

Development of Speaking Fluency With Model Input and Peer-check Activity

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of pedagogical intervention on the 3/2/1 fluency activity. When students engaged in the 3/2/1 activity, students received peer feedback on whether the function phrases were used. Pre-and Post-speaking data of one-minute monologues were collected on Week 3 and Week 14. Questionnaires were administered to ask students what they thought about the provided pedagogical intervention. The statistical findings showed that there was significant improvement of students' fluency development between pre-and post-test while there were no significant differences on fluency development among different groups. However, students' usages of function phrases differed depending on the treatment. Questionnaires were used to follow up on the quantitative findings. The importance of pedagogical intervention to enhance focus on form will be discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Developing speaking fluency is a crucial factor to achieve a communicative goal. In the English Discussion Class, one of the learning goals is developing speaking fluency (Hurling, 2012). If learners develop speaking fluency, they will be able to succeed in stating their opinions more effectively in a group discussion.

According to Gatbonton and Segalowitz (2005), conducting a language classroom to improve fluency requires attention to the following points: repetition of linguistic material with formulaic sequences and the development of automatization of language. To enhance automatization of language, the 3/2/1 speaking task is implemented in every discussion class. In this task, one speaker talks about a particular topic for three minutes, retells the information a second time in two minutes, and then retells it a third time in one minute (Nation, 1989). One advantage of this task is that students can develop speaking fluency by verbatim repetition (Boers, 2014; De Jong & Perfetti, 2011; Thai & Boers, 2015).

Boers (2014) conducted a study to compare learners' performance under time shrinking condition and under time constant condition. The participants were 10 adult ESL learners in New Zealand. They were asked to talk about two topics that they felt comfortable to talk about by their choice. He compared the mean changes in Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency between the first delivery and the third delivery. The results show that shrinking time conditions allowed learners to improve fluency but not accuracy and complexity. On the other hand, the constant condition promoted accuracy more.

Thai and Boers (2015) also conducted a similar study that examined the 3/2/1 speaking activity with or without time pressure as Boers conducted (2014). The participants were twenty high school students in Vietnam. They were asked to talk about the same topic, "a favorite movie." Ten students performed under a 3/2/1 minute conditions while the other ten students performed under a 2/2/2 minute conditions. The results show that fluency (syllables per minute) statistically improved under time shrinking condition (3/2/1). There was no significant improvement in complexity under time shrinking condition (3/2/1) while there was a significant gain in complexity (mean ratio of clauses per AS unit) under constant-time condition (2/2/2).

De Jong and Perfetti (2011) investigated longitudinal effects of the 4/3/2 activity with 24 adult ESL learners in the United States. The participants were randomly assigned into repetition,

no-repetition, and control groups. The repetition group ($n=10$) spoke on the one topic three times (4 minutes, 3 minutes, and 2 minutes). The no-repetition group ($n=9$) spoke on three different topics for 4, 3, and 2 minutes. The treatment lasted for 3 weeks. The results showed that students who repeated the same topic increased fluency significantly better than students who talked about a different topic each time because proceduralization occurred due to the repetition. However, as De Jong and Perfetti (2011) recognized, it was not clear what kind of language knowledge was proceduralized. Further investigation of specific linguistic features needs to be examined using qualitative analysis or other methods.

These previous studies suggest that 3/2/1 tasks are beneficial to improve fluency due to the verbatim repetition (e.g., De Jong & Perfetti, 2011), and time pressure (Boers, 2014, Thai & Boers, 2015). However, three things remain unknown about 3/2/1 tasks from the previous studies. First, there was no clear information to understand what linguistic features were proceduralized through this activity. Second, few studies have explored the pedagogical intervention for the 3/2/1 activities. Previous researchers suggested providing learners with model input first and encouraging them to use the input for exemplars in their own speech (Boers, 2014, p. 231). According to Anderson's Skill Acquisition Theory (1983), learners gradually transform their performances from controlled to automatic. It is worth investigating what linguistic forms can be automatized through repetition. Third, few studies have examined students' strategies and perceptions of doing 3/2/1 fluency tasks. In general, the effects of 3/2/1 tasks were investigated only quantitatively using statistical analysis of speech data. In this study, as Warren (2014) implemented, students were encouraged to use the target function phrases during the 3/2/1 tasks. Encouraging student to use the function phrases (e.g., In my opinion, It is because, For example) during the 3/2/1 tasks could help students to stretch their speech and improve speech rate. To do so, I will mainly examine the effects of pedagogical intervention (teacher-modeled input / pair-check activity) on longitudinal development of students' fluency both quantitatively and qualitatively. Specifically, my research questions are the following:

