Research Paper

Impact of Regulatory Focus Orientations on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Fluency and Accuracy in an L2 Oral Task Performance

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Abstract

This study employed 2 theories of motivation (i.e., the regulatory focus and the regulatory fit) to examine how L2 students with different motivational compositions perform L2 oral tasks, especially in terms of accuracy and fluency. The researchers asked 52 intermediate students of a higher education center in Shahrekord (Iran) to partake in an experiment in which they were, first, categorized into 2 groups of either prevention-oriented or promotion-oriented based on their dominant motivational composition. Afterward, the research was conducted in 2 stages: the first one with a conditionally neutral speaking task (regulatory focus) and the second one with 2 conditionally charged speaking tasks, each designed to either induce prevention condition or promotion condition in the mind of the test takers, to see how task condition and motivational orientation of the participants tended to interact (regulatory fit). Results did not reveal any significant causal relationship between the participants' motivational orientation/task condition and their fluency and accuracy. We postulated that the predictions of these 2 theories were not realized because of the interference of extraneous factors such as curriculum design and learning experience.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

Among all the psychological constructs acknowledged in the field of L2 learning research, motivation has gone through many reconceptualizations and, thus, it can be considered the most developed one out of the other relevant factors (Boo et al., 2015). To put it simply, with more than five decades of ongoing motivation studies in the field of applied linguistics (e.g., Dörnyei, 1990; You & Dörnyei, 2016), there is comprehensive literature surrounding motivation, which has undergone numerous changes and paradigm shifts.

Despite the existence of such a rich background supporting the importance of this construct, a significant limitation in approaching motivation-related issues in the realm of L2 learning studies was and still is that most conceptualization took a quantity perspective. In this view, motivation was considered a burst of energy that pushed L2 learners in the pursuit of their goals and aspirations (Gardner, 1985). This assumption does not differentiate between how motivation and its consequent behaviors might differ across individuals (Papi et al., 2019). In other words, regardless of the quality associated with motivation, the intensity of the motivation that a learner feels is the determining factor, and the dominance of this view has been driven away from the complementary perspective that looks at motivation as a quality.

Another notable aspect of motivation studies in the L2 learning domain is the overwhelming focus of researchers on its global and macrolevel influences on L2 students' behavior and knowledge of the L2 (Han, 2017). For example, factors such as motivated behavior and learning effort (e.g., Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005), as well as the interplay between teachers' behavior and the students'

motivation (e.g., Ghafarpour et al., 2018), constitute the majority of literature, whereas studies (e.g., Azizi & Gholami, 2020) regarding task motivation fall within the minority.

One example of these micro-level aspects that has received little attention is how dimensions of L2 performance (i.e., complexity, accuracy, and fluency) are influenced by motivation. Two notable studies that are concerned with this matter include those by Kormos and Dörnyei (2004) and Al Khalil (2011) in which the researchers attempted to explore how motivation can impact upon these measures, and both were concluded by a call for further investigation as focusing solely on global and macrolevel factors' obscures our vision of situation-related or task-related aspects (Han, 2017).

1.2 Theoretical Framework

Applying one of the most influential models of motivation initially developed outside the L2 studies, referred to as the regulatory focus and its extension, the regulatory fit (Higgins, 1997; 2000) might provide an alternative perspective to the ones discussed above. These theories look at motivation from an interpersonal and chronic perspective, conceptualizing it as almost similar to a personality trait with two orientations (i.e., promotion and prevention) that can also be manifested as preferred approaches to a certain situation. In the case of prevention, the priority is on safety and security, and for prevention, advancement and progress are more important. One's account of motivational orientation can also affect how they perform in different tasks/situations (Crowe & Higgins, 1997), and when it aligns with the situational concern, there is a boost in performance (the assumption of regulatory fit; Higgins, 2002).

1.3 Justification of the Study

The regulatory focus and fit provided the present researchers with two important frameworks to fill the existing gap in the motivation studies: Firstly, unlike the motivation-as-energy view (Papi, 2018), here, each motivational

orientation is associated with different strategies, priorities, and behaviors; thus, different performance and quality of motivation are expected to be observed in people of different regulatory focus composition. Secondly, the regulatory fit and the notion that every situation can be defined by a situational orientation opened a window into how motivation can be conceptualized in a certain situation (in this case, an oral task; Han & McDonough, 2018, 2019) and has been successfully implemented in psychology (e.g., Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Förster et al., 2003) to account for microlevel factors such as speed and accuracy in task performance, in nonlinguistic as well linguistic tasks of L1 (see Section 2.4).

