

INVESTIGATING PRE-TASK PLANNING TIME IN L2 SPEECH PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT: The present study investigated pre-task planning effects on L2 speech production. The participants were 7 public school learners of English as an L2 who, in the context of a task-based lesson, were given one minute to plan their performance of an L2 oral task. The analysis of participants' planning notes, speech samples and interviews show that pre-task planning time has a beneficial effect on speaking and that learners tend to implement their plans, despite their reported perception that planning time is useless.

KEYWORDS: L2 speech production; task-based approach; L2 acquisition

RESUMO: Este estudo investigou os efeitos do planejamento prévio no desempenho oral em L2. Os participantes do estudo foram 7 aprendizes de inglês como L2 em uma escola pública. No contexto da abordagem de ensino baseada em tarefas, os participantes foram solicitados a planejar o desempenho de uma tarefa oral, por um minuto. A análise das anotações feitas pelos participantes durante o

planejamento, bem como de sua produção oral e das entrevistas demonstrou que o planejamento prévio é benéfico à produção oral e que os alunos tendem a implementar o que planejam, apesar de afirmarem não perceber utilidade no planejamento.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: produção oral em L2; ensino baseado em tarefas; aquisição de L2

1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of the present study is to investigate pre-task planning effects on advanced learners' foreign language (L2)¹ oral production. To this endeavor, the present study builds upon research on the task-based approach and on one of its major concepts, the concept of planning. Drawing on the existing research which examines the nature of planning and its actual use by L2 learners, the present study aims at providing data to enrich the current literature in this field by pursuing the following research questions:

1. Do L2 learners implement their plans during the production of speech?
2. What do L2 learners report they do during planning time prior to oral performance?
3. How do L2 learners evaluate the opportunity for planning and their subsequent oral performance?
4. Is there a relationship between learners' reported evaluation and their oral production in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity?

¹ In the present study, the terms second language and foreign language will be used interchangeably and will be referred to as L2.

This paper is organized into four main sections. In the first section, we provide the theoretical background to the present study. In the second section, recent studies investigating planning and task performance are reviewed. The third section presents the method, participants, procedures for data collection, and analysis. The results obtained and the discussion of the findings are presented in section four. Finally, in our final remarks we discuss the limitations of the study and make suggestions for future research.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 THE TASK-BASED APPROACH (TBA):

In his account of task-based instruction, Skehan (2003) remarks that the pedagogic developments of the 1970s and 1980s, characterized generically as communicative approaches to the teaching of L2, had the "communicative activity" as the core concept. In the 1980s, the notion of "communicative activity" which, according to Skehan (2003) was then vaguely defined, was slowly replaced by the notion of "task", despite the similarities between the events that one term and the other described. It was also during the 1980s that the weak and strong views of a task-based approach to the teaching of L2 appeared. In the weak view of a task-based approach, the task is peripheral to the teaching and learning processes, serving as an auxiliary tool in structure-based teaching. In this view, learning is a result of automatization and practice. On the other hand, in the strong view of a task-based approach to L2 teaching, the task is a central component because of the acquisitional processes it engages under conditions of interaction, recasting, and focus-on-form. But what is a task? Although there is no consensus on what might qualify as a task, Bygate, Skehan & Swain (2001, p. 11) propose the following core definition for the term: "a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective." Seeing the task as a workplan (BREEN, 1989; ELLIS,

2000), Skehan (1998, p.38) defines a task as: “an activity in which: meaning is primary, there is some sort of relationship to the real world; task completion has some priority; and the assessment of the task performance is in terms of task outcome.” In the present study, we adopt Skehan’s cognitively-oriented definition of task and assume, therefore, that task features as well as performance conditions may impact on L2 learners’ acquisitional processes.

An important assumption in a task-based approach is that learning should be based on language use and related to form and meaning to be successful (WILLIS; WILLIS, 2001; SKEHAN, 1996; 1998). Therefore, not only is focus on meaning paramount, but also a focus on form. According to Skehan (1996), focus on meaning is not sufficient to foster the acquisition of an L2. Based on psycholinguistic evidence, the author claims that, if learning is to be achieved, it is necessary to provide learners with explicit instruction, to manipulate the allocation of their attentional resources, and to consider the different language processing modes (i.e. rule- and exemplar-based). Thus, Skehan proposes that in order to advocate for task-based instruction and its value to interlanguage (IL) development, it is necessary to focus on three different goals of language performance: (i) fluency - “the capacity to cope with real-time communication” (FOSTER; SKEHAN, 1996, p. 304); (ii) accuracy – error-free performance (SKEHAN, 1996, p. 46), and (iii) complexity - the use of more elaborated and organized language with greater variety of syntactic patterning (FOSTER; SKEHAN, 1996).

