IMPACT OF TASK PLANNING ON FLUENCY, ACCURACY, AND COMPLEXITY IN WRITING A CASE STUDY ON IRANIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract. This study attempted to explore the effects of task planning on young Iranian EFL learners' writing proficiency. More specifically, the study was intended to examine such effects on the three dimensions of language proficiency, namely complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF). In this study, 30 young Iranian University students with the intermediate level of proficiency were selected from Khatam ol-Anbia University in Tehran, Iran. All the participants were randomly assigned into the control and experimental groups. The Oxford placement test was run in order to make sure that the two groups were homogeneous. Afterward, a series of writing tasks were developed to examine participants' performance in writing. In the experimental group, the participants were supposed to do task planning based on the instruction they received from the instructor, while in the control group, participants, although instructed about the planning, were not required to do so. The results of the study indicated that task planning had positive effect on almost all the dimensions of language proficiency. This implies that EFL teachers can be very hopeful to successfully apply task planning in their classes because learners are willing to adapt themselves to this new area of language teaching. Eventually, it is believed that the results of such research will encourage EFL teachers and learners to use task planning and have more positive attitude towards it.

Keywords. Task-based instructions, Task planning, Complexity, Accuracy, Fluency.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically speaking changes and shifts in language teaching have always been present in this discipline. At its basis, apparently never-ending uncertainty about the effectiveness of methods at specific historical movements has always been a crucial issue. There is also an enduring search to find better ways of teaching and learning languages, which involves recognizing dissatisfaction with methods and procedures in progress. In the second half of the 20th century, changes in methodology became recurrent and critical for teachers and learners. The need for communication among people of different cultures and languages was commenced by gobalization.

This forced people to learn languages more fluently, quickly, and efficiently. Learning a new system of communication is significantly different from what it used to be earlier. This critical need to learn languages is felt everywhere within societies all over the world. The search for new and more systematic methods is the result of our social organization and the need for fluent communication. In the last part of the 20th Century the dichotomy, focus on form vs. focus on content, teaching and learning language for accuracy vs. teaching and learning language for meaning progressed as the new paradigm. Form, structure and accuracy succeeded in the sixties and seventies, meaning and communicative potential obtained power in the eighties and later on.

The Task Based Approach (TBA) must be sited within this period, at the end of the 20th Century. The arrival of the TBA is connected to what became famous as the 'Bangalore Project' (Prabhu, 1987) started in 1979 and completed in 1984. The word 'task' here refers to the special kind of activities carried out in the classroom. Such activities are characterized, by the emphasis put on meaning and the importance assigned to the process of doing things (how) vs. the winning role given to content (what) in the teaching procedure of that decade.

Over the past decade, a number of studies have examined the impact of task planning on language production (e.g. Crookes, 1989; Ellis, 1987; Foster & Skehan, 1996; Mehnert, 1998; Ortega, 1999; and Wendel. 1997). These studies claim that humans posses a limited processing capacity and as a result are not completely able to attend to all aspects of a task (Anderson, 1995; Newell & Simon, 1972).

Second language (L2) learners, especially the ones with limited proficiency, find it hard to concentrate on meaning and form simultaneously, and accordingly have to make decisions about how to give out their attentional resources by prioritizing one aspect over the other (Anderson, 1995; Skehan, 1996; Van Patten 1990). In a series of studies, Skehan (1996) has realized three aspects of linguistic performance, Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency (CAF).

1.1. Review of literature

Ellis (2003) defines a task as a work plan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. In addition, Richard and Renandya (2002) have claimed that "A task is an activity which learners carry out using their available language resources and leading to a real outcome" (p. 94). It is also claimed that a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, which emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective (Bygate, Skehan, and Swain, 2001). By reviewing various definitions of task, it would be noticeable that a task is a communicative activity in which language is used to achieve an outcome with the primary focus being on meaning.

