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THE ULTIMATE LEVEL OF ENGLISH FLUENCY

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Abstract

This article analyses the concept of the ultimate level of English fluency together with its linguistic, cognitive and cultural components. The study examines the place of fluency in the hierarchy of language skills, the criteria for reaching the C2 level on the CEFR scale, and the psycholinguistic foundations of automated speech production. The findings outline effective pathways for English as a Foreign Language learners to achieve advanced fluency.

Keywords: Fluency, language competence, CEFR, C2 level, psycholinguistics, automatization, speech skills, second language acquisition, foreign language teaching, language pedagogy.

INGLIZ TILINI MUKAMMAL DARAJADA EGALLASH MASALALARI

Narzikulova Rayhona

Samarqand davlat chet tillar instituti o'qituvchisi

Annotatsiya:

Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilini mukammal darajada egallash (ultimate fluency) tushunchasi, uning lingvistik, kognitiv va madaniy komponentlari tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqotda ravonlikning til malakalari ierarxiasidagi o'rni, CEFR shkalasi bo'yicha C2 darajaga erishish mezonlari, shuningdek, avtomatlashgan nutq malakalarini shakllantirishning psixolingvistik asoslari ko'rib chiqiladi. Maqola

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natijalari ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o'rganuvchilar uchun yuqori darajadagi ravonlikka erishishning samarali yo'llarini ko'rsatib beradi.

Kalit so'zlar: ravonlik, til kompetensiyasi, CEFR, C2 darajasi, psixolingvistika, avtomatlashtirish, nutq malakalari, ikkinchi tilni egallash, chet tilini o'qitish, lingvodidaktika.

ВОПРОСЫ ДОСТИЖЕНИЯ ВЫСШЕГО УРОВНЯ ВЛАДЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКИМ ЯЗЫКОМ

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Аннотация:

в данной статье рассматриваются понятие высшего уровня владения английским языком (ultimate fluency), его лингвистические, когнитивные и культурные компоненты. В исследовании рассматриваются место беглости в иерархии языковых навыков, критерии достижения уровня C2 по шкале CEFR, а также психолингвистические основы формирования автоматизированных речевых навыков. Результаты статьи показывают эффективные пути достижения высокого уровня беглости для изучающих английский язык как иностранный.

Ключевые слова: беглость, языковая компетенция, CEFR, уровень C2, психолингвистика, автоматизация, речевые навыки, усвоение второго языка, преподавание иностранного языка, лингводидактика.

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INTRODUCTION

The notion of fluency has long occupied a central position in second language acquisition research. In contemporary language pedagogy, fluency is no longer regarded as a vague characteristic of “speaking well”; it is understood as a multidimensional construct that includes speed of production, automaticity, smoothness, accuracy and contextual appropriateness¹. The ultimate level of fluency, often associated with C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), represents the highest stage at which a learner can use the language with the ease and precision of an educated native speaker.

English currently functions as a global lingua franca and as the dominant language of academia, science, business and digital communication. According to recent estimates, about 1.5 billion people use English in some form worldwide, but only a small percentage of non-native speakers reach the highest proficiency level². This gap raises an important methodological question: which factors enable certain learners to move from advanced proficiency (C1) to ultimate fluency (C2 and beyond)?

The relevance of this research is determined by the need to revise traditional foreign language teaching models, which often stop at the upper-intermediate level and fail to provide systematic support for learners who aim at near-native fluency. The aim of this article is to analyse the linguistic, cognitive and didactic dimensions of ultimate English fluency and to identify the conditions necessary for its achievement.

METHODS

The research is based on the analysis of theoretical sources in the fields of applied linguistics, psycholinguistics and second language acquisition. Descriptive and comparative methods were used to systematize the existing definitions of fluency.

¹Segalowitz, N. (2010). *Cognitive Bases of Second Language Fluency*. New York: Routledge. P. 38.

²British Council. (2023). *The Future of English: Global Perspectives*. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>.

