

The effects of planning condition, task structure, and gender on EFL learners' written performance

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Abstract

This study focuses on the effect of different variables on the nature of language performance in the context of task-based instruction. The effects of three different tasks with various inherent structures (the personal, the narrative, and the decision-making tasks), two planning conditions (pre-planning and no-planning), and gender on the variables of fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density were investigated. The findings of the study revealed strong effects of planning on all aspects of learners' performances. Also, significant differences were found among the three tasks with the personal and the narrative tasks resulting in better performance than the decision task. No significant differences were found between males and females groups. In addition, interactions were found between task type and planning condition. The findings justifies the integration of planning time and the use of different tasks in writing courses as they clearly promote some aspects of performance.

Keywords: accuracy, complexity, fluency, lexical density, planning condition, task structure.

1. Introduction

Research in the area of task-based instruction suggests that performance on a task may be influenced by several factors. One of these factors is planning and time for planning before commencing a task. Planning prior to performance has interesting effects on aspects of language performance. Most of the studies so far have revealed positive impacts of planning for fluency and complexity (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). But the findings for accuracy are mixed. Another factor that may influence performance is the structure of a task. As Skehan (1998) points out tasks with different degrees of structure, ranging from familiar to unfamiliar propositions, require different levels of attention on the part of the learners, hence, affecting learners' performance.

Modality, which concerns whether a task is spoken or written, is another factor that has an impact on learners' performance. Written tasks, in contrast to spoken ones, will enable learners to marshal their resources, to some extent, and as a result have some degree of choice in how they allocate their attention to form or meaning (Skehan, 1998). In the area of task based research, most of the studies have concentrated on spoken tasks. A frequently neglected area, written tasks, may lead to different results in this area. Also, one area that remains unexplored is the effect of learner variables, such as gender, on different aspects of performance. This study investigates the relationship between planning condition, task structure and gender on different aspects of intermediate EFL learners' written performance. It also examines the interaction effect of these factors on learners' performance.

2. Background

The development of foreign language students' communicative competence has been widely proposed as a goal of foreign language instruction (e.g. Ellis, 2000). Within this goal, the use of tasks has evolved in contrast to previously dominant presentation, practice, production (3Ps) model. Pedagogical choices that effectively

support the SLA process involve the use of tasks with appropriate levels of structural support and content as well as decisions about their sequencing within other classroom activities (Robinson, 2001; Skehan, 1998). Skehan (1998), in keeping with the processing perspective of language acquisition, proposes two justifications for the use of tasks. The first, processing based analysis, concerns with information-processing load, and effectively focuses on the difficulty of the task. He makes the assumption that human beings operate with limited capacity attentional system, with the implication that to pay attention to one area of performance may reduce the attention available elsewhere. The second rationale, selective channeling, attempts to make links between desirable aspects of language performance (complexity, accuracy, fluency) and task characteristics. Here, the focus is on the way the task itself leads attention to being used in particular way. The claim here is that a set of task characteristics have predictable influences upon performance.

In the last few years, a number of studies have been reported on the effects that planning and task characteristics have on the performance of L2 learners. One of the early studies in this regard was carried out by Crookes (1989) to investigate the effect of planning on two monologic production tasks. Under the planned condition, participants had 10 minutes planning time before performing a task. Crookes found that under the planned condition, interlanguage productions were more complex and rich in lexical variety. With regard to accuracy, measured in terms of length of error-free T-units and number of error-free T-units in utterance, differences were not statistically significant.

Robinson (1995) in a study used two kinds of tasks, here-and-now and there-and-then. He suggested that language tasks requiring reference to there-and-then were more cognitively complex than those requiring reference to here-and-now. The results showed that there-and-then condition elicited greater accuracy and a higher ratio of content to grammatical words and the here-and-now condition generated greater utterance length.

