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**INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF SPEAKING  
FLUENCY THROUGH METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES FOR FIRST TERM  
STUDENTS IN THE ELT PROGRAM AT UIS**

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**ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS**

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**Trabajo de grado elaborado como requisito parcial para optar al título de  
LICENCIADO EN INGLÉS**

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## **SPECIAL DEDICATION**

*First of all I would like to thank God for giving me the strength to finish my professional career successfully. I would like to extend a very personal thank to my parents for supporting me throughout all of these years.*

*Also, I would like to dedicate this project to my family, my friends, and my university professors. I know they desire all the best things for me, and the culmination of this project is one of them.*

*Thank you all.*

*Luz Dary Mateus.*

## *SPECIAL DEDICATION*

*Thanking God, my parents,  
my professors and my friends  
is the perfect way to express  
that this project is the  
result of the efforts of many  
people. In this opportunity,  
I want to express all my  
gratitude to those human  
beings that have been there  
along the way guiding,  
helping and especially  
encouraging me to be  
always the best.*

*I do not like to dedicate this  
project to anyone in  
particular; but instead, I  
would love to make  
everyone feel very special.  
Since this project is for all  
of you because in a way or  
another you inspired me to  
follow my instincts and try  
to do everything the best  
way possible.*

*Carolina Meneses.*

## RESUMEN

**TÍTULO: INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF SPEAKING FLUENCY THROUGH METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES FOR FIRST TERM STUDENTS IN THE ELT PROGRAM AT UIS\***

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### **PALABRAS CLAVES:**

Análisis de necesidades, fluidez oral, comunicación, competencia comunicativa, autonomía, metacognición, libro de ejercicios de auto acceso, mecanismos para crear tiempo.

En este documento las autoras intentan presentar la propuesta de un Diseño Instruccional para ayudar a los aprendices principiantes a desarrollar su fluidez oral. En un primer momento, se llevó a cabo un análisis de las necesidades de los estudiantes. Con este fin, se observó su desempeño oral en una relación estudiante-estudiante; se indagó sobre su concepción de fluidez y se midió el nivel de fluidez oral de los mismos. Se concluyó que aunque la fluidez no tiene un efecto negativo en la comunicación, la misma es un elemento relevante en la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes del programa de Licenciatura en Inglés de la UIS como futuros profesores de lengua.

En segunda instancia, se constituyó un soporte teórico partiendo del concepto de fluidez oral, que no consiste en la velocidad al hablar; pasando por el concepto de autonomía, que es cuando el aprendiz se hace responsable por su aprendizaje; para llegar al concepto de metacognición, que es cuando el aprendiz es conciente de las estrategias que utiliza para aprender una lengua extranjera.

Los dos componentes mencionados anteriormente, fueron la base para la elaboración de un Diseño Instruccional en forma de libro de ejercicios de auto acceso. Dicho material impreso tiene como objetivo tanto concienciar a los estudiantes de adoptar un nuevo concepto de fluidez oral, como mejorar el nivel de fluidez oral de los estudiantes de primer semestre de Licenciatura en Inglés por medio del uso de mecanismos para crear tiempo cuando se comunican en la lengua extranjera.

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\* Proyecto de Grado.

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## ABSTRACT

**TITLE: INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF SPEAKING FLUENCY THROUGH METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES FOR FIRST TERM STUDENTS IN THE ELT PROGRAM AT UIS\***

**AUTHORS: CAROLINA MENESES RODRÍGUEZ  
LUZ DARY MATEUS AMAYA\*\***

### KEYWORDS

Needs analysis, oral fluency, communication, communicative competence, autonomy, metacognition, Self-access workbook, time-creating devices.

In this document the authors attempt present an Instructional Design proposal to assist beginner learners in building oral fluency. To begin with, a needs analysis on students' requirements was carried out. In order to gather this information, students' oral performance in a student-student relationship was observed; their idea on fluency was investigated and their level of oral fluency measured. It was concluded that even if fluency does not have a negative effect on communication, it is a relevant element for the development of communicative competence in students in the ELT program at UIS as future language teachers.

Afterwards, a theoretical framework was constituted starting from the concept of oral fluency, which does not denote speaking fast; moving to the concept of autonomy, that is to say, when the learner is responsible for his learning process; to reach the concept of metacognition, when the learner is conscious of the strategies he uses to learn a foreign language.

Both above-mentioned components were the foundations for the elaboration of an Instructional Design delivered in a Self-access workbook. This printed material pursues both to make students aware of a new concept of oral fluency, and to improve first term ELT program students' level of oral fluency by means of the use of time-creating devices when communicating in the target language.

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\* Final project paper.

\*\* Faculty of Human Sciences, School of Languages. Advisor: Esperanza Revelo Jiménez.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The authors of this project carried out a research project focused on fluency and its effects in communication as a requirement for the Autonomous Learning Models class in the ELT program. The subject population was a group of students in third year at the ELT program at UIS enrolled in the Conversation class. As a first hypothesis, researchers mentioned that there are some factors like speed, precision and fluency that affect the performance and the process of communication among students in the ELT program. The main research concerns dealt with a description of students' fluency in oral performance and the effects of fluency in communication. It was observed and confirmed through surveys that the students had the notion of the concept of fluency but they had not developed this ability, despite the fact that this group of students had already taken four levels of English as subjects from the ELT curriculum and their expected level of proficiency was advanced.

Therefore, the above mentioned study helped the authors to realize that some of the possible problems students may face when there is a lack of fluency are, on the one hand: loss of semantic meaning at the moment the message is being conveyed by the speaker, and on the other hand, misinterpretation of the message conveyed by the speaker. As a conclusion of the research, it was determined that: first, the use of pauses, fillers and hesitation markers can be considered both as a normal reaction in the speech production or as a lack of fluency. Second, although fluency does not have a negative effect in communication, it is an element that has a huge relevance in the foreign language learning process, since it is predictable that when using strategies for developing fluency ELT students can significantly improve their oral communicative performance, a definite plus for their future professional endeavors as teachers.

Teaching and learning a foreign or a second language in contexts like the Colombian one, has been framed into what is commonly called the communicative approach. Such approach highlights the importance of developing communicative competences in the target language. Also, the notion of English as a basic tool for working on new technologies, for social integration and for the building of knowledge, is pursued. A foreign language teacher, thus, must have the capacity to understand both, oral and written texts, to communicate thoughts and ideas in a different language, that is, he/she must develop a communicative competence in order to achieve this perception of language. In the same way, a language teacher needs to develop empirical knowledge in the function of the target language linguistic system, and awareness of the steps a learner goes through in order to

gain a specific level of proficiency in the language. He/she must also be conscious about the metacognitive processes that any learner can use for learning how to learn a language through his/her own reflection.