Over the past decades, traditional methods of language teaching have used grammatical topics or texts (e.g., dialogues, short stories) as a foundation for arranging a syllabus. All spoken and written language use needs planning. Eventually, speakers and writers have to decide what to say or write and how to do it at the same time. Task planning is crucially an easing activity; it includes what linguistic devices should be selected in order to affect learners in the proper way. As Clark and Clark (1977) pointed out, task planning happens at different levels, resulting in discourse plans, sentence plans and constituent plans, all of which have to be merged in the actual implementation of a language act. Two principal task-based planning are pre-task planning and within-task planning. These are recognized when planning takes place – either before the task is performed or during the task. Moreover, Ellis (2005) distinguished three kinds of planning. A basic difference is drawn between pre-task (i.e. the planning that is done before learners perform a task) and within-task planning (i.e. the planning that occurs on-line while learners are

actually performing a task). Pre-task planning can later be divided into rehearsal (i.e. planning takes the form of an opportunity to perform the complete task once before performing it a second time) or strategic planning (i.e. planning what content to express and what language to use but without opportunity to rehearse the complete task).

Historically speaking, CAF research detects its origins at least to the 1970s, when L2 researchers turned to metrics of grammatical complexity and accuracy developed in L1 acquisition research (e.g. Brown 1973; Hunt 1965). In their search for an L2 developmental index with which they could 'expediently and reliably measure proficiency in an L2' (Larsen-Freeman, 1978, p. 469) in an objective, quantitative and verifiable way (Hakuta 1975; Larsen-Freeman 1978, 2009; Nihalani 1981). At around the same time, an essential distinction was built in research on L2 pedagogy between fluent L2 speeches on the one hand versus accurate L2 usage on the other to examine communicative L2 proficiency in classroom contexts (e.g. Brumfit 1979, 1984; Hammerly 1990). In the mid-nineties, Skehan (1996, 1998) established a proficiency model that brought the three dimensions together for the first time, i.e. fluency, accuracy and complexity. At that time, the three dimensions were still given their today working definitions. As a consequence, complexity is commonly characterized as the ability to use a wide and mixed range of complicated structures and vocabulary in the L2, accuracy as the ability to produce target-like and error-free language, and fluency as the ability to produce the L2 with native-like rapidity, pausing, hesitation, or reformulation (cf. Ellis 2003, 2008; Ellis & Barkhuizen 2005; Lennon 1990; Skehan 1998; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki & Kim 1998).

According to Bulte and Housen (2012) complexity is a property or quality of a phenomenon or entity in terms of the number and the nature of the discrete components that the entity consists of, and the number and the nature of the relationships between the constituent components (p. 22). Complexity can also be defined in linguistic terms and in cognitive terms. Linguistic complexity refers to the intrinsic formal or semanticfunctional roperties of L2 elements (e.g. forms, meanings and form‑meaning mappings) or the properties of L2 elements. Cognitive complexity, however, refers to the "relative difficulty with which language elements are processed during L2 performance and L2 learning as determined in part by the learners' individual backgrounds (Towell, 2012, p. 54). Moreover, Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) define

complexity as the proportion of clauses to T-units or the percentage of dependent clauses of total clauses. Accuracy can be defined as the extent to which an L2 performance, whether written or oral (and the L2 system that underlies this performance) deviates from a norm (Housen, et al., 2012, p. 4). However, there is a debate as to how that norm should be defined. It could be determined in relation to the native speakers of the language, to other non‑native speakers of the language (e.g., Agren, Granfeldt & Schlyter, 2012) or to the same individual speaker at less or more advanced stages of learning. SLA research tends to take a relativistic approach to this matter. Most often SLA research regards the language of a learner or of a group of similar learners as being, at least potentially, systematic and therefore as having its own norms (Selinker, 1972). Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) define accuracy as the percentage of error-free T-units or the percentage of error-free clauses.