Working within the context of task-based instruction, Foster and Skehan (1996) examined the impact of different variables on the nature of language performance. They tried to find the effect of three

different tasks and three different implementation conditions (planning) for each task on the variables of fluency, complexity, and accuracy. They found strong effects of planning on fluency and complexity, with a linear relationship between degree of planning and degree of complexity. They found evidence of an interaction between planning and task type. They also found a trade off effect between complexity and accuracy. By trade off effect they meant that when attention was paid to one aspect of performance the other aspect suffered. Mehnert (1998) investigated the effect of different amounts of planning time on the speech of L2 learners. In her study she used two tasks: The first task (instruction task) which tapped familiar information was very structured. The second task (exposition task) which was based on unfamiliar information was unstructured. There were also four groups of learners each performing these two tasks with different amounts of planning time. The control group had no planning time available; the three experimental groups had 1, 5, and 10 minutes of planning time, respectively, before performing the task. Speech samples of learners were analyzed in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density. The results revealed that fluency and lexical density of speech increased as a function of planning time. She indicated the trade off effect between complexity and accuracy. But here, she found length of time as a crucial factor.

Ortega (1999) also reports that pre-task planning results in better performance of Spanish learners. The results of her study indicate that giving learners opportunity to plan before performing a task: (a) enhances learners' attention to form, (b) increase the rate of speech of learners on a story-telling task, (c) increases the mean number of words per utterance (a complexity measure), (d) results in greater fluency, and (e) lessens the cognitive load of a given task. Regarding accuracy, she found that planning led to greater accuracy in the case of Spanish noun-modifier agreement but not in the case of articles. Building on Ellis' study (1987), Yuan and Ellis (2003) carried out another study to compare the effects of pre-task and on-line planning on learners' performance on a narrative task in a more systematic way. In the pre-task planning condition, the learners were given ten minutes to plan and then perform a task under time pressure. In the second condition, on-line planning, the learners were not given

time as an opportunity to plan but they were allowed to perform the task in their own pace. The results showed that pre-task planning enhanced grammatical complexity while on-line planning positively influenced accuracy and grammatical complexity. Learners who were given pre-task planning time also produced more fluent and lexically varied language than the learners who were given on-line planning time to perform the task. In another study, Tavakoli and Skehan (2005) tried to find the effect of different variables (planning condition, proficiency level, and task structure) on oral performance of learners. Four narrative tasks with respect to different degrees of structure were used. Also, two planning condition (planned and unplanned) were chosen for the purpose of the study. The findings on planning showed that pre-task planning led to a significant increase in fluency and accuracy. The findings on task structure revealed that the structured tasks led to more accurate and more fluent language in comparison to the unstructured tasks. Rahmanian (2004) carried out a study on the effect of planning condition on learners' performance which differed from the above studies in terms of the modality of a task used (written task instead of spoken). In his study, there were three groups of participants performing a task under different planning conditions, pre-task planning, on-line planning, and no-planning condition. The results showed that there was no significant change in the pre-task planning group in comparison to no planners in terms of fluency. In contrast, the performance of on-line planners was more fluent than no-planners. In general, pre-task planners outperformed other groups in terms of fluency. Also, regarding lexical variety no-planners outperformed pre-task planners. Pre-task planners also produced somewhat less accurate and less complex language than on-line planners.

Another issue that needs to be addressed in the area of task-based research is the question of how to measure L2 learners' performance. Researchers have used a wide range of units in measuring learners' production. Skehan (1996) distinguished between three aspects of production (fluency, accuracy, and complexity) on the basis of his theoretical claims about dual competence model and trade-offs in learners' focus of attention.

A number of researchers have used these aspects of performance to measure production specifically or generally. For instance, Foster, Tonkyn, and Wigglesworth (2000) have proposed the use of AS-unit (Assessment of Speech) as a unit of complexity measurement. They argue that this is more appropriate for a spoken language than T-unit which is more appropriate for written language. Other researchers used proportion of lexical verbs, percentage of occurrence of multi-propositional utterances, frequency of use of conjunctions, frequency of hypothesizing statements, anaphoric reference, etc. (Ellis, 2003) for measuring complexity. Regarding accuracy, most of researchers used a measure of percentage of error free clauses, or errors per 100 words. Other measures of accuracy which were used by researchers are: number of self-corrections, target-like use of verb tenses, target-like use of articles, target-like use of plurals, ratio of indefinite to definite articles, etc. For measuring fluency, researchers measured number of words per minute, number of syllables per minute, number of pauses of one/two second(s) or longer, mean length of pauses, number of repetitions, number of false starts, number of reformulations, number of words per-turn, etc. Lexical density is another unit for measuring performance. A number of studies show that there are differences in lexical density between spoken and written discourse (Ure, 1971, cited in Mehnert, 1998) as well as between different types of spoken discourse. Also, the results obtained by O'Loughlin (1995) suggested that the degree to which discourse is planned may be a possible cause of differences in lexical density between different discourse forms. Lexical density measures the relationship between lexical and grammatical items in a text by calculating the ratio of the number of lexical items to the total number of items (Mehnert, 1998).

