

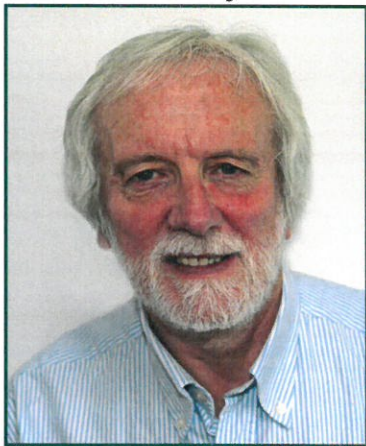
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Mike McCarthy

Fluency Revisited

In the case of speaking, most researchers agree that fluency involves smooth, automatic production. However, digital technology has enabled the creation of a huge range of corpora, including spoken corpora, and evidence from this suggests that fluency in dialogue also involves attention to the linking of speaking turns to create mutual 'flow'. We discuss research aimed at an understanding of dialogic fluency and show examples of how fluency can be taught, informed by corpus evidence.

Teaching and assessment systems typically consider fluency in speaking to be one of the factors that determine a learner's competence and level, especially at higher levels. Furthermore, examination systems, alongside level descriptors in systems such as the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), frequently mention fluency in speaking and attempt to define it and set tasks to assess it. But what is fluency? In the case of speaking, most researchers agree that it involves smooth, unhesitant production, and that being able to produce language automatically is a key element in being fluent. However, evidence from



spoken corpora suggests that fluency also involves a repertoire of interactive items, and attention to linking what you say to what other speakers say in dialogue to create a kind of mutual 'flow'. How do we achieve this sense of interactive flow, what sorts of things do learners need to master to achieve smooth dialogue, and how can we teach these?

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