1. To what extent do students who receive pressure to use the target function phrases develop their oral speaking fluency over a semester?
2. To what extent do students who receive pressure to use the target function phrases proceduralize them over a semester?
3. How do learners perceive their 3/2/1 speaking training, teacher-modeled input and the pair-check activity?

METHOD

The participants were 44 students from six classes. Prior to the 3/2/1 speaking task each lesson, all the participants received teacher-modeled input using the function phrases on a handout. All of the target formulaic languages (opinions, reasons, examples) were always used in the model input. Function phrases in teacher-modeled passages on the handout were underlined so the target formulaic sequences would be more noticeable. While the teacher reads the passage aloud, the students follow the passage quietly. The rationale of using this input-based planning was that frequency of experience with language input is a key determinant of language acquisition (Ellis, 2002). Students were exposed to the same amount of the target language through teacher-modeled input every lesson prior to the 3/2/1 task.

The participants were divided into three different groups based on the different types of pressure to use the target form. Regardless of planning time, students do not necessarily plan effectively because the students do not attend their attention to use their planning effectively without any instruction (Park, 2010). In short, without any pressure to use the target form, the

students probably would not be able to use them during the tasks. The groups were categorized as the following:

Control Group. This group immediately started the 3/2/1 speaking tasks after they received teacher-modeled input. They were NOT instructed to use the forms during the task. For this group, the listeners only listened to their speaker (e.g., I see. Uh-huh, Wow) while the speakers were performing 3/2/1 speaking tasks. The listeners did not check their speakers’ usage of function phrases during the 3/2/1 speaking tasks.

Middle Pressure Group. This group was encouraged by the teacher to use the target function phrases (e.g., I think, In my opinion, It is because, For example). As in the Control group, the listeners only listened to their speaker while the speakers are performing 3/2/1 speaking tasks.

High Pressure Group. This group had additional pressure to use the target form. That is, listeners were putting the checkmarks whenever the speakers used a function phrases (e.g., I think, In my opinion, It is because, For example). I hypothesized that this group would perform significantly better in terms of fluency (speech rate). It is because the more function phrases the student uses, the more proceduralized their utterances will become. Table 1 shows the study design.

Table 1. Types of Pedagogic Intervention

<i>Group</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Treatment</i>		
		<i>Model input</i>	<i>Instruction to use the FL</i>	<i>Peer-check</i>
Control Group	14 Level 2 = 7 Level 3 = 7	+	-	-
Middle Pressure Group	14 Level 2 = 7 Level 3 = 7	+	+	-
High Pressure Group	16 Level 2 = 8 Level 3 = 8	+	+	+

Monologue speaking tests. In order to analyze the students’ fluency development, pre-and post-speaking data were collected on Week 3 and Week 14. In week 3, the pretest, one-minute-long monologue speaking tasks, were administered. Students were paired up and each pair stood at each corner of a classroom and recorded their opinions by holding an IC recorder individually. One student was a speaker and another student was a listener. Because it was the first time for the participants to record their English in one-minute monologue speaking tests, they practiced a monologue task prior to the actual tests with different question topics. This practice helped the students to be familiar with the recording, feel less pressure and grasp the length of one minute. After they finished the practice, they recorded the actual monologue speaking tests. The questions on Table 2 were presented for each of the tests. They were given 30 seconds to think about what to talk about without any pen or paper. After the first speakers finished their speaking, the second speakers engaged in the speaking tasks in the same manner. In order to control the order effect, the first speakers and the second speakers talked about different topics. The one-minute monologue speaking recordings were administered using the same procedure in Week 14 (Post-

tests).