These studies suggest that a number of factors influence learners' performance: the type of planning (guided vs. unguided planning, online planning, etc.), grammatical features involved, the inherent structure of a task, the length of time, the proficiency level of learners. Yet, so far, they have not studied how these factors can possibly interact. Also, the participant factors, which may have an impact on learners' performance have not been investigated in the

area of task-based research. Further research is needed to clarify these points.

The study reported here was designed to examine the influence of planning, task structure, and gender on different aspects of intermediate EFL learners' written performance, namely, fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density, addressing the following research questions:

Q1: Is there any relationship between planning condition (no-planning and pre-planning condition) and different aspects of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance (accuracy, fluency, complexity and lexical density)?

Q2: Is there any relationship between task structure (personal, narrative, and decision-making tasks) and different aspects of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance (accuracy, fluency, complexity and lexical density)?

Q3: Is there any relationship between gender and different aspects of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance (fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density)?

Q4: Is there any relationship between planning condition (planning and no planning), task structure (personal, narrative, and decision-making tasks), and gender and different aspects of Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' written performance (fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density)?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 160 (80 males and 80 females) adult intermediate EFL learners studying English at Zabansara Institute (consisting of two branches: one for males and one for females) in Zanjan. The criterion for choosing them were a test (called Big Test) given by the institute itself to the students who had passed the pre-intermediate course successfully. The students were required to gain a score between 70 to 100 in order to be allowed to enter intermediate level. The participants were between the ages of 16 and 23 years old.

They were studying English as a foreign language and had been studying English at the same institute for at least 20 months.

3.2 Tasks

To achieve the purpose of the study regarding the degree of structure three types of tasks were used: (1) Personal task, (2) Narrative task, and (3) Decision-making task. They were similar to the tasks used in Skehan (1996). As he points out "The choice of these types [of tasks] were based on analysis of tasks commonly used in current English language teaching text books. They were hypothesized to require different levels of attention on the part of subjects, with progressively less familiar and less predictable information causing an increasingly taxing cognitive load and, as a consequence, influencing performance on the task" (1998, p. 306).

The *Personal task* required the participants to describe to their friend how to get to their home from the school (they were learning English) and then to turn off a gas cooker that had been left on. "As it involved accessing information well known to the speaker [here the writer] and possibly already rehearsed in English, it was seen as requiring the least cognitive effort and allowing the greatest attention to language forms. Moreover, it was reasoned that the nature of the task would require relatively simple linguistic forms to be used" (Foster & Skehan, 1996, p. 307). This task requires the students to describe an aspect of their actual lives. There is evidence (Tarone, 1985, cited in Foster & Skehan, 1996) indicating that discourse salience can influence the level of accuracy on a task, particularly when syntax and morphology have discursal value to signal meaning. "Although this is, speculative, it may be the case that when subjects are drawn toward a greater degree of precision and accuracy when they can use planning condition to invest the language they use in tasks with more personal significance" (Tarone, 1985, cited in Foster & Skehan, 1996).

For the *Narrative task*, each participant had to construct a story structure. This task involved encoding new, visual information into linguistic written forms and requires some degree of imagination. "It was seen as giving scope for more complex language. But also

demanding greater cognitive effort , therefore , allowing less attention to be devoted to form" (Tarone, 1985, p. 307).

For the *decision-making task* , participants were asked to act as judges and try to find a suitable prison sentence for an offender in a case given. "This task was considered to place the heaviest cognitive load upon the subject and to allow the least attentional resources to be given to language form (Tarone, 1985).As they point out in this kind of task students have to draw upon their own system of values and beliefs in trying to find a suitable prison sentence for an offender.

