



## **Enhancing EFL Undergraduate Students' Speaking Fluency through Chunking**

**Monica<sup>1\*</sup>**

*Pattimura University Ambon, Indonesia*

\*Corresponding e-mail: [monica.amboina@gmail.com](mailto:monica.amboina@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

The objective of this research is to examine the impact of using chunking, multiword groups, on enhancing EFL Undergraduate students' speaking fluency. As a learner of English as a foreign language, the obstacle experienced in improving productive skills, especially in speaking such as fluency in speaking with minimal understanding of the importance of understanding how the native speaker uses many chunks in communicating fluently. In the initial stage of this research, students in the same class of speaking in general speaking skills through speaking skills tests and interviews in English to measure their general speaking skills in the same population. Furthermore, the class was divided into two large groups, control and experimental groups using the same material and speaking skills. However, the experimental group was given learning and practice using chunking to improve their fluency in speaking. In the final stage, the second group was given a posttest in the form of an interview with the same material to measure the difference in their level of speaking ability, especially the frequency of using chunking in speaking fluency. The findings showed a significant difference in increasing speaking fluency in the experimental group and positive attitudes towards the use of chunking in enhancing speaking fluency.

**Keywords:** *Speaking fluency, chunking*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The activities of speaking in a language classroom have many different objectives whether learning about the content matter and language items from participants, learning communicative activities, developing skills in discourse, and finally developing fluency (Nation, 1989). In the process of communication, the speakers of a language should have knowledge of the forms of the language they use. They have to comprehend the use of the knowledge of negotiating the meaning. In this case, speakers and listeners or writers, and readers should interact with each other. The quality of this interaction may influence many aspects of the speaker's life. Therefore, fluency is one factor that increases the quality of interaction among nonnative speakers.

Many EFL learners wish to speak English. They often struggle to achieve native-like fluency. As non-native speakers, they spend plenty of time and invest much money in learning English in schools, institutes, or even universities. They may fulfill the course requirements, however, they occasionally fail to cope with the requirements due to fluent speech. This refers to their lack of understanding of what chunks in the English language are used by native speakers. Richards (2008) claims that when implementing communication tasks, students who have low-level English often depend on a lexicalized system of communication that relies heavily on vocabulary and memorized chunks of language. However, Lackman (2011) argues that the approach to lexical in which chunking plays a significant role does include grammar and the structural nature of language. Meanwhile, Richards and Rodgers (2001) state that lexis; word, and word combinations are the most important thing in building blocks of language learning and communication, not grammar, function, notions, or some other unit of planning and teaching. Numbers of researchers show that by learning a wide and varied vocabulary of individual words, English learners must also cope with a great number of multiword units.

Most studies works designed in the field of chunks have concentrated on native speakers and little is recognized about the use of chunks by nonnative ones. Therefore, this study's main purpose was studied to see the implementation of using chunks bring significant progress to enhance EFL learners' speaking in general and fluency in particular.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chunking is the process by which we try to understand something complex by breaking it down and working on smaller units ("chunks"). For example, in learning a new language, we study phrases, grammar, vocabulary, etc. which will help you build complex sentences. Instead of having to try to form complex sentences right at the beginning of the lesson, that way will be much more difficult, because everything seems foreign. Cutting makes difficult subjects easier to learn.

Another benefit to chunking is that it can help using future learning processes, even when we learn something completely different. For example, some songs are used as a device for memorizing the periodic table. "Polyglots" around the world also agree that the more languages they know, the easier it will be to learn a new language. The chunks they have accumulated from the language they previously learned help in the chunking process of the new language.

Lexical chunks have less attention in much of the traditional literature on formal and theoretical linguistics. Lexical chunks combine semantic, syntactic, lexical, and even pragmatic information. Study on chunks based on the assumption that native speakers apply many chunks in their everyday language and they are considered fluent speakers of a language (McCarty & Carter, 2002). Another reason for the lack of discussion of lexical chunks in formal linguistics is that they are difficult to define in simple, universally applicable terms. The following review shows some significant studies related to the current study.

Zafarghandi, et al. (2017) stated the implications of chunks for the notion of fluency. Their study on the use of chunking for English learners pointed out that mastery of using chunks helps learners improve their fluency in speaking English. This showed the benefit of using chunks in learners' speech and they were fostered to use them while speaking throughout the whole semester.