In Housen et al. it was cited that fluency has three dimensions: speed fluency, breakdown fluency and repair fluency. It is detected as "mainly a phonological phenomenon" (Housen et al., p. 5) dissimilar to accuracy, and complexity, which can show themselves at "all major levels of language structure and use (i.e. the phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, socio-pragmatic level" (ibid, p. 5). The speed of fluency will plainly be dependent upon procedures for storage and recall; breakdown and repair fluency are related to the degree of learner's confidence that what has been stored is reliable and the extent to which the learner has also created procedures which can be brought into operation to repair the situation when communication breakdown happens, for whatever reason (O'Malley & Chamot 1990). In addition, fluency can be defined as 'the capacity to produce speech at normal rate and without interruption' (Skehan) or as 'the production of language in real time without non-essential pausing or hesitation' (Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005, p.139).

It should also be considered that, while the desired outcomes may be native-speaker-like accuracy, complexity and fluency, most learners studied in SLA do not present native like language, almost at some intermediate stages. They may be effective and 'fluent' communicators (in Lennon's (2000) broad sense of 'fluent') with a usable intermediate language system. Some may 'fossilize' at an intermediate level with limited accuracy and complexity but with substantial fluency in calling up for use the language system, which they have created.

1.2. Review of literature

With the shift toward communicative language teaching in the 1970s, there was a growing sense of need to use language to convey a massage. Consequently, the increasing attention contributed to the use of tasks in the classroom. The adoption of a task-based syllabus is usually argued upon because some scholars believe it has inadequacies of other types of syllabus. One of the concerns of using a task-based syllabus was that tasks focus on fluency at the expense of accuracy. Ellis (2003a) suggests that tasks could be either focused or unfocused on form. A focused task would directly aim a particular language feature in meaning-based communication.

Writing classes can benefit from task planning in order to help students write more accurately, and fluently while using clauses and units that are more complex. Although the use of tasks is more popular now in many countries, in Iran this has not been taken seriously as a means for developing second language learners' writing proficiency. This issue has been noticed by personal observation as a teacher and from certain informal surveys conducted. It is obvious that planning tasks would help young L2 learners in many ways, but few studies have been done to examine its effectiveness on young L2 learners' writing proficiency. This fact has not been taken into account as a preferred way for developing writing skills.

In addition to this inadequate attention to the effect of tasks on young L2 learners in Iran, research seems to have overlooked the issue of fluency, complexity and accuracy among them. With regard to the problem mentioned in this part, the demand for performing tasks in a second language classroom in order to make it more effective and produce more fluent and accurate L2 writers in Iranian context strikes the society as a vital need.

1.3. Significance of the study

The present study exa1mined the different effects of task planning on three dimensions of language proficiency (complexity, accuracy and fluency) of young Iranian EFL learners' writing performance. In Iran, as personal observations as well as informal interviews with experienced language teachers have shown, the focus of most language classrooms has been on accuracy of the learners' production in both writing and speaking. In fact, little, if any, attention has been focused on EFL learners' complexity and fluency in general and in writing in particular.

The significance of the study can be viewed from both theoretical and pedagogical perspectives. From a pedagogical and theoretical point of view task planning has strong effects on different age ranges, especially young EFL learners. According to Wendel (1997), task planning has a clear influence in case of grammatical complexity. The use of task planning will lead L2 learners to be more accurate and proficient L2 writers.

Utilizing tasks can create better L2 writers as well as better and more fluent L2 speakers. Since these days, most of Iranian L2 learners are mostly young learners, traditional writing classes may disappoint them, but task-based classes will motivate them to be more accurate and fluent in their writings.

1.4. Significance of the study

This study was primarily intended to explore the impact of task planning (the independent variable) on the Complexity Accuracy, and Fluency (dependent variables) of young Iranian L2 learners' written production. It was also aimed to investigate which dimensions of language proficiency (CAF) was more significantly affected by task planning and to find out whether there was a significant difference between these three dimensions.

