The effect of task complexity in dialogic oral production by Indonesian EFL learners

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The effect of task complexity in dialogic oral production by Indonesian EFL learners

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Abstract

In EFL settings opportunities to practice meaningful use of English are often limited and this is the case in Indonesia – the context of the current study - where teachers often favor traditional approaches to language learning. To address this, task based approaches to language teaching are being promoted internationally as a way to provide opportunities for language learning. This is because the use of tasks in an EFL classroom context provides learners with learning activities that reflect real life situations and language is used by learners in ways that are facilitative of their second language acquisition. However, many English

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language teachers are unsure of which tasks and tasks conditions are best for their learners. Informed by the Cognition Hypothesis (Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005, 2007), this study investigates the effect of manipulating different task conditions, namely planning time and the number of elements on L2 learner performance of dialogic tasks, as measured by complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF). 52 Indonesian learners of English performed four tasks, each involving different task conditions. The results only partially support the predictions of the Cognition Hypothesis. However, they do provide directions for teachers about how to use tasks to potentially promote learners' language performance in terms of complexity, accuracy and fluency.

Key words: The cognition hypothesis, dialogic tasks, complexity, accuracy, and fluency

Introduction

The low levels of ability in spoken English among Asian students, particularly those coming from countries where English is a foreign language (EFL), are due primarily to the anxiety of speaking English and lack of speaking practice both inside and outside the classrooms (Na, 2007; Rahim, Ahmad, & Rosly, 2004; Tsai, 2003). This is also to the case for Indonesian students, the majority of whom have been reported as still being unable to speak English well after a number of years studying the language (Kasihani, 2010; Saragih, 2009; Setiyadi, 2009). This suggests that these learners might not have been provided with the type of learning opportunities that facilitate their development in English.

Task-based approaches (TBA), which primarily focus on meaning rather than on forms, are believed to facilitate learners' development of their language (Samuda and Bygate, 2008). This is because tasks provide learners with activities similar to a natural context and they promote the type of language use argued to facilitate second language acquisition (SLA) (Beaven, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In particular, and according to an interactionist approach (Long, 1996) tasks provide learners with opportunities for interaction and in doing so connects comprehensible input with "internal learner capacities, particularly attention, and output in productive ways" (p. 451-452).

Despite the obvious benefits, TBA have not been widely adopted in Indonesia. Instead, many teachers insist on their 'traditional practice', providing learners with linguistic rules and grammatical exercises rather than engaging them in meaningful speaking activities. As Luciana

(2005) points out, this may be due to teachers' lack of experience with TBA. Even when they attempt to use tasks they are unsure of which ones to use and what tasks conditions are best for their learners. Hence, they need direction to address these concerns and it is one aim of the current study to provide this information.

In recent years, research into TBA within SLA has burgeoned (e.g., Bygate, 2009; Gilabert, 2005; Gilabert, Baron, & Llanes, 2009; Robinson, 2001, 2003, 2005, 2007a; Tavakoli & Foster 2011). In particular, a number of such studies have explored the effect of different task conditions (e.g., task complexity) on learners' language performance, with a number of such studies having been inspired by Robinson's Cognition Hypothesis (2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005, 2007).

The Cognition Hypothesis

To successfully adopt TBA, it is necessary to have learners undertake tasks and do so in an order that enables success. How this might be achieved is outlined by Robinson (2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2011) in his Cognition Hypothesis. A key part of this is the Triadic Componential Framework (2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005, 2007a) which is composed of three parts: task complexity (cognitive factors), task conditions (interactive factors), and task difficulty (learner factors) all of which influence learners' L2 performance as measured by complexity, accuracy and fluency (CAF) as detailed in Figure 1.

Task complexity	**Task conditions**	**Task difficulty**
(Cognitive factors)	(Interactive factors)	**(Learner factors)**
a) resource-directing	a) participation variable	a) affective variables
e.g., +/– few elements	e.g., one-way/two-way	e.g., motivation
+/– here-and now	convergent/divergent	anxiety
+/– no reasoning demands	open/closed	confidence
b) resource-depleting	b) participant variables	b) ability variables
e.g., +/– planning	e.g., gender	e.g., aptitude
+/– single task	familiarity	proficiency
+/– prior knowledge	power/solidarity	intelligence
Sequencing criteria	----------	Methodological criteria
Prospective decisions about task unit		on-line decision about pairs and groups

Figure 1. Robinson's Triadic Componential Framework

According to Robinson, tasks should be designed and sequenced on the basis of task complexity because learner factors cannot be used to predict task difficulty in advance. However, the current study only focuses on the first two of these factors, that is, task complexity and task conditions. Although it is acknowledged that learner factors clearly have a role in task performance, in this study these were controlled rather than investigated.

