INTEGRATING ENUMERATION AND CLIMAX TECHNIQUES INTO SPEAKING INSTRUCTION: EFFECTS ON RESPONSE STRUCTURE AND FLUENCY

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Annotation. Speaking instruction in foreign-language classrooms frequently emphasizes vocabulary development, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and opportunities for conversational practice. However, learners who possess sufficient linguistic resources may still experience difficulty producing extended responses that are logically organized, coherent, and fluent. One possible explanation is that learners are often taught how to construct individual sentences without receiving equally explicit instruction on how to organize ideas during spontaneous speech. The present study examines the integration of two rhetorical techniques, enumeration and climax, into English speaking instruction and considers their effects on learners' response structure and oral fluency. Enumeration enables speakers to divide a response into identifiable and logically ordered points, while climax organizes those points so that the most significant idea receives the final or strongest position. The study proposes that explicit instruction in these techniques can provide learners with a practical framework for organizing ideas while speaking and may consequently influence both structural coherence and temporal characteristics of speech. Previous research on L2 fluency and spoken discourse provides a theoretical basis for examining the relationship between discourse organization and fluent production. The study contributes to speaking pedagogy by treating rhetorical organization as an explicit component of oral language instruction rather than as an assumed consequence of general language proficiency.

Keywords: enumeration, climax, speaking instruction, oral fluency, response structure, rhetorical organization, EFL, spoken discourse, second language acquisition

Introduction

Speaking is one of the most demanding areas of foreign-language learning because a speaker must formulate and communicate ideas while the interaction is already taking place. Unlike written language, spoken communication rarely allows learners unlimited time to reconsider the organization of their message. A learner may know the vocabulary necessary to answer a question and may understand the grammatical structures required to express an opinion, yet still hesitate because the ideas themselves have not been organized.

This problem is particularly visible in extended responses. When learners are asked to explain an opinion, describe a problem, discuss advantages and disadvantages, or respond to an abstract question, they frequently begin speaking before deciding how their ideas will develop. As a result, their answers may contain relevant information but lack a clear beginning, progression, and ending. Ideas may appear in an arbitrary order, supporting arguments may be repeated, and the speaker may reach the end of the allotted speaking time without establishing which point was most important.

From a teaching perspective, this raises an important question: should speaking instruction focus exclusively on linguistic resources, or should learners also be taught concrete techniques for organizing their ideas before and during speech? The present study is based on the view that rhetorical organization deserves a more explicit position in speaking instruction. Learners should not only know words and grammatical structures; they should also possess practical mechanisms for deciding how information will be arranged when they speak. Two rhetorical techniques are particularly suitable for this purpose: enumeration and climax.

Enumeration provides a speaker with a simple organizational principle. Instead of presenting several ideas as an undifferentiated stream of speech, the speaker identifies a limited number of points and develops them sequentially. This can make the response easier to construct and easier for the listener to follow.

Climax introduces another dimension. Once several ideas have been identified, they do not necessarily have equal importance. A speaker can organize them progressively so that the strongest or most significant idea appears toward the end. This

gives the response a sense of direction and prevents it from becoming a simple collection of equally weighted statements. The combination of the two techniques may therefore offer learners a practical framework for spontaneous speaking. Enumeration can help learners answer the question “What are my main points?”, while climax can help them determine “Which point should receive the greatest emphasis?” The present research focuses on two related outcomes. The first is response structure, referring to the way learners organize and develop their spoken ideas. The second is fluency, referring to the temporal and disfluency characteristics of their speech. The study is based on the assumption that these two dimensions should not be treated as completely independent. A speaker who has difficulty deciding what to say next may experience more hesitation and interruption. Conversely, a speaker who has a familiar organizational framework may be able to move from one idea to another with greater continuity.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to examine whether explicit instruction in enumeration and climax can contribute to better-organized spoken responses and improved fluency among English language learners.

The study addresses the following research questions:

1. Does explicit instruction in enumeration and climax improve the structural organization of learners' spoken responses?
2. Does explicit instruction in enumeration and climax affect learners' oral fluency?
3. Which dimensions of fluency demonstrate the greatest change following the instructional intervention?
4. What relationship exists between improved response structure and changes in fluency?