As various studies in the area suggest (FOSTER; SKEHAN, 1996; SKEHAN; FOSTER, 2001 and 2005), a focus on meaning leads learners to achieve higher levels of fluency, whereas a focus on form leads learners to achieve higher levels of accuracy. Nevertheless, if the three goals are to be achieved, task-based teaching may seek to find a balance between meaning and form. This balance may be achieved through cycles of organized activities which include a focus

on form and a focus on communication (VAN PATTEN, 1990; SKEHAN, 1996; 1998).

Based on the above mentioned goals, Skehan (1996) proposes a framework divided into three main stages: the pre-task, the during-task, and the post-task phases.

Briefly put, the pre-task phase consists of activities that promote restructuring and aim at activating new and existing language that will be necessary for task performance, reducing its cognitive load. This can be done, according to Skehan, through a series of consciousness-raising (CR) activities and the allowance of time to plan the main task. The during-task phase refers to the performance of the task itself, which should not be too difficult nor too easy. If tasks require excessive cognitive effort, learners may simply “communicate any sort of meaning” (SKEHAN, 1996, p. 55). If they are too easy, learners may get bored. Task difficulty can be manipulated by lowering level of difficulty (e.g. using visual or written support), or by increasing it (e.g. introducing a surprise element). Finally, task outcomes can be influenced by post-task activities (SKEHAN, 1996; SKEHAN; FOSTER, 1999). Skehan suggests that when learners know there will be a post-task activity, they tend to readdress the way their attentional resources is used during the performance of the main task. In Skehan’s framework, teachers can manipulate the way learners’ attention is directed during task performance by having in mind, before the task is done, whether they wish learners to produce fluent, accurate or complex speech. Learners’ allocation of attention affects the goals of fluency, accuracy and complexity in different ways, depending on the type of task being performed and on how learners interpret it.

Finding out how a balanced performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity can be achieved and how this balance fosters language acquisition and use has been the aim of a good number of recent studies. These studies have investigated these 3 aspects of task performance in terms of degree of familiarity (BYGATE, 1999), pre-task and online planning time (MEHNERT, 1998; ORTEGA,

1999; 2005) and degree of task complexity (IWASHITA et al, 2001; ROBINSON, 2005; GILABERT, 2006). Of immediate interest to the present study are the studies addressing planning time and task performance, some of which are discussed next.

2.2 PLANNING TIME AND PERFORMANCE

There already exists a consensus on the facilitative role of planning in L2 oral performance, although acquisition-related predictions that link planning to interlanguage development are not clear-cut (ORTEGA, 1999). In this sense, Foster and Skehan (1996), in a seminal article, investigated predictions regarding the effects of different tasks and different implementation conditions for each task on the variables of fluency, accuracy and complexity. The study reported strong effects of planning on fluency and complexity. However, more accurate performance was found among the less detailed planners. Foster and Skehan (1996) also found that effects of planning were greater in the Narrative and Decision-Making tasks than in the Personal Information task.

Mehnert (1998) explored the effects of varying the amount of time available for planning on the three goals of speech production: fluency, accuracy and complexity. Planning conditions comprised a non-planning time group (the control group), a 1-minute planning group, a 5-minute planning group, and a 10-minute planning group. Participants were required to perform two monologic tasks: (i) an instruction task (more familiar, structured, requiring the use of future or present verbal tenses), and (ii) an exposition task (less familiar, unstructured and requiring the use of past tense). Results indicated an overall performance improvement for planners. Positive effects for accuracy were found only in the speech of 1-minute planners, whereas for ten-minute planners these effects vanished in favor of complexity. Regarding fluency, planners produced higher speech rates and less pausing time than non-planners. However, the hypothesis that the greater the amount of planning time available,

the more fluent the outcome, was only partially supported. Mehnert concluded that there might be a competition for attentional resources in speech production. That is, when the production of less structured language is required, attention seems to be directed to fluency and accuracy. On the other hand, when more complex structures are needed learners tend to allocate their attentional resources to complexity, thus leaving fewer resources (or any) available to produce accurate and fluent speech simultaneously.