Table 2. Monologue Speaking Questions

Test	Week	Questions
Pre-test	3	A) Do you think SNS is good for you?
		B) Do you think part-time job is a good idea?
Post-test	14	A) Do you think circle activities are important?
		A) Do you think study abroad is a good idea?

Note. A): The first speaker; B): The second speaker when they change their roles.

Questionnaires. A questionnaire was administered during Week 13. It explored how the students perceived about the 3/2/1 fluency training and the pedagogic intervention (teacher-modeled passages, peer-check activities). The questionnaire included 5 – 6 question items with 6-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree) and open-ended questions about why they rated their answers.

Analysis. Students' monologue speeches were transcribed by the author. Then, fluency development was examined by counting syllable on the website (www.syllablecount.com). In addition to the fluency measures, the frequency of function phrases was counted. To answer the Research Question 1 (To what extent do students who receive pressure to use the target function phrases develop their oral speaking fluency for 14 weeks?), a 3 x 2 repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted. The independent variable is Group (three levels: Control, Low pressure, High pressure) and Time (two levels: Pre-test, Post-test). The dependent variable is syllable per minutes. To answer Research Question 2 (To what extent do students who receive pressure to use the target function phrases proceduralize them over 14 weeks?), the mean score of frequency of function phrases was analyzed. To answer Research Question 3, (What do learners perceive toward their fluency development, 3/2/1 speaking training and the pair-check activity?), questionnaires were examined based on Likert scale and open-ended questions.

RESULTS

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of mean scores of syllable per minute on pre-test and post-test. The Control Group had the highest mean scores both on pre-test and post-test. Also, this group had the highest gain between pre-and post-test (42.00). The Middle Pressure Group had the second highest score on pre-test and post-test. Although the High Pressure Group had the lowest mean score both pre-and post-test, their gain between pre-and post-test was the second highest (39.20).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on Mean Scores of Fluency

	Pre-test M (SD)	Post-test M (SD)	Mean diff
Control Group (n = 12)	71.33 (29.87)	113.33 (20.46)	42.00
Middle Pressure Group (n = 14)	70.93 (17.28)	97.64 (16.48)	26.71
High Pressure Group (n = 15)	45.93 (12.97)	85.13 (17.34)	39.20

Then, a 3 x 2 repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there was a statistical significance between three different types of pedagogical intervention to fluency development. The independent variable included a between-subjects variable, the groups, and within-subject variable, repeated measures of pre-test and post-test. The dependent variable was the syllables per minute. Mauchly's test was not significant and the assumption of sphericity has been met. An alpha level of .05 was utilized for this analysis. There was not a statistically significant interaction in the fluency development between the group types and test time, $F(2, 38) = 2.85, p = .07$. This suggests that there were no significant differences of fluency development depending on different groups. A large effect size was confirmed with the result from the main effect on the pre-test and post-test, which was significant, $F(1, 38) = 167.56, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.82$. The results show that there was a significant improvement on fluency between pre-test and post-test.

Table 4 shows mean scores of the students' usage of function phrases. Since the number of students in each group differed, I compared the mean scores each students' usage of function phrases (Total counts of the target function phrases divided by the group participants). In pre-test, students used "I think" more frequently than other function phrases. It is probably because the question was, "Do you think...?" students easily associated to answer with "I think..." However, fewer students used the function phrases for reasons. Although the students seemed to give reasons, they did not explicitly use the function phrases such as "because" or "It is because." Moreover, a very few students ($n = 2$) used "for example" in the pre-test. Indeed, some students had difficulty to stretch their ideas for one minute partly because they could not give detailed information.

In the post-tests, students' performances differed from the pre-test in the following aspects; 1) the frequency of function phrases and 2) the variety of function phrases. For the first aspects, students, regardless of group, improved to use more function phrases. Compared to the pre-test, in which students mainly used only opinion functions "I think" they were able to use function phrases for "reasons" more frequently in the post-test. They were able to give reasons with more specific phrases such as "It's mainly because (14 tokens)," "One reason / another reason is (3 tokens)."