3.3 Planning Condition

Two planning conditions were operationalized in this study. In the no-planning condition no planning time was given to the two groups of the participants (one group male and one group female) and in the planning condition 10 minutes planning time was given to the other two groups (one group male and one group female).

3.4 Procedure

The students had been placed in different intermediate classes after passing the *Big Test* and a brief interview successfully. Which of the classes an individual student chose to join was not based on any difference in language proficiency but on a personal preference for a particular class time. The make-up of each class can be described as comparable with respect to language proficiency, age range , and L1 background. Each class consisted of 20 students. The classes were randomly assigned to planned or unplanned groups. The classes had begun 3 weeks before data-gathering started. All data were collected during normally scheduled class times. It is argued that the use of intact classes minimizes any effects that experimental conditions might have on students performance. Of the eight intact classes (four of the classes from males' institute and four of them from females') used in the study , four acted as planned groups (two classes from females, and two classes from males institute) and four acted as unplanned groups (two classes from females, and two classes from

males institute) so each group consisted of 40 participants. Each subject in each of the four groups performed the three tasks over a period of three weeks.

The teacher of each class introduced the tasks as classroom activities. Planned groups (both females and males) had 10 minutes of planning time before the task. In order to make sure that the participants were engaged in planning they were asked to make notes on a separate sheet of paper and were reminded that they were not allowed to use their notes during the main writing. Before starting to write, students had to hand over their notes but were allowed to keep the task sheet until they had completed the task. They were given 10 minutes to complete the task.

Participants in the unplanned condition received the task sheet and were asked to begin as soon as they had read through the task. They were given 10 minutes to complete the task.

3.5 Measures

Students' writings were measured in terms of fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density.

Fluency

Fluency, in this study, was measured in terms of the number of syllables per minute. This was a general measure of fluency in other studies in the area of task-based research.

Accuracy

Following Mehnert (1998), in this study accuracy was measured in terms of the number of errors per 100 words. As she indicated (Mehnert, 1998, p. 86) this is more accurate than the other measures of overall accuracy that take account of the number of errors per clause since clauses can be of different lengths.

Complexity

Complexity here was measured by counting the number of T-units and dividing them by the total number of words.

Lexical Density

Following Mehnert (1998), lexical density was measured by dividing the number of lexical items (content words) by the total number of items or words in the text. These were the general measures used in other studies.

3.6 Reliability of Measures

To establish the reliability of measures a part of the data (30 papers out of 40 for each group) was corrected by another rater. To see the inter-rater reliability of measures Pearson Product Moment Correlation was utilized. The results turned out to be high in all the cases.

4. Results

The whole data was scored regarding the measures of fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density. Then the data was entered into SPSS software version 11. Four three-way ANOVAs were run to investigate the research hypotheses.

Q1: Is there any relationship between planning condition (no-planning and pre-planning condition) and different aspects of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance (accuracy, fluency, complexity and lexical density)?

Q3: Is there any relationship between gender and different aspects of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance (fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density)?

The following table shows the mean scores of fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density of the three tasks and the planning conditions for both males and females.

Table 1: Mean scores of planning and no-planning groups for the four measures and the three tasks

	Personal		Narrative		Decision	
	planning / no-planning	planning / no-planning	planning / no-planning	planning / no-planning	planning / no-planning	planning / no-planning
Fluency						
Females	20.78	8.52	19.40	12.64	7.72	4.28
Males	20.93	8.53	19.49	12.51	7.78	4.38
Accuracy						
Females	3.50	9.85	3.67	11.01	6.30	12.66
Males	3.62	9.92	3.77	10.92	6.36	12.69
Complexity						
Females	.170	.150	.154	.127	.145	.106
Males	.170	.126	.157	.126	.146	.106
Lexical D.						
Females	.570	.454	.496	.448	.561	.430
Males	.571	.442	.506	.436	.562	.440