Considering both the results of the research project in terms of fluency, and the Colombian context described in the previous paragraph, what the authors attempt to do in this document is to present an Instructional Design proposal to assist beginner learners in building oral fluency keeping in mind that: “fluency is not an absolute value that learners have or don’t have. It is a degree-based characteristic: all learners should achieve some degree of fluency.”<sup>1</sup> Besides, the Instructional Design is realized through some conceptual pillars such as: communication, communicative competence, fluency, autonomy and metacognition. The structure of the Instructional Design comprises a rationale, instructional sequence and strategies, assessment and evaluation, learning routes, features of the workbook, and recommendations for use. The activities included in the workbook were selected, adapted and directed not only to make students aware that fluency is not about speaking fast, but to help them improve their fluency level by themselves as well.

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<sup>1</sup> BULUT, Dogan. Oral Fluency: Promoting Oral Fluency of Second Language Learners. Literature Review. Department of English. King Saud University. 2004. p. 4.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

### **2.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE**

- The main objective of this project is to develop an Instructional Design aimed at producing a Self-access workbook for the improvement of speaking fluency in English through metacognitive strategies.

### **2.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To study students fluency in oral production by means of a needs analysis.
- To elaborate a theoretical framework from where to elicit the guiding principles for the instructional design process.
- To develop an Instructional Design model by means of creating, adopting or adapting a range of self-contained activities that address individual learning styles, so that learners can explore the material in autonomous ways and improve their English language fluency.

### **3. NEEDS ANALYSIS**

Considering that an Instructional Design process must undertake the preliminary task of analyzing students' needs, in order to direct the methodological, conceptual and strategic efforts of designers towards planning instruction that will meaningfully affect the L2 learning process, the authors conducted a research project that attempted to describe the fluency of advanced level students in the ELT program at UIS.

#### **3.1. NEEDS ANALYSIS PROCESS**

As advanced students in the ELT program at UIS, the authors of this project coincided with a concern for the fluency in the L2. The authors wanted to know what could be done to improve students fluency in the target language, and thought of studying advanced level students in the "Conversation Class", so that after describing their fluency the authors could think of pedagogical proposals to be implemented during the first term of studies as a prophylactic measure to ensure quality development of oral communicative competence which in turn would help improve learner's academic self-concept as well as provide a better account for their proficiency level.

##### **3.1.1. POPULATION**

The population chosen were students from 5<sup>th</sup> semester who were taking the "Conversation Class" in the ELT program at UIS. Fifth-semester students were targeted because they had attended more English classes and as a result could assess the situation more objectively and comprehensively.

##### **3.1.2. FOCUS**

Through systematic observation of student-student interaction in the "Conversation Class", it was noticed that there were some lexical factors such as speed, accuracy and fluency that affected the oral performance and therefore the communication process among advanced learners. From this observation, it was concluded that fluency was the target factor to be analyzed in the needs analysis process. Some of the possible problems that may show up when fluency is

misused in communication were also taken into consideration. These problems include: first, the case when part of the meaning is lost while transmitting the message; and second, the case when the sender has trouble trying to convey meaning.

### **3.1.3. OBJECTIVES**

In the following stage of the needs analysis, it was decided to tackle the topic of fluency and its possible effect in communication in the L2, by using scientific enquiry. A research plan which had as purpose to determine whether or not fluency had an effect in communication in the L2 was proposed. In the pursuit of such purpose, three specific objectives to be attained were identified:

- To identify the extent to which the number of syllables per minute produced in students' utterances had an effect or interfere with communication.
- To identify some of the possible factors related to fluency and their impact on communication.
- To describe the use or non use of fillers or hesitation markers by students to keep the conversations going.

### **3.1.4. DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

The authors decided to carry out a qualitative research study because it was important for them to obtain reliable information from primary sources. The data was gathered using observations, questionnaires and specific tasks as research instruments.

At first, a descriptive observation of the development of the "Conversation Class" was made. The authors analyzed this first observation and drew some conclusions about the target group: Students from the population were very dynamic and there seemed to be a very cheerful and friendly atmosphere for students to talk. They tended to make sporadic interventions at the same time, so there were lots of interference. There were some students who led the rhythm of the conversation, while some others just listened.

The next step was to videotape a "Conversation Class" for 15 minutes in order to gather more information about the participants in this class. The idea was to narrow the sample of this research, so that the authors could focus their

observations. Students who agreed to let the authors video tape them remained in the classroom, while the teacher led an informal conversation about various topics. Two students were evaluated as to be adequate for the research since they belonged to opposite streams of speech management. That means they had different ways of expressing themselves orally. The gender of the participants was irrelevant due to the fact that this was a descriptive research, not an ethnographic one. Finally, the authors had a conversation with the two participants and they agreed to take part in the research project, which the authors decided to accomplish through a case study, following Selinger and Shohamy's idea that : "... the case study approach is used where the investigator is interested in describing some aspect of the second language performance.... Because it is believed that individual performance will be more revealing than studying large groups of subjects."<sup>2</sup>

To continue with the inquiry process, it was decided to write a semi-structured questionnaire. Answers were recorded. The aim was obtaining a general idea about the perception participants have about their own fluency. From the questionnaire about participants' assumptions of fluency, authors were able to do a taxonomic analysis which shed light on a series of categories on participants' definition of fluency.

### **3.1.5. DATA ANALYSIS**

Out of participants' responses to the semi-structured questionnaire, six included terms with their corresponding semantic relationships and cover terms were extracted. First, *speaking* is conceived by participants as a way to socialize, communicate and travel. Second, *feeling stuck* for them is a result of nervousness and fear to deceive a professor; furthermore, it is conceived as a characteristic of lack of fluency. Third, *fluency* is a kind of factor to keep a conversation going and also it is a way to feel good and comfortable. Fourth, *lack of fluency* is a part of hesitation and getting bored. Fifth, *getting bored* is a part of non-effective communication. Finally, *hesitation* is conceived as a part of standard speech and as a characteristic of lack of fluency. Regarding the results obtained in the taxonomic analysis, the authors concluded that: lack of fluency is not a factor which affects significantly the transmission of a message when people carry out a conversation. Moreover, hesitation is considered to be either as a normal reaction in standard speech or as a lack of fluency. (See Appendix A Taxonomic Analysis).

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<sup>2</sup> SELIGER, Herbert W and SHOMANY, Elana. Second Language Research Methods. OUP, 1989. p. 125.