Ortega (1999) set out to investigate the cognitive and attentional processes engaged by learners during planning to check whether the availability of planning time would promote a focus on form prior to and during task performance. Ortega found that under planning conditions, learners produced more fluent and complex speech and that planning before task performance tends to increase learners' attention to form even when they are not explicitly directed to that. Ortega (1999) states that learners reported a concern with morphosyntactic aspects of language during planning and for planning at the utterance level.

Ortega (2005) explored the possible benefits planning may have on learners' L2 oral performance through the investigation of the strategic processes carried out by non-native speakers while planning. She observed that strategies such as retrieval, rehearsal, and translating were widely used by learners during planning. In the study, most learners reported that planning had definitely helped them tell the story in a more efficient way and feel less stressed during task performance. Moreover, learners showed a tendency to use their planning time to improve retrieval and rehearsal operations. In other words, learners tried to recall particular lexical items and grammar rules needed to convey their intended messages and memorize them for further performance (ORTEGA, 2005). In terms of individual differences in learners' orientation, Ortega (2005) noticed that some learners, who were firstly considered to display a strong communicative orientation, seemed to accept error and error correction as inherent to their condition (non-native speakers of

the language) and as part of a gradual process of L2 learning. They also seemed to accept their lack of accuracy as a temporal stage of learning rather than a breakdown in communication. In addition, they tended to be skeptical of the advantages of planning (ORTEGA, 2005). On the other hand, advanced learners with confessed natural predisposition towards accuracy reported being anxious about making mistakes and showed to be less concerned with the impact of their performance on the listener. Finally, Ortega (2005) suggests a review of the traditional dichotomy of 'attention to form' versus 'attention to meaning' during meaningful L2 production due to the fact that learners seem not to be able to keep both aspects apart. As explained by her, learners apparently "pay attention to form and meaning simultaneously, holding in long term memory considerations regarding the message to be conveyed and the essential formal sources to convey it" (pg.106).

3 METHOD

3.1 CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

In the present study we set out to investigate the behavior of advanced L2 learners of English during planning of oral performance. The participants of the present study were 7 English learners, high school students from a public school in Florianópolis, in the state of Santa Catarina, southern Brazil. At the time of data collection, their ages ranged from 16 to 17 years.

At the public school where data was collected, learners of the same grade are assigned to different English groups according to their proficiency in the English language, which is determined after a placement test applied in the beginning of the school year. Learners selected for the present study were at the advanced level of the L2. In a study like ours, it was necessary to have more proficient learners because of the complexity of the task proposed. The regular teacher

of the selected participants, who is also one of the researchers of the present study, implemented the task-based lesson planned for data collection. All learners signed an informed consent to participate in the study (see Appendix C).

3.2 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

3.2.1 Materials and Tasks

In this study, the framework for the implementation of tasks, proposed by Skehan (1996), was adopted, since it takes into account the need of a balanced focus on both meaning and form. Reiterating, it is through this balance that, as suggested by Skehan (1996), the three goals of communication – fluency, accuracy and complexity – can be achieved. For the sake of answering the four research questions pursued by the present study, the pre-task and during-task phases of Skehan's framework were implemented in a sequence of 3 English classes. We turn now to the description of the activities carried out in the pre-task phase – subsection 3.2.1.1. In subsection 3.2.1.2, we report the data collection procedures used in the during-task phase.

3.2.1.1 Pre-task

The pre-task stage was divided into 4 sub-stages carried out in 2 classes due to the fact that each class in the selected school lasts only 40 minutes.

In the first class, and following the course plan, the teacher presented the topic of the unit – dreams – as proposed in the learners' course book. The objective of this first stage was to brainstorm vocabulary concerning the topic as well as provide learners with the opportunity to access and/or reactivate information already stored in memory and have them engage with the content of the task they were about to perform (SKEHAN, 1998). Afterwards, learners were asked to write an essay telling a dream they had had. For this, the

teacher explicitly told them to make use of the simple past tense. The essay should be turned in in the following meeting, when the second, third and fourth sub-stages of the pre-task stage took place. In this class, the teacher collected the essays and implemented the other 3 sub-stages which aimed at pushing learners to focus on language structures possibly needed to perform the main task (a narrative) through deductive/implicit learning. The teacher made use of the following three pre-tasks: (1) a speaking, (2) a listening and, (3) a reading pre-task.

