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تاثیر زمانبندی و پیچیدگی فعلیت محوری بر روی بیان شفاهی فراگیران زبان دوم

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چکیده

تحقیقات زیادی تاثیر پیچیدگی فعلیت محوری را بر روی عملکرد زبانی فراگیران از بعد روانی و درستی کلام مورد بر رسی قرار داده است. علیرغم این,به تاثیر پیچیدگی فعلیت محوری در کنار عامل زمانبند توجه زیادی نشده است. برای بررسی تاثیر پیچیدگی فعلیت محوری و زمانبندی بر روی بیان شفاهی فراگیران 40 نفر از زبان آموزانیکه در کانون شاهد تبریز مشغول به تحصیل بوده اند بصورت تصادفی انتخاب کرده و به 2 گروه زمانبندی شده و بدون زمانبندی تقسیم کردیم. به منظور گردآوری اطلاعات یک تصویر پیچیده از نوع فعلیت محور مبتنی بر تصمیم گیری مورد استفاده قرار گرفت. گروه 1 با محدودیت زمانی 10 دقیقه (جهت آماده شدن) این تکلیف را انجام دادند و گروه 2 همان تکلیف را بدون هیچ محدودیت زمانی انجام دادند. اطلاعات, ضبط شده و سپس بصورت متن درآمدند و به اعداد خام تبدیل شدند. برای تجزیه و تحلیل این اعداد از روش آماری استفاده شد. نتایج تحلیل آماری نشان داد که درستی کلام گروه 2 بهبود بسیار کمی داشته اما به لحاظ روانی کلام گروه 2 (بدون هیچ محدودیت زمانی) از گروه 1 پیشی گرفتند. این تحقیق همچنین راهکارهایی برای محققان حوزه فراگیری زبان دوم و تدوین گران مطالب درسی در حوزه تعلیم و تربیت دارد.

لغات کلیدی: فعلیت محوری, روش مبتنی بر فعلیت محوری, پیچیدگی فعلیت محوری, زمانبندی, درستی, روانی

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The Effects of Planning Time and Task Complexity on Second Language Learners' Oral Discourse

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*Dedicated to My Niece **Zahra***

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Abstract

There has been a large body of research investigating the effects of task complexity on learner production in terms of accuracy and fluency. However, the effects of task complexity along with planning time condition was not investigated so much. To investigate the effects of planning time and task complexity on learners' oral discourse, 40 male intermediate EFL learners studying in Shahed Language Center, Tabriz, Iran were randomly assigned into two experimental groups. For the purpose of the data collection, a complex version of decision-making task was employed. Group A did the complex task with a limited time of about 10 minutes and group B did the same task with no time limitation. The data were recorded, transcribed and coded. To interpret the data an ANOVA measurement was employed. The results of the statistical analysis revealed that there was a little amount of increase in accuracy attributed to the unplanned group and in terms of fluency the unplanned group outperformed the planned one. This study has a number of pedagogical implications for SLA researchers and syllabus designers.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

When L2 learners speak, the speed of their production, the complexity of their utterances, and the accuracy of their speech is influenced by a number of factors, such as the anxiety learners may feel as they speak, their proficiency, or the degree of cognitive complexity of the task that learners are trying to perform and time pressure. Researchers have so far found that the case is different from simple to complex task performance. This study is specifically concerned with the design features of oral tasks which contribute to their different degrees of accuracy and fluency. As far as possible, in Cognition Hypothesis (Robinson 2001a, 2001b, 2005a), the cognitive complexity is isolated from other factors, and the effects of its manipulation along with planning time on production measured. The effects of various types of planning time on oral task performance have been investigated with reference to three aspects f language production-fluency, complexity, and accuracy (Skehan, 1996). These three aspects of learners' performance can be seen as constituting a learners' language proficiency. That is, it is assumed that a proficient speaker will be able to perform tasks fluently and accurately, using complex language (Ellis, 2009).

As a consequence, I became interested in operationalizing the present project to find out how learners of English as a foreign language benefit from task complexity and planning time variables. Also this investigation addresses a general question that is at the heart of much research in applied linguistics and second language acquisition (SLA): what makes a second or foreign language (L2) user, or a native speaker for that matter, a more or less proficient language user? Many researchers and language practitioners believe that the constructs of L2 performance and L2 proficiency are multi-componential in nature, and that their principal dimensions can be adequately, and comprehensively, captured by the notions of complexity, accuracy and fluency (Skehan 1998; Ellis 2003, 2008; Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005). Therefore, complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) have figured as major research variables in applied

linguistic research. CAF have been used both as performance descriptors for the oral and written assessment of language learners as well as indicators of learners' proficiency.