Task complexity and task conditions, those factors that impact upon interaction and on learner performance are variously defined, as are the elements that make up each. For example, in relation to the element labeled familiarity (which depending on definition can be categorized as either task complexity or task condition) has been interpreted differently by different researchers. For example, Skehan (1998) defines it in terms of cognitive familiarity (i.e., familiarity with topic, discourse genre, and task), whereas Bygate (1999) refers to familiarity in terms of task repetition. On the other hand, Robinson's (2001a) interpretation of task familiarity refers the content of the tasks (e.g., familiarity with a route marked on a map). According to Robinson, learners are more likely to find it easier to perform tasks if they are familiar with the content or the topic of the task. Conversely, they may have difficulties if the content and/or the topic of the task are unfamiliar to them.

In this research the following definitions of 1) Task Complexity; and, 2) Task Conditions have been adopted:

1) Task complexity refers to cognitive factors that can be manipulated to increase or lessen learners' cognitive engagement when learners are performing tasks (Robinson, 2001).

This encompasses those dimensions labeled resource-depleting and resource-directing. With respect to the former, planning time is one key factor. Ellis (2005, p. 3) claims that 'planning is essentially a problem solving activity; it involves deciding what linguistic devices need to be selected in order to affect the audience in the desired way.' Planning is argued to be an effective way to reduce the cognitive load of demanding activities (Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 2003; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan, 1996). Further, it does seem that providing planning time facilitates improvement in learner language performance, as measured by CAF (Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2011; Ellis, 2005, 2009; Gilabert, 2005, 2007a, 2007b; Markee, & Kunitz, 2013; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; Philp, Oliver, & Mackey, 2006; Yuan & Ellis, 2003, 2005).

In relation to the resource-directing dimension Robinson suggests three main components: +/–few elements, +/– reasoning demand, and +/– here and now. Among these, the manipulation of

the number of elements is regarded to be more inclusive than the other two components. This is because tasks which are manipulated according to number of elements may also involve the other two components of the resource-directing dimension, namely, giving reasons (+/– reasoning demands) and using present or past references (+/– here and now). It is also something that teachers can easily manipulate (e.g., adding in or taking away objects in a picture placement task or adding or subtracting differences in a 'spot the difference' task). For these reasons the current study focuses on the manipulation of planning time and a number of elements within the dialogic tasks.

2) Task conditions also involve interactive factors. Robinson (2001, 2003, 2005, 2007) specifies two types of task conditions or interactive factors, namely participation factors (interactional demands) and participant factors (interactant demands). The current study focuses on the first of these, and specifically the interactional demands related to dialogic (i.e., two way) tasks – including those that are simple and those that are more complex (based on the manipulation of task complexity factors, specifically the number of elements – as described above). Two way tasks have been chosen because it is proposed they stimulate learners' active participation in conversation because the communication burden is shared and one speaker does not dominate - ultimately leading to greater gains in learner improvement (Anton, 1999; Bell, 2003; Michel, Kuiken, & Vedder, 2007; Riggenbach, 1989). Again they are also the type of tasks that are readily available in teaching resources that promote communicative language teaching and TBA in particular. In contrast, one-way tasks are less interactive, and hence run counter to the communicative intent of many language classrooms.

Robinson (2003, p. 64) predicts that complex interactive (dialogic or two way) tasks will result in less fluent, but more accurate language production, but that simple dialogic tasks should generate more fluent language production, but decrease in accuracy. Robinson (2003, 2005, 2007) proposes that interactive, complex tasks will trigger learners to produce more comprehension checks and clarification requests which, in turn, will decrease syntactic complexity.

