4/3/2 in the 21st Century: Formative Assessment of Fluency through Digital Recording

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What is 4/3/2?

- Fluency-building activity (Maurice, 1983)
- Students speak on the same prompt three times: once for four minutes, once for three minutes, and once for two.
What is 4/3/2?

- Students work in pairs and speak directly to a partner.
- Many pairs participate in parallel.
- The teacher’s involvement is limited to circulating among the students.

Photo: Sailko, CC BY 3.0
What is 4/3/2?

Advantages:
- Time-efficient
- Lots of student talk-time
- Low-key; students are not performing for the whole class or teacher

Disadvantages:
- No assessment
- Neither teacher nor students can review the speech
My modification

- Students watch a short, humorous film which has no dialogue.
- Students report the events of the film three times.
- Time limits are 2 minutes, 1.5 minutes, and 1 minute.
My modification

- Students record the three speeches directly into a computer.
- All students speak simultaneously.
- During the activity, the teacher does not intervene in students’ speech.

Photo: Marco Raaphorst, CC BY 2.0
Context

- Non-intensive adult ESL course which focuses on speaking and listening skills.
- Students have recently begun a prepared speaking project and will be presenting within the next two weeks.
My modification

● Goals
  ○ Build fluency.
  ○ Demonstrate the efficacy of rehearsing a prepared presentation out loud multiple times.

● Let’s see the activity in action. Actual classroom slides follow.
Speaking Fluency activity

- This is what you will do:
  - Watch a short video two times.
  - Record yourself for two minutes. Tell me what happened in the video. Be specific.

“First, a small, blue bird landed on a power line…”
Speaking Fluency activity

- Record yourself for two minutes. Tell me what happened in the video. Be specific.

“First, a small, blue bird landed on a power line…”
Speaking Fluency activity

Listen to a bit of your recording. How fluently did you speak? Choose a number between 1 and 10.

1  . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .10

Not fluent  
(long pauses between words, many hesitations)

Very fluent  
(Few pauses, connected words together very well)
Speaking Fluency activity

- Record yourself for one and a half minutes. Tell me what happened in the video. Be specific.

“First, a small, blue bird landed on a power line...”
Speaking Fluency activity

Listen to a bit of your recording. How fluently did you speak? Choose a number between 1 and 10.

1 . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 10

Not fluent
(long pauses between words,
many hesitations)

Very fluent
(Few pauses,
connected words
together very well)
Speaking Fluency activity

- Record yourself for one minute. Tell me what happened in the video. Be specific.

“First, a small, blue bird landed on a power line…”
Speaking Fluency activity

Listen to a bit of your recording. How fluently did you speak? Choose a number between 1 and 10.

1 10

Not fluent
(long pauses between words, many hesitations)

Very fluent
(Few pauses, connected words together very well)
Speaking Fluency activity

- Save your final recording.
- E-mail your recording to:

wcp5@pitt.edu
My modification

Assessment:

- Students self-assess during the activity.
- Teacher reviews recordings and provides grades with explicit written feedback.

Image: Scout, Public Domain
My modification

Advantages:

● Even more time efficient than classic 4/3/2
● Enjoyable video prompt
● Enables student self-assessment and introspection
● Enables teacher assessment of speeches

Disadvantages:

● No interaction between students
● No immediate intervention or feedback from teacher
● Saving and submitting audio recordings can pose technical challenges