Traditionally, L2 fluency research has examined fluency-related features from monologue learner productions quantitatively. Certain temporal measures have been found to differentiate fluent and disfluent groups, whereas results regarding filled pauses (FPs) and repair measures are less straightforward. FPs and repairs are likely to be multifunctional and can even contribute to the flow of speech by reducing time spent in silence. Reconsidering the status of FPs and repairs as ‘disfluency markers’ and exploring their possible fluency-enhancing functions is crucial for developing the understanding of how learners are able to maintain fluency with limited skills in an L2.

The aim of the present study is to examine the mechanisms learners have for maintaining fluent speech. The study employs a new Fluency Resources Framework, where FPs and repetitions are considered stalling mechanisms that help in coping with processing time pressure (see also Dörnyei & Kormos 1998). In addition, communication strategies (CSs) can contribute to fluency, since they aid in overcoming lexis-related problems. To my knowledge, the present study is the first to examine the link between CSs and fluency empirically.

I will discuss the main results regarding the types and uses of fluency resources among two learner groups at different school levels. The data consist of L2 monologues and dialogues by 50 Finnish learners of English (20 ninth graders, 15-year-olds, and 30 upper secondary school students, 17–18-year-olds). Complementary data include L1 monologues and stimulated recall protocols of the dialogues. The triangulation of several types of data allows for the examination of previously relatively unexplored aspects of fluency, including fluency in dialogue and the influence of personal L1 speaking style on L2 fluency.

Reference

Keywords: communication strategies, fluency, L2 speech.