In the speaking pre-task, learners were presented with six incomplete stories and, in pairs, were required to complete the narratives orally using their imagination and creativity. In the listening pre-task, they were asked to listen twice to two stories of the previous pre-task in order to identify which ones of the six stories were being told. Learners were also required to take notes and to retell the two stories. Finally, in the third task, a reading activity was proposed. In this activity, learners were supposed to read 13 sentences concerning three different pictures, which were provided as a visual support, and try to put the events in a chronological order.

The pre-tasks described above, specially the reading one, were implemented so as to make learners direct their attention to particular language structures generally used to tell a story. The role of the teacher in this pre-task phase was to guide students on what they should focus on and help them with the necessary consciousness-raising information to accomplish this goal. Taken together, the objectives of the pre-task phase were: (i) to reduce the possible cognitive load of the main task to be performed later on; (ii) to familiarize learners with the task; (iii) to promote learners' awareness of the language to be used in the main task and consequently, (iv) to lead them to better performance (SKEHAN, 1998).

Following Mehnert (1998), the present study included 1-minute planning time as a condition in which learners were asked to think about aspects of the task they were about to perform (aspects of meaning and/or form) and make notes about them.

3.2.1.2 During task

The during-task stage was carried out in the third class, one day after the teacher had completed the pre-task stage. Learners were taken to a language laboratory and were required to record a dream they had had as if they were in a psychologist office. This task was selected because, as suggested by Lennon (1990), narratives are a usual modality of spoken language, being familiar to most language users. Also, according to Ortega (1999), story-retelling tasks seem appropriate to collect oral data "... because narratives are familiar to most learners and can be manipulated naturally so as to be monologic rather than interactive in nature, and because there is a long tradition of using story-retelling in SLA research" (p. 122). The fact that learners were asked to imagine they were in a psychologist office was thought of as a strategy to make the task seem more naturalistic and thus engage learners in more "genuinely communicative" behavior (ORTEGA, 2005, p. 80).

In order to perform this task, learners were instructed to speak only in English, make use of any vocabulary they had available and try to tell it as accurately as possible (see Appendix A for instructions to participants). In addition, learners were supposed to narrate the same dream they had written for the pre-task activity. The speech samples were recorded individually and in separate booths. During the performance of the task, learners were allowed to use the notes taken in their 1-minute planning time because our main interest was to investigate whether learners actually implemented what they had planned.

3.2.2 Retrospective interview

For the sake of the present study, a retrospective interview was conducted with participants immediately after the performance of the task (ORTEGA, 1999). As explained by Ortega, this procedure allows us to examine what learners do when they are provided with

time to plan prior to task completion and to collect information concerning learners' focus of attention and communicative priorities during task performance.

The retrospective interview was designed by the researchers themselves and aimed at gathering evidence to support research questions 1, 2 and 3. They were conducted in learners' native language (Portuguese) in order to ensure as much clarity as possible in learners' answers. The interview consisted of 8 questions. However, only the first five questions were submitted to analysis (see Appendix B for the questions of the retrospective interview).

3.2.3 Data analysis

This study analyzed the following sources of data: students' written planning notes, the transcription of students' L2 speech production (their narratives), and students' responses to the retrospective interview. Students' written planning notes were compared to the transcriptions of their narratives, i. e., the dreams they told. The students' responses to the retrospective interview were analyzed qualitatively and helped us to understand participants' points of view regarding the planning time.

Participants' L2 speech production was assessed in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency. For the purposes of the present study, complexity was defined as learners' willingness to make use of more complex language structures, by taking risks and testing new hypothesis (SKEHAN; FOSTER, 2001) and was operationalized as the total number of subordinate clause per a hundred words (SKEHAN, 1996). Accuracy was defined as speech free "from error, based on whatever language is used" (FOSTER; SKEHAN, 1996, p. 304). Accuracy was calculated by counting the total number of errors per a hundred words produced, excluding errors immediately corrected by the speaker (FORTKAMP, 2000; LEVELT, 1989). For the individual analysis of this variable, only morphosyntactic errors and inadequate lexical choices were considered (VASQUEZ, 2004).

Finally, fluency was taken as learners' ability to mobilize their IL system so as to produce speech in real time (SCHMIDT, 1992). In the present study, fluency was assessed by the total number of words produced by each speaker, including self-repetitions and corrections. The total number of words produced by each participant was then divided per the total time each participant talked, thus indicating the participant's speech rate.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section reports the qualitative and quantitative results carried out in order to answer the four research questions pursued by the present study. Findings and discussion will be presented following each one of the research questions.