According to the issues raised above and the problem mentioned, the following research questions are posed:

1. Does task planning affect young Iranian EFL learners' complexity in written production?

2. Does task planning affect young Iranian EFL learners' accuracy in written production?

3. Does task planning affect young Iranian EFL learners' fluency in written production?

4. Which dimension of proficiency (Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency) is more significantly affected by task planning?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were 30 young Iranian University students with the intermediate level of proficiency being selected from Khatam ol-Anbia University in Tehran, Iran. Although gender was not a determining factor, attempts were made to include both male and female participants in the experiment. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 23. In order to select the participants, a written placement test

was employed to make sure that the participants were homogeneous. They were Mid-proficiency EFL learners who had English as their foreign language for at least one year. The participants were placed into two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. Both groups were taking English classes and had writing as a part of their course.

2.2. Instruments

In order to conduct the experiment and collect the required data, the following types of materials were employed.

2.2.1. The Oxford Placement Test

Oxford Placement Test (Allen, 2004) is a valid and reliable test and a highly effective instrument in grouping students into appropriate levels. It can also be used as a quick measurement of students' general language proficiency. The test and its criteria for placement were used to appropriately place learners in relevant proficiency level. The test has several sections including the listening, grammar and vocabulary. It should be noted that the grammar and vocabulary parts of the test were used to place students in the relevant groups and make sure that they were homogeneous.

2.2.2. The textbook, Thompson (2010)

The textbook, Family and Friends 3, which was used during the course, was Thompson (2010), first published by Oxford University Press. The book contains 14 units focusing on real speaking and writing output and clear vocabulary and grammar syllabus. Five units of the book were considered as the main part of the study. It should be noted that both the experimental and the control groups were required to study the book and do the writing exercises.

2.3. Procedure

Initially, for selecting and grouping participants in homogeneous groups, Oxford Placement Test was administered. After the participants were chosen, in order to gather the samples of both groups for the pretest, they were expected to write a paragraph based on their first writing assignment in their books. Then in order to do the experiment and implement the treatment the following procedure was followed. First, the tasks were performed and explained to the students in the experimental group. As noted earlier, the very first writing of each of the groups was considered as their pretests. Afterwards,

two tasks were run for the experimental group, namely a rehearsal or pre-task, writing about a school trip to a farm with a model writing as a help with not direct instructions by the teacher. It should be noted that participants received feedback from the teacher after the task. Later, a lesson about how to use correct words and verbs was given as the treatment.

Next as a part of the treatment, they were provided with extra samples of writing as a perfect model and they were asked to focus on the grammatical points (e.g., verb collocations) in an explicit way. Finally, a withintask planning was operated experimentally as their posttest. In this section, participants were given the task with the required time they needed to perform the task. It should be noted that because students were pretty young, attempts were made to make the task as stress-free as possible by removing any pressure they might feel about the need to complete the task rapidly; therefore, they were not given.

It is essential to emphasize that the procedure for the control group was exactly like the experimental group, that is, they were given the task to write and they were provided with the required feedback, but they did not have any task planning. Participants of the Control group were mainly encouraged to do the assignment the way they usually do in the writing classes, or in speaking classes as a part of their writing assignment. In other words, no explicit mention of task planning was given for the participants of the control group.

As the pretest, participants of both groups were asked to write a short paragraph based on the lesson in their books without any special writing instructions. The writings were gathered and put into their files to be considered as their pretests. They were asked to use the words and verb collocations given in the box of writing section provided in their books. In addition, in the following three sessions, they were required to write in the same way they were asked to do the first one. The topics were the most tangible ones based on their levels.

The three variables (complexity, accuracy and fluency) were considered important to the teacher to give feedback. After three sessions, one session was dedicated to a model writing as the pre task for the experimental group. The model was a writing assignment, which was written by one of the students outside the groups, but in the same level of English proficiency and corrected in advance by the teacher; as a result, all the mistakes were removed. Afterwards for the treatment session the teacher

literally taught the students what a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and the conclusion were. The participants were then asked to write based on the instructions in their within task planning as the final task. They submitted their first draft the following session, as noted above the pressure of time was removed, they were provided with feedback. Their revised versions were considered as their posttest.

2.4. Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions of the study, the mean scores were analyzed using SPSS 21. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, standard deviations, and percentages were obtained. To realize if there was a statistically significant difference between the control and the experimental groups, a series of independent samples t-tests as well as paired samples t-tests were run.

