

Special Topics in Functional English

“Spoken fluency measurement and development”

Instructor: Ralph Rose

Course Overview

Many people say that they would like to become more fluent in a second language. But what does fluency actually mean and how can it be actively developed? This course aims to explore these questions through a dual focus on fluency. One, the course will explore what it means to be fluent by reading what experts have said about it and integrating it with students' own intuitions. Students will also carry out a number of experiment-like activities to examine fluency in a hypothesis-driven manner. Second, the course will seek to develop students' fluency in English communication. Deciding exactly how this will be done will be an exercise for the student: They will decide on a suitable procedure and implement it on a regular basis, partly during each lesson. By the end of the course, students should be able to describe various theoretical and observational facets of fluency, as well as evaluate their own fluency development in objective terms.

Syllabus

Course goals

- ✓ Students should understand many of the concepts and views related to fluency that have been discussed by experts.
- ✓ Students should be able to explain a coherent view of what fluency is in English.
- ✓ Students should be able to carry out a quantitative evaluation of fluency with respect to their views.
- ✓ Students should report on such evaluations in English in both oral and written formats.

Schedule (subject to change)

- Lesson 1: Introduction
- Lesson 2: What is fluency
- Lesson 3: Fluency applications
- Lesson 4: Basics of acoustic phonetics
- Lesson 5: Acoustic phonetics analysis techniques
- Lesson 6: Fluency development
- Lesson 7: Cognitive fluency
- Lesson 8: Rehearsal and fluency
- Lesson 9: Shadowing and fluency
- Lesson 10: Individual fluency project proposals
- Lesson 11: Utterance vs. perceptual fluency
- Lesson 12: Disfluency and disability
- Lesson 13: Fluency detection and attitudes
- Lesson 14: Broader notions of fluency
- Lesson 15: Individual fluency project oral reports, final report submission

Lessons will be scheduled according to the university's schedule as well as to the available modes of delivery (e.g. classroom, on-line)

Textbook

There is textbook for this course. Handout will be provided by the instructor, and readings and other material will be drawn from on-line open-source archives.

Other Resources and Materials

Students will be expected to read some background readings, do some experiment-like assignments based on class activities, as well as engaged in activities they have designed and decided on to improve their own fluency.

This course will make extensive use of Course N@vi for distributing and sharing materials and resources, giving information about assignments and collecting such assignments, and distributing other relevant information. Students should access the Course N@vi site regularly to check for updates and changes.

Because of the topic of the course, students will make use of recording software such as Praat, Audacity, or WaveSurfer. Students will likely need to download and install one of these on their home computer to complete some assignments. Furthermore, a headset with a microphone is highly recommended for use with such software, though sufficient and inexpensive ones can be purchased easily.

Grading Method

Final grades will be determined based on completion of homework assignments and performance on quizzes and a final group project (oral presentation and individual written paper). Active class participation is expected of all students and will also influence the final grade. Regardless of performance on the above assignments, student who are absent from more than one-third of the scheduled lessons will not achieve a passing grade in the course, in accordance with university policy.

Students who wish to question their final grades should make inquiries directly to their course teacher who will consider each case based on the student's performance record. Inquiries of this nature can be made until the end of the 7th full day (1 week) after the final grades are made public by the Education Office. Once these 7 days have expired, no further grade inquiries will be considered.

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to keep the highest standards of academic honesty in all of their course work. In short, "Do your own work."