Finally, a prompted task to measure the fluency of participants in terms of syllables per minute (SPM), one of the most commonly used ways to rank fluency, was used. The task included two different activities. In the first activity, the participants were asked to speak and to give their opinion about the theme of the movie "American Pie 1". Participants were recorded and a transcription of their speeches was made. The authors applied the SPM system to count the syllables per minute produced during the two minutes of the conversation. Average conversational rates for normal preschoolers are reported to range from 110-180 SPM; for elementary aged children from 140-200 SPM; and for adults from 180-220 SPM. Each participant spoke for 55 seconds. Participant 2 rated 129 syllables, 5 fillers and hesitation markers. Participant 1 rated 167 syllables and 19 fillers and hesitation markers. According to the SPM system none of the participants were fluent in conversation since the minimum rate is 180 syllables. (See Appendix B Syllables per minute SPM Analysis)

During the conversation there is one moment when Participant 2 tries to intervene, but Participant 1 is delivering his speech and he does not allow Participant 2 to do it; so, Participant 2 remains quiet. Participant 1 doubles the quantity of hesitation markers used by Participant 2.

During this part of the task there were three external observers filling in a format that contained questions about the conversation. (See Appendix C Final task observation criteria) The three observers agreed on the fact that Participant 2 looked more fluent than Participant 1, also, they considered that Participant 1 had more control on the conversation. The observers mentioned three different moments when the communication was being lost and three different reasons why they considered one participant was more fluent than the other. One observer had the impression that both participants were equally fluent, but that Participant 2 used a stronger tone of voice and more hesitation markers than Participant 1, so this observer considered that for this reason Participant 2 looked more fluent than Participant 1. Another observer considered that Participant 2 did not control the conversation because she stated her opinion about the topic from the beginning, and for this reason she/he had no more things to say.

Although Participant 2 produced less quantity of syllables, it gave the impression of being a more fluent speaker to the observers, while Participant 1 gave the impression of having a broader knowledge on the topic discussed. The observers considered that with those levels of fluency on both participants there were no significant problems in the communication process.

In the second activity, the participants were asked to speak freely about some topics chosen by the researchers. The participants spoke for about two minutes. Their speeches were recorded and transcribed. In this part of the task there were no external observers. The researchers did some interventions during the speeches of the participants in order to keep them talking. Once researchers had the transcription they applied the SPM system. In this task Participant 2 produced a total of 432 syllables in two minutes and an average of 216 syllables per minute. In total she used 33 fillers and hesitation markers.

According to the SPM system Participant 2 is a fluent speaker. It was observed that she spoke spontaneously and she did not need much time to plan and organize her ideas. The most repeated fillers in her speech are “kind of”, “you know”, “that stuff”, and “like uh-huh.” Participant 2 simplified structures by using the coordinating conjunction “and” repeatedly. Examples of formulaic expressions in her speech were not found. Participant 2 used the ellipsis technique most of the time at the end of the sentences by using the filler “and that stuff.” Participant 1 scored a total of 249 syllables in two minutes and an average of 128 syllables in one minute. In total he used 33 fillers and hesitation markers. According to the SPM system Participant 1 is not a fluent speaker.

It was observed that Participant 1 needed some more time to develop his ideas hence he used fillers, hesitation markers, silent pauses and even false starts. Sometimes he gave researchers the impression that he could only produce short sentences introduced by a filler or a pause. He used long pauses from 2 to 3 seconds to think while speaking. These pauses were sometimes misinterpreted at the end of his intervention, but researchers noticed it was not the case because the idea had not finished. In a different environment like the classroom, this would make him lose the opportunity to speak. He did not simplify sentences with coordinating conjunctions; instead, in order to tack new sentences on to previous ones he repeated the subject of the sentence. The most commonly used fillers and hesitation markers were “I don’t know”, “I think” and “uh-huh.”

### **3.1.6. CONCLUSIONS**

Unfortunately, there are no established norms to compare speakers and speech across differences in age, task, familiarity with content, length of utterance, and effectiveness of monitoring. Therefore, the main conclusions drawn from the data collected were:

- There was a great difference in the amount of syllables produced by each participant. Participant 1 produced fewer syllables than Participant 2, but he used a higher amount of fillers and hesitation devices. According to the

definition of fluency stated in this project, to the SPM system and to the observers' impressions, Participant 1 is a non-fluent speaker of English and Participant 2 is a fluent speaker of English. However, despite the fact that one participant is fluent and the other is not, both of them are able to handle a conversation and to deliver speech without having their fluency level as an obstacle to communicate. In other words, a low level of fluency does not have a negative effect in the communication process.

- Participants were found to use hesitation markers and fillers properly and also, they consider hesitation is a component of speech. They do not think of hesitation as a negative issue in standard speech. This conclusion is confirmed with the results of the taxonomic analysis of the semi-structured questionnaire applied to the participants about the notions they have of fluency in communication. One of the conclusions states that hesitation is considered to be either a normal reaction in standard speech or a lack of fluency.

Some possible reasons why there exist such differences in participants' fluency might be related to the previous knowledge of English of the participants, the years spent learning English and the differences in personality. Participant 2 has shown to be very outgoing and cheerful, while Participant 1 seems quiet and introverted. A more profound study has to be done in this area though.

## **4. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

In the previous section of this project, the needs analysis process carried out in order to establish the necessities students of the ELT program at UIS have in terms of improving English speaking fluency was described. However, this needs analysis is not the only factor taken into consideration when building the Instructional Design. What is more, there must be strong conceptual cornerstones that support the decision making process regarding the structure of the design, teaching methodology and learning theory. Therefore, in this section of the project ideas related to theories and concepts that contribute to make up the guiding principles for this Instructional Design will be discussed.

### **4.1. COMMUNICATION**

Communication can be interpreted in the classic sender-message-receiver model. This project is based on the definition of communication as “more than just a message being transmitted from a speaker to a listener... communication involves not just the unidirectional transfer of information to the other, but the very constitution of the speaking subject in relation to its other.”<sup>3</sup>

Learning a foreign language in the XXI century has become a requisite for global communication since it empowers citizens to establish intercultural exchanges that are carried out through personal experiences mediated by oral or written communicative competences build up by the individual within its context. In this Instructional Design model the improvement of fluency is pursued in order to have students practice what they learn when they communicate.