   As the application of regulatory focus and fit theories have been far and few in the realm of L2 learning and because they have proved promising when applied to the study of microlevel factors such as different aspects of task performance, the current study set out to find out whether there is a significant relationship between people's dominant motivational orientation and how they tend to perform in an oral task in terms of accuracy and fluency.

2. Review of Literature
2.1 Motivation in Task Studies
According to Bygate et al. (2001), "a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (p. 11). Robinson (2011) believed that one's cognitive abilities and resources (i.e., attention and memory capacity), which can temporarily be influenced by motivation, play a significant role in individuals' task performance and perceived difficulty. Focusing solely on the task in motivational studies is a natural development in the paradigm as it gives researchers the advantage of studying motivation in a situated manner (Dörnyei, 2002).

   Throughout the literature, two studies (Al Khalil, 2011; Kormos & Dörnyei, 2004) used similar constructs (e.g., fluency and accuracy) to the ones

used in the present study and investigated how the students' production in an oral and written task can be affected by motivation. For example, Kormos and Dörnyei (2004) were interested in exploring the role of general and situation-specific motivation and individual difference variables (i.e., anxiety and willingness to communicate) on the quantity as well as quality operationalized as accuracy, grammatical complexity, lexical richness, and argumentation. The results indicated a correlation between motivation and the quantity of output; however, the quality of production was not related to motivation to a great extent. The researchers posited that these results were not surprising, given that the pattern followed that of the motivation theories (motivation does not necessarily affect the quality of behavior but rather its magnitude).

In her dissertation, Al Khalil (2011) used Gardner's (1985) and Dörnyei's (2009b) frameworks, to see how motivation can influence students' ability to notice the recasts that they received and their oral production. The results revealed that motivation (as a basic, general term, not any of its specific components) significantly predicted accuracy, complexity, and fluency in only the most and the least motivated participants. None of the components of Dörnyei's (2009b) framework, including the ideal and ought-to L2 self, instrumentality-promotion, and instrumentality-prevention were found to have any explanatory power.

2.2 Regulatory Focus Theory

The regulatory focus theory, first proposed by Higgins (1997), distinguishes between two coexisting but independent motivational orientations (i.e., promotion and prevention) that regulate the way people pursue their goals (Avnet & Higgins, 2003). The theory expands upon the hedonism principle that suggests at the core of human behavior is the need to increase happiness, as well as other positive feelings, and reduce pain (Higgins, 1997). The individuals with a tendency toward promotion orientation view growth,

achievement, accomplishment, and gain (as well as avoiding absence of gain) as their ideal end state. The presence of a positive outcome, nurturance, and the pleasurable feeling after accomplishing their aspirations is what they are endeavoring for and what makes them motivated. In contrast, individuals who tend to prioritize prevention orientation focus on minimizing losses, avoiding a negative outcome, and maintaining the status quo. Their primary aspiration is to fulfill the responsibilities that they are obliged to. They prefer staying in their safety zone (Scholer & Higgins, 2008).

According to Higgins (1997), a person can have a chronic inclination toward any of these orientations. Also, some people can have a robust inclination toward both promotion and prevention orientation simultaneously.

2.3 Regulatory Fit Theory

The introduction of regulatory fit was an attempt to describe the match between one's orientation and the means necessary to achieve something. Individuals might find themselves more suited to specific tasks, activities, and goals in a way that their regulatory focus aligns with their required means and procedures (Higgins, 2000). People can often complete similar goals and tasks by different methods based on how they judge the means and ways to fit their orientation. Consider the following example by Higgins (2002): A student with promotion orientation often tries to read supplementary materials for the classroom, opting for just a cursory review of the assigned textbooks. Meanwhile, a student inclined towards prevention chooses to study the assigned materials meticulously because of the strong sense of responsibility that this particular person feels. In this example, the two students picked the style that fit them better. Based on regulatory fit, a higher level of success and engagement is expected to be observed in individuals when their orientation aligns with the strategy (i.e., eager or vigilant) that they use to approach the goal or task (Higgins et al., 2010).