First of all, to make sure that the participants were homogeneous, an independent samples t-test was run. In addition, to answer the first, second and third research questions, three independent samples t-tests were run to see if there was any significant difference between the performances of each group in any of the given variable, that is, complexity, accuracy, and fluency. In order to answer the last research question, i.e., which asked dimension of proficiency (fluency, accuracy, or complexity) was more significantly affected by the treatment, i.e., task planning, three paired samples t-test were run to compare the effect of the treatment on participants of the experimental group in the pre- and posttest.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results of the placement test

Group of 30 young Iranian EFL learners participated in the study after taking the oral placement test. In order to make sure that the participants were homogeneous and that there was no significant difference among them in terms of the level of proficiency, they were asked to participate in the Oxford Placement Test (Allen, 2004), which is a highly valid and reliable placement or proficiency test. Table 1 presents descriptive data concerning OPT participants. The table shows information about each group in terms of the number, mean, and standard deviation, standard error of measurement, the minimum, and the maximum scores, respectively.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Placement Test

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Opt	Experimental	15	65.93	3.72	.95
	Control	15	66.02	3.31	1.02

In order to see if the two groups were homogeneous, an independent samples t-test was conducted. The results, as presented in Table 2 indicate that the difference was not significant and that the participants were quite homogenous.

Table 2. Independent Samples T-test for the Placement Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Difference	Error 95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
								Lower	Upper
Opt	1.14	32	79	28	0.58	1	1.26	1.42	3.59

By studying Table 2, one can find out that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of the level of proficiency. This would assist the researcher to perform the inferential statistics to detect whether there was a significant difference among the participants in terms of the impact of the independent variable.

3.2. Results of the pretest

In order to investigate the impact of task planning, the independent variable, on Iranian young EFL learners' Complexity (C), Accuracy (A), and Fluency (F) in writing, i.e., the dependent variables, the participants of the study had to write several writings during the course. The first writing of the participants was considered the pretest. The following tables present the descriptive statistics and the results of the independent samples t-test related to the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of the participants in the pretest. Table 3 presents descriptive statistics related to the complexity of participants' writing in the pretest.

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre C	Experimental	15	1.54	.39	.10
	Control	15	1.22	.23	.06

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Complexity (Pretest)

Despite the fact that the means indicate no significant difference between the experimental and control group, in order to assure that the difference was not statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted Table 4 presents the results.

Table 4. Independent Samples T-test for Complexity (Pretest)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Difference	Error 95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre C	Equal variances assumed	0.05	0.8	1	28	0.83	0.05	0.15	0.26	0.35

As the results indicate, there was no significant difference, t (28) =.75, p=.83, between the control group (M=1.22, SD=.23) and experimental group (M=1.54, SD=.39) in terms of the complexity of their sentences. Table 5 presents descriptive statistics related to the accuracy of participants' writing in the pretest.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for Accuracy (Pretest)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre A	Experimental	15	.38	.10	.03
	Control	15	.40	.10	.03

As Table 5 indicates, it can be found that based on the means there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups; nevertheless, in order to find out whether the difference was statistically significant or not, an independent samples t-test was employed. Table 6 presents the results of the independent samples t-test.

Table 6. Independent Samples T-test for Accuracy (Pretest)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Difference	Error 95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre A	Equal variances assumed	0.11	0.75	-0.44	28	0.67	-0.02	0.04	-0.9	0.06

As can be seen, there was no significant difference, t (28) =-.44, P= .67, between the control group (M = .40, SD= .10) and the experimental group (M = .38, SD = .10) in terms of accuracy of their sentences.

Table 7 presents descriptive statistics related to the fluency of participants' writing in the pretest.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics for fluency (pretest)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre F	Experimental	15	10.22	3.42	.88
	Control	15	10.62	2.76	.71

Looking at Table 7, it can be seen, from the means, that there was no significant difference between the experimental and control groups. However, in order to make sure that the difference was not statistically significant; an independent samples t-test was conducted. Table 8 presents the results.

