

## SPOKEN FLUENCY THROUGH ENGLISH POETRY IN EFL/ESL ACQUISITION

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### **Abstract**

The most important goal of learners in an EFL/ESL class is to get spoken fluency, and to get it, they grope for vocabulary, symbolic ways of expression, intonation, avoiding unimportant grammatical errors, rhetoric, different ways to express etc. Though English poetry in getting spoken fluency is not believed in match with the other traditional inputs, which are considered to be the hallmarks of spoken fluency, yet its use can bring tremendous success. English poetry, if implemented dexterously by accomplished instructors, is enormously instrumental for those, who struggle for spoken fluency in an EFL/ES class. Fluency in an EFL/ESL class comprises two types- spoken fluency and written fluency. This research paper has more contact with the spoken fluency and discusses the hands-on ways of introducing English poetry to garner spoken fluency from an EFL/ESL Class. The paper is full of insights acquired by implementing the ideas, presumed to be effective in introducing English poetry to earn spoken fluency from the class. The paper is a boon for those creative instructors and curriculum setters, who sincerely want to add a cutting edge to an EFL/ESL class, to equip the learners with spoken fluency. The paper discusses at what time, which poems- regarding their difficulty level, and which contents of theirs, have to be discussed. Additionally, it sheds light on the existing problems of the dearth of adept language instructors with some flair of poetry recitation, and suggests some best solutions available to this acute problem.

**Keywords-** Rhetoric, dexterously, grope for.

Fluency is the main goal aspired by all learners from an RFL/ESL class. According to Oxford Dictionary of Advanced Learners, ‘Fluency’ is the quality of being able to speak or write a language, especially foreign language, easily, accurately. Good command, ease, readiness, slickness, glibness, volubility and articulateness are other hallmarks of fluency. Fluency in this paper is related to spoken fluency. EFL/ESL acquisition has been a subject of extraordinary research. Experts have put infinite inputs to make the field more conducive, a lot of lacunae are left though. Many methods, approaches and techniques are in place, but the need for result giving and more practical inputs, is increasing more and more. To make the learners speak fluently in English, an instructor exposes a learner to grammar, newspapers, animated movies, discussions, and what not. To enhance learners’ fluency, only prose part is given importance, thinking that it is handier to be reached at this stage. And looking at poetry for this purpose is believed a bit odd. Poetry is rhythmical expression of one’s feelings and ideas. It, if used otherwise, can help immensely in the fluency, which is the stage in the target language or a foreign language, where one expresses himself without and hindrance of any kind, be it vocabulary, be it grammar etc.

Generally, dry topics sans excitement are discussed to get the highest notch in EFL/ESL acquisition i.e. spoken fluency. Poetry adds a sort of unique variety to have this most sought after stage. If the learners are always asked to explain pictures, reading newspapers, role playing, it would bring boredom in the class, and to kill it, a language instructor needs to introduce something rhythmical, soft and pleasant. It adds variety as well and fun, and certainly paves the way for profound understanding of the subject, which eventually leads to the fluency. Adding poetry to this process is completely new, and in the every likelihood, is going to be liked by the learners.

Introducing poetry is equally benefitted for both kind of learners, the beginners and the ones, who can express themselves up to some large extent. In the case of beginners, when they are introduced to simple poems with very simple vocabulary, and asked to paraphrase the idea, they find it very fascinating and try to explain beyond their capacity, sometimes because of its theme; sometimes because of its vivid images; sometimes because of enchanting and sonorous words. The best time to introduce a poem to the beginners in an EFL/ESL acquisition class is after teaching them the basics of English language. The poems of this phase must be very simple in all aspects i.e. subject, theme, vocabulary etc. The under given poem could be the best example of this phase:

Life is precious  
And each day a gift  
So enjoy every gift  
As it were you last live

Cherish your loved ones  
Hug them tight  
Share with them your heart  
And your time

When troubles arrive  
And knocks off your feet

Stand up and smile  
And remember life is too sweet

Every morning when you wake  
Decide night from the start  
That “Today will be a good day”  
And let it all in with open heart.

Having recited well, the instructor should tell the learners, the importance or dedication to express the idea without being obsessed with the grammatical rules. They can be asked to explain the idea in their own words using at least five or odd words or some phrases. In the above example poem of this phase, there are many simple and good examples of phrases like: a good day, with open heart, from the start etc. The learners after finding the exercise more exciting and easier will speak creatively, confidently, and the vocabulary and phrases learnt in this way are for good. On the top of it, when the learners speak some sentences or phrases, they feel more motivated which results in the fluency holistically at later stages.