2.4 Regulatory Fit and Focus in Task Performance

The impact of motivational orientations and their match with the task at hand on one's performance are well documented in the literature on psychology. It is hypothesized that prevention-oriented individuals prefer to take their time and maximize their accuracy to avoid making mistakes that may lead them to lose vital information, and promotion-oriented individuals prefer to capitalize on speed to increase the chance of possible gains and advancement. Both of these groups would benefit from a situation that matches their chronic concerns or motivational orientations. An example of such studies in the workplace context is Wallace and Chen's (2006) inquiry that concluded employees who scored higher on the promotion scale were more competent and completed the task swiftly; however, employees with higher prevention focus were able to finish the job more accurately with considerable attention to safety. Similarly, Chen et al. (2013) found that the subordinates' promotion focus significantly facilitated effective communication, and it was linked to higher efficiency in performance situations.

Crowe and Higgins (1997) studied the impact of regulatory focus (i.e., the state of eagerness and vigilance) on individuals' strategic dispositions in goal pursuit within different cognitive tasks. Their goal was to see how university students perform when they are subjected to challenging tasks that require them to produce multiple alternatives. The results indicated that individuals with a promotion orientation performed far better in more difficult tasks than individuals with prevention orientation. Also, they were less likely to quit the complex task and generated a more significant number of alternatives, compared to the prevention-focused individuals that tended to come up with fewer, more repetitive items, as well as more conservative guesses.

Förster et al. (2003) conducted four different experiments to investigate the effect of promotion and prevention focuses on speed and accuracy in decision-

making and a drawing task (in which the participants connected numbered dots to draw a picture). The results revealed that the promotion-focused individuals were faster in information processing because their primary focus was on maximizing gains. The prevention-focused individuals had higher accuracy in the same information processing tasks, and they were concerned with correct rejections. Also, in one of the experiments that required error correction in a passage, it was found that those with a promotion focus were faster and managed to generally find more errors, especially the ones that were considered less complex (i.e., simple and complex surface errors). The participants with prevention focus found fewer errors compared to their counterparts but were able to spot more intricate ones (simple and complex contextual errors).

2.5 Regulatory Focus and Fit in L2 Studies

The first application of Higgins's (1997, 2002) theories in the realm of L2 can be seen in the conceptualization of the L2 motivational self system by Dörnyei (2005, 2009a). Although the motivational self system has turned out to be a stand-alone and different concept in and of itself, the idea of self in Dörnyei's model is similar to that of Higgins's (1997). The direct usage of these theories within L2 motivational research gained momentum later on with studies such as Teimouri (2017), Papi et al. (2019), as well as Papi and Khajavy (2021). The following studies touched on the relationship between motivational orientation/task condition and L2 learners' performance in L2 studies.

   Papi's (2018) study (which was obtained from Papi's [2016] dissertation) was conducted on incidental learning and probed the predictive ability of the regulatory fit theory when it comes to incidental attainment of vocabulary in a reading/writing task. As such, the participants (who were under either loss or gain task condition) read an article and, then, wrote an essay on the same topic of reading task. After that, the researcher administered a vocabulary posttest to

the participants to see how well they had attained the vocabulary that they had encountered within the text. The results showed a relative predictive ability for the regulatory fit theory. As expected, prevention-oriented participants assigned to the loss-framed condition acquired more vocabulary items compared to those in the gain-framed condition. However, there was no significant difference in the rates of vocabulary attainment for the promotion-oriented individuals between loss or gain task conditions.

In their first experiment, Han and McDonough (2018) explored the impact of the regulatory focus orientations (trait-based) and task conditions on L2 learners' oral production in an expository monologue task. The findings suggested that the participants' disposition toward either promotion or prevention had no impact on their L2 production, but those who performed under the prevention condition were faster (i.e., more fluent) and more accurate. In a similar follow-up study, Han and McDonough (2019) investigated the effect of prevention and promotion instrumentality (which are the positive and negative values assigned to a gain or loss situation) on oral performance in a different type of speaking task (i.e., role-playing). This time, the findings suggested that neither task conditions nor its interaction with instrumentality had any significant effect on the participants' oral performance; however, accuracy was shown to be negatively affected by the prevention instrumentality. None of the other measures of performance (i.e., complexity, fluency, and lexical dysfluency) was affected by instrumentality.

Given that the application of regulatory focus and fit in L2 studies is very limited and, to the best of the current researchers' knowledge, nonexistent in the context of Iran, and given the fact that these theories can provide us with an alternative and complementary view of motivation in L2, specifically the L2 task (see Section 1), the current study set out to answer the following questions:

1.   Does motivational orientation, as defined by the regulatory focus theory, of L2 learners affect their accuracy and fluency in an L2 monologic oral task?
2.   Does the fit between the learner's motivational orientation and the task condition affect their accuracy and fluency in an L2 monologic oral task?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants were from the female student body of *Shahrekord Technical and Vocational School for Girls*. The students of this higher education institute were majoring in two different undergraduate programs (associate and bachelor), and they were from various disciplines, including but not limited to computer engineering, graphic design, clothing design, and architecture. Taking courses in General English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was a compulsory part of their undergraduate programs. As for their proficiency levels, the participants tended to vary significantly because they were from different backgrounds: Some only had standard training in school (for 5 to 7 years), whereas others had enrolled in extra classes in private language schools.