Literature Review

2.1. Rhetorical organization in spoken discourse. Spoken discourse is organized through relationships among propositions and larger units of meaning rather than through isolated sentences. Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST), developed as a framework for explaining discourse organization, describes coherence through relationships between different parts of a text or discourse. The framework emphasizes

that individual units contribute to a larger communicative structure and that coherence involves meaningful relationships among those units. [9]

The relevance of rhetorical organization to non-native speech has been investigated directly. Wang et al. examined spontaneous spoken responses produced by non-native speakers and applied Rhetorical Structure Theory to the analysis of discourse coherence. Their research demonstrated the feasibility of annotating rhetorical structures in non-native spontaneous speech and examined discourse-structural features in relation to human evaluations of coherence. [11] In an earlier study, Wang et al. reported inter-annotator agreement for different levels of rhetorical annotation and investigated discourse-structural features in non-native spoken responses. Their findings demonstrated that rhetorical structure could be systematically analyzed in spontaneous second-language speech. [10] These findings are relevant to speaking instruction because they demonstrate that spoken responses can be examined not only through lexical and grammatical characteristics but also through their larger discourse organization. Discourse structuring devices have also been investigated in relation to listener perceptions. Tyler, Jefferies, and Davies examined spoken discourse produced by non-native university teachers and found that speakers used different linguistic and prosodic resources to establish relationships among ideas and signal their relative importance. The study particularly highlighted the role of discourse structuring devices in helping listeners construct coherence. [8] This evidence supports the treatment of response structure as an independent dimension of speaking performance.

2.2. Enumeration as a rhetorical organizational technique. Enumeration is a rhetorical procedure through which a speaker divides information into a series of identifiable components. In practical speaking, enumeration may be realized through explicit markers such as “first,” “second,” and “finally,” but the organizational principle can also operate without overt numbering. For language learners, enumeration provides a predictable structure for extended responses. Instead of attempting to maintain an unspecified number of ideas simultaneously, speakers can establish a limited sequence and develop each point individually. The pedagogical significance of such organization lies in its potential to reduce ambiguity during speech

production. Once the speaker has established the sequence of ideas, the next communicative step becomes more predictable. Enumeration is particularly compatible with common academic speaking tasks. Opinion questions, argumentative responses, problem-solution tasks, presentations, and examination questions frequently require speakers to provide multiple reasons or supporting arguments. A numerical or sequential structure can make these responses more transparent. However, enumeration should not be interpreted as merely inserting discourse markers. Simply saying “first,” “second,” and “third” does not automatically create a coherent response. Each enumerated point must maintain a meaningful relationship with the central topic, and the progression between points must remain comprehensible.

2.3. Climax and progressive organization of ideas. Climax is a rhetorical technique involving progression toward a point of increasing importance, intensity, or significance. In speaking, the technique can be used to arrange several supporting ideas so that the final idea carries greater rhetorical weight. The distinction between enumeration and climax is therefore important. Enumeration primarily concerns **division and sequencing**, whereas climax concerns **relative importance and progression**. For example, a speaker discussing the benefits of international education may present three ideas: language development, increased independence, and broader cultural understanding. Enumeration establishes these as three separate points. Climax can then position the culturally broader argument as the culminating point.

The technique is particularly relevant to spoken argumentation because listeners need to recognize not only which ideas are being presented but also which ideas the speaker considers most significant. Research on discourse structuring has shown that speakers employ linguistic and prosodic resources to orient listeners toward relationships and relative importance among ideas. [8] This suggests that rhetorical prominence is not simply a feature of written composition but also operates in spoken communication.

2.4. Oral fluency in second-language speech. Fluency is a multidimensional characteristic of second-language performance. De Jong describes fluency in relation to cognitive, utterance, and perceived dimensions, emphasizing that different

perspectives capture different aspects of fluent language use. [2] Utterance fluency can be examined through observable characteristics of speech. Common measures include speech rate, articulation rate, pausing, mean length of run, and repair phenomena. Kormos and Dénes demonstrated the usefulness of temporal measures for examining fluency in second-language speech and investigated the relationship between measurable speech characteristics and perceived fluency. [5] De Jong similarly discusses different approaches to measuring fluency and demonstrates that several commonly used measures are mathematically related because they are based on the timing and distribution of speech and pauses. [2] More recent research continues to distinguish different components of utterance fluency. Morrison, for example, separates speed measures, breakdown measures, and repair measures when examining oral fluency in L1 and L2 speech. [6] This distinction is particularly important for the present study. A learner may increase speech rate while continuing to produce frequent repairs, or may reduce pauses while producing poorly organized ideas. Consequently, fluency should be examined through multiple indicators rather than a single numerical measurement.

2.5. Formulaic language, planning, and fluency. Research on formulaic sequences provides another relevant perspective. Boers et al. investigated formulaic sequences and perceived oral proficiency, demonstrating the importance of multiword sequences in spoken language performance. [1] Subsequent research has examined whether explicit instruction in formulaic sequences can enhance L2 oral fluency. Studies in this area have considered speech rate, pausing, repair, and other temporal characteristics of spoken production. [7] The relevance of formulaic language to the present study is indirect but significant. Formulaic expressions can provide learners with readily available linguistic material for managing discourse. Enumeration techniques may similarly provide learners with readily available organizational patterns. In this sense, the present study extends the principle of procedural support from the linguistic level to the discourse level.

