Self-assessment in Fluency Activities
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ABSTRACT
In the English Discussion Class (EDC) at Rikkyo University, students complete a 3/2/1 fluency activity every week. One important feature of this fluency activity is that students should repeat the same information in each speaking turn. To help students to do this, each week a checklist was given to the students. At the end of the course, a questionnaire was given to the students to ascertain their views on whether the checklist helped them to remember to repeat the information and to do so quickly. The questionnaire was also used to check whether remembering translated into action. Most students reported that the checklist helped them to remember to repeat the information and do so quickly. However, most students reported they could only sometimes do this. Possibly more important than the results obtained is students’ awareness of their own performance that self-assessment brings.

INTRODUCTION
The English Discussion Class (EDC) at Rikkyo University is one of four English courses compulsory for first-year students. Each EDC class meets once a week for 90 minutes and in each class a fluency activity is included. This fluency activity is adapted from Maurice’s (1983) 4/3/2 activity but due to time constraint is reduced to 3/2/1. In the 3/2/1 fluency, students talk about the same topic for 3, 2, and then 1 minute with a different listening partner each round before switching speaker-listener roles. Students are not usually given time to prep for the fluency activity so in my lessons students are encouraged to consider the first three minutes as the planning phase.

One important feature of the fluency activity is repetition of the same information during each speaking turn (Nation & Newton, 2009). This is important for students to fully benefit from this activity. However, in the EDC class, it is not always possible to monitor and check if all the students are doing this. One solution is to help the learners to become independent, self-regulating students who are aware of their own performance.

In Vygotsky’s cognitive theory (Oxford, 1999) the goal of learning is to develop an independent, self-regulated, problem-solving individual. In the EDC context, where the class topics, discussion questions, and functions introduced are pre-determined, it is important to give students some opportunity to take charge of their own learning. That is, it is important for students to become active participants in the learning process. One way to do this is through self-regulation. Self-regulation has 3 components, planning, guiding & monitoring (Oxford, 1999) and these components are referred to, by educators, as metacognitive learning strategies. The component of self-regulation to be addressed in this paper is monitoring.

Self-monitoring is central to self-regulated learning and occurs when students reflect on various aspects of their performance and generate internal feedback (Butler & Winne, 1995). Self-monitoring consists of two parts: self-assessment (has a target behavior been achieved?) and self-recording (recording the results in some way). Self-assessment is important because people cannot influence their own motivation and actions very well if they do not pay adequate attention to their own performances (Bandura, 1991). Therefore, in a classroom setting, student self-assessments can play a crucial role in helping learners become more motivated and dedicated (Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki, 2014).

Using Checklists for Self-Assessment
Although self-assessment can be done alone, it works best for most students in combination with
self-recording (Harris & Graham, 1992), so checklists provide a channel for students to record their results. Using checklists can increase learner awareness of gaps in their knowledge or behavior. It is also a part of metacognitive skills which results in awareness of the learner’s strengths and weaknesses. Other benefits of checklists proposed by Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki (2014) include:

- Providing opportune and fruitful feedback allows for fast and effective assessment of student learning
- Enhancing academic integrity through student self-reporting of learning progress
- Promoting the skill of reflective learning and self-monitoring
- Increasing learner intrinsic motivation
- Increasing learner self-esteem

Checklists are easy to make and can be easily adapted to different activities and goals so is a useful tool in the language classroom.

In addition to the internal feedback provided by monitoring, research generally confirms that learners are more effective when they attend to externally provided feedback (Butler & Winne, 1995). Therefore, in the classroom activity being introduced in this report, self-check sheets were used in conjunction with peer feedback.

**Advantages of Peer Feedback**

Peer feedback is less threatening than teacher feedback as students tend to be more comfortable with their classmates, so getting corrected by own friends may cause less anxiety (Sultana, 2009). In my lessons, I often notice that students listen more attentively and are more responsive when receiving peer feedback.

When correction comes from the teacher, it reinforces teacher’s authority (Sultana, 2009). In a traditional language class, the teacher is the authoritative figure. However, in EDC lessons, the teacher is a facilitator and students are not considered to be “a passive receiver of information” (Sultana, 2009, p.12). Peer correction offers opportunities to the students to be responsible for their own learning and increases students’ involvement in the class.