### **4.2. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE**

To begin with, Canale defines the communicative competence as “the underlying systems of knowledge and skill required for communication.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>3</sup> LA FORGE. Counseling and culture in second language acquisition. In: RICHARDS, Jack C. and RODGERS, Theodore S. Approaches and methods in language teaching: A description and analysis. Oxford: Pergamon, 1983. p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> CANALE, Michael. From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In: KAMIYA, Masashito. The Role of Communicative Competence in L2 Learning. London: Longman, 1983. p. 5.

the works of Canale & Swain<sup>5</sup> can be considered as a point of reference for the framework related to the communicative competence, since they conceptualized the communicative competence as to be formed by four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discursive competence and strategic competence. The strategies mentioned above are going to be described as follows. The *grammatical competence* refers to the level of control of the linguistic code including vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and syntax. The *sociolinguistic competence* has to do with the capacity to generate accurate segments of speech both in terms of form and meaning in a situation of communication. The *discursive competence* refers to the capacity to make use of different kinds of discourses and arrange them according to the parameters of the situation of communication in which they are produced and interpreted. Finally, *the strategic competence* reflects the potential speakers have to progressively describe, the sense they convey, and how they make modifications, clarifications and precisions.

A decade after Canale and Swain proposed their framework of communicative competence, a new model was presented by Bachman, who emphasized the meaning of describing “the processes by which [the] various components interact with each other and with the context in which language use occurs”<sup>6</sup>.

Bachman used a different term “communicative language ability” (abbreviated as CLA) to refer to the communicative competence. He developed three fundamental components for CLA that are crucial to define one’s competence in communicative language use: language competence, strategic competence, and psychophysiological mechanisms. For the purpose of this project, only *language competence* is dealt with here. *Organizational competence* and *pragmatic competence* are the first two categories of language competence. To begin with, *the organizational competence* is further divided into grammatical competence and textual competence. The grammatical competence proposed by Bachman is similar to the one presented by Canale and Swain, in the sense that it includes abilities to manage the formal structure of language. The textual competence belongs to the knowledge of conventions for cohesion and coherence and rhetorical organization. It also includes conventions for language use in conversations, involving starting, maintaining, and closing conversations. It could be stated that, Bachman’s textual competence has not only the component of

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<sup>5</sup> CANALE, Michael, and SWAIN, Merrill. Theoretical Basis of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Testing and Teaching. In: BULLA, Germán Alberto et al. Idiomas Extranjeros Lineamientos Curriculares: La Competencia Comunicativa. 1980 p. 1–47.

<sup>6</sup> BACHMAN, Lyle. F. Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing. In: KAMIYA, Masashito. The Role of Communicative Competence in L2 Learning. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1990.

Canale and Swain's discourse competence, but also the component of their strategic competence.

To continue, Bachman's *pragmatic competence* mainly refers to the relationship between what one says in his or her communicative acts and which functions he or she intends to perform by means of his or her statements. Then, *Illocutionary competence* make possible for a speaker to use his or her language to provide a range of functions and a hearer to understand the illocutionary force of a speech or a discourse required of him or her. Finally, Bachman proposes a *sociolinguistic competence* which is made up of four abilities: ability to be sensitive to regional and social language varieties, ability to be sensitive to differences in register, ability to produce and interpret utterances based on naturalness of language use. In Bachman's proposal, the *sociolinguistic competence* and the *illocutionary competence* are arranged to form a speaker's *pragmatic competence* that at the same time, create, along with the *grammatical competence*, his or her language competence.<sup>7</sup>

### 4.3. FLUENCY

Since students in the ELT program are future teachers they have an enormous interest on the development of their communicative competence, specifically in terms of the improvement of their fluency level. Although fluency has not a negative effect on communication it is still a relevant component of the communicative competence when learning a foreign language. For those reasons, in this section the concept of fluency will be discussed regarding those ideas which are more suitable for the purpose of this project.

Fluency as one of the components of speaking proficiency is defined differently. For instance, Hartmann and Stork<sup>8</sup> regard the notion of speaking fluency as the automatic usage of units, patterns and (time-creating) devices<sup>9</sup> of a language accurately... A more specified definition of speaking fluency is made by Chambers<sup>10</sup> who considers fluency as one of the several descriptors of oral performance in the assessment of a foreign language. He further states that becoming fluent is not about speaking faster (articulation rate) but about pauses

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<sup>7</sup> BACHMAN, Lyle. F. Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing. In: KAMIYA, Masashito. The Role of Communicative Competence in L2 Learning. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1990.

<sup>8</sup> HARTMANN, R. R. K. and STORK, F. C. Dictionary of language and linguistics. New York: Wiley, 1976.

<sup>9</sup> Time-creating devices in this project refer to: pauses (filled and silent), fillers and hesitation markers.

<sup>10</sup> CHAMBERS, F. What do we mean by fluency? System, 1997. p. 535-544.

less often and pausing at the appropriate juncture in the same utterance. In addition, Gatbonton and Segalowits<sup>11</sup> state that speaking fluency refers to the speed and ease of handling utterances without the need of inordinate amount of time to formulate an utterance.

According to the above definitions regarding speaking fluency, the focus of this project should be rather centered on the appropriate pauses and automatic production of speech at normal conversational speed than centered on speaking faster. Since being fluent does not mean speaking quickly, speakers need to know strategies for creating time to speak. Some of these time-creating devices are called fillers, hesitation markers and filled or silent pauses. What is more, Hieke and Crystal<sup>12</sup> suggest that fillers and hesitation markers are [devices] that contribute to better-quality speech production. Nolasco and Arthur<sup>13</sup> state that their use in speech can contribute to an impression of fluency. These expressions [time-creating devices] are very common in native speaker speech. By using pauses and other devices appropriately [to keep the floor while formulating what they want to say], speakers create a texture for their talk that supports and enhances what they are saying.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4.4. AUTONOMY

For the purpose of this project, a definition of autonomy would be compound in order to cover several aspects of language learning. Firstly, Holec states that autonomy is "...the capacity<sup>15</sup> to take charge of one's own learning..."<sup>16</sup> To continue, Littlewood proposes that "...[autonomy] depends on two main components: ability and willingness. Ability depends on possessing both knowledge and the necessary skills ..." <sup>17</sup> To conclude, Wenden conceives that "... 'Successful' or 'expert' or 'intelligent' learners have learned how to learn. They

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<sup>11</sup> GATBONTON, E. and SEGALOWITS, N. Creative automatization: Principles for promoting fluency within a communicative framework. TESOL quarterly, 1988. p. 473-492.

<sup>12</sup> HIEKE and CRYSTAL. A Componential Approach to Oral Fluency Evaluation. In: KAM-YIN, Wu. Teaching Time-Creating Devices in Spontaneous Speech: A Focused-Learning Approach. The Modern Language Journal, Vol. 69, No. 2. Summer, 1985. p. 135-142.

<sup>13</sup> NOLASCO, R. and ARTHUR, L. Conversation. In: KAM-YIN, Wu. Teaching Time-Creating Devices in Spontaneous Speech: A Focused-Learning Approach. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1987.

<sup>14</sup> SARI, Luoma. Assessing Speaking: Chapter 2 The nature of speaking. Fixed phrases, fillers and hesitation markers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> The word 'ability' was replaced by the word 'capacity' for the sake of avoiding repetition.