A sample of 52 intermediate participants (one of the participants was only present in the second experiment), ranging from 17 to 24 ($M = 21.5$, $SD = 2.10$), were recruited from a total of 114 students who spoke Persian as their L1 and had never left their home country. The sampling method was based on convenience sampling: Those who were willing to partake in the study were asked to take a placement test to ensure the homogeneity of the sample.

3.2 Materials and Instruments

3.2.1 Placement Test

To ensure the homogeneity of the participants and categorizing them as the intermediate level, the pen-and-paper version of the Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate's Quick

Placement Test (QPT; version 1, 2001) was administered to them before the main phase of the research. The test consists of 60 multiple-choice items assessing grammar and different vocabulary items. Geranpayeh (2003) posited that this test has gone through quality control procedures of the Cambridge English for Speakers of Other Languages Department, and he calculated the reliability of the test to be around .9. In the current study, the reliability estimate was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, turning out to be .86.

3.2.2 Composite Regulatory Focus Questionnaire

A Persian translation of the Composite Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (CRFQ), originally developed by Haws et al. (2010), was used to identify the motivational orientation of the participants. The scale consists of 10 numerical-rating items: 5 to measure promotion focus and 5 for prevention focus. They ranged from 1 (*Not at All True of Me*) to 7 (*Very True of Me*). Depending on the sets of items on which each participant had scored higher, they were categorized as either having a tendency toward the promotion or the prevention focus.

Although Haws et al. (2010) reported the reliability of the scale to be .74 and .79 for each section, several studies (Browman et al., 2017; Wiener & Farnum, 2013) have shown that the negatively worded items have made this construct unreliable. Encountering the same phenomenon when checking for the reliability of the translated questionnaire, it was decided to remove items # 1 and 7 to improve the internal consistency of the scale to an acceptable level ($\alpha > .60$).

Before distributing the questionnaire, an independent translator checked the translated version and back-translated it. Two experts and ten students in the pilot session were also asked to comment on the script to ensure its validity, and following the responses, minor changes were made to some of them to

provide clarity (Brislin, 1970). Additionally, during a pilot session, the questionnaire was distributed to a group of 25 students. Based on the data from the pilot session, the reliabilities of the promotion and prevention sections were determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which were found to be .67 and .61, respectively

3.2.3 Speaking Tasks

For the sake of this study, three descriptive monologic tasks that highly resembled the cue card tasks of the IELTS speaking section (part 2) were designed. The choice was made due to the fact that this type of task was generally more time-efficient (the experiments were done during the school hours while the students were attending their classes). A monologic task does not involve a two-way sharing of information—similar to a monologue (Tavakoli, 2016). After the topics were presented to each participant, they had 2 min to read and think about the question and, then, provide a coherent description as a response within 2 min.

First, the tasks were presented to two experts in the field of language teaching and assessment to check their appropriateness. After applying the required changes, all of the tasks were mock-tested in a separate session. The researchers asked two students to respond to each of the tasks. Subsequent changes were made and discussed again with the two experts to ensure that the two speaking tasks used for the second research question were parallel and comparable, as each was given to the participants in the promotion or prevention conditions (Luoma, 2004).

The topic of the tasks (i.e., money and purchasing) were selected because all the participants had, at least, one lesson with a similar topic as part of their compulsory English textbook (*Strategic Reading 1*). This choice was based on their teachers' suggestion, who believed that using a topic that was familiar to everyone can yield more accurate results.

For the first experiment of the study, the participants performed a monologic task that did not impose any particular condition. The question prompted them to describe an item that they had recently bought. It was specifically selected because it was related to the next two tasks to be discussed in the next section.

For the second experiment, the participants executed two other speaking tasks, each of which was designed to induce a different condition. Cesario, Higgins, and Scholer (2008) mentioned two different ways: integral (used in the current study) and incidental. As such, for the prevention condition, the participants were asked to describe strategies to avoid overspending, and in the promotion condition, the task focused on methods of saving money.