Research question 1: Do L2 learners implement their plans during the production of speech on line?

The results show that learners tend to implement their plans during L2 speech performance. Although reporting that planning is not useful to their performance, the analysis of participants' notes and speech samples show that most were able to make use of what they had planned prior to task performance, as can be seen in the extracts below:

Part.1 (interview): "...to tell you the truth, it wasn't very useful"²

Part.1 (written notes): Ship, Spiders, Run, Fight, Almost win, Wake up

Part.1 (speech sample): "...I was in a big ship...I was being followed by one big spider...I started running...there were many spiders many spiders...running behind me...I stopped running and

² For the purposes of this report, participants' planning notes and excerpts from the interviews were translated by the researchers.

decided to fight the spiders...I started fighting...I was almost winning my fight...my mom...woke me up...

Part.6 (interview): "...[planning] doesn't make much difference..."

Part.6 (written notes): Missed the plane because of traffic. A classmate and I. The plane crashed. And everybody dies, even a great friend, José, I think.

Part.6 (speech sample): "...I and others co colleges...stay in the traffic and we can't catch the plane...the plane crash...the name of the best friend...I think it's José ..."

Part.7 (interview): "it didn't make much difference because I didn't use it"; "...I ended up forgetting all I had planned when I started to talk..."

Part.7 (written notes): Monday, snake, a lot of them, there were kids playing, stay away. I'd find a place without snake sleep.

Part.7 (speech sample): "...Monday I had a dream with snakes...there were a lot of them...some kids play...with snakes...wanted to stay away...I find some places...there weren't snakes...I found...I found a bed and so I I sleep..."

Quadro 1 - Participants' individual planning

Participants	1-MINUTE PLANNING
1	Ship, Spiders, Run, Fight, Almost win, Wake up
2	Spiritual, preaching, gospel, Jesus, pulpit, salvation, preacher
3	I dream with the best friend of my boyfriend. We are in the studio of musical band, when he kiss me. I'm...
4	When I woke up in my dream there where strange people. I started running and I locked myself
5	I really don't remember. I just remember simple things like a day that my team was winning the Brazilian championship. I was in Maracana. Gol
6	Missed the plane because of traffic. A classmate and I. The plane crashed. And everybody dies, even a great friend, José, I think.
7	Monday, snake, a lot of them, there were kids playing stay away. I'd find a place without snake sleep.

Additionally, a concern with meaning and form was observed in learners' planning notes. In Ortega (2005), more verbs were found in advanced learners' planning notes than in high intermediate ones. In our study, data analysis revealed the use of key-words under the form of nouns, verbs, adverbial phrases, independent and subordinate clauses. It is also important to highlight that the order of these key pieces of information in each participant's notes was again used in their actual narrative.

Research question 2: What do L2 learners report they do during planning time prior to oral performance?

In order to answer this research question, we devised the following questions to ask participants in the retrospective interview conducted right after task performance: (i) How did you use the time that was given to you to plan your speech? What did you do? What did you think about?³ (ii) Which aspects of your speech production were you concerned with when you planned what to say? and (iii) What were you the most concerned with: what you said or how you said it?

Results show that, regarding the first question, 4 out of 7 learners reported being worried about using the 1-minute planning time to keep information in memory so as to use it when speaking later. This finding corroborates Ortega's (1999), in which learners also applied memory-related strategies while planning. Thus, the issue of remembering figured prominently in learners' responses, as can be observed in the following examples:

Part. 1: "...I selected just few topics so that I wouldn't forget what to say..."

³ (i) Como você utilizou o tempo que lhe foi dado para planejar a sua fala? O que você fez? Em que você pensou? (ii) Com que detalhes da sua fala você se preocupou especificamente ao planejar sua mensagem oral? And (iii) Com o que você mais se preocupou enquanto você contava o seu sonho: com o que você dizia ou com a forma como dizia?

Part. 4: "...I tried to plan the main aspects, those that I remembered, you know? The beginning, the middle, and the end of my dream."

Part. 6: "...I included some important topics..."

Part. 7: "I just wrote a lot of words that I'd remember, such as "stay away" or something that they were doing at the time, but no complete sentences..."

As regards the second question, 3 out of the 7 participants seemed to be more concerned with accuracy. According to Ortega (1999), this might be due to the fact L2 learners start performing the task with different intentions on how to allocate their attentional resources – some may be more meaning-oriented, whereas others more form-oriented.