<sup>16</sup> HOLEC, H. Autonomy in Language Learning. Oxford: Pergamon, 1981. p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> LITTLEWOOD, W. Autonomy: an anatomy and a framework. System, 1996. p. 428.

must have the attitudes that enable them to use these skills and knowledge confidently, flexibly, appropriately and independently of the teacher...”<sup>18</sup>

Closely related to the definition of autonomy, and autonomous learner, is the one of self-assessment. Following this flow of ideas, Gardner in one of his works states that it is reasonable to assume that autonomous learners would benefit from feedback on achievements in their learning through engaging in some kind of assessment procedure. Self-assessment seems to accommodate itself much more easily to the diverse and flexible requirements of an autonomous learner since they decide what to learn, when to learn and how to learn. In this sense, autonomous learners take responsibility for their learning and this includes taking responsibility for monitoring their progress. An important aspect of the monitoring process for learners is simply to know how they are doing in their learning. They want to know if they are becoming more proficient as users of the target language. As well as monitoring language proficiency, self-assessments provide learners with personalized feedback on the value of their learning strategies, specific learning methods and learning materials. Learners can use this feedback to evaluate their approach to language learning, which is a component of learners' reflection about learning. Gardner further states that: “Self-assessments provide milestones in the ongoing process of reflection that all autonomous learners are engaged in.”<sup>19</sup>

#### **4.5. METACOGNITION**

One of the common concepts shared among educational researchers regarding the development of autonomy in language learning has to do with the metacognitive abilities involved in the learning process as a condition for the elaboration of autonomous learning tasks.

Metacognition refers to higher order thinking which involves active control over the cognitive processes engaged in learning. The term *Metacognition* appears in the scientific literature at the end of the 70's and it is etymologically defined as “knowledge of the knowledge” in the same way that *metacommunication* refers to a communication related to communication and *metalinguistics* describes a language used to talk about language. The knowledge of the knowledge is an

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<sup>18</sup> WENDEN, A. Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy. London: Prentice Hall International, 1991. p. 15.

<sup>19</sup> GARDNER, David. Self-assessment for autonomous language learners. University of Hong Kong. Links & Letters, 2000. p. 49-60.

interesting issue for every person in the process of learning who reflects about the strategies and methods he/she uses when learning.

The interest for Metacognition dates back to ancient times as stated by Socrates at Delfos' temple "knowing yourself". This interest fed the reflection among a number of authors who tried to explain the intellectual processes that led to the production of their works.

Vigotsky was one of the first psychologists who got interested in the consciousness individuals have about their own cognitive processes in order to control them. It is important to add that this author stated the existence of a direct relationship between cognitive capacities and metacognition.

On the other hand, Piaget used a close concept to metacognition: "the reflexive abstraction"<sup>20</sup>. According to Piaget, the action that a subject exercises over an object leads him/her to distinguish the properties of such objects (empirical abstraction) as well as the properties of his/her own actions and cognitive processes (reflexive abstraction).

However, it was Flavell who first generalized the concept of metamemory from which the term metacognition was derived. According to Flavell, "metacognition refers to one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive process or anything related to them..."<sup>21</sup> For Flavell, metacognition includes knowledge and regulation of cognition. Knowledge about cognition consisted of: 1) *person variables*, or knowledge about one's self, and others' thinking; 2) *task variables*, or knowledge that different types of tasks make use of different types of cognitive demands, and; 3) *strategy variables*, or knowledge about cognitive and metacognitive strategies for enhancing learning and performance. In fact, Flavell was trying to establish the existing relationship between the memorizing capability in university students and their representations related to the functioning of the memory.

The term metacognition can thus be considered as the most generic one among a series of related terms such as metamemory, metacomprehension, metalinguistics and metasolution of problems.

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<sup>20</sup> PIAGET, Jean; KONRAD, Lorenz et al. *Juego y desarrollo*. Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1988.

<sup>21</sup> FLAVELL, John. *Metacognitive Aspects of Problem Solving*. In: GRAY, Grey. *The Nature of Metacognition*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1976. p. 231 – 235.

In a relatively recent and well documented work, Gombert considers that the metalinguistic activities constitute an area of metacognition with respect to language. This author defines metacognition as “a field that gathers the introspective knowledge of the own cognitive processes so as to achieve a specific goal or objective.”<sup>22</sup>

He defines metalanguage as an area of metacognition which has to do with the language and its use, that is, the activities about language reflection, their use and the capacities of the subject to control and plan his/her own processes of linguistic treatment (in comprehension or production).

There are also metacognitive learning strategies considered to be essential for a better development of fluency. These strategies consist of thinking about the mental processes used in the learning process, controlling learning while it occurs and evaluating it once it is finished. Some examples of the metacognitive strategies a learner can use at the beginning of a language learning process are: Planning the ways in which he/she can recall the new words he/she hears in conversations with native speakers; deciding which are the most effective ways to discover the grammatical rules, and evaluating their progress and deciding what to focus on in the future.

“The metacognitive strategies are used to ensure that the [learning] goal has been reached.”<sup>23</sup> These strategies can be classified into four categories: Strategies about the focus of interest which implies that the individual retains certain details and eliminates others. Planning strategies consist of predicting the order in which he/she is going to act. Monitoring strategies deal with controlling the development of the activities and providing modifications to them. Finally, evaluating strategies consist of appreciating the quality of the results of the activities.

The paragraphs above have clearly enlightened the guiding principles of the instructional design for the constant improvement of fluency that the target population requires. In the following section, the conceptual pillars that support the structure of the design will be described and explained in detail.

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<sup>22</sup> GOMBERT, J.E. Le développement métalinguistique. Paris: PUF, 1990. p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> ROBERTS, M. and ERDOS, G. (1993). Strategy selection and metacognition. In: LIVINGSTON, Jennifer A. Metacognition: An Overview. Educational Psychology, Vol. 13, 1993. p. 259-266.

## **5. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

### **5.1. RATIONALE**

#### **5.1.1. SCOPE OF THE DESIGN**

After analyzing the conclusions of the needs analysis and based on the instructional design guiding principles, an Instructional Design delivered as a Self-access workbook was conceived. The activities included in the workbook were selected, adapted and directed to first term students in the ELT program at UIS. These students work with pre-intermediate material; for this reason, the activities in the Self-access workbook have been adapted to this level. It is hoped that once students have gone through the material, they will provide the authors with some reflections or recommendations in order to create a better version of it.

This Self-access workbook instructs learners on how to use properly a series of exercises to evaluate their learning process with respect to oral fluency. Indeed, the workbook contains a compilation of key concepts such as fluency, autonomy, metacognition, and communicative competence for learners to know which the guiding principles behind the exercises presented in this autonomous learning device are.