Meanwhile, Movahediyani Attar and Allami (2013) conducted research on investigating the effect of teaching collection on the speaking ability of EFL Iranian learners and examine the relationship between the participant's knowledge of collections and the use of collocations. This study also found out the attitude of learners toward teaching collocations. The results of the study showed that learners' collocation knowledge has been improved by using lexical collocation. Through this knowledge, learners comprehensively understand the idea within the dialogues and conversations.

Hartmann and Stork (1976) showed the idea of automaticity and normal conversational speed. Fluent native speakers use language effortlessly and it increases their speed of speaking. Hartman and Stork defined fluency due to the fact and ignored the point that there might be some fast speakers who are not considered fluent. Brumfit (1984) and Schmidt (1992) also inserted automaticity as one of the factors in speaking fluency. While, McCarthy (2005, p.5) stated that speed is not everything, at least not constantly rapid talks; some parts of the conversation may be uttered rapidly, but it may often be desirable to slow down in crucial parts of one's message. A study conducted by Salmani (2008) pointed out that all people have filled and unfilled pauses in their speech normally. It occurs regarded to some reasons such as misperception, getting time to think, getting listeners' attention, emphasizing a point, or a way to show your disagreement. Therefore, it can be concluded that having reasonable pauses in speech does not mean that the person is not fluent.

In the IELTS test, fluency is one of the criteria assessed in the standard proficiency test. Grading speaking has four criteria including, coherence, fluency, pronunciation, lexical resource, grammatical range, and accuracy. In the IELTS speaking test, fluency is defined as a combination of speed of speech, length of the answer, and pausing correctly (Cloe, 2011). McCarthy (2005) suggested three significant aspects of fluent conversation which include speakers as the central criteria, formulaic chunks that increase speech rate and conversational flow, and scaffolding which refers to the idea of confluence. He also stated that chunks by their nature are retrieved whole, they are not created new each time, they are part of that automaticity that enables effortless accuracy. Moreover, Pawley and Syder (1983), Nattinger and De Carico (1992), and Wood (2001) due to the relationship between lexical bundles and linguistic production fluency, lexical bundles, and formulaic language units help second language learners to increase their speech speed by building sentences and increasing the length of their speech.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was an investigation to determine the effect of using chunking on the speaking fluency of EFL Undergraduate students of Pattimura University and find out the students' positive perspective towards the use of chunking in enhancing their speaking fluency. This used experimental research. This usually uses comparison or control groups to investigate research questions and is known as a between-groups design (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Using the Test of English as a Foreign Language as a measure of their proficiency in English, the subject were randomly assigned into two groups (experimental and control). The treatment was given to the experimental group. During the treatment, they were instructed to use chunks and they utilized chunks and made writing about selecting topics and presenting in the class. In the contrary, the learners in the control group did not take any instruction in using chunks. They studied the same material but merely used the grammar-translation method.

Participants were selected through the availability sampling method. There are 40 participants out of 125 who were chosen through random selection in order to participate in the study. The selected participants were divided into two groups of 20 students. The instruments of the present study were a test of collocations and a collocation interview. The first instrument was of chunks which were used as the pre-test and post-test. There were 30 multiple-choice items administered to all forty participants in the study with a score from 0 to 30. The use of the “English Collocations in Use” book, written by Michael McCarthy and Felicity O’Dell for testing lexical chunks. The second instrument is using interviews in pre-test and post-test. It was ten open questions for the participant to share their opinions and ideas using lexical chunks they had already learned in the 8 sessions of study.

## FINDINGS

Table (1) shows the two groups’ means, standard deviations, and standard error means of the post-test.

Table 1. Independent Samples T-Test Post-test control and experimental

	Post-Test	Group Statistics			
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Fluency Scores	Experimental	20	10.010	1.2575	1472
	Control	20	08.031	1.4765	2108

This presents the results for speaking fluency in both the experimental and control groups, showing the scores’ mean in both groups. Experimental and control group scores’ mean in the post-test, shows the results of applying the independent samples t-test. The results of applying the independent samples t-test for comparing the means of the post-test of experimental and control groups showed that there were significant differences between the performances of the two groups in the post-test.

