportive environments and effective instruction. The majority reported positive improvements in their speaking abilities through such instruction. Note taking habit can also contribute towards improving fluency of oral communication

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