The same works with those learners, who have gained some momentum in the fluency. Sometimes, after trying hard in all other inputs of fluency, the class starts pacing slow. In such a condition, the introduction of poetry comes like showers, energizing superbly. It's been experimented by me in many classes of engineering students', and the results have been wonderful, provided the topic suit to the age, temperament of the students. Those, who are tight-lipped or not much fluent, also try to maintain spontaneity. The treatment of the poem, regarding the difficulty level and the supra segmental level, has to be upgraded a bit more over here. The learners can be asked to focus on prosodic features and practice recitation, following the same prosodic features. Here is one of the poems of this phase:

L.O.V.E (Jeremy Vega)

L, is for the Laughter I give to you everyday  
knowing you'll never go away

O, is for the Options we'll have when were together  
knowing our love couldn't get any better

V, is for Visions I have of you  
knowing I'll never find anyone quite like you

E, is for everything that's true I've ever said  
especially when I said “we'll be together till were dead”.

One important thing, which has to be followed by the instructor from starting, is that in an EFL/ESL class, the poetry is not used as a literary genre for aesthetic pleasure. It has linguistic aspects only. So, the instructor may select any aspect of a poem, keeping in mind the spoken fluency of the learners.

Fluency, if restricted to expressing views continuously; will be a half-truth. Supra segmental features are other qualities, which, in a right sense, complete the fluency part of a

learner in an EFL/ESL class. The Supra segmental features include stress, pause, loudness, intonation and rhythm. They have attitudinal and semantic denotations, which can influence the meaning largely. English speech has a complicated rhythm, interesting pronunciation, unique stress patterns, and exception to every rule. All EFL/ESL learners try to simulate the native speakers in their spoken part, and in this regard, English poetry can help them tremendously. When an expert instructor reads out a poem with all prosodic features, it definitely leads to qualitative fluency.

To improve vocabulary and structures one needs to get exposure to widest possible range of topics. . There are poems on war, love, philosophy, religion and what not. English poems expose learners to “fresh and unexpected” use of language in relation to vocabulary, syntax, semantics, morphology etc. These uses are beyond the fixed layers of meaning and structural units. A repertoire of vocabulary and structures is a big asset for the fluency. A poet, apart from using new words and structures, gives one ideas to be creative with one’s own vocabulary in future. It teaches how deftly a poet uses his carefully selected words afresh every time. This is the best desired quality in the fluency which attributes to the introduction of English poetry in EFL/ESL acquisition.

The poetry teaches thousand new ways to say the same thing. Enhancing the importance of the idea, it also provides different ways to look at old things. The themes and subjects of the English poetry are related to the common areas of human nature, but they are dealt differently in different cultures. By exposing poetry in an EFL/ESL class, we can introduce many treatments of these common subjects to enrich the learners’ creative, constructive and reflective thinking. This multipronged knowledge is greatly helpful in the fluency. On many occasion a speaker is not supposed to say a thing straight; the poetry offers us symbolic ways to present ideas more emphatically.

To introduce the poetry effectively in EFL classes, the requirement of good instructor is a must. If an instructor is native speaker, then it’s the best thing, otherwise, they need to be trained highly to turn English poems into an effective EFL /ESL material. Many have got bad experience about poetry-dissecting, forms, exact means and they don’t like it. But in the present time, the technology can help the instructors, who are good at other things except the poetry, in a long way. Almost every poem is available in the audio-visual form on the YouTube and other sites.

Whereas, maximum people of the peoples approach the EFL/ESL classes to have spoken fluency, the need to make this process easier and attractive is demanding more focus than ever. The prevailed system has to be revamped by creative researches and inputs like introducing English poetry in ESL/EFL classes to have spoken fluency. Apart from adding variety, which is one of the psychological factors to stimulate learning, it adds immensely in vocabulary, creative thinking, variety of expression, prosodic features, structures etc. The biggest challenge to reap the fruit of this process is dearth of accomplished language instructors with some genius inclination towards poetry. The language instructors need to be given some specific training to get the maximum benefit out of the greatly paying input. The YouTube and other sites, where almost all poems are available in audio-visual form, are a great help for the efficient implementation of English poetry into EFL/ESL classrooms to get the sound spoken fluency.

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