Table 8. Independent Samples T-test for Fluency (pretest)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Difference	Error 95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Pre F	Equal variances assumed	0.91	0.35	-0.35	28	0.73	-0.4	1.13	-2.72	1.92

As can be seen in Table 8, there was no statistically significant difference, t (28) =-.35, P=.73, between the control group (M=10.62, SD=2.76) and the experimental group (M =10.22, SD =3.42) in terms of the fluency of their sentences.

3.3. Results of the posttest

After conducting the pretests, the study was performed and posttests were organized. The following sections present the results of posttests.

3.3.1. Complexity

With respect to the issue mentioned earlier, in order to investigate the impact of task planning, i.e., the independent variable, on Complexity (C), Accuracy (A), Fluency (F), of young Iranian EFL learners' writing, i.e., the dependent variables, the participants of the study were required to write a number of writings during the course, the students' last writing was evaluated as the posttest. The following tables indicate the information about each group in terms of number, mean, standard deviation, standard error of measurement, the minimum, and the maximum scores, respectively which is related to complexity, accuracy and fluency of the participants in the posttest. Table 9 presents

descriptive statistics for the complexity of the participants' writing in the posttest.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics for Complexity (Posttest)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post F	Experimental	15	1.17	0.16	0.04
	Control	15	1.13	0.18	0.05

The means demonstrate that there was no significant difference between the performance of the experimental group and that of the control group. Nevertheless, in order to find out that the difference was not statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was run. Table 10 displays the results.

Table 10. Independent Samples Test for complexity (posttest)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Difference	Error 95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Post C	Equal variances assumed	2.2	0.15	0.64	28	0.53	0.04	0.06	-0.09	0.17

Studying Table 10, it can be understood that there was no significant difference, t(28) =.64, P=.53, between the performance of the participants in the control group (M =1.13, SD =.18) and that of the experimental group (M =1.17, SD=.16) in terms of the complexity of their sentences. The results help to answer the first research question (Does task planning affect young Iranian EFL learners' complexity in written production.)

As it can be seen, the answer to this question is negative. In fact, task planning; the independent variable did not make a difference in producing more complex sentences among young Iranian EFL learners.

3.3.2. Accuracy

Table 11 shows descriptive statistics related to the accuracy of the participants' writing in the posttest.

As it is obvious from the means in Table 11, there was a highly significant difference between the experimental and the control groups; nonetheless, in order to show that the difference was statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was run, Table 12 shows the results.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics for Accuracy (Post-test)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post A	Experimental	15	0.8	0.08	0.02
	Control	15	0.38	0.16	0.04

Table 12. Independent sample t-test for Accuracy (post-test)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Difference	Error 95% Confidence Interval of the difference	
									Lower	Upper
Post A	Equal variances assumed	8.24	0.01	9.08	28	0	0.41	0.05	0.32	0.51

Table 12 shows that there was a highly significant difference, t (28) =9.08, P<.01, between the performance of the participants in the control group (M =.38, SD =.16) and that of the participants of the experimental group (M =.80, SD=.08) in terms of the accuracy of their sentences. The results help to answer the second research question (Does task planning affect young Iranian EFL learners' Accuracy in written production). As the results indicate, the answer to this question is positive. In fact, task planning; the independent variable did make a difference in producing more accurate sentences among young Iranian EFL learners.

3.3.3. Fluency

Table 13 indicates the descriptive statistics related to the fluency of the participants' writings in the posttest.

Table 13. Descriptive Statistics for Fluency (Posttest)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post F	Experimental	15	8.53	1.43	.37
	Control	15	10.19	1.83	.47

Despite the fact that the means indicate there was a difference between the performance of the experimental group and that of the control group, in order to make sure the difference was statistically significant, an independent samples t-test was conducted. Table 14 presents the results.

Pair 1	Pre C	15	1.54	.39	.10
	Post C	15	1.17	.16	.04

In order to compare the performance of participants' complexity in their written production a series of paired samples t-test was run. Table 16 presents the results of paired samples t-test for the complexity of the participants' writing in experimental group.

