

Accuracy and Fluency

In order to **communicate effectively** students will have to work on several areas of the language, as described below. For example, if students' grammar is poor, this will interfere with their ability to speak and write and the messages they are trying to convey may not be understood. If students' pronunciation is poor, the listeners may not understand what is being said. In both cases, communication does not take place. This is why the language *ab initio* course places emphasis on both accuracy and fluency.

Accuracy is understood as the focus on the form of the linguistic production, and is directly related to grammar, spelling and pronunciation. When teachers correct the grammar, spelling or pronunciation of a particular word or sentence they are focusing on accuracy.

Fluency, on the other hand, focuses on meaning. During the *ab initio* course, students should develop strategies that will help them:

- produce written or spoken language by concentrating on the message
- speak with a good but not necessarily perfect pronunciation and intonation
- communicate ideas effectively
- produce continuous speech without causing comprehension difficulties or a breakdown of communication.

A balance between accuracy and fluency will bring about the best performance and an ability to communicate effectively in a variety of everyday situations. Although accuracy is important for communication at *ab initio* level, the emphasis of the course is on the ability to communicate despite any possible linguistic mistakes (fluency).

Areas of Language

The most important areas of the language to be worked upon as the four language skills are developed are: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and intonation. Some of these will take up more teaching time in some languages than others. For instance, grammar plays a more fundamental role in learning Spanish than pronunciation, whereas intonation is vital in learning Mandarin. By practising these areas the students will acquire higher accuracy in the use of the language, while working the four primary skills in an integrated way will increase students' fluency.

Vocabulary and grammar

As far as possible the teaching of vocabulary and grammatical structures should be integrated into materials and communicative activities chosen by both teachers and students in a way that enables students to practise the language in context. Nevertheless, when such an approach is neither possible nor appropriate, the systematic teaching of language structures could be considered.

The grammatical structures, which appear in the language-specific syllabus, should be practised throughout the course to enable students to meet the language *ab initio* objectives and to develop their language skills to an appropriate level.

Pronunciation and intonation

Pronunciation and intonation are necessary for developing oral skills. Depending on the language, one or the other will be more important. The teaching of pronunciation and intonation should be integrated into the course. The teacher is best placed to balance the communicative methodology with a more systematic approach when teaching the phonetic patterns of the language.

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