

## Spoken fluency: Is the internal dialogue a model for spoken interaction, or the other way around?

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**Keywords:** Fluency, inner speech, dialogue

The concept of spoken fluency is a mundane idea, accessible to non-specialists, generally referring to speed and accuracy. The source domain for fluency in many languages is that of running water. However, it is remarkably difficult to pin down exactly what is meant by fluency and Heike (1985, p.135) notes that the literature is "replete with vacuous definitions". In this presentation I will suggest that the source of the paradoxical intuitive familiarity versus metacognitive difficulty of the fluency concept is based around the interrelationship between external, spoken dialogue and inner dialogue.

In classical antiquity Plato stated that thinking is 'the soul's dialogue with itself', presenting the concept that inner thought is a dialogue rather than a monologue. Although some claim not to experience inner dialogue (Ferryhough 2016) the phenomenon is widespread and recognizable to most people as noted by Langacker (2008, p. 459).

It is a basic principle of cognitive linguistics that human experience in and of the external world serves as a source for cognition and linguistic expression. I suggest that our conscious experience of inner dialogue combined with our experience of external dialogue are interrelated, each informing and structuring the other.

I propose that internal and external dialogue have some important commonalities: They take place in a recognizable language (English, Japanese or whatever); they follow the grammatical patterns of that language; they are rooted primarily in the auditory channel; they unfold over time, et cetera. However, there are some differences between the two instances of dialogue. Insights from conversation analysis have revealed that "discourse and conversation have their own forms of organization, distinguishing them from mere strings of sentences or clauses, forms that need to be analyzed in their own terms." Gumperz (1996). External interactions are characterized by practices which cannot be manifested in the same way, or at all, in the internal dialogue. For example, external dialogic interaction is driven by what Heritage (2012) calls 'the epistemic engine'. Also, participants engage in a carefully managed system of turn-taking, (Sacks et. al 1974), orienting to a 'no gap, no overlap' ideal. Interactions open and close with recognizable greeting and degreeting sequences. Repair of trouble sources is a common occurrence. By contrast, in the internal dialogue it is impossible to be epistemically K+ and K– simultaneously, lessening the driving force of the epistemic engine. In internal dialogue, 'current selects next' as a mode of speaker transition, using such transition moves such as 'How about you?' is not a feature. Trouble sources such as mishearing ("Fifteen or fifty?") and other such perturbations are not possible in the internal dialogue. Thus, our internal dialogue is fluent in a way that external dialogue occasionally mirrors, but the two modes differ sufficiently to make fluency simultaneously both an intimately familiar and oddly elusive concept to pin down.

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