3.3 Measures of Accuracy and Fluency

Foster et al. (2001) suggested a construct, the AS-unit, defined as "a single speaker's utterance consisting of an independent clause, or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause associated with either" (p. 365). In this study, accuracy was measured by the calculating ratio of error-free AS-units (free from grammatical and word order errors).

To calculate fluency, speech rate, which is the number of syllables uttered per second in pruned speech (i.e., chunks of utterances without reformulation, repetitions, and replacements; Yuan & Ellis, 2003), was used. Additionally, filled pauses and repair were calculated per 60 s to account for the participants' disfluency (Skehan & Foster, 2005).

3.4 Design and Procedure

This study followed a quasi-experimental survey design to find out whether task condition or L2 students' motivational orientation could affect their accuracy and fluency.

After getting permission from the director of the institute and the English lecturer, a pilot session was conducted to estimate the reliability of the

translated questionnaire and to check the validity and reliability of oral tasks. One week later, one of the researchers asked the volunteers to participate in a session to answer both QPT and CRFQ, and out of all the volunteers, only 52 participants remained. This session lasted around 60 min. Most students who were left out either fell below or above the intermediate according to the QPT test or, in a few cases, although they were within the targeted L2 level, they had an equal score in both promotion and prevention scales (i.e., the sum of their scores in promotion items [*1-4*] was equal to the sum of their scores in the prevention items [*4-8*]) and, thus, we were unable to categorize them into either group.

The first question of the study involved the use of a neutral speaking task so that the theory of regulatory focus could be tested on all of the participants— whether they were prevention or promotion-dominant. In the second question, however, two different speaking tasks were used to see how the fit or unfit between motivational orientation and task condition could affect the participants' performance. That is why half of the promotion-dominant participants were categorized into the promotion condition (fit) and the other half into the prevention task condition (unfit). The same procedure was repeated for people in the prevention group.

The procedures for all of the speaking task sessions were the same. The participants met one of the researchers in three sessions (each was scheduled with a weak interval) to perform the speaking tasks. All of the tasks were done individually in a quiet room during school hours. First, the participants met the interviewer (i.e., one of the researchers) and were greeted by her. The interviewer explained the procedure and handed out a short instruction in the participants' native language (i.e., Persian) to them. The interviewer was also responsible for the timing of preparation and recording phases.

The data collected from these speaking tasks were, then, transcribed and analyzed. An English teacher checked the accuracy of the transcriptions. The discrepancies and the errors found in the samples were later corrected by one of the researchers. Then, the interrater reliability for 30% of the speech sample was calculated (procedure inspired by Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009) by correlation coefficient for all the variables ($.72 < r < .81$, $p < .01$).

3.5 Data Analysis

Using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS; version 21), a MANOVA was run to investigate the impact of motivational orientation on the participants' performance in a monologic oral task in terms of accuracy and fluency. Two-way ANOVA was also used to test the second research question that involved two different task conditions.

4. Results

4.1 Effect of Motivational Orientation on Task Performance (Question # 1)

Tables 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the participants' oral performance in terms of grammatical accuracy and fluency measured by the ratio of the error-free AS-units, instances of filled pauses and repairs per 60 s, as well as speech rate (syllables per 60 s) in two groups of promotion and prevention. As shown in both tables, Skewness and Kurtosis were within the satisfactory range of ±2, which is within the normal range for conducting a MANOVA.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics of Accuracy Measure in Different Groups

	Motivational Orientation	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Error-Free AS-Units	Prevention	24	.21	1.00	.569	.230	.299	-.895
	Promotion	28	.27	1.00	.571	.214	.397	-.834
Syllables per Second	Prevention	24	1.27	2.21	1.609	.255	.766	-.084
	Promotion	28	1.25	2.42	1.711	.292	.311	-.367
Filled Pauses per 60 s	Prevention	24	2.44	8.99	5.702	1.596	-.289	.070
	Promotion	28	2.00	8.42	4.50	1.720	.603	-.151
Repairs per 60 s	Prevention	24	2.30	7.89	5.045	1.381	.061	-.337
	Promotion	28	2.12	6.12	4.751	.977	-.392	.292

In order to assess the test-takers' accuracy and fluency performance based on their speech sample, a one-way MANOVA was run to detect any sort of statistical significance in comparing mean scores of both groups. The dependent variable involved in the analysis was accuracy and fluency measures, and the between-subject independent variable was the motivational orientation (i.e., the promotion and prevention groups).