There was an interesting difference about usage of providing examples. Not many students used "for example" even in the post-test (Control Group 3 tokens, $M = 0.25$, Middle Pressure Group 2 tokens, $M = 0.14$) while students in the High Pressure Group used it more frequently (7 tokens, $M = 0.47$). Students in the High Pressure Group generally stated their opinions first and supported their opinions with reasons. Following that, they gave more information about their reasons with examples. While students in other groups could continue talking for one minute, they did not give many examples.

For the second aspect of variety of function phrase use students used a wider variety of phrases to give opinions (e.g., In my opinion) or to give reasons (e.g., It's mainly because) in the post-tests compared to the pre-test, in which students used "I think" and "because" only. More specifically, students in the High Pressure Group used more variety of phrases to state opinions (e.g., In my opinion, Personally speaking I think, I am not sure but I think) compared to the other two groups, which mostly used the basic phrase of "I think." It shows that students in the High Pressure Group implemented a larger variety of phrases and more examples in the post-test.

Table 4. Mean Scores of Function Phrases Usage

Function Phrase	Pre-test						Post-test					
	Control		Middle		High		Control		Middle		High	
	(n = 12)		(n = 14)		(n = 15)		(n = 12)		(n = 14)		(n = 15)	
	Freq	M	Freq	M	Freq	M	Freq	M	Freq	M	Freq	M
Opinion												
I think	19	1.58	16	1.14	16	1.07	10	0.83	16	1.14	5	0.33
In my opinion	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	6	0.50	3	0.21	10	0.67
I am not sure but I think	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.08	0	0.00	2	0.13
Personally speaking	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.07
Reasons												
Because...	8	0.67	1	0.07	12	0.80	4	0.33	8	0.57	10	0.67
It's mainly because	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	7	0.58	2	0.14	5	0.33
One reason is/ Another reason is	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	0.08	1	0.07	1	0.07
Example												
For example	0	0.00	1	0.07	1	0.07	3	0.25	2	0.14	7	0.47

The questionnaires were analyzed in order to understand the quantitative findings more in depth. The number of participants was different from the number of participants in the quantitative analysis. It is because the questionnaires were administered on a different day from the recording day. The questionnaires were done anonymously in order not to put pressure on students for their comments. Questionnaires include both multiple choice questions items and open-ended questions. For multiple-choice questions, students were asked to rate each statement by 6-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

Table 5 shows students' perceptions toward 3/2/1 tasks and pedagogical intervention. Question item 1 (I think I am good at 3/2/1 tasks) shows the students perceived that they were not good at the 3/2/1 tasks ($M = 2.79, 2.56, 3.13$). The reasons behind it vary such as "three minutes is too long for me" "I cannot come up with ideas quickly" "Thinking and speaking at the same time is difficult."

Question item 2 (I think teacher-modeled is necessary) shows that students think that teacher-modeled input is beneficial. The reasons were categorized into three groups; 1) content generalization, 2) how to organize their speeches and 3) usages of function phrases. For example, they wrote, "Model passages helped me to generate ideas," "It helps me understand how to start the task," "I can learn how to use function phrases in an appropriate way." On the other hand, there were shortcoming of teacher-modeled input; "my ideas became very similar to the model" and "it is a bit difficult to absorb the written information within a short period of time."

Question item 3 (I think pair-check activity is useful) was asked only to the High Pressure

Group because of the treatment. They said that the pair-check activity was useful because “it can help me understand what function phrases I used,” “partners often helped me use different functional phrases” and “I feel more confident if I could use many function phrases.” This shows that students felt that this activity could promote them to use more function phrases while they did 3/2/1 tasks. Indeed, I observed some students gave oral feedback after a speaker delivered their speech. At the same time, one student wrote, “When I was a listener, I had to concentrate on listening to my partner’s usages of function phrases, I could not really catch the content.”

Question item 4 (I think I use function phrases) suggests that students in the High Pressure Group perceived that they used function phrases when compared with students in other groups ($M = 5.47$). They understand that they had to use function phrases due to the peer check activity, which led the highest mean scores among the three groups.