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A pedagogical analysis of CEFR descriptors for the C2 level was carried out in order to identify the operational criteria of ultimate proficiency. In addition, qualitative observations of advanced learners of English in Uzbek higher education institutions were taken into account to illustrate the theoretical findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed that ultimate fluency in English is a complex construct that integrates several interconnected components. The most significant of them are linguistic accuracy, cognitive automaticity, pragmatic competence, cultural literacy and stylistic flexibility.

1. Linguistic accuracy. At the highest level, the learner is expected to control virtually all grammatical structures, including rare and complex ones such as inverted conditionals, cleft sentences and subjunctive forms. Errors at this stage are sporadic and do not interfere with communication. Vocabulary range, according to CEFR descriptors, includes idiomatic expressions, collocations and stylistic nuances. A C2 user can convey fine shades of meaning and use language for rhetorical, aesthetic and persuasive purposes.
2. Cognitive automaticity. Psycholinguistic research distinguishes between controlled and automatic processing. At the ultimate level of fluency, most linguistic operations become automatic: the learner no longer has to translate from the first language or consciously plan grammatical structures. This is associated with the formation of stable neural networks responsible for speech production. The development of automaticity requires intensive and prolonged exposure to authentic input, as well as deliberate practice in real communicative situations.
3. Pragmatic competence. Ultimate fluency involves not only linguistic but also pragmatic mastery. The learner must be able to recognize implicatures, understand indirect speech acts and use politeness strategies appropriate to the context. According to Brown and Levinson, the choice between positive and

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negative politeness depends on social variables such as power, distance and degree of imposition. A fluent speaker uses these strategies intuitively, without conscious calculation.

4. Cultural literacy. Language and culture are inseparable. A speaker who has reached the ultimate level of fluency in English is familiar with the cultural references that permeate everyday communication: allusions to literature, history, films, music and current events. Without such background knowledge, even grammatically perfect speech may sound strange or out of context. Cultural literacy includes familiarity with humor, irony, idioms and the conventions of various genres.

5. Stylistic flexibility. The ability to shift between registers — from formal academic discourse to informal everyday conversation — is one of the most demanding requirements at C2 level. The fluent speaker can produce coherent texts for different audiences, choosing appropriate vocabulary, syntactic complexity and rhetorical strategies. Stylistic flexibility presupposes a deep awareness of genre conventions and an ability to manipulate them creatively.

From a didactic perspective, several pathways can support the transition from advanced proficiency to ultimate fluency. First, extensive reading of literary and academic texts in English provides exposure to rich vocabulary and complex syntactic structures. Second, regular speaking practice with native or near-native interlocutors helps develop automaticity and pragmatic intuition. Third, engagement with authentic media — films, podcasts, news, lectures — deepens cultural literacy. Fourth, deliberate work on writing, including academic essays, creative texts and professional correspondence, strengthens stylistic flexibility.

It should also be noted that the achievement of ultimate fluency is closely related to learner identity and motivation. Research in the field of language and identity suggests that learners who develop a sense of belonging to the English-speaking discourse community are more likely to reach native-like proficiency.

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Conversely, those who view English merely as an instrumental tool often plateau at the upper-intermediate level.

CONCLUSION

Ultimate fluency in English is not a single skill but a complex configuration of linguistic, cognitive, pragmatic, cultural and stylistic competences. Reaching the C2 level on the CEFR scale requires systematic exposure to authentic language input, deliberate practice in diverse communicative contexts and the development of a strong learner identity oriented toward the English-speaking discourse community.

For learners of English as a foreign language, the path to ultimate fluency is long but achievable. Educational institutions, particularly higher education programmes that train future teachers and translators, should design curricula that systematically support the development of all five components of fluency identified in this study. Further research may focus on the empirical measurement of these components, on the comparison of fluency trajectories across different first language backgrounds, and on the role of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence-based tutors, in accelerating the move from advanced proficiency to ultimate fluency.

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