#### **5.1.2. PURPOSE OF THE DESIGN**

Students need to find efficient ways to monitor and improve their fluency level. Many students have not been exposed to using the notions they have about fluency to help themselves have a better oral production. This Self-access workbook will help students put into practice those notions they have and possibly, create a new concept about this speech pattern. Through the use of these exercises the improvement of learners' oral fluency is pursuit.

#### **5.1.3. LEARNER GOALS**

- Learners will develop an understanding of the benefits from using time-creating devices correctly to sound more natural in a conversation.

- Learners will discover how to use time-creating devices under specific situations.
- Given the exercises, learners will demonstrate on his/her overall performance how to use fillers, pauses and hesitation markers appropriately.
- Learners will be able to access and comprehend results based on their own performance in the exercises.
- This workbook will show the learner how to be more reflective on his/her own learning process with respect to oral fluency.
- Learners will know how to incorporate the use of time-creating devices into a classroom context and in a communication situation that requires it.

#### **5.1.4. CONCEPTUAL CORNERSTONES**

##### **5.1.4.1. AUTONOMOUS LEARNING SYSTEMS**

Before deciding upon the model for the Instructional Design it was necessary to follow some steps. First, there appears the need to find a suitable definition from autonomy. Then, to take into account which model is more appropriate for the purpose of the design, target users, learner goals, and evaluation criteria. Next, to make choices since there are different learning styles. For these reasons, the “Self-access language learning” is the most appropriate model for this particular Instructional Design since it deals with different learning routes and it does not require guide from the instructor; it is completely autonomous.

##### **5.1.4.2. METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES**

Metacognitive strategies are those that allow the learner to think of the mental processes used during the learning process in order to control learning in the process and evaluates the learning once finished. This Self-access workbook incorporates the use of metacognitive strategies, since they are an obligatory

component for autonomous language learning. The use of metacognitive strategies is reflected on the workbook as follows: Exercises from the workbook are not sequenced. Learners predict the order of the exercises they want to do according to their learning style. (Planning strategies) The progress check from each exercise allow learners monitor and control the development of the tasks and at the same time they can give feedback to the exercises. Also, learners have the opportunity to reflect upon the strategies they use to learn on a private journal. (Monitoring strategies) In the self-assessment from each exercise, learners have the opportunity to appreciate the quality of the result of the tasks. (Evaluating strategies)

#### **5.1.4.3. LEARNING STYLES**

Perceptual modality refers to the primary way learners' bodies take in information. Commonly, researchers identify auditory, visual, and kinesthetic styles. Most learners retain a dominant and an auxiliary learning modality. Learners usually rely on those modes to process information at an unconscious level, but they may be consciously aware of which modes they prefer. Learners access information through all senses, but generally favor one. They process visually (by sight), auditorally (by sound), and kinesthetically (by moving).

Visual learners prefer seeing what they are learning. Pictures and images help them understand ideas and information better than explanations. A drawing may help more than a discussion about the same. When someone explains something to a visual learner, he or she may create a mental picture of what the person talking describes. Visual learners may find it helpful to see the person speaking. They may watch a speaker talk, as well as to listen to what he or she says.

Auditory learners prefer spoken messages. Sometimes, they need to hear their own voice to process the information. Some others remember things said to them and make the information on their own. They may even carry on mental dialogues and determine how to continue by thinking back on the words of others.

Kinesthetic learners want to sense the position and movement of what they are working on. Kinesthetic learners prefer activities where doing, moving, and

touching are involved. They may not get much from discussions. Also, they may have difficulties dealing with autonomy.<sup>24</sup>

#### **5.1.4.4. COMPREHENSION VS PRODUCTION TASKS**

Comprehension tasks in this workbook promote the awareness on the use of time-creating devices before giving learners an exercise to carry out. Production tasks have the learner use the time-creating devices once they have thought about their relevance when communicating in the target language. In this way, learners make sure that they are not going to mechanize an instruction, but they are going to be able to implement what he/she had learned so far.

#### **5.2. INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE AND STRATEGIES**

The organization of the Self-access workbook allows the learner to practice using the exercises in the way suggested by this workbook. First of all, learners take a test on autonomy in order for them to realize how they are with respect to their autonomous level. Then, they must take a test to find out what type of learners they are. Once they have their results they may work with one or with all the types of exercises contained in the workbook. There is a section in the workbook that explains each one of the components of the exercises and it tells the learner why the time-creating devices are important in speech. After completing the exercises of a given section learners will be aware of the correct use of time-creating devices to improve fluency. The Self-access workbook is divided as follows:

- A. Introduction
- B. Learner Goals
- C. Structure of the workbook
- D. Features of the workbook
- E. Test on Autonomy
- F. Test on learning styles
- G. Exercises
- H. Answer Key
- I. Transcripts
- J. Glossary
- K. Compact Disc (CD)

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<sup>24</sup> GARDNER, Howard. Frames of mind: the theory of Multiple Intelligences. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

### 5.3. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Once learners finish the exercises, they go to the answer key section to check their answers and determine their performance in the task. Then, learners fill in the progress check chart to check their overall performance. Learners also have the self-assessment chart to qualitatively indicate learners how their performance was. Finally, they have the opportunity to reflect on a private journal upon their learning process in terms of the use of time-creating devices to improve their oral fluency. In this workbook there is no other evaluator of the process than the students per se.

### 5.4. LEARNING ROUTES

Learners will discover their own routes for learning when accessing the Self-access workbook. However, there is a strong tendency for students to follow the learning route presented below:

**Presentation:** Before starting to use the workbook, students are welcomed and encouraged to use this tool for the development of fluency in oral communication.

**Step 1:** Students take a test on autonomy and then a test on learning styles in order to be classified and so they can work in a specific group of exercises.

Depending on the results obtained on the test students may: (follow step 2, step 3 or step 4)

**Step 2:** (Visual Learner) in this section, students find audiovisual materials. Students watch the video as many times as desired. They will be provided with the transcript for a better comprehension. The student is required to answer questions, to fill in spaces and to organize pictures as part of the exercise through metacognitive strategies to improve speaking fluency.

**Step 3:** (Auditory Learner) in this section, students find audio materials. Students listen to the recording as many times as desired. They will be provided with the transcript for a better comprehension. The student is required to highlight based on what he listens as part of the exercise through metacognitive strategies to improve speaking fluency.

**Step 4:** (Kinesthetic Learner) in this section, students find audiovisual and manual materials. Students use the materials as desired. They will be provided with the transcripts for a better comprehension. The students are required to make dialogues based on some pictures to reach their learning style.