In addition, whilst previous studies based on Robinson's Cognition Hypothesis have mainly been conducted by manipulating only one dimension of Task Complexity, namely either the resource-directing dimension or the resource-depleting dimension, this is not the case in the current study. Usually either the number of elements (i.e., resource-directing dimension), or the "performative or procedural demands" (e.g., providing various amounts or even no planning time) have been manipulated, but not both at the same time. The current study seeks to do both.

A study by Robinson (2001a) is typical of such previous research: Monologic tasks were used and prior knowledge controlled, but the number of elements was adjusted to increase task complexity. The results showed that the complex task resulted in significantly less fluent oral production, but higher lexical complexity than the simple task. However, the complex task did not affect either accuracy or syntactic complexity. According to Robinson (2001a, p. 36), the nature of interactive tasks with many turn-takings and interruptions may "mitigate learners' attempts at using structurally complex language".

In contrast, a study undertaken by Kuiken and Vedder (2007) with 76 adult learners of French with differing proficiency levels found that increasing task complexity along the resource directing dimension did result in more accurate language production. In another study with 42 lower-intermediate students focusing on the resource directing dimension, Gilabert (2007b), manipulated three task components (+/– here and now, +/– few elements, and +/– few reasoning), and found the types of tasks did have a positive effect, not on accuracy, but on self-repair.

As indicated above, most studies have investigated only one dimension of task complexity at a time. Few studies have been conducted where two dimensions have been simultaneously investigated (e.g., +/- number of elements and +/- planning time). One notable exception is the study undertaken by Gilabert (2005) who simultaneously investigated the roles of planning time and present and past activities (here and now). In addition, most studies conducted within the parameters of the Cognition Hypothesis have been undertaken by controlling and using only one aspect of task condition, namely one way (monologic) rather than two way (dialogic) tasks (see Ahmadian & Tavakoli, 2010; Foster & Skehan, 2009; Gilabert, 2005; Kormos & Trebits, 2012; Madarsara & Rahimi, 2015; Robinson, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005, 2007a; Saeedi, Ketabi, & Kazerooni, 2012; Tavakoli & Foster, 2011; Yuan & Ellis, 2003). However, a study undertaken by Michel, et al., (2007) did incorporate both types of tasks. Specifically, an examination was undertaken of the influence of the number of factors (+/– few elements) using both one way and two way tasks. The results showed that increasing task complexity resulted in more accurate, but less fluent oral production. Furthermore, the dialogic tasks triggered more accurate and more fluent oral production, but the production of syntax was less complex. As such the results of the study partially supported the cognition hypothesis.

Therefore, although numerous task-based studies have been conducted in ESL and EFL contexts, including those that manipulated task complexity, few, if any, empirical studies have been

undertaken where this has been simultaneously manipulated along two dimensions (i.e., resource-directing and the resource-depleting) using dialogic tasks rather than monologic tasks. The purpose of the current study is to address this gap.

On this basis, the current research sought to answer the following research question:

To what extent do dialogic tasks manipulated simultaneously along the resource-directing and the resource-depleting dimensions (i.e., planning time and the number of elements) affect the complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) of Indonesian EFL learner production?

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were first year students enrolled in an English Study Program (ESP) at a university in Indonesia. Based on the selection criteria for this program, administered through the national higher education entrance test (SNM-PTN), proficiency levels were deemed to be relatively similar. However, to ensure this was the case, the English proficiency test (EPT) was also administered. Based on these test results, four potential participants were excluded due to them having markedly different EPT scores compared to the remainder of the cohort. In addition, two others were excluded as they participated in the trials of the instruments, and the other two were absent during the data collection without prior notification. This resulted in a total of 52 participants being available for the study: 14 were male and 38 were female and all were aged between 18 and 20 years. They had all formally studied English at high school for six years, and for approximately six months had studied ESP at the university level. However, to ensure their proficiency levels were similar, the English proficiency test (EPT) was administered to 60 potential participants before the research was conducted.

Tasks

The participants completed four tasks in total which were manipulated simultaneously along the resource-directing (i.e., the number of elements, +/– few elements) and the resource-depleting dimensions (i.e., +/– planning time) in the following way:

Task 1 + planning time and + few elements

Task 2 – planning time and + few elements

Task 3 + planning time and –few elements

Task 4 – planning time and – few elements

Following Robinson's categorization of task complexity, the tasks of the current study were developed from the simplest task (Task 1) to the most complex task (Task 4). The topics of the tasks – Blackberry Mobile phones and Houses for Rent – were selected because they reflect the life experiences of the participants. In addition, the topics of the tasks allowed for easy manipulation of the planned and unplanned conditions.