Table 16. Paired Samples T-test for Complexity (Pretest and Posttest)

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair A	Pre C - Post C	0.37	0.42	0.11	0.14	0.6	3.44	14	0.004

The results show that there was a significant increase in learners' complexity in writing production from the pretest (M =1.54, SD=.39) to the posttest (M=1.17, SD=.16), t (14) =3.44, P >.004, as the mean scores show, there was a significant increase in complexity of the participants' written production.

3.4.2. Accuracy

Table 17 presents the descriptive statistics for the learners' accuracy of experimental group in written production in both pre- and posttest.

Table 17.Paired Samples T-test for Accuracy (Pre-test and Post-test)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre A	15	.41	.15	.04
	Post A	15	.80	.08	.02

In order to compare the performance of participants' accuracy in their written production a paired samples t-test was run, Table 18 presents the results of paired samples t-test for the accuracy of the participants' writing in experimental group.

Table 18. Paired Samples T-test for Accuracy (Pre-test and Post-test)

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre A - Post A	-0.4	0.18	0.05	-0.49	-0.29	-8.5	14	0

The results show that there was a highly significant increase in learners' accuracy in written production from the pretest (M =.41, SD=.15) to the posttest (M=.80, SD=.08), t (14) =-8.47, P<.000, as the mean

Table 14. Independent Samples T-test for Fluency (posttest)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean differences	Std. Difference	Error 95% Confidence Interval of the difference		
										Lower	Upper
Post F	Equal variances assumed	0.49	0.49	-2.76	28	0.01	-166	0.6		-2.89	-0.43

Table 14 reveals that there was statistically significant difference, t (28) =-2.76, P=0.01 between the performance of the control group (M=10.19, SD=1.83) and that of the experimental group (M =8.53, SD=1.43) in terms of the fluency of their sentences. As the results of Table 14 show, participants of experimental group outperformed those of the control group in their fluency, so this will help to answer the third question (Does task planning affect young Iranian EFL learners' fluency in written production?). In fact, participants of the experimental group were more fluent after the experiment.

3.4. Paired samples t-tests

3.4.1.   Complexity

Through investigating the results presented in the previous sections, it can be concluded that task planning in EFL writing did make a difference in their performance in the posttest. As it is shown, the participants of the experimental group outperformed those of the control group in accuracy and fluency, but there was no significant difference in Complexity of their writing performance. These results helped the researcher answer the last question (Which dimension of proficiency (Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency) is more significantly affected by task planning?). In fact, as the results of the research showed task planning did affect Iranian young EFL language learners' written production in two of the language proficiency dimensions.

However, in order to have a clearer picture of the results and participants' performances, a paired samples t-test was conducted. Table 15 introduces the descriptive statistics for the learners' complexity of experimental group in written production in both pre- and posttest.

Table 15. Paired samples test for complexity (Pretest and Posttest)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean

scores show, there was a significant increase in accuracy of the participants' written production.

3.4.3 Fluency

Table 19 indicates the descriptive statistics for the learners' Fluency of experimental group in written production in both pre- and posttest.

Table 19. Paired Samples T-test for Fluency (Pre-test and Post-test)

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre F	15	10.22	3.42	.88
	Post F	15	8.53	1.43	.37

In order to compare the performance of participants' fluency in their written production, a paired samples t-test was run. Table 20 presents the results of paired samples t-test for the fluency of the participants' writing in experimental group.

Table 20. Paired Samples T-test for Fluency (Pre-test and Post-test)

Paired Differences								
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre F - Post F	1.69	3.15	0.81	-0.05	3.43	2.08	14	0.04

The results show that there was a significant increase in learners' fluency in written production from the pretest (M =10.22, SD=3.42) to the posttest (M=8.53, SD=1.43), t (14) =2.08, P<.05, as the mean scores show, there was a significant increase in fluency of the participants' written production.