As the table shows the personal and narrative scores for fluency are higher than the decision task. Also, the difference between planning and no-planning fluency scores is high in personal task compared to the narrative and the decision task (both for males and females) which indicates that the learners' performance, with regard to fluency, was improved greatly by giving them time to plan before performing the personal task compared to the narrative and the decision tasks. The table also shows that the writings of planning groups were more accurate than the no-planning groups (the formula for accuracy was counting the number of errors per 100 words). The results also indicate that accuracy in the personal and the narrative tasks were higher than the decision task. It means that accuracy was decreased in performing the decision task which was considered as a more demanding task compared to the other two tasks. Also, with regard to planning time (if we calculate the mean

differences) planning groups' writings were much more accurate in the narrative task which means that planning had more effect on the narrative task with regard to accuracy. The mean scores of complexity for the personal task are higher than the other two tasks. Also, the difference between means of planning and no-planning groups are higher in the personal task compared to the narrative and the decision tasks with respect to complexity. The mean scores of lexical density are a little bit higher in the personal and decision tasks compared to the narrative task. The table also reveals that the mean difference between planning and no-planning groups is slightly higher in the narrative task. These patterns of results were the same for both males and females. The following table confirms these findings.

Q2 : Is there any relationship between task structure (personal, narrative, and decision-making tasks) and different aspects of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance (accuracy, fluency, complexity and lexical density)?

Q4: Is there any relationship between planning condition (planning and no-planning), task structure (personal, narrative, and decision-making tasks), and gender and different aspects of Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' written performance (fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density)?

Table 2: Between-subjects effects for the three factors

Density	Measures						
	Fluency		Accuracy		Complexity		Lexical
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F
P							
Planning	873.6	.000	631.4	.000	470.7	.000	515.8
.000							
Task	601.1	.000	40.6	.000	64.6	.000	26.2
.000							
Gender	.038	.864	.036	.850	.007	.933	.177
.674							
Planning*Task	103.3	.000	1.34	.263	5.08	.007	22.6
.000							

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Planning*Gender	.50	.824	.031	.861	1.14	.285	1.64
.200							
Task*Gender	.019	.961	.010	.990	.312	.732	.143
.867							
Planning*Task*							
Gender	.22	.978	.010	.990	.158	.854	.466
.628							

Table 2 shows the results for between-subject effects for the three factors of planning, task, and gender and the related interactions. A brief look at the p-values for each F ratio shows that there is a significant main effect for planning, task, and the interaction between them, but there is no significant main effect for gender factor and its interactions with the other two factors with respect to fluency, accuracy, complexity, and lexical density. Therefore, we can conclude that there was a relationship between task and planning but no relationship was found between planning and gender, task and gender, and task, planning, and gender.

In order to establish where the differences were located the Scheffe test was carried out for each of the measures. Table 3 summarizes the results of these tests.

Table 3: Post hoc tests

Measures	Tasks		
	Personal-Narrative	Narrative-Decision	Decision-Personal
Fluency	.000	.000	.000
Accuracy	.137	.000	.000
Complexity	.000	.000	.000
Lexical Density	.000	.000	.257

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

As the table shows the tasks differ from one another significantly with regard to fluency and complexity. Regarding accuracy the

personal and the narrative tasks do not differ from each other significantly but the personal and the decision tasks as well as the narrative and the decision tasks differ from each other significantly. Also, the decision and the personal tasks do not differ from each other with respect to lexical density.

5. Discussion

The results of this study revealed the significant difference between planning and no-planning groups, both for males and females, showing that planning before performing the task helps the learners to achieve a better performance. This finding supports the claim made by many researchers (e.g. Crookes, 1989; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). Taking together both the effect of planning and all three the tasks with regard to performance measures, in this study planning time had a great effect on the personal task regarding fluency (mean difference between planned and unplanned condition was 12.5) and the decision task produced the least fluent language (mean difference of 3.3) compared to the narrative (mean difference of 6.9).

With regard to accuracy planning time resulted in more accurate performance in the narrative task (mean difference of 7.1) compared to the other two tasks (the personal and the decision tasks produced similar gains with regard to accuracy. The mean difference between planning and no-planning groups with regard to complexity showed that the personal task produced the most complex language. The smallest improvement in complexity as a result of planning was for the narrative task (i.e., the opportunity to use more time did not seem to confer much advantage for complexity). Also, the decision and the personal tasks had a great lexical density compared to the narrative task as a function of planning. All the above patterns of results were the same for males and females.

