

English fluency development in Czech students before and after their transition from grammar school to university

Chris Williams, Department of English, Masaryk University, Brno - Czech Republic

Introduction

While fluency has been investigated within second language studies (see Sauer & Ellis, 2019) it has rarely been the sole focus of attention (Peltonen, 2017), and, until recently, fluency research has tended to focus on monologues rather than interactions between speakers (Tavakoli, 2016).

The project will record and analyse the changes in the interactive spoken English fluency of 10 Czech teenagers in their final year of gymnasium study and their first semester at university.

Research questions

1) How does an individual participant's fluency change between the two collection points?

2) Are any changes reflected in a cross-group trend?

Participants

- 10 students from a local high school/gymnasium
- L1 Czech
- Live in a Czech home environment
- Final year of school studies

Tasks

- A conversation-discussion activity with one other participant.
- The discussion between participants will be helped with the use of question prompts on generic topics that will be familiar to the participants.

Two collection points:

- Late-April 2021 - towards the end of the participants' school study period
- November 2021 (TBC) - towards the end of the participants' first semester at university

References

- Peltonen, P., Lintunen, P. (2016). Integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches in L2 fluency analysis: A study of Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking learners of English at two school levels. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 209-238
- Peltonen, P. (2017). Temporal fluency and problem-solving in interaction: An exploratory study of fluency resources in L2 dialogue. *System*, 70, 1-13
- Sauer, L., Ellis, R. (2019). The Social Lives of Adolescent Study Abroad Learners and Their L2 Development. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(4), 739-762
- Tavakoli, P. (2016). Fluency in monologic and dialogic task performance: Challenges in defining and measuring L2 fluency. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 54(2), 133-150

Analysis

Audio samples will be transcribed and annotated, then analysed for fluency indicators using *Praat*, a software package for speech analysis.

These fluency indicators will be monitored after each data collection period:

- temporal (quantitative) speech indicators:
speech rate, pause length, pause frequency
- interactive (qualitative) features:
circumlocution, repetitions, and fillers

The qualitative measures focus on the functions and contexts of repair features (Peltonen & Lintunen 2016) during interaction. Strategic use of these features may actually enhance fluency, rather than hinder.

Expected results

Minimal changes on temporal indicators

Further information

If you have a question or comment, feel free to contact me at chris.williams@mail.muni.cz