3.5. Summary of the results

As the results of the posttests shows, the experimental group significantly outperformed those of control group in two dimensions of language proficiency, which were accuracy and fluency but showed no significant difference in complexity of young language learners. In addition, a closer look at the results of the paired samples t-tests indicates that the experimental group performed much better than the control group in accuracy and fluency.

4. CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine the effect of task planning on young Iranian EFL learners' written production. The research pointed to investigate the impact of task planning on the three dimensions of language proficiency (CAF) in their writings. To shed light on the issue, the research tries to perform task planning on learners' CAF in writing to see if it has any impact on these three dimensions and if it has the effect, on which of them the impact is more obvious and clear.

The results showed that there was no significant difference between the control group and the experimental group in their pretest of their writing performance before the planning starts. Therefore, any possible change in learners' performance in the posttest would be attributed to the treatment. In fact, the results of the posttest indicated that there was a great improvement over time for the experimental group. It is fascinating to pinpoint that the treatment, performing task planning, showed positive effects from the pretest to the posttest and task planning indicated better performance in writing proficiency among the participants of the experimental group compared with the control group. The findings also showed that it is in the use of task planning that EFL classes would have better results in language proficiency and it surely leads EFL classes to have more fruitful outcome.

Task planning has proved over time to be a successful way to improve writing ability. This finding is in agreement with another study based on which the impact of task planning was investigated by Pauline and Peter (1996), who have shown that planning enables learners to become more fluent in a foreign language than non- planning learners; they will perform better if learners have a chance to plan a task beforehand. It has also been obtained that learners who plan are more capable of producing sentences that are more complex. Secondly, within-task planning helps avoid distraction by other students when they are not asked by their teacher to do a particular task during the class. Their results show that students fail to encourage their concentration when there is no planning time, obviously, when not asked by a teacher; they tend not to take their questions seriously. In line with studies such as Bygate (1996) Gass, Mackey, Fernandez, and Alvarez-Torres, (1999) Bygate (2001), only a small improvement in accuracy was observed. Clearer evidence in changes in complexity and grammatical variety (e.g. an increase in number of past tense forms) was seen.

To sum up, task planning provides a considerable opportunity for the students and also for the teachers to perform better in the classroom. As the results of the experiments, as well as some recent studies clearly demonstrate, more use of task planning can

improve student's fluency and accuracy, though some errors may still remain.

5. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

Based on the overall findings of the research, the most important implications are as follows: Firstly, since utilizing tasks as the most meaningful classroom activities (Ellis, 2003) rather than exercises or drills, which are on the traditional side of language learning, can be extremely helpful to L2 learners' improvement during a course of English, teachers should become more aware of using them in their syllabi.

Secondly, based on the findings of this study and the in line previous studies mentioned earlier, task planning could contribute to better writings in EFL classes and surely can enhance the three dimensions of language proficiency (CAF). Tasks are not hard to understand by the students nor boring for them, they are contextualized not context removed like exhausting drills which might not have positive effect on learners' language proficiency improvement. As a result, the students should be given the opportunity to acquire L2 nowledge in this proper way.

Thirdly, it is suggested that teacher's educational programs, which aims at rigorously training teachers about the methodologies of language, should genuinely deal with the strengths and also weaknesses of TBI as an instructional method. To this end, another issue that has not taken into account so far is that, one of the reasons teachers and learners avoid using task planning is deeply related to the lack of confidence in such young methods in Iranian context. As a result, much consideration should be given to this area to overcome obstacles and barriers that teachers and learners may encounter.

Finally, it is believed that the three dimensions of language (CAF) are highly affected by task planning. The effectiveness of using task planning on young L2 learners is somehow clear and surely needs more research. It might be under question that young L2 learners are not capable of completing tasks but in the present study, the participants showed great enthusiasm to finish their task, because tasks are not repetitive compare to exercises. The attitude of the young EFL learners were rather positive toward the tasks given in this study compare to traditional methods of language teaching. In this regard, as one of the teachers of E-Land private institute, the researcher does her best to promote TBI at the above-mentioned language institute.

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