Question item 5 (I think about speaking speed) shows that students felt that it is a bit difficult to pay attention to their speed while they needed to come up with their ideas. The Middle Pressure group had the lowest mean scores ($M = 3.25$).

Table 5. Students’ Perceptions Toward 3/2/1 Tasks and Pedagogical Intervention

	<i>Control Group</i> <i>n = 14</i>	<i>Mid Pressure</i> <i>n = 16</i>	<i>High Pressure</i> <i>n = 15</i>
	<i>m (SD)</i>	<i>m (SD)</i>	<i>m (SD)</i>
1. I think I am good at the 3/2/1 task.	2.79 (0.97)	2.56 (1.03)	3.13 (1.25)
2. I think teacher-modeled input is necessary.	5.42 (0.63)	5.31 (0.79)	5.33 (0.72)
3. I think pair-check is useful.	N/A	N/A	5.40 (0.73)
4. I think I use function phrases every time.	4.57 (1.02)	5.19 (0.75)	5.47 (0.74)
5. I think about speaking speed.	4.21 (0.96)	3.25 (1.29)	4.40 (1.24)

DISCUSSION

In line with other previous findings such as De Jong and Perfitti (2011), this study shows the 3/2/1 tasks were beneficial to improve speaking fluency longitudinally. The quantitative result shows that there was a significant main effect on speaking fluency over time. However, there was no significant interaction between pressure and time, which suggests that effect of pressure on fluency development did not influence students’ fluency development. There are some possible reasons why there was not a significant interaction between pressure and time. The first reason might be the small sample size. Another reason might be students’ speaking fluency developed drastically regardless of pedagogic intervention. Compared to the beginning of the semester, students develop speaking fluency by doing many different English activities through English discussion classes and other English classes in university. Therefore, the pedagogical pressure did not impact on students’ fluency that much.

However, interesting things were found when analyzing students’ usages of the target

function phrases. Compared to the pre-tests, students used more variety of function phrases in the post-test. Especially, students in the High Pressure Group were able to use more variety of phrases compared to other groups. These students used different types of opinion phrases more often (e.g., In my opinion, ... Personally speaking, I think...). Moreover, they used examples more frequently compared to other two groups. This finding suggests that students in the High Pressure Group proceduralized and automatized the function phrases through peer-check, which allowed students to transfer their usages of function phrases when they did a monologue. This is supported by Anderson's Skill Acquisition Theory that declarative knowledge can be proceduralized through oral practices (e.g., Tavakoli, Campbell & McCormack, 2015). Although students had the declarative knowledge of the formulaic languages, their usage of the phrases was more automatized by having peer-check (oral practice). It would be possible to argue that automatization was facilitated by providing some pressure to practice the phrases.

This study also examined students' perceptions of the 3/2/1 tasks and pedagogic intervention (teacher-modeled input and peer-check activity). The questionnaire was administered toward the end of the semester. Yet, many students expressed their anxiety and less confidence about 3/2/1 tasks. At the same time, students perceived that pedagogical intervention (teacher-modeled/ peer-check activity) was beneficial. Based on quantitative results and qualitative findings from students' answers in their questionnaires, there were two reasons why pedagogical intervention was effective. First, students felt that pedagogical teacher-modeled input helped students to be ready for the 3/2/1 tasks in terms of content generalization. One student wrote in the questionnaire, "Without teacher-modeled input, I don't think I can do 3/2/1 tasks well." Another student also wrote, "I can understand overall image of what to talk about" and "This model gives some hint of what to talk about while I read the passage." This supports Ellis's claim (2009b) that pre-task planning provides theoretical account for learners' L2 performance in terms of conceptualizing the message.

Second, pedagogical intervention helped learners to think about "how to say things." Speakers transform the preverbal messages (what to talk about) into linguistic form (how to say thing) such as appropriate lexis and grammar (Levelt, 1989). After speakers generate ideas of what to talk about, learners need to think about "how to say thing." Pre-task planning can promote proceduralization because planning might allow them to access their linguistic sources (Muranoi, 2007). For example, teacher-modeled input showed some useful ways to use function phrases. Also, teacher-modeled input can show how to organize the phrases. Students wrote, "Organization of speech was easy to understand and I can use as an example" and "Sometimes, I had a hard time to understand how to answer the topic question. With the teacher's examples, it was easier to do the task." Students' comments are related to Prabhu's (1987) idea of *borrowing*, in which learners try to fill the gap in their current knowledge by reading related materials.