Another reason for a concern with form may be related to the first substage of the pre-task phase, in which the teacher introduced learners to the topic of the main task (dreams) and asked them to write an essay telling a dream they had had making use of verbs in the past tense. Besides, when learners performed the main task, they were asked to tell the same dream they had written about. Thus, knowing that the teacher had previously advised them to use the Simple Past, they might have felt a need to emphasize form over meaning. This tendency can be seen in the following excerpts from the retrospective interview:

Part. 3: "I tried to speak, I mean, I was more concerned with speaking correctly..."

Part. 5: "I was concerned with using the correct verb tenses..."

Part. 7: "Oh, I wanted to use verbs in the past..."

Three learners reported not being worried about planning details, which might suggest that they were possibly more worried about communicating than using grammar adequately. The following examples seem to support this interpretation:

Part. 1: "No, nothing specific".

Part. 6: "Only the main ideas."

Part. 2: "...no details..."

One participant showed a concern with planning the content of the dream. It is noteworthy that participant 4 also demonstrated making use of memory-related strategies to be able to remember what to say:

Part. 4: "I was concerned with remembering the dream..."

Answers to the third question revealed that most learners – 4 out of 7 – suggested being worried about getting their messages across, that is, about producing meaningful speech. These learners also reported a concern with planning the content of their dreams and writing down general information. Extracts from the retrospective interview seem to support this view:

Part. 2: "I tried to get my message across."

Part. 4: "Yes, I was concerned with conveying my message..."

Part. 6: "I was focusing on meaning."

Part. 1: "I was concerned with what I was saying..."

Conversely, 3 of them reported having paid more attention to how to transmit their messages, indicating a concern for form. It is important to highlight that these learners are the same who reported being concerned with speaking correctly, as evidenced in their answers for question 2, mentioned previously in this section. This inclination to form can be observed in the following extracts from the retrospective interview:

Part. 3: "With how I was speaking..."

Part. 5: "Oh, the form I was speaking..."

Part. 7: "With the form of what I was saying."

In sum, we may conclude that when provided with 1-minute planning time, learners tended to use their time to take notes on the main ideas they would need to communicate afterwards, thus ensuring that the relevant information to complete the task would be kept in memory for further recall. In addition, learners also presented both a concern for meaning and form, corroborating Ortega's (1999) findings.

Research question 3: How do L2 learners evaluate the opportunity for planning and their subsequent oral performance?

Aiming at answering this research question, learners' answers to the following questions of the interview were analyzed: (i) Did you like to have this time to plan your speech? Why? (ii) Do you think that your talk improved with planning time? How?⁴

As regards whether learners liked being given planning time, 4 out of 7 reported having enjoyed the opportunity for planning, as can be observed in the following extracts from the retrospective interview:

Part. 1: "It was interesting because I could remember the dream better..."

Part. 2: "Yes, oh, yes, I did."

Part. 3: "Yes, I did, but I thought it was too short."

Part. 4: "Yes, but I wanted it to be longer, to be able to plan with detail..."

However, despite the fact that these four learners acknowledged they had liked the opportunity for planning, two of them also mentioned the time provided for this pre-task activity was not enough. Participant 4 reported she would have liked to have more time so that she could have planned her speech better.

The other three learners found the 1-minute planning time insufficient and useless. According to the following extracts taken from the retrospective interview, they seemed not to have profited from the time provided:

Part. 5: "No. It was too fast."

Part. 6: "Yes, but it was more helpful before than during planning because before I tried to remember the dream or the story. During planning I wrote only the main facts...it didn't make much of a difference, really."

Part. 7: "Oh, I don't know, it didn't make much difference because, in the end, I didn't use what I had planned."

However, it is important to remember that, the same three participants were found to have implemented their planning notes while performing the speaking task (see results for research question one in the beginning of this section).

When asked whether they felt their speech performance had improved, three learners reported that no improvement was accomplished as a result of the opportunity for planning and two of them stated that the planning-time had no influence in their performance, despite the fact that they actually implemented their notes while telling their dreams. Learners' answers to this question can be seen in the following extracts:

Part. 1: "I think it got worse because with planning I got nervous, I don't know, I felt I had the obligation to say things correctly."

Part. 4: "I think my performance didn't change with planning..."

Part. 5: "No. Honestly, it didn't improve."

Part. 6: "No, I got confused sometimes. I didn't remember some names and some facts."

Part. 7: "I don't know because I ended up forgetting what I had planned when I started to think..."

