



The Effects of Different Amounts of Planning Time on Accuracy of Producing Certain Grammatical Items in an Oral Narrative Task

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1. The study

1.1 Introduction

This is a cross-sectional study that examines English language use of Arabic speakers of English under three types of task conditions (No planning, 1 minute, and 5 minutes planning time). It is considered a partial replication of a number of studies as follows: Tarone (1985) and Mehnert (1998).

1.2 Subjects

There were 17 participants in this study: with an age range from 20 to 25 years old. They were full-time university students majoring in English language in college of Education at Almergeb university in Libya. Their level of proficiency was characterized by their teachers as post beginner to intermediate. The participants were 15 females and 2 males. The candidates were also from second, third and fourth year. They had been studying English for six to seven years at Junior and High school. Their native language is Arabic. It should also be mentioned that all the students almost never had experienced any sort of English contact outside the classroom context. As a result of these factors, students may display less variability of their language use.

1.3 The task

The task chosen for this study was based on retelling a story orally after watching an extract from a movie of a comedy character called *Mr. Bean* for eight minutes. This character was thought to be more familiar to the learners of the current study. Three different extracts which are structurally organized have been used. The culture of learners was taken of very much consideration when we chose the extracts.

1.4 Procedure

Data were collected at the college of Education, Almergeb University in Libya. Students were chosen at random by the researcher to participate in this study. The students came into the language laboratory for data gathering in pairs immediately after they had finished their exam sessions. Since there was not enough voice recorder devices, they were asked to implement the task in pairs. A few of them felt unwilling to do the task because of exam pressure and apologized for not being able to continue.

2. Results

A full analysis of correct article use per the obligatory context of articles of 17 subjects has been undertaken. Then the data gathered were coded and scored and then were subjected to statistical analyses.

(Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Per correct use (Percentage %) of Articles under 0 and 1 minute planning conditions)

Table 1 shows a summary of the descriptive statistics for the accuracy measures of articles under 0 and 1 minute planning. It can be seen that the mean is slightly higher in 1 minute planning than of no planning.

Variable	Planning	N	N*	Mean	SE	Mean	SD	Minimum	Q1	Median	Q3	Maximum	Narrative Task
Planning 0		11	0	32.91	7.27	24.11	6.00	13.00	27.00	54.00	76.00		
Planning 1		6	0	35.67	6.72	16.45	13.00	25.75	32.00	49.25	62.0		

variance was also carried out using the statistical package called Minitab. A statistical analysis of two-sample t-test was

performed in order to compare the differences between two planning time conditions.



(Table 2-1: The Results of A paired t-test of the Percentage of correct article use between 0 and 1 minute planning time with the same group of learners)

Paired T for Percorr0 - Percorr1				
Planning time	N	Mean	StDev	SE Mean
0 planning time	5	79.80	17.97	8.03
1 planning time	5	80.14	7.58	3.39

Difference 5 -0.35 13.07 5.84
 95% CI for mean difference: (-16.57, 15.88)
 T-Test of mean difference = 0 (vs not = 0): T-Value = -0.06, P-Value = 0.955

(Table 2-2: The Results of A paired t-test of the Percentage of correct article use between 0 and 5 minute planning time with the same group of learners)

Paired T for Percorr0 - Percorr5				
Planning Time	N	Mean	StDev	SE Mean
0 Planning time	5	79.80	17.97	8.0
5 Planning time	5	82.43	10.56	4.72

Difference : 5 -2.64 9.01 4.03
 95% CI for mean difference: (-13.82, 8.55)
 T-Test of mean difference = 0 (vs not = 0): T-Value = -0.65, P-Value = 0.548

As shown in the two tables above (2-1 and 2-2), the mean is clearly higher in the 1 and 5 minutes planning than is found in 0 planning. However, if we look at the *p*-value of both analyses, we will find no statistically significant differences (at the *p* = .05 level) in both cases (with *p* = 0.955 and *p* = 0.548). It could be said that accuracy rate of article use did not improve with the amount of planning time provided in a narrative task.

3. Discussion

The results of this study do not add an evidence to the claim that planning time leads to more accuracy of article use. One possible explanation is a linguistic one. It may be that articles are not very salient, and would not therefore come to learners' attention during planning. The results lead us to say that despite the cohesiveness of the narrative discourse, attention to form was not present in learners' minds. It is possible that the article system of English is different from the one in Arabic to the extent that the rules that govern the use of Arabic articles become acquired rules and "cannot easily be retained consciously in memory" (Tarone, 1985:390). As stated by Smith (2001), Arabic learners have difficulty in producing error-free articles due to interference of their L1 rules. Thus, we cannot say that planning time did not lead to accuracy of learners' oral performance with other grammatical features. Another possible explanation might be the use of specific measures of accuracy in this study. Those measures did not detect any differences between planned and unplanned output. Global measures if used with the same transcripts might show some significant results in the data.

In addition to this, experimental conditions play an essential factor in the interpretation of the results. The methodological problem was in the difficulty of assigning different subjects to each group under each condition of planning time with the same variables. As those learners undertook the task under constraint of time and place and under exam pressure, this may have had a negative effect on their performance.

4. Conclusion

This study has considered interlanguage variability by investigating the effect of planning time on a single language item in a single discourse type (narrative discourse). Planning time's influence on learners' oral performance has not shown to be a highly predictive of accuracy of article use. As stated above, planned output did not increase accuracy of article use as was hypothesized. However, the results cannot be generalized to other L2 learners. We need further studies to examine this area of planning. Despite its limitations, this research has pedagogical implications for second language classrooms.

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