Generalizing from these results, what seems to be at issue here is that each of the tasks produces a pattern of results that basically reflect task properties. The personal task generates a greater degree of fluency and complexity without achieving much accuracy as a

result of planning. The narrative task produces the highest level of accuracy, but this gain was at the expense of complexity. Finally the decision task seems to occupy an intermediate position, producing same level of complexity. Therefore, what seems to be happening here, considering the combination of task type and planning, is that participants were operating under some information processing pressure: they had to allocate attention to particular goals at the expense of other goals (Foster & Skehan, 1996). In other words, these patterns of results support the trade off effects between complexity and accuracy which agrees with the findings of Skehan and Foster (1996, 1997). As accuracy improves as a result of planning time in the narrative task, complexity decreases and as accuracy declines in personal task, complexity increases. This trade off effect is in line with the limited resources theory: when attention is paid to one aspect of performance, the other aspect will suffer.

Regarding task structure, Foster and Skehan (1996) proposed that "the personal task would be the easiest, the decision task the most difficult, with the narrative closer to the decision than to the personal" (p. 317). The results of their study only partly fit into this analysis. However, the results of this study fit into their analysis and only in some parts the findings match with each other. In this study, in planning condition the personal task produced much more fluent language with a little bit difference from the narrative task. It means that unlike Foster and Skehan's analysis, here, the narrative task was much closer to the personal task than the decision task. The least fluent performance was for the decision task.

Also, Skehan and Foster (1997) hypothesized that the decision task and the narrative place the heaviest cognitive load upon the subject and, therefore, allowing less attention to be devoted to language form. Another hypothesis was that the decision task would produce the most complex language. Although, the least accurate performance was for the narrative task this was not true for the decision task.

Regarding complexity, the narrative task produced the most complex language, the decision task was in middle, and the personal task produced the least complex language. So, their findings only partly fit into their hypotheses. The findings of the present study,

however, suggest that performance on the decision task was less accurate than the narrative task. Also, the personal task produced the most complex language, the narrative task was in the middle, and the decision task produced the least complex language of all.

In trying to account for some of the discrepancies with Foster and Skehan (1996), two potential explanations present themselves. First of all, the contrast in findings may be due to the nature of the measures used. Foster and Skehan (1996) looked for some aspects of fluency (reformulations, replacements, repetitions, pauses, and hesitations), complexity (c-units and syntactic variety), and accuracy (error-free clauses) in detail, whereas the present study used a more global measure of aspects of performance. A second explanation, however, focuses on the modality of tasks. Foster and Skehan (1996) used oral tasks. In their study participants were required to *tell* their partners how to get to his/her home from school and to turn off a gas cooker that had been left on, or to *tell* a story, based on a series of pictures, to their partners. However, in the present study participants were required to *write* what they ought to say to their friend. As Skehan (1998) points out, spoken tasks will permit less time to be allocated to on-line planning and attention to form. In contrast, written tasks will enable learners to marshal their resources to some extent and, as a result, have some degree of choice in how they allocate their attention.

Another finding was that there was a significant interaction between task and planning time. This finding agrees with Tavakoli and Skehan (2005). It means that giving learners time before performing the task gives them the opportunity to think about what they are going to write. Also, the unstructured tasks, in which learners do not have any ready-made schemata, consume more time to perform than the structured tasks.

Also, no significant differences were found between planning males group and planning females group, and also between no-planning males group and no-planning females group. Therefore, here, gender variable had no effect on learners' performance. Similarities of groups' performance in terms of gender resulted in no significant interaction between gender variable and the other two variables (planning and task).

This study provides inquiry into the effect of different variables on learners' performance in the area of task-based instruction. Future research should explore the impact of task type and planning condition on learners' performance expanding the number of task types and planning conditions examined. Additional research is also needed to investigate the role of other learner variables (such as age, ethnic background, etc) on task performance. Such research has potential implications for language teaching pedagogy and would be of great interest for most language instructors, test constructors, and curriculum designers.

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