The tasks were piloted and based on this the tasks were amended slightly for clarity. The final versions of the tasks are shown in Appendices 1 – 4.

Procedure

Before the data collection began, the participants were randomly paired. This was done by matching each learner with the person who appeared next on the attendance document. Next, each pair performed the tasks with the researcher in attendance and their roles as speakers the speakers (A and B) were alternated in all four levels of tasks. The tasks were undertaken by all the pairs in sequential order, starting with the two simple tasks (Tasks 1 & 2) and then followed by the complex tasks (Tasks 3 & 4). Each task was performed on average for 8 minutes. The shortest duration for performing the task was 2 minutes and 12 seconds (Task 1) and the longest duration was 15 minutes and 16 seconds (Task 4). As the learners performed the tasks, they were audio recorded using a digital recorder. These recordings were then transcribed using regular orthography and coded for various CAF measures as described in section 2.4.1.

Data Analysis

Coding

The participants' oral production were coded and then analyzed on the basis of CAF. To undertake the coding, the participants' utterances were coded manually, in which the utterances were scrutinized and then designated a coding according to each aspect of CAF measure. For example, the clause for the complexity measure in terms of syntactic complexity was coded by "AS" referring to the analysis of speech units. This procedure was also applied to Accuracy and Fluency measures.

The measures adopted in this study were similar to those used by Michel et al. (2007) and included:

Complexity: Both syntactic and lexical complexity were calculated and done so in the following way:

1) Syntactic Complexity was calculated manually by determining the AS-Units (the analysis of speech units). This was used instead of T or C-Units because the interactional nature of the data meant that it consisted of many non-syntactic segments (Foster, Tonkin, & Wigglesworth, 2000; Norris & Ortega, 2009).
2) Lexical Complexity was calculated in two ways:
   i. Percentage of Lexical Words to a Total Number of Words using the Conversation Analysis Mode of CHILDES (MacWhiney, 2000).
   ii. Guiraud's Index of Lexical Richness was also calculated using CHILDES. Both measures of Lexical Complexity were commonly used in the previous studies (Gilabert 2005; Michel et al. 2007).

Accuracy was calculated manually by determining three aspects as shown in Table 1:

Table 1
Accuracy Measures

No	Accuracy Measures
1	The percentage of Error-Free clauses $\frac{\text{Number of Error-Free AS-units}}{\text{Number of AS-Units}} \times 100$
2	1) Percentage of Self-Repairs was calculated as: $\frac{\text{Number of Self-Repairs}}{\text{Number of Errors}} \times 100$
3	Percentage of Repaired Errors to Unrepaired Errors: $\frac{\text{Number of Repaired Errors}}{\text{Number of Unrepaired Errors}} \times 100$

Fluency was again calculated manually, ascertaining firstly the Unpruned Speech Rate A and then Pruned Speech Rate B as presented in Table 2 (Gilabert, 2005; Yuan & Ellis, 2003).

1) To calculate Speech Rate A, the number of syllables used per minute was determined, with the following rules applied. In the current study, a syllable is taken to refer to any "syllable type" of English as elaborated by McKay (2004). These syllable types include a single

vowel (V), and vowel consonant clusters, such as, VC, CV, CVC, CVCC, CCVCC, and CCCVCCC.

2) Speech Rate B was also calculated in a similar way to Speech Rate A, but syllables which appeared as repetitions, self-corrections, false starts, and in Indonesian or local words were excluded.

Table 2
Fluency Measures

No	Fluency Measures
1	Speech Rate A $\frac{\text{Number of Syllables}}{\text{Total number of seconds}} \times 60$
2	Speech Rate B $\frac{\text{Number of Syllables}}{\text{Total number of second}} \times 60$

Reliability

Twenty percent of the data were re-coded by a second rater. Inter-rater reliability was then calculated for each measure, showing sufficiently high levels of reliability (i.e., percentage agreement was 85% or higher). (See Appendix 5 for individual scores).