1.2. Background of the study

In recent years there have been considerable research interests in tasks, both as a construct and as a research basis. Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001) say pedagogy involves decisions by teachers, action by learners and perceptible outcomes, both immediate and over time. In task-based language teaching, tasks are considered as the main unit of analysis. As a result, they are designed to engage learners in authentic communication on the grounds that engagement in communicating meaning is likely to lead to implicit learning (Gilabert, 2007). Since 1970s, a large number of studies have turned to examine and investigate tasks in the realm of L2 performance (Bygate 1999, 2001; Foster and Skehan, 1999; Gilabert, 2005, 2007; Ortega, 1995, 1999, 2005; Rahimpour, 1997, 2002, 2003, 2007, 2009; Robinson, 1995, 2001, 2003, 2005; Skehan and Foster, 1999). Besides, Skehan (1996) distinguishes three different dimensions of task outcome, i.e. accuracy, fluency and complexity (Skehan, 1998, 2001; Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2003b, 2005a, 2007a), therefore, researches undertaking task has been primarily concerned with analyzing the effects of task design and performing variables on the accuracy, fluency and complexity of language in oral production.

One of the greatest advantage of tasks is that they allow learners to achieve their communicative potential of the encoded semantic resource (Widdowson, 2003) and the most important role for a language task is to make learners face with certain language problems in completing the task (Long, 1985).

In task-based research four major approaches can be distinguished (Robinson, 2007; Skehan, 2003):

1. a psychological, interactional approach, influenced strongly by the work of Long (1985, 1989);
2. a sociocultural approach, represented by the work of researchers like Lantolf (2000) and Swain (Swain, 1998; Swain and Lapkin, 2001);
3. a structure-focused approach, where tasks are designed to elicit the use of a particular structure feature (Loschky and Bley-Vroman, 1993; VanPatten, 1996);
4. a cognitive, information-theoretic approach (Skehan, 1998, 2001, 2003; Skehan and Foster, 1999, 2001; Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005, 2007).

In this study and in the latter approach, the main focus is on the information processing stages and the cognitive processes and attentional resources used by learners during task completion.

Among three aspects of task-based pedagogy, complexity, difficulty, and condition, to Robinson (2001a) task complexity is the task dependent and proactively manipulatable cognitive demand of tasks. Among increasing number of different models of task complexity (Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Candlin, 1987; Long, 1985; Prabhu, 1987; Rahimpour, 1997, 1999), Robinson's model (2001b, 2007a), seems to the investigator to meet the requirements of what Robinson (2001b) calls theoretically motivated, empirically substantiable, and pedagogically feasible sequencing criteria to syllabus design.

Beside this task design, Robinson (2001a) in his model, included planning time in the resource-dispersing as a variable which affect the performance of a task as well as L2 proficiency. Practically it can help inform the methodology of task-based teaching, where one of the options available for implementing tasks concerns whether or not to allow students time to plan and, if so, what kind of planning and for what length of time. Generally there are two main types of planning time, Pre-task planning or strategic planning and within task

planning or online planning. The former emphasize on how planning that takes place during performance of a task affects production while the latter points to the influence of planning prior to performance and its result in production (Ellis, 2003).

There have also been growing bodies of research in this area. Researchers such as (Skehan and Foster, 1996, 2005; Foster and Skehan, 1999; Lynch and Maclean, 2000, 2001; Bygate, 1996, 2001; Rutherford, 2001; Wigglesworth, 2001; Yuan and Ellis, 2003; Tavakoli and Skehan, 2005; Sangarun, 2005; Sheppard, 2006; Norris and Ortega, 2006a; Gilabert, 2007; Guara-Tavares, 2008) all investigated the effects of different types of planning time on different aspects of L2 learners' performance as mentioned before mainly in terms of fluency, complexity, and accuracy. Although all the above researchers share the common features in their investigation and achieved to some degree similar results, but some of them obtained different results in their studies which in turn motivated the present researcher to investigate the area again in different context.

1.3. Significance of the study

As mentioned above, tasks form the basic unit of analysis of the curriculum; therefore no doubt that cognitive; information-theoretic factors of different tasks (task complexity) have the prime importance in task-based instruction, as it is believed that language learning and teaching should be sequenced by means of tasks (Gilabert, 2005; Robinson, 2001b, 2007a). Robinson (2001a) relates task complexity, cognitively defined, to choices in syllabus design and to other issues in the implementation and assessment of task-based instruction.

Norris and Ortega (2006b in Ellis & Yuan, 2009, p. 477) note that a 'research synthesis always includes an explicit articulation of how the relevant literature was searched and how

primary studies were selected for review'. In this case, I searched relevant publications for experimental studies that compared L2 learners' performance of meaning-centered tasks on the two aspects of language use (fluency, and accuracy) in terms of how much strategic planning was effective. Thus a key criterion for inclusion was the presence of a no-planning as well as one planning group. There are also some other reasons behind this research including types of planning whether pressured or unpressured and learners' fluency and accuracy to integrate them with task complexity to see how they affect L2 learners' performances. Therefore the current paper aims at cast some lights on what the following researchers say:

Ellis (2009, p. 505) commented on the novelty of the subject as follows:

> One of the most serious limitation is the lack of information about what learners actually do while they plan. One or two studies have examined the planning strategies that learners adopt during planning but to date only Ortega (1999) has attempted to relate these to their actual performance of the task.

Ellis (2003, p. 131) argues that 'Clearly more research is needed to indentify how planning time interacts with task design variables, implementational procedures and learner factors.' Since his study lasted 10 weeks, Bygates (2001) addresses another limitation as '…the lack of a longitudinal study of the effects of planning on L2 performances.'

As a result, the main focus of this paper is the three aspects of language use in terms of how the above variables impact separately on fluency and accuracy.