The Effects of Planning, Task Type, and Post-task Activity on Second Language Performance

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Abstract

This study aims at examining the effects of planning, task type, and post-task activity on task-based language performance by adopting a multifactorial repeated measures design. Motivated by recent cognitive task-based research studies, the effects of three planning conditions (unplanned, planned but without detail, and detailed planning), three tasks (Personal, Narrative, and Decision), and two post-task conditions (with or without knowledge of a post-task) on the three measures (fluency, accuracy, and complexity) of language performance were investigated. The study was conducted in the context of a Hong Kong secondary school. 36 subjects participated in it, including 16 males and 20 females. Confirming hypotheses and previous research studies, planning had significant effects on all three measures and a monotonic relationship over the three task planning conditions was found. Significant effects of all three tasks on the three measures were also reported. However, the order of magnitude for the three measures was not consistent with the original predictions. The decision task, which had been hypothesized to be the most cognitively demanding, was found to be the least demanding one. It was speculated that transfer of learning had occurred. Nevertheless, the results supported the "trade-off model" which proposed that with limited attentional resources, there was a competition among fluency, accuracy, and complexity. Regarding post-task activity, no significant effects were reported for the three measures.