Statistical analysis

The CAF measures for each of the four tasks were compared using Repeated Measures Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) (Pallant, 2007). The comparisons were then made according to the characteristics of the tasks (i.e., +/- planning time and +/- few elements). Multivariate analysis was then used to examine the effects of the four levels of the tasks on the participants' spoken performance in terms of CAF.

Results

CAF measures for the Four Tasks

As can be seen in Table 3 the performance of the four tasks resulted in different mean scores on the various CAF measures.

Table 3
Means of CAF for the four levels of Tasks

Task/Measure	Task 1 (+ planning time/+ few elements)	Task 2 (– planning time/+ few elements)	Task 3 (+ planning time/–few elements)	Task 4 (– planning time/– few elements)
Complexity				
Syntactic: AS-Units	1.54	1.65	1.41	1.42
Lexical: % of Lexical Words to a Total Number of Words	18.84	19.40	16.77	17.03
Guiraud's Index of Lexical Richness	5.93	5.97	5.93	5.82
Accuracy				
% of Error-Free Clauses	48.74	47.17	50.89	46.33
% of Self-Repairs	7.54	2.20	1.45	5.61
Ratio of Repaired Errors to Unrepaired Errors	9.90	2.41	1.58	7.03
Fluency				
Unpruned Speech Rate A	126.23	122.11	122.73	125.01
Pruned Speech Rate B	115.99	104.97	112.65	117.87

Next, the difference between the four levels of task difficulty on CAF measures was tested using Repeated Measures of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and then multivariate analysis was undertaken to determine the main effects size. This was done using Wilks' Lambda because the

value of sphericity in the current study was violated (Pallant, 2007, p. 255). These results are reported in Table 4.

Table 4
Repeated measures ANOVA: main effects of different levels of tasks for CAF measures

Measures		Wilks' Lamda	F-value	*p*-value	η
Complexity	Syntactic complexity	.507	15.894	.000*	.493
	Percentage of Lexical words	.523	14.896	.000*	.477
	Guiraud's Index	.934	1.162	.334	.066
Accuracy	Error-Free-AS-Unit	.825	3.465	.023*	.175
	Percentage of Self-Repairs	.660	8.398	.000*	.340
	Ratio of Repaired to Unrepaired	.693	7.237	.000*	.307
Fluency	Speech Rate A	.966	.566	.640	.034
	Speech Rate B	.723	6.244	.001*	.277

*p< 0.05, η= Partial Eta Square

As can be seen from Table 4, there was a statistically significant effect for six out of eight aspects of CAF measures ($p<0.05$), namely, two of the Complexity measures (Syntactic Complexity and Percentage of Lexical Words), three Accuracy measures (Error-Free AS-Units, Percentage of Self-Repairs, and Ratio of Self-Repaired to Unrepaired Errors), and one Fluency measure (Speech Rate B). In contrast, there were no significant differences between the tasks for the two CAF measures namely Guiraud's Index of Lexical Richness and Fluency as measured by Unpruned Speech Rate A.

For those measures that were significantly different, the results show a large effect size (i.e., the values of Partial Eta Squared obtained from the multivariate tests were higher than .14) and based on this, it does appear that planning time and the number of elements affected the learners' performance. The following sections explore this in detail.

Comparing Planned and Unplanned Tasks

This section reports on the apparent effect (as measured by CAF) of the planned and unplanned conditions for both simple tasks (Tasks 1 and 2) and complex tasks (Tasks 3 and 4). First the results of Complexity measures for the comparison of Tasks 1 and 2, and Tasks 3 and 4 are presented in Table 5.

Table 5
Mean differences of planned and unplanned tasks for Complexity Measures

Comparison	Syntactic Complexity	Percentage of Lexical Words	Guiraud's Index
Planned Simple Task (Task 1) and Unplanned Simple Task (Task 2)	–0.11*	–0.56	–0.40
Planned Complex Task (Task 3) and Unplanned Complex Task (Task 4)	– 0.01	–0.26	0.11

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As shown in Table 5, Syntactic Complexity was only significantly different for unplanned simple task (Task 1) (0.11, $p<0.05$). That is, providing ten minute planning time resulted in increased complexity in the participants' oral production. However, this only occurred when the tasks were simple. As the tasks were done in order, it may be that the repetition reduced the impact of planning for the complex tasks. That is planning for Tasks 1 resulted in differences with Task 2 because the tasks were relatively novel, however, by the time the participants performed Task 3 and 4 repetition meant that planning had less bearing on the complexity of the learners output.