Peer-check activity was also seen positively by students. This peer intervention was very challenging because students had to focus both on content (meaning) and function phrases (form) while they talked. Therefore, I observed that students were initially struggling after each delivery. However, by looking at their own checkmarks of using the function phrases after peer-check, students could understand the weakness and strength of their usage more objectively. In this way, students feel some kind of accomplishment after they finished their speaking turn.

The 3/2/1 tasks are known and used widely as an effective activity for fluency development. In addition, it is beneficial for teachers because it is very student-centered. Basically, teachers do not do anything while students engage in the 3/2/1 tasks. However, it does not necessarily mean that teachers do not have to do anything to help students succeed in this task. Students need more assistance and scaffolding. Pedagogical intervention such as teacher-modeled

input and peer-check activity appear to be useful and effective in maximize students' content generalization, access to language resources and promoting automatization. Particularly, in a Communicative Language Teaching Approach or Task-based Language Teaching, there is some misunderstanding among educators that TBLT cannot ensure focus on form (Ellis, 2009a). Pedagogic intervention can be beneficial to have adequate coverage of the linguistic form. Having longitudinal intervention and repetition of oral practice of certain phrases might foster students' proceduralization of certain linguistic forms.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how pedagogic intervention can help students improve fluency over a semester. A semester-long project shows that students improved fluency statistically significantly regardless of their pedagogic intervention. No significant differences were found on speaking fluency development between different groups. However, students in the High Pressure Group used the variety of function phrases more than other two groups. It showed that students in the High Pressure Group possibly proceduralized and automatized the function phrases more.

There are three limitations of this study. First, sample size was very small ($N = 44$). For a future study, each group ideally could have more than 30 participants to maximize statistical power. Second, this study mainly focused on fluency development. For a future study, other speaking components such as Complexity and Accuracy can be also analyzed so that teachers can understand more in depth of students' longitudinal oral development. Third, this study did not employ a control group without teacher-modeled input. Therefore, for a future study, it would be necessary to contrast performance with another group of students who do not receive teacher-modeled input to understand to what extent teacher-modeled input impacts on students' oral proficiency development.

In spite of these limitations, there are the following pedagogical implications. First, the peer-check activity could be effective for automatizing the function phrases. Students who had peer-check activity were able to transfer more variety of function phrases in the post-tests. In addition, peer-feedback activities were seen very positively by students, suggesting that it can motivate students to practice function phrases during the 3/2/1 tasks.

Second, although teacher-modeled input was not purely controlled in the study design, according to the students' comments on the questionnaire, the teacher-modeled input could have potential to give students more readiness for the 3/2/1 tasks. It could be a good way of scaffolding to help students to understand "what to talk about" and "how to say things." Implementation of pedagogical intervention can promote students' speaking development because they could easily access their linguistic sources by the teacher's model. Although it might take extra time for teachers to prepare a model passage and to read aloud prior to the 3/2/1 tasks, it is worthwhile to do because many students could feel more confident about the 3/2/1 tasks. In this study, students did not write or brainstorm on a handout. In class implementation, if time allows, it might be more beneficial to take their thinking time after reading teacher-modeled input so that students' can take their own time to think of their ideas.

The 3/2/1 tasks have been implemented widely both inside and outside of Japan. To make this task more effective, the pedagogic interventions were found to be useful. As DeKeyser (2007) states that automatization is one of the most problematic stages of acquisition in the classroom context. This study suggests that the 3/2/1 task is beneficial to improve speaking fluency over 13 weeks, especially by providing a lot of opportunities to practice the target phrases by pedagogical intervention and repetition. I hope that this finding can shed the light on providing students to have opportunities for proceduralization of certain linguistic phrases in a communicative language

classroom.

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