**PROCEDURE**

This activity is designed to assist students in effectively conducting the 3/2/1 fluency activity. In the discussion lessons, there are eight students. Students first perform the 3/2/1 fluency: Students are placed in pairs and one student is assigned the role of the speaker while the other is assigned the role of listener. The speaker is given a handout (Appendix A) with three questions and given three minutes to talk about those questions. Students are encouraged to consider this first three minutes as the planning stage as they are actively trying to generate content. At the end of the three minutes, pairs are shuffled so that all speakers are paired with new listeners. The speakers again answer the same three questions but are given two minutes to do so. At the end of the two minutes, speakers change again forming new pairs. Again, they answer the same three questions but are given one minute to do so. In this one minute, students are encouraged and expected to repeat 100% of the content from round two.

At the end of round three, on the handout (Appendix A), speakers circle the percentage of content from round two they could repeat in round three. The speakers then give their checklist to their paired listener, who records the number of pauses from the speaker.

**VARIATIONS**

The main component of the 3/2/1 fluency activity is for students to repeat the same content in each stage. However, as some students pointed out, they do not always remember what was said in the
previous round. One variation to correct this is adding space to the fluency question sheets (Appendix B) so that students can make notes. If enough time is available, students may be able to take comprehensive notes. However, in the limited time available in the EDC context, making note of keywords could be useful.

DISCUSSION
Twenty students completed the questionnaire (Appendix C) and in the questionnaire, four questions were asked. Eighteen students reported that the checklist helped them to remember to repeat 100% of the content in round three while nineteen students said it helped them to remember to speak quickly. So, for most of the students the checklist appeared to increase their awareness of the goals of the activity. In the classes used in this research, at the beginning of the class the students are given the checklist and their attention is drawn to the two goals. This kind of metacognitive awareness is proposed as a pre-requisite of effective behavioral control (Ridley et. al, 2004).

Nineteen students said that the questionnaire sometimes helped them to repeat 100% of the content in round three while one student said it never did. Eighteen students reported that they could speak with less pauses while two students said they didn’t. This means that, for these students, awareness of the goal often translated into performance. In the lessons, I often noticed that students made deliberate attempts to speak quickly in each round. When the listeners circle “no pauses” on their checklist, speakers were often visibly happy and thanked the listeners. This may help with motivation.

CONCLUSION
There are some possible problems with this activity. During the peer feedback, some students might feel reluctant to correct their friends’ errors because correcting friends’ errors might harm their relationship (Sultana, 2009). So, whether or not the speakers actually had a lot of pauses, the listeners may still circle no pauses. Also, students often forget their own performance so their self-assessment may not be accurate. However, I don’t think this diminishes the value of this kind of self-assessment activity. Before the beginning of one of the classes, I heard one student commenting that the week before she was not able to repeat 100% of the content in round three and she really wanted to do it that week. I think that students thinking about and being able to speak about their own performance is important in the language classroom. Therefore, I believe that any activity that leads students to do this is valuable.

REFERENCES


**APPENDIX A**

**Lesson 6-Country versus City**

1. What do you like about your hometown?
2. What do you dislike about your hometown?
3. Where would you like to live in the future?

**Round 3:** Did you repeat everything you said in **round 2**?

- 25%----------50%--------75%---------100%
- Did you have many pauses?
- No pause
- a lot of pauses

1--------2----------3--------4---------5
APPENDIX B

Lesson 6 - Country versus City

1. What do you like about your hometown?

-  

2. What do you dislike about your hometown?

-  

3. Where would you like to live in the future?

-  

Round 3: Did you repeat everything you said in round 2?

25%--------50%--------75%--------100%

Did you have many pauses?
No pause          A lot of pauses
1---------------2---------------3---------------4---------------5

APPENDIX C

1. Did the checklist help you to;

チェックリストは次のこと役に立ちましたか:

a. Remember to repeat 100%  Yes  No

内容の100％を繰り返すために

b. Remember to speak quickly  Yes  No

もっと早く話せるようになるために

2. Did you repeat 100% of round 2 in round 3?  Always  sometimes  never

三回目の時に二回目と同じ内容を100％繰り返すことができました。

3. From lesson 6 - 9, did you speak with less pauses in round 3?  Yes  No

レッスン6 - 9では、三回目の際はあまり止まらずに話すことができましたか。