In the beginning, preliminary assumption testing was carried to ensure the appropriateness of parametric statistics. As MANOVA is a multivariate test, the assumption of the normal distribution was tested via both multivariant (Mahalanobis distance) and univariate normality (Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Simirnove; Pallant, 2005). According to Tabachnik and Fidell (2001), the critical value of chi-square used to evaluate the satisfactory upper-bound for the acceptable Mahalanobis distance for a model consisting of four dependent variables is around 18.5, which, in our study, was calculated and found to be less than 10. Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Simirnove tests were also conducted with no major violations noted.

According to Pallant (2005), MANOVA is especially useful when dependent variables are to somehow correlated with each other, but not so much that they result in multicollinearity. Thus, to conduct this test, the

preliminary correlation coefficient between dependent variables should yield an ideal *r*-value that can range from 0.20 to just below 0.80. As such, the Pearson correlation coefficient was conducted between the dependent variables, and all the *r*-values fell within the aforementioned range.

To test the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, the Box's *M* value of 7.156 was reported with a significance level of .769, which was interpreted as non-significant (i.e., $p < .001$). The assumption of homogeneity of variance was confirmed through the Levene's *F* test for all the variables and the assumption of equal variance were not violated.

As shown in Table 3, there was no significant difference between promotion and prevention in their effect on the combined dependent variables, $F(4, 47) = 2.073$, $p = .099$; Wilks' Lambda = .850; $\eta2 = .150$.

Table 3
MANOVA for Accuracy and Fluency

	Value	*F*	Hypothesis df	Error df	*Sig.*	Partial Eta Squared
Wilks' Lambda	.850	2.073	4.000	47.000	.099	.150

The results of one-way MANOVA indicated that there was no significant difference between the promotion and the prevention groups when it comes to the different measures of accuracy and fluency. Thus, the first null hypothesis cannot be rejected.

4.2 Effect of Regulatory Fit on Task Performance (Question # 2)

In this section, the second question of the study is explored. The main difference between the first and the second questions is the added between-subject independent variable: task condition (i.e., situational concerns). The main goal was not only to observe the effect of motivational orientations and task conditions on different measures of accuracy and fluency but also to examine the interaction between these two variables in their effect on the dependent variables. The assumptions of normality (i.e., Kolmogorov-

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Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test) were tested beforehand, and all the levels yielded normal distribution.

Tables 4 displays the results of the descriptive statistics related to the accuracy and fluency measures between the two groups of participants (i.e., the promotion-oriented and prevention-oriented) in the two different task conditions (i.e., promotion and prevention conditions):

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of Accuracy and Fluency Measures across Different Task Conditions and Different Groups

	Motivational Orientation	Task Condition	*N*	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Ratio of Error-Free AS-Unit	Prevention	Prevention	12	.29	.91	.568	.197	.564	-.771
		Promotion	12	.31	.84	.507	.159	.961	.057
	Promotion	Prevention	14	.23	.98	.495	.225	.788	-.008
		Promotion	14	.23	.95	.564	.2273	.101	-1.149
Syllables per Second	Prevention	Prevention	12	1.08	2.25	1.665	.379	.173	-1.166
		Promotion	12	1.05	2.51	1.648	.417	.594	.045
	Promotion	Prevention	14	1.03	1.93	1.631	.248	-1.050	1.198
		Promotion	14	1.03	2.70	1.675	.405	1.187	2.297
Filled Pauses per 60 s	Prevention	Prevention	12	2.69	7.91	4.981	1.778	.380	-1.045
		Promotion	12	2.22	9.40	5.574	2.335	.044	-1.306
	Promotion	Prevention	14	1.85	9.71	5.514	2.402	.037	-.869
		Promotion	14	1.00	8.13	4.636	2.142	-.008	-.678
Repairs Per 60 s	Prevention	Prevention	12	1.80	9.67	4.736	2.161	1.052	1.236
		Promotion	12	1.50	9.56	5.130	2.747	.396	-1.233
	Promotion	Prevention	14	1.50	8.30	4.308	2.072	.567	-.599
		Promotion	14	.00	6.42	4.226	1.761	-1.012	1.059

The skewness and kurtosis values (±2) shown in Tables 3 indicated that the sample was normally distributed (the exception is the kurtosis value of the syllables per second for promotion group in promotion condition).

Table 5 displays the results of the two-way ANOVA. The between-subject independent variables were the task condition, motivational orientation, and the interaction between these two variables, and the dependent variables were the different measures of accuracy and fluency.