Table 2 presents the results for speaking fluency in the experimental group, showing the scores means, std. Deviation and std. Error mean.

Table 2. Paired Samples Statistics of The Experimental Group in both tests

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	7.876	20	1.2876	2532
	Post-test	10.102	20	1.1875	2375

The scores’ mean in the experimental group was 7.876 in the pre-test whereas it is 10.102 in the post-test. It shows an increase in the scores’ mean after treatment.

Table (3) summarizes the control group speaking fluency scores. It presents the results for speaking fluency in control group, showing the scores' means, Std. Deviation and Std. Error Mean.

Table 3. Paired Samples Statistics of the Control Group in both test

		Paired Samples Statistics			
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test	8.675	20	1.4687	2764
	Post-test	8.021	20	1.4964	2834

The scores' mean in the control group was 8.675 in the pre-test and it is 8.021 in the post-test. It shows no statistically significant difference in the post-test. The results of applying paired t-test for comparing the means of the control group's learners' pre-test and post-test scores indicated that there were no significant differences between the performance of the learners' pre-test and post-test

## DISCUSSION

The research set out in investigating whether using chunks had any significance on EFL Undergraduate students of the English Study Program of Pattimura University speaking fluency and whether there is any significant difference between experimental and control group mean scores on the post-test after the treatment. The most important finding of this research is chunking in a different context of the discussion, presentation, and conversation utilized brought significant change in fluency. During the treatment, the experimental group utilized chunks and presented them in the class discussion and presentation in various ways. This showed their positive attitude and assisted them in highly motivated in promoting their speaking fluency on the post-test. Therefore, instructing EFL undergraduate learners in using chunking in different contexts promoted their linguistic production fluency.

On the contrary, the participants in the control group who did not take any instructions on using chunking studied the same material by using the grammar-translation method. The result was that their performance on the post-test did not change much in comparison to their pre-test mean score. Thus, the reason why the experimental and control group participants' performance on the post-test was significantly different was due to instruction.

Based on the inferential statistics showed that the experimental and control group performed significantly differently on the post-test. This can be concluded that experimental group participants who applied instruction in using chunking did much better than the control group participants who did not receive using it. This stated that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control groups. This difference refers to the improvement of experimental group participants' speaking fluency. Meanwhile, the control group participants showed a lack of improvement for not using chunking. These findings of the research are in accordance with the theory of Richards (2008) who holds that there are many factors that can contribute to the naturalness of speech and that one important factor is the extent to which the learners use what is sometimes called multi-word chunks, as well as conversational routines or fixed expressions.

## CONCLUSION

The present study revealed that chunks did significantly enhance the speaking fluency of the experimental group. Participants of the experimental group were made aware of the benefits using of chunks in their oral performance, speaking, and they were encouraged to use chunks in their speaking activities. Based on the comparison between the pretest and posttest the amount of using chunks has increased significantly in the experimental group better than control one. This showed by the fluency score.

It could be concluded that learners' speaking fluency can be improved by the implementation of chunking. The use of vocabulary and phrases is essential to speaking fluency. there is a direct correspondence between using chunks and judgments of the listener of speaking fluency when the assessor had no awareness of instructing of chunks and their assessment was not influenced by the number of using chunks. The using of chunks and getting the most out of them tends to be used over time by the participants. However, they got the insight to use chunks properly when needed contextually when this brought long-term effects of using chunking. In the EFL setting, this study brings some implications for learners, teachers, syllabus designers, and material developers are demanded to support the role of chunk for enhancing students especially EFL undergraduate ones.

This study has found that using chunks is able to assist EFL learners to be more fluent in interaction. This recommends material developers consider creating language learning materials by introducing different types of chunks and how they should be applied. Through this research, the participants showed a positive perspective on using chunks to improve their fluency and high self-motivation by using them frequently. Moreover, it reduces their anxiety during the process of speaking and builds up their confidence.

In the end, the researcher came to this conclusion from the current section that using chunking or lexical chunks had a significant effect on EFL Undergraduate students' speaking fluency. Moreover, there was a significant difference between the experimental and control group speaking fluency. These enhancements and differences were due to the use of chunking.

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