Next, the results of different accuracy means of Tasks 1 and 2, and Tasks 3 and 4 are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Mean differences of planned and unplanned tasks for three Accuracy Measures

Comparison	Error-Free AS-Units	Percentage of Self-Repairs to Number of Errors	Ratio of Self- Repaired to Unrepaired
Planned Simple Task (Task 1) and Unplanned Simple Task (Task 2)	1.58	5.34*	7.49*
Planned Complex Task (Task 3) and Unplanned Complex Task (Task 4)	4.55*	– 4.16*	–5.45*

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

As can be seen from Table 6, although there was no significant difference between Task 1 and 2 in terms of accuracy, Task 3 did generate more accurate oral production in terms of Error-Free AS-Units compared to Task 4 (4.55, $p<0.05$). When Accuracy is measured as a Percentage of Self-Repairs and the Ratio of Repaired to Unrepaired Errors, the results indicate that the planned simple task (Task 1) generated more accurate oral production than the unplanned simple task (Task 2) (5.34, $p<0.05$). This contrasts the findings of the comparison between Task 3 and 4 where it is found that the unplanned complex task (Task 4) actually resulted in more accurate oral output than the planned complex task (Task 3).

Next the results of the comparisons of fluency measures for Tasks 1 and 2, and Tasks 3 and 4 are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Mean differences of planned and unplanned tasks for two Fluency Measures

Comparison	Unpruned Speech Rate A	Pruned Speech Rate B
Planned Simple Task (Task 1) and Unplanned Simple Task (Task 2)	4.11	11.02*
Planned Complex Task (Task 3) and Unplanned Complex Task (Task 4)	–2.28	–5.22

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

When measured using Speech Rate B, the participants' fluency was only significantly different for planned task (Task 1) compared to unplanned simple task (Task 2), (11.02, $p<0.05$). Therefore, it would seem that although providing planning time may increase fluency for simple tasks, when the tasks are complex, planning time has little or no effect at all.

Comparing Simple and Complex Tasks

Next the comparison of CAF measures for the simple and complex tasks (+/– few elements), namely, Tasks 1 and 3, and Tasks 2 and 4 are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Mean differences of simple and complex tasks for Complexity measures

Comparison	Syntactic Complexity	Percentage of Lexical Words	Giuraud's Index
Planned Simple Task (Task 1) and Planned Complex Task (Task 3)	0.13*	2.10*	.003
Unplanned Simple Task (Task 2) and Unplanned Complex Task (Task 4)	0.23*	2.37*	0.15

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

As can be seen from Table 8, the syntactic constructions as measured by Syntactic Complexity and the Percentage of Lexical Words for the simple and complex tasks in both the planned and unplanned conditions (Tasks 1 and 2) were significantly different. That is, changing the number of elements affected the complexity of the learners' oral production, at least with respect to syntax and lexical diversity

In terms of Accuracy, the results of comparisons of Tasks 1 and 3, and Tasks 2 and 4 are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Mean differences of simple and complex tasks for three Accuracy measures

Comparison	Error-Free AS-Units	Percentage of Self-Repairs to Number of Errors	Ratio of Self-Repaired to Unrepaired
Planned Simple Task (Task 1) and Planned Complex Task (Task 3)	–2.15	6.08*	8.32*
Unplanned Simple Task (Task 2) and Unplanned Complex Task (Task 4)	0.83	–3.41*	–4.62*

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

As can be seen the planned simple (Task 1) and unplanned complex tasks (Task 4) were significantly different in terms of Percentage of Self-Repaired to Errors, and the Ratio of Self-Repairs to Errors, but not significantly different as measured by Error-Free AS-Units. As such these results only partly confirm the Cognition Hypothesis. That is, manipulating tasks along the resource-directing dimensions (i.e., number of elements) affects the accuracy of language production.

With respect to Fluency, the comparisons of the simple and complex tasks within the planned and unplanned conditions (Tasks 1 and 3, and Tasks 2 and 4) are shown in Table 10.