Table 5
Two-Way ANOVA for Measures of Accuracy and Fluency

Measures		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
	Motivational Orientation	.001	1	.001	.019	.891	.000
	Task Condition	.000	1	.000	.005	.947	.000
	Task Condition* Motivational Orientation	.054	1	.054	1.270	.265	.026
Error		2.044	48	.043			
	Motivational Orientation	.000	1	.000	.001	.970	.000
Syllables per Second	Task Condition	.002	1	.002	.016	.899	.000
	Task Condition* Motivational Orientation	.012	1	.012	.090	.766	.002
Error		6.446	48	.134			
Filled Pauses per 60 s	Motivational Orientation	.530	1	.530	.111	.741	.002
	Task Condition	.263	1	.263	.055	.816	.001
	Task Condition* Motivational Orientation	6.985	1	6.985	1.461	.233	.030
Error		229.541	48	4.782			
Repairs per 60 s	Motivational Orientation	5.736	1	5.736	1.194	.280	.024
	Task Condition	.315	1	.315	.065	.799	.001
	Task Condition* Motivational Orientation	.733	1	.733	.153	.698	.003
Error		230.598	48	4.804			

The results—as shown in Table 5—indicated that there was no significant difference between the performance of the promotion and prevention groups in the promotion and prevention task conditions.

5. Discussion
5.1 Effect of Motivational Orientation on Task Performance
In this study, the results of the first experiment did not show any significant relationship between the motivational orientation of the participants and how they performed on the speaking task. Based on Förster et al. (2003), which was the original study done in the realm of psychology, there was an expectation

that the promotion-oriented individuals could be faster in their task performance (in the context of L2 performance we defined it as fluency). In contrast, the prevention-orientated participants would be more cautious with fewer mistakes (accuracy). As explained in the following paragraphs, the findings of the other L2 related studies were not wholly unified as to what the possible relationships could be.

Similar to this study, Han and McDonough (2018) did not discover any relationship between the motivational orientation and the linguistic measures (accuracy and fluency) of the speech samples produced by the participants. However, the findings of a similar experiment documented in Han and McDonough's (2019) study were quite different as the prevention instrumentality had a negative effect on only the accuracy measure, which the researchers believed were due to the anxiety of the participants with higher levels of prevention instrumentality.

5.2 Effect of Regulatory Fit on Task Performance

As with the first experiment, the results of the second one revealed no potential relationship between the motivational orientation and L2 task performance. The added independent variable of the task condition was also shown not to impact upon either fluency or accuracy. These findings are in contrast to those of Förster et al.'s (2003) that observed a robust positive relationship between the promotion task condition (i.e., the promotion framing) and speed as well as the prevention task condition (i.e., the prevention framing) and accuracy.

For instance, Han and McDonough (2018), though unable to discover any evidence for the regulatory fit, found that the participants in the prevention task condition achieved better performance both in terms of accuracy and fluency. Han and McDonough (2018) observed that the promotion group participants were more concerned with generating ideas (i.e., brainstorming) and not so much with language production per se. Thus, in this scenario, avoiding a

negative outcome was manifested not just as accurate speech but better quality of speech, overall.

Testing this assumption was out of the scope of the current study. However, casual observation of the sample transcripts revealed that participants in the promotion condition (more specifically the promotion-oriented ones) generated less conventional and more extensive responses to the question about saving money without any noticeable ill effects on their speech performance. Some participants even pointed to more than one method, which was the question's requirement. Generating more alternatives, both in terms of numbers and novelty, was also associated with the promotion scale in Crowe and Higgins's (1997) study.

Contrary to Han and McDonough's (2018) findings, Han and McDonough (2019) did not find the task condition or its interaction with instrumentality (i.e., regulatory fit) to affect the students' performance. They believed that the difference in task types (i.e., monologic expository vs. collaborative and decision-making role-playing tasks) and the lack of longevity of the induced condition might have been the reason behind this observation.

Also, Papi, in his 2016 dissertation (which was the precedent to Papi, 2018) speculated about this possible explanation for the lack of task condition effect. In his study, although the presuppositions of the regulatory fit held for the prevention scale in the prevention condition, the promotion scale in any of the conditions did not predict vocabulary learning. He proposed that the writing task created a promotion task condition that interfered with the frame that he initially implemented for the promotion and prevention conditions.

A similar phenomenon might have happened within the context of the present study. Either the atmosphere of the interviews or a more encompassing factor, such as the socioeconomic situation of the participants, could have interfered with the task condition and the longevity of its effect. For example,

some participants might have been facing a financially difficult situation, and their means might not have allowed saving for a more significant purchase. These students might have been under a lot of pressure not to lose any money and not to overspend on something that may damage their already fragile financial condition. Of course, in such a condition, even if the task created a short-termed promotion condition (i.e., saving money), their underlying mental engagement with their real-life situation might prevent them from being fully affected by this artificially induced condition.