This finding may indicate participants' high expectation on their own performance, since all of them demonstrated engagement and commitment in performing pre- and during-task activities. Furthermore, as Ortega (2005) suggests, social/affective strategies might also play a role during planning if learners are concerned with the communicative context at hand. Additionally, we may speculate that a retrospective interview carried out immediately after task performance is not likely to foster critical thinking about performance features, since learners of the present study might not be cognitively mature enough to evaluate what they have produced without consciousness raising activities aimed at directing their attention to

⁴ (i) Você gostou de ter esse tempo para planejar a sua fala? Por quê?, and (ii) Você acha que a sua fala melhorou com o planejamento? De que forma?

what was actually done during task completion. Nevertheless, 2 out of 7 participants confirmed they found their oral performance did improve as a result of the planning time, as can be observed in the next extracts:

Part. 2: “Look, I think so, really. I didn’t write much, but I think so. And remembered everything.

Part. 3: “Yes, because it’s always good to think about what we’re going to say...so that it won’t come out as a surprise. So, although the time was short, it was possible to plan and have an idea of what I was going to say.”

Summing up, it seems that the majority of the learners who answered they had being given 1-minute planning time also demonstrated having profited from it. On the other hand, learners who tended to think that the time provided for planning did not help in their subsequent oral performance, or that it did not affect performance at all, also claimed their oral production did not improve.

Research question 4: Is there a relationship between learners’ reported evaluation and their oral production in terms of fluency, accuracy and complexity?

Having found that 5 out 7 participants concluded that planning time did not affect their oral performance, we decided to investigate whether these assertions were related to quantitative aspects of their speech production. Consequently, three dimensions of oral speech were taken into account in the present study: fluency, accuracy and complexity (following Foster & Skehan, 1996). Recapitulating in this study, in each participant’s speech sample, fluency was assessed in terms of speech rate, accuracy was taken as the total number of errors per a hundred words, and complexity was calculated by determining the total number of subordinate clauses per a hundred words, following Fortkamp (2000). The descriptive statistics for the above three measures were computed by using the SPSS software. These results are presented in Table 2:

Table 2 - Descriptive Statistics for fluency (speech rate), accuracy and complexity

	Fluency (SR)	Accuracy (ACC)	Complexity (COM)
M	94,87	9,19	3,13
SD	25,30	6,00	0,74
Min	78,40	1,77	2,36
Max	151,34	16,07	4,56

N=7

As can be seen in Table 2, the highest possible score for the SR variable was 151,34 with a relatively high standard deviation (SD) – 25,30. The variation between the minimum and maximum scores on this variable was over 72-point range, indicating that participants presented a very heterogeneous behavior on this measure. As can be seen in Table 3, 6 out of 7 participants performed under the mean (94,87).

Accuracy presents a relatively lower standard deviation – 6,00 with a mean of 9,19, suggesting that the speech produced by the participants of the present study was to some extent grammatically problematic. It is important to remember that for this variable, the higher scores are the ones which represent the greater indices of grammatical errors. Thus, in order for the oral performance to be considered accurate, these indices should be lower. The variation between the minimum and maximum scores was over 14-point range, indicating, similarly to the fluency variable, a heterogeneous behavior from participants. As can be seen in Table 3, only 4 out of 7 participants performed under the mean.

The complexity (COM) variable seems to have a different profile, since it presented a small mean value – 3,13 – and also the smallest standard deviation score – 0,74 – which suggests a more homogeneous behavior among participants on this measure. The minimum and maximum scores varied over 2 raw scores. As can be seen in Table 3, for this measure, 2 out of 7 participants performed

above the mean, whereas two were very close to the mean. See participants' ranking regarding fluency, accuracy and complexity in Table 3:

Table 3 - Ranking of individual scores on fluency, accuracy, and complexity

Participants	Ordering Fluency (SR)	Participants	Ordering Accuracy (ACC)	Participants	Ordering Complexity (COM)
1	151,34	1	1,77	4	4,56
2	90,81	4	2,48	3	3,57
3	90,38	5	6,25	5	3,12
4	87,69	7	8,77	2	3,06
5	83,48	2	13,26	6	2,63
6	82,01	6	15,78	7	2,63
7	78,40	3	16,07	1	2,36

In sum, results on the three different dimensions of speech production – fluency, accuracy and complexity – seem to support other studies in the area, indicating trade-off effects among these variables. This trend can be seen from the following summary comparing individual scores among participants:

Participant 1: produced more fluent and accurate speech, but less complex language;

Participant 2: produced relatively more fluent speech in relation to the other participants, except for participant 1. This participant also produced relatively more complex language, presenting a score very close to the mean. However, this participant presented less accurate speech;

Participant 3: produced more complex speech in comparison to the other participants, except for participant 1, and more fluent speech in relation to the other participants except for participants 1 and 2. However, this participant presented less accurate language;

Participant 4: produced more complex and accurate speech, but not so fluent. Although this participant was the third one to

have more fluent speech if compared to the other speakers, his ranking in the COM and ACC variables was first and second respectively;

Participant 5: produced less fluent speech, and relatively more complex and accurate language. Even though the COM and ACC variables presented the same order of classification if compared to the participants' scores (third), the score on complexity was almost the same as the mean.

Participant 6: produced less fluent, complex and accurate speech. The participant's scores on the three variables were under the mean.

Participant 7: produced less fluent, less complex and less accurate speech as well, thus being ranked the fourth, fifth and fourth positions, respectively.

According to the results presented above, the fourth question of this study was partially supported, since although some learners reported they had not improved their oral performance during task completion, it was possible to observe that they were able to improve at least some of its aspects (participants 1, 5 and 4). On the other hand, participants who reported they had improved did perform well in some aspects (participants 2 and 3). Finally, participants 6 and 7 reported no improvement during the speaking task, which seems to be confirmed by the results, since these learners presented relatively less improvement than the other participants.

Summing up, trade-off effects among fluency and complexity were found for 4 out of 7 participants: participant 1 displayed more fluent but less complex speech, while participants 2, 4 and 5 were less fluent and more complex. Regarding fluency and accuracy, 4 out of 7 participants presented the same tendency, that is, participant 1 was more fluent and more accurate, while participants 2, 6 and 7 were less accurate and less fluent. In the case of accuracy and complexity, two patterns were found. In the first one, 3 out of 7 participants could not be accurate and complex at the same time – participants 2 and 3 were less accurate but more complex, whereas

participant 1 was more accurate and less complex. The second pattern revealed that participants 4 and 5 were more accurate and complex while participants 6 and 7 were less complex and also less accurate.

5 FINAL REMARKS

In the present study we implemented a task-based lesson in an L2 classroom as a means to investigate the influence of planning on L2 oral performance. More specifically, our interest was to examine what learners do when they plan, what they report they do and most importantly, how they feel about planning and their impressions regarding subsequent performance. Given that L2 speech tends to be slower and present a larger number of pauses and hesitations due to learners underdeveloped L2 knowledge (POULISSE, 1997), planning is likely to be attention-consuming. In this sense, the planning condition implemented in the present study aimed at providing learners an opportunity to prepare their speech in advance so that attentional resources would be freed to be reallocated to other performance aspects.

From the presentation and discussion of the results provided above, the present study seems to corroborate the existence of trade-off effects on L2 oral performance, even when planning time is provided. Overall results suggest that, despite the focus on form given in the pre-task phase, the learners investigated here might have interpreted the task in different ways thus, choosing how to allocate their attentional resources. This finding corroborates Ortega's (2005), which indicate individual differences play a role in the allocation of attention. Although form was somehow in focus during the pre-task phase, learners showed no tendency in favor of meaning or form only and a balance between meaning and form during task performance was found instead. This was also evident through the retrospective interview.

Corroborating Ortega's (2005) results, learners of the present study tended to plan their messages at the utterance level. Few instances of single words were found in the transcriptions of their planning notes. Additionally, it seems that learners' self-perception of planning seems not to fit with the actual implementation of their planning notes. In most cases, learners reported that planning time was useless, that their oral performance had not improved and that they had not been able to use what they had planned. However, it seems clear from the results that this was not the case. Finally, and similarly to Ortega (2005), a strategic behavior was also noticed among participants while planning. Learners made use of rehearsal, retrieval and translation strategies so as to be able to prepare their messages.

One of the main limitations of this study is the very restricted number of subjects, which does not allow for any generalizations of the findings. Another shortcoming of the study was the lack of a control group or another rendering of speech from participants without time for planning so as to compare oral performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Suggestions for further research would be to implement the same task-based lesson with learners from a control group and check for performance differences. Equally interesting would be to have a greater sample size and learners from the intermediate level. This would allow us to have a wider view of the relationship between L2 proficiency and planning.

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