Accuracy and Fluency
JoAnn Miller, Editorial Macmillan

Accuracy and Fluency Self-Assessment for Teachers

Self-Assessment
* How do I feel about my students’ errors?
* How do I feel about my students’ fluency?
* When my students talk to me outside of class, which do I tend to notice more, their accuracy or their fluency?
* Do I enjoy teaching grammar? pronunciation? vocabulary?
* What techniques do I believe help students with accuracy?
* What techniques do I believe help students with fluency?

Class Assessment
* What are my students’ needs and goals for English?
* What percentage of class time do my students spend using productive skills?
* What percentage of class time do my students spend using receptive skills?
* What activities in my class emphasize accuracy?
* What activities in my class emphasize fluency?
* What activities in my class emphasize both?
* How do I provide feedback to my students?
* How often do I correct students?
* How do my students respond to feedback?
* Do my students seem cautious and calculating to avoid errors in their production?
* Do they seem to feel free to produce language without great concern about errors?
* Am I satisfied with my students’ progress in accuracy?
* Am I satisfied with my students’ progress in fluency?
* Are my students’ satisfied with their progress in accuracy?
* Are my students’ satisfied with their progress in fluency?
* Does the emphasis in my classroom match my students’ needs and goals?
* Which area, accuracy or fluency, may be lacking in my classroom and what activities could I add to promote this more?

(Which Comes First in ESL Instruction? , by Miriam Eisenstein Ebsworth, Ph.D., ESL Magazine. 1:2, 24-26. March/April 1998.)
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Freewriting (Writing for Fluency)


Freewriting is often used as a way to introduce a new topic for writing or discussion. Students are asked to write on a specific topic and answer questions or raise issues that relate to the topic. The approach to freewriting presented here is different. This freewriting activity is designed not as a means of brainstorming ideas for more structured writing, but as a practice for decreasing students’ inhibitions about writing. This practice can stimulate creative thinking, lower the affective filter and allow students to increase their written fluency, giving novice EFL writers a chance to learn to enjoy writing for its own sake.

Students should be reassured continually that anything they write is "O.K.,” as long as they "keep writing." Students should "write as much as possible."

**Purposes:** First, freewriting will help them increase their written fluency in English-especially if students can stop self-censoring as much as possible during freewriting time. The second goal of freewriting is to write many different ideas.

**Two very important rules.** The first is "Don’t erase!” The second rule is "Don’t stop writing!"

**Some ideas for your classes:**

**Week #1: Fifteen minutes of music**
Bring a cassette or CD with various kinds of music to class. After a brief introduction to freewriting, tell students, "Here is your first topic. Begin," and push play. Fifteen minutes later, the music stops, and the first freewriting activity is over.

**Week #2: Half a picture, upside-down**
Something big, strange and not easily recognizable is best. A colorful magazine ad or calendar illustration works well when cut in half and turned on its head.

**Week #3: Something in a bag**
This week, I pull out a small paper bag and tell students to put their hands in the bag without looking ("Don’t worry, it won’t hurt"). At the end of fifteen minutes, I take my blue fuzzy unicorn finger puppet out of the bag and show them what they touched.

**Week #4: Something smelly**
My choice for this week is hyacinth cologne on a small white silk handkerchief. Students pass my handkerchief around the room, touching, studying, and sniffing it—the smell lingers in the room well beyond our fifteen minutes.

**Week #5: "udnsl" (a nonsense word)**
Finally! A topic with letters! But what can it mean...?

**Week #6: A postcard**
From where, from whom, portraying what is all up to you, but let students quickly pass it around before freewriting begins.

**Week #7: Salt or sugar?**
I bring two film containers to class. One holds salt, the other, sugar. I walk around the room saying, "Pick a topic". Students hold out their hands for a little taste of some mysterious white powder. Everyone should taste their topic before beginning to write. Carry a cup around the room for students to dispose of unwanted granules.

**Week #8: Mystery sound**
Make or find a recording of a short, mysterious sound. Play it once for students at the beginning of freewriting this week.

**Week #9: "Test" (a loaded word)**
Any loaded word will work, but I’ve found that all my students have a strong reaction to this one.

**Week #10: Music revisited**

At the end of our final fifteen minutes, students can compare the writing from their first and final weeks of freewriting ("Is it longer? Is it more interesting?"). During our last class meeting, students have a chance to react to freewriting, and reflect on their own personal development as writers.
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The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics

Fluency/Accuracy

Fluency: the ability to produce written and/or spoken language with ease...speak with a good but not necessarily perfect command of intonation, vocabulary and grammar...communicate ideas effectively, and produce continuous speech without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication.

Accuracy: the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences but may not include the ability to speak or write fluently. (p.141).

"Teachers must balance issues of fluency and accuracy depending on the specific needs of learners and the resources of time and materials for instruction" (Which Comes First in ESL Instruction?, by Miriam Eisenstein Ebsworth, Ph.D., ESL Magazine. 1:2, 24-26. March/April 1998.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILL</th>
<th>ACCURACY</th>
<th>FLUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading / Listening</td>
<td>Intensive (with short sections or sentences when we need to understand or study information or language use in detail; instructions)</td>
<td>Extensive (reading in order to gain an overall understanding of a longer piece—perhaps a story or an article, when we worry less about individual words and sentences and get caught up in the general flow of a piece: a movie)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Classroom writing / Process writing</td>
<td>Freewriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>how well language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language</td>
<td>concerns the learner's capacity to produce language in real time without undue pausing or hesitation.</td>
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</tbody>
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From Dave Willis, "Accuracy, fluency and conformity", Challenge and Change in Language Teaching, J. Willis and D. Willis, ed. Heinemann, 1996 p. 50. (My italics and underlining - J. Miller)

Fluency: "Learners need opportunities to process language for communicative purposes as receivers and producers. These opportunities should be unfettered by the perceived need to conform to teacher expectations in terms of the production of specific language forms."

Accuracy: "Whenever learners are involved in communication they are concerned with accuracy in that they are making the best use of their language system to meet the communicative demands placed upon it. In spontaneous communication learners have little time to reflect on the langue they produce. If, however, they are given time to prepare what they have to produce then there will be a concern for formal accuracy within a communicative context."

Bibliography:


Scrivener, Jim. Learning Teaching, Heinemann, 1994

Willis, Dave, "Accuracy, fluency and conformity", Challenge and Change in Language Teaching, J. Willis and D. Willis, ed. Heinemann, 1996 p. 50.