2.6. Task repetition and speaking performance. Task repetition has also been investigated as a means of influencing second-language oral performance. Repeating a

speaking task gives learners additional opportunities to process content, organize language, and redistribute attention during subsequent performances. Thai and Boers examined repeated monologues under increasing time pressure and reported effects on fluency, complexity, and accuracy. [7] Their research demonstrates that changes in task conditions and repeated performance can influence measurable characteristics of L2 speech. This finding is relevant to the present intervention because enumeration and climax are expected to become increasingly automatic through repeated use. The instructional procedure therefore needs to provide sufficient opportunities for learners to apply the techniques across different speaking tasks rather than teaching the rhetorical concepts only as theoretical definitions.

Discussion

The proposed integration of enumeration and climax into speaking instruction is based on a relatively simple pedagogical principle: learners need tools not only for producing language but also for organizing the information they intend to communicate. The existing literature supports the relevance of this distinction. Research on non-native spontaneous speech has demonstrated that discourse coherence can be systematically examined through rhetorical structure. [10][11] Research on discourse structuring devices has further demonstrated the importance of cues through which speakers communicate relationships and relative importance among ideas. [8]

The present approach translates these observations into an explicit classroom procedure. Enumeration gives learners a manageable structure for constructing extended responses. Rather than searching for the next idea without an established organizational plan, learners can work through a predetermined sequence of points. Climax adds a second level of organization. It requires learners to consider the relative importance of their ideas rather than merely listing them. This distinction may be particularly valuable in argumentative speaking. A response containing three equally weighted points may provide information, but a response that develops toward its strongest point can provide a clearer rhetorical direction. The proposed intervention also has implications for fluency research. Fluency is commonly evaluated through temporal characteristics of speech. [2][5] However, temporal fluency does not

necessarily indicate whether the information itself is organized effectively. A speaker can produce rapid speech that is difficult to follow, while another speaker can use strategically placed pauses while presenting a well-organized response.

Consequently, response structure and fluency should be treated as related but distinct dimensions. This approach also addresses a limitation in some classroom speaking practices. General speaking practice can provide learners with extensive opportunities to communicate, but practice alone does not necessarily guarantee that learners will develop an efficient organizational strategy. Explicit instruction can make the underlying structure visible. The role of repeated practice is also important. Research on repeated speaking tasks indicates that repetition can influence fluency, complexity, and accuracy. [7] Therefore, the proposed intervention should not consist of a single lesson on rhetorical devices. Learners need repeated opportunities to apply enumeration and climax across different topics and task types. There is also a connection with research on formulaic sequences. Formulaic language can provide learners with readily available linguistic material during oral production, and explicit instruction in formulaic sequences has been investigated as a means of improving oral fluency. [1][3] Enumeration may provide an analogous form of support at the discourse level. Expressions such as “there are three main reasons,” “first,” “second,” and “most importantly” can function as organizational resources that help learners manage the progression of an answer.

Finally, the relationship between rhetorical structure and fluency requires careful interpretation. If a learner produces a clearer response but speaks at the same rate, the intervention may still have produced a meaningful pedagogical effect. Similarly, if speech rate increases but response structure deteriorates, increased speed should not be interpreted as an unequivocal improvement. The objective should therefore be effective spoken communication, in which ideas are organized sufficiently for the listener while the speaker maintains an appropriate level of temporal continuity.

Conclusion

The present study proposes an instructional approach that integrates enumeration and climax into second-language speaking instruction. The approach is based on the

observation that successful oral communication requires learners to organize ideas as well as produce grammatically and lexically appropriate language. Enumeration provides learners with a means of dividing information into identifiable points and sequencing those points. Climax provides a mechanism for establishing progression by positioning a particularly important idea toward the culmination of the response. Previous research has established the importance of rhetorical organization in non-native spontaneous speech and has demonstrated that discourse coherence can be systematically examined. [10][11] Research on L2 fluency has also established the relevance of speech rate, articulation rate, pausing, and repair measures in the analysis of oral performance. [2][5][6] The contribution of the proposed research is to bring these two areas together within an explicit classroom intervention. Rather than treating response organization as an ability that learners will automatically develop through general speaking practice, the study treats it as a teachable skill. The proposed methodology allows the effects of such instruction to be examined through both structural ratings and objective measures of speech performance.

Future empirical research should determine whether learners receiving explicit instruction in enumeration and climax demonstrate measurable improvements in response organization and fluency compared with learners receiving conventional speaking instruction. The investigation may also contribute to a broader understanding of how rhetorical knowledge interacts with second-language speech production. If learners can organize their ideas more efficiently before and during speaking, rhetorical instruction may become a useful complement to existing approaches based on task repetition, formulaic language, communicative practice, and fluency development.

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