Table 10

Mean differences of simple and complex tasks for two Fluency measures

Comparison	Unpruned Speech Rate A	Pruned Speech Rate B
Planned Simple Task (Task 1) and Planned Complex Task (Task 3)	3.50	3.34
Unplanned Simple Task (Task 2) and Unplanned Complex Task (Task 4)	2.90	–12.90*

*The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 10 shows that the only the unplanned complex task (Task 4) (12.90, $p<0.05$) triggered the participants to generate more fluent oral production as measured by Speech Rate B. Therefore, with respect to Fluency when no planning time is provided, it appears that complex tasks enable participants to generate more fluent oral production.

From the results described above it would seem that there is a complex interrelationship between the conditions of complexity (+/– number of elements) and planning.

In summary, the results of the current study show:

1) 6/8 measures showed significant differences (with large effect size) based on task conditions.
2) Planning time led to increased complexity (simple task only), accuracy (simple task only with planning, complex task with no planning), and fluency (simple task only).
3) Number of elements led to increased complexity (on syntax and lexical measure), accuracy (simple task only with planning, complex task with no planning), and fluency (complex task with no planning only).

Discussion

Theoretically, the current findings only provide partial support for the Cognition Hypothesis (Robinson, 2003, 2005). It may be that the context of the current study – namely an EFL setting with learners who are offered limited opportunities for language practice – affected the results. However, it may also be that the manipulation of both the resource-directing and resource-dispersing dimensions at the same time and with the repetition of the task may have contributed to the current results. Further research needs to be carefully designed to take these aspects into

account. Even so the current findings are consistent with those of Mehnert (1998), and Yuan and Ellis (2003, 2005). Clearly there is still a great deal more research to do, particularly in different contexts.

It is also possible that the repetition resulted in greater familiarity with task which in turn facilitated participants to generate more oral complex production when performing the unplanned simple and complex tasks (see Table 5). In this way the current findings do provide additional support for Bygate's (1999, p. 41) argument that task repetition leads to better language performance because it provides learners with "the time and awareness to shift attention from message content to the selection and monitoring of appropriate language", and this shift in attention might enable the participants to retrieve more of their current L2 knowledge leading to greater complexity.

The simple tasks both in planned and unplanned conditions generated more complex syntactic constructions (see Table 8) which is in agreement with the predictions of the Cognition Hypothesis Robinson (2001a) and are also similar to the results found by Michel et al. (2007). However, the findings regarding Guiraud's Index contradict those of previous studies (Robinson, 2001a; Michel et al., 2007) as no significant differences were found. It is possible that the use of dialogic tasks in the current study rather than monologic tasks, as in Robinson's (2001a) study, may account for these different results. In fact, Robinson (2003, 2005) and Michel, Kuiken, and Vedder (2007) argue that the dialogic (interactive) tasks, especially complex ones, are commonly characterized by highly interactional conversation (i.e. a lot of turn-taking and clarification requests). This condition may disperse the learners' attention from what they have planned to say and, consequently, they produce simpler clauses as well as less varied lexis (Robinson, 2003, 2005; Michel et al., 2007).

With respect to Accuracy providing learners with ten minute planning time did lead to more accurate oral production when the task was simple, that is, within the resource-directing dimensions (+ *few elements*), yet when the task was complex, no planning time actually resulted in greater accuracy. In this way these findings contradict the Cognition Hypothesis which predicts lack of planning time prior to performing tasks may "create problems for learners attempting to access their current repertoire of L2 knowledge" (Robinson, 2005, p. 7). Again, it is possible that the increase in fluency for Task 4 was due to the impact of task repetition, as suggested by Bygate (1999) and because of the "familiarity with the tasks" as argued by Skehan (1998).

The current findings (as shown in Table 9) partly confirm the Cognition Hypothesis. That is,

the complex task manipulated along the resource-directing dimensions (i.e., *– few elements)* led to an increase in the accuracy of language production. However, the increase in accuracy as measured by Error-Free AS-Units was only confirmed for Task 3 (as compared to Task 1). In contrast, Accuracy in terms of Percentage of Self-Repairs and Ratio of Repaired Errors only occurred for the complex task with the unplanned condition (Task 4) compared to the simple unplanned task (Task 2). These findings are, in the main, similar to those in the study by Michel et al. (2007), that is, complex dialogic tasks generated more accurate oral production as measured by Error-Free As-Units, and Ratio of Repaired Errors, but it produced less accurate oral output as evidenced by a lower Percentage of Self-Repairs.