Even though Kormos and Dörnyei's (2004) study of quality and quantity of L2 task performance used a vastly different theoretical framework from that of the present study, their findings can shed some light on the claims made thus far. They did not find any relationship between any of the motivational variables and the quality of production. For example, the attitude towards the task (one of their variables) can, roughly, be mapped on the concept of the regulatory fit. When there is a fit between one's preferred motivational orientation and task orientation, there is a sense of ease and satisfaction (Higgins, 2000). So, it is not too absurd to think that attitude toward the task is, at least to some extent, indicative of the regulatory fit.

Although the current study was unable to find a significant causal relationship between the independent variables (i.e., the motivational orientation, the task condition, and the interaction between these two factors) and the dependent variables (i.e., accuracy and fluency), we believe that this can be accounted for by understanding the unique extraneous factors that may have dominated the overall condition of our context. What the participants were experiencing may not have matched the intended task condition. A task is not done within an isolated bubble. There are rather a series of factors that might eventually dictate what condition the students are subjected to. Also, based on the abovementioned qualitative observation that we made, the

promotion-dominant and prevention-dominant participants simply had a different approach to accuracy and fluency, which may not have been translated well into our quantitative analysis.

6. Conclusion and Implications of the Study

According to the findings of the present study, it is hard to come to a unified conclusion, given the small number of studies investigating the regulatory focus and the regulatory fit and their uncomplimentary results in the context of L2 learning and task performance.

Three out of the four studies—including the current one—support the fact that motivational orientations do not seem to affect performance. The only time that it did was in Han and McDonough's (2019) study, which can be associated with the anxiety of the prevention-oriented participants in their study. Also, Papi's (2018) study only partially supported the assumptions of the regulatory fit, and the widely different findings of each study regarding the effect of the task condition were not enlightening.

Given that, the application of the principles of the regulatory fit and the regulatory focus to the design of the microlevel classroom tasks is not be recommended. However, attention to the battery of interactive factors that are going to ultimately act as the dominant L2 context (that the students are affected by) should be of the utmost importance when a curriculum or a test is being developed. In other words, the isolation of the task from the context might yield inaccurate results.

One of the noteworthy observations is that the promotion-oriented participants as well as participants in the promotion task condition (regardless of their motivational orientation) were more likely to produce longer and more novel responses. van Dijk and Kluger (2011) believed that giving students positive feedback (i.e., creating a promotion condition) can increase their performance when it comes to creative tasks. This approach (i.e., providing a

promotion condition) can be potentially useful when students have problems coming up with proper responses, even though they do not lack the competency in speaking or grammaring.

It is important to mention that a large body of studies backs up the assumptions of these two theories; thus, the whole literature should not be neglected by the virtue of one study. Therefore, the findings should be treated cautiously. Even if future studies discover that task performance, by no means, is associated with the task condition or the motivational orientation, there are other worthwhile ventures for future L2 studies, inspired by the realm of the psychology of teaching, such as the implementation of the promotion or prevention condition to activate the regulatory fit to help L2 students with better attainment through explicit learning (Markman et al., 2007) or exploring the different types of mistakes associated with either promotion and prevention orientations and possibly condition (Förster et al., 2003), which can help L2 teachers and other stakeholders make better decisions about local or global educational matters.

A limitation of this study relates to the fact that when studying the field of L2, researchers should be wary of the fact that, compared to L1, the process of L2 learning and the abilities of each individual at a given point in time show a lot more variability from person to person (Dörnyei, 2009a), causing complications that studies like Förster et al. (2003) or Crowe and Higgins (1997) did not have to deal with (given they were dealing with either L1 production or nonlinguistic tasks). Thus, it is hard to provide robust evidence regarding the actual homogeneity of the sample, especially with a multiple-choice test that does not assess speaking abilities.

Also, the operationalization of the prevention and promotion orientations was another limitation. These two constructs are, by nature, independent, meaning that there is barely any correlation between them (Haws et al., 2010; Higgins, 1997). Though it is not uncommon for researchers to just categorize the participants based on their dominant motivational orientation (e.g., Avnet

& Higgins, 2003; Förster et al., 2003; Han & McDonough, 2018; Park & Ryu, 2018), others like Haws et al. (2010) and Kurman and Hui (2011) warn against such erroneous interpretation of this construct, which may lead to inaccurate results.

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