**Step 5:** Students keep a record (in a journal) of their learning process, strategies used and reflections about their impressions on exercises they have done so far.

## **5.5. FEATURES OF THE WORKBOOK**

**LEARNER STYLE:** Visual/Auditory/Kinesthetic

According to a test on learning styles they are divided into three main categories. Those who are visual learners will solve exercises which contain audio-visual materials to enable their learning process. Those who are auditory learners will solve exercises which contain audio materials to appeal their learning style. Those who are kinesthetic learners will solve exercises which contain audio-visual and manual activities for them to learn by doing.

**TYPE OF EXERCISE:** Comprehension/Production

There are two types of exercises: Comprehension and production. Comprehension exercises are those which involve receptive abilities such as, identifying and listening attentively. Production exercises are those which involve productive skills such as, recording your oral production, underlining, filling in blanks, etc.

**FOCUS:** Pauses/Fillers/Hesitation Markers

The focus of the exercises is defined by the time-creating devices presented in this workbook. Pauses in this workbook are of two types: silent and filled. Fillers and hesitation markers are a selection of those commonly used in everyday oral communication situations.

**TIME:** 20 to 30 minutes approx.

The time to develop the activities is approximated since there are variations in speed to solve exercises from learner to learner. The amount of time is not under 20 minutes because of the various components of each exercise. Also, it is not over 30 minutes because learners could get tired and leave the exercise unfinished stopping their learning process.

**WARM-UP:** *Do you consider...?*

At the beginning of each exercise there is a question that prepares the learner for the task. The aim is to have the learner think of what he will be faced to, so that, the learner will be aware of the focus of the task and its possible approaches.

**TASK:** *Record yourself...*

Each task involves three main factors: learner style, type of exercise and focus; aspects which have already been mentioned above. The task in this workbook is conceived as the activity itself that would help learners to improve their speaking fluency.

**Answer:** *Was it easy/difficult to...?*

Immediately after each task, there will be a question or two that inquire the learner about the activity he has just finished. In this sense, this workbook is reaching its metacognitive theoretical basis. That means that, with that set of questions, the learner is asking himself about his learning process, passing from using cognitive to using metacognitive strategies.

**PROGRESS CHECK:** *I know how to.../I need to improve how to...*

Students will have the opportunity to check their overall performance in the task by checking two goals related to it. Monitoring strategies are implemented in this section.

## **FEEDBACK OF THE EXERCISE**

In this section, there is also another chart in which learners can write some comments about the topic, grammar and vocabulary of the task and if those categories make any difference to achieve their goals.

## **SELF-ASSESSMENT:** *I feel excellent/good/bad after the activity...*

In this section learners can find some feedback according to their impressions on the exercise. There are three categories with a piece of text to encourage them to keep on working or ameliorate their overall performance in order to improve fluency. Evaluating strategies are implemented in this section.

## **GUIDELINES:** *Remember...*

In this section learners find some recommendations to reinforce the goals that they have reached in the task. These tips are very useful for their use in daily oral communication situations.

## **REFLECTION (JOURNAL):** *After finishing this activity...*

In here, the learners write their impressions on the exercise. They also reflect and decide whether their learning process is the most adequate for them or if they will have to make some adjustments to take the best of their skills and abilities for their own benefit.

## **TRANSCRIPT: Maggie:** *Come out I want to take a look at your outfit...*

In this section (at the end of the self-access workbook) students will find the written version of the recorded dialogues presented in some of the tasks. This transcript will definitively help the students to check listening skills because in order to improve fluency it is not only necessary to have good speaking proficiency, but also to perform well as a listener.

**ANSWER KEY:** *Jane: It's a friend of mine ... Natalie.*

This is the section in which the students find all the answers for the exercises they have already finished. Using the answer key, students will make sure (autonomously) that they know how well they did on an exercise and find ways to improve their overall performance in the corresponding task.

## **5.6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE**

Learners should do the exercises in a responsible way. It means that if they are required to go through some steps to reflect upon their own learning, they ought to do it in a conscious manner. The exercises have some components that were included for the learners to think of their own learning process and to decide if what they are learning is meaningful for them in any sense.

Since it is the version 1.0, exercises are subjected to the evaluation of the users and may be different in content and form for a next version. This Self-access workbook has got to be tested and changed if necessary for a next edition. Further investigation and implementation might be carried out as a prolongation of this project.

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## **7. APPENDIXES**

### **7.1. APPENDIX A TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS**

### **7.2. APPENDIX B SYLLABLES PER MINUTE (SPM) ANALYSIS**

### **7.3. APPENDIX C FINAL TASK OBSERVATION CRITERIA**

### **7.4. APPENDIX D SELF-ACCESS WORKBOOK**

## 7.1. APPENDIX A

### TAXONOMIC ANALYSIS OF THE SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRES

Included terms	semantic relationship	cover term
1. Speaking	is a way to is a way to is a way to	Socialize Communicate Travel
2. Feeling stuck	is a result of  is a characteristic of	Nervousness Fear of deceiving A professor Lack of fluency
3. Fluency	is a kind of  is a way to	A factor to keep a Conversation Feel good and Comfortable
4. Lack of fluency	is a part of	Hesitation Getting bored
5. Getting bored	is part of	Non-effective Communication
6. Hesitation	is part of is a characteristic of	Standard speech Lack of fluency

### THE ROLE OF FLUENCY ON COMMUNICATION

1. Fluency
  - 1.1 socialize
  - 1.2 communicate
  - 1.3 travel
  - 1.4 a factor to keep a conversation
  - 1.5 feeling good and comfortable
  
