

## WHAT L2 FLUENCY MEANS

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***Анотація** При дослідженні та тестуванні другої мови (L2) ступінь вільного володіння усним мовленням використовуються як діагностика володіння знаннями. Однак, вільне володіння також визначається особистістю чи стилем розмови, що ставить питання про те, наскільки вільне володіння L2 є дійсними показниками володіння знаннями L2.*

**Ключові слова:** друга мова (L2), вільне володіння, знання, майстерність, рівні.

***Abstract** In second language (L2) research and testing, measures of oral fluency are used as diagnostics for proficiency. However, fluency is also determined by personality or speaking style, raising the question to what extent L2 fluency measures are valid indicators of L2 proficiency.*

**Keywords:** the second language (L2), fluency, proficiency, levels.

### Introduction

Issue how to assess second language (L2) fluency begins with the defining of the meaning of the term fluency. The word fluency can mean different things in different contexts. Sometimes it refers to a person's global competence or proficiency, sometimes to the fluidity of speech, sometimes separately to speaking, listening, reading, or writing abilities. Translating the term fluency into other languages can also be difficult because of different meanings. The solution to this problem is to narrow the focus to just one meaning. In this regard, a distinction is often made between knowledge of the L2 (phonology, vocabulary, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistic and pragmatic considerations) and the fluency or fluidity with which a speaker is able to implement that knowledge (rate of speech, pausing, hesitation and other temporal phenomena) [1, 2].

### Research results

In this paper, fluency as an aspect of overall speaking proficiency, also described as fluency in the narrow sense and often contrasted with the linguistic complexity and the accuracy of the linguistic forms that speakers use, is considered [3, 4]. Fluency in the narrow sense is usually described in terms of speedy and smooth delivery of speech without pauses and repetitions on a range of topics in real time. In L2 testing, speaking fluency is a component in the evaluation of speaking proficiency. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages takes fluency as a component for describing overall proficiency. The CEFR (available in 40 languages) divides proficiency into six “can do” levels – A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2. A corresponds to “Basic” levels, B to “Independent”, and C to “Proficient.” Observable skills include:

A1: Capabilities range include basic introductions and answering questions about personal details provided the listener speaks slowly and is willing to cooperate.

A2: Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her past, environment and matters related to his/her immediate needs and perform routine tasks requiring basic exchanges of information.

B1: Can deal with most daily life situations in the country where the language is spoken. Can describe experiences, dreams and ambitions and give brief reasons for opinions and goals.

B2: Can understand the themes of complex texts on both concrete and abstract topics and will have achieved a degree of fluency and spontaneity, which makes interaction with native speakers possible without significant strain for either party.

C1: Can understand a wide range of longer texts and recognise subtleties and implicit meaning; producing clear, well-structured and detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.

C2: Can understand virtually everything heard or read, expressing themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, while differentiating finer shades of meaning even in highly complex situations [5].

Though fluency may denote a degree of proficiency, it does not automatically imply the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences nor does it imply grammatical range. How important are the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences and grammatical range? It depends on speakers' needs. If they just want to converse in social environment, they may focus on achieving oral fluency, but if the L2 is required for business

or academia, the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences and grammatical range are critical as speech full of grammar mistakes is considered as unprofessional [6].

Speaking fluently requires three main processes to run smoothly: conceptualization, formulation, and articulation. Fluency in spontaneous L2 speech can be predicted by L1 fluency and L2 fluency measures are, to a large degree, measures of personal speaking style. Articulatory skills were found to contribute modestly to explaining variance in both L1 and L2 fluency.

Fluency in the broad sense is usually described in terms of how native speakers can show individual differences. Moreover, these differences between individuals have been shown to relate to individual characteristics such as extraversion [7].

Speakers' oral fluency depends to a large extent on their ability to execute the conceptualization and formulation of messages effectively and on their ability to translate formulated messages into articulatory actions smoothly during the speech production process. However, speakers differ greatly in their speaking skills and whereas some manage to communicate fluently, others' speech is characterized by various dysfluent phenomena, such as clause-internal pauses or lexical repetitions and reformulations, which reflect inefficient functioning causing a fluency breakdown at any of the stages in the speech production process. Fluency in spontaneous speech in both L1 and L2 can be explained by individual differences in articulatory skills. [1]

### Conclusions

Individual second language speakers can display different strengths. Speakers can be very accurate but so afraid of making mistakes that their fluency suffers or they can be quite fluent, but their language is full of mistakes.

According to the research from the University of Cambridge English Language Assessment, it takes 200 guided hours for a motivated learner to advance from one level to the next. The key word here is *motivated*: language acquisition varies dramatically between individuals. Is the learner open to new structures? Will they build upon what they've already learned instead of clinging to basic "good enough" grammar? Will they commit to consistent study and practice?

Proficiency scales provide an excellent tool for assessing L2 ability, but the fastest oral fluency and grammar accuracy tests are real-life situations with native speakers. Such tests can show

- how smooth and lengthy your interactions in the L2 are;
- whether you avoid certain topics and situations because you don't have the words;
- whether you find yourself grasping for key words and content yourself with understanding the sense rather than the entirety of the conversation;
- how well you can understand a film without subtitles or read a book without a dictionary;
- if you write an email and ask a native speaker to check how many mistakes it has.

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