In this study the students' oral performance in terms of Fluency also only partly confirm the Cognition Hypothesis, which predicts that increasing complexity by decreasing planning time also decreases fluency. Further, the statistically significant increase of fluency as measured by Speech Rate B for Task 4 (over Task 2) again might be due to the familiarity (i.e., repetition) of performing the previous tasks. These findings are in line with Skehan's (1998) concept of task difficulty, that is, learners' degree of familiarity with the nature of tasks or the topic will contribute to their level of difficulty in performing tasks. These findings are also largely in agreement with the study of Michel et al. (2007) that simple dialogic tasks, that is, with few elements to compare, have the potential to generate more fluent oral production.

In short, dialogic tasks promote more fluent, accurate, and complex language production when both the resource-directing and the resource-dispersing dimensions are made simple (requiring less cognitive engagement). That is, there are few elements to discuss and learners are given time to plan (ten minute planning time) prior to performing tasks. Moreover, it does seem that dialogic complex tasks (cognitively more demanding) helps learners to improve their language performance in terms of CAF, particular when learners become familiar with doing similar tasks by repeating them, albeit under different conditions.

Conclusion

The findings of the current study do provide some degree of support for the claims by Robinson in his Cognition Hypothesis – namely that resource-directing and resource-dispersing dimensions (i.e. number of elements and planning time) in tasks impact on learners' oral production in terms of CAF, however, given the complex pattern of results this support is not unequivocal. This may be

because, unlike previous research which investigated these constructs separately, the current research examined these simultaneously and did so using dialogic rather than monologic tasks. Further, it was found that the manipulation of these cognitive factors alone was not sufficient to account for learners' performance. Instead what emerged is that a number of interrelated factors, including those described within the Triadic Componential Framework (e.g. task conditions or interactive factors) also have a role to play. As such these various factors need to be considered when designing and sequencing pedagogical tasks.

This study did show that repeating similar tasks led the participants to improve their language production even when the task was made more complex. This is something teachers may consider when providing learners with tasks of a similar type. Based on the theories of Robinson, Bygate and Skehan, teachers may structure tasks so that learners repeat tasks, moving from simple (less cognitively demanding) to those that are more complex (more cognitively demanding) and in this way learners can be supported to produce output of greater complexity, accuracy and fluency. As such the findings of this study provide direction for Indonesian EFL teachers and syllabus writers about designing pedagogical tasks, and factors to consider in their sequence of presentation.

In a broader sense this study demonstrates the potential of TBA for English language teaching in Indonesia. It shows that a shift from "synthetic" practices of language teaching, which solely focus on forms (e.g. through traditional grammar teaching) to TBA is indeed possible with Indonesian EFL learners. The data showed that by using tasks teachers can provide opportunities for learners focus on meaning as well as develop their English speaking ability. In addition, it was found that tasks provided students with communicative opportunities that kept them stimulated and using English in authentic ways. This is in line with the claim by Long (1991, p. 41) that "to learn a language is not by treating it as an object of study, but by experiencing it as a medium of communication". Adopting such an approach may address the current shortcomings of teaching English at all education levels in Indonesia which is generally regarded as unsuccessful (Setyadi, 2009; Saragih, 2009; Kasihani, 2010).

It is acknowledged that this is an initial study and clearly there is a need for much further research, especially in relation to task complexity (cognitive factors) - both the resource-directing (i.e., +/- few elements) and the recourse-dispersing (i.e., +/- planning time) dimensions. Further investigations, again using dialogic tasks would also be beneficial, reflecting classroom practice in a way that the previous reliance in research on monologic tasks do not.

As with most research, although a number of measures were put into place to ensure reliable and valid data, the current study does have limitations. One factor that needs to be considered in future research relates to the issue of familiarity with doing the tasks. Although an attempt was made to minimize the effect of repetition, it did seem the way the tasks were presented may have influenced the results of the current study. A counter-balanced design should be used in the future. The topics may also have influenced the type of language produced by the participants. Further replication research is warranted using alternative topics. As language pedagogy increasingly becomes task based or at the very least task oriented, there is a real need for such research to provide practitioners with guidelines for the implementation of such an approach.

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