2. Lack of fluency
  - 2.1 nervousness
  - 2.2 fear of deceiving a professor
  - 2.3 feeling stuck
  - 2.4 hesitation

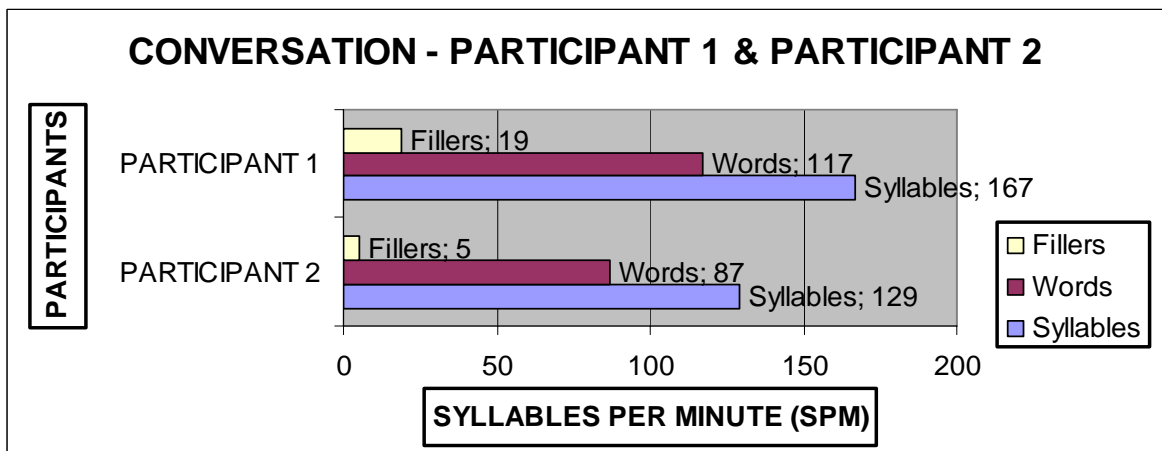
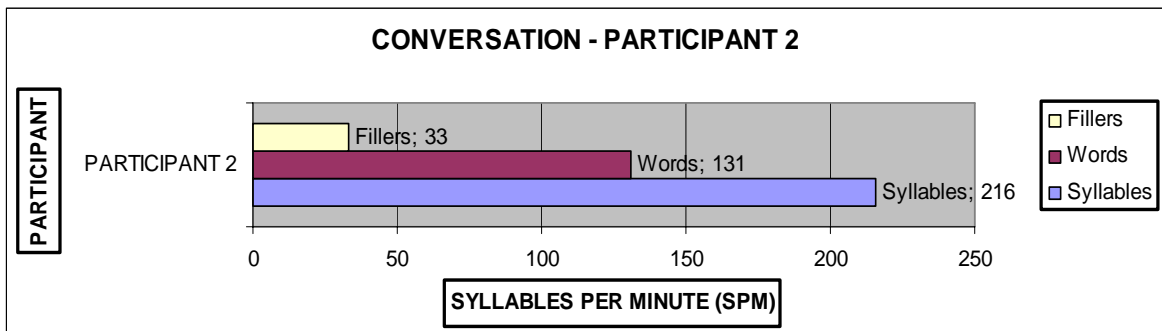
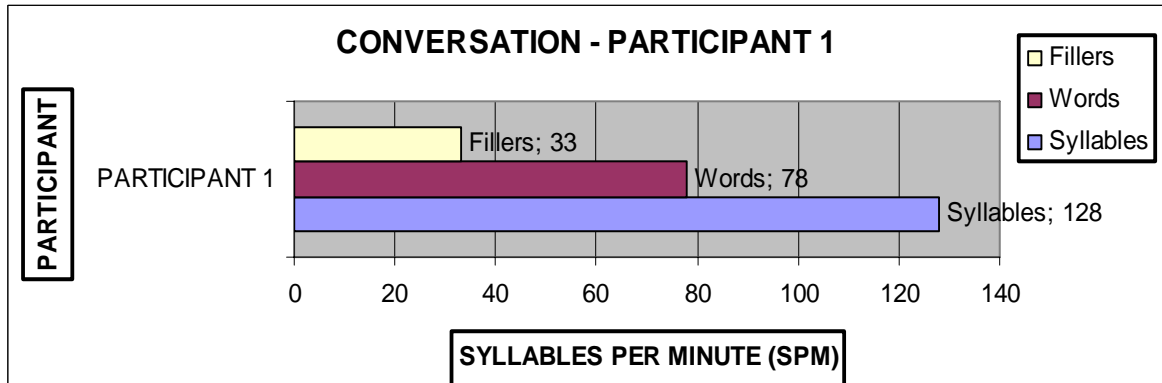
## **CONCLUSIONS**

Taking into consideration the results obtained in the taxonomic analysis, we can conclude that:

- Lack of fluency is not a factor which affects significantly the transmission of a message when people carry out a conversation.
- Hesitation is considered to be whether a normal reaction in standard speech or a lack of fluency.

## 7.2. APPENDIX B

### SYLLABLES PER MINUTE (SPM) ANALYSIS



### 7.3. APPENDIX C

UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER  
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES  
FLUENCY IN COMMUNICATION  
FINAL TASK OBSERVATION CRITERIA

Task 2 (for your consideration).

- Identify the participant that is the most fluent. (Note: in this research fluency is considered as to be the property of a person to deliver information quickly and with expertise.

The girl seems to be more fluent than the boy because of the speed she uses to speak but I think both of them are equally fluent because the message was clear in both cases.

- Which participant controlled the conversation?

The girl because of her voice tone and the number of fillers she uses.

- Write the moments when you felt the communication wasn't so effective. when they hesitated and wasted a period of time looking for the correct word to express their ideas.

- Why do you consider one participant had more control on the conversation than the other?

Shyness

He-She doesn't know the topic.

Lack of fluency

Other voice tone and because of the gender.

women tend to speak more while men's answers are more direct and precise.

UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER  
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES  
FLUENCY IN COMMUNICATION  
FINAL TASK OBSERVATION CRITERIA

Task 2 (for your consideration).

- Identify the participant that is the most fluent. (Note: in this research fluency is considered as to be the property of a person to deliver information quickly and with expertise.

Lidia since she said what she taught without doubting that much.

- Which participant controlled the conversation?

Jorge, because it seems that he was here engaged with the topic.

- Write the moments when you felt the communication wasn't so effective.

Lidia try to intervene, she wasn't able to. Jorge stops speaking and Lidia didn't intervene

- Why do you consider one participant had more control on the conversation than the other?

- Shyness
- He-She doesn't know the topic.
- Lack of fluency
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER  
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES  
FLUENCY IN COMMUNICATION  
FINAL TASK OBSERVATION CRITERIA

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- Why do you consider one participant had more control on the conversation than the other?

Shyness

He-She doesn't know the topic.

Lack of fluency

Other voice tone and because of the gender.

women tend to speak more while men's answers are more direct and precise.

#### **7.4. APPENDIX D**

The Self-access workbook presented immediately after is an autonomous learning model aimed at the improvement of speaking fluency in first term students from the ELT program at UIS. This first version of the workbook is the result of an Instructional Design Model constituted by a needs analysis on students' fluency, instructional guiding principles such as communication, communicative competence, autonomy and metacognition, and an instructional design which compiles the building blocks of the structure of the workbook. The components previously mentioned give the authors of this project the foundations to elaborate the workbook.

It is hoped that this learning device for autonomous learning helps beginners from the ELT program to gain awareness and improve their speaking fluency as one of the components of speech in the target language. It is important to remark that gains and achievements from learners after making use of the material enhance them to ameliorate their overall communicative competence considering the adoption and further use of metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate what they learn in terms of the use of time-creating devices